

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN MORIGAON DISTRICT OF ASSAM: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Chakradhar Deka

Assistant Professor,
Department of Geography,
Charaibahi College, Morigaon.

INTRODUCTION

The spatial distribution of population in a particular region reflects to a large extent the nature of economic activities in terms of occupational structure. The uneven distribution of population in varying environmental conditions of different ethnic groups gives rise to different occupational structure. Moreover, the qualities of the population also determine the level of resource utilization. Both the physical as well as the social factors have influence the distribution of population as well as occupational structure. These factors are varying from place to place as well as from one community to other.

The people of tribal community living in different regions of Morigaon district have their own traditional attitudes towards the operation of economic activities. The size of agricultural field of this group is also very small. When the operational holding is very small, it is difficult to invest large amount of capital, which leads to low level of income. The nature of agriculture of this group is still primitive subsistence type in the district.

Such type of micro-level study will help in understanding the level of economic development of the tribal people. It will also help in finding out the root causes behind the nature of such development.

THE STUDY AREA

The present Morigaon district, centrally located in the state of Assam, was upgraded from sub-division to a new district carving out of the old Nagaon district in 1989. It is bounded by the mighty Brahmaputra and Darrang district in the north, Nagaon district in the east, Karbi-Anglong and Meghalaya in the south and Kamrup district in the west and south-west. The total geographical area of the district is 1559 sq. km. accounting for 1.99 percent of the state's total geographical area. According to 2011 census, the total population of the district is 9,57,423 of which 50.83 percent are males and 49.17 percent are females.

To the west and the south of the district lie ranges of low hills covered with luxuriant vegetation of tropical forest. The greater part of the district is covered with highly fertile alluvial plain.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

- (a) To find out their spatial distribution pattern in relation to the different physical and ecological settings of Morigaon district.
- (b) To analyse the structural pattern of occupations of tribal group.

METHODOLOGY

The data for the present study have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data have been collected from census reports, different Government offices like Economic and Statistical Department, Deputy Commissioner Offices, circles offices etc. The Location Quotient Method is used to examine the concentration of the Tribal population in the district.

Besides these, some geographical information about the tribal people is obtained only by personal observation and interview.

The data and information thus collected are first processed and tabulated and then analyse with the help of meaningful cartographic techniques.

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBAL POPULATION

As per 2011 census, the total population of Scheduled Tribe in Morigaon district was 1,36,777 persons accounting for 14.29 percent of the total population of the district scattered over 268 villages. The distribution of this group in the district is quite uneven. A number of factors including the perception of this group to the environment have been responsible for such an uneven distribution. Generally majority of them are distributed in the central and eastern part of the district especially in the mouzas of Niz- Ghagua, Tetelia, Morigaon and Silpukhuri.

Table- 1
MOUZAWISE DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION,
MORIGAON DISTRICT, 2011

Mouza	Total population	Total Scheduled Tribe population	Percentage of Scheduled Tribe population to total population	Location Quotient
1. Dandua	37670	9228	24.50	1.71
2. Morigaon	65579	21101	32.18	2.25
3. Tetelia	31838	11292	35.47	2.48
4. Uttarkhola	64927	12208	18.80	1.32
5. Charaibahi	44034	5764	13.09	0.92
6. Mikirbheta	38837	4097	10.55	0.74
7. Silpukhuri	54342	15847	29.16	2.04
8. Laharighat	127391	11330	8.89	0.62
9. Moirabari	126227	14	0.01	-
10. Bhuragaon	85539	10361	12.11	0.85
11. Bokani	37894	3460	9.13	0.64
12. Gova	77227	14885	19.27	1.35
13. Manaha	43463	4432	10.20	0.71
14. Mayang	43897	318	0.72	0.05
15. Niz-Ghagua	27067	9633	35.59	2.49
16. Pokaria	51491	2807	5.45	0.34
District	9,57,423	1,36,777	14.29	

Source: Calculated from the Primary Rural Census Abstract, 2011

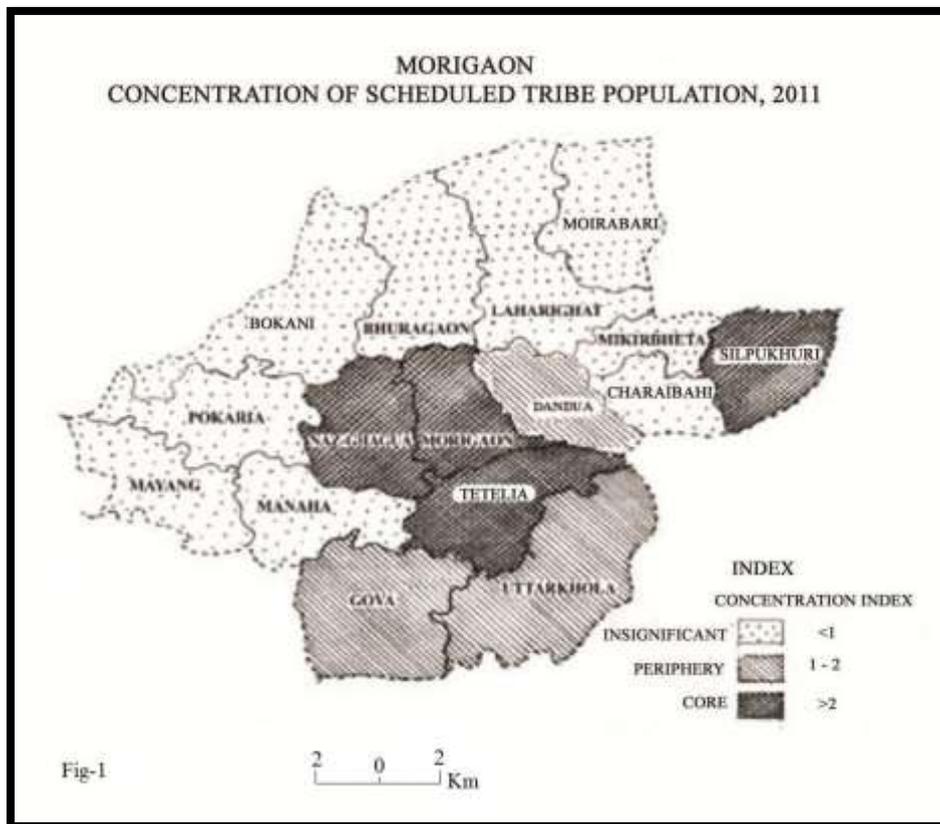
The analysis of the spatial distribution and concentration pattern shows that the highest concentration (35.59 percent) of this tribe is found in the Niz-Ghagua mouza scattered over 23 villages (Table 1). In this mouza, none of the villages are found below 25 percent of Tribal population of the total population of the villages, while 4, 9, and 10 villages fall in the categories of 25-50, 50-75, and above 75 percent respectively.

Table- 2
MOUZAWISE DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBAL VILLAGES UNDER DIFFERENT
CATEGORIES, 2011

Mouza	Number of villages with percentages of Tribal population				Total
	Below 25	25-50	50-75	Above 75	
1. Dandua	7	6	-	2	15
2. Morigaon	10	5	8	18	41
3. Tetelia	9	3	4	14	30
4. Uttarkhola	15	5	9	10	39
5. Charaibahi	5	4	1	-	10
6. Mikirbheta	5	3	-	-	8
7. Silpukhuri	6	5	2	7	20
8. Laharighat	8	2	2	11	23
9. Moirabari	1	-	-	-	1
10. Bhuragaon	4	2	-	2	8
11. Bokani	1	-	1	2	4
12. Gova	6	7	1	14	28
13. Manaha	4	1	2	4	11
14. Mayang	2	-	1	1	4
15. Niz-Ghagua	-	4	9	10	23
16. Pokaria	2	-	-	1	3
District	85	47	40	96	268

Source : Primary Rural Census Abstract, 2011.

It is followed by Tetelia mouza with 35.47 percent Scheduled Tribe population to the total population of the mouza. There are 30 Tribal villages in this mouza. Out of which 9, 3, 4, and 14 villages lie below 25 percent, 25-50 percent, 50-75 percent and above 75 percent respectively. The Morigaon mouza holds 32.18 percent of Tribal population to its total population. There are all together 41 Tribal villages in this mouza. Among these villages, 10 villages are under the category of below 25 percent while 5 and 8 villages fall in the category of 25-50 percent and 50-75 percent respectively. There are 18 villages which comprise above 75 percent of the Tribal population to the total population of villages (Table-2). Silpukhuri mouza covers about 29.16 percent of Scheduled Tribe population to the total population of the mouza. There are 20 Tribal villages in this mouza. Out of which 6, 5, 2 and 7 villages lie below 25 percent, 25-50 percent, 50-75 percent and above 75 percent respectively. The mouzas of Moirabari and Mayang hold a very insignificant concentration of population accounting for about 0.01 percent and 0.72 percent respectively (Table 1).



In order to measure the pattern of spatial location of Scheduled Tribe population the degree of concentration is measured with the help of Location Quotient method. The mouzas of Niz-Ghagua, Tetelia and Morigaon in the central part, Silpukhuri in the eastern part emerge as the core areas for the concentration of Tribal People. The three mouzas, viz., Dandua, Gova and Uttarkhola are the peripheral location for the concentration of Scheduled Tribe. Insignificance concentration is found in the remaining 9 mouzas of the district (fig 1).

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

The total workers of the Scheduled Tribe community constitute about 45.17 percent of the total population of Scheduled Tribe community of which 28.06 percent are male and 17.11 percent are female. The remaining 54.83 percent are non-workers (Table 3).

Table 3
PERCENTAGES OF WORKERS TO TOTAL ST POPULATION, 2011

Total Workers			Non- Workers		
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
45.17	28.06	17.11	54.83	21.93	32.90

Source: Calculated from the Primary Rural Census Abstract, 2011

About 53.30 percent of the total workers of this tribe earn their livelihood by adopting themselves as the cultivators either at their own land or at the land leased from other landholders. They generally engage themselves in peasant agriculture of rice, mustered, pulses etc. A significant proportion of them (21.43percent) are landless agricultural labours. Thus, 74.73 percent of the total workers are engaged in primary sector of occupation of which 48.09 percent are male and 26.64 percent are female. It is observed that the female participation in agricultural sector is highly noticeable. During the harvesting and plantation periods of different crops a large number of female of this tribe earn a good income. Apart from raising agricultural crops, poultry and pig rearing also contribute a significant proportion to their economy. Most of the people of this tribe are not well acquainted with the participation in fishing works. They mainly join in this aspect only for their self consumption.

The field observation reveals that generally the tribal people are not very much interested in industrial activities. Only small cottage industries are popular among the people of this tribe. The tribal women produce good quality endi chadar and cotton

mekhela chadar which also contribute a lot to their economy. Though this culture has tremendous scope for development, it is yet to give more attention by the Government as well as Non-Governmental organizations. About 6.47 percent of the people of this group are found to be engaged in industrial sector (Table 4).

Table 4
PERCENTAGES OF WORKERS IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS, 2011

Primary						Secondary			Tertiary		
Cultivator			Agricultural Labour			Industrial Sector			Service Sector		
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
53.30	39.81	13.49	21.43	8.28	13.15	6.47	1.41	5.06	18.80	12.62	6.18

Source: Calculated from the Primary Rural Census Abstract, 2011

A very small proportion (18.80 percent) of the people of them is engaged in tertiary activities. About 9.77 percent of the total workers of this tribe are engaged in petty business like vegetable and pork supply and supply of some other essential commodities. The field study reveals that the literacy rate is still poor among the Scheduled Tribe population of Morigaon district. They are stricken by poverty also. Therefore, the engagement in service sector is not very high. Only 9.02 percents of the total population of this tribe are holding different jobs in different Government and private organizations (Table 4).

CONCLUSION

The forgoing analysis shows that there is spatial variation in the distribution of Scheduled Tribe population at the mouza level. There is also spatial variation in the concentration of this group of people. They are mainly concentrated in the central and eastern part of the district. A high proportion of them are engaged in agriculture which is still primitive subsistence. So they are not able to generate sufficient return (income) to run their family smoothly. Hence, apart from raising agricultural crops, poultry and pig rearing are also their additional income source. The extreme poverty and illiteracy of the people of Tribal community are the major hinder for their socio-economic development. This can be handled only by providing separate planning strategy for this group. Extension of education and training facilities are of utmost necessary to motivate the tribal peasants towards modern method of cultivation as well as modern way of life. Sufficient helpline should be provided by the Government as well as Non-Governmental organizations. Industrial technology of handloom and weaving industry should be modernized for higher outputs which provides for multidimensional occupational to the rural people. The poultry and piggeries are to be modernized by providing loans from Banks and other financial institutions so that a large share of the workers can be absorbed.

REFERENCES

- Das, Harmohan, 2006, *Occupational Mobility and Pattern of Socio-Economic Change in Rural Areas of Hajo Block, Assam*, An unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Gauhati University, Guwahati.
- Deka, Chakradhar, 2008, *Pattern of Agricultural Development and Occupational Mobility in Morigaon district of Assam*. An unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Gauhati University, Guwahati.