



PRIVATISATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON TRIBAL LABOUR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AT IGNTU, AMARKANTAK

RAMKRISHAN KOTHARE

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh.

E-mail: ramkrishankothare07@gmail.com

Received: 04 May 2026; Revised: 08 June 2026;

Accepted 15 June 2026; Publication: 30 September 2026

Abstract: This research paper examines the socio-economic challenges faced by tribal labourers in the context of privatisation at Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU) in Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. Privatisation, a key component of India's economic reforms, has significantly altered employment patterns, wage structures, and working conditions, particularly in tribal regions that have long struggled with economic marginalisation. The study explores how these changes have affected tribal workers, who are traditionally employed in lower-wage, manual, and administrative roles, as they transition from direct employment with public institutions to precarious contractual work managed by private contractors. The paper highlights several key issues, including wage stagnation, the erosion of job security, and worsening working conditions resulting from outsourcing practices. It also assesses the broader social implications of privatisation, including increased vulnerability of tribal communities to economic exploitation, reduced access to public benefits, and the loss of traditional livelihoods. Through a case study of IGNTU, this research illustrates the profound effects of privatisation on the tribal workforce, highlighting the exacerbation of existing socio-economic inequalities.

Keywords: IGNTU, Privatisation, Contractual Employment, Social Inequality, Labour Rights, Tribal Workforce, Tribal Communities, BIGS.

INTRODUCTION

Privatisation has been a central feature of India's economic reforms since the 1990s, driving a shift from a largely state-controlled economy to one that

To cite this paper:

Ramkrishan Kothare (2026). Privatisation and ITS Effects on Tribal Labour: Socio-Economic Challenges at IGNTU, Amarkantak. *Journal of Indian Sociology*. 2(1-2), 49-62.

encourages private-sector participation across sectors. While these reforms have led to economic growth and increased efficiency in specific industries, they have also had significant social and economic repercussions, especially in marginalised communities. One of the most affected groups in this transition has been the tribal population, whose socio-economic conditions have often been left behind in the race for development. **(Kundu, 2001; Xaxa, 1999; Government of India, 2018).**

The tribal communities in India, historically marginalised and economically disadvantaged, depend on agricultural activities, forest resources, and manual labour for their livelihoods. These communities often face barriers such as low levels of education, limited access to healthcare, and inadequate infrastructure. Despite these challenges, many tribal people find employment in government institutions and the public sector, which traditionally offer better job security, benefits, and protections than the private sector (Ibrahmin & Al Falasi, **2014**).

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), located in Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh, plays a critical role in the education and empowerment of tribal youth, mainly by providing opportunities for higher education and skill development. However, over the past few decades, there has been a gradual shift towards privatisation, including the outsourcing of services such as security, housekeeping, and administrative support. This shift has had profound implications for the tribal workforce employed at IGNTU, as many have been moved from stable government employment to temporary, low-paying, contract-based work under private contractors. **(Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2020)**

This research explores the socio-economic challenges tribal labourers face in the context of IGNTU's shift towards privatisation. By examining the consequences of privatisation on employment conditions, wages, job security, and the overall livelihood of tribal workers, the paper seeks to highlight the broader impact of neoliberal economic policies on tribal communities. The study also investigates the wider socio-cultural consequences, including the marginalisation of tribal populations and the disruption of community structures. **(IGNTU)**

Through this research, we aim to understand the nuanced ways in which privatisation is reshaping the lives of tribal workers while considering potential

policy interventions to address the emerging socio-economic challenges. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on privatisation in India and its implications for vulnerable populations, particularly in rural and tribal regions.

India has witnessed an impressive growth rate of over 6 per cent based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since the 1980s. Growth has been remarkably rapid since the post-reform period of the 1990s (Mospi). This high growth has contributed to a sustained increase in per capita income, a decline in absolute poverty, and a modest improvement in living standards. The structure of the labour market, patterns of employment growth and labour-market institutions play an essential role in shaping development patterns and outcomes. Today, India is categorised as an important emerging economy, but its employment conditions remain poor. Overall, the labour-force-to-population ratio (for the age group 15 years and above) at 56 per cent is low in India compared to nearly 64 per cent globally. The low participation in India is mainly because the female labour force participation rate (LFPR) is dismally low at 31 per cent, amongst the lowest in the world and the second lowest in South Asia after Pakistan (though official figures are underestimated). Even today, the large proportion of workers engaged in agriculture (about 49 per cent) contributes a mere 14 per cent to the GDP (**Swaminathan S. & Anklesaria Aiyar, 2016**)

Tribes are the aboriginal and most primitive people in society, primarily residing in forest areas. Traditionally, tribal people have depended solely on nature for their livelihood, and in return have ensured the protection of forests and other natural resources. Over time, the traditional sources of livelihood for tribes have changed due to colossal population pressure, changes in government policies, and the influence of modernisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation. (**Girish Ranjan Sahoo & Manoj Kumar Sadual, 2018**) In this research paper, a central University, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, where the population is tribe-dominant, and after the university's establishment, tribal people's livelihood and working patterns changed. The paper has to focus on the socio-economic conditions of tribal labour.

ABOUT BIGS COMPANY

T-12, 3rd floor, Silicon Shopper, Udhana Main Rd, Chandanvan Society, Udhana Village, Udhana, Surat, Gujarat 394210, India

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tribal Labour and Employment Trends

(Thakur & Kumar, 2018) Tribal communities, often located in rural and remote areas, have traditionally engaged in agricultural, artisanal, and informal labour. According to several studies, tribal workers tend to occupy the lower rungs of the labour market, often in poorly paid, insecure, and unregulated sectors. The exclusion from formal education and skills development further limits their upward mobility in the labour market. This sector is marked by vulnerability to exploitation and wage theft, and many tribal workers are employed in jobs that offer limited or no benefits.

Sahoo and Mishra (2019) argue that tribal labour remains predominantly in subsistence agriculture or seasonal work in both the formal and informal sectors. The informal labour market's precariousness has made tribal communities especially susceptible to the adverse effects of privatisation.

Privatisation and Its Impact on Tribal Communities

(Dube & Ray, 2020) Privatisation, the transfer of ownership and control of public services or assets to the private sector, has become a central feature of economic reform in many countries. For tribal communities, privatisation often leads to displacement and loss of access to land and natural resources that were once controlled by public authorities. When state-owned industries are privatised, the emphasis on profit maximisation often reduces the priority given to local communities, including tribal groups.

(Chaudhary, 2017) Several studies have highlighted how privatisation has led to the contraction of labour-intensive industries, which were traditionally a source of employment for tribal populations. For instance, in the privatisation of the mining and forestry industries, many tribal workers were displaced without adequate compensation or resettlement schemes. This exclusion from new economic opportunities results in both wage reductions and job insecurity for tribal populations.

(Prakash & Agarwal, 2021) A crucial aspect of privatisation is the rise of contract and temporary labour. Privatised industries tend to rely heavily on flexible labour models, which often result in lower wages, poor working conditions, and reduced benefits for tribal workers who are disproportionately affected by such changes.

Wage Inequality and Tribal Workers

(Kumar and Pandey, 2020) Note that wage inequality remains a pervasive issue for tribal workers, exacerbated by their marginalisation in both rural and urban labour markets. Tribal workers, particularly in the agricultural sector, often receive lower wages than their non-tribal counterparts. Tribal workers are not only paid lower wages. However, they are also often excluded from formal wage-setting institutions such as trade unions, which play a key role in negotiating better pay and working conditions.

(Roy & Choudhury, 2018) The wage gap between tribal and non-tribal workers has persisted despite various legal protections and affirmative action policies aimed at promoting social equity. The implementation of minimum wage laws in several countries has failed to close the wage gap, with enforcement mechanisms often weak in tribal-dominated regions.

(Singh & Sharma, 2021) Privatisation and the contraction of the public sector have often reduced job security and wage stability for tribal communities. The shift towards more flexible employment contracts in privatised industries has increased vulnerability to wage cuts and exploitation.

Gender and Tribal Labour

Dey (2020) Argues That Gender dynamics also play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of tribal workers in the context of privatisation. Women in tribal communities, who are already marginalised by their gender, experience compounded disadvantages when it comes to employment and wages. They are often relegated to the lowest-paying jobs and informal sectors, which are most susceptible to exploitation under privatisation policies. Privatisation has had a disproportionate impact on tribal women's economic participation, with many pushed out of agricultural labour into low-wage industrial jobs that do not provide job security or adequate wages.

Policy Responses and Future Directions

(Bhattacharya, 2022) In response to these issues, a range of policies has been proposed and implemented to address labour and wage problems faced by tribal communities. These include affirmative action policies, land reform programs, and government support for tribal entrepreneurship. However, the effectiveness of these policies has been limited by implementation challenges and the lack

of coordination across various levels of government. To mitigate the adverse effects of privatisation on tribal workers, scholars have called for stronger regulatory frameworks to protect vulnerable workers in privatised industries. There is a growing demand for policies that ensure tribal communities' access to social safety nets, promote equitable wage structures, and support tribal entrepreneurship and labour rights.

Objective

1. To identify the socio-economic conditions of tribal labour belonging to Igntu University.
2. To understand the job satisfaction at their workplace.
3. To find out their earlier and later living and working conditions.
4. To understand the tribal labour problems and identify ways to bring them to the Government's notice.
5. To suggest measures for the improvement of working and living conditions of tribal labour?

Research Methodology

Madhya Pradesh has many districts that are home to tribal people. Anuppur is among them, and Anuppur is economically better than all other tribal districts. The three most common activities where labour gets hired are coal mines, brick kilns, and MNREGA. However, the Research paper focuses on IGNTU Amarkantak tribal labour working under the BIGS company. A questionnaire will be prepared for this purpose, and another will be administered to determine the essential socio-economic conditions indicating educational attainment. Universe of the study: The eastern part of Madhya Pradesh, the district of Anuppur, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, will be taken as the universe of the study. According to IGNTU, 400+ tribal labourers are working in the BIGS company (Mention female and male). The researcher conducted the study to collect data on 100+ workers.

Data sources: Both primary and secondary data have been considered for the data collection. Primary data: Given the low educational level in Anuppur district, the Schedule criteria for primary data collection have been adopted for this study. Secondary data: Secondary data have been used to

review the literature, use census reports, NSSO data, the Economic Survey, and governmental or non-governmental documents.

Tools and techniques for data analysis: Statistical and mathematical methods have been used as needed for the study.

Limitations of the study: The following are the study's limitations: A. The literacy rate at IGNTU is low; therefore, it is challenging to collect primary data through a questionnaire. B. Sometimes, the respondent shows no interest in the researcher's questionnaire or schedule. C. Demographic distribution is heterogeneous, which may create problems for sampling.

Labour force and income in India

A critical inquiry into labour conditions in India over the last couple of decades is vital to understanding labourers. Economic reforms in India began in 1991. Since then, every budget has proposed privatisation and disinvestment as a significant source of income and employment generation. However, capital investment and employment generation have not moved together since then. The unemployment rate has been increasing since 1988 and is still rising at an average of 5% per year. State-led employment-generation schemes in India have a poor track record; however, every government uses them to justify privatisation and investment. Such political preferences and narratives about employment generation shape the public imagination, leading the public to believe the government is working to generate employment. It is also an easy way to capture votes; however, no political party takes ownership of low employment levels. It is a fact that people find jobs and livelihoods in different sectors on their own, including agriculture and allied industries. The government often takes the liberty as a sovereign authority to articulate employment guarantee programs as poverty alleviation measures. Interestingly, no government programme has successfully alleviated poverty. Still, the government has to respond to the labour crisis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic and Social Characteristics

The study focuses on the tribal labour workforce at IGNTU and examines their socio-economic conditions. Among the 100 respondents, 73% were men, and 27% were women, indicating a gender imbalance. Women's representation

in these roles is limited, possibly due to societal constraints or the nature of the work. Of the workforce, 65% were from Scheduled Tribes (ST), primarily the Baiga and Gond tribes. Other categories included 10% Scheduled Castes (SC), 15% Other Backward Classes (OBC), and 10% from the General category. The concentration of ST workers reflects the university's location and its impact on employing the local tribal population.

The average age of the workers was 35 years, aligning with their prime working age and highlighting their role as active contributors to family incomes. Ninety per cent were married, emphasising their responsibilities as heads of family units. Most workers came from villages near the university, showcasing the dependence of surrounding rural communities on IGNTU for employment.

Economic and Occupational Characteristics

Economic dependency on IGNTU jobs was a notable finding, with 90% of the respondents identifying as the primary breadwinners for their families. This dependency underscores the significance of these jobs in maintaining household financial stability. Despite their critical role, their educational qualifications showed significant variation:

- **40%** had completed higher school education.
- **30%** had senior secondary education.
- **20%** were graduates.
- **10%** held postgraduate degrees.

This distribution highlights the underutilisation of skills and education, as many workers remain confined to low-paying, labour-intensive roles.

Job Satisfaction and Wage Awareness

The study revealed widespread dissatisfaction among workers, with 80% expressing unhappiness with their jobs. Key reasons included a lack of career progression, the absence of skill recognition, and the physical strain associated with their duties. The dissatisfaction was compounded by wage issues, with 90% reporting earnings below expectations. Many workers reported that their wages were insufficient to meet family needs, falling short of the standards set by the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

Only 30% of respondents were aware of their legal wage entitlements. This lack of awareness is a critical gap that leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation. Moreover, although some workers had basic knowledge of trade unions, they were unaware of how to leverage them to their benefit.

Socio-Economic Challenges

The socio-economic challenges faced by tribal workers at IGNTU are deeply intertwined with their regional and institutional contexts. The majority of these workers belong to the Baiga and Gond tribes, communities known for their close-knit social structures and traditional reliance on agriculture and forest-based livelihoods. The transition to wage-based employment at IGNTU represents a significant shift, often marked by economic and social adjustments.

1. **Wage Insecurity:** Despite their employment at a central university, many tribal workers reported earnings below the statutory minimum wage. This non-compliance with the Minimum Wages Act reflects systemic lapses in monitoring and enforcement. For tribal families, where alternative income sources are scarce, such low wages exacerbate financial insecurity, forcing workers to rely on credit or informal support systems.
2. **Educational Mismatch:** A notable portion of the workforce is relatively well-educated, with some holding graduate and postgraduate degrees. However, their employment in low-skill roles highlights a lack of opportunities to utilise their educational qualifications. This mismatch not only leads to underemployment but also contributes to frustration and a sense of stagnation among workers, particularly younger employees aspiring for upward mobility.
3. **Gender Inequity:** The underrepresentation of women in the workforce is a persistent issue. Cultural norms and safety concerns limit their participation, confining them to specific roles. Women who are employed often face dual burdens of work and household responsibilities, with limited support systems in place to address these challenges.
4. **Limited Awareness and Advocacy:** While some workers have a basic understanding of trade unions, their lack of practical knowledge about collective bargaining limits their ability to address workplace grievances. The absence of organised representation leaves workers

vulnerable to exploitation and reduces their negotiating power for better wages and conditions.

5. **Dependence on IGNTU:** As a major employer in the region, IGNTU plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic stability of local tribal communities. However, this dependence creates vulnerabilities, as workers have limited alternative employment options. Any disruptions in employment or wage disbursements can have cascading effects on household stability.
6. **Cultural Displacement:** Tribal workers often experience a sense of cultural alienation in structured institutional settings like IGNTU. The shift from traditional livelihoods to regimented roles challenges their sense of identity and belonging, impacting mental well-being and job satisfaction.
7. **Working Conditions:** Workers frequently cited physically demanding tasks, long hours, and inadequate workplace facilities as significant concerns. For tribal communities accustomed to flexible and communal work structures, these conditions represent a stark departure from their traditional way of life.

The socio-economic challenges of tribal workers at IGNTU reflect broader systemic issues, including inadequate policy implementation, cultural marginalisation, and limited avenues for skill development. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that considers the unique needs and aspirations of tribal communities while leveraging IGNTU's central role in empowerment.

National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (2009) 15 defined the unorganised sector as "...Consisting of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale or production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers."

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Socio-Economic Profile of Tribal Workers at IGNTU, Amarkantak

A. Demographics and Employment Patterns:

- The tribal communities in Amarkantak predominantly belong to the Gond, Baiga, and other indigenous groups. These communities have

historically relied on agriculture, forest resources, and manual labour for their livelihoods.

- IGNTU employs many tribal workers, mostly in administrative support roles, housekeeping, and maintenance.

B. Wages and Job Security:

- Before privatisation, many of these workers were employed directly by the university, often under long-term contracts with relatively stable wages and benefits. However, following the onset of privatisation, several administrative services have been outsourced to private contractors.
- Wages have decreased, and job security has become precarious, as many workers are now employed on temporary or contractual terms without access to social security benefits such as health insurance, pensions, or job stability.

C. Working Conditions:

- Outsourcing has led to significant changes in the working conditions of tribal labourers. Workers are often subjected to long hours, unsafe working conditions, and inadequate training and equipment.
- Many tribal workers employed through private contractors have reported higher levels of exploitation, including delayed payments and reduced working benefits.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Some limitations in this study may be addressed in future research. First, the study focused only on one demographic area at IGNTU University, rather than the entire district. Therefore, a future researcher can extend the scope of the work to a broader demographic. Second, the study focused only on tribal labourers at IGNTU University. The results identified in this study may or may not apply to other universities. Hence, future studies can focus on different sectors. Third, the results have been established in the Indian context and cannot be generalised. Future researchers may base their study on a country perspective.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The socio-economic analysis of tribal labour at IGNTU highlights pressing challenges that significantly impact their well-being and livelihoods. Workers,

predominantly from the Baiga and Gond tribal communities, form the backbone of the university's operational workforce but remain marginalised due to systemic and socio-economic constraints and education levels. Their dependency on IGNTU for employment underscores its pivotal role in shaping their financial stability and future opportunities.

Key findings include widespread dissatisfaction with wages and job roles, compounded by limited awareness of rights and entitlements. The mismatch between educational qualifications and job roles reflects potential loss, leaving many workers underemployed and disillusioned. Furthermore, gender disparities and inadequate working conditions highlight areas requiring urgent intervention.

To address these challenges, IGNTU must adopt a multifaceted approach that includes wage policy reforms, skill enhancement programs, and initiatives to raise awareness about workers' rights. By fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment, the university can not only improve the livelihoods of its tribal workforce but also reinforce its mission of promoting tribal welfare and empowerment.

SUGGESTIONS

1. **Policy Reforms:** IGNTU should establish a dedicated monitoring body to ensure strict compliance with the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Regular audits and transparent reporting mechanisms can help bridge wage gaps and instil trust among workers.
2. **Skill Development and Upskilling:** Tailored training programs can empower workers to transition into roles that better align with their educational qualifications. IGNTU can partner with skill development organisations to provide certified courses in technical and administrative fields.
3. **Cultural Integration Initiatives:** To address cultural displacement, IGNTU can organise workshops and events that celebrate tribal heritage and promote community integration. This approach can help workers feel more connected to the institution's ethos, such as on the 15th of August, when the parade included the security guard.
4. **Trade Union Empowerment:** Establishing worker associations or trade unions can give workers a collective voice to negotiate for better

conditions. Training sessions on collective bargaining and legal rights can further empower these unions.

Reference

- Bhattacharya, P. (2022). Policy responses to the socio-economic challenges of tribal labour in India. *Journal of Public Policy and Governance*, 9(3), 122–136.
- Chaudhary, R. (2017). The impact of privatisation on tribal labour: A case study of mining and forestry industries in India. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 10(2), 112–130.
- Desai, V., & Vaid, N. (2019). Economic inequality in rural tribal areas: Implications for development. *Indian Economic Review*, 32(1), 77–92.
- Dube, S., & Ray, P. (2020). Privatisation and the exclusion of tribal communities: A socio-economic perspective. *International Journal of Economic and Social Development*, 18(1), 45–60.
- Government of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2020). *Annual report 2019–20*. <https://tribal.nic.in/>
- Government of India. (2018). *Annual report 2017–18*. Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Ibrahim, A., & Al Falasi, S. (2014). *Research methods and data analysis for business decisions*. Zayed University.
- Kumar, A. (2020). Social policies and their effects on the tribal workforce: A case study of Madhya Pradesh. *Journal of Social Policy and Development*, 15(4), 201–214.
- Kundu, A. (2001). Globalisation and the emerging urban structure: Regional inequality and population mobility. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36(50), 4706–4713.
- Mahajan, S., & Singh, P. (2021). Employment patterns among India's tribal populations: A review of current trends. *Labour Market Review*, 7(5), 210–226.
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (n.d.). *Statistical Yearbook of India*. Government of India. <https://mospi.gov.in/>
- Patel, V., & Mehta, A. (2020). Privatisation and its impact on the rural labour market: The case of tribal workers. *Journal of Rural Economy and Development*, 8(4), 234–245.
- Pradhan, S. (2020). Gender and the tribal labour market in India: A comparative study. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 33(3), 189–205.
- Prakash, A., & Agarwal, R. (2021). Labour dynamics in privatised sectors: A study of contract and temporary employment in India. *Labour Studies Journal*, 45(3), 304–320.

- Raghavan, A., & Rao, V. (2018). Policy analysis for tribal welfare: Challenges in implementing land reforms. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 31(3), 189–203.
- Ray, S., & Bhatia, A. (2020). Education and employment outcomes among tribal youth in India: A longitudinal study. *Indian Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(4), 148–162.
- Reddy, S., & Kumar, P. (2017). Tribal economies and land reforms: A critical evaluation. *South Asian Economic Journal*, 15(3), 234–247.
- Sahoo, G. R., & Mishra, D. K. (2019). Socio-economic status of tribal labourers in India: An overview. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 6(4), 452–458.
- Sahoo, G. R., & Sadual, M. K. (2018). Changing livelihood patterns of tribal communities: A study of a tribal village in Odisha. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(4), 63–68.
- Sen, R., & Das, A. (2018). Impact of urbanisation on tribal employment patterns. *Urban Studies Journal*, 45(2), 175–190.
- Sharma, S., & Sharma, K. (2019). The link between economic growth and tribal welfare in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54(12), 66–72.
- Shukla, S., & Soni, P. (2020). Economic empowerment of tribal communities in India: A policy framework. *Indian Journal of Economic Policy*, 39(2), 147–160.
- Swaminathan, S., & Anklesaria Aiyar, S. (2016). *Economic reforms and employment: The Indian experience*. Centre for Policy Studies.
- Thakur, D., & Kumar, R. (2018). Labour market exclusion of tribal communities in India: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(3), 780–785.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2017). *Tribal development report: Pathways to empowerment*. <https://www.undp.org/>
- World Bank. (2019). *Tribal development in India: Challenges and opportunities*. <https://www.worldbank.org/>
- Xaxa, V. (1999). Tribes are the indigenous people of India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(51), 3589–3595.