

## Demographic Dynamics of Indigenous People in India

India has the second largest concentration of indigenous population in the world. Objective of this paper is to outline the demographic scenario of this vulnerable group of people by using data from Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001. For the present study, in order to have a better understanding of the demographic situation of the tribal communities, the state and territories are grouped into seven regions. There are 577 tribes in India located in five major tribal belts across the country. Indian tribes constitute about 8.2 percent of national population and mostly they inhabited in the central belt in the middle and in the north eastern part of India. The study reaffirmed that illiteracy, higher level of dependency and poor access to outer world makes the tribal population socially vulnerable. Nevertheless, sex ratio and work participation rate especially for women is quite high in the indigenous people of India.

### **Introduction**

The term “tribe” originated around the time of the Greek city- states and the early formation of the Roman Empire. The Latin term, “tribus” has since been transformed to mean “a group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1993, p.339, as cited in Fried, 1975, p.7). The range of meanings however, has grown ever further over the intervening years, for example, “ any of various systems of social organization comprising several local villages, bands, districts, lineages, or other groups and sharing a common ancestry, language, culture and name” (Morris, 1980, p.1369). Morris (1980) also notes that a tribe is a: “group of persons with a common occupation, interest, or habit” and “a large family”. Today the range of groups referred to as tribal is truly enormous. According to Fried (1975, p.44) tribes “are the product of specific political and economic pressures emanating from an already existing State- organized societies”. Tribes are the people with special attachments to land, kinship ties, a unique culture, certain religious beliefs, particular activities or material possessions that differentiated and separated them from the mainstream. The tribes are in subordinate roles for they had less political power and less access to resources, technology and other forms of power.

The origin of India’s Indigenous People or (officially called Scheduled Tribe in India) has been traced to such races as the Proto-Australoids who one time practically covered the whole India, secondly, the Mongolians who are still located mostly in Assam, and finally to a limited extent, also to the Negritos Strain as indicated by frizzy hair, among the Andamanes and the Kadars of the South-West India (Memoria, 1957).

In technical terms Article 342 of the Indian Constitution relates to a special provision in respect of

“Scheduled Tribes” which are defined as the “tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribal communities which the President of India may specify by public notification”. The tribal groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the national population. The term “Adivasis” (Adi-original; Vasi- inhabitants) has recently become current to designate these groups. The tribal are: hunters, forestland, cultivators and minor forest product collectors, lived in isolation with near to nature hence, called son of soil. Though tribes in India have been divided and sub-divided into a large number of sub tribes, all mutually inclusive and the common features of all these tribes are (Memoria, 1957):

- They live away from the inaccessible parts lying in forest and hills
- They speak the same tribal dialect.
- Profess primitive religion known as “Animism” in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element.
- Follow primitive occupations such as gleaning hunting and gathering of forests produce.
- Some of them have nomadic habits and many love for drink and dance.

### **Need for the study:**

A glaringly negligible number of studies have been made on tribal societies. Among the various reasons for this gap the following could be mentioned as the important ones: The tribal societies have remained isolated from the main social currents of Indian society. This has seriously affected the proper and healthy process of communication between these two sections of Indian society. Tribal constitute about eight percent of India’s population which is very significant proportion. After sixty years of independence, Scheduled Tribes (ST) are still at the low ebb of society and the fact that most of the tribal people have been living in isolation from rest of the country and, therefore, the sense of identification with the country as a whole is weaker. The tribal population is, therefore, often apathetic at best and hostile at the worst (Memoria, 1957). A reasonably good number of studies in population dynamics have been carried out among the urban and rural segments of the Indian population but the time has come to understand the tribal urges and aspirations within the context of regional milieu.

### **Objectives**

- To study the trend in growth rate in Scheduled Tribes population in India in the past three decades.
- To study the changes in the socio-economic characteristics of Scheduled Tribes such as age composition, sex ratio, literacy rate and work- participation rate etc.

## Sources of data for study

The basic data for the present study has been taken from the Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001.

## Methodology

For the present study, in order to have a better understanding of the demographic situation of the tribal communities, the state and territories are grouped into seven regions.

North-Eastern	Eastern	Northern	Central	Western	Southern	Island
Arunachal Pradesh	West Bengal	Himachal Pradesh	Madhya Pradesh	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	Andhra Pradesh	Andaman & Nicobar Islands
Manipur	Orissa	J&K		Maharashtra	Kerala	
Meghalaya	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh			Tamil Nadu	
Nagland				Rajasthan		
Tripura				Goa	Karnataka	Lakshadweep
Assam				Daman & Diu		
Sikkim				Gujarat		
Mizoram						

In 2000, Govt. of India made three new States from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar and their name are Uttranchal, Chattisgadh and Jharkhand .I have not taken it separately and calculated as a State before 2000.

### \* Measure used in analysis:

1. Exponential growth rate :

$$P_t = P_0 * e^{rt}$$

r: growth rate

P<sub>0</sub>: population at the base year

P<sub>t</sub>: population at time t.

2. Sex ratio is defined as the number of female per 1000 male.

$$\text{Sex ratio} = (\text{Female/Male}) * 1000$$

3. Ratio of the population aged 60 years and above to the population aged 14 years and below, which defined “ageing index” and

$$\text{Ageing index} = (P_{60+}/P_{0-14}) * 100.$$

4. Dependency ratio is ratio of population aged 14 years and below and aged 60 and above to population in age group 15 to 59.

$$\text{Dependency Ratio} = (P_{0-14} + P_{60+} / P_{15-59}) * 100$$

### **Distribution and Composition**

Indian tribes constitute around 8.2 percent of nation's total population, nearly 84.3 million people according to 2001 census. The concentration of tribal population stretch's along the Himalayas from Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in the West, to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizorum, Manipur and Nagaland in the Northeast. Another concentration is found in the hilly areas of Central India- Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and to a lesser extent Andhra Pradesh, which is bounded by the Narmada River in the North and the Godavari River in the Southeast. The tribal people generally occupy the slopes of the mountains. The tribal also inhabit the tract extending from the western coast of Gujarat and Maharastra passing through central India up to the north-eastern region. Most of the concentration, around 87 percent of the country's total tribe population is found in the central belt of the country comprising Gujarat, Maharastra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal.

The largest tribal population is found in Madhya Pradesh. A little less than one fourth of the total scheduled tribe population resides in Madhya Pradesh. The extent, to which a state's population is tribal, varies considerably. The tribes in Lakshadweep and Mizorum constitute more than ninety percent. In Northeastern states of Meghalaya, Nagaland more than eighty percent of the total population are tribal followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Dadra And Nagar Haveli with nearly two-third of the population, between twenty and thirty five percent in Assam, Manipur, Sikkim, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Nearly ten percent in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharastra, Assam, and Andaman and Nicobar Island; nearly six percent or less in Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal. And one or less than one percent in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Goa and Daman and Diu.

Scheduled Tribes have been enumerated in twenty five out of the thirty States and Union Territories being analyzed. Among these twenty five states and UT's the proportion of ST population declined in twelve, increased in twelve and remained same in one. The sharpest decline is noticed in Arunachal Pradesh where the proportion has declined from 65.8 percent in 1981 to 63.7 percent in 1991. Out of the 12 States and UTs where the proportion of ST population has increased by more than one

percentage point are Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. In the remaining states and Union Territories having ST population, the proportion increased marginally during 1981-1991. Almost similar trend has been found in the 1991-2001 period. Proportion of Scheduled Tribes population increased in twelve states and declined in thirteen states and UTs and remained same in one out of total twenty six States and UTs where Scheduled Tribes has been enumerated.

## **Finding and Discussion**

The percent of tribe's population in total population of India is showing increasing trend. The tribal in the census are enumerated according to the list of Scheduled Tribes. This list is not a fixed datum, having been revised/supplemented/amended from time to time. The trend of population growth suggests that in last two intercensal period the decadal growth rate of Scheduled tribe is higher than total population and non- Scheduled Tribe .But it is showing the declining trend. The trend of growth of ST and non-ST in the states and Union Territories presents a mixed pattern. All the 27 States and Union Territories are divided in to the seven groups. The North-Eastern group where the highest decadal growth has been recorded by ST population and ST in the Eastern and Northern region are showing lowest growth rate in ST and also in comparison of non-ST during 1981-1991 & 1991-2001. In Island region i.e. Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep growth rate of non-Scheduled Tribal (NST) is more than double of ST growth rate.

During 1991-2001, at the national level decadal growth rate of ST population is higher than in the non-ST population. In this decade the highest decadal growth of ST population is in Southern region. And the major contributor is Karnataka. In Karnataka growth rate of ST is 80.82 percent which obviously can not be explained by natural growth or migration. Except Southern, other regions decadal growth rates are showing declining trend. Very surprising the growth rate of non-ST in Island region is very high than ST growth rate. Between two periods, growth rate for both non-ST and ST almost declining, and there is sharp decline in Island and North-Eastern region. In 1981, in all the States and UT's the Scheduled Tribes or group of tribes notified together comes to 557. In 1991 it increased to 573 and in 2001, the total ST notified is 577. As a matter of fact, the total number should not be taken as the total number of tribes as a tribe might have been notified in different states and UT's as a tribe more than one. For instance Bhil has been notified as a Scheduled Tribe in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Tripura. Thus in the total of 573, Bhil has been added seven times, once in each of the seven states. Hence the table does not reflect the real number of tribes

in the country. No tribe has been scheduled in the states of Haryana, Punjab and the UT of Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry. The highest proportion of ST in the total population of region has been found in North-Eastern region. Where more than 52 percent of population belongs to ST (excluded Assam population). Even if we include Assam population, ST proportion is highest in North-Eastern region. It is followed by Central region and Island. In Northern region lowest proportion of ST is found in total population of the region, and it is around 0.4 percent. In 1981, the largest concentration of ST population was in the Western region and it was about 28.85 percent of total ST population of India. After that Eastern region has 28.66 percent of total ST population. Central region has third largest concentration of ST population. Similar trend has been found in the last two decades. At India level in 1981; only 6.2 percent Scheduled Tribes population was in urban area which increased to 7.56 percent in 1991 and up to 8.48 percent in 2001. The growth rate of urbanization is very slow for ST population. In region wise, Island has highest urban ST population followed by Northern-Eastern region. Again Northern region has least urban ST population. As compared to the general population, there appears to be more even distribution of males and females among the scheduled Tribes. In India, the sex ratio (female per 1000 males) of the population is favorable to males; the census further reveals that the sex composition among the tribal is relatively more balanced than that of that non-ST population. This suggest that female in the tribal society are not neglected; the social and cultural values protect their interest.

During 1981-2001 within the country, the regional sex ratio of the tribal population varies widely. It is closed to balanced composition in the North-Eastern, Eastern and Central regions and relatively low in the Northern region. Exceptionally sex ratio of non-ST is higher than ST in Southern region. Otherwise in remaining six regions sex ratio of non-ST is always less than ST population. The tribal population's structure is relatively younger than that of the non-ST population.

As expected, the level of literacy among tribal has always been a matter of concern. Literacy in case of Scheduled Tribes is quite low in comparison to the total population and especially so among the tribal females. Literacy among the tribal of the North-Eastern and Island regions is relatively higher than in other regions. And in the Eastern and Central it is as low as 10 percent in 1981. Highest literacy among female ST is in the Island and North-Eastern region, which is almost equal to non-ST female literacy rate. In Island and North-Eastern, literacy rate of ST is almost equal to non-ST. In terms of work participation rate there is strong evidence that work participation is higher among Scheduled tribes than among the non-ST. The percentage of female worker in case of Scheduled tribe is higher

than among their counterparts in case of general population. In India's total work force Scheduled Tribe Contribution is around 11 percent.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the data on trend and decadal growth rate of Scheduled Tribes population shows that their proportion is increasing at a steady rate and admittedly decadal growth is higher than the general population. At the same time decadal growth rate of Scheduled Tribe is showing a declining trend. Region wise decadal growth is also declining in case of Scheduled Tribe, only Southern region is showing increasing trend. During last years total numbers of tribal groups have been increasing marginally. Region wise distribution of Scheduled Tribe population is almost same in last two decades and dominated by Western, Eastern and Central region. Seven Indian states account for more than seventy five percent of the tribal population. The main concentration of tribal people is the central belt in the middle part of India and in the north-eastern States. The predominately tribal-populated states of the country (tribal population more than fifty percent of the total population) are: Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep. The prominent tribal areas constitute about fifteen percent of the total geographical area of the country and correspond largely to under developed areas of the country (IDSP 2003). Tribal communities of India, though very close knit society, cannot be clubbed together as one homogeneous group.

Percentage of Scheduled Tribe living in urban areas is still very low in comparison of non-ST. Sex composition among the Scheduled Tribe has shown almost a balance picture among ST and we can infer that they are not biased in sex preference. The age structure of tribal population compared to non-ST population is relatively younger. Literacy among tribes in general has improved slightly over time. A marked improvement is noticed in North-Eastern and Island regions. But Central region and some states of other region are still lagging. Females are more disadvantageous in case of literacy in Scheduled Tribe in most of the regions. A larger proportion of the ST population goes for work and hence relatively higher work participation rate in general and particularly higher among females has observed compared to the non-ST female population.

### **Notes:**

- 1. ST: Scheduled Tribe**
- 2. NST: Non Scheduled Tribe**
- 3. TP: Total Population**
- 4. GR: Growth Rate**
- 5. Govt. of India is using Scheduled Tribe term for Indigenous People of India.**

## References

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**Table 1: Percent of Scheduled Tribe population and decadal Growth Rate of Schedules Tribes & non Scheduled Tribes & Total population India 1981-2001**

	% of ST in TP	GR of ST	GR of NST
<b>1981</b>	<b>7.76</b>		
<b>1991</b>	<b>8.08</b>	<b>22.40</b>	<b>20.79</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>8.20</b>	<b>20.42</b>	<b>19.00</b>

Notes: In Assam Census has not held in 1981 and in Jammu & Kashmir Census not held in 1991. They had been excluded in calculation of growth rate.

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST.

**Table 2: Decadal growth rate of Total Population, Scheduled Tribes & Non-ST population by region, India**

Region	1981-1991		1991-2001	
	ST	NST	ST	NST
<b>North Eastern</b>	<b>36.96</b>	<b>21.68</b>	<b>23.52</b>	<b>18.04</b>
<b>Eastern</b>	<b>16.21</b>	<b>21.01</b>	<b>15.26</b>	<b>19.85</b>
<b>Northern</b>	<b>16.01</b>	<b>22.13</b>	<b>18.06</b>	<b>22.11</b>
<b>Central</b>	<b>24.55</b>	<b>22.93</b>	<b>19.82</b>	<b>20.08</b>
<b>Western</b>	<b>24.25</b>	<b>21.74</b>	<b>19.63</b>	<b>21.46</b>
<b>Southern</b>	<b>18.87</b>	<b>17.30</b>	<b>29.83</b>	<b>11.86</b>
<b>Island</b>	<b>21.59</b>	<b>41.30</b>	<b>14.38</b>	<b>24.35</b>

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 & 2001

**Table 3: Number of Tribes in India 1981-2001**

	1981	1991	2001
<b>India</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>577</b>
Assam	14	14	14
Manipur	29	29	29
Meghalaya	14	17	17
Nagland	5	5	5
Tripura	19	19	19
Arunchal Pradesh	12	12	12
Sikkim	2	2	2
Mizoram	14	14	14
Bihar	30	30	30
Orissa	62	62	62
West Bengal	38	38	38
Himachal Pradesh	8	8	8
J&K		8	12
Uttar Pradesh	5	5	5
Madhya Pradesh	46	46	46
Gujarat	29	29	29
Maharashtra	47	47	47
Rajasthan	12	12	12
Dadra & nagar Haveli	7	7	7
Goa	5	5	5
Daman & Diu		5	5
Andhra Pradesh	33	33	33
Kerala	35	35	35
Karnataka	49	49	49
Tamil Nadu	36	36	36
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	6	6	6
Lakshadweep			

**Notes** Inhabitants of Lakshadweep who and both of whose parents, were born in Lakshadweep have been treated as Scheduled Tribes

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST.

**Table 4: Percent of Scheduled Tribes in Urban Areas, 1981-2001**

	1981	1991	2001
Region	% ST in Urban	%ST in Urban	%ST in Urban
India	6.2	7.56	8.48
North-Eastern	10.33	13.73	15.62
Eastern	5.07	5.85	6.59
Northern	3.28	4.40	5.08
Central	3.62	4.85	6.04
Western	7.51	8.76	9.00
Southern	3.62	4.85	6.04
Island	28.52	36.28	30.10

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST

**Table 5: Percentage of Scheduled Tribes in Regions Total Population, India, 1981-2001**

Region	1981	1991	2001
North Eastern	52.31	56.18	58.05
Eastern	9.81	9.38	8.99
Northern	0.37	0.35	0.34
Central	22.97	23.27	23.21
Western	11.26	11.52	11.33
Southern	3.51	3.57	4.26
Island	26.25	22.55	20.82

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST.

**Table 6: Percentage distribution of Scheduled Tribes Region wise, India, 1981-2001**

Region	1981	1991	2001
North Eastern	7.12	8.26	8.83
Eastern	28.66	26.91	25.18
Northern	0.83	0.78	2.12
Central	23.22	23.73	23.27
Western	28.85	29.40	28.77
Southern	11.20	10.80	11.73
Island	0.12	0.12	0.11
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST Table

**Table 7: Percent of Scheduled Tribes in State's Total Population, India 1981- 2001**

<b>North Eastern Region</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>
Assam		12.82	12.41
Manipur	27.30	34.41	32.31
Meghalaya	80.58	85.53	85.94
Nagaland	83.99	87.70	89.15
Tripura	28.44	30.95	31.05
Arunachal Pradesh	69.82	63.66	64.22
Sikkim	23.27	22.36	20.60
Mizorum	93.55	94.75	94.46
<b>Eastern</b>			
Bihar	8.31	7.66	7.14
Orissa	22.43	22.21	22.13
West Bengal	5.63	5.59	5.50
<b>Northern</b>			
Himachal Pradesh	4.61	4.22	4.02
Uttar Pradesh	0.21	0.21	0.21
<b>Central</b>			
Madhya Pradesh	22.97	23.27	23.21
<b>Western</b>			
Gujarat	14.22	14.92	14.76
Maharashtra	9.19	9.27	8.85
Rajasthan	12.21	12.44	12.56
Dadra & NH	78.82	78.99	62.24
Goa	0.99	0.03	8.85
Daman&Diu		11.54	0.04
<b>Southern</b>			
Andhra Pradesh	5.93	6.31	6.59
Kerala	1.03	1.10	1.14
Karnataka	4.91	4.26	6.55
Tamil Nadu	1.07	1.03	1.04
<b>Island</b>			
Andaman & Nicobar	11.85	9.54	8.27
Lakshadweep	93.82	93.15	94.51

**Table 8: Sex Ratio among ST& NST, Region wise, India, and 1981-2001**

Region	ST			Non-ST		
	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001
North Eastern	982	971	975	872	909	923
Eastern	996	982	990	933	917	930
Northern	944	942	929	888	882	902
Central	997	985	988	925	916	922
Western	967	957	965	930	924	916
Southern	967	962	974	982	980	989
Island	974	977	984	738	799	830

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST.

**Table 9: Age Distribution of ST and NST, India, 1981 and 2001**

Age group	1981		2001	
	ST	NST	ST	NST
0-14	41.25	39.45	39.52	35.08
15-59	53.15	53.98	54.38	57.33
60+	5.60	6.57	6.10	7.59
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001, Social and Cultural Table

**Table 10: Dependency ratio of ST and non-ST, India, 1981 and 2001**

Dependency ratio	1981		2001	
	ST	NST	ST	NST
	88.25	85.25	83.89	74.43

**Table 11: Ageing index**

Year	1981		2001	
	ST	NST	ST	NST
Total	13.57	16.65	15.43	21.64
Male	13.04	16.49	14.28	20.49
Female	14.13	16.82	16.63	22.90

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001, Social and Cultural Table

**Table 12: Literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes & Non Scheduled Tribes 1981-2001**

Region	1981		1991		2001	
	ST	NST	ST	NST	ST	NST
North Eastern	34.07	45.35	41.15	44.86	53.02	54.78
Eastern	14.99	34.89	20.28	40.55	32.40	50.02
Northern	22.97	27.74	32.85	33.84	37.36	46.21
Central	10.68	33.00	16.88	41.09	35.98	57.73
Western	18.52	43.22	25.41	49.91	40.16	62.11
Southern	13.93	44.14	20.29	50.71	35.62	62.20
Island	44.94	54.76	58.68	59.78	67.77	72.42

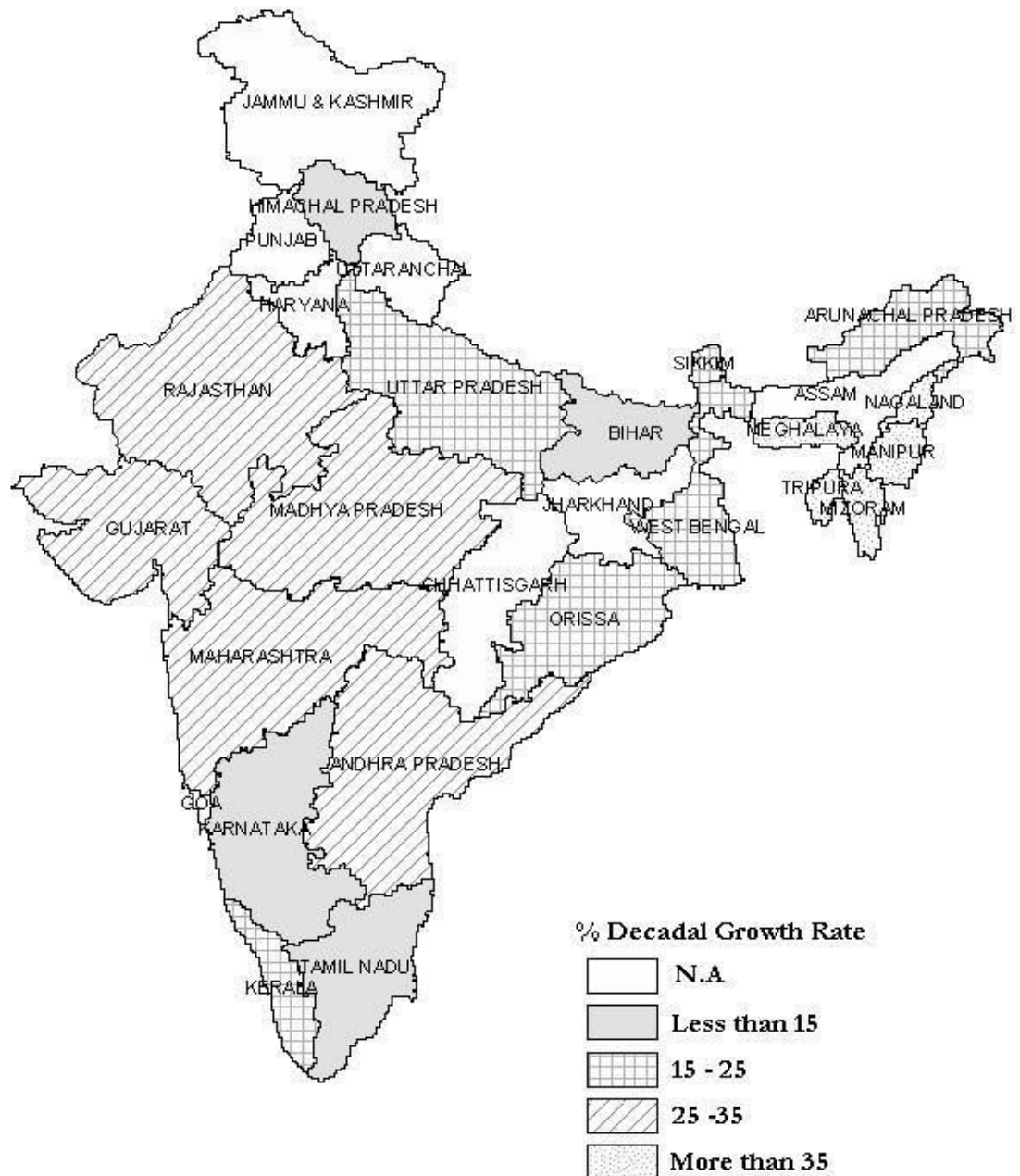
Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST.

**Table 13: Work Participation Rate of ST& Non ST, Region wise, India, 1981-2001**

Region	1981		1991		2001	
	ST	NST	ST	NST	ST	NST
North Eastern	46.92	37.25	42.33	35.48	43.73	35.41
Eastern	47.50	30.92	47.59	31.58	47.86	34.90
Northern	44.96	31.10	46.06	32.54	44.75	33.35
Central	53.35	39.81	52.67	39.84	51.50	41.30
Western	49.62	38.34	50.41	39.94	49.71	41.28
Southern	51.19	40.60	51.81	41.47	52.00	42.87
Island	29.16	36.65	29.45	35.15	31.05	37.78

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991 and 2001 Series-1 India Part 2 B – (iii) PCA ST

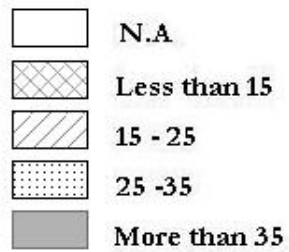
### Decadal Growth Rate Among Scheduled Tribes in India (1981 - 91)



### Decadal Growth Rate Among Scheduled Tribes in India (1991 - 2001)



#### % Decadal Growth Rate





## Age- Sex Structure of ST and NST in 2001, India and Region wise

