

Changing trends in work participation of tribal women by education in some selected states of India

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ABSTRACT: Women's decisions in work participation are influenced by cultural norms which guide their mobility and workforce participation in the employment market. The objective of this study was to examine the changing trends in work participation by tribal women according to their education level. The study used the data from the Census of India (1991-2011). The crude work participation rates were calculated. The results show that the women tend to enjoy higher status in society which is reflected in the higher education levels and workforce participation by tribal women of the North-Eastern states of India as compared to the other tribal-dominated states. Marginal work participation is inclining over the period, and the same pattern has been observed for literate females who were engaged as marginal workers. Women with lesser educational attainment and a high percentage of illiterate women formed a significant proportion of main workers in other tribal-dominated states.

KEYWORDS: Main Workers, Marginal workers, Scheduled Tribe, Women, Work participation

I. INTRODUCTION

The status of women is manifested in the level of social and economic development of society. It is often judged on the parameters of the level of income, employment, education, health, and fertility as well as their decision-making roles within the family, community, and society. Women's decisions in work participation are influenced by cultural norms which guide their mobility and workforce participation in the labour market. Women from deprived groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in particular, face chronic conditions of poverty, discrimination, and exploitation in both the work as well as the social environment.

The situation of women in tribal¹ communities is crucial (Das,2013). They constitute about half the total population; and in tribal societies, women play more prominent roles than in most non-tribal communities. They work hard and contribute significantly to the tribaleconomy. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization which has impacted many tribal communities, tribal women continued to play a significant role (Haseena,2014). The majority of tribal women, who live in the rural areas, are engaged in the informal and unorganized sectors. They have fewer education opportunities, less access to healthcare, and insufficient productive assets and resources (Ramakrishnappa,2015).

According to the 2011 census, India's tribal population is 100.43 million, constituting 8.6 percent of the total population. 89.97 per cent of them lives in rural areas and the remaining in urban areas. Of the tribal population, 4.17 crores are women (Census of India,2011). Tribal communities are found in all states and Union Territories (UTs). Demographic changes (size and distribution) determine the composition of the workforce. On the other hand, the rates of participation in the workforce differ according to the stage of economic advancement across cultures, age groups, and sexes (Bhagat, et al.,2008)

¹Tribes or tribal are official designations given to various groups of historically disadvantaged indigenous people in India. The terms are recognised in the Constitution of India and the various groups are designated in one or other of the categories. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. In modern literature, Tribes is used as an official term for Adivasi (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Annual Report,2016).

India's North-Eastern region considered as relatively less economically developed. But there is also appreciation the position of women is much better here than in the rest of the country. A previous study found that women of the North-East were comparatively better off only. It is found from the study that the reputation of women in that region is comparatively much better than the rest of the country only in some selected indicators (Das, 2013).

North-Eastern India has the highest concentration of tribal population (12 percent of the total as per Census 2011) in the country. The women tend to enjoy higher status and more liberty in the society which is reflected in the high workforce participation level in the rural regions of the North Eastern states as compared to the rest of India. It is also reflected in the higher sex ratios and higher literacy levels among women. Many tribal communities are matriarchal in structure, and hence, women in these parts had more freedom and treated with respect. This is reflected in higher participation levels of women in the workforce as compared to the rest of India.

The main objective of this paper is to ascertain the changing trends, and the extent of participation of women from tribal-dominated states in the workforce, and determine if such participation could be taken as indicative of women's empowerment and availability of better working conditions in the region. The study also attempts to compare work participation of women in North-Eastern Region (except Assam), according to education level, with the that of other states with a high proportion of tribal. Working with a population that is marginalized and not widely studied. It becomes important for us to recognize the women who have a "double burden" of not only being a woman but also from the tribal population. But in the same context, they are powerful and significant in their rights.

There are studies on tribal communities, but most of these focus on the North-Eastern states. There are also studies that are specific to tribal population in other states (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha). This study seeks to add to existing knowledge by comparing workforce participation by women in the North-Eastern states with those in other tribal-dominated states. It is expected to give a better understanding of the economic activities of tribal women living in different states in India.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data for this study, education level of tribal women and their workforce participation was obtained from Census of India reports. Three rounds of Census data (1991, 2001 and 2011) sets were used for analysis. The states are chosen for the study are those with a tribal population of at least 25 percent of the total. Thus, the states included in this study are Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura from The North-Eastern States; and Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha from the rest of India.

A bivariate data series analysis was performed with the data on age, workforce participation in various activities (main and marginal), and education level. The crude work participation rates were calculated for the total, main², and marginal³ workers.

1. Crude work participation rates (CWPR)

The crude work participation rate is defined as the percentage of total workers (main and marginal) to the total population. Thus, here also, crude work participation rates have been calculated for the total, main, and marginal workers as represented by the following equation,

$CWPR = (TW/TP) * 100$ Where,

CWPR= Crude Work Participation Rate

TW=Total workers

²Those workers who had worked for the major part of the reference period (i.e. 6 months or more) are termed as Main Workers (Census of India, 2011).

³Those workers who had not worked for the major part of the reference period (i.e. less than 6 months) are termed as Marginal Workers (Census of India, 2011).

TP=Total population

2. Literacy level of Workers (main and marginal) by residence

The share of workers by educational level rural-urban categories was calculated.

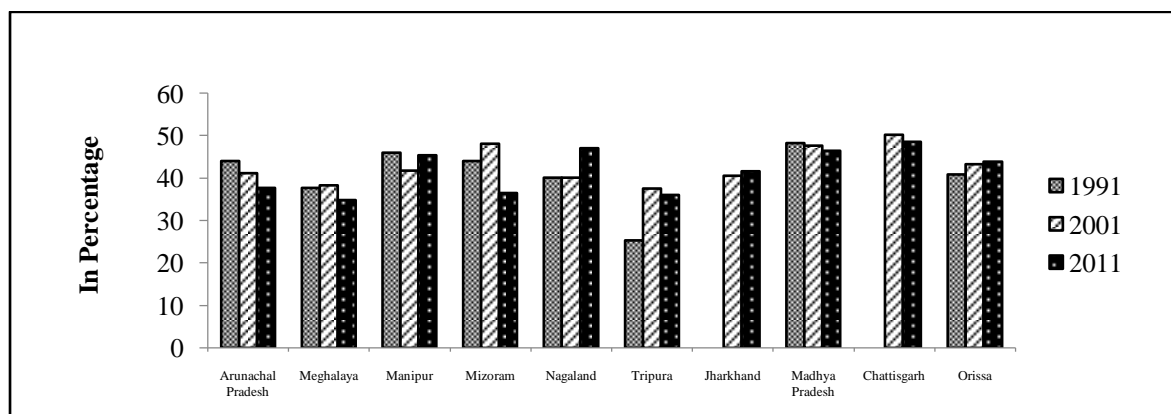
Share of Illiterate Workers= (Number of illiterate workers/Total workers) *100

Similarly, the share of literate workers for both main and marginal workers was also calculated.

III. RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the crude work participation rate of main and marginal tribal workers during the study period. It is observed from the figure that women work participation rate among tribal community has gradually decreased in most of the states during 1991 to 2011; but at the same time, there is an increase in work participation in the states of Manipur and Nagaland along with a slight incline in Odisha.

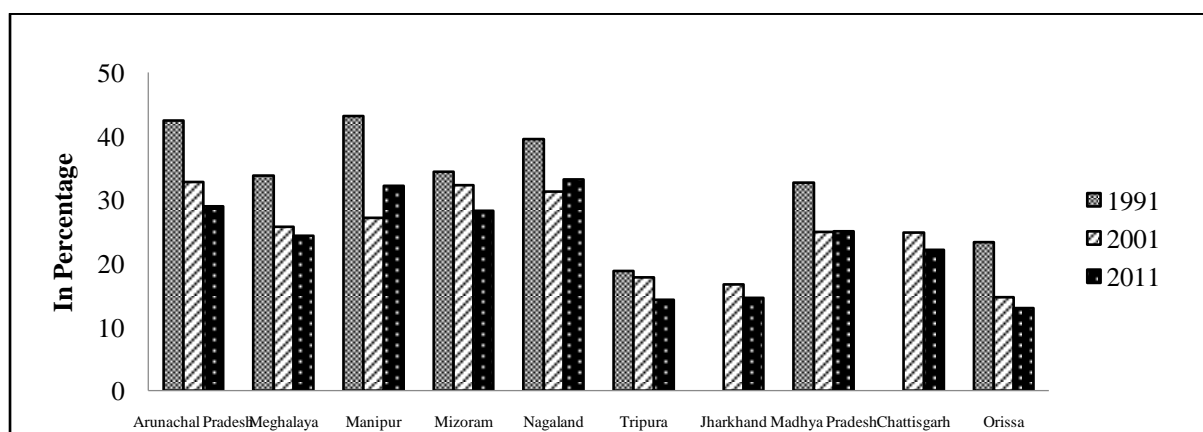
Figure 1. Crude Work Participation Rate (Main + Marginal) of Tribal Women, 1991-2011



Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

Figure 2 describes that crude work participation rate among tribal women engaged as main workers have declined during the study period (1991-2011). However, in Manipur and Nagaland, there was an incline in main working participation during the years 2001-2011. In 2011, the proportion of tribal women who were engaged as main workers reported in Tripura, Jharkhand, and Odisha was less as compared to other states.

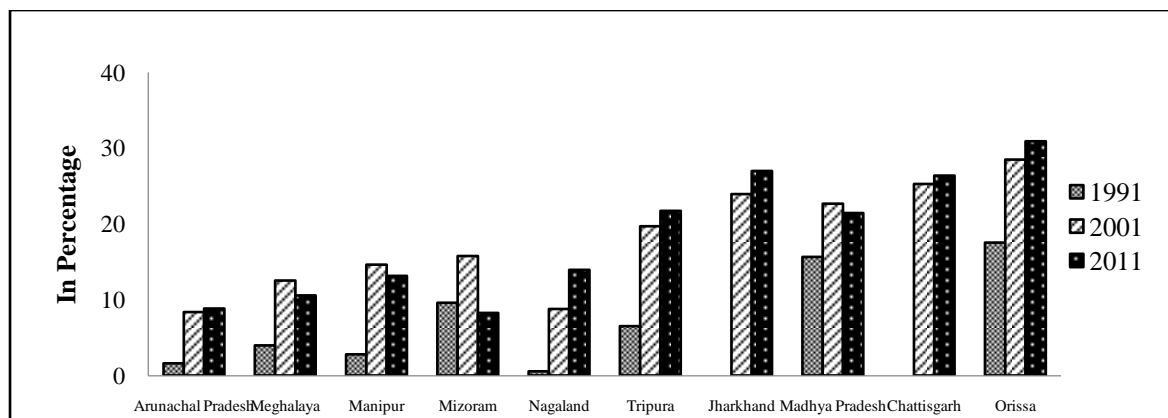
Figure 2. Crude Work Participation Rate of Tribal Women Main Workers, 1991-2011



Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

It has been seen from figure 3 that there is a substantial increase in the work participation rates of marginal workers in all of the states during 1991-2001. However, there was a decline in marginal work participation in the states of Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram during the period 2001 to 2011.

Figure 3. Crude Work Participation Rate of Tribal Women Marginal Workers, 1991-2011



Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

Table 1 presents the distribution of female literacy levels by type of work in the North-eastern and the selected EAG states 1991-2011. The literacy levels of tribal women are higher among those in the main work category and marginal worker in selected states of India during the period 1991-2011. Women belonging to Mizoram (75%, 86% and 89%) and Meghalaya (32%, 52%, and 67%) reported rapid increase in education level, while literacy level was the lowest in Odisha (5%, 14%, and 29%) and Madhya Pradesh (8%, 18%, and 21%) in 1991, 2001, and 2011 respectively among the main workers.

Table 1. Distribution of main and marginal workers by literacy, 1991-2011 (Total)

Name of the State	Female Main Workers						Female Marginal Workers					
	Illiterate			Literate			Illiterate			Literate		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	89.9	77.3	61.1	10.1	22.7	38.9	87.3	68.0	55.0	12.7	32.0	45.0
Meghalaya	67.6	48.0	33.5	32.4	52.0	66.5	68.9	50.7	37.9	31.1	49.3	62.1
Manipur	72.3	52.7	46.6	27.7	47.3	53.4	63.9	47.8	34.1	36.1	52.2	65.9
Mizoram	25.1	13.6	11.3	74.9	86.4	88.7	13.2	14.2	16.4	86.8	85.8	83.6
Nagaland	65.2	56.3	34.6	34.8	43.7	65.4	44.7	39.9	19.3	55.3	60.1	80.7
Tripura	85.6	71.2	36.2	14.4	28.8	63.8	88.6	71.8	38.1	11.4	28.2	61.9
Jharkhand	NA	80.2	65.9	NA	19.8	34.1	NA	83.8	70.8	NA	16.2	29.2
Madhya Pradesh	91.6	81.9	78.9	8.4	18.1	21.1	95.6	81.2	74.2	4.4	18.8	25.8
Chhattisgarh	NA	68.0	62.6	NA	32.0	37.4	NA	71.6	65.1	NA	28.4	34.9
Orissa	94.9	86.5	71.0	5.1	13.5	29.0	94.4	86.7	73.5	5.6	13.3	26.5

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

Table 2 shows the distribution of main and marginal workers by their literacy level in the rural area of the selected states of. A higher proportion of illiterate women from Madhya Pradesh and Odisha were employed as main and marginal workers during 1991-2011 than other selected EAG states. However, the proportion of literate was highest in Mizoram in both main (64%, 79%, and 81% in 1991, 2001, and 2011) and as well as the marginal (78%, 77%, and 73%) work in comparison to the other states of Northeast in that period.

Table 2. Distribution of main and marginal workers by literacy in rural, 1991-2011

Name of the State	Female Main Workers						Female Marginal Workers					
	Illiterate			Literate			Illiterate			Literate		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	90.9	80.6	66.2	9.1	19.4	33.8	87.3	68.5	57.7	12.7	31.5	42.3
Meghalaya	71.4	52.1	37.8	28.6	47.9	62.2	70.2	52.2	39.3	29.8	47.8	60.7
Manipur	73.6	53.4	48.6	26.4	46.6	51.4	65.1	48.0	35.3	34.9	52.0	64.7
Mizoram	35.9	20.7	19.1	64.1	79.3	80.9	21.8	23.1	27.3	78.2	76.9	72.7
Nagaland	67.2	58.9	38.5	32.8	41.1	61.5	44.8	40.6	20.5	55.2	59.4	79.5
Tripura	86.7	72.7	37.47	13.3	27.3	62.53	88.6	71.9	38.3	11.4	28.1	61.7
Jharkhand	NA	82.0	68.3	NA	18.0	31.7	NA	83.9	71.1	NA	16.1	28.9
Madhya Pradesh	92.4	82.2	79.8	7.6	17.8	20.2	95.7	81.2	74.3	4.3	18.8	25.7
Chhattisgarh	NA	68.3	63.7	NA	31.7	36.3	NA	71.5	65.3	NA	28.5	34.7
Orissa	95.1	87.0	72.0	4.9	13.0	28.0	94.4	86.7	73.6	5.6	13.3	26.4

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

Table 3 depicts the distribution of main and marginal workers by their literacy level in the urban areas of the states in this study. The illiterate women of the EAG states of Odisha (87%, 75%, and 58%) and Madhya Pradesh (76%, 74%, and 61%) reported the highest proportion of women those who were employed as main workers during the period 1991-2011. And, the pattern is the same for the marginal workers of the two states. Tribal women of Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh reported a higher percentage of literates who were engaged as main workers during 1991-2011. The percentage was the lowest for Arunachal Pradesh.

Table 3. Distribution of main and marginal workers by literacy in urban, 1991-2011

Name of the State	Female Main Workers						Female Marginal Workers					
	Illiterate			Literate			Illiterate			Literate		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	42.8	38.2	19.8	57.2	61.8	80.2	87.0	58.8	31.2	13.0	41.2	68.8
Meghalaya	25.3	18.2	10.92	74.7	81.8	89.08	42.1	28.6	16.5	57.9	71.4	83.5
Manipur	35.3	27.2	18.1	64.7	72.8	81.9	46.5	42.4	19.1	53.5	57.6	80.9
Mizoram	7.4	3.2	1.6	92.6	96.8	98.4	6.2	3.7	2.8	93.8	96.3	97.2
Nagaland	20.5	17.1	10.7	79.5	82.9	89.3	32.0	24.7	12.6	68.0	75.3	87.4
Tripura	11.8	11.7	13.7	88.2	88.3	86.3	33.3	36.4	24.4	66.7	63.6	75.6
Jharkhand	NA	49.0	41.0	NA	51.0	59.0	NA	77.4	58.5	NA	22.6	41.5
Madhya Pradesh	75.5	74.0	60.5	24.5	26.0	39.5	93.3	85.2	72.2	6.7	14.8	27.8
Chhattisgarh	NA	60.4	43.8	NA	39.6	56.2	NA	74.9	57.5	NA	25.1	42.5
Orissa	87.4	75.1	57.6	12.6	24.9	42.4	90.7	85.1	65.9	9.3	14.9	34.1

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

IV. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to examine the changing trend and extent of participation of the women belonging to the tribal communities of North-Eastern and the selected EAG states in the workforce. The study found that workforce participation rate of tribal women decreased across the three census periods 1991, 2001, and 2011. The continuing decline in female workforce participation in Arunachal Pradesh may be due to the impact of the high rate of migration of the workforce to other parts of India. It is pertinent to mention here that the women of Arunachal Pradesh are not joining the workforce because the absence of men due to migration may have compelled them to devote more time to household responsibilities, resulting in declining workforce population.

Mizoram has also shown a declining trend of female work participation. This may be due to increasing educational attainments of the women of the state. In the case of Manipur, it is observed that the level of female workforce participation remained the same during the study period (Pegu, 2015).

The study also found that the crude work participation rate among tribal women engaged as main worker had declined and there was a substantial increase in the work participation rate of marginal workers in some of the states. Overall, the secular increase in tribal workforce participation in marginal work is reflective of fundamental changes in rural areas that have impacted tribal livelihoods (Naresh,2014).

It can be seen from the results that there was a rapid rise in the literacy levels of women belonging to Mizoram and Meghalaya. It was the least in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh among both main and marginal workers. Educating tribal women is an essential aspect of development because it is a vital for bringing changes to the social and cultural norms and patterns of their lives to make them economically independent in today's times(Chatterjee,2014). However, illiterate women are drawn into the workforce because of various reasons. In most cases, they cannot afford to remain unemployed.

But at the same time, it is worth mentioning that the improvement in educational levels does not seem to have given rise to better opportunities in the labour market for the women of these states (Borah,2015). In the states where women have greater access to educational credentials, formal employment rates are higher, but the correlations between employment and education prove to be significant only at the secondary level of education. When formal employment rates are higher, women have enhanced access to formal employment and are less likely to be represented among marginal workers (Das, et al.,2015).

Labour force participation of women in rural areas is higher than those in urban ones. But over time, the gap between urban and rural areas has narrowed, with most of the convergence by fall in the participation rates in rural areas (Das, et al.,2015). In the north-eastern region, with the exception of Tripura, crude workforce participation of marginal workers is very low. However, the situation is completely different Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha where women are engaged in low-paid jobs. The NAREGA⁴(NAREGA,2005)schemes have also signed the workforce participation in rural areas. The results show that there is a trend toward more literate women in the workforce. But among the marginal workers, there are more illiterate women than literate ones. The picture is also different for rural and urban areas. In the rural areas of predominantly agricultural states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Madhya Pradesh, there were more literates among marginal workers. The proportion of illiterates among the main workers was also high. This is because women were mainly employed in agricultural labour. The share of rural women working in agriculture and manufacturing sectors, self-employed and as domestic help increased during the period (Klasen&Pieters,2012).

On the other hand, in the urban areas of these states, more literate women were employed as main workers; illiteracy was high among marginal workers like other states. Political unrest is one of the reasons for low work participation among tribal women because of the frequent disruptions to their routines as well as the consequential limited mobility. Often, work participation declines due to the high migration rates.

Tribal women play a significant role in economic development because of their contribution to various economic activities. Education is a fundamental need for a society's development. Lack of education is largely responsible for the exploitation and present plight of the tribal. In spite of various policies for the upliftment of the tribal, it is a very hard reality that the tribal women still are lagging behind in many aspects and they are still facing so many challenges (Chatterjee,2014). Although the literacy rate of tribal has shown an increasing trend, it remains below the national literacy rate (Awais,2009). Tribal women are mostly engaged in low-paying work. This is a problem. It is necessary to provide skills and training to the women, which will help them access better-paying opportunities. Promoting Self-help groups of tribal women will also help accelerate their development.

⁴National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005), it is an [Indian labour law](#) and [social security](#) measure that aims to guarantee the '[right to work](#)'. It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Results of the analysis in this study show that workforce participation rates among tribal main workers are declining. At the same time, marginal work participation is increasing. It is also observed the percentage of literate females among marginal workers is increasing. Participation rates according to education as a determining factor reveal the distress-driven nature of the employment of tribal women. The female literacy rates have increased in the north-east, and it has had a productive impact on the ideological, political and social spheres. The changes are the result of education and training. It is presumed that such initiatives will further increase the women's mobility and control over labour, production and income, as well as empowering them politically. They will also have greater influence in decision-making, particularly for the development of the region (Pegu, 2015). On the other hand, tribal women in states like Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha continue to live in deprived conditions. Literacy levels in this segment are still low. There is a higher proportion of illiterate women in the main workforce. To upgrade the status of the tribal woman of these states the focus has to be on the tribal and non-tribal women both. The present participation rates reveal the lack of adequate employment opportunities, and of suitable policies for the tribal population in rural areas. Presently, only limited numbers of the tribal women benefit from the various policies and schemes.

VI. LIMITATIONS

This accuracy of results and findings depends on the reliability of Census data. It must be mentioned here that between the census periods, the boundaries of a few states (Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh) were changed. There is a way to make a state by clubbing the districts of the parent one from where the sub-state was created. However, the district wise data of 1991 census for the tribal workers were not available.

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