



Echoes of Injustice: Exploring Crime Patterns against Scheduled Tribes in North-Eastern India

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.12733170](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12733170)

Submission Date: 06 May 2024 | Published Date: 12 July 2024

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Abstract

It has been observed that crime against the scheduled tribes is a major issue in Assam and Mizoram. There are no registered criminal cases against the scheduled tribes in Meghalaya and Nagaland. Mizoram is the only state that records the incidences and victims of simple hurt, grievous hurt and assault on children. The state has also records the highest incidences and victims of assault on women. There are no cases of stalking and insult to the modesty of women in any of these states. Mizoram has the highest incidences of crime/atrocities against scheduled tribes followed by Assam, Sikkim, Tripura and Manipur. There are no incidences of crime/atrocities against scheduled tribes in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, crimes against women deterring empowerment and progress of the women of scheduled tribe's category. Therefore, the Governments of the concerned states should introduce proper policies for reducing such crimes against the scheduled tribes. This study is the first of its kind to acknowledge and analyse the crime statistics of the aforementioned areas. The novelty of this paper is that it is the first to identify and highlight the atrocities committed against the tribal population in the northeastern states of India. This paper discusses the crimes committed against the scheduled tribes in the north-eastern states of India and aims to provide key insights to scholars, researchers and policymakers who contribute towards the upliftment of tribal communities in India.

Keywords: Crime, North-eastern region, Atrocities, Scheduled Tribes, and Women.

Introduction:

Scheduled Tribes are a deprived class of people recognised in the Constitution of India. Article 366 (25) and Article 342 of our Constitution discusses about such tribes. The essential characteristics of these communities are economic backwardness, cautious of contact with the community at large, distinct culture, geographical isolation and primitive traits (Guha, 2019). They are notified in 30 States/UTs. Union Territories of Chandigarh, Delhi and Puducherry and states such as Haryana and Punjab do not have any community specified as Scheduled Tribe (Madhok, 2013). As per the 2011 census, the total population of scheduled tribes in India are 10.43 crore, constituting 8.6 per cent of which 10.03 per cent live in urban areas and 89.97 per cent the rest i.e live in rural areas. The STs broadly inhabit in the areas like Central India and North-Eastern while Central India has more than half of the Scheduled Tribe population, more than two-thirds of the ST population lives in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh (Gandee, 2020).

The Constitution of India categorises these tribes into two groups: Scheduled Tribes (Plains) and Scheduled Tribes (Hills). Tribal communities generally live in the forests, hills and inaccessible areas. Out of the 700 tribes, 75 are particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Ramaiah, 2011). The basic features of such groups are subsistence level of economy, extremely low literacy, stagnant or declining population and pre-agriculture level of technology. In West Bengal, there are 40 distinct tribes. Santals are the largest tribe in West Bengal and Jharkhand. Negritoes are considered as the oldest tribe (Tiwari, 2022). Tribal life is characterized by closeness to nature, low population density, small group size, simplicity, and cultural isolation. The Main Scheduled Tribes (Plains) in Assam include the Hajong, Missing, Sonowal,

Deori, and Bodo. Dimasa and Karbi people have the Scheduled Tribes (Hills) status. Bodo is the largest tribe in the state (Tiwari and Shubham, 2023). Nagaland has 17 major tribes along with other sub-tribes. Sumi tribe is the oldest tribe and Konyak is the largest tribe in the state. The Pochury is one of the smallest Naga tribes. Mizo (Lushai), Chakma, Lakher (Mara), and Pawi (Lai) are some of the major tribes in Mizoram (Prasad and Bibhar, 2020).

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of this paper are: (a) to study the trends and patterns of crimes against scheduled tribes in the north-eastern states of India, and (b) to identify the various initiatives of governments for mitigating such crimes.

The Study Area:

Northeast India is the easternmost part of India. It is commonly known as "Seven Sisters." The contiguous states are Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. It is situated in the Eastern Himalayas. The total area of the region is 262,184 km^s and the population is 45,772,188 as per census report 2011. The region has 3.8 per cent of India's total population. Agriculture is the basic livelihood for the tribal households of the area. It has a subtropical climate. Hinduism is the main religion. It has over 220 ethnic groups.



Methods and Materials:

- **Design and Approach:** This study is descriptive in design and has utilised a qualitative approach. Secondary data for the study has been purposively collected and analyses from various govt. reports, National Crime Record Bureau website, reports of international agencies, research papers, published or unpublished thesis, articles, etc.
- **Method of Analysis:** To reveal the crimes against scheduled tribes in general and the women in particular, a method of qualitative analysis comprising of descriptive analysis, content and text analysis has been performed.
- **Period of Study:** This study is confined to three years i.e. 2020-2022 to analyses the recent crime status of the aforementioned states. The period 2023 and 2024 have not been considered as they are a part of ongoing ephemeris.

Results and Discussion:

Crime against scheduled tribes is a most sensitive issue. There is discrimination and oppression against the people belonging to Scheduled Tribes who are historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the Indian context. As per the figures from the National Crime Records Bureau, cases of crimes against people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes are on rise gradually and progressively. These include crimes such as kidnapping, stalking, sexual harassment, assault on women, murder, and assault on children among others. Cases registered for crimes against STs in India rose from 6,528 in 2018 to over 8,272 in 2020. The government of India have implemented the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act to prohibit discrimination against people from the Scheduled Tribes category.

Table 1: Crime against Scheduled Tribe(s) - 2020-2022

State	2020	2021	2022	Rate of Total Crime against STs (2022)	Charge sheeting Rate (2022)
Manipur	2	0	1	0.1	0.0
Arunachal	0	1	0	0	0
Meghalaya	0	0	0	0.0	-
Assam	10	16	9	0.2	58.3
Mizoram	0	0	29	2.8	100.0
Tripura	2	0	3	0.3	0.0

Nagaland	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Sikkim	0	1	4	1.9	1000.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p. 637, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India.

Table 1 depicts the crimes or atrocities against scheduled tribe(s) in the northeastern states. It has been found that Assam and Mizoram are ahead of other states in the region. During 2020-2022 the number of total crime cases committed against the tribals in Assam and Mizoram are 35 and 29 respectively. There are no registered crime cases in Meghalaya and Nagaland. The number of total crime cases registered against the tribals during the period but in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur these are 1 and 3 respectively while five cases are registered each in Sikkim and Tripura during this period.

Table 2: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in North-eastern States- Murder and Attempt to Commit Murder

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC (Total)			SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act					
				Murder*			Attempt to Commit Murder^		
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	1	1	0.1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	5	8	0.1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	29	31	2.8	4	4	0.4	2	2	0.2
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	1	1	0.5	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p.638, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R=Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases. * Sec. 302 IPC, Sec. 307 IPC. Sec. 307 IPC.

Table 2 describes the murder and attempt to commit murder cases against Scheduled Tribes in the north-eastern states. Murder is a crime of intentionally killing a person due to multiple reasons. It is an unlawful and unpleasant task. An attempt to commit murder is an unsuccessful or terminated attempt to murder another person. It has been found that Mizoram records the highest number of incidences and victims under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC, followed by Assam, Sikkim and Manipur. There are no such incidences in Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. Except Mizoram, there are no incidences and victims of murder and attempts to murder in other states in the region.

Table 3: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in North-eastern States – Simple Hurt and Grievous Hurt

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC								
	Grievous Hurt						Simple Hurt		
	Grievous Hurt (Total)			Grievous Hurt					
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	4	4	0.4	4	4	0.4	5	5	0.5
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p.639, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R=Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table 3 discusses the simple hurt and grievous hurt cases against scheduled tribes in the northeastern states. Simple hurt does not pose any threat to the life of any person. The victim suffers some physical harm due to the actions of the offender. It is not catastrophic. Grievous hurt is opposite of the simple hurt. It is rashly or negligently endangering human life. It has been found that Mizoram is the only state that has experienced the incidences and the victims of simple hurt and grievous hurt cases against the Scheduled Tribes in the Northeastern region. Except for Mizoram, other northeastern states do not have any case or victim of grievous hurt.

Table 4: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in North-eastern States – Assault on Women

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC								
	Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage Her Modesty								
	Assault on Adult Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty			Assault on Women (Above 18 years)			Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty (Adults+ Children)		
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	3	3	0.3	3	3	0.3	7	7	0.7
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	1	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	1	0.5

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p.641, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R=Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table 4 discusses the assault on the women of scheduled tribes in northeastern states. Assault on women is the violence against women. It is the most frequent human rights violation. It has been found that Mizoram has recorded the highest incidences and victims followed by Sikkim. There are no such incidences and victims in the states of the region. Mizoram is also the only state in the region having an assault on women (above 18 years). There are incidences of assault on adult women in Mizoram and Sikkim.

Table 5: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in North-eastern States – Stalking, Assault of Children and Insult to the Modesty of Women

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC								
	Insult to the Modesty of Women			Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage Her Modesty					
				Assault of Children			Stalking		
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	0	0	0.0	4	4	0.4	0	0	0.0
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p.643, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R= Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table 5 illustrates the cases of stalking, assault on children, and insult to the modesty of scheduled tribes in women the northeastern states. Stalking is the unwanted behaviour of any person that causes fear or safety concerns in a victim. Stalkers may use violence or threats to frighten their victims. Child abuse is emotional, sexual, physical and/or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child under 18. Outrage of modesty refers to the actions that violate a person's dignity often in a sexual manner. It has been found that there are no cases of stalking and insult to the modesty of women in any state. Mizoram is the only state that has incidences of assault on children.

Table 6: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in North-eastern States – Kidnapping, Abduction, and Rape

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC								
	Rape of Women (Above 18 yrs.)			Rape (Total)			Kidnapping and Abduction		
							Other Kidnapping & Abduction		
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	1	1	0.1	1	1	0.1	0	0	0.0

Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	0	0	0.0	1	1	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	0	0	0.0	5	7	0.5	0	0	0.0
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p.647, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R= Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table-6 discusses the cases kidnapping, abduction, and rape incidences against scheduled tribes in the northeastern states. Kidnapping means forcibly taking away a person to any unknown location against his/her will. Abduction is the act of forcing a person to go somewhere with you, especially using threats or violence. Rape is the unlawful sexual activity carried out forcibly or under threat of injury. It has been found that there are no incidences of kidnapping and abduction in any state in the region. Mizoram has the highest incidences of rape cases followed by Assam and Manipur. Number of rape victims are highest in Assam. Manipur is the only state having an incidence of rape of a woman above 18 years.

Table 7: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in north-eastern states – Rape of Children, Attempt to Commit Rape, and Rioting

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC								
	Rape of Children (Below 18 yrs.)			Attempt to Commit Rape			Rioting		
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	1	1	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	5	0	0.5	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, p.648, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R= Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table-7 discusses the rape of children, attempts to commit rape and rioting cases against the scheduled tribes in north-eastern states. Rape of children is an unlawful sexual activity carried out forcibly or under threat of injury who are under the age of 18. Attempted rape occurs when an individual attempt to commit the act of rape but fails to carry out the full offence. Rioting is a violent public disorder. It has been found that Mizoram has the highest incidence of rape of children followed by Assam. Tripura, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh do not have any incidence of rape of children belonging to the scheduled tribes. There are no incidences of attempts to commit rape and rioting against the scheduled tribes in any northeastern states.

Table 8: Crime Head-wise against Scheduled Tribes in north-eastern states – Robbery, and Dacoity

State	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act r/w IPC								
	Dacoity						Robbery		
	Dacoity with Murder			Dacoity					
	I	V	R	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	1	1	0.1	1	1	0.1	1	1	0.1
Tripura	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R= Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table 8 discusses the incidences of robbery and dacoity against the scheduled tribes in northeastern states. Robbery is the unlawful way of taking property of another person. It may be by violence or threat of violence. It is motivated by the desire to obtain money or assets. Dacoity is the crime of stealing money or goods especially done by the armed gang. It has been found that Mizoram is the only state in the region to have incidences of robbery. There is only one incidence of robbery in the state and the number of victim is also one. Mizoram is also the only state having the incidence of Dacoity and Dacoity with murder in the region. There is only one incidence of Dacoity and Dacoity with murder in the state.

Table 9: Total Crime/Atrocities against Scheduled Tribes in north-eastern states

State	Total Crime/ against Scheduled Tribes			Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955		
	I	V	R	I	V	R
Manipur	1	1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Arunachal	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Meghalaya	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Assam	9	12	0.2	0	0	0.0
Mizoram	29	31	2.8	0	0	0.0
Tripura	3	4	0.3	0	0	0.0
Nagaland	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Sikkim	4	4	1.9	0	0	0.0

Source: Crime in India 2022 report, National Crime Record Bureau, Govt. of India. Note: R= Crime Rate per lakh population, V= No. of Victims, and I= No. of Incidences/Cases.

Table 9 discusses the total crime/atrocities against scheduled tribes in the northeastern region. It has been found that Mizoram has the highest incidences of crime/atrocities against scheduled tribes followed by Assam, Sikkim, Tripura and Manipur. There are no incidences of crime/atrocities against scheduled tribes in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Assam has the highest crime rate per lakh population followed by Sikkim, Tripura and Manipur.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, and The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 were passed for empowerment of the tribals. Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan was launched on November 15, 2023, for the development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. The Department of Tribal Welfare has been set up by state governments for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. There are many incidences of racial discrimination against the northeastern tribes in other states of India. Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was introduced to curb such incidences. Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2014 was introduced after a large number of cases of violation against the Northeastern people were recorded.

Conclusion:

Crime against the scheduled tribes is a most sensitive issue. Discrimination against scheduled tribes still exists although the government have enacted various Acts. Assam and Mizoram have higher crime rates compared to the other states of the region. Mizoram is the only state that has the incidences and victims of simple hurt and grievous hurt cases. It has also the highest incidences and victims of assault on women followed by Sikkim. There are no such incidences and victims in other states of the region. Mizoram is also the only state in the region having an assault on women (above 18 years). There are incidences of assault on adult women with the intent to outrage their modesty in Mizoram and Sikkim.

There are no cases of stalking, kidnapping abduction and insult to the modesty of women in the region. Mizoram is the only state that has incidences of assault on children. It has recorded the highest incidences of rape and of rape of children followed by Assam. There are no incidences of attempts to commit rape and rioting against the scheduled tribes in any northeastern states. Mizoram is the only state in the region to have incidences of robbery, dacoity and dacoity with murder in the region. It has the highest incidences of crime/atrocities against the scheduled tribes followed by Assam, Sikkim, Tripura and Manipur. There are no incidences of crime/atrocities against scheduled tribes in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The government of India have already passed various laws to reduce crime and discrimination against the scheduled tribes, but it still exists. There are many incidences of discrimination against the scheduled tribes of the other states of India. There should be more awareness and implementation of such laws.

This study is confined because of three limitations. Firstly, this paper acknowledges the crime statistics as available in government-released documents. There is a high possibility that a greater number of crimes might be going unreported in the targeted regions. Secondly, due to the secondary data sources, this paper may be subjected to selection biases, which may be a theme for future research. Thirdly, atrocities against tribal communities cannot be generalised by marginal regions of the nation. A broader scope of research is encouraged to obtain a full picture of the atrocities committed against them.

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CITATION

Suman K.C, Sukanta S., & Chandra S.P. (2024). Echoes of Injustice: Exploring Crime Patterns against Scheduled Tribes in North-Eastern India. In *Global Journal of Research in Business Management* (Vol. 4, Number 4, pp. 1–7). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12733170>