

Linguistic Demography of the Tribal Languages in India

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Introduction

The Indian model of language management is unique. It provides space for the growth of every Indian mother tongue/language. The Constitution of India recognized the languages as *Scheduled and Non-scheduled Languages*. Further languages became the *Official/Associate Official Languages* through various Acts passed by the competent authorities. The Presidential Order published in the Part II; Section I of the Gazette of India on August 13, 1960 has scheduled the *Tribal Languages* in India. The Census of India 1961 has grouped interrelated tribal mother tongues into tribal languages. The Census of India 1971 has genetically classified Indian mother tongues/ languages. Through the Gazette notifications languages were accorded the status of *Classical Languages*. All these categories of Indian languages with certain status are inclusive and open ended. In due course of time they have got expanded. In India it is possible for a language to concurrently have many labels. Kannada is a Scheduled language, Official language of Karnataka as well as a Classical language. Today, Santali is a Tribal as well as a Scheduled language.

Eighth Schedule of the Constitution

The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India is cited in language related discussions more often than any other language related Articles of the Constitution. It comes handy in taking language related decisions. This indicates its importance as well as utility. The Constitution of India adopted on November 26, 1949 in the Constituent Assembly listed 14 languages in the Eighth Schedule. The same till now is amended thrice through Constitution Amendment Bill No 21 in 1967, to include Sindhi; Bill No. 71 in 1992 to include Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali and in 2003 Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali were added to the Schedule by the 92nd Amendment Act of 2003.

While discussing the linguistic demography of the tribal languages it is essential to recollect what was debated in the Constituent Assembly concerning these languages. In the Assembly Jaipal Singh (Bihar-General) pleaded for inclusion of the *Adivasi languages* and moved an amendment to include Mundari, Gondi and Oraon in the Schedule out of the 176 *Adivasi (Tribal) languages*. Mundari spoken by 40 lakhs, Gondi spoken by 32 lakhs and Oraon

spoken by 11 lakhs be included in the Schedule because they are important and spoken by a greater number of people than some of the languages already included. He selected only three out of 176 Adivasi languages because he did not want to overburden the Schedule. He felt that through the acceptance of these languages there will be an encouragement to ‘...the cause of unearthing ancient history...’ and ‘...that these languages should be encouraged and developed so that they themselves can become enriched and, by their enrichment, they enrich the Rashtrabhasha of the country.’ (CAD, p. 1439-41). However, inclusion of any tribal language into the Eighth Schedule did not happen for many decades. It has to be noted that till 2003, the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India did not have any tribal language and also any language form the Austro-Asiatic family of languages. Through the inclusion of Bodo and Santali, these two oversights were overcome.

Linguistic Demography

It is a fact that ‘... *demography is concerned with gathering information of various kinds about population groups, including their mother tongues.* (Albert F.V:1998) The tribal languages are repositories of the intangible heritage – traditional knowledge systems, passed on from generation to generation for centuries. The 1961 Census records 1652 mother tongues. Latest 2011 count of Indian mother tongues/languages informs that Census had a raw return of 19569 mother tongues. After due processing of this raw data, it has arrived at 1369 mother tongues grouped into 22 Scheduled and 99 Non-Scheduled languages. They belong to Indo-Aryan (78.50%), Dravidian (19.64%), Austro-Asiatic (1.11%) and Tibeto-Burmese (1.01%) families. All these families have tribal languages. In this paper the Census of India data involving the tribal mother tongues / languages is analysed to investigate (a) the variation and distribution of the population of speakers of different tribal languages from one decennial Census to another and (b) examine the proportion and direction of spread of multilingualism - both bilingualism and trilingualism among them.

Indo-Aryan Family

The Indo-Aryan Family has a smaller number of tribal languages compared to other families. The table-1 illustrates the changes that have taken place in the population of the speakers of the Indo-Aryan tribal languages between 1991-2011. Among them Bhili / Bhilodi and Halbi show an increase of population by 8.67% and 29.13% respectively. However, in case of Khandeshi language between 1991 and 2001 there is an increase of speakers by 113.13% but between 2001 and 2011 there is a decrease in population by -10.36%. Majority of Halabi 92.17%, Bili/Bhilodi 34.49% and Handeshi 86.90% are residing in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

Table-1
Percentage of Change and Distribution in the States

Languages	1991-2001	2001-2011	State -2011	Majority
Halabi	11.07	29.13	Chhattisgarh	92.17

Bhili/Bhildi	71.97	8.67	Rajasthan	34.49
Khandeshi	113.13	-10.36	Maharashtra	86.90

This increase in one decade and then decrease in the subsequent decade in Khandeshi requires us to look into the details of its composition. Khandeshi is collective of more than four mother tongues.

Table-2
Percentage of Change: Khandeshi

Mother tongues	1991	2001	2011
Ahirani	85.95	89.90	87.97
Dangi	11.18	6.68	8.09
Gujari	0	2.34	3.07
Khandeshi	1.97	0.83	0.57
Others	0.88	0.21	0.28

This indicates that the increase is due to the inclusion of speakers of Gujari mother tongue and reduction is due to the reduction of Dangi , Khandeshi and Other mother tongue speakers.

Austro-Asiatic Family

In the Austro- Asiatic family of languages only Santali tribal language is a Scheduled language since 2003. In Meghalaya Khasi is recognised as an Associate Official Language. According to the Meghalaya State Language Act 2005 ‘Khasi Language (s) of the language may be used as the associate official language for State all purposes in the District, Sub-Divisions and Block level offices of the State Government located in the Districts of East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Ri-Bhoi’.

In case of all the Austro-Asiatic tribal languages, other than Bhumij and Korwa the percentage of language speakers has increased from a maximum of 62.19% in Savara to 1.09% in Nicobarese. However, in case of Bhumij and Korwa there is a significant decrease of speakers -42.02% and -17.73% between 2001 and 2011. Maximum speakers of Bhmij-40.99%, Ho-69.95%, Mundari-83.59%, and Santali-44.37% are in Jharkhand; Gadaba-81.36%, Juang-100% and Kharia-47.09% are in Odisha; Korku-64.69% and Korwa-67.52% are in Madhya Pradesh; Munda-66.37% and Savara-72.92% are in Chhattisgarh; Koda/Kora-86.19% in West Bengal and Nicobarese-99.35% in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Language wise actualities are illustrated in the Table-3.

Table-3
Percentage of Change and Distribution in the States

Language	1991-2001	2001-2011	State -2011	Majority

Savara	-7.56	62.19	Chhattisgarh	72.92
Gadaba	-6.73	56.03	Odisha	81.36
Ho	9.85	36.32	Jharkhand	69.95
Juang	40.63	28.13	Odisha	100.00
Khasi	23.71	26.83	Meghalaya	96.57
Kharia	6.23	24.21	Odisha	47.09
Korku	23.26	26.57	MP	64.69
Santali	24.03	13.89	Jharkhand	44.37
Koda/Kora	52.59	9.85	West Bengal	86.19
Munda	13.4	7.79	Chhattisgarh	66.37
Mundari	23.22	6.3	Jharkhand	83.50
Nicobarese	9.61	1.09	A&N Islands	99.35
Bhumij	4.73	-42.02	Jharkhand	40.99
Korwa	25.84	-17.73	MP	67.52

Bhumij: This has two mother tongue components - Bhumij and Others, the Table-4 illustrates the details. Reduction in number of speakers from 47,443 persons in 2001 to 10,190 persons in 2011 needs to be noted. Majority of Bhumij speakers 31,510 in 2001 were in Odisha. In Odisha in the year 2011 their population has decreased to 5,912 persons. At the same time there is an increase of speakers of Other mother tongues. Reasons for the reduction in the number of speakers of Bhumij needs further investigation.

Table-4
Percentage of Change: Bhumij

Mother tongue	1991 %	2001 %	2011 %
Bhumij	86.94	64.74	37.04
Others	13.05	35.25	62.95

Between 1991-2001 both Savara and Gadaba had shown a decrease of -7.96% and -6.73% of speakers respectively. However, between 2001-2011 they show an increase of 62.19% and 56.03% respectively.

Korwa: The 1971 Census reports that Korwa has 16,286 speakers. Both the Censuses of 2001 and 2011 have a same note that “A number of mother tongues including Korwa have been grouped together under the language name Korwa, on the basis of their linguistic affiliation but out of these only Koraku fulfils the criterion of 10,000 or more speakers oat the all-India level and hence only Koraku appears by name as a mother tongue and the rest are included under ‘Others’”

Table-5
Percentage of Change: Korwa

Language	27,485		34,586		28,453	
Mother tongue	1991	1991	2001	2001	2011	2011
Koraku	15716	57.18	27942	80.78	16154	56.77
Korwa	11169	40.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Others	600	2.18	6,644	19.21	12,299	43.22

This indicates that a reduction from 16,286 in 1971 to less than 10,000 speakers in 1991 of Korwa as an important mark of an endangered tribal language. Since 2001 majority of Koraku mother tongue speakers are Korawa language speakers.

Dravidian Family

The Table-6 displays the changes that have taken place in the population of the speakers of the Dravidian tribal languages. The percentage of speakers of tribal languages in the Dravidian family varies from 46.08% to 2.21% in Kisan and Parji respectively. It can be seen that among them only Jatapu has a reduction in the number of speakers by **-49.08%** between 2001 and 2011. Majority of Gondi-39.01% and Kui-99.76% of speakers are in Madhya Pradesh; Khond-73.80%, Kisan-94.47%, and Malto-64.49% are in Odisha; Jatapu-99.42%, Konda-95.74% and Koya-64.44% are in Andhra Pradesh; Kolami-69.41% in Maharashtra; Kurukh / Oraon-47.88% in Jharkhand and Parji-86.61% in Chhattisgarh.

Table - 6
Percentage of Change and Distribution in the States

Language	1991-2001	2001-2011	State -2011	Majority
Kisan	-12.96	46.08	Odisha	94.47
Khond	-46.28	31.16	Odisha	73.80
Kurukh / Oraon	22.77	13.52	Jharkhand	47.88
Koya	33.61	12.53	Andhra Pradesh	64.44
Gondi	27.72	9.97	Madhya Pradesh	39.01
Konda	214.95	7.89	Andhra Pradesh	95.74
Kolami	23.99	5.41	Maharashtra	69.41
Malto	107.98	4.47	Odisha	64.49
Kui	42.70	2.76	Madhya Pradesh	99.76
Parji	16.4	2.21	Chhattisgarh	86.61
Jatapu	52.86	-49.08	Andhra Pradesh	99.42

Jatapu: This has only Others and Jatapu as mother tongues under its umbrella. It is spoken mainly in Andhra Pradesh. It is difficult to understand such a drastic reduction in the number of speakers in a decade.

Table-7
Changes in Jatapu

Language	25,730	39,331	20,028
Mother tongues	1991	2001	2011
Jatapu	25,503	39,319	19,990
Others	277	12	38

Between 1991 and 2001 Kisan and Khond had a reduction in the percentage of speakers **-12.96% and -46.28 %** respectively. Kisan is not having any mother tongue under its umbrella. The enormous fluctuation in reporting of mother tongue by the people needs to be socio-linguistically investigated. One reason could be the question of identity of population with the mother tongue.

From the Table-8 it is evident that the reduction in the speakers of Khond language is due to reduction in Khond/Kondh mother tongue speakers. Majority of them in 2001 are from Odisha:1,12,223 persons and Andhra Pradesh:5,663 persons. Whereas their population in 2011 in Odisha is 1,14,802 and Andhra Pradesh:39,564. Kuvi mother tongue was not a part of the Khond language in 2001 and becomes part of it again in 2011.

Table-8
Changes in Khond/Kondh

Language	2,20,783	1,18,597	1,55,549
Mother tongues	1991	2001	2011
Khond /Kondh	1,97,762	1,15,330	1,11,693
Kuvi	22,450	0	43,865
Others	571	3267	0

Tibeto-Burmese Family

Maximum number of tribal languages scheduled in the Presidential order of 1960 belong to the Tibeto-Burmese family and spoken in the North-East of India. In this family among the tribal languages only Bodo is in the Eighth Schedule since 2003. All others are Non-scheduled languages.

In Meghalaya as per the State language Act ‘Garo Language may be used as associate official language for all purposes in the District, Sub-Divisions and Block Level Offices of East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills and South Garo Hills.’ In Mizoram Mizo is an Official Language

along with English. In Sikkim, Lepcha can be used for official purposes according to the Sikkim Official Languages Bill.

Some of the tribal languages according to 2011 Census are statistically major languages in different states. They are Arunachal Pradesh: Nissi/Dafla-28.60%; Meghalaya: Khasi-46.59%; Mizoram: Lushai/ Mizo-73.16%; Nagaland: Konyak-12.33%

During the period 2001 to 2011, there is an increase in the percentage of speakers in Tibeto -Burmese tribal languages from 92.93% in Nissi/Dafla to 1.46% in Konyak. The rest fall between this range in increase. During the same period there is a reduction in the percentage of speakers in eight languages ranging from -89.57% in Sema to -0.53% in Ao. Statistical details of Mao language are not available for the Census year 2001.

Table-9
Percentage of Change

Language	1991-2001	2001-2011	Language	1991-2001	2001-2011
Nissi/ Dafla	21.69	92.93	Maring	46.23	15.62
Khiemnungam	60.36	64.17	Angami	35.43	15.56
Kuki	-9.25	58.81	Pawi	62.68	14.72
Zemi	50.70	49.30	Miri / Mishing	41.13	14.28
Tangkhul	39.47	31.85	Bodo	10.52	9.81
Mishmi	17.09	29.88	Vaiphei	51.51	7.75
Kabui	37.48	29.73	Chang	92.15	7.12
Garos	31.65	28.76	Lepcha	28.69	6.51
Karbi / Mikir	14.56	25.97	Rengma	63.5	6.49
Abor / Adi	25.28	25.38	Lotha	98.13	5.57
Lalung	-19.78	25.30	Kom	8.3	2.96
Paite	30.19	24.04	Khezha	31.88	2.05
Lushai/Mizo	25.22	23.13	Halam	30.53	1.67
Dimasa	26.45	22.53	Konyak	80.15	1.46
Lakher	51.44	22.09	Sema	-37.69	-89.57
Wancho	23.92	20.55	Phom	87.40	-55.58
Thado	76.49	20.33	Rabha	18.23	-15.04
Hmar	27.91	18.68	Maram	268.1	-13.07
Tripuri	22.80	18.42	Yimchungr e	95.11	-9.64
Anal	90.78	17.36	Nocte	8.27	-6.43
Koch	18.87	17.08	Tangsa	42.55	-3.65
Deori	50.19	15.79	Ao	51.57	-0.53
			Mao	X	32.39

Nissi/ Dafla: Both the increase and decrease in the percentage of speakers among speakers of different languages is interesting to study. The possible reasons for the increase of percentage of speakers of Nissi / Dafla by 92.93% the highest among all the tribal languages of the Tibeto-Burmese tribal languages could be examined. Nissi / Dafla is a composite language including many mother tongues. The Table-10 illustrates the composition of the language. Since 2001, Nishang is not an independent mother tongue. Similarly, Bangi and Nissi are not reported independently in 2011. The number of speakers Nissi/Dafla mother tongue has increased. Majority of speakers of Nissi/Dafla are in Arunachal Pradesh 2,08,337 (2001) and 3,95,745.

Table-10
Changes in Nissi/ Dafla

Language	1,73,791	2,11,485	4,06,532
Mother tongue	1991	2001	2011
Apatani	21,453	28,422	44,815
Bangi	35,339	18,842	X
Nishang	16,976	X	X
Nissi / Dafla	68,176	X	2,89,166
Nissi	X	1,18,111	X
Tagin	31,845	38,244	62,697
Others	2	7,866	9,654

Sema: In 1991 Majority of speakers of Sema-92,884 were in Nagaland. However, their strength in this state has got reduced drastically to 8,268 persons in 2011.

Phom: Same is the case of Phom. In 1991 majority of speakers of Phom-1,22,454 were in Nagaland. However, their strength in this state has got reduced drastically to 53,674 persons in 2011.

The reasons for this kind of reduction in both Sema and Phom need to be further investigated. The Table-11 provides the details of distribution of maximum number of Tibeto-Burmese tribal languages in different states. It is self-explanatory.

Table-11
Maximum Speakers of Tibeto-Burmese Tribal Languages and the North- Eastern States

Language	State	%	Language	State	%
Abor / Adi	Arunachal Pradesh	96.46	Khiemnungam	Nagaland	99.87
Dafla /Nissi	Arunachal Pradesh	97.34	Konyak	Nagaland	99.86
Mishmi	Arunachal Pradesh	95.27	Rengma	Nagaland	94.19

Nocte	Arunachal Pradesh	98.27	Sema	Nagaland	76.54
Tangsa	Arunachal Pradesh	94.61	Lotha	Nagaland	98.89
Wancho	Arunachal Pradesh	98.80	Phom	Nagaland	98.63
Anal	Manipur	97.39	Yimchungre	Nagaland	89.06
Hmar	Manipur	49.58	Deori	Assam	84.75
Kabui	Manipur	89.16	Dimasa	Assam	95.83
Kuki	Manipur	45.02	Karbi / Mikir	Assam	96.82
Mao	Manipur	93.40	Lalung	Assam	93.80
Maram	Manipur	98.88	Miri / Mishing	Assam	98.29
Maring	Manipur	99.39	Rabha	Assam	72.68
Paite	Manipur	69.21	Zemi	Assam	40.69
Tangkhul	Manipur	97.76	Garo	Meghalaya	81.76
Vaiphei	Manipur	93.34	Kocha (Naga)	Meghalaya	63.67
Thado	Manipur	97.57	Halam	Tripura	59.33
Kom	Manipur	96.77	Tripuri	Tripura	94.02
Angami	Nagaland	99.40	Pawi	Mizoram	99.94
Ao	Nagaland	88.87	Lushai/Mizo	Mizoram	96.61
Chang-Naga	Nagaland	98.17	Lakher	Mizoram	98.69
khezha	Nagaland	82.20	Lepcha	Sikkim	80.94

Multilingualism Among Speakers of Tribal Languages

The Census is enumerating information on bilingualism since 1901. In 2001 and 2011 information on the 'First Subsidiary Language and Second Subsidiary language' of different mother tongue speakers is collected. These statements 'first subsidiary language' and 'second subsidiary language' are interpreted as bilingualism and trilingualism for the purposes of analysis in this paper. While studying bi/multilingualism statistics it is essential to study why people are becoming multilingual - the reasons for becoming multilingual; in which language they are becoming multilingual; kind of connection exists between languages of multilingualism; the stability or otherwise of multilingualism in individuals and society. It is supposed that multilingualism acts as a bridge between speakers of different languages. The choice of one or more languages as the first, second subsidiary language reflects the social, economic, educational and sometimes political need/will of a language community.

The percentage of bilingualism and trilingualism are indices of spread of languages among speakers of other languages and the names of first and second subsidiary languages recorded in the Census indicate the people's choice of the language. India as a nation and each state and union territory within her are multilingual. The proportion of multilingualism varies

from one administrative unit to another; varies among speakers of different languages; varies among the speakers of Scheduled and Non-scheduled languages. It depends upon the existing communication pattern. It has to be noted that multilingualism is self-declared by the people. It is not measured based on any testing scale.

The Table-12 and chart provide the details of Indian multilingualism since 1991. The Census of India in 2001 presented the national average of bilingualism at 24.79% and trilingualism at 8.51%. Where as the Census in 2011 recorded bilingualism at 26.01% and trilingualism at 7.10%, an increase in bilingualism and a decrease in trilingualism in a decade. It is evident that bilingualism among speakers of Indian languages is progressing and trilingualism increased between 1991 and 2001 but has noticeably declined between 2001 and 2011.

Table-12
Percentage of Multilingualism in India

	Bilingualism	Tri-lingualism
1991	19.44	7.26
2001	24.79	8.51
2011	26.01	7.10



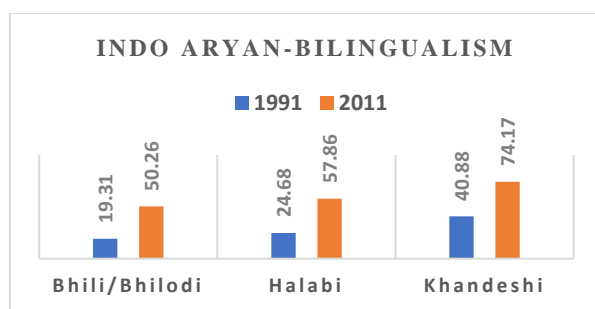
In this context of Indian multilingualism we can study the growth of multilingualism among the speakers of tribal languages belonging to different language families.

BILINGUALISM

Indo-Aryan: The speakers of the Indo-Aryan tribal languages are highly bilingual, much above the national average of 26.01%. Between 1991 and 2011 the percentage of bilinguals speaking Halbi and Bhili/Bhilodi languages has become more than double. There is a substantial increase in bilingualism among the speakers of Khandeshi.

Table-13
Bilingualism and Indo-Arya Tribal Languages

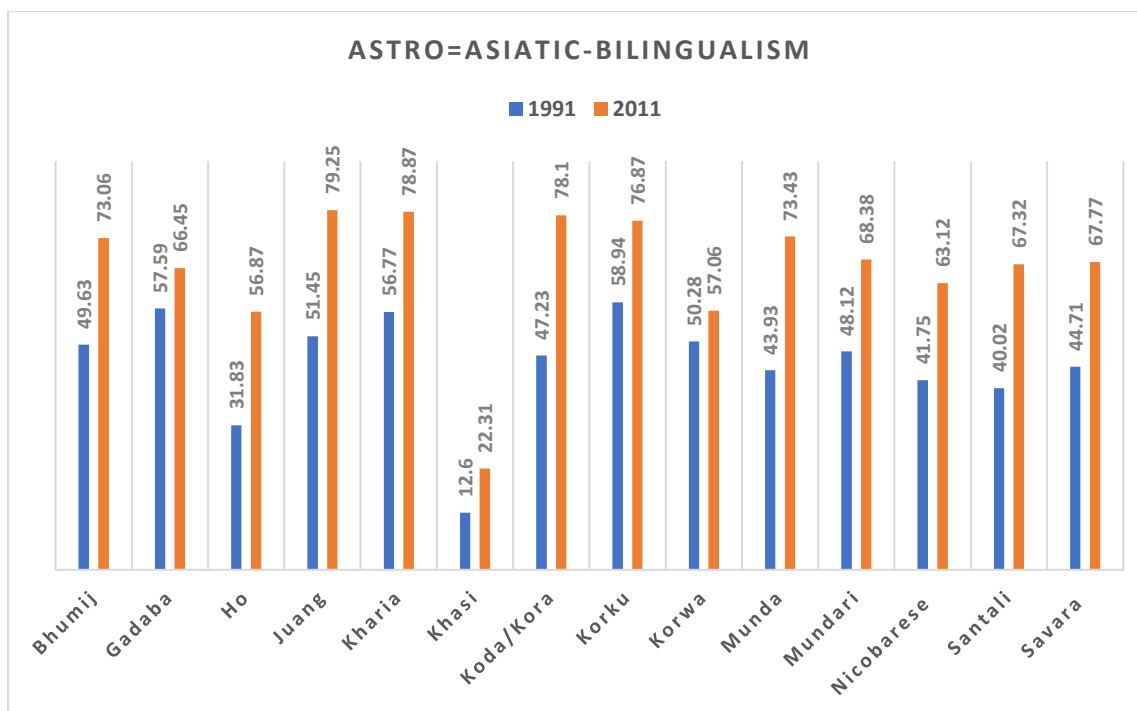
Language	Bilingualism 1991	Bilingualism 2011	Bilingualism in	Percentage 2011
Khandeshi	40.88	74.17	Marathi	86.92
Halabi	24.68	57.86	Hindi	83.58
Bhili/Bhilodi	19.31	50.26	Hindi	64.63



Austro-Asiatic: Bilingualism among the tribal language speakers of this family of languages in 2011 is much more than the national average of 26.01%, except in case of Khasi. More than fifty percent of speakers of Austro-Asiatic tribal languages other than Khasi are bilinguals. Maximum bilinguals are in Juang language-79.25% and minimum are in Khasi-22.31%.

Table 14
Bilingualism and Austro-Asiatic Tribal Languages

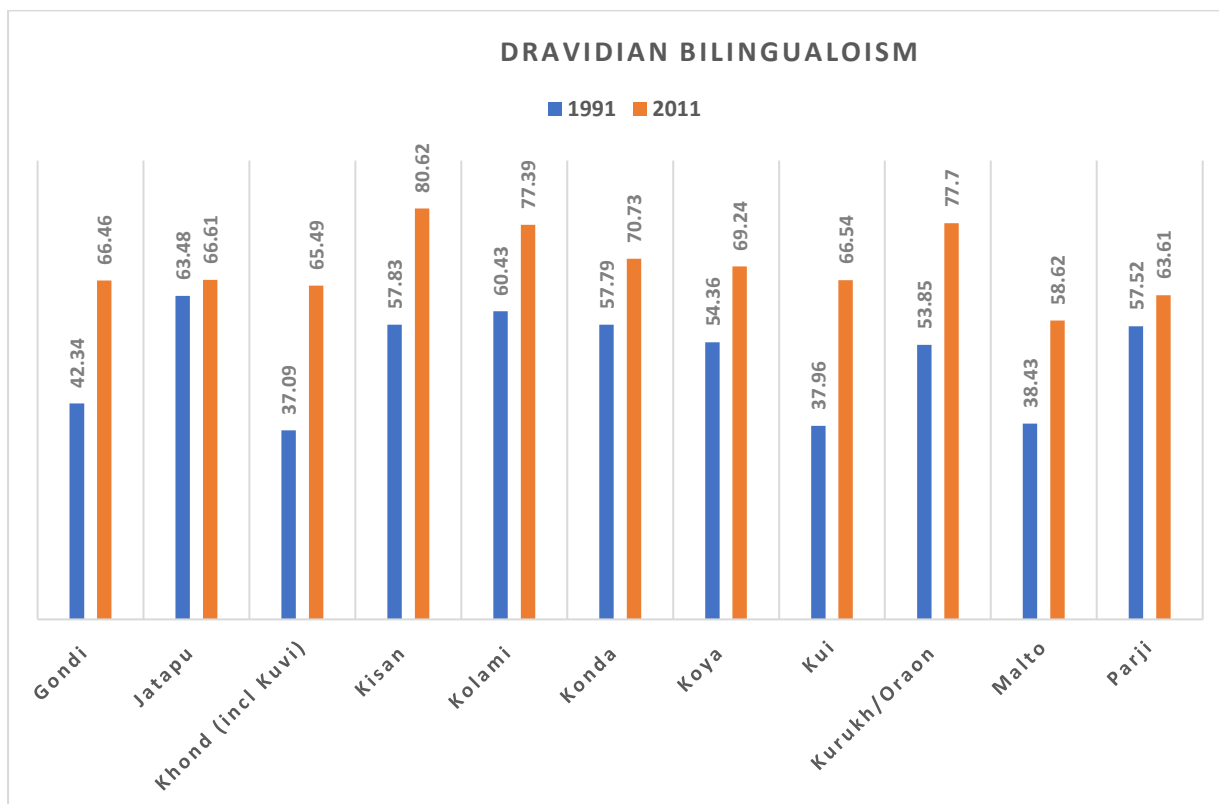
Language	Bilinguals 1991	Bilinguals 2011	Bilingual in	Percentage 2011
Juang	51.45	79.25	Odia	99.59
Kharia	56.77	78.87	Hindi	59.34
Koda/Kora	47.23	78.10	Bengali	89.60
Korku	58.94	76.87	Hindi	94.62
Munda	43.93	73.43	Odia	54.30
Bhumij	49.63	73.06	Bengali	39.19
Mundari	48.12	68.38	Hindi	78.85
Savara	44.71	67.77	Odia	67.94
Santali	40.02	67.32	Bengali	43.80
Gadaba	57.59	66.45	Odia	76.45
Nicobarese	41.75	63.12	Hindi	97.58
Korwa	50.28	57.06	Hindi	81.17
Ho	31.83	56.87	Hindi	60.71
Khasi	12.60	22.31	English	74.26



Dravidian: The speakers of the Dravidian tribal languages are also highly bilingual more than double the national average. Bilingualism among the speakers is much more than the national average in case of speakers of all the tribal languages. More than 60% of Dravidian tribal language speakers are bilinguals, except speakers of Malto. Among them bilingualism varies from 80.62% in speakers of Kisan to 58.62% in speakers of Malto-58.62%. The rate of increase between 1991 and 2011 too is very high.

Table-15
Bilingualism and Dravidian Tribal Languages

Language	Bilinguals 1991	Bilinguals 2011	Bilingual in	Percentage 2011
Kisan	57.83	80.62	Odia	89.43
Kurukh/Oraon	53.85	77.70	Hindi	87.04
Kolami	60.43	77.39	Marathi	75.85
Konda	57.79	70.73	Telugu	85.40
Koya	54.36	69.24	Telugu	73.22
Jatapu	63.48	66.61	Telugu	93.93
Kui	37.96	66.54	Odia	96.36
Gondi	42.34	66.46	Hindi	67.33
Khond	37.09	65.49	Odia	72.34
Parji	57.52	63.61	Halbi	45.22
Malto	38.43	58.62	Hindi	57.15

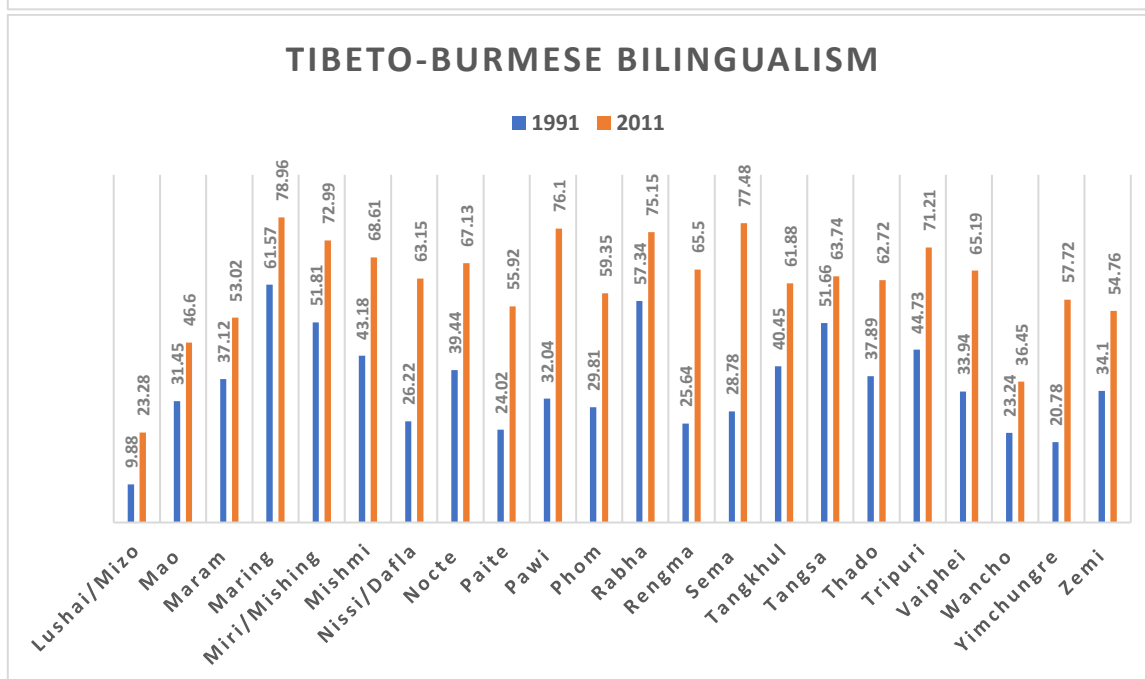
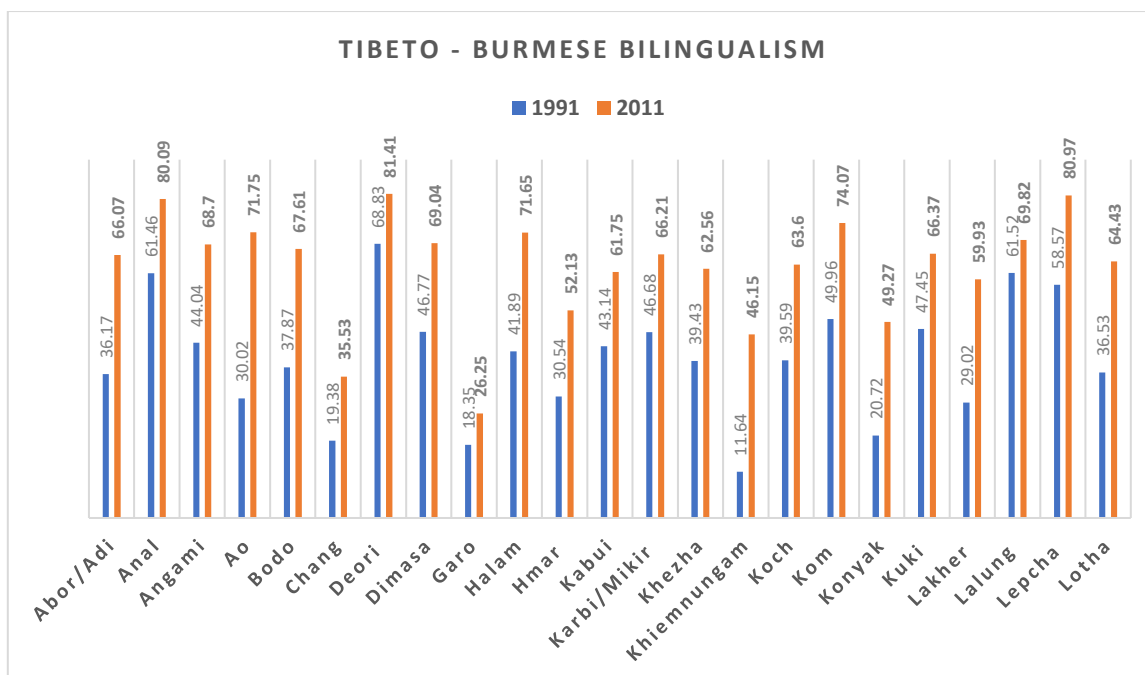


Tibeto-Burmese: This family of languages has maximum tribal languages. In this family percentage of bilingualism varies from a maximum of 81.41% among speakers of Deori to 23.28% among Lushai/Mizo speakers. Bilingualism is above the national average in the speakers of all the languages except in the speakers of Lushai/Mizo. It is very important to note that in this family of tribal languages - more than 70% of the speakers of 12 languages, 60% of speakers of 19 languages and 50% of 7 languages are bilinguals. Between 1991 and 2011, the percentage of bilingualism among speakers of most of the languages has increased many folds.

Table-16
Bilingualism and Tibeto-Burmese Tribal Languages

Language	Bilinguals 1991	Bilinguals 2011	Bilingual in	Percentage 2011
Deori	68.83	81.41	Assamese	85.98
Lepcha	58.57	80.97	Nepali	72.72
Anal	61.46	80.09	Manipuri	71.33
Maring	61.57	78.96	Manipuri	84.77
Sema	28.78	77.48	English	48.73
Pawi	32.04	76.10	Lushai / Mizo	96.72
Rabha	57.34	75.15	Assamese	76.80
Kom	49.96	74.07	Manipuri	66.90

Miri/Mishing	51.81	72.99	Assamese	96.20
Ao	30.02	71.75	Assamese	46.75
Halam	41.89	71.65	Bengali	62.32
Tripuri	44.73	71.21	Bengali	93.77
Lalung	61.52	69.82	Assamese	85.69
Dimasa	46.77	69.04	Hindi	35.59
Angami	44.04	68.70	English	59.36
Mishmi	43.18	68.61	Hindi	63.18
Bodo	37.87	67.61	Assamese	83.20
Nocte	39.44	67.13	Hindi	63.18
Kuki	47.45	66.37	Manipuri	28.13
Karbi / Mikir	46.68	66.21	Assamese	86.41
Abor/Adi	36.17	66.07	Hindi	73.50
Rengma	25.64	65.50	Assamese	51.37
Vaiphei	33.94	65.19	Manipuri	34.68
Lotha	36.53	64.43	English	58.16
Tangsa	51.66	63.74	Hindi	46.04
Koch	39.59	63.60	Assamese	47.06
Nissi/Dafla	26.22	63.15	Hindi	78.99
Thado	37.89	62.72	Manipuri	61.16
Khezha	39.43	62.56	English	43.84
Tangkhul	40.45	61.88	Manipuri	54.82
Kabui	43.14	61.75	Manipuri	62.17
Lakher	29.02	59.93	Lushai/Mizo	92.71
Phom	29.81	59.35	Assamese	51.75
Yimchungre	20.78	57.72	Assamese	50.16
Paite	24.02	55.92	English	35.07
Zemi	34.10	54.76	English	31.50
Maram	37.12	53.02	English	47.54
Hmar	30.54	52.13	English	31.29
Konyak	20.72	49.27	Assamese	66.06
Mao	31.45	46.60	English	66.81
Khiemnungam	11.64	46.15	Assamese	72.73
Wancho	23.24	36.45	Hindi	70.41
Chang	19.38	35.53	Assamese	51.80
Garo	18.35	26.25	English	34.22
Lushai/Mizo	9.88	23.28	English	77.04



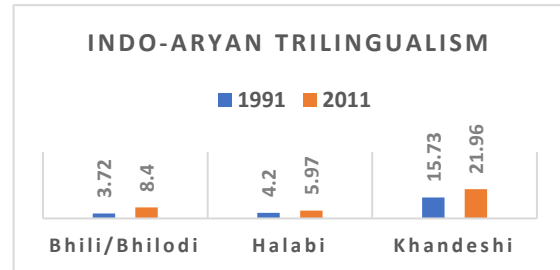
TRILINGUALISM

Indo Aryan: Among the tribal language speakers of this family, trilingualism is not as wide spread as bilingualism is, though it is progressing from decade to decade. In 1991, only Khandeshi had 15.73% trilinguals, more than the national average of 7.26%. In 2011, two languages Khandeshi and Bhili/Bhilodi both have 21.96% and 8.40% trilinguals, above the national average of 7.10%. Though there is a decrease in the national average of trilingualism from 7.26% to 7.10%, there is an increase in case of Indo-Aryan tribal languages. Halbi is an

exception with 4.20% and 5.97%, lower than the national average in 1991 and 2011 respectively.

Table-17
Trilingualism and Indo-Arya Tribal Languages

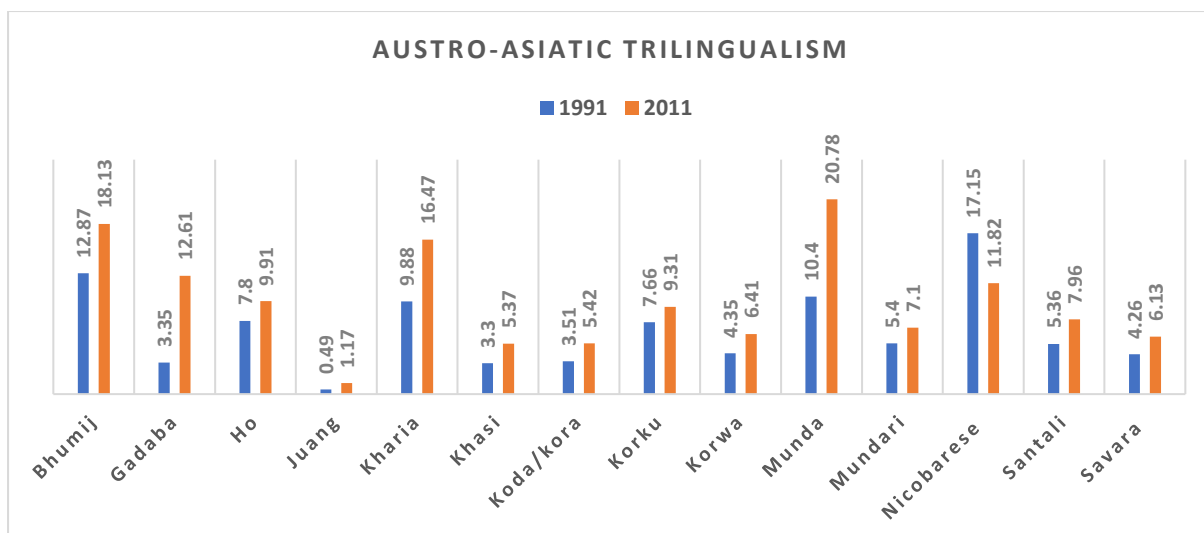
Language	1991	2011
Khandeshi	15.73	21.96
Bhili/Bhilodi	3.72	8.40
Halabi	4.20	5.97



Austro-Asiatic: Trilingualism among the tribal language speakers of this family is also increasing from decade to decade. In 1991 eight out of fourteen languages had trilinguals less than the national average. However, now nine languages have trilinguals more than the national average. Only five languages have trilinguals less than the national average. In 2011, Munda has maximum trilinguals 20.78% and Jung has less trilinguals 1.17%.

Table-18
Trilingualism and Austro-Asiatic Tribal Languages

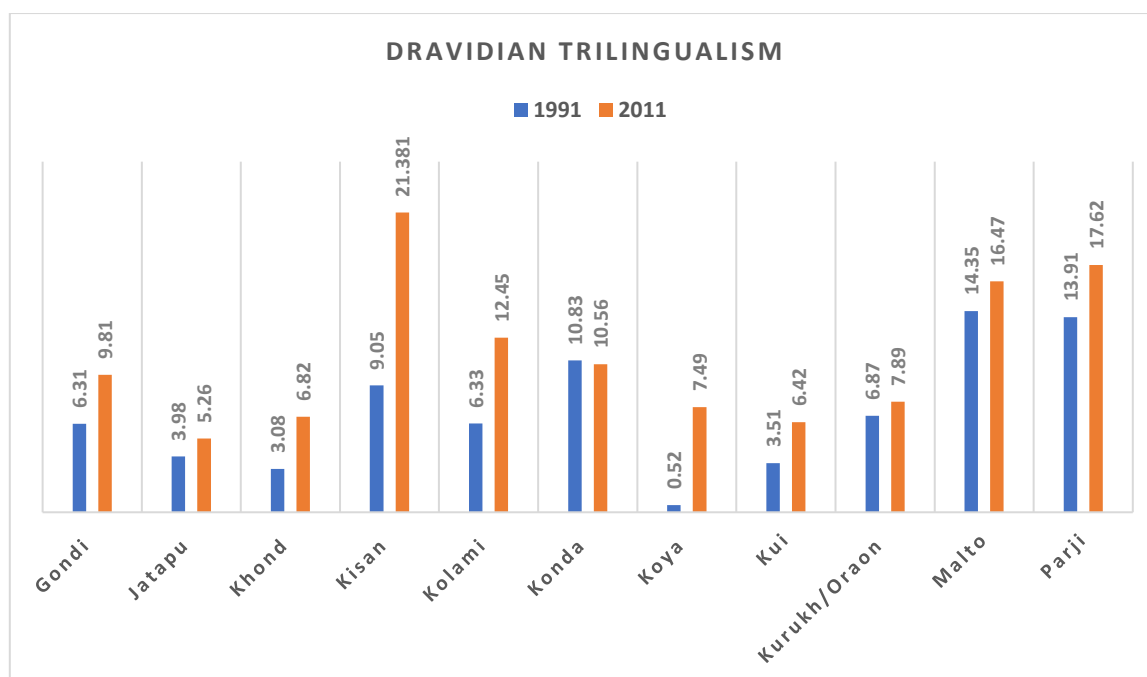
Language	1991	2011	Language	1991	2011
Munda	10.40	20.78	Santali	5.36	7.96
Bhumij	12.87	18.13	Mundari	5.40	7.10
Kharia	9.88	16.47	Korwa	4.35	6.41
Gadaba	3.35	12.61	Savara	4.26	6.13
Nicobarese	17.15	11.82	Koda/kora	3.51	5.42
Ho	7.80	9.91	Khasi	3.30	5.37
Korku	7.66	9.31	Juang	0.49	1.17



Dravidian: Like the tribal languages in the other family of languages, Dravidian tribal languages also show a remarkable progress in the growth of trilingualism among their speakers from decade to decade. In 1991, the percentage of trilinguals was varying from 14.35% in Malto to 0.52% in Koya. At that time seven out of nine languages had trilinguals below the national average. In 2011, only three languages Khond-6.82%, Kui-6.42% and Jatapu-5.26% have trilinguals below the national average of 7.10. Now the percentage of trilinguals ranges from 21.38% in Kisan to 5.26% in Jatapu.

Table-19
Trilingualism and Dravidian Tribal Languages

Language	1991	2011	Language	1991	2011
Kisan	9.05	21.38	Kurukh / Oraon	6.87	7.89
Parji	13.91	17.62	Koya	0.52	7.49
Malto	14.35	16.47	Khond	3.08	6.82
Kolami	6.33	12.45	Kui	3.51	6.42
Konda	10.83	10.56	Jatapu	3.98	5.26
Gondi	6.31	9.81			

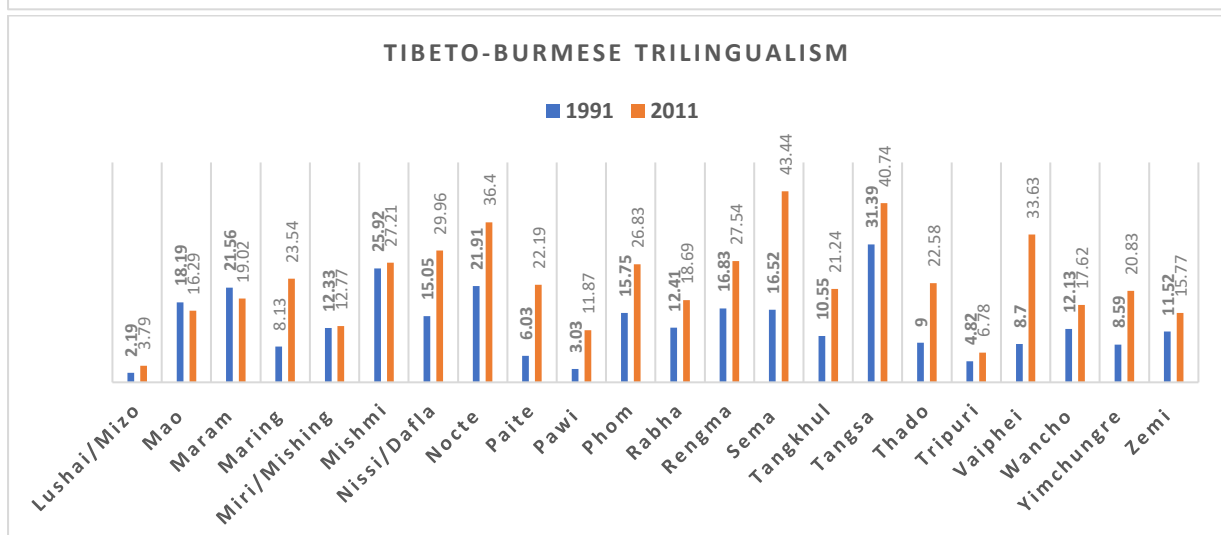
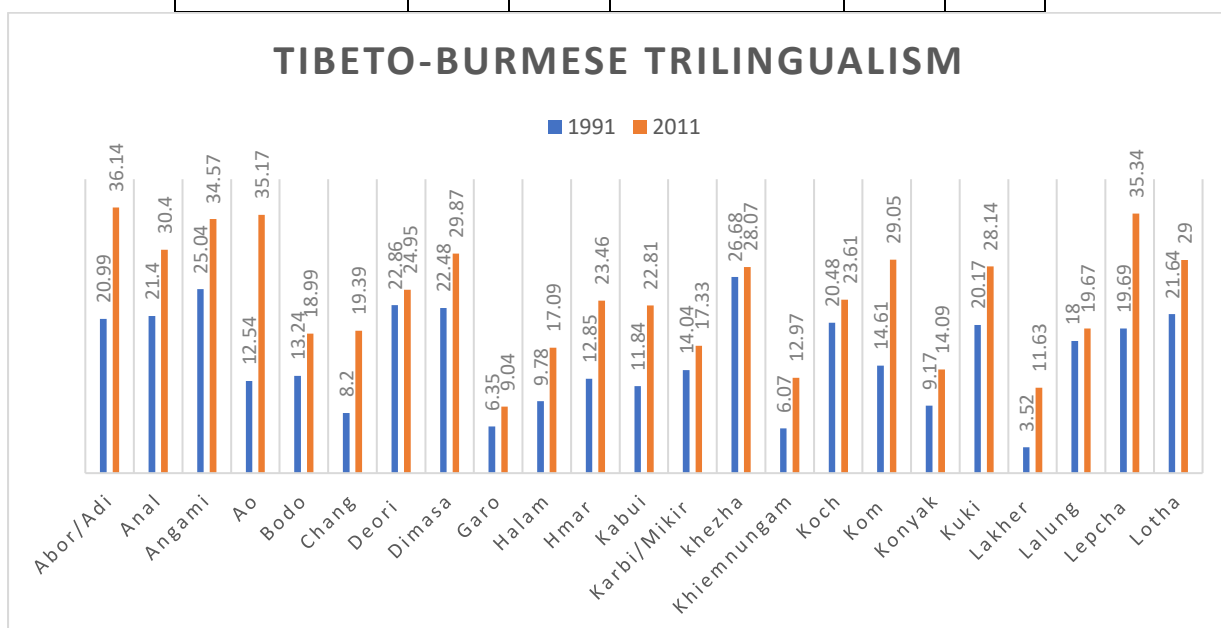


Tibeto-Burmese: As saw earlier that largest group of tribal languages belong to the Tibeto-Burmese family, spoken mainly in the north-east of India. In this family of languages population of trilinguals varies from 43.44% in Sema to 3.79% in Lushai/Mizo. In 1991 seven languages had trilinguals below the national average. In 2011 only two languages Tripuri 6.78% and Lushai/Mizo 3.79% have trilinguals below the national average. It is very important to note that in the Tibeto-Burmese family of tribal languages that - more than 30% of the speakers of 9 languages, 20% of speakers of 18 languages and 10% of 15 languages are trilinguals. Between 1991 and 2011, the percentage of bilingualism among speakers of most of the languages has increased many folds.

Table-20
Trilingualism and Tibeto-Burmese Tribal Languages

Language	1991	2011	Language	1991	2011
Sema	16.52	43.44	Thado	9.0	22.58
Tangsa	31.39	40.74	Paite	6.03	22.19
Nocte	21.91	36.4	Tangkhul	10.55	21.24
Abor / Adi	20.99	36.14	Yimchungre	8.59	20.83
Lepcha	19.69	35.34	Lalung	18.00	19.67
Ao	12.54	35.17	Chang	8.20	19.39
Angami	25.04	34.57	Maram	21.56	19.02
Vaiphei	8.70	33.63	Bodo	13.24	18.99
Anal	21.40	30.40	Rabha	12.41	18.69
Nissi/Dafla	15.05	29.96	Wancho	12.13	17.62
Dimasa	22.48	29.87	Karbi / Mikir	14.04	17.33
Kom	14.61	29.05	Halam	9.78	17.09

Lotha	21.64	29.00	Mao	18.19	16.29
Kuki	20.17	28.14	Zemi	11.52	15.77
Khezha	26.68	28.07	Konyak	9.17	14.09
Rengma	16.83	27.54	Khiemnungam	6.07	12.97
Mishmi	25.92	27.21	Miri / Mishing	12.33	12.77
Phom	15.75	26.83	Pawi	3.03	11.87
Deori	22.86	24.95	Lakher	3.52	11.63
Koch	20.48	23.61	Garó	6.35	9.04
Maring	8.13	23.54	Tripuri	4.82	6.78
Hmar	12.85	23.46	Lushai/Mizo	2.19	3.79
Kabui	11.84	22.81			



TO CONCLUDE ...

In this paper on *Linguistic Demography of Tribal Languages in India* information accessible in the Census of India 2011 under Scheduled Languages and Non-Scheduled Languages is taken as a basis of analysis. Statistical information about the languages/mother tongues where number of speakers is below 10,000 persons is not provided by the Census. Hence, this analysis has its own limitations.

In a multilingual setup due to power relations between different languages, a greater number of minor language speakers tend to be multilingual. Wherever it has evolved, it is because of a given socio-political, economic and demographic factors. It has always remained vibrant. Essential day to day communicative needs of the speakers of the minor languages compel them to know more languages. Multilingualism has spread widely among the speakers of the Tibeto-Burmese family of tribal languages than speakers of languages other families. It is observed that more percentage of tribal language speakers in India are multilingual. People acquire many languages from the social contacts and contexts from their early childhood. They do not have to go to school to learn to use two or more languages.

Growth of multilingualism in the form of bilingualism and trilingualism among the languages discussed here has to be viewed with more caution than celebration. As the time passes, not so language conscious population of the minor or minority languages knowingly or unknowingly may get inclined to adopt the first or second subsidiary language as their mother tongue if it appears to be economically, socially, politically powerful and useful.

Though percentage of most of the speakers of tribal languages in India is increasing, there are grey areas where there is decrease in the number of speakers as revealed in this paper, calling attention of lovers of languages and preservation of linguistic diversity. Reality of not so normal increase in case of some of the tribal languages needs to be looked into to know whether it is real increase or use of language tag for identity assertion by the speakers. The fate of tribal mother tongues which have less than 10,000 speakers as already informed, is not clearly known since their names and numbers are not available in the public domain. We find that many names of languages classified into the language families, scheduled in the Presidential order of 1960, are not to be found now. Some of them could be listed here, the number of speakers at that time are indicated against the name of the language. Austro-Asiatic: Agaria- 98, Asuri- 4540, Birhor- 590, Birjia/ Brijia /Binjhia-2395, Kherwari-647; Dravidian: Kota- 956 and Toda-765; Tibeto-Burmese: Aimol-98, Aka/Hrusso-81, Chiru-3590, Chote-1035, Khoirao-406 and Rangkhoh-4651; Dravidian: Kota- 956 and Toda-765.

Amidst the dark clouds there are silver lines too. Prof. M. S. Thirumalai, the Managing Editor & Publisher of the Online Journal *Language in India* brought to my notice a report appearing *The Times of India* on February 21, 2018, where the Tribal Research Institute has said that, according to Census 2011 the population of Toda and Kota is 2978 and 3110

respectively. Both Toda and Kota dialects are very much alive. This warm note on speakers of two tribal mother tongues of the Dravidian family brings joy to the lovers of indigenous languages.

It is more eloquent to conclude this discussion with a statement from The Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing by UNESCO. It states that “Throughout history and certainly also before known history, languages died and disappeared, many of them leaving no trace. This trend has, during the last two hundred years or so, reached quite alarming proportions. Today, half or more likely even more than half the languages still spoken today are endangered, with quite a few of them in death throes and fated to die in the near to very near future...Any language is to be regarded as endangered if children do not learn it fully any more, or not at all-this will inevitably lead to its death, in due course, unless the languages get revitalised as a result of some new circumstances, or successful application of some efforts at maintaining it.” Efforts may be going on at different institutions and by individuals in India and abroad to study the marginalised languages of India. Studying for studying sake, documentation of them in different formats are welcome. But what is most important from the point of preserving and continuing the intangible heritage is to maintain these languages in the community of speakers. This can happen only with the awakening and participation of the members of the concerned speech community.

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