

Research Paper -Geography

AN APPRAISAL OF TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL SEX RATIOS IN DHULE AND NANDURBAR DISTRICTS (MAHARASHTRA)

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ABSTRACT

Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1000 males. It is one of the important social indices to measure the prevailing inequality between males and females and regional imbalances in the status of women. The present paper based on the 1981, 1991 and 2001 census data, intends to examine the changing sex ratio in tribal population in comparison to non-tribal population in Dhule and Nandurbar districts of Maharashtra. It is found that the average sex ratio in the study area was 994 in 1981 which has increased to 995 in 1991 and 997 in 2001. It ranges from a maximum of 1013 in Akkalkuwa tahsil and minimum of 965 Shirpur tahsil in 1981 but in 1991 Nandurbar tahsil was identified with highest sex ratio (1015) and Dhule tahsil with lowest (897). In 2001 the maximum in Akkalkuwa tahsil (1021) and minimum sex ratio was found in Dhule tahsil (936). It is found that the sex ratio among the non-tribals is comparatively lower than the tribals. It is because of the fact that the feeling of having male issue is mainly confined to the non-tribal population, but the tribals don't find any difference between male and female child. The low tribal sex ratio in some talukas or districts is not because of getting rid of female child after having done sex determination, but in case of non-tribals, who are much advanced but in terms of feeling for the girl child lagging much behind as compared to the tribals. This sort of investigation can further bring grass-root realities at micro-level and with that solution for improvement of sex ratios in the lagging areas can be explicitly determined.

INTRODUCTION

Sex ratio is one of the important indices to comprehend women's health and position in any society. India has distinction along with China and a few South Asian countries having a deficit of females since long and still this ratio is in favour of men and the proportion of women has continuously been declining. This is largely interpreted as the symptom of low status of women in the country. Sex ratio is one of the significant demographic development indices, which can determine the status of women in a region or country.

It is associated with various socio-economic, cultural, biological and circumstantial factors. It becomes therefore, essential to insight into the spatio-temporal patterns of sex ratio to identify the pockets with very low sex ratio or otherwise to comprehend the hidden realities associated with geographical social, cultural or some other reasons and to find out the concrete solution to have a balanced sex ratio. It is intended here to appraise the sex ratio status of tribal population in comparison to the non-tribal population in a socio-cultural and geographical set up especially in Dhule- Nandurbar districts with substantial tribal population.

The tribal people distinct by their own cultural, traditions and occupation and are scattered all over the world. The scheduled tribes form the most socially and

economically backward sections of Indian society, illiterate, underdeveloped, primitive and predominantly concentrated in thick forested and hilly areas, which hampered interaction with outside world. The tribals are the economically backward ethnic group in India. They are food gatherers, hunters, forestland cultivators, and minor forest product collectors. They lived in isolation with near to nature hence, called son of soil. Tribes constituted separate socio-cultural groups having distinct customs, tradition, marriage, kinship, property inheritance system and living largely in agricultural and pre-agricultural level of technology (Nagada, 2004). India is a home of number of tribes there are over 314 communities. Tribal society is defined as a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying a common territory. The word 'tribe' means a group of families, living in a contiguous region, speaking a common language and having a historical past.

Sex ratio is a very significant attribute of population. Apart from its impact on fertility, it also determines the socio-economic pulse of people. Banerjee (1977) studied sex ratio and its correlates in the tribal district of Singhbhum in South Bihar. The sex ratio in the area has been strongly influenced by pattern of migration. It was also noticed that the gradual decline in sex ratio is also attributed to higher female mortality. Ayyar and Srivastava (1978) observed that sex ratio was inversely correlated with size of urban centers and also with proportion of scheduled castes. Chandna and Sidhu (1979) focus primarily on determinants of sex ratio i.e. sex ratio at birth, male, female differential in mortality and migration besides, factors like wars, famines and status of women also make notable impact on sex ratio. Pendnekar and Sita (1980) analyzed spatial patterns of sex ratio in South Kokan (Maharashtra) during 1951-71. Singh (1980) analyzed population growth, sex ratio and age structure of five cities of West Bengal: a case study. Siddiqui (1982) made a study of regional aspects of sex ratio in Uttar Pradesh. The analysis reveals that socio-economic structure and urbanization emerge as the most important variables responsible for characteristic pattern of sex ratio in the state. Mishra and Navaneethan (1991) studied decline in sex ratio: an alternative explanation revisited. Raju and Premi (1992) studied decline in sex ratio alternative explanation re-examined. Prasad (1994) examined a study of the declining sex ratio in Andhra Pradesh. Srinivasan (1994) analyzed sex ratio what they hide and what they reveals. Premi (2001) studied the missing girl child. James (2004) examined a note on the sex ratio from 2001 census result in Andhra Pradesh. Kumari and Rajyam (2004) analyzed census 2001: a critical analysis of sex ratio in India. These studies on various aspects of sex ratio explicitly explicated the need to make investigations thoroughly to understand in a better way.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective is to analyse tribal sex ratio in comparison to the non-tribal population in Dhule and Nandurbar districts.

STUDY AREA

Dhule and Nandurbar districts are undertaken as the area for the present study located on the northern tip of Maharashtra, which lies between 20°47' and 22°03' north latitude and 73°47' and 75°11' east longitude. The study area is highly concentrated with tribal population in the state. Dhule and Nandurbar formerly known as West Khandesh region. It is surrounded by Madhya Pradesh state to its north, Jalgaon district to its east, Nashik district to its south and Gujarat state to its west. It is very interesting to note that the boundaries of study area are natural, the river Narmada form the boundary in the western part of northern boarder, the south-west boundary runs along the Aneer river and it follows the Tapi river up to Mudvad and along the northern part of boundary Devomogra hill runs parallel behaves like a contour re-entrant crossing (Gazetteer of Dhule District, 1974). The Dhule district was bifurcated on 1st July 1998 into two separate districts now known as Dhule and Nandurbar where the tribal population is highly concentrated.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on the secondary source of data collected from 1981, 1991 and 2001 censuses reports. Sex ratio is measured in terms of number of females per thousand males. That is

$$\text{Sex Ratio} = \frac{\text{Female Population}}{\text{Male Population}} \times 1000$$

To make the comparative analysis the sex ratio of non-tribal population has also been computed. It can give better understanding regarding the issues pertaining to rise or fall in either of the sex ratios.

CHANGING TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL SEX RATIOS: A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE

Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1000 males. It is one of the important social indices to measure the prevailing inequality between males and females and regional imbalances in the status of women. Sex ratio is an index of the socio-economic conditions prevailing in an area and is a useful tool for regional analysis and development. It is observed that in 1981 sex ratio was 994 in the study area, which was higher than the state average (937) and the country (934) as well. Not only this, the sex ratio of non-tribal population (947) was less by 47 points than the tribal population in the study area. It is noticed that the sex ratio varied from a minimum of 965 in Shirpur tahsil to a maximum of 1013 in Akkalkuwa tahsil of the study area (Table 1). There were as many as five tahsils with above average (994). These are - Sakari, Akrani, Nawapur, Talode and Akkalkuwa tahsils and the remaining five tahsils viz. Nandurbar, Shahade, Sindhkhede, Dhule and Shirpur are identified with much below the average (994) in 1981. The maximum value of non-tribal sex ratio (966) and the minimum of tribal segment (965) are more or less the same. It is found that the tahsils in the northern and western parts are identified with sex ratio above 1000. These are such tahsils where their proportion was quite high. The average non-tribal sex ratio was 947 and it ranged from a minimum of 928 in Dhule tahsil to a maximum of Sindhkhede 966 in 1981. In 1991 the tribal sex ratio was 995 which has marginally augmented over 1981 (994), but in case of non-tribal it has gone down by 13 points from 947 in 1981 to 934 in 1991. The tahsils like Nawapur, Nandurbar, Talode, Akkalkuwa and Akrani are such where the tribal women have dominance over the males. Dhule tahsils is identified with lowest sex ratio (956) and Nandurbar with maximum (1015). The tribals

have shown improvement in sex ratio while the non-tribals' position is deteriorating. In 1991 the lowest sex ratio of non-tribal population was 873 and the maximum was 956, which is at par with the minimum sex ratio of the tribal population. Only 4 tahsils viz. Sindhkhede, Shirpur, Talode and Nandurbar having relatively higher sex ratio than its average value (934). But in all the tahsils the non-tribal sex ratio is far less than the balanced one. The 2001 census has also vindicated the improvement in the sex ratio (997), over 1981 (994) and 1991 (995) and during this period, it has remained mostly balanced one in comparison to the non-tribal which has slashed by 17 points from 947 to 930. It is further investigated that the tribal sex ratio in 2001 was above average (997) in as many as seven tahsils viz. Shahade (998), Akrani (1013), Akkalkuwa (1021), Talode (1008), Nandurbar (1010), Nawapur (1006) and Sakri (1003). Hardly three tahsils viz. Dhule, Shirpur and Sindhkhede where this ratio was not only comparatively less, in fact, in favour of men. But as a whole, in 60 per cent tahsils, the ratio is in favour of tribal women for which socio-cultural factors are responsible. The tribals don't find the differential between the male and female issue, give equal importance to both the sexes. Among them also, this sort of feeling giving importance to the male child comes when they get exposed to modern cultural especially in the urban centres. As mentioned above, the sex ratio of non-tribals has dipped from 947 in 1981 to 930 in 2001 and no where in the study area of Dhule and Nandurbar districts the sex ratio was nearly equity, in fact far low. The proportion of missing girl child has been augmenting. The ban on sex determination in the state of Maharashtra has not so far shown positive results as the sex ratio has continuously been dipping. It is possible to determine the sex of the foetus after the twelfth week of pregnancy and despite of its ban, hiddenly and secretly, this business is going on. The termination of pregnancy is only permissible after 10 or before 20 weeks when the pregnancy poses a risk to the life of mother and doctor finds, with evidences, the foetus is malformed or the pregnancy is due to the contraceptive failure, otherwise not. It is very explicitly determined by the government that if any doctor caught for carrying out sex determination tests, action will not be taken against doctor only but also against the government health and police officials in charge of the district, if found negligent in enforcing the law. The frightening drop of 49 points in the child sex ratio of 0-6 age group from 976 in 1961, immediately after a year of formation of Maharashtra state to 927 in 2001, have had cumulative affect on the overall sex ratio. As per the provisional census 2011 results, it has further gone down by 13 points to 914. It clearly indicates the preference for male children over females is continued. Figures for tribal segment are not available, but the trends show that tribals have not been affected in Dhule and Nandurbar districts, barring some urban areas where they have migrated in search of better and regular wages.

TABLE 1
DHULE AND NANDURBAR DISTRICTS TALUKA WISE SEX-RATIO OF
TRIBAL AND NON- TRIBAL POPULATION, 1981-2001

Sr. No	Name of the Tahsils	Tribal Sex-Ratio 1981	Non-Tribal 1981	Tribal Sex-Ratio 1991	Non-Tribal 1991	Tribal Sex-Ratio 2001	Non-Tribal 2001
1	Dhule	966	928	956	922	936	924
2	Sakri	997	947	993	933	1003	939
3	Nawapur	1008	946	1006	930	1006	929
4	Nandurbar	990	952	1015	939	1010	938
5	Talode	1010	937	1014	954	1008	931
6	Akkalkuwa	1013	922	1010	873	1021	674
7	Akrani	1005	931	1003	929	1013	917
8	Shahade	988	957	984	933	998	938
9	Shirpur	965	970	969	951	969	943
10	Sindhkhede	979	966	985	956	949	950
	Total	994	947	995	934	997	930

Source: Census of India, 1981, 1991 and 2001.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the sex ratio, which is one of the indices of demographic development, has augmented in case of the tribal population, considered to be backward, but at the same time considering the period of 1981 to 2001, the same has declined for the non-tribal population indeed an advanced segment. For instance, the average sex ratio for the study area was 994 in 1981 which slightly enhanced in 1991 (995) and again it has risen to 997 in 2001. It is Dhule tahsil in Dhule district only where the tribal sex ratio has consecutively declined since 1981 to 2001, which seems to be the tribals here have got exposed to the urban culture and practicing the same culture of the non-tribals in which the preference to the male child is given over the female, otherwise, it is very minutely noticed that in the remaining nine tahsils out of ten, the sex ratio has gone up, if it is declined, that is only in four tahsils particularly during 1991 and 2001. It further evidences that there are only two tahsils: Sakri and Shahade in Dhule district, where the sex ratio has increased continuously from 1981 to 2001, but in Talode- it has increased from 1010 to 1014, but came down to 1008 in 2001. It is inferred that the tribal community being much left behind in terms of social and economic development having the feeling of equal treatment for male as well as female child but the non-tribal community, being much advanced socially, politically and economically having malice and discriminative attitude towards female child therefore, the female child is generally got rid off before its birth by identifying the sex of the child through sex determination machine. It is, therefore found that the women in tribal society have shown the positive growth but in case of non-tribal, the situation is disgusting and alarming one, needs to be improved. It is suggested that the tribal society particularly the girls need to be educated so that this backward segment of society can develop further demographically as well as socio-economically. It is intrinsically important that girls should be given opportunity like boys to get educated, economically independent that can give empowerment to her to take decisions on her own and enough capable to help her parents in difficult old age. Traditionally, since time immemorial giving or accepting dowry should be discontinued and attitude of this sort needs to be changed. It can raise the status of women which will help in bringing demographically healthy and balanced society.

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