

Myth and Misconception Regarding Asia's Second Largest Village

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Abstract: The scale or parameter to measure a village size is varied and non-uniform across the globe. Hence, it is difficult to arrive in agreement to determine the largest village or give it a ranking. The size of the village can be determined in terms of area, population size and household size. Lack of common platform or organisation to determine their ranking makes it impossible to arrive at common agreement. Also, the vagueness to determine a village size hinders its calculation. In such scenario there is possibility for birth of myths and misconception in explaining a village size where people may proclaim or anoint ranks to a village without considering authentic data.

Keywords: Myth, misconception, largest village, household size, population size, village rank.

Introduction

As per 2011 census of India about 69 % of India's total population live in village. There was a total of 649,481 villages in India. The size of these villages varies from region to region. It is interesting to note that 236,004 Indian villages have a population fewer than 500 people, while 3,976 villages have a population of 10,000 and above.

Common classification of rural settlement in India based on settlement patterns are nucleated, linear, dispersed and mixed villages. Classification based

on settlement patterns only provides subjective idea of how house structures are placed on the earth surface. Measurement of Geographical area covered by a village is another method to understand the size of a village. But this method is not in popular use to determine a village size due to various reasons.

Household number and household size are another indicator used to identify the size of a village. As per 2011 census there are total 17.97 crore rural household in India. (Socio-economic and caste census 2011). Rarhi in the Darbhanga district of Bihar, with 7,500 households the village with the highest number of households in India during the 2011 census. Despite having a population of over 36,000 and a large number of households, Rarhi is classified as a village because it doesn't meet the criteria for urban classification, as less than 75% of its male working population is engaged in non-agricultural work.

The most commonly used tools to show the size and Classification of towns and villages in India is by its population size. Population size is the most agreed upon scale to determine a size of village.

Accordingly, towns and villages are classified as:

<i>Size Classification of Towns & Villages</i>			
<i>Towns</i>		<i>Villages</i>	
<i>Classification</i>	<i>Population Range</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Population Range</i>
Class I	>100,000	Very Large Villages	>10,000
Class II	>50,000 and <100,000	Large Villages	>5,000 and <10,000
Class III	>20,000 and <50,000	Medium-sized Villages	>2,000 and <5,000
Class IV	>10,000 and <20,000	Small Villages	>1,000 and <2,000
Class V	>5,000 and <10,000	Hamlets	>500 and <1,000
Class VI	<5,000	Small Hamlets	<500

Sources: Census 2011 and 'Visualising the Grey Area between Rural and Urban India' by Arindam Jana, *The Administrator*, Volume 56, 2015.

Though India conducts population enumeration every 10 years and the database being shared on census books, there still seems to flow many incorrect and unverified claims on population of a place. One such myth and misinformation is regarding the second largest village in Asia.

The Objective of this paper is to analyse the myth and misinformation regarding the claim of second largest village in Asia. And the method of analysis will be based on secondary data using census handbook of India and states of the year 2001 and 2011.

Myth and Misconception Regarding Second Largest Village in Asia

Apparently, Hong village located in the Ziro Plateau of Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh and Bara Basti (Kohima Village) in Nagaland has become a popular degree of comparison. Wherein, both the places are being reflected or mentioned in social media, internet search engines, magazines, newspapers and even in social life as the second largest village in Asia.

Excerpt from Wikipedia- Kohima Village is an Angami Naga village in Kohima District of the Indian state of Nagaland. It is located in the northeastern part of the present-day Kohima Urban Area. The village is widely considered to be the second biggest village in Asia. Wikipedia.

The google search engine and AI produces similar information for Hong Village.

Excerpt from Google search- Hong village, located in the Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, is often cited as the second-largest village in Asia. It's known for its unique Apatani culture, traditional wooden houses built on stilts, and the practice of facial tattoos and nose plugs by older women. The village is divided into Hong-I and Hong-II, with a combined population of over 2000 people.

Besides, there are numerous Facebook posts and YouTube channels which portrays this information resulting in widespread misinformation and misconception. When two places claim the same position or rank, it only indicates that both cannot be true and one will be false. Such claims on positions of a place leads to various questions such as;

1. What authority and Organisation has conducted the study to allot the rank or position of the village in Asia?
2. On what basis these two states are making claims of Asia's second largest village. Is it on the basis of size of population, number of Household or on the basis of Geographical area size?
3. Is the claim of Asia's second largest village by both Hong Village and Kohima village verifiable with the help of population census data?

Following is the Population census data of Hong village and Kohima village.

1. Hong village comprises of Hong-I and Hong-II
 Hong - I is a village located in Ziro (Sadar) Circle of Lower Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh with total 181(households) families residing. The Hong - I village has population of 1197 of which 581 are males while 616 are females as per Population Census 2011.

Hong - II is a village located in Ziro (Sadar) Circle of Lower Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh with total 155 families residing. The Hong - II village has population of 936 of which 458 are males while 478 are females as per Population Census 2011. (*Source – Census of India 2011*)

2. Kohima Village (Bara Basti) is an Angami Naga Tribe village located in Nagaland. It has a total population of 15734 with 3374 households. (*source- Census of India series 14 part XII, District census handbook Kohima, 2011*)

The above comparative census 2011 of Hong I & II and Kohima Village clearly shows that there is a misconception in depicting Hong Village as Asia's second largest village. Now, the question arises if the same claim remains valid for Kohima Village (Bara Basti)? The table 1 shown below indicates that there are many villages in India which has population size more than 16,000 people. This indicates that the popular statement or belief that Kohima Village (Bara Basti) is the second largest village in Asia is also a misconception and cannot be verified or backed by census data.

Table 1: The table here shows population size of villages of Hong I & II, Kohima Village and some villages from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal

State	Village name	Total population	Total household	Data source
Nagaland	Kohima village	15734	3374	Census of India series 14 part XII, District census handbook Kohima, 2011
Arunachal Pradesh	Hong village-I	1197	181	Census of India, 2011
Arunachal Pradesh	Hong village-II	936	155	Census of India, 2011
Uttar Pradesh	Dasna dehat	43722	6883	Census of India, 2011
Uttar Pradesh	Sujru	32374	5137	Census of India, 2011
Uttar Pradesh	Shekhpura kadeem	26893	4471	Census of India, 2011
West Bengal	Shikarpur	19437	4336	Census of India, 2011
West Bengal	Sannyasikata	27044	5773	Census of India, 2011
West Bengal	Sukani	35276	7735	Census of India, 2011

Note: The village population size shown below is only for the purpose of comparison and they are not in ascending order or in rank.

Conclusion

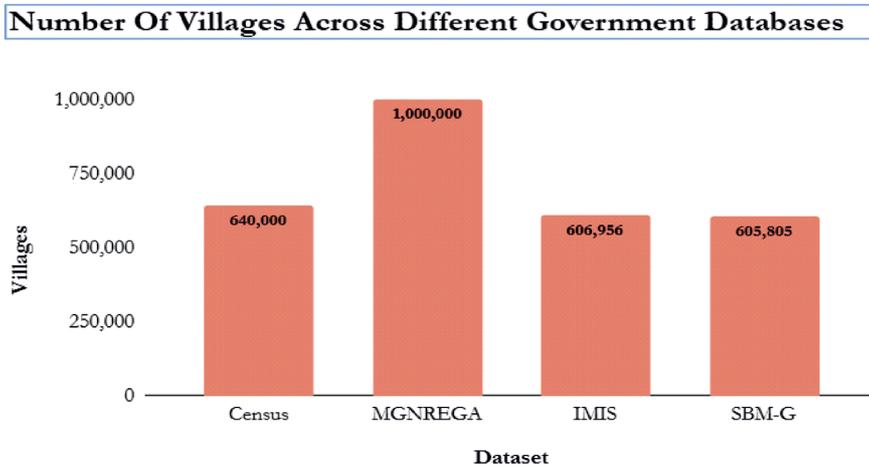
Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland are neighbouring states in the north east region of India and are in close proximity. Still, the popular idea of having the second largest

village in Asia is being shared by the both states. It is more astonishing to know that Hong I and II village, which have a combined population of only 2133 people (2011 census) managed to popularise this idea. The source and origin of this claim is also untraceable for both Hong Village and Kohima village. It is also astonishing to know that neither Media or any authority has stepped in to correct the misinformation and misconception.

Gahmer, in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh with population of 25,994 (2011) is also shown as the biggest village in India. This information is popularly shared in print media, social media and in books. A meticulous reading of the census data tells otherwise. There are many villages in India which have population between 10,000-30,000.

Also, besides the census book, the Government of India derives data from other sources such as MGNREGA, IMIS and SBM-G. Lack of uniform database makes it impossible to arrive at definite numbers to determine population size of rural and urban India.

Table 2: Variation of village numbers across different government databases.



Source: Census 2011; Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme; Integrated Management Information System, Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation; Swachh Bharat Abhiyan-Gramin.

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