

Chapter 2

Rural Population in Sikkim : Its main Characteristics - A Study of the Census Reports.

Introduction

Sikkim is one of the smallest states of Indian Union. Population of Sikkim according to 1981 Census is 3,14,999 out of which 84% live in the rural areas and 16% live in urban areas.

Sikkim's economy is extremely rural can be evident from comparison with the All India figures beginning from 1901.

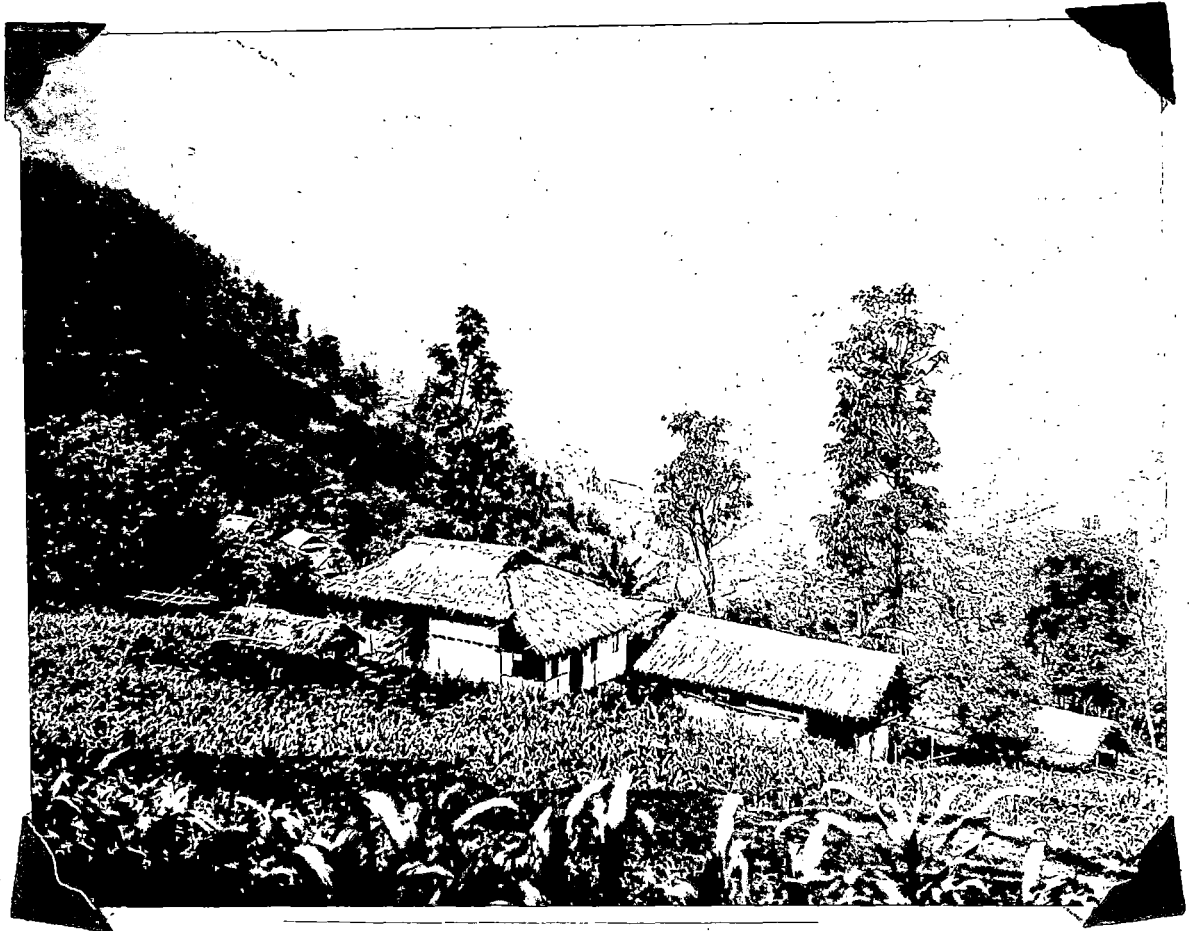
Table 2.1

Distribution of 100 persons living in rural areas.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Sikkim	100	100	100	100	100	93	96	91	84
India	89	80	69	68	66	63	62	60	76

(1)

It should be mentioned that Sikkim had no urban area prior to 1951. In Sikkim 7 towns are considered as urban area in 1971. The same 7 towns are considered as urban areas in



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1981 Census. The towns are Mangar, Gangtok, Singtam, Namchi, Jorethang, Gyalsingh and Nayabazar. Gangtok town, the capital of Sikkim is classified as Class III town in the population size of 20,000 - 49,999. Gangtok's population was 13,308 in 1971 and in 1981 it is about 36,768. All other towns are under lowest category of Class VI (population size of less than 5000. It seems that according to census of 1981 72% of the urban people live in Gangtok and 28% in other six (6) urban centres.

Predominantly, Sikkim is rural and about 84% of people in the rural area. But there are considerable district-wise variation in this respect.

As regards, district-wise rural and urban population composition is concerned it may be mentioned here that the West District (Gangtok) is the only district having some urban population since 1951. All the other districts are having urban population only since 1971. North (2.84 per cent), South (2.30 per cent) and West (1.69) districts had a negligible urban proportion of population in the year 1971. North and West Districts recorded very negligible increase of 2.96 per cent and 2.28 per cent respectively in its urban proportion of population in the year 1981 over the level of 1971. Presently, only 3 and 2 persons respectively out of the 100 live in the urban areas in these two districts. In South District due to development of Jorethang town and increase in area of Namchi town, persons living in urban area (out of every 100 persons)

has jumped from about 2 in 1971 to 7 in 1981. Growth of urban population in East District is mainly due to development and increase in area of Gangtok town. Number of persons living in Urban area of East District which was about 20 in 1971 has jumped to 31 in the year 1981. A comparative statement showing rural/urban composition of the population in the district is shown below :

Table 2.2

Distribution of 100 persons in Rural Area of Sikkim of the districts 1951-1981.

	1951	1961	1971	1981
North	100	100	97	97
East	95	98	80	69
South	100	100	98	93
West	100	100	93	98

(2)

The rural population has more or less continuously grown over the period beginning from 1901. A comparative statement of decennial increase in every 1000 persons in Sikkim to make a comparative study with India.

Table 2.3

Rural-Urban decennial population for every 1000 persons in Sikkim.

1901-1981.

	1901- 1911	1911- 1921	1921- 1931	1931- 1941	1941- 1951	1951- 1961	1961- 1971	1971- 1981
Total	+490	+71	+344	+107	+133	+178	+294	+401
<u>Sikkim</u> Rural	+490	+71	+344	+107	+111	+151	+224	+389
Urban	+1496	+1872	+1509
Total	+ 57	- 3	+110	+142	+133	+ 215	+248	+244
<u>India</u> Rural	+ 67	+13	+100	+119	+ 89	+ 206	+217	+190
Urban	+ 3	+83	+191	+320	+414	+ 264	+382	+460

(3)

From the above Table it is clear that there is a continuous growth in the rural population of Sikkim and particularly a substantial increase in the last decade. Decadal increase of rural population jumped from about 224 to 389 per 1000 persons. In urban areas growth of population has remained continuously high since 1951.

Rural-urban decennial increase for every 1000 persons is shown in Table 2.4. It is seen that North District is the only district with very high population increase of 1028 persons per 1000 persons during the decade of 1971-1981. (In other words, 1000 population of 1971 in North District has reached 2028 in 1981. Similarly, its rural population increased fantastically

in the decade 1971-1981, as compared to the earlier decade of 1961-71. East and South Districts also have comparatively higher growth rate for rural population than West District. Urban growth rate in West District also registered comparatively low growth rate during the decade of 1971-1981 whereas South District recorded the highest growth rate during 1971-1981.

Table 2.4

Rural-Urban decennial population increase for every 1000 persons in the districts 1961-1981.

		<u>1961-71</u>	<u>1971-1981</u>
	Total	+934	+1028
North District	Rural	+300	+1019
	Urban	+1357
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	Total	+510	+613
East District	Rural	+376	+383
	Urban	+1485	+1942
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	Total	162	+ 423
South District	Rural	138	+ 353
	Urban	+3391
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	Total	+ 289
West District	Rural	+ 284
	Urban	+ 553

Further, from the table 2.5 it can be seen that East district is having the highest population with 138,762 persons confined to 128 revenue blocks (2 uninhabited) and 3 towns. It is followed by South district which has a population of 78,976 residing in 145 revenue blocks (1 uninhabited) and 2 towns and West district which has recorded a population of 75,192 persons residing in 120 revenue blocks (1 uninhabited) and 2 towns. North district is the least populated which accounts for 26,455 persons residing in 54 revenue blocks (3 uninhabited) and 1 town.

Percentage increase in population growth of urban and rural areas of the State of Sikkim suggests that although population increase of rural areas is comparatively lower than urban areas still economic development in urban areas is faster than that of rural areas. In other words, it may be concluded that development measures of State are more concentrated in urban areas and that is why, in spite of higher population growth the economic development is faster in urban parts of Sikkim and villages or rural areas have not been able to come to the level of urban areas. This can be understood from various indicators.

In the table 2.6 it can be seen that Mangan the only town in North district has recorded 54.23% literacy rate. In East district, Gangtok, the capital town as expected is having

Table 2.5

Population, Number of revenue blocks and towns 1981.

Sl. of No. State/ Dis- trict.	P O P U L A T I O N											No. of Revenue blocks	No. of towns
	T o t a l			R u r a l			U r b a n			Total inha- bited			
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females		12	13	14
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Sikkim	3, 16, 385	1, 72, 440	1, 42, 945	2, 65, 301	142,341	122,930	51, 084	30, 099	20, 985	447	440	8	
1. North	26, 455	14, 784	11, 671	25, 675	14, 272	11, 403	780	512	268	54	51	1	
2. East	1, 38, 762	77, 232	61, 530	95, 520	51, 845	43, 675	43, 242	26, 387	17, 855	128	126	3	
3. South	75, 976	40, 980	34, 996	70, 611	37, 787	32, 824	5, 365	3, 193	2, 172	145	144	2	
4. West	75, 192	39, 444	35, 748	73, 495	38, 437	35, 053	1, 697	1, 007	690	120	119	2	

(5)

the highest literacy i.e. 56.86% followed by Singtam showing a literacy rate of 51.05% and Rangpo 42.94%. In South district Namchi town has registered a literacy rate of 56.09% and Jorethang 49.66%. Gyalshing town in West district has shown a literacy rate of 54.50% followed by Nayabazar 44.12%. The differential in the literacy rate of towns in this State is not large. Highest literacy rate in the State is 56.86% observed in Gangtok town and lowest 42.94% in Rangpo town. (6)

Table 2.5

Literacy rates for each town
of State in 1991.

District/State	Name of town	Literacy rate
North	Nangan	54.23
	All Towns	53.23
East	Gangtok M.C.	56.86
	Rangpo	42.94
	Singtam	51.05
	All Towns	55.54
South	Jorethang	49.66
	Namchi	56.09
	All Towns	51.39
West	Gyalshing	54.50
	Nayabazar	44.12
	All Towns	48.67
Sikkim	All Towns	54.86

Table 2.7 shows districtwise total population by sex and by total, rural and urban break-up along with the percentage of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes population of literates.

A close examination of Columns 8 to 10 of Table 2.7 reveals some interesting facts. Rural-Urban difference in literacy rates is quite high in all the four districts of the State ranging from 20.56 percentage points in East district to 25.63 percentage points in West district. Difference in male-female literacy rates, though gone down significantly as compared to 1971 census, is still quite high in rural areas. It can be observed that difference in male-female literacy rates in rural areas of all the districts of the State is approximately of the order of 21 percentage points whereas this difference in urban areas is highest in West district. The table clearly indicates that East district is distinctly ahead in literacy followed by South and North districts. West district is lagging behind. In fact it is nearly half of the percentage literacy rate observed for East district. It can be seen that the East district has made significant improvement in rural literacy as compared to other districts of the State. The female literacy in rural area is far behind the males in all the districts of the State. (8)

It is noticed from Table 2.8 that the percentage of

Table 2.8

Urban and Rural Development in terms of Employment of Workers.

Name of District	Total Rural Urban	Main workers to total population			Marginal workers to total population			Total workers to total population			Non-workers to total population		
		Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
North	Total	46.34	58.92	30.41	6.91	3.23	11.55	53.25	62.16	41.97	46.75	37.84	58.03
	Rural	46.32	58.86	30.63	7.11	3.34	11.82	53.43	62.20	42.45	46.57	37.80	57.55
	Urban	47.05	60.74	20.90	0.26	0.20	0.37	47.31	60.94	21.27	52.69	39.06	78.73
East	Total	43.39	56.16	27.37	0.91	0.44	1.49	44.30	56.60	28.86	55.70	43.40	71.14
	Rural	44.25	54.37	32.01	1.12	0.43	1.94	45.37	54.99	32.95	54.63	45.01	66.05
	Urban	41.48	59.40	15.01	0.45	0.50	0.39	41.93	59.89	16.39	59.07	40.11	83.61
South	Total	47.79	57.45	36.48	2.54	0.59	4.83	50.33	58.03	41.31	49.67	41.97	58.69
	Rural	48.29	57.06	38.19	2.71	0.60	5.14	51.00	57.66	43.33	49.00	42.34	56.67
	Urban	41.30	62.11	10.73	0.25	0.34	0.09	41.55	62.45	10.82	53.45	37.55	89.18
West	Total	51.41	55.48	46.92	0.48	0.25	0.72	51.89	55.73	47.64	48.11	44.27	52.36
	Rural	51.77	55.47	47.72	0.46	0.23	0.72	52.28	55.70	48.44	47.77	44.30	51.56
	Urban	35.83	56.01	6.38	1.06	1.39	0.87	36.89	57.20	7.25	63.11	42.80	92.75
Sikkim	Total	46.60	56.55	34.69	1.70	0.67	2.93	48.30	57.22	37.61	51.70	42.78	62.39
	Rural	47.61	55.90	38.01	1.94	0.71	3.38	49.85	56.81	41.37	50.45	43.39	58.63
	Urban	41.36	59.59	15.21	0.45	0.50	0.37	41.81	60.09	15.68	58.19	39.91	84.42

(9)

main workers to the total population is 46.6 in Sikkim. For males the percentage of main workers to the total population is 56.5% whereas for females it is only 34.7%. The percentage of marginal workers in the State is 1.7%. There are only 0.7% marginal workers among the males and 2.9% among the females. The remaining 51.7% of the total population in the State have been treated as non-workers in accordance with the concept of workers and non-workers adopted in 1981 census. Highest participation rate 51.41% is observed in West district followed by South district 47.79% and North district 46.34%. Lowest participation rate of 43.39% is recorded in East district. Rural-urban difference in participation rate is highest in West district where main workers in rural areas are 51.77% and in urban areas 35.83% showing a gap of 15.94 per cent points. Rural-Urban difference in participation rate is lowest in North district where percentage of main workers is higher by 0.73 per cent points in urban areas than in rural areas.

The difference in male and female workers participation rates is quite high in the state but as compared to other states of the country this difference is very low. Male-female difference in participation rates varies from 0.55 per cent points in West district to 28.79 per cent points in East district and 28.51 per cent points in North district. Male-female difference in participating rates is higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas of all the districts of the State. Role

of marginal workers in the economy of the State is insignificant. Highest proportion of marginal workers (6.91%) is recorded in North district and the lowest 0.48% in West district.

proportion of non-workers is highest in East district (55.70%) followed by South district (49.67%) and the lowest proportion (45.75%) is recorded in North district.

SUMMARY

Growth of population in Sikkim is quite high in recent periods, though the density of population is much less. In comparison to other areas of India a high proportion of population lives in the rural areas.

As regards, district-wise rural and urban population composition is concerned it may be mentioned here that the East District (Gangtok) is the only district having some urban population. All the other districts are having urban population. North, South and West districts had a negligible urban proportion of population in the year 1971 and 1961. North and West districts recorded very negligible increase. Therefore, total population of Sikkim may be regarded as rural and problem of development of Sikkim is basically a problem of rural development.

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