

Totos as a Demographic Entity of Madarihat Block of Alipurduar District of West Bengal, India

Partha Pratim Roy

Assitant Professor, Department of Geography, Siliguri College

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Received: 30 May 2017

Accepted: 15 June 2017

Published Online: 15 July 2017

Keywords

Demographic, Totos, community, population

ABSTRACT

The study of population has gained much more importance because of increasing realisation that an understanding processes underlying demographic changes, the factors associated with them and their consequences. The Totos are a primitive Mogoloid isolated tribal group in the newly formed Alipurduar District and have been identified as one of the endangered tribes of India. They have very distinct socio-economic and cultural peculiarities that have acted as constraints to their expansion and survival. However, intervention from government and non-governmental organisation, the negative growth rate of the Toto population has been checked and is at present showing negligible increments. There are certain issues which are taken into consideration for the study. The distinctness of the Toto community has been measured from a geographical perspective and presented by the socio-demographic profile with a define foci on environment and habitat. Measures and recommendations in form of suggestion are possible when socio-economic variables are studied along with their demographic indicators like family size and population composition.

Introduction

The study area selected for the present study is the Totopara Village of Madarihat Block of Alipurduar District. The latitudinal extent of Madarihat block is between 26°27'30" N to 26°52'26" N and 89°04'38" E to 89°19'57" E longitudes. It covers a total area of 376.76 sq.km. The survey was carried out with a vision to highlight the demographic characteristics of Toto community in Totopara village. The village is remotely located with minimum infrastructural facilities which also make this community more nature dependent. They have been successful to preserve their identity. The status of women in their society is more than any men enjoy in their patriarchal family.

Study Area

The Totopara village is located in Madarihat Block of Alipurduar district extending between 26°49'31" N to 26°52'26" N latitudes and 89°17'48" E to 89°19'57" E longitudes covering an area of 8.081 sq. km. The location code of Totopara village is J.L. No. - 33 out of a total of 50 villages in the Madarihat block. The northern part of the village is surrounded by Bhutan foothills whereas the southern part is marked by Ballalguri village. It is composed of six hamlets – Panchayat Gaon, Mandal Gaon, Subba Gaon, Mitrang Gaon, Puja Gaon, and Dhumchi Gaon.

Database and Methodology

Data for the present study has been based on both primary and secondary sources which were collected from household survey and different official sources which were

time to time crosscheck and verified. The present investigation was conducted on 228 families which recorded the data connected with the family, structure, the size of the family, age of each member, their sex, marital status, education and occupational status, housing and other relevant information.

Physiography and Drainage

The highest contour is 2600 feet at the north – western part of the village, while the lowest value is 700 feet which is found in the eastern part of the village. The contours are mostly concentrated on the western and north – western parts of the village, which indicates the terrain is dissected in character. The northern and north- western part of the village is relatively higher than the south and eastern part of the village. The relief gradually decreases towards south and ultimately joins with the plains of duars region. The area demarcated by the Haori River in the south and Torsa River in the east. Torsa is the main river of this village and river Haori is its tributary.

Totos – different cultural attributes

They define themselves as Hindus, but they have two main Gods whom they worship. One is Ishpa who lives in Bhutan hills. They believe that when he is unhappy, they fall sick. Totos offer Eu and animals to make him happy. On the other hand, Chima keeps the village and its people safe from sickness and troubles. They offer Eu and rice to make him happy. They have no priests to offer their worship for Ishpa in the outside and Chima inside the house. Recently some of Toto family converted into christianity.

The dresses of the Totos are very simple. They are influenced by Bengali and Nepalese culture. Male used pants, shirts along with their traditional dresses Gappo or Gado. Females are using sarees and salwar kameez along with their traditional dress Zuia or Mera. They also use different ornaments which are made of silver.

The Toto language falls under Tibeto-Burman Language Family and is sub classified as a Himalayan, Non-prenominalised dialect. At present, there are only a few members of Toto speakers at Totopara. According to 1901 census report, the total number of Toto speakers was 171. At present, the total numbers of Toto speakers are 1579 (January, 2016). The Toto language consists of 25 segmental phonemes of which 19 are constants and 6 are vowels. The vowels of the Toto language can be classified into Front unrounded, Central unrounded and Back rounded vowels. Vertically, these vowels can be classified as Close, Close – mid, Open – mid and Open. In the absence of Toto script, Sri Dhaniram Toto came forward to develop one, taking the help from the Bengali script. So, at present the Toto community can boast of a Toto script and two books have been published by Sri Dhaniram Toto on the folktales of the tribe.

The main foods of the Totos are rice, chura (parched rice), milk and curd etc. They also eat all kinds of fish, meat, pork, and poultry. Nowadays, they are habituated to pure Bengali foods like rice, vegetables, dal, fish and meat. In each occasion they take a drink called “Eu”. The liquor ‘Eu’ made from fermented Marwa, rice powder and malt which is served warm in Paipa (wooden glass).

They have nuclear type of family; however, joint family are also common. Monogamy is common form of marriage but polygamy isn’t prohibited. If a woman dies, her husband may marry the deceased wife’s younger sister but a woman can’t marry her deceased husband’s brother. On the death of spouse, the husband or wife must remain single for 12 months before he or she is free to marry again. There is

various way of acquiring mates like, Thulbehoea (Marriage by Negotiation), Char – behoea (Marriage by Escape), Sanbehoea (marriage by Capture) and LamLami (love marriage). The Totos are very conservative and marry within the tribe to preserve their ethnicity. This means marriage take place between cousins too. There is no dowry system. There is no custom of divorce among the Totos.

Toto Population

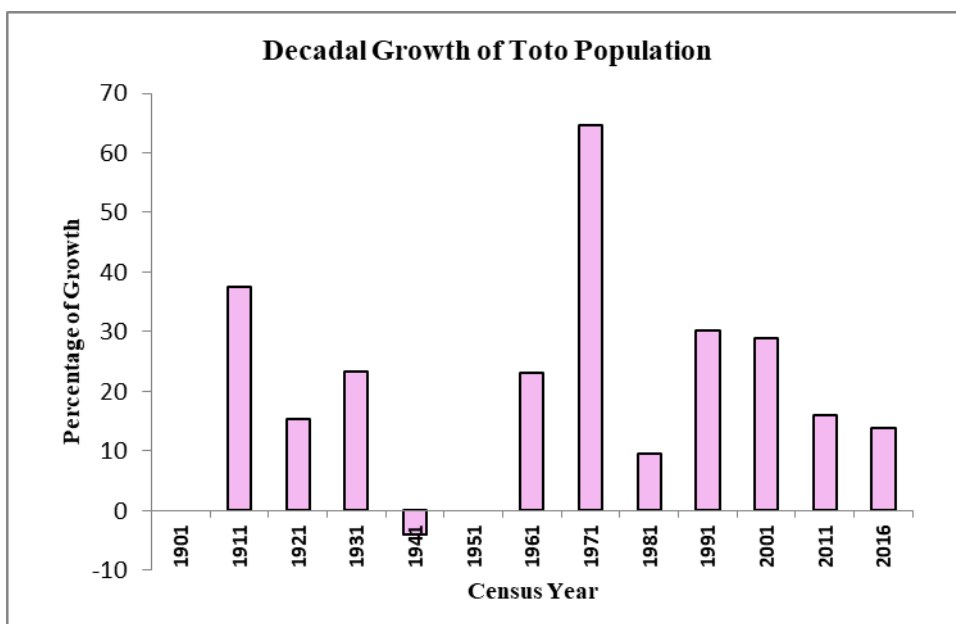
Regarding the distribution of total population among the Toto community, the population growth shows a trend towards increase from 1991 to 2011. Out of the total population of the surveyed area, 50.7% were males and 49.2% were females in the 1991 census. Two decades later the male population increased marginally to 51.9%, whereas, the female population shows a marginal decline to 48.1%. Since, the disparity in the absolute numbers of male and female population among the Totos is negligible; this signifies a balanced and stable sex-ratio in Totos.

Decadal growth of Population

An analysis of the rate of decadal growth of Toto population reveals some very interesting features. Initially, in 1901, the Totos were the sole inhabitants of Totopara (Das, 1999). Therefore, a great fluctuation seems to exist in the decennial projection of the population with a negative growth rate being evident in 1911 and by 1950s the Totos has nearly been extinct. However, measures to safeguard their unique heritage helped the population growth. After 1951, the Totos underwent a process if cultural and developmental changes and at present the population figures show an increasing trends. The main problem of Toto tribe, regarding the demographic imbalance is concerned with the influx of migrant population. This has change the man- land ratio which is ultimately putting pressure on this small agrarian Toto community

.Decadal Growth rate of Population (1901- 2016)				
Year	Male Population	Female Population	Total Population	Decadal Growth Rate (%)
1901	72	99	171	-
1911	125	110	235	37.4
1921	140	131	271	15.3
1931	130	204	334	23.2
1941	159	162	321	-3.9
1951	161	160	321	No Change
1961	206	189	395	23.1
1971	332	318	650	64.6
1981	362	350	712	9.5
1991	470	457	927	30.2

2001	620	575	1195	28.9
2011	737	650	1387	16.1
2016*	821	758	1579	13.8
* Data Collected from BCWD, Govt. of West Bengal				

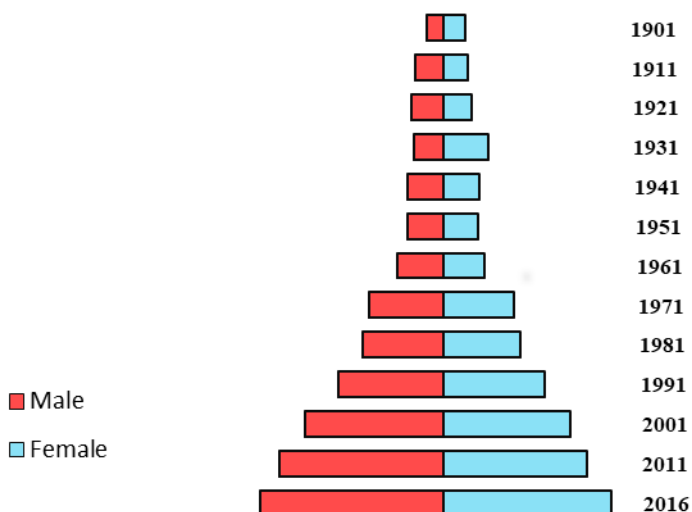


Population Pyramid

From the structure of the population pyramid from 1901 – 2016, both the male and female population show a trend of gradual increase. However, there is an exception to this general trend in 1931 when a decline of 13 % is seen in the male population which shows a spurt in the decrease from 51.6 % in 1921 to 38.9% in 1931. On the other hand, during the same period there is a spurt in the growth of female

population, which shows a consequent increase of 13 % from 48.3 % in 1921 to 61.8% in 1931. Therefore, in the next decade, there is a reversal of the growth rate where the male population increases by 11% to 49.5% of the total population and the female population decreases by 11 % to 50.4 % in the year 1941.

Population Pyramid of Toto Population



Male - Female Toto Population in different Census years (1901 - 2016)

Hamlet-wise distribution of Male – Female Population

It is an amalgamation of six hamlets. The largest being Panchayat Gaon that also exhibits the most balance sex ration with an almost 60% share of male – female population. A similar scenario can be witnessed in Mandal Gaon. Of the

remaining four hamlets, the distribution is skewed in favour of the male population. This is most marked in the hamlet of Mitrang Gaon, followed by Subba Gaon.

Hamlets	Dhumchi Gaon	Puja Gaon	Mitrang Gaon	Subba Gaon	Mandal Gaon	Panchayat Gaon
Male Population	88	138	177	60	80	278
Female Population	81	124	142	50	82	279
Total Population	169	262	319	110	162	557

Occupation Structure

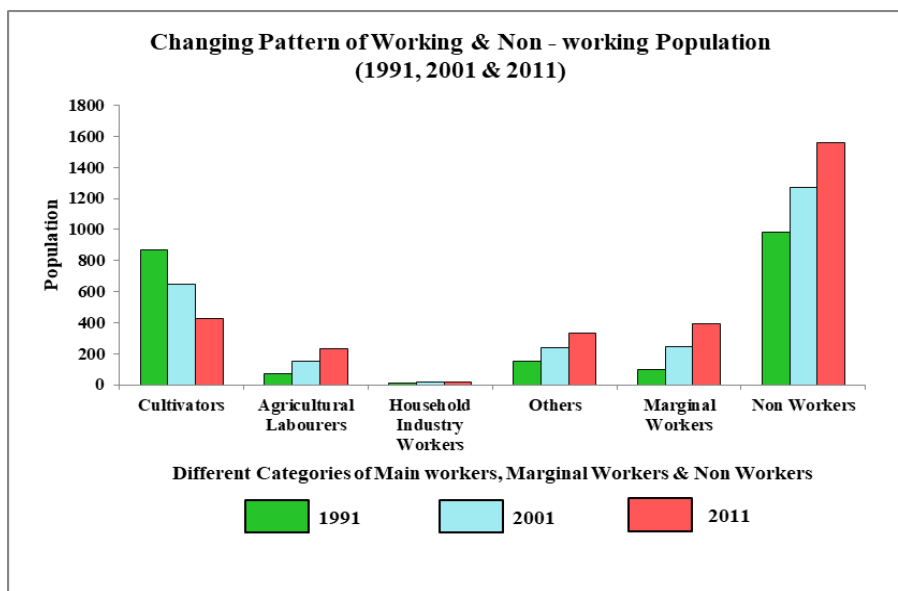
The main occupation of Toto community is primary in nature. Their main source of income is agriculture and animal husbandry. From agricultural production they not only fulfill their daily basis demands but simultaneously selling of these products help them to support financially. From 228 families, 307 people are engaged in Primary sector where most of them have their own arecanut and orange plantation. Yearly two to three times either they sell arecanut directly to the local market or they lease the garden to some third party with some financial conditions. Some of the family runs their own grocery shop which is totally for the local residents of the village. A very small portion of the working population is engaged in tertiary activities like stone crushers and banking sector.

Workers and Non-workers profile of the village

Three consecutive census years has been taken into account for the study, i.e. 1991, 2001 and 2011. The three main categories are Main Workers which are again classified as Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, household Industry Workers and Others as per the census of India. The other two categories are Marginal Workers and Non workers. It is clear from the data that the in Main Workers the number of cultivators are decreasing, which means that the population of the village is more towards industrial sector than agricultural sectors. Similarly, as a result of it there is a steady growth in the Agricultural Labourers, Household Industry Workers and Others. On the other hand the number of Marginal Workers is also increasing due to lack of job opportunity in the area. The number of non-workers increases remarkably either of lack of interest among the residents or because of their low level of education.

Working and Non- working Population of Totopara (1991 - 2011)						
Year	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry Workers	Others	Marginal Workers	Non Workers
1991	868	68	13	148	97	983
2001	645	150	15	240	244	1271
2011	423	234	17	330	391	1559

*Data Collected from Census of India (1991, 2001, 2011)



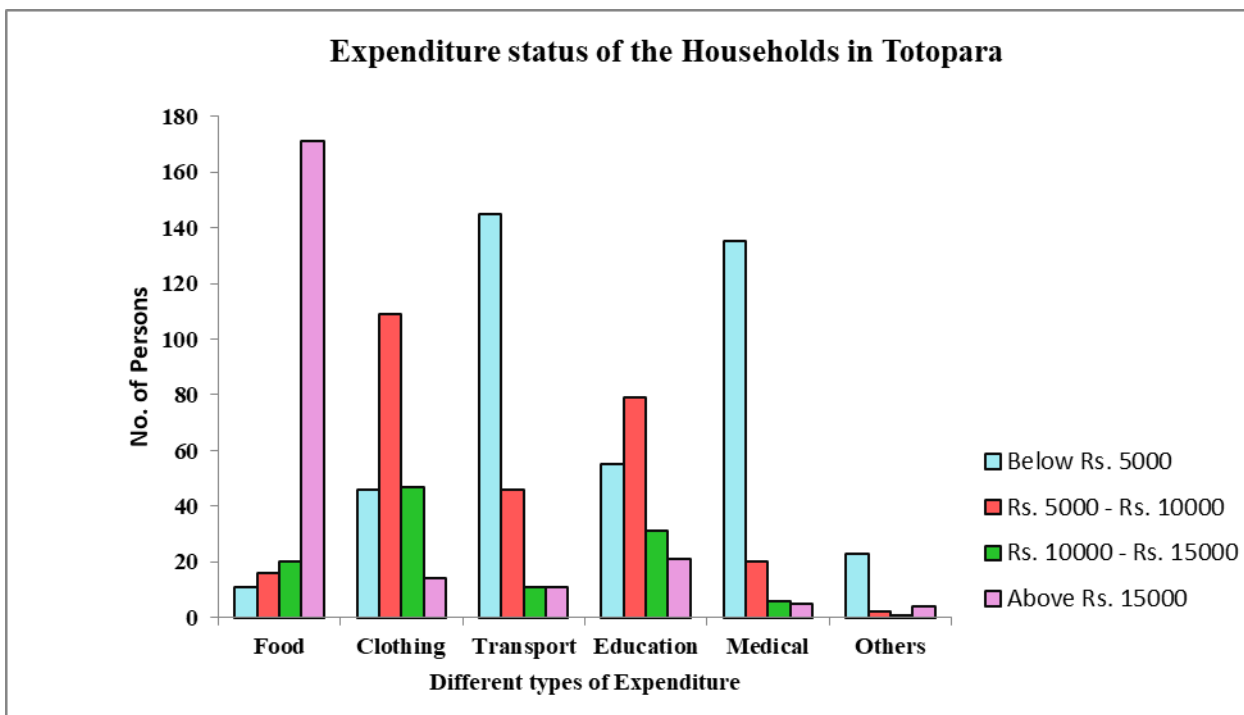
Economic Profile of the village

Expenditure among the residents has been divided into four categories on the basis of amount they spent in different livelihood parameters. The categories are as follows
Below Rs. 5000 – In this category, the maximum expenditure is on transport, as the people in this low income stratum belong mostly to daily wage earners who have to commute over long distance. This is followed closely by medical and educational expenses.

Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000 - here maximum income of the family expense for clothing and education. This is followed by medical, transport and food expenses.

Rs. 10000 to Rs. 15000 - The maximum expenses are also clothing, education and food for people belonging in this category. Transport and medical expenses are also notable.

Above Rs. 15000 – This category shows a different picture with regard to their spending habits, where 77% spent on food, 20% for clothing, transport and education and 5% for medical and other expenses.



Conclusion

The Toto tribal community has lived in social isolation like most of the other tribes of the state, but in recent years, some development in their socio-cultural and economic activities have been observed. This positive change in primarily due to their first hand contact with the mainstream population outside their habitat. The status of health and education has increased among them. A majority of the Totos are main workers in the form of day labourers. In recent times, the Toto youth are engaged in services and small businesses like grocery shops or other types of shops. Now, the use of mobile phones and telephones has become common. Today, Totos, enjoy personal land ownership.

For further developments of the Toto community the following recommendations may be considered.

- a) Regarding health care services there should be more provisions of health centres, doctors and nursing staffs in the village.

- b) Regular meetings of local health management should be undertaken to provide better and free medical treatment facilities to the village residents.
- c) Conditions of road and bridges in and around the village need to be improved.
- d) The government funds and grants for housing projects, especially for the landless population should be taken up seriously. Programmes like Indira Awas Yojana be implemented for the needy families.
- e) Provisions for supplementary food among children and child nursing women should be implemented.
- f) Special attention should be given to the development planning of the region. Through the five year plans for the scheduled tribes including the members of the Toto community.
- g) In order to increase the per capita income as well as to enhance the production of households, alternative employment opportunities should be given to the local populace.

References

1. Administrative Atlas of India, 2011.
2. B.K. Anil, (2012): Impact of modern educational in Toto community, Published in Contemporary research in India (ISSN22312137). Retrieved dt. 2014.11.10. from www.contemporaryresearchindia.com/puff/CRI/.....105. Pdf.
3. Census of India, 1991.
4. Census of India, 2001.
5. Census of India, 2011.
6. Das, J. (2011): Factors Influencing the Socio-Economic status of Toto tribe in Madarihat Block of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, Retrieved dt. 2014.11.10. from gswb.in/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/gav1n2-11.pdf
7. Dasgupta, A. Goswami, A. Sen, M. & Mazumder, D. (2009): Study on the Effect of socio-economic parameters on Health of the Toto, status Santhal, Sabar and Ladha tribes of West Bengal, India. Retrieved dt. 2014.11.08. from www.krepublishers.com/T&T-07-1-031-09-182 Dasgupta, A. -TtPdf.
8. Govt. of West Bengal (2003): A brief profile with activities at a glance on development of Totos, Backward classes welfare, Jalpaiguri.
9. Majumder, B. (1998): The Totos, Academic Enterprise 249/A, East Kodalia, new Barrackpur, 24 Paragana (North), Kolkata-700050
10. Paul, S. Dey, P. Ghosh, S. (2001): Upajati Bhabna, Bangladesh publication, 32/AShyampukur street, Kolkata-4
11. Sarkar, A. (1993): Toto society and change, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd, 257 B, B.B. Ganguly street, Kolkata-700012
12. Sarkar, P. (1995): Matir Chhonya , Dutta Screen printing, Bhangapool, Alipurduar, West Bengal.
13. Sarkar, P. Dey, P. Mukhyopadhyay, M. (2006): Smarak Patrika, Avinaba Printers, Alipurduar Court, West Bengal.
14. The telegraph (2006): First Toto women to get Govt. Job in the Telegraph, Kolkata-13.01.2006 Retrieved dt.12.11.2014
15. The Telegraph (2010): Thalassemia threat to Toto tribe on reels in the telegraph, Kolkata-14.12.2010. Retrieved dt. 11.11.2014.
16. The Telegraph (2014): Toto girl graduated in the Telegraph, Kolkata-24.07.2014 Retrieved dt. 14.12.2014.
17. Toto, D. (2011): Toto Janajatir Samogrik Parichay (Bengali) Lokswar Patrika, Vol No-4.