

# Problems Pertaining Migration of Female Tribal Population: A Demographic Perspective on Their Migratory Patterns and Struggle

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**Abstract:** *Migration is a complex issue which has been a subject of keen interest for many years to sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, economists and political scientists. The migrants who work out of their locations face lot of oppression and subjugation with respect to work allocation, socio-economic and political aspects. And if the migrants are women their problems are manifold, diverse and sometimes beyond to address. The indigenous women who are left in the dark, forced to endure extreme poverty. They live in politically unstable and geographically remote regions where there is a lack of adequate education, infrastructure, and healthcare. Migration tends to be seen as the only way out. But, when it comes to women it is very hard to accept and cope-up.*

**Keywords:** Migration, tribal women, problems, anthropology.

## 1. Introduction

### A. Tribal women and migration

The word migration is derived from the Latin word *migrate*; meaning to change one's residence. It is difficult to define the concept 'migration' precisely, since it encompasses many aspects. Migration from one area to another in search of improved livelihoods is a key feature of human history. Migration is today a worldwide phenomenon and has become an important issue in our times. Migration has been both a boon and a curse to humans particularly the womenfolk [1]. More developed regions that earlier might have welcomed a supply of cheap labour, now struggle to keep migrants out as the flow of migrants, both 'legal; and 'illegal' increase. However, borders remain highly porous and migration becomes an increasingly political issue. In physiological terms migration primarily means movement of people from one place or location to another, which is not of a casual nature, as a visit or a tour. Migration is necessarily a pre-empt move; it is the survival instinct that drives humans to seek better prospects [2]. The possible causes of migration can be identified as Economic reasons such as dense population and lack of means of livelihood, facility of transport, attraction of industrial centres, facility of trade and commerce. Social reasons such as access to healthcare, education, housing etc, change in social status, change in occupation status. Physical factors such as availability of new land for agriculture purposes, facility of irrigation, availability of forest/ mineral resources and Political factors like wars, society tensions, ethnic/ caste clashes.

Women play an important economic and demographic role in contemporary migrations throughout the world. Women make up nearly half of the international migration population. The proportion of female migrants varies from country to country. The main exporting countries of migrant women in Asia are Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The main receiving countries are the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Hongkong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei are also major receiving

countries [3]. According to Zlotnik, female migration is a key constituent of global migration. It is seen that a significant proportion of unmarried women are migrating on their own or in mixed groups with family and kin. It has been suggested that migration from villages to city offers women an escape from traditional roles, perhaps an escape from obedience to male kinsmen and an escape from a life of hard work. It has also been argued that women move to towns in search of husbands. Some seek to escape customary sanctions against unmarried mothers. Then there are women who are divorced or have deserted their husbands. They may be runways of unhappy, broken or barren marriage [4].

Anthropologically, a tribe is a social group the members of which live in a common dialect, uniform social organisation and possess cultural homogeneity having a common ancestor, political organisation and religious pattern. But, perhaps, it would be very difficult to find many tribal groups in India who possess all these characteristics. Again a number of tribal groups are recognized by the Government and they are the scheduled tribes. But since all the tribal and analogous social formations are not considered as Scheduled Tribes, and when tribal population is considered, the number of actual tribal population must be much more than what is mentioned as Scheduled Tribe Population [5]. Some of the large tribal communities are distributed in a wide region and often profess varied occupations. A few tribal groups are divided into a number of sub- groups which are practically distinct tribal groups. In many cases, some distinct tribal groups have identical names. Tribal Demography in India constitutes 8.08% of the total population. The main demographic characteristics of tribals in India are – in some state and Union Territories they constitute an overwhelming majority; e.g. Mizoram (94.75%), Lakshadweep (93.15%), Nagaland (87.75%) and Meghalaya (85.53%). The States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal account for 13% of the total tribal population. The tribals are predominantly rural [6]. The present article covers an entire range of issues affecting female migration, and to throw

light on the diverse and different aspects of migration and its multi-fold issues.

## B. Factors influencing migratory patterns

### i. Age and literacy

Age and education also influence migration like employment, marriage, occupational composition and certain social and cultural activities of the community. The age groups '15-24' years and '25-34' years show greater migration tendency compared to other age groups. This is true for both sexes as well as for both sectors urban and rural. The main reason for this trend is that both these groups constitutes for economically most mobile youth which moves out of their habitats for greener pastures occupationally. Also, the majority of marriages take place in this combined age group only [1]. The literacy rate of the tribals is 23.63 per cent. This is lower than that of the general population (62.21%). The literacy rate of the rural tribal female is 12.74 per cent. The health status of the tribals is lower and inferior compared to that of the general population. It is so or it is because the attitude of the tribals towards health that disease is caused by supernatural powers and wrath of their deities and ancestral spirits and therefore, they can be cured by the pacification of these enraged supernatural powers by sacrifices of animals, religious rituals, sorcery and the witchcraft, Despite their supernatural beliefs the tribals have an indigenous medical system based on herbs.

### ii. Occupational patterns and struggle

The role of tribal women in their society is considered very crucial in India because they work harder. Family's economy and management both depend on them. They are sometimes considered as economic assets as they would participate in all agricultural operations indigenous cottage industries, arts etc. however, women are paid lesser in comparison to men for the same work. This biasing continues to hold true even at domestic fronts where the complete household responsibility is shouldered on womenfolk's [7]. The early monographs used to portray them as objects of beauty and sexuality and for this reason they had been exploited by men from higher strata of society. Between 1950 and 1980, tribal women migrated to the rural areas of Bihar and West Bengal mainly to work as agricultural labour, but from 1980 onwards, they began migrating to bigger cities in search of employment. They readily agree to work at low wages also as domestic helps in metro cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Bangaluru etc. Here, they become victims of constant verbal and sexual abuse, working without any grievance redressal mechanism. Tribal women migrants have found jobs in factories, agro-processing plants or working as porters, street hawkers, petty traders, construction workers, domestic workers, sweepers and cleaners. Migrants are often willing to take on jobs that others cannot or do not want to do (those that are dirty, degrading and dangerous). The work is commonly poorly paid and insecure but it is very attractive to those from marginal areas where wages are too low to make a living [8]. They have also found suffering from anaemia, malnutrition, body-aches, weakness etc. Their exploitation include long working hours, extremely unhygienic working conditions, never paid salary by the placement agencies,

fraud done by the recruitment agencies and verbal and physical abuse of sorts [9]. Many amongst them have been found working in massage parlours but some have been found to be pushed into brothels for meagre amounts. This issue actually highlights the most crucial problem of our society i.e. human trafficking. These girls are forced to live humiliating and disgraceful lives.

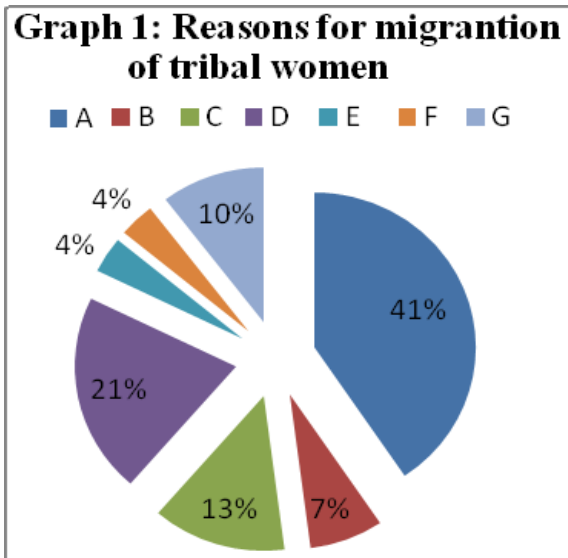
### iii. Demographic Patterns

According to the research report [10] it is observed that in the process of migration of tribal women and girls to cities the 'Push – Pull' factors have played an important role. The significant push factors located during investigation were very low rates of wages, unemployment and land alienation along with poverty and indebtedness. Marriage was found to be the single most important reason for migration of female members of tribal communities. Migration of tribal girls to big cities for education is very limited and hence negligible. Only about 0.8 percent females migrate to big cities for education. It is, therefore, very clear that in spite of the facilities like free primary education, free hostel and other basic facilities, tribal girls are not coming to big cities for higher education in sufficient number. **Table 1** depicts the percentage distribution of different factors resulting in migration of tribal women to cities. The major pull factors include economic stability and employment opportunities. They consider cities would provide better and improved lifestyle conditions and therefore better standards of living. Once in city, they tend to feel self-sufficient and financially independent. Some even claim to be trained in vocational programs run by NGOs to become trained and skilled wagers.

**Table 1:** Illustrates the various reasons for migration of tribal women during (2000-2010)<sup>[11]</sup>

Reasons of migration	Women	Girls	Total
A	535 (35.67%)	682 (45.47%)	1217 (40.57%)
B	82 (5.47%)	140 (9.33%)	222 (7.40%)
C	60 (4.00%)	293 (19.53%)	553 (13.43%)
D	674 (44.93%)	---	674 (20.86%)
E	42 (2.80%)	71 (4.73%)	113 (3.76%)
F	37 (2.47%)	71 (4.73%)	108 (3.60%)
G	70 (4.66%)	243 (16.20%)	313 (10.43%)
Total	1500 (100%)	1500 (100%)	3000 (100%)

- A. Lack of employment opportunities in the native place.
- B. Agricultural land and house of the family was acquired for development project.
- C. No proper facilities of education in village or nearby towns.
- D. Marriage (husband was living in city).
- E. Repeated natural calamities like floods and famines.
- F. Lured by the pleasures of city life.
- G. Any other



The major reason for migration of tribal women to cities as shown in **Graph 1** is lack of employment opportunities in the native place (41%), followed by marriage (21%). The remaining 38% constitutes to 20% collectively for agricultural land and house of the family was acquired for development project and no proper facilities of education in village or nearby towns while 8% collectively constitutes for repeated natural calamities like floods and famines, pleasures of city life and 10% to other miscellaneous reasons. It is clear from the chart above that the causal push-pull factors for migration of tribal women are employment opportunities and marriage [11].

### C. Problems Faced by Tribal Women Migrants

Unemployment, poverty and lack of basic facilities of education, health and hygiene are still a major problem in the tribal areas forcing them for out migration to various towns and cities. The case studies and data of migrant tribal women and girls indicate that they face number of problems immediately after their migration to cities which included difficulty of communication in local language, residential accommodation, employment, education of children, local contacts, adjustment with city life and environment etc. The migrant tribal women in cities suffer from poor housing conditions Most of them have their houses in slum areas surrounded by unhealthy environment. In addition, more than 50% of the migrant tribal women are living in rented houses. Education and vocational guidance and training for development of their skills with a view to improve their potential for employment are lacking in tribal areas [13]. Tribal migrant women exploitation is mostly done by the middlemen who offer them good emoluments, good placement and work conditions and after they are taken to the work place they are cheated. The tribal migrant women of the three metro cities namely Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata expressed that, of the specific cases of exploitation by the person/agency, landlords exploitation is the major one followed by placement agency at the place of work. The economic and physical abuse, sexual exploitations have been reported [12]. The tribal families are not able to meet their basic needs out of their meagre income from their occupations and are heavily indebted to the money lenders. They pledge their fixed assets like land, trees and mobile

articles for meeting their daily expenses and occasional functions. There are no proper marketing and forward and backward linkages for the forest produce and articles being produced by the tribals in the interior areas.

## 2. Discussion

The main reason for migration of tribal women is unemployment followed by poverty. This can be attributed to lack of knowledge or educational backwardness of migrant tribal women which is due to mostly non-availability of sufficient number of educational institutes in the tribal areas as well as in the slum areas of cities where majority of the migrant tribal women and girls live. However, the reasons for their exodus need to be studied in detail given the large number of development programmes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Food for Work Programme (FFW), Prime Minister Gramin Swarojgar Yojana (PMGSY), Swarna Jayanti Gramin Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY). These tribal migrants specially the women folks should also be made aware of various development programmes being implemented for their benefit by these agencies [13, 14].

## 3. Conclusion

The present article covered an array of issues affecting female migration and discussed diverse and different aspects of migration and its multi-fold issues. The migrant class always lags behind in terms of economic and social respects. And they also have to bear the cost of travel, the access of information about migration opportunities, chance of unemployment etc. Studies reviewed, push and pull factors involved in female migration. This fluctuating trend in employment opportunities for tribals despite many efforts on part of Government remain unproductive and futile, resulting in high suicide rates as also discussed by Singh et al (2013). Further other issues such as the impact of migration on the economic and social status of households, cost and benefit of female labour migration quality of life among migrant households and the status of children in migrant families are some other dominant problems faced by tribal women migrants.

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