

Impact of Liberalization on Tribes in India

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INTRODUCTION

India is home to a large tribal population with distinct cultures, languages, and traditional livelihoods. After 1991, India adopted **economic liberalization**, which brought rapid industrialization, globalization, and privatization. While liberalization promoted economic growth, it also created **social, cultural, educational, and economic challenges** for tribal communities. This study examines how liberalization has influenced tribal life in India **activity**. However, liberalization can also be used as a synonym for decriminalization or legalization, Privatization. Economic liberalization refers to the reduction or elimination of government regulations or restrictions on private business and trade.^[3] It is usually promoted by advocates of free markets and free trade whose ideology is also called Economic liberalism. Economic liberalization also often involves reductions of taxes, social security, and unemployment benefits. **Liberalization** American english or **liberalisation** British english is a broad term that refers to the practice of making laws, systems, or opinions less severe,^[1] usually in the sense of eliminating certain government regulations or restrictions. The term is used most often in relation to Economic, where it refers to Economic liberalization the removal or reduction of restrictions placed upon (a particular sphere of) economic. Liberalization refers to **reducing government control** over economic activities and encouraging **private investment, foreign trade, and market freedom**.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the concept of liberalization
- To study the impact of liberalization on tribal communities
- To analyze educational, cultural, health, and economic effects
- To identify problems faced by tribal people

To suggest solutions for tribal development

SCOPE OF THE AREA

The word "Tribe" has deep historical roots that stretch back to ancient civilizations. The term originates from Latin Word Tribe's which initially referred to the three political and ethnic divisions of early Roman society—the Latins, Sabines, and Etruscans. These were not kinship groups, but administrative units created for political purposes in ancient Rome. Tribes in India represent some of the world's most fascinating and diverse cultural communities, with over 745 tribal groups spread across the in India. These communities often referred to, as "Adivasi" meaning, "original inhabitants, possess unique social structures, languages, and traditions that have evolved over thousands of years. Understanding what defines a tribe and their key characteristics helps us appreciate the rich tapestry of human diversity and the remarkable ways communities adapt to their environments while maintaining their distinct identities.

Tribes are **indigenous communities** living in forests and remote areas with:

- Distinct culture and traditions
- Close relationship with nature
- Simple economic systems
- STs constitute 8.6% of India's population (10,42,81,034 as per Census 2011).
- Total rural ST population: 9,38,19,162; urban ST population: 1,04,61,872.

- Growth rate (2001–2011): 23.7% (India's overall: 17.64%).
- There are about 550 notified tribes; largest number in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh.
- No notified ST population in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Puducherry.

Urban/Rural ST Distribution (Census 2011) ST rural: 11.3% of rural population; ST urban: 2.8% of urban population.

ST rural growth 2001–2011: 21.3%, ST urban growth: 49.7%.

INTERDUCED INDIAN LIBERALIZATION

Liberalization in India 1991 refers to the process of reducing government restrictions on trade, industry, and investment to create a competitive and open economy. Liberalization is one of the most defining turning points in the history of India's economy. Introduced in 1991, this process marked a shift from a highly regulated and protectionist system to a more open, market-based framework. Over the past three decades, liberalization has shaped India's growth story and transformed the country into one of the world's fastest-growing economies. This article explains the meaning, background, types, features, and impact of liberalization in India in an easy-to-understand format. Understanding what liberalizations means in economics, its objectives, features, and impact on the Indian economy

India introduced liberalization in **1991** under the New Economic Policy (NEP) to:

- Control economic crisis
- Increase foreign investment
- Promote industrial growth

GLOBALIZATION IMPACT ON TRIBES

- Education
- Loss of traditional occupations
- Displacement due to industries
- Exposure to modern lifestyle
- Cultural erosion

Education

Nearly every tribal Indian child aged six to 10 years is enrolled in school, but by the age of 14, only three in four go to school, while fewer than half the children aged 16-17 remain enrolled, data from the Unified District Information System for Education UDIE for 2023-24, the latest available, details the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)--that is, student enrolment as a proportion of the corresponding eligible age group in a given year, for four school stages.

Primary and upper primary grades together constitute elementary school. GER can exceed 100% because of grade repetition and entry at ages younger or older than the typical age at that grade level. While UDISE+ revised its data collection method in 2022-23, to bring it in line with the requirements of the National Education Policy, it also released data in the 'existing structure', which are used here in this story. Across all social groups, 93% of primary school-age children are enrolled in grades I-V, while at the higher secondary level, 56% are enrolled. Several northern and northeastern states reported some of the lowest secondary school enrolment rates.

Overall, about 235 million students were enrolled in schools across India in 2023-24, down 3% from 242 million the year before. Of these, 113 million (48%) were girls and 122 million were boys. Further, 23 million belonged to Scheduled Tribes (ST) and 43 million to

Scheduled Castes (SC). In 2022, **IndiaSpend reported** how the economic shock caused by the Covid-19 pandemic led to a decline in enrolment in private schools. As household incomes fell, especially among economically weaker families. Many parents could no longer afford private education, highlighting how financial distress directly impacts school enrolment.

In four charts, we analyse the disparities in enrolment.

Secondary school enrolment drops

For students belonging to ST communities, as we said, 98.3% of primary-age children are in school, but this number drops to 77% in secondary school and 49% for higher secondary. In comparison, across social groups, primary GER stands at 93%, but 56% make it to grade XI. Further, tribal children have higher enrolment rates even at the upper primary level (95%, compared to 90% for all social groups), suggesting dropouts happen after grade VIII. Bhausaheb Chaskar, an education activist from Maharashtra, told **IndiaSpend**, “Children from tribal areas have the talent and ability to excel in sports. However, our formal education system does not recognise or utilise this natural potential and ability. Children who drop out of school often end up working as labourers in the fields.” Chaskar has over 28 years of experience teaching at a Zilla Parishad school in the state.

According to a 2024 analysis [-1](#) limited access to schools, poverty, language barriers, and social discrimination continue to affect tribal students' participation in education. The report noted that a lack of infrastructure, schools, and transportation facilities hinders their ability to attend regularly. It also found that bias and prejudices in the educational system can create a hostile environment, leading to low self-esteem and discouragement among ST students. According to a 2021 report [-2](#) factors such as family income, distance from educational institutions, cultural expectations, and discrimination within schools all influence enrolment among marginalised groups. The report also noted that even with educational qualifications, individuals from marginalised groups face lower chances of being selected for jobs compared to dominant caste applicants, limiting incentives to stay in school.

Secondary Education Distance of schools, early marriage, Lack of facilities, Impacts is dropouts, discontinuation, low performance. Indian Tribal students Higher education dropout reasons, financial problems, impact is ,low access, limited area understand.

Gender divide

As seen with the overall enrolment rates for ST students, data show that while a higher percentage of ST girls are enrolled in primary school, they do not continue to secondary or higher secondary grades in those numbers.

In 2023-24, GER for ST girls dropped from 97.4% in elementary to 78.5% at the secondary stage, and further to 48.4% at the higher secondary level. Across social groups, about 93% girls are enrolled in primary school, and the number falls to 78% by secondary level.

In 2019, **IndiaSpend reported-2** on the condition of residential schools for tribal girls in Odisha, with girls often facing unsafe environments and a lack of basic facilities. The report also documented instances of abuse, showing how girls struggled with both their living conditions and continuing their education.

“The issue of early child marriage among girls who drop out of school is a matter of serious concern,” Chaskar said. “Many of these boys and girls are married off at a young age. The holistic development of children from marginalised communities and the provision of quality education is not seen as a social priority.”

According to a 2018 Study-3 domestic and caring duties, agricultural labour, and family responsibilities were the main reasons for girls missing school in rural areas. Many spent hours fetching water, collecting firewood, caring for siblings, or helping with farm work-especially when parents migrated for work.

Regional variations

In 2023-24, several northern and northeastern states recorded some of the highest declines in enrolment for ST students. Meghalaya saw a drop of 71.6 points, from 157% at the elementary level to 85.4% at secondary. Bihar followed with a 55.6-point decline, and Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, and Mizoram saw declines of 35 points or more. In contrast, southern states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala reported smaller declines.

TRIBAL CULTURE IN INDIA

There are more than 750 tribes of India that have had their presence in the country for a long time. Each community has its own individuality that separates it from the other tribes. All of these communities share one thing in common and that's the disconnection from the outside world. They are unaware of the technology and developments going around the globe and somehow they are happy with this decision. Amongst the huge number of tribes existing across the country, we have profiled the 30 most interesting and comparatively popular indigenous tribes in India and their culture this blog. Check out the names, areas they belong and what makes them so different from others.

BANJARA CULTURE

Social Life of Banjara Community

The unique community life, language, religious customs, festivals, and ceremonies marked the socio-cultural life of Banjaras. Predominantly Banjara maintained a unique and separate tribal identity. They claimed to have descended from Rajput ancestry from Rajasthan region. Banjaras, unlike any other people have a unique tradition of socio-cultural life, Thanda settlement, dress, language, festivals, gods, customs and manners as independent of public life. Dubois rightly pointed out that, "The Lambadis form a caste entirely distinct from the rest of Hindus being wholly different from them in religion, language, manners, and customs." Mothiraj writes that Gorvamshiya(Banjara) had a unique culture, independent public life, unique tradition of livelihood, and much evident in their lifestyle, food habits, festivals, rituals, worship, likes and dislikes, dances, songs, languages, clothing and Thanda life. Nagarjuna Sagar in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh is said to be the origin of Banjara dance and other cultural practices.

Banjara does not follow the caste system, rather have a clan system. However they follow Hinduism in their practice of religious and social life. During Deepavali and Holi Banjaras sacrifice goats to deities and go from house to house, dancing and receiving alms. The social and cultural life of Banjara distinguished them from other people.

Community Life

Banjara people live in "Thanda" keeping a distance from non-Banjara people. The community was held above the individual interests and "Naik"(head of the community) led the community both in matters of socio-political and religious life. The kinship and clan or sub-clan relationship

enhanced the strong sense of communitarian life.

Banjara and Non-Banjara

The Banjara settlement was a sign that they did not mixed with others. Banjara lived outside the villages in camps keeping the distance from other non-Banjara people. This helped them to preserve their unique socio-cultural life, language, dress, the songs and religious life. However the introduction of modernism and rise of poverty among Banjaras forced them to mingle with others.

Banjara Settlement/Thanda

The settlement of Banjara in camps outside the non-Banjara habitations was called Thanda/encampment. It was their exclusive characteristic to live in "Thanda" which they acquired from the days of their nomadic life. In the modern times though have settled still continued to live in Thandas. The traditional house of Banjara looked very different from other non-Banjara house which is naturally built and easily dissolvable. As they have been assimilated into the main stream society government is providing permanent houses. The social life settings of Banjara was still experienced and visible in present day. Some peculiarities of Banjara settlements are given here.

Thanda Jury Board-Nasab

The political organization of Banjara tribe was headed by the Naik/chief for the disciplinary and juridical matters of the community. Naik is the head of the both spiritual and secular matters of the Thanda and governs his people standing in front. Each Nangar or Thanda was under a headman or Naik and this post could be mostly hereditary but sometimes people chose able person. The Thanda council is called Nasab or Thanda judiciary, dealt with matters related to adultery, rape, elopement, and family settlement. It also has got the power to impose fine and punishment to the offenders. Thanda Jury Board is headed by Naik, and Karbhari who gives valuable suggestion to Naik for wellbeing of the Thanda. Normally there was no practice of going out to register cases in Police station or trial in courts; all cases are dealt within the Thanda judiciary which saves time, money, and reputation.

Culture

Banjara people have a unique cultural life and practices that differentiate them from others. The language, food, dress and ornaments, art and dance, body tattooing and ceremonies formed the cultural world of Banjara people. The influx of modern life style and growing contact with non-Banjara world had affected the Banjara cultural life. The division of banjaras clans as Chawhan, Rathod, Pawar, Jadhav, are derived from the legends of Lords Krishna.

Language

The language of Banjara is known as "Gor boli" "Gor mati Boli, "Gore Wate" or "Brinjari," an independent dialect. The dialect spoken by Banjara/Roma Gypsy falls in the category of Indo-Aryan language. Robert Caldwell writes that "the Lambadis, the gypsies of peninsula, speak a dialect of Hindustani." The dialect was spoken since the pre-Indus period in Gor provinces of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab, Gujarat, Kethewada, Harappa and Mahenjodaro. Banjaras can easily understand the Hindi and Sanskrit language as about 90% words resembled with 'Gor boli'. Gor Boli was spoken within the family and kin groups, and the regional/local languages were used to communicate with others.

Food

The traditional food of Banjara people were Daliya (mixed cereal), Bati (roti), Saloi (made from goat or sheep or pork blood and intestines), and Ghuggari (boiled cowpea, red gram, land gram etc.) and occasionally rice is used. 'Patali baati' was made from quality wheat or bazra or ragi and eat with chicken curry or boiled green leaves. They were found of non-vegetarian food except beef. The Banjara dogs were famous for hunting the wild animals.

Vegeterian

- Sangai
- Toti Tadi
- Laapsi
- Kheer
- Galwani
- Kardao
- Kado
- Raabdi
- Churmo
- Bhunji Lapsi

Non -Vegetarian

- Boti-bati
- Saloi

Drinks

- Bhang
- Ghota
- Doodh
- Gholya

Dress

The Banjara women wore a colorful dress with rich embroidery, jewellery and mirror patch works. Their dress include Phetiya (the skirt), kanchali (blouse), Kurta (the top), Chantiya (the veil). The ornaments used were: Baliya(bangles), Kasautiya(armllet), sadak(skirts decorated with draw string), Gagri/topli(clips worn by married women), Pawlar Haar/Haasli(the necklace made of coins), Bhuriya (nose ring), finger rings, Ghoogri-Chotla(metal flowers and balls suspended from the hair), kolda(leg ankle rings), which were different from others. Banjara men wear Dhoti, Kurtha or long shirt and pagadi (turban) with multiple rounds. However, due to the influence of modern developments there is a gradual change taking place in their dress and ornaments of Banjara women.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Secondary data (books, reports)
- Descriptive method
- Census and government sources

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

- Helps understand tribal issues
- Useful for policy formulation
- Promotes social justice

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Education access has improved but dropout remains high
- Culture and language are under threat

- Economic inequality has increased

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- Strengthen tribal education
- Protect land and forest rights
- Promote tribal culture

GOVERNMENT TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

- Forest Rights Act
- Tribal Sub-Plan
- Scholarships and hostels
- Skill India programs

CONCLUSION

Liberalization brought development opportunities but also created serious challenges for tribal communities. Balanced and inclusive policies are essential to protect tribal identity while promoting development. The gap between the majority population and the excluded group has grown significantly because of globalisation. Multinational corporations are expanding their access to tribal lands, while indigenous tribal groups are losing their basic rights and falling farther into poverty as a result. A large portion of these tribe members are compelled to acquire the status of roaming jobless labourers. The people who rely on these resources become the direct and immediate victims of these initiatives if land and other natural resources that belong to indigenous tribes are taken for industrial use or lost to development projects. The interests of the underprivileged and disadvantaged segments of the population are not served by technological advancement that reduces the need of human labour and strains natural resources. To give the impoverished and disadvantaged indigenous peoples the advantages of progress, this situation has to be governed and managed. Their ties to their homes, communities, and local resources provide a strong social capital foundation that enables individuals to support one another in times of unanticipated crisis and calamity. Although it is believed that the different Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) programmes at the national and state levels will protect the interests of the displaced people, this is not always the case in actual practise. The standing of the indigenous people has been degraded socially and culturally, leading to increased violence and abuse against them as a result of repeated displacement, migration, and radical changes in lifestyle patterns.

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