

Changing Bio-demography of the Todas of the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT A bio-demography survey of the Todas of the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, over generation indicate the change that have occurred not only in the demographic events but also in the socio-economic conditions. The exotic traditional Todas known to the world through their practice of pastoralism and polyandry are also classic in touching zero population growth and at times even negative growth. The present study deciphers the secular trends, if any, in time and space. A survey of the growth rates of the population over nearly ten decades indicates that the population has experienced at times a continuous negative growth during the decades, 1901 to 1931 and again between 1961 and 1971 where the annual exponential growth rates are 0.71, -1.44, -0.67 and -0.44 respectively. A significant positive growth is however established during 1971 and 1991 as the annual exponential growth rates have triggered to 2.85 and 4.25. A significant change is seen not only in fertility and mortality rates but also children ever-born and their survivorship between the two generation, that is, younger and older. The age-specific fertilities of the younger generation indicate that women on an average stands at 2 to 3, while the older generation exhibit a mean number of 4 ever-born children. Similarly, in terms of sib survivorship, the survival capacity of a child born of woman of older generation in only fifty percent, while in the younger generation women it is more, that is, eighty-five percent. As a result, Toda women (38%) prefer to adopt family planning measure after two or three children. These bio-demographic changes have also led to change in socio-economic milieu, such as, polyandry to monogamy type of marriages, joint-extended to nuclear family establishment, avoidance of female infanticide thereby considerable improvements in the female population and thus equal or near equal sex-ratio in the population and finally traditional pastoralism to mixed economy.