

Social and Cultural Characteristics of the People of Puruliya Municipality: A Geographical Appraisal

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Received: March 09, 2018

Accepted: April 12, 2018

ABSTRACT

Puruliya located in western part of West Bengal is a relatively backward region away from the urbanized part of the state. Puruliya Municipality being the district headquarter of Puruliya is a class I town from 2001 onwards. Located in the backward region this town suffers from a number of shortcomings. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the socio cultural characteristics of Puruliya Municipality and also to point out the challenges for the socio cultural development of the town.

Keywords: Puruliya Municipality, Urbanization, Socio-cultural characteristics.

Introduction

Puruliya district had undergone numerous and lengthy phases of reforms before emerged as a separate district in West Bengal from Manbhum district of Bihar on and from 1st Nov. 1956 under the West Bengal and Bihar (Reorganisation of Territories) Act, 1956. Originally, Manbhum district, as it was formed in 1833, comprised of Dhanbad, Puruliya and a part of Bankura district covering 7896 sq. miles. In 1879, the area was curtailed to 3759 sq. miles and finally it has an area of only 2407 sq. miles or 6259 sq. km. at present out of which the urban and rural areas consist of 79.37 sq. kms (1.27 per cent) and 6179.63 sq. kms (98.73 per cent) respectively. So, decades were spent to settle the administrative and political status of this district.

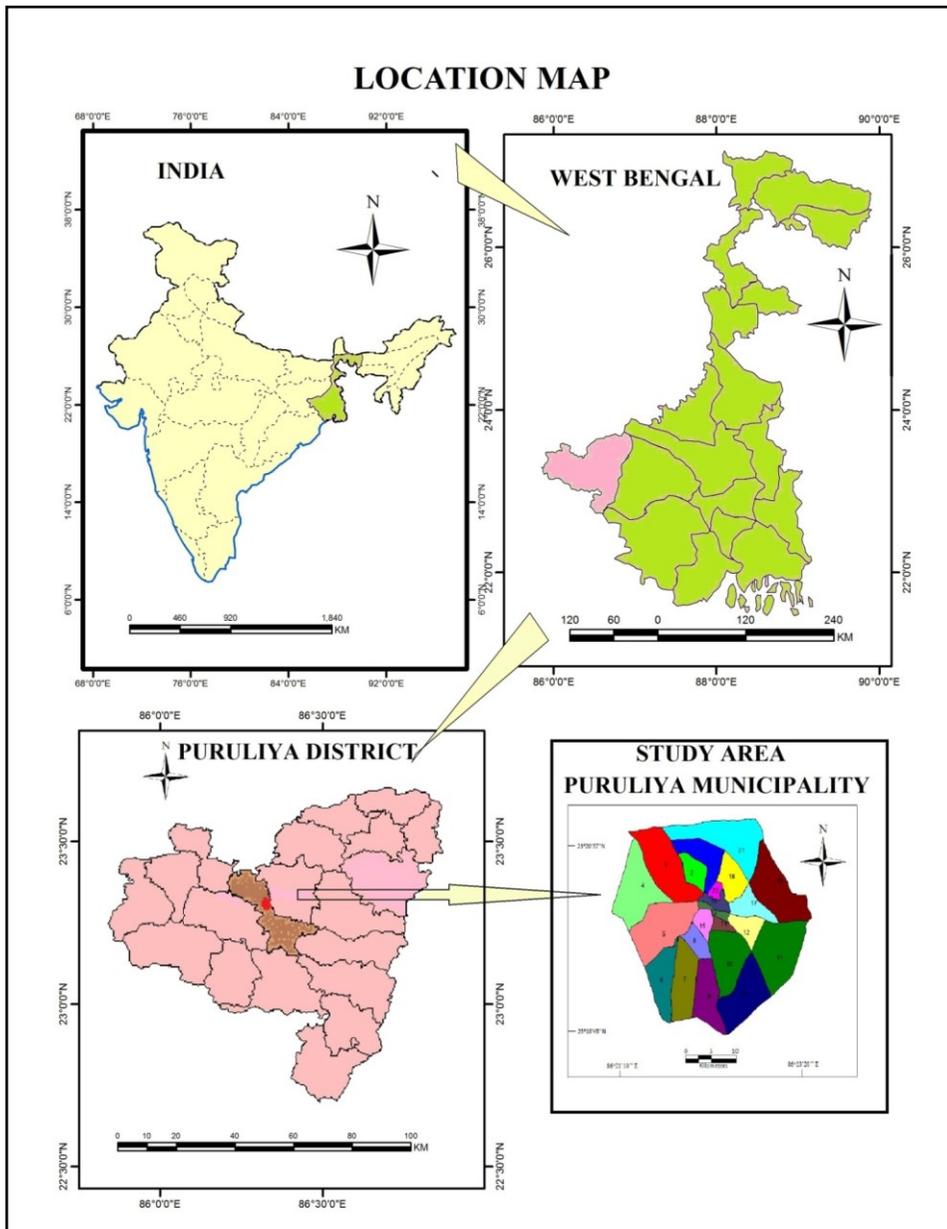
Three sides, viz., north, west and south of the district are surrounded by the state of Jharkhand. Majority of the eastern part of the district is bounded by Bankura. The district also touches a part of Burdwan District on the northeast and a part of Midnapore district on the southeast. Its latitudinal and longitudinal extents are from 22°42'35" to 23°42'00" North and from 85°49'25" to 86°54'37" East respectively. The landscape of Puruliya is quite unique having distinctive soil, terrain, drainage, forest and whole gamut of physical environmental set up which is within the ambit of Rarh tract of West Bengal (Haldar. S, and Saha. P.).

Objectives

1. To analyze the causes of urbanization in Puruliya Municipality..
2. To analyze the trend of population growth and sex-ratio in Puruliya Municipality.
3. To analyze the characteristics of population according to religion in Puruliya Municipality.
4. To analyze the characteristics of working population in Puruliya Municipality.
5. To analyze the age-sex structure of population in Puruliya Municipality.
6. To analyze the availability of household assets and culutral and recreational facilities in Puruliya Municipality.

Methodology and Database

The study has been done by collecting data from secondary source, mostly from various publications of the Census of India. Most of the data collected has been of 2011 with respect to population growth, male-female distribution, religious groups, workers category, household assets and cultural facilities. The maps have been prepared on GIS platform. The background work of digitization was completed with Global Mapper software and for final presentation and layout Map Info software has been used.



Factors responsible for the development of Puruliya Municipality

Urbanization is a dynamic socio-economic force spreading across the world and crossing all the boundaries of religion, custom, race, caste etc. Though the services catered by it may be of the same nature but the process and the causes behind it may not be the same everywhere. Each and every urban nodal point has developed owing to a different set of factors. The comprehensive analysis of the area suggests the following factors for its urbanization:

Economic factor

Perhaps among all the factors, it can be said that economic activity is the most pivotal driving force for the rise of urbanization in Puruliya (Chamling, M.). Due to the process of industrialization along with the innovation of globalization, large number of industries pertaining to both medium and small scale has come up in this area. Apart from these, commercial shops, small and medium traders, wholesalers, banking and insurance sectors, postal services etc. have shown rapid expansion. Puruliya Municipality being the headquarter of the district provides all the urban facilities to the people of the district. This indeed has greatly changed the urban morphology and landscape within a short period of time.

Administrative factor

Puruliya is the headquarter of the district; it is the main hub for all the important official works. It houses all the important offices of civil servants, MPs, MLAs, administrative departments etc. As such, due to its tertiary facilities, every year huge people migrate from adjoining rural areas to the town.

Educational Development

Today Puruliya town has become the main centre of learning in the whole district. Many new schools, colleges and educational institutions offering good career oriented programmes have been established which in turn is attracting huge inflow of people in the town. Highly acknowledged institutions like Sainik School Puruliya, Ram Krishna Mission, Ekalabya School for SC/ST etc. are located in the town. The demand for better education and career has been one of the emerging and determining factors for its rapid population growth.

Table 1. Educational Institutions in Puruliya Municipality (2011)

Sl. No.	Particular	Statistics
1	Primary school	78
2	High school	15
3	SSK	10
4	NCEC	02
5	CEC	22
6	Colleges	05
7	University	State university-1, Open university-1

Source : Chamling.M : Critical appraisal of urbanization in Puruliya Municipality, pp-52

Transportation

Puruliya is well connected by both roads and railways. Three railway routes provided by South Eastern Railways connect Puruliya with all the major cities of the country. In terms of road transport, NH 32, NH 60A, NH 2 and State highway 5 fulfil all transportation and communication requirements of the place. All the important cities like Kolkata, Durgapur, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Asansol are easily accessible from Puruliya. This in turn has played vital role in the growth of Puruliya town.

Medical facilities

Since Puruliya has a large number of advanced and sophisticated medical institutions, it has become the central point for urbanization. In order to avail the medical facilities people from all the corner of the district visit Puruliya town. The absence of adequate health service in the rural areas pushes the people to settle in and round the town.

Table 2. Health institutions in Puruliya town (2011)

Sl. No.	Name of health unit	Facilities	Controlling authority	No. of beds
1	Deben Mahato Dist. Hospital	General	Govt	506
2	Puruliya Jail Hospital	General	Govt.	09
3	Puruliya Mental Hospital	Mental	Govt.	10
4	Sanjeevini Nursing Home	Maternity	Pvt.	20
5	Rameshwarlal Seva Pratisthan	General	Pvt.	20
6	Rotary Service	X Ray	NGO	45
7	Lifeline Nursing Home	Maternity	Pvt.	10
8	Roy's Nursing Home	Maternity	Pvt.	15

Source : Chamling.M : Critical appraisal of urbanization in Purulia Municipality, pp-53

Socio-cultural characteristics of the region

Tourism

Due to activism of Maoism and its detrimental impact, the main stream of tourism has almost come to the halt. But in the recent past due to good governance policy, there has been marked reduction in the red flag activities which in turn has boosted the tourism industry. Ayodha Hill, Joychandi Pahar, Sahed Bandh Lake, Surulia Zoo, Bagmundhi Pahar etc are the main attraction of the region. The legacy of Chhau dance and

Jhumur song with its worldwide recognition pulls a large number of tourists both domestic and foreign every year. Hence, in the present scenario, tourism factor has paved the way for urbanization in Puruliya.

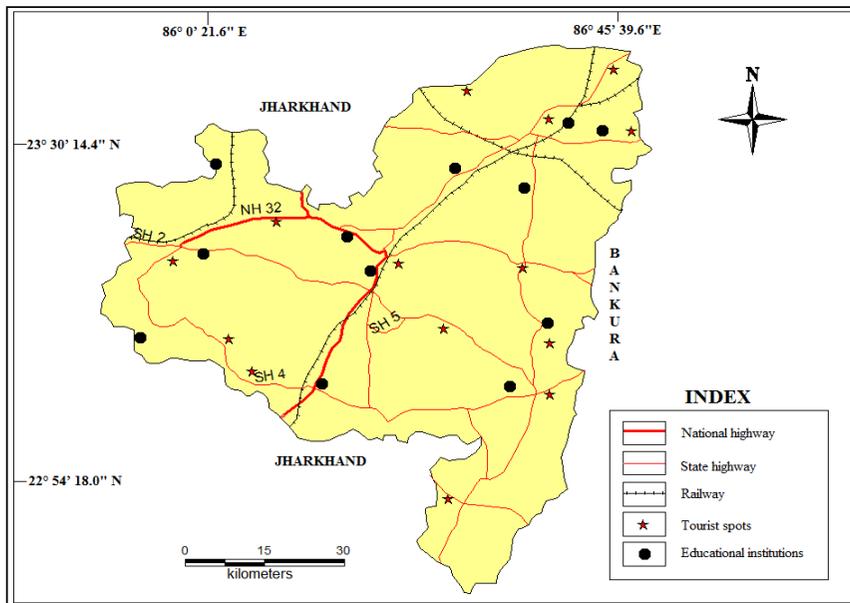
Culture

Puruliya has rich cultural heritage. It has the mixed culture of Bengal, Jharkhand, and Orissa due to its proximity to neighbouring states. From archaeological evidences to local festivals, every cultural event has got a tribal touch in it, which is the speciality of Puruliya. The distinctiveness of that culture is well demonstrated with the sentiments and feelings of the population and they are marked with the splash of colours and often entwined with pathos, romanticism, velour, and social consciousness. Puruliya got a distinct folk of Jhumur, Tusu, Bhadu songs. It is also the birthplace of a marital dance of Bengal Chhau.

Festivals

‘Bhadu’ is another festival started by Panchakot raj of Kashipur after the death of the king’s daughter named Bhadravati and nowadays it is enjoyed by the local masses. Karma is a festival of the tribe in Puruliya where tribal people worship the tree whose local name is ‘Karam’. Poila Boisakh (the first day of the Bengali New Year) is also observed in Puruliya by the local people with religious culture and Chhau dance. Tourism festival (Porjoton Utsab) in Raghunathpur Joychandi Pahar is the most popular festival in the Puruliya District during the last week of December.

Figure 1.Important Tourist destination in Puruliya District



Analysis

Table 3 shows the trend of population and growth rate for Puruliya Municipality. It can be clearly seen from the table that Puruliya witnessed a steady increase in its population from 1901 to 2011. From 2001 itself Puruliya gained the status of Class I town with population over one lakh. The decadal growth rate shows wide variation with the highest growth rate observed in 1941-51 and the lowest in 1911-21. The most significant trend is the gradual decrease in growth rate from 1981 onwards and the last decade i.e. 2001 -11 recording one of the lowest growth rate for the town.

Table 3. Trends of population and its growth rate (1901 - 2011)

Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Population	17,291	20,886	22,161	25,974	30,445	41,461	48,134	57,708	73,904	92,386	1,13,806	1,21,067
Decadal Growth Rate (%)	-	20.79	6.10	17.21	17.21	36.18	16.09	19.89	28.07	25.01	23.19	6.38

Table 4 shows the sex ratio of Puruliya Municipality from 1981 to 2011. During these thirty years the lowest sex ratio was recorded in 1991 and the highest in 2011. More significantly the sex ratio in 2011 is far better than the national average for urban centres across the country.

Table 4. Sex Ratio (1981 - 2011)

Year	1981	1991	2001	2011
Female	915	908	926	942
Male	1000	1000	1000	1000

Figure 2 shows the religious composition of population for Puruliya Municipality in 2011. It is clearly evident that Hindus dominate the municipality with more than 3/4th of the total population belonging to this category. The Muslims being the second most dominant religious group also occupies a significant proportion about 1/6th of the total population. The third most important religious group is the Christians although of insignificant proportion.

Figure 2 RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF TOTAL POPULATION (2011)

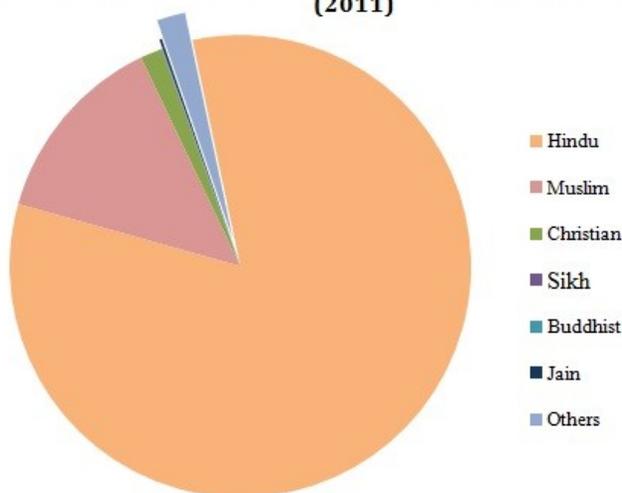


Figure 3 shows the distribution of population by religion according to age group in Puruliya Municipality. What is evident from the figure that the percentage of Muslims in lower age group is higher and it decreases significantly with increase in age group for example in the age group of 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 the percentage of Muslim population is about 17 percent while in the age group of 40-44 and higher their percentage drops to about 10 percent. This is essentially because of late acceptance of birth control measures among the Muslims in general compared to other religious groups.

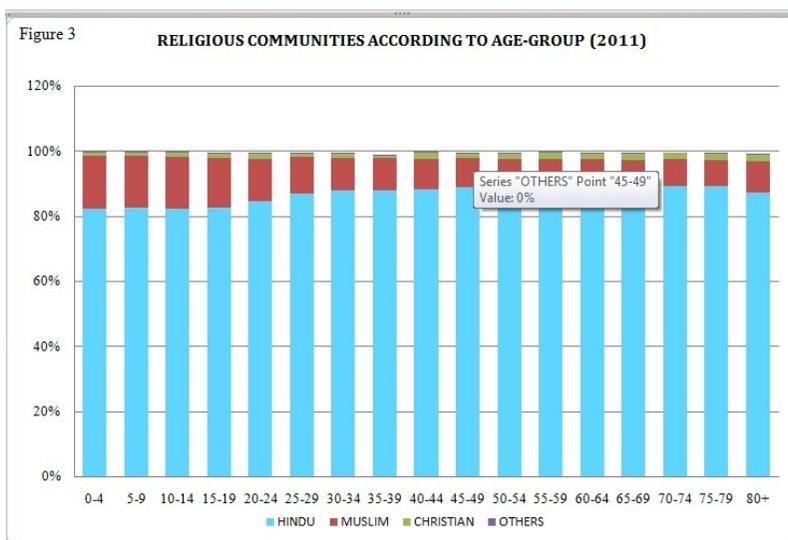


Figure 4 shows the literacy rate among various religious groups in Puruliya Municipality. It shows that among all the religious groups Christians and Jains are in a better position both in terms of male and female literacy rate. Infact the disparity in literacy rate between male and female is least among the Christians and maximum among the Sikhs. This gives an idea about the position of female in these religious groups. It seems the Muslims are in worst position in terms of literacy rate both for male and female with figures well below the general literacy rate.

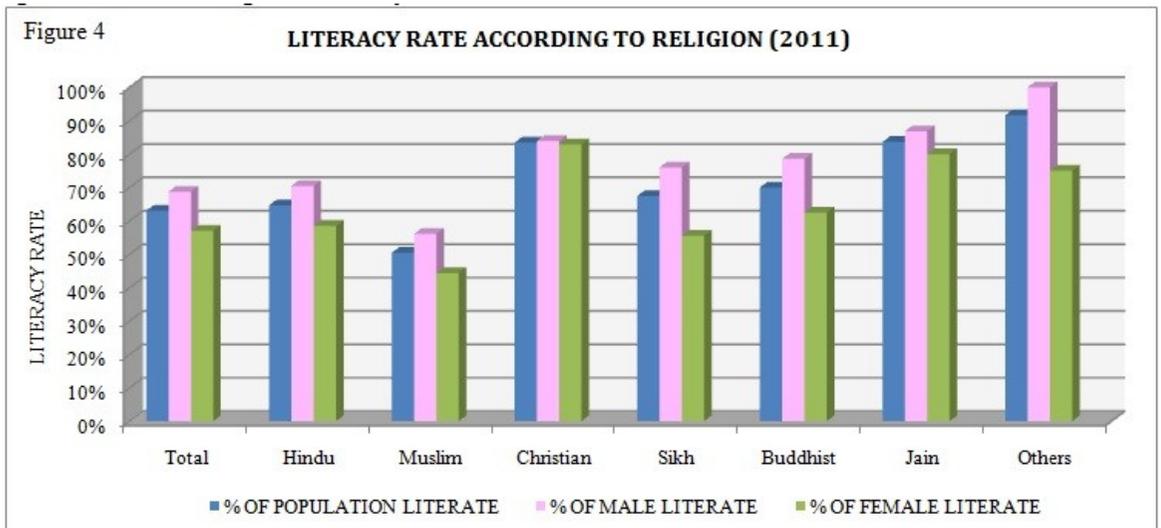


Figure 5 shows the mother tongue of the people of Puruliya Municipality. As evident Bengali is the mother tongue of more than 80 percent of the total population in the town. The second most dominant mother tongue is Hindi followed by Urdu.

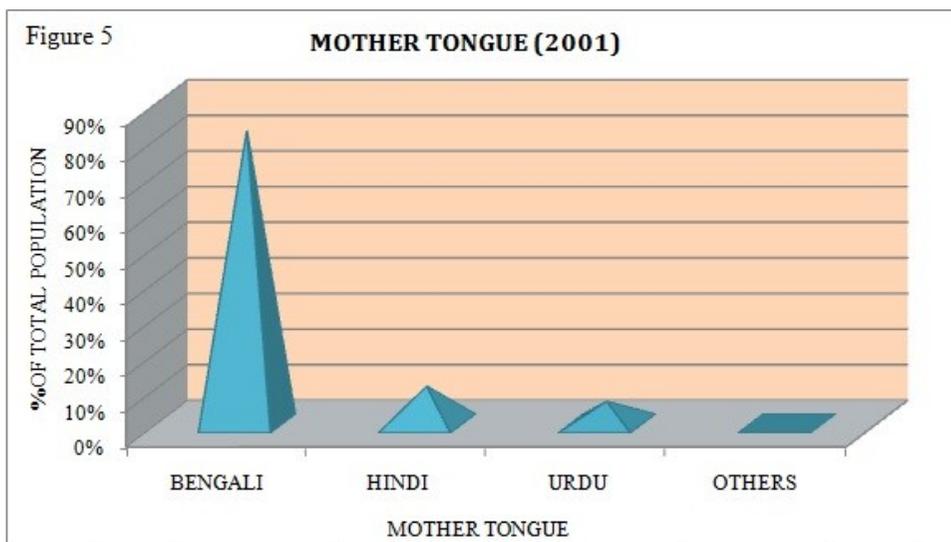


Figure 6 shows the category of working population in Puruliya Municipality. It shows main and marginal workers combined forms about 1/3rd of the total population. The non workers constitute about 2/3rd of the total population, a figure quite high for a small town like Puruliya which obviously pushes up the dependency ratio in the town.

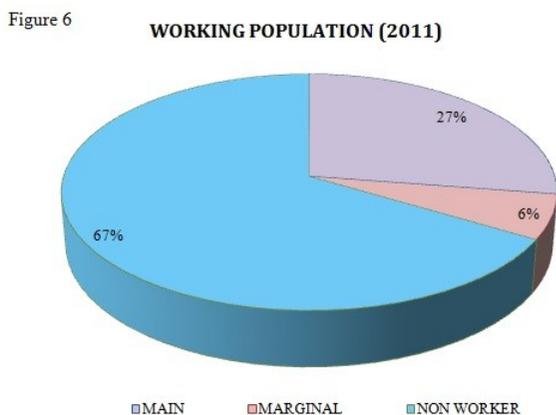
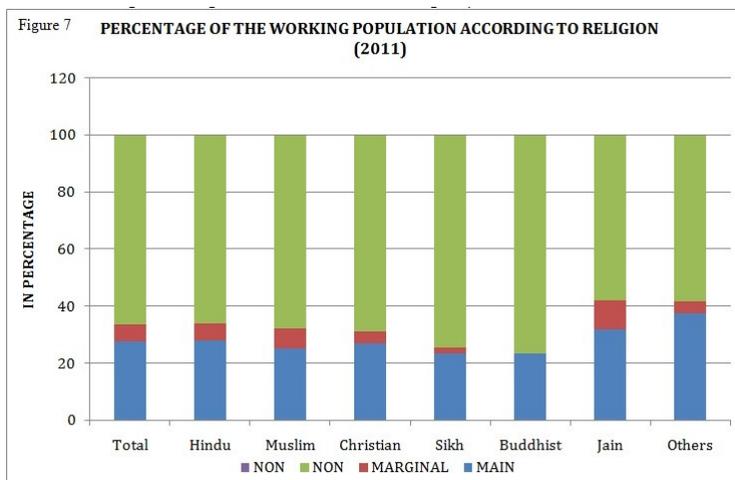


Figure 7 shows the working population according to religious group in Puruliya Municipality. It shows the percentage of main workers in highest among the Jains and lowest among the Buddhist. Jains also has the highest percentage of marginal workers while the marginal workers is absent among the Buddhist. Non-workers is highest among the Buddhist and lowest among the Jains.



The occupational structure of a society is the mix of different types of occupations found in a region (Roy. S.S, and Jana. N.C.). Figure 8 shows the occupational distribution of main workers according to religious groups in Puruliya Municipality. Buddhist has the highest percentage in other workers category. Muslims and Jains have maximum household industry workers. Agricultural labourers are insignificant among all religious groups. However, cultivators are significant only among the Sikhs.

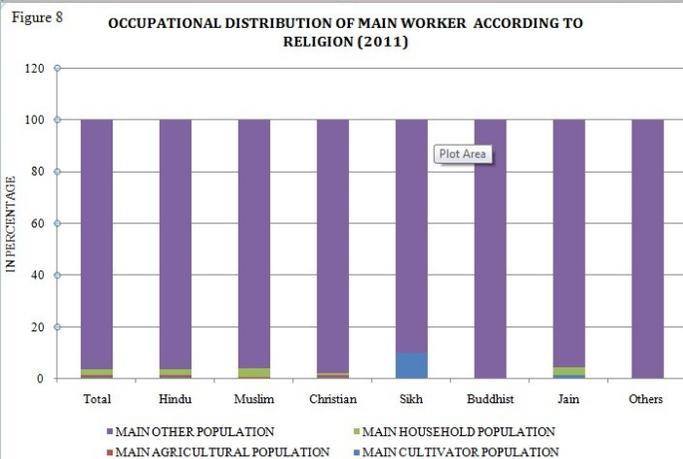


Figure 9 shows the marital status of the head of the household in Puruliya Municipality. It shows that nearly 75 percent of the head of the household are currently married out of which the male members really dominate. This is in conformity with the family structure prevalent in our society where in most of the households the elderly male member welds the maximum power and he is the last word in any decision making process. However among the widowed headed households it is the females who dominate. Rest of the categories have very insignificant proportion of the head of the household.

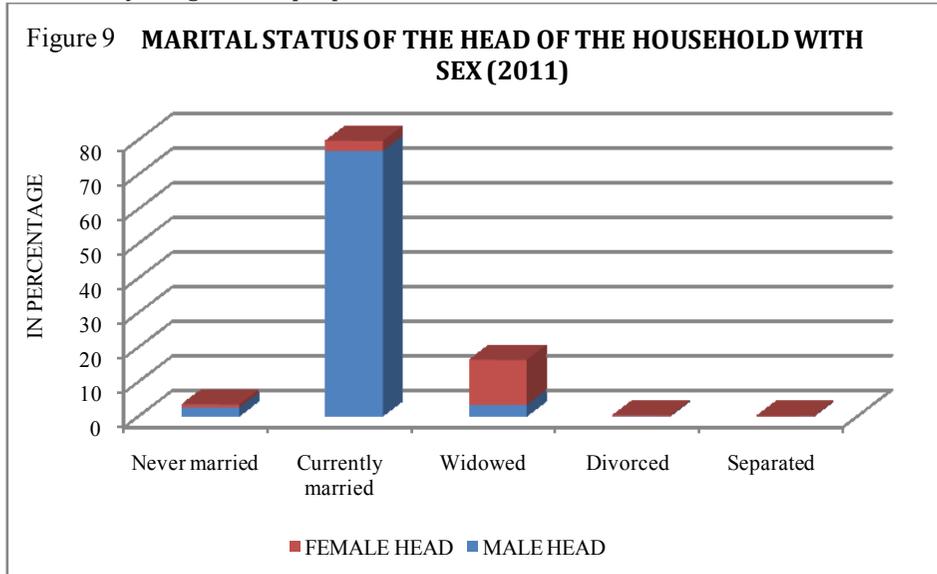


Figure 10 and 11 shows the age-sex pyramid of Puruliya Municipality. The pyramid is more or less same for 2001 and 2011 respectively which signify very little change has taken place during this time. The age-sex pyramid is similar to one typically observed in any developing country with broad base and gradually tapering with increase in age. The three age groups with highest proportion of population are 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19 for both the years.

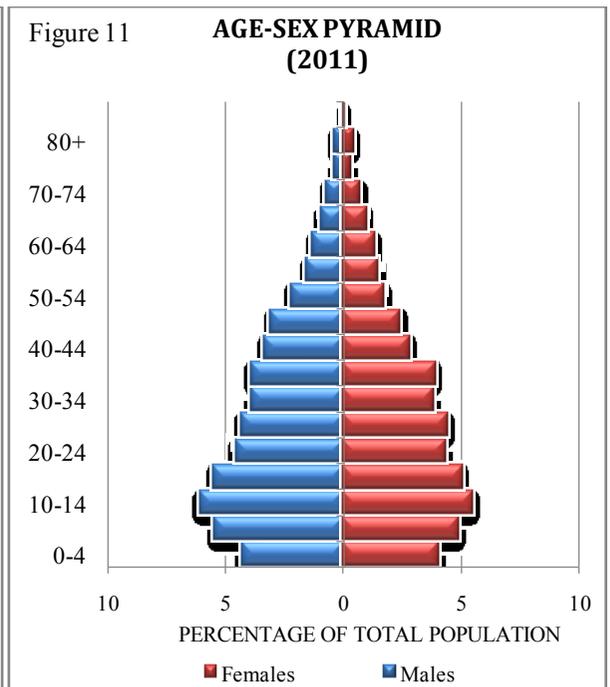
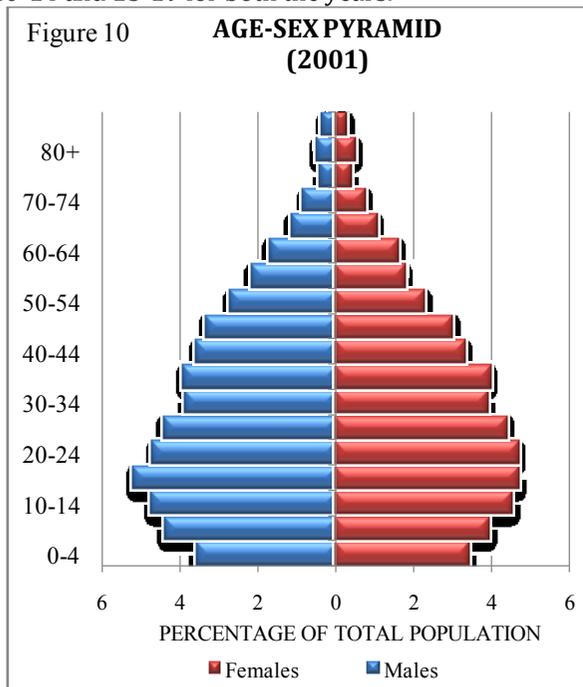


Figure 12 shows the availability of some particular assets among the households in Puruliya Municipality. It shows bicycle and television are the two most common assets found in majority of the households. Nearly 1/4th of the households have a two wheeler which is really an indicator of recent prosperity. Modern gadgets like computer and mobile phone is relatively less common with only about 10 percent of the households having access to them. Others assets like four wheeler and radio is relatively less

common among the households with only the super rich owing a four wheeler and the poor households a radio.

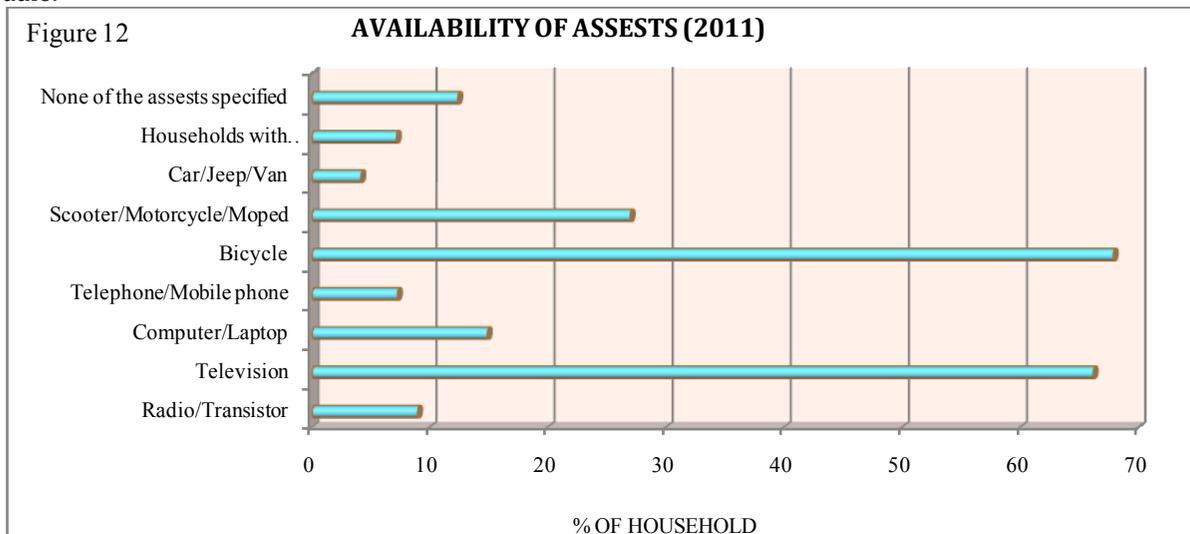
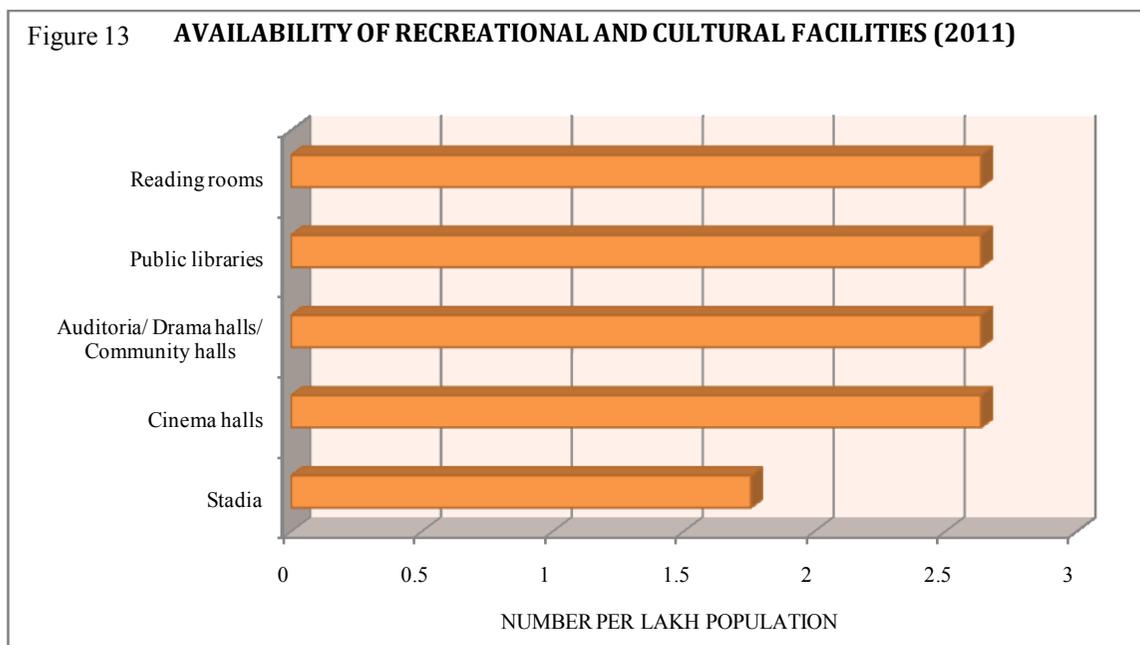


Figure 13 shows the availability of recreational and cultural facilities in Puruliya Municipality. It shows various facilities like reading rooms, public library, community hall, cinema hall and stadium are a rare commodity in Puruliya. Therefore efforts must be taken to improve the availability of these facilities as they form a very important component for overall development of human kind.



Conclusion

In the discussion so far it is found that Puruliya is rapidly passing through the urbanization phase. But under the process it is also simultaneously facing serious urban crisis and problems. With the unprecedented urbanization and related phenomenon, Puruliya is facing large scale urban environmental deterioration over the years. The level of air, water and solid waste pollution are steadily rising. The biggest problem of urbanization in Puruliya can be seen by the proliferation of slums and squatters. As per IHSDP survey (2011) it has a slum population of about 47544 and BPL population of 8804. This underprivileged group lives in the settlements that are made up of temporary buildings with few basic services.

Every year huge flow of rural to urban migration is experienced by the town. The main motive behind such large scale migration is in search of good jobs and thus a better way of life. As in the town, there

is already a shortage of employment; this migration has further aggravated the problem (Chamling. M.). Within a short span of time the percentage of unemployed or people seeking employment has increased many folds in Puruliya.

As Puruliya town is growing in both spatial extension and urban functions; it is facing the growing momentum of traffic congestion. The main CBD of the town is severely affected by the lack of space to park the vehicles. Moreover, the concentration of govt. offices, schools, colleges in the town has put tremendous pressure on public transportation and given rise to related problems. Therefore the need of the hour is better urban governance with bottom-up approach to planning where the common people will be a part of the developmental works with their views and active participation. In this regard adequate funding from state and central government for improving common services and infrastructure to meet the challenges in the coming days is the need of the hour.

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