

## TRIBES IN TRANSITION”: THE CHALLENGES OF URBAN MIGRATION IN MODERN INDIA

1 Mr. Abhilash Aggarwal & 2 Dr. Ausaf Ahmad Malik,

1 Head of Department, School of Law, Rai University, Ahmedabad

2 Principal, School of Law, Rai University, Ahmedabad

1 abhi71@hotmail.com, 2 principal.sol@raiuniversity.edu

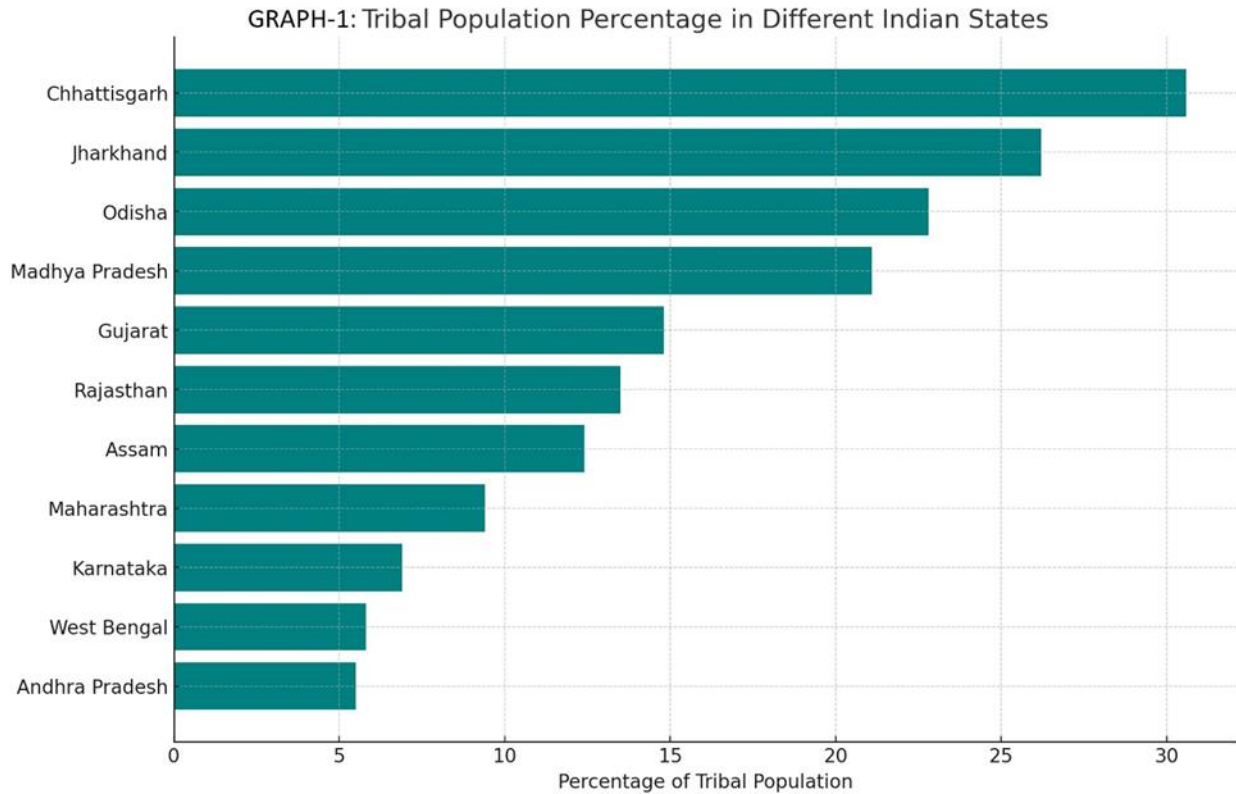
### **ABSTRACT:**

India's tribal communities, historically concentrated in rural, forested and geographically isolated areas, constitute approximately 8.6% of the national population, equating to around 104 million individuals as per 2001 census. These communities have undergone substantial lifestyle transformations as a result of the country's swift urbanization. Many indigenous communities have relocated to urban areas in quest of greater economic possibilities, despite their long history of subsistence living in close proximity to the land. This trend of inter-state migration is driven by one or more issues like, poverty, unemployment, environmental deterioration, confronted development induced displacement and forceful alienation caused by infrastructure projects. The desire for better infrastructure and jobs in cities, as well as the loss of ancestral lands and inadequate healthcare and education attracts the indigenous tribes to the glittering cities. But the socioeconomic difficulties that tribal migrants encounter when they reach urban areas, including substandard housing, informal work and prejudice, while sacrificing traditional preservation cannot be equated beyond borders. In this chapter, we'll take a look at the pull and push causes that are causing tribal migration in India. The aim this study is to add towards the larger conversation about modern India's urbanization, indigenous people's rights and social inclusion. This chapter delves more into the assessment of the efficacy of government welfare programs and policies aimed at supporting tribal populations in meeting the requirements of tribal migrants to metropolitan areas. It explores the urban migration experience of tribal groups in India via case studies and giving a comprehensive knowledge of the topic and offering ideas into how policies may be more inclusive to assist assimilation while protecting traditional identities.

**KEYWORDS:** Tribals, Indigenous Rights, Migration, Urbanization, Conservation

**INTRODUCTION:**

The tribal community of India possess considerable cultural and historical importance, having origins that extend to antiquity. Comprising around 8.6% of India's population, they are distributed over many regions, notably in the central, eastern and northeastern areas of the nation. The percentage of tribal populations in different states based on the 2011 Census data are depicted in the graph 1 (Mistri & Singh, 2023).



The state of Chhattisgarh having the maximum (30.6%) state's population of tribes followed by the state of Jharkhand (26.2%), Odisha (22.8%), Madhya Pradesh (21.1%), Gujarat (14.8%), Rajasthan (13.5%), and the least population in Bihar (1.3%). Indigenous peoples have maintained self-sufficient lifestyles intimately linked to environment, engaging in distinct rituals, dialects and traditional knowledge. Nonetheless, colonial and post-independence policies frequently disadvantaged indigenous communities, relocating them for resource exploitation, infrastructural development, and agricultural expansion. This displacement has resulted in heightened migration, with several indigenous individuals relocating to metropolitan regions in pursuit of work and improved living standards. Urban migration presents considerable obstacles, including cultural displacement, economic exploitation, and restricted access to services. Notwithstanding these adversities, tribal tribes persist in

enhancing India's cultural variety, exemplifying resilience as they manage the intricacies of maintaining identity amid socio-economic changes (Negi & Abdul, 2022).

Migration routes among tribal populations in India are influenced by historical, economic and social factors, with particular districts serving as significant sources and destinations for these movements. In Madhya Pradesh, the *Dindori* district, primarily populated by the *Gond* tribe, experiences significant migration of individuals to Nagpur in Maharashtra for employment in 'agriculture and construction sectors'. *Bastar* in Chhattisgarh, which hosts diverse tribal groups, exhibits significant migration patterns toward *Koraput* in Odisha, influenced by 'agricultural labourers'. In the *Lohardaga* district of Jharkhand, inhabited by the *Oraon* and *Munda* tribes, there is a notable migration to *Purulia* in West Bengal, driven by opportunities in 'agricultural labor' and 'local industries'. *Kandhamal* in Odisha, recognized for its *Kutia Kondh* tribe, provides labor to *Visakhapatnam* in Andhra Pradesh, which presents various employment opportunities. The *Dangs* district in Gujarat, predominantly populated by the *Warli* community, experiences migration to *Thane* in Maharashtra for employment opportunities in 'construction services'. *Banswara*, located in Rajasthan and home to a significant *Meena* tribal population, supplies migrants to *Mandsaur* in Madhya Pradesh for 'agricultural labor'. Similarly, *Adilabad* in Telangana and *Kurnool* in Andhra Pradesh exhibit connections through seasonal migration trends. Further, the *Dima Hasao* district in Assam exports migrants to *Darjeeling* in West Bengal, where employment prospects in 'tea plantations' and 'tourism' are plentiful (Behera, 2019). The observed migration patterns indicate a pursuit of improved livelihoods and underscore the significance of familial networks and community ties that enable regional mobility.

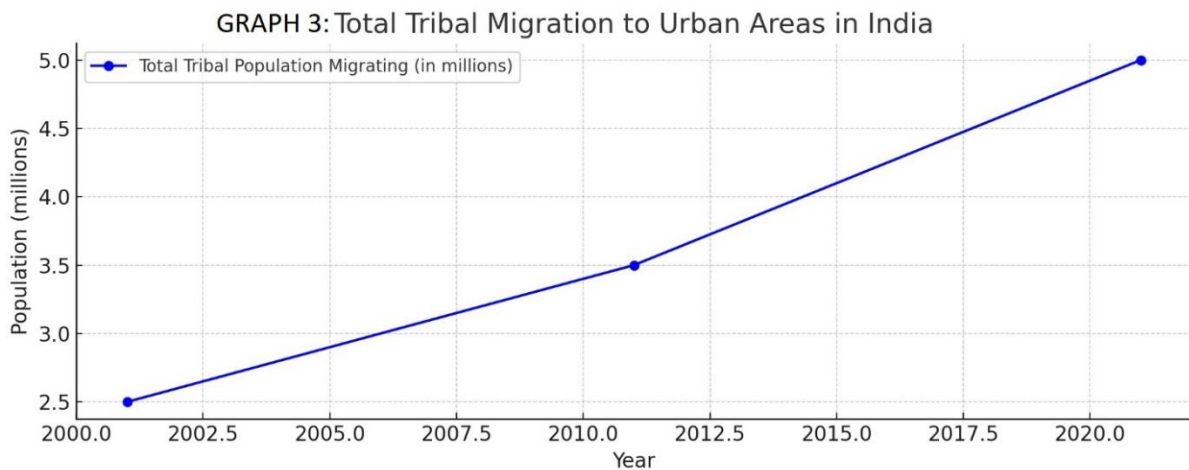
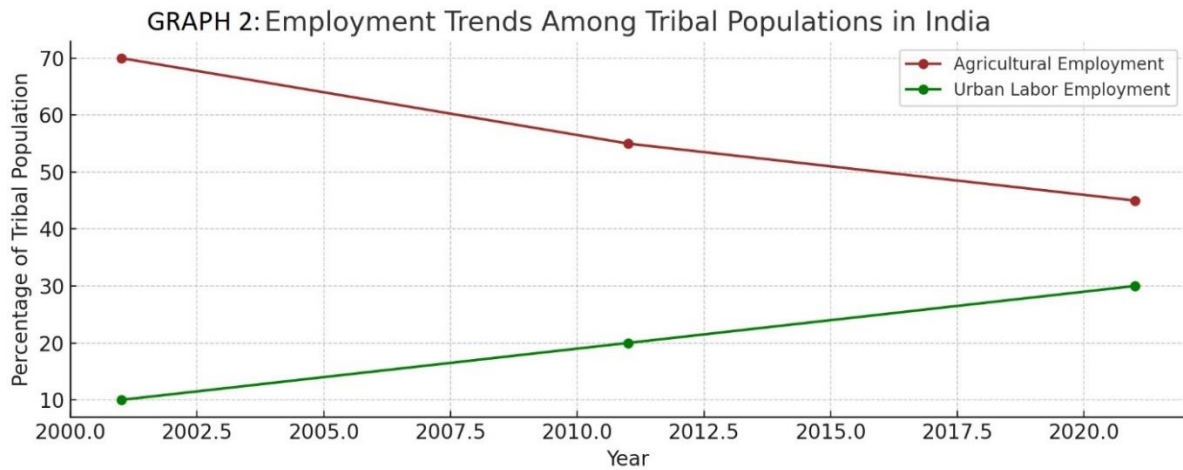
This chapter shall discuss numerous challenges that contribute to the hardships faced by tribal migrants in metropolitan India, including economic exploitation, cultural dislocation, social isolation, inadequate housing and educational barriers. Further, we shall discuss to facilitate their integration and safeguard their rights and dignity, as to address these issues through legislation, culturally attuned policies and targeted legal reforms. The need for State-level policies in India which play a crucial role in the integration of interstate tribal migrants will be studied to recommend both the unique needs of tribal communities and the challenges they face when migrating to different states. Concluding to acknowledge the diversity among tribal communities and their distinct socioeconomic and cultural challenges, the state policies can offer and tailored support for their integration.

## Reasons for Inter-State Migration among Tribal Community

The significance of North Eastern States of India among other states in India is significant to our understanding which holds a great deal of biological variety and cultural variety throughout the eight states that make up India's northeast. Drug trafficking, inadequate transportation and communication, immigration problems, ethnic strife and insurgency are among the shared challenges throughout the states. Migrants from this area carried remnants of the long-lasting ethno political turmoil. The number of Northeastern Indians migrating to mainland India fell from 0.29 million in 2001 to 0.27 million in 2011 a fall of 6.0%. While migration from the Northeast to the North and East Indian states fell between 2001 and 2011, migration from the South increased at the same time. According to employment elasticity, the absence of inclusive income growth in the Northeastern states is causing a sensitivity problem with job prospects and a subsequent influx of workers from other states. A significant exodus of students shows how inadequate the school system is. Economic prosperity and social well-being were profoundly impacted by the decades-long ethnopolitical turmoil and the AFSPA of 1958, which led to a popular movement in the 1990s and 2000s (Mistri, 2023).

In northern and western India, tribal migration is mostly motivated by the pursuit of enhanced economic chances, particularly owing to constrained agricultural prospects in their indigenous areas. Numerous tribal tribes encounter land shortages, drought, and deforestation, which diminish the sustainability of traditional agriculture and forest-dependent economies. Moreover, infrastructural initiatives like as dams and mining activities frequently result in displacement, compelling tribes to migrate to metropolitan regions for economic opportunities. Seasonal migration is prevalent, with persons employed in low-wage positions within construction, agriculture, or mining sectors. Social determinants, like the quest for education and access to healthcare, also drive tribal migration to more developed areas (Agarwal et. al, 2020). The *Baiga* community in Madhya Pradesh encounters issues such as *land degradation* and *deforestation*, prompting many to relocate to metropolitan regions in pursuit of improved livelihood possibilities. The *Bhil* tribes in Rajasthan frequently abandon their villages due to *inadequate agricultural production*, pursuing seasonal jobs in urban areas such as Ahmedabad and Indore for construction or agricultural labor. The displacement caused by infrastructure initiatives, like as the 'Narmada Valley Project', has intensified these problems, uprooting thousands of tribal families and forcing them to pursue new livelihoods elsewhere. Moreover, the pursuit of education and healthcare drives migration; for instance, tribal families from Gujarat relocate to metropolitan areas to secure superior educational opportunities for their

children. This movement signifies a multifaceted interaction of economic imperatives, environmental obstacles and the pursuit of enhanced living standards among native populations in these areas. Here’s a statistical representation of tribal migration trends in India of the shifting employment landscape and migration rates among tribal populations in India over recent decades.



- **Employment Trends among Tribal Populations:** Graph 2 depicts the decline in tribal employment in agriculture (from approximately 70% in 2001 to around 45% in 2021) and the corresponding increase in urban labor employment, reflecting a shift to informal urban jobs.
- **Total Tribal Migration to Urban Areas:** The graph 3 indicates an increase in tribal migration to urban areas over the years, from about 2.5 million in 2001 to around 5 million by 2021, highlighting the trend of rural-to-urban migration among India’s tribal communities (Varughese & Mukherjee, 2024).

## **Challenges faced by Tribal Migrants in Urban India**

Economic, social and cultural barriers impede the integration and quality of life of tribal migrants in metropolitan areas of India. Due to systemic discrimination and insufficient formal employment opportunities, tribal migrants often experience economic volatility in their employment. The informal sector frequently represents their sole alternative, where they encounter inadequate wages, physical and sexual exploitation with an absence of legal protections. The economic exploitation of tribal workers and their limited access to benefits and security in the informal sector are attributable to these causes. Cultural transition is a significant challenge for tribal migrants due to the city's divergence from their traditional lifestyles. Their traditional lifestyles clash with modernity, resulting in cultural shock and displacement. In the complexities of urban integration, individuals lose connection with their unique cultural practices, languages and community bonds that are essential to their history as they adjust to this new environment. This type of displacement results in individuals losing their sense of identity and when arriving in the city, they discover a lack of support for preserving their cultural traditions (Bates & Carter, 1992).

In urban centers, tribal migrants encounter social isolation and discrimination, hindering their integration and fostering feelings of alienation. Due to bias and the erosion of conventional support structures, indigenous communities face social exclusion and heightened vulnerability. Tribal communities include robust familial networks that offer social and emotional support; but, upon relocating to urban areas, these networks are often dismantled or significantly impaired, resulting in insecurity and disorientation regarding one's identity. A significant issue for tribal migrants is housing, due to the scarcity of affordable and safe housing alternatives in urban areas. Overcrowding and inadequate living conditions are prevalent in slums and other substandard dwellings where numerous tribal migrants are compelled to live due to economic difficulties and discrimination. Their already fragile health is further endangered by the absence of access to medical treatment in these regions. Scarce resources and language barriers significantly hinder sufficient education for tribal migrants, particularly youngsters. Both children and adults have considerable obstacles in accessing educational and employment possibilities owing to language barriers, particularly tribal migrants who frequently lack comprehension of the dominant local language (Kaur & Sinha, 2021).

## **Government Initiatives for Inclusivity of Tribal Migrants**

The Indian government has instituted many initiatives in recent years to address the housing, healthcare, job, food security, and educational requirements of underprivileged people including tribal migrants namely;

- The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), initiated in 2015, seeks to ensure affordable housing for all by 2022, emphasizing economically disadvantaged groups in urban and rural regions, including tribal communities.
- The Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), launched in 2013, facilitates inexpensive housing and jobs for the urban impoverished, focusing on vulnerable populations that encounter obstacles in obtaining secure urban housing.
- The Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) was initiated in 2018 to offer complimentary health coverage of up to INR 5 lakh per family per year, targeting economically disadvantaged households, including several tribal populations.
- The National Health Mission (NHM), which includes the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) and the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) established in 2005 and 2013 respectively, enhances healthcare infrastructure in underserved and remote areas, incorporating provisions aimed at addressing tribal health issues, such as mobile health units.

Employment prospects for marginalized and tribal communities have been bolstered by initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005, which ensures a minimum of 100 days of wage employment per year for rural households, thereby aiding numerous tribal families. Established in 2013, the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) fosters employment and skill enhancement for the urban impoverished, whereas the Stand-Up India Scheme, initiated in 2016, empowers Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and women to engage in entrepreneurship by offering loans and resources critical for business advancement. The Public Distribution System (PDS), established in the 1940s to tackle food security, saw significant modifications with the introduction of the “One Nation One Ration Card” plan in 2019, enabling migratory workers, especially tribal migrants, to obtain subsidized food grains across many states. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), initiated in 1975, offers additional nourishment to young

children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding moms, emphasizing impoverished and tribal regions.

Education is essential for the integration and advancement of underrepresented populations, emphasizing programs that stress linguistic inclusion. The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), initiated in 2018, prioritizes quality, multilingual education by supplying resources for instruction in both regional and tribal languages. Simultaneously, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), established in 1997, provide high-quality residential education specifically designed for tribal kids, facilitating instruction in indigenous languages and safeguarding tribal cultural heritage. The National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme, initiated in 2008, assists economically disadvantaged students by providing scholarships and tools to overcome linguistic hurdles and maintain educational continuity.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:**

State-level policies in India are crucial for facilitating the integration and welfare of tribal migrants, catering to their distinct socioeconomic and cultural requirements. Employment and livelihood assistance programs, for example, offering job reservations or specialized employment efforts that help mitigate prejudice and foster equitable job prospects in both the public and commercial sectors. Moreover, skill development and training initiatives customized for the distinct requirements of tribal migrants improve their employability, with many states endorsing self-employment programs that sustain and promote the traditional artisan skills inherent to tribal communities. Social security and legal safeguards are equally vital, since they guarantee that tribal migrants are incorporated into welfare programs, Policies for education and linguistic support facilitate the closure of the educational disparity frequently encountered by indigenous children in new states. These policies encompass access to educational institutions, scholarships, and linguistic assistance, guaranteeing that indigenous students have resources to facilitate their adaptation to other curricula and languages. States can enhance the preservation of tribal identities by advocating for bilingual education and integrating cultural festivals or educational programs that honor and promote tribal languages and customs. Access to healthcare is essential, with state health services tailored to be culturally attuned to tribal habits and languages, facilitating medical care for tribal migrants. Mobile clinics and health outreach programs in regions with significant tribal populations enhance accessibility, while mental health activities mitigate the stress associated with migration and cultural displacement, hence promoting smoother adaption to new contexts.

Affordable housing initiatives that address the distinct requirements of rural-urban migrants facilitate secure and sustainable living circumstances for housing and urban integration. State-established community centers can link tribal migrants with local support networks, aiding in the preservation of traditional identity and facilitating adaptation to new social environments. Political participation and lobbying are essential, as policies that enhance tribal representation in local administration guarantee the inclusion of tribal migrants' opinions in state-level decision-making. Dedicated tribal welfare departments focus on issues pertinent to tribal migration, include legal assistance and lobbying against discrimination. Anti-discrimination law is a crucial component of these initiatives, protecting tribal migrants from exploitation and bias while guaranteeing fair treatment in many work areas. These inclusive initiatives and policies aim to establish a more equitable and inclusive society, tackling the distinct issues encountered by tribal and underprivileged communities throughout India. These inclusive, culturally attuned policies facilitate the equal integration of tribal migrants throughout India's states, honoring their identities and advancing a more inclusive society where varied tribal groups may flourish while maintaining their own cultural heritage.

## REFERENCES:

1. Aggarwal, V., Solano, G., Singh, P., & Singh, S. (2020). The integration of interstate migrants in India: A 7 state policy evaluation. *International Migration*, 58(5), 144–163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12701>
2. Bates, C., & Carter, M. (1992). Tribal migration in India and beyond. In *The world of the rural labourer in colonial India*. Oxford University Press, India.
3. Behera, J. M. (2019). Migration of tribals and their settlement: A study in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. *The NEHU Journal*, 17(1), 72-92.
4. Kaur, K. J., & Sinha, A. K. (2021). Trend of Migration Studies in Sociocultural Anthropology: A Critical Analysis. *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India*, 70(2), 240-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2277436X211044055>
5. Mistri, A. (2023). Migration from North-East India since the 1990s: Ethnopolitical Issues and Economic Development Perspectives. In: Ranjan, A., Chattoraj, D. (eds) *Migration, Regional Autonomy, and Conflicts in Eastern South Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan, 55-87. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-28764-0\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-28764-0_3)
6. Mistri, A., & Singh Sardar, S. (2023). Tribal Migration in Indian Censuses: A Neglected and Litigated Area. *Migration Letters*, 20(2), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v20i2.2828>
7. Negi, D. & Abdul, E.P. (2022). Impacts of Development Induced Displacement on the Tribal Communities of India: An Integrative Review. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*. 2, 50-62. <https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1420>
8. Varughese, R., & Mukherjee, S. (2024). Deciphering tribal migration through the pages of contemporary literary narratives in translation. *World Journal of English Language*, 14(4), 525. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n4p525>