

## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF TOTO TRIBE IN MADARIHAT BLOCK OF JALPAIGURI DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

Jayanta Das\*

### Abstract:

The objectives of the study are to determine the socio-economic status of Toto tribe and to suggest suitable remedies. The present study has been made to examine the rate of literacy and quality of education, occupational and employment pattern, size of landholding, level of income and expenditure with other socio-economic characteristics of Toto tribe. The existing literature on the socio-economic and living conditions of Totos provided several factors that are directly and indirectly responsible for the socio-economic backwardness, poverty and financial obligation in this Primitive Tribal Group (PTG). The main problem in the Toto tribe is that they are diminishing due to lack of population compared to other migrant population; consequently, they have become minority in their own land. The study focuses that this minor primitive tribal group needs much intensive development policy package for their socio-economic transmission.

**Keywords:** *Primitive Tribal Group (PTG), illiterate, socio-economic backwardness, policy package*

### Introduction:

A tribe is a group of people in a primitive stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in a culture. The general characteristic of the tribal population of India is their exclusive geographical habitat. The Toto is a primitive tribe who live more in isolation in inaccessible difficult terrain and maintains a life style which remains almost static through centuries. In general their population size is small with low growth rate in comparison to other. But it is a glooming fact that even after 65 years of independence; Toto tribe is overwhelmed with several socio-economic problems (Dhargupta, 2009).

There is a legend that a few people were engaged by Britisher, during the fight with Bhutan in 1865, as labourers to carry the baggage of tota (cartridge) and hence in due course this group of people as well known as Toto (Sarkar, 1993). Although they were previously known as Jepang → Jiten → Totvi → Tota → Toto (Dhaniram Toto, 2011). The Toto is an Indo-Bhutanees tribe belongs to Mongoloid racial group with flat nose, broad, and square cheeks, thick lips, small eyes and black iris. They are generally divided into 13 exogamous clans of families. About 70% of the families belong to five dominant clans, namely Dankobei, Dantrobei, Budubei, Boudubei and Bangabei and others are Dhiringchankobei, Nurinchankobei, Mantrochei, Manchincei, Nubebei, Rekanjibei Nischankobei, Digbei, Badanga and Jantrobei.

The Totos were the sole inhabitants of Totopara in 1901 (Das, 1999). But traditional locality of Totopara has been grossly encroached by the Nepali populations who have grabbed the maximum land of the area. The limited land resources and scanty avenues for employment of the local people create an imbalance in their economic life. Moreover, this area remains cut off from the outside world for nearly three months due to flood of two rivers namely Torsa and Howdi, covering three sides of the locality. The remaining side is in the hill top which falls under Bhutan. Many tributaries such as Dungti, Datingti, Dipti, Chuati Nitingi, Japti, Goyati, Namsiti, Kitingti, Udingsi, Meremati etc. isolate the Totopara.

It is observed that, this minor primitive tribe faces many socio-economic problems from the beginning. During the British regimes, the British Government did not pay much attention on the Toto. After Indian independence, number of policies and programmes were initiated (Rao & Rao, 2010). But the Governmental and NGOs endeavours for their betterment have failed. In addition, socio-economic related studies were limited and available studies are isolated, fragmentary and maximum works on cultural aspect. Hence the present study is undertaken to determine the socio-economic status of Toto.

### Area of Study:

The entire study area falls in Totopara village under J.L. No. 33 which lies on the western bank of Torsa River. It comprises an area of 1991.39 acres. It is an elongated and stretching from North to South, covering a length of about 4 km. Maximum distance from East to West like Tripezoid in shape. Totopara mouza is divided into six hamlets, like Panchayetgaon, Subbagaon, Mandolgaon, Mitragaon, Pujagaon and Dhumchigaon. Totopara is located at the foot of the Himalaya just to the south of the borderline between Bhutan and West Bengal in the Madarihat Block, Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, India.

---

\*Research Scholar, Department of Geography and Applied Geography, University of North Bengal

**Database and Methodology:**

Data for this study has been based on both primary and secondary sources. Information relating to the socio economic condition of the selected Toto household is collected with the help of questionnaire method. The sample size is 90, collected from six hamlets. The Random sampling design without replacement has been adopted for household survey. The collected data has been compiled and analysed using standard statistical and cartographic techniques. To assess the socioeconomic condition of the Toto seven important socio-demographic and economic variables are taken into account. Among them three variables are social indicators such as literacy levels of the households, family size and the health status. Similarly to measure the economic condition of the households, the work participation rates of the family members of the households, size of the operational land holding of the households, the average annual income of the household, the extent of consumption expenditure made by the household on alcohols, ceremonies and functions are taken into account. The following statistics are used-

$$Mean(\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum fm}{N}$$

Where,  
f= frequency  
m = mid value  
n=number

$$S.E. of Mean = \frac{Sd}{\sqrt{n}}$$

Where,  
Sd= Standard Deviation  
n = number

$$C.V = \frac{Sd}{\bar{x}} \times 100$$

Where,  
Sd = Standard Deviation

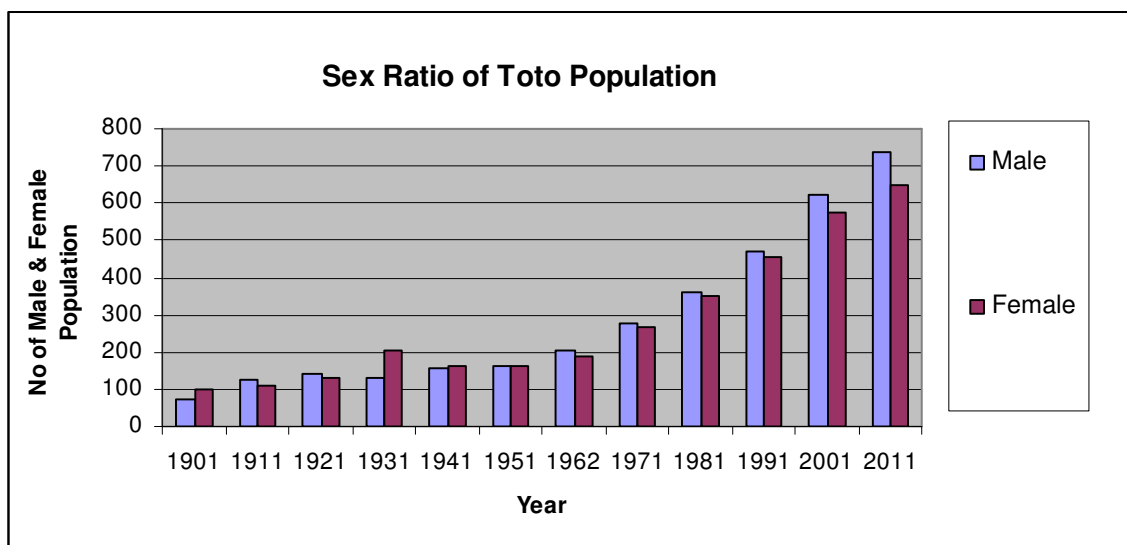
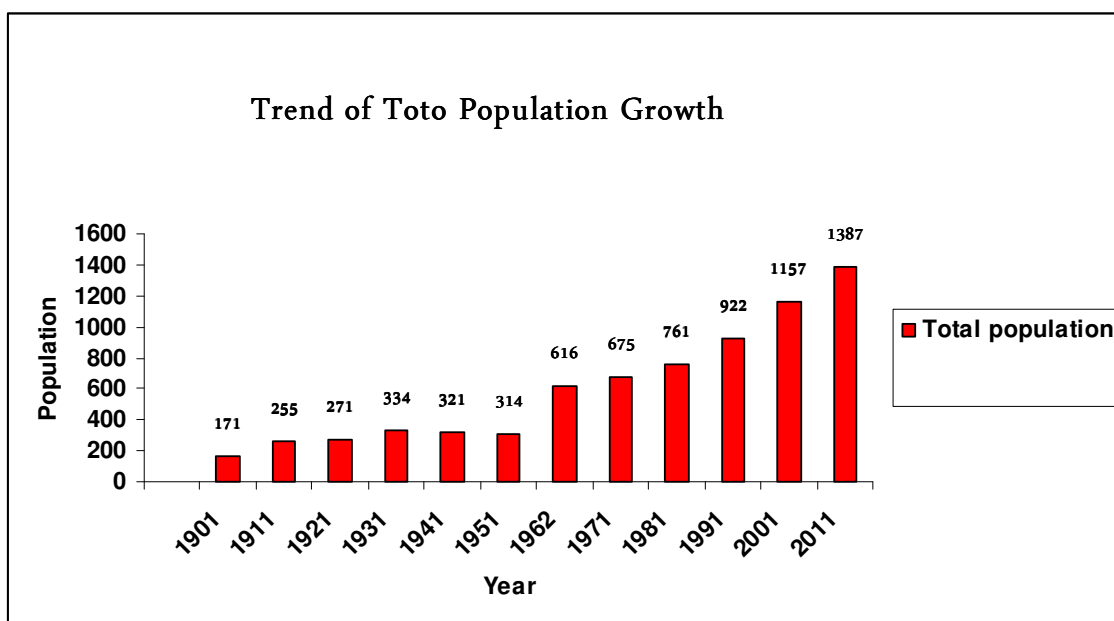
**Result and Discussion:****Demographic Circumstance:**

Totos were nearly becoming extinct in the 1950s, but recent measure to safeguard their areas from being swamped with outsiders have helped to preserve their unique heritage and also helped the population growth. After 1951, the Totos have been coming more and more in contact with the outside world and undergoing a process of cultural and development changes. (Sinha & Pal, 1983). At present the population shows a trend toward increase. The Totos were the sole inhabitants of Totopara in 1901 (Das, 1999). But in 2011 they shared only 23.46% of the total population of Totopara. Besides the Toto, twenty six other communities live in Totopara. They belong to thirteen Nepali speaking castes namely Tamang, Mangar, Rai, Chhetri, Gurung, Kami, Sanyasi Damai, Limbu, Ghate, Newar, and sarki; five Hindi speaking groups namely Sunri, Sunwar, Marwari, Chamar and Muslim ; two Bengali speaking caste Goala and Rajbanshi and six other tribal communities namely Garo, Oraon, Mech, Sherpa, Lepcha and Rava. The main problem of the Toto tribe lies in the demographic imbalance in the locality with the influx of migrant population. This has changed the man-land ratio which is ultimately putting pressure on this small agrarian community of the Toto (Das, 1999). Another problem is that the sex ratio is being decreasing. In 1901, sex ratio was 1375 female/1000 male, then in 1931, sex ratio was 1569 female/1000 male, whereas in 1961 sex ratio was 917 female/1000 male, now(2011) sex ratio is 882 female/1000 male which reveals high mortality rate among women due to negligence of girl child.

**Table-1 Demography profile**

Year and Source	Population		Total population	Sex Ratio(Female/1000 Male)	Decadal Growth Rate
	Male	Female			
1901(Census)	72	99	171	1375	
1911(Census)	125	110	255	880	49.12
1921(Census)	140	131	271	936	6.27
1931(Census)	130	204	334	1569	23.25
1941(Census)	159	162	321	1019	-3.89
1951(Census)	161	160	314	994	-2.18
1962(I.S.I.)	206	189	616	917	96.18
1971(Census)*	275	269	675	978	9.58
1981(Census)	362	350	761	967	12.74
1991(Census)	470	457	922	972	21.16
2001(Census)	620	575	1157	927	25.49
2011(Census)	737	650	1387	882	19.88

\*I.S.I. Indian Statistical Institution



**Family Size:**

The average family size of Toto population is 5.16. Small size families are consist of less than 3 Nos. of member representing only 28.89 %. The highest percentage 45.56 is observed with 4 to5 family members. There is a tendency of becoming larger family units in this population. About 14.44 % of family constitute of 6-7 members. Only 11.11 % families have more than 8 persons who are classified under very large type. Standard error of mean in this case is 0.11 and co-efficient of variation is 20.16. The Totos generally prefer simple families. About 63.33 % families belong to nuclear type where as 36.67 % families have joint kitchen.

Table-2. Family size of Toto population

Family size in persons				No. of Unit	Mean	S.E. of Mean	C.V.
<3	4-5	6-7	>8				
26	41	13	10	90	5.16	0.11	20.16
28.89	45.56	14.44	11.11	100			

Source: Sample Household Survey

**Literacy Level:**

Education is the back bone of any nation; more specifically literacy rate has been taken as one of the indicators for changing the backwardness of a tribe. Among the Totos, the percentage of the literacy is very low. Among them, only 30.35% are literate. The percentage of male literacy is slightly higher than that of female literacy. Of the total literacy, 36.36 % is male and 23.53% is female. A cursory glance at the composition of literate persons according to educational standard among Toto population reveals that the percentage of literate persons generally decreases with increasing standard of education. In respect to standard of education from VI-VII, there are only 5.19 % out of total Toto population and college going population only 0.79 %, 2.96 % have Secondary level of education, and 1.30% has Higher Secondary level of education. But it is noted that among all standards of education, female literacy is very low as compared to male literacy.

Table-3 Rate of Literacy and Standard of Education

Standard	<V	V-VIII	IX-X	XI-XII	B.A.	Total literate			Total illiterate		
						M	F	T	M	F	T
Male	173	46	28	12	9	36.36 %	23.53%	30.35%	63.64%	76.47%	69.65%
Percentage	23.47	6.24	3.80	1.63	1.22						
Female	106	26	13	6	2						
Percentage	16.30	4.00	2.00	0.92	0.31						
Total in %	20.12	5.19	2.96	1.30	0.79						

Source: Totopara I.T.D.P. Primary High School, Totopara Board Free Primary High School, Dhanpati Toto Memorial High School, Lokswar Patrika

**Land Holding:**

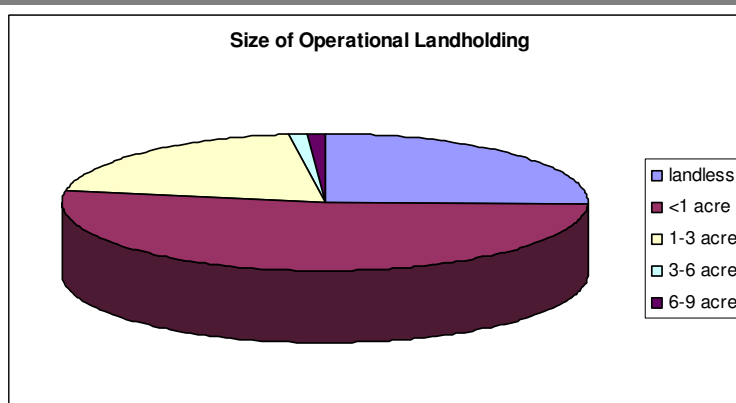
The amount of land is an important economic parameter to assess the economic standing of the person in the society. But average size of landholding among Toto is very poor (only 0.69 acre). According to Govt. Record, first settlement survey conducted at Totopara in 1889-94 by D. Sunder, the area was reserved and restricted for the Totos only. Subsequently, the land was given on lease to the Totos' chief on behalf of the whole community and cultivation was also done by the institution of the same traditional Panchayet. In the 1951, the area of Totopara mouza was recorded 1996 acre as per census survey, conducted by Govt. of India. Individual ownership has been introduced in 1969 and also the area becomes unreserved. During the settlement Operation in 1969 which was carried out by the S.L.R.O., Falakata, 347.43 acres of land were recorded with 89 Toto families. The residual part of land (more than 1600 acres) was brought under Collector's Khash Possession. The land under cultivation in that particular season was recorded as the individual landholding of the respective Totos and their traditional land ownership system had been abolished. The changes in land rights from traditional community ownership to individual ownership have both good and bad effect in their socio-economic life and mode of thinking.

At present encroachment of the land of Totopara has become a problem and as a result available lands for cultivation in this village become difficult. A large numbers of Totos' have become landless in their own soil. More than one fourth of Toto respondents are now landless. About 52.22 % respondents have less than 1 acre land. The average size of land holding is only 0.79 acre, S.E. of mean is 0.08 and C.V. in this case is very high. Now they did not have any extra land for extra income like cultivation etc. This has why they were mainly involved in labour class, due to their occupation, their income was very low.

Table-4 Landholding Pattern among Toto Family

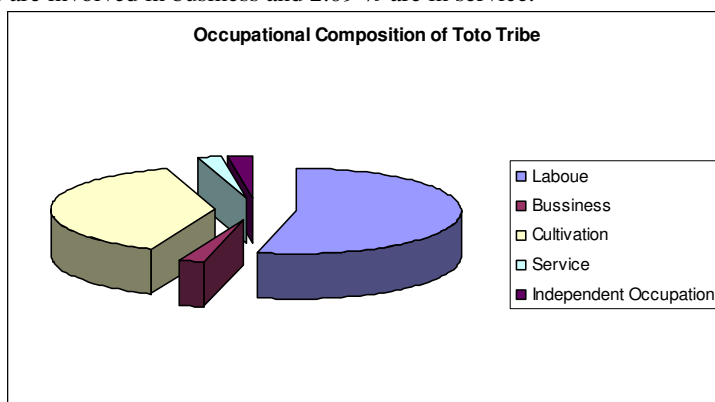
Size of Landholding in Acre					No. of Unit	Mean	S.E. of Mean	C.V
Landless	<1	1-3	3-6	6-9				
23	47	18	1	1	90	0.79	0.08	101.27
25.56%	52.22%	20%	1.11%	1.11%	100			

Source: Sample Household Survey



**Work Participation:**

The percentage of total workers to total Toto population is 42.67. The majority of the main workers are working in the field as day labourer. The study reveals that 53.98 % workers fall in labour class, 38.91 % are cultivators, only 2.51 % workers are involved in business and 2.09 % are in service.



**Per Capita Income:**

Average annual income of Toto family is approximately Rs. 23600 /-. Average per capita annual income is only Rs. 4574 /- and most of the families, nearly 62.22 % have very low annual income varying between Rs. 12000 to Rs. 24000. There are only 1.11 % families which have very high average annual income above Rs. 96000 /- compared to other Toto families. About 14.45 families earn between Rs 24000 /- and Rs. 36000 /- annually and followed by 2.22, 3.34, 1.11, 2.22 and 1.11 percent families have annual income between Rs. 36000 and Rs. 48000, Rs. 48000-60000, Rs. 60000-72000, Rs. 72000-84000 and Rs. 84000-96000 accordingly. The S.E. of mean is 1837.40 and C.V. is very high (73.86). As per Backward Classes welfare, out of the total income, 42.13 % come from wage earning and 16.16 % come from cultivation and 12.21 % income come from service sector. But only 1.87% of the total population are engaged in service.

Table-2 Average Annual Income of Toto Family

Annual Income in Rs.									No. of unit	Mean	SE of Mean	C.V.	
< 12000	12000-24000	24000-36000	36000-48000	48000-60000	60000-72000	72000-84000	84000-96000	>96000					
11	56	13	2	3	1	2	1	1	90	2360	0.00	1837.40	73.68
12.22 %	62.22%	14.45%	2.22%	3.34%	1.11%	2.22%	1.11%	1.11%	100%				

Source: Sample Household Survey

**Expenditure:**

The study focuses that both income and expenditure level are same in most of the respondents of Toto family. As regard, entertainment of the guests, home-grew liquor and alcohol are responsible for their high expenditure and indebtedness. They can afford about 34.76 % of their annual income in this purpose, where as they spend only 43.22 % for food, and 22.02 % for fuel, cloth, medicines, house repairing etc.

**Health Status:**

According to Totopara primary health centre, the common ailments of the area are tropical diseases like Hookworm, Cold and Cough, Dysentery, Dyspepsia, Diarrhoea and Scabies, Carries, Ulcer, Leucoderma, Yaws, Malaria etc. and deficiencies of vitamin A, D, B complex iodine and calcium. The Doctor of Totopara P.H.C. also stated that “deficiency of nutrition and un-hygienic way of life are the main causes for these diseases”. It may be observed that sanitation system of Toto respondents are totally absent and they follow a peculiar system of their own. Most of the respondents did not accept the scientific medical facility due to their own traditional cultural practice. The Totos used medicinal plants for curing the diseases- Skin disease like Ulcers and headache, stomach trouble, cold and cough, bleeding from wounds, diarrhoea, eye- inflammation and night blindness, bleeding of gums, fever, small pox, fracture, scorpion bite, swelling, blood pressure, labour pain fever(Sarkar,1993).

**Conclusion:**

The study focuses that the socio-economic status of Totos are backward. Cultivation was the main occupation of Toto respondents but size of landholding is very low, more over maximum of them are illiterate and due to this, they compel to work labour oriented job and because of their occupation, their level of income is very low. Consequently most of the families live below the poverty line. The study suggests that the socio-economic condition of the study area and the Totos households living in this isolated Himalayan foothill need much intensive development policy package for their socio-economic transmission. Because of their peculiar psychological approach, the implementation of some of the national plans and polices are not easy. Those therefore, must be planned according to their culture and life style. That is to say, Toto problems must be handled and solved according to their needs and culture.

**Acknowledgements:**

I am highly grateful to Professor Dr. Sudip Kr. Bhattacharya, Dept. Of Geography and Applied Geography, N.B.U. for his enormous and Valuable support and guidance while carried out of this work. I also would like to thank Dhaniram Toto, social worker, Backward Welfare Society, Totopara for his cordial cooperation and necessary help.

**Reference:**

- Das, A.K. (1999), Contemporary Society: Social Realities. In S.N. Ratha, G. Pfeffer, D.K. Behera (Eds.), *Totos: a Primitive Tribe in Transition* (pp.225-234), Retrieved from googlebooks database.
- Sarkar, A.(1993), *Toto:Society and Change (A Sub –Himalayan Tribe of West Bengal)*, Firma KLM Private Limited.
- Sinha, D. and Pal B.C.(1993) *Population Dynamic among the Totos of West Bengal: A positive Response to Cultural Contact*, Journal of Biological science15: pp 237-245. Abstract retrieved from ncbi database.
- Toto, D. (2011, Volume Four), *Toto Janojatir Samogrik Parichay* (in Bengali), Lokswar partika,50,1-12.
- Dhargupta A., Goswami,A., Sen,M., &Majumder,D. (2009), *Study on the Effect of Socio-economic Parameters on Health Status of the Toto, Sabar and Lodha Tribes of West Bengal, India*, Journal of Stud Tribes Tribals 7(1): 31-38. Retrieved from <http://krepublishers.com/.../T&T-07-1-031-09-182-Dhargupta-A-Tt.pdf>.
- Rao, S.M. & Rao, B.L.(2010), *Factors Influencing Socio-Economic Status of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and Plain Tribes in Andhra Pradesh (A Logistic Regression Analysis)*, World Applied Sciences Journal 11(2): 235-244. Retrieved from [http://idosi.org/wasj/wasj11\(2\)/18.pdf](http://idosi.org/wasj/wasj11(2)/18.pdf).
- Govt, of West Bengal (2003), *A brief profile with activities at a glance on development of Totos*, Backward Classes Welfare, Jalpaiguri.