

## Ethnic Migration In The City: Reviewing The Pull And Push Factors Of Tribes And Non-Tribes Migration In Agartala, North-East India



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### Abstract

The paper discusses the stages of ethnic migration in the city with inferences from the past and present state scenario. The paper conducts an analytical review of the 'pull' and 'push' factors in Agartala city that shape the nature of migration of various ethnic inhabitants of the city. The city's ethnic composition has been largely influenced by a push for ethnic international migration from Bangladesh (or erstwhile East Pakistan) due to Agartala being situated at the international border between India and Bangladesh. The paper focuses on how tribes and inter-tribes respond to the urban environment and adjust to city life. The study has unraveled and discussed how the presence of large non-tribes in the city affects the tribe's migration. It analyzes the findings of migration through the evidence of statistics recorded from the census and other secondary sources available in the study's context. By looking at the specific issues related to tribal and non-tribal migration in the area being studied, this paper examines and explains the trends and behaviors of ethnic migration that are influencing the city's main ethnic makeup.

**Keywords:** *Ethnic Migration, Pull and Push factors, Tribes and Non-Tribes, Agartala city, urban ethnic composition, Tripura and North-East India.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

People from many ethnic backgrounds, faiths, castes, and social strata find the cities and towns central and nodal centers of interest. Historically, urban centers have grown because of migration since they fulfill important administrative, economic, services, and other objectives (Siddiqui, 2012; Bhagat, 2011). Cities and towns draw traders, businesspeople, government and private sector workers, as well as laborers looking for livelihood possibilities (Kundu, 2009). The Cities and towns are also the place of congested place where space of habitations is limited and raise the problems of hygienic and adjustments to various crowd living. On the other hand, the livelihood in the cities and towns becomes complex and need adaptation to the modern and urban styles of living. Almost all cities and towns have originated from the rural settlements or spacious settlements existed when it first begun as important settlement attraction. The primary settlers need to adjust with the changing lifestyles those urban amenities offer to the residents. There is a competition in earnings, lifestyles and source of earnings, as agriculture activities has been discarded and limited in the town due to growing areas for settlements and price of land rocketing high with only left an area of house building premises. The requirements of urban standard of life and pursuing livelihood becomes challenging where some primary settlers have moved out from the towns and cities to secure simple livelihood in rural villages or in outskirts of the town.

Due to its strategic location, Northeast India has traditionally been a migration corridor. Baruah (2005) describes how Central and Southeast Asian immigration changed the region's demographics. The Ahoms in Assam and Bengali Hindu and Muslim migrations during Partition are examples of initial and later migrations driven by geopolitical and socio-economic factors (Baruah, 2005). Hazarika (2013) highlights the internal migrations of many indigenous populations, which exacerbates the ethnic mosaic. The migration of Bodos, Kukis, and Mizos has changed local demographics and inter-ethnic relations. History, politics, and socioeconomics have changed the population of North-East India, which contains several ethnic groupings. Dispur-Guwahati (Assam), Imphal (Manipur), Aizawl (Mizoram), and Agartala (Tripura) are major internal and external migration hubs.

Urbanization, ethnic relations, and identity politics in these cities have been greatly impacted by migration. Economic possibilities, ethnic disputes, and insurgency or natural calamities propel ethnic groups to North-East India's major cities. Guwahati's demographics have altered due to rural migration, mainly from the Brahmaputra Valley (Das, 2015). Migrants from Manipur's hills have caused urban congestion and ethnic clashes in Imphal (Singh & Choudhury, 2019). Inter-ethnic tensions between Mizos and non-Mizos regularly affect migration in Aizawl, Mizoram's capital. Due to socio-political

pressures in their original areas, Chakma and Bru (Reang) populations have relocated to Aizawl, increasing the city's population and inter-ethnic rivalry for resources (Zama & Lalhmachhuani, 2020). Agartala, Tripura's capital, has seen migration from Bangladesh and rural regions, mainly Bengali Hindus and tribal tribes (Debbarma & Roy, 2021). With regard to tribal communities of Agartala, Adhikari (2020) in the *'Four immigrant tribes of Tripura'* described the central tribes communities influencing State's Tribal ethnic composition of the State.

The influx of migrants to these places has affected municipal governance, urban development, and ethnic relations. Indigenous peoples sometimes feel marginalized by migrant groups, causing ethnic tensions and calls for political autonomy. Assamese residents in Guwahati fear being demographically exceeded by Bengali and Nepali migrants, causing tensions (Baruah, 2018). Migration from the hills of Imphal, Manipur, has increased inter-ethnic conflict, notably between Meitei and tribal communities. The city is periodically destabilized by protests and insurgents because to increased competition for resources and power (Singh & Ningthoujam, 2020) of Aizawl, the expansion of non-Mizo populations has triggered indigenous rights discussions, with Mizo civil society organizations pressing for land ownership restrictions for non-Mizos (Chhange, 2017). Despite these obstacles, migration has diversified the economy. Migrants have boosted retail, transit, and construction in Guwahati, generating jobs for locals and migrants. Economic development has been unequal, with migrant groups generally working in low-wage occupations, expanding economic inequality (Das, 2015).

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Agartala is not the only city where huge numbers of refugees change the ethnic makeup. After the Castro-led revolution in Cuba, many Cuban exiles migrated to Miami. Miami, formerly a strange mix of black and white southerners and retired Jews from the North, turned Hispanic (Portes & Stepwick, 1993; Dasgupta, 2014). "Not only in India but also in the rest of the world, the question of the marginal presence of ethnic groups in urban centres has received inadequate attention. One of the notable exceptions to this statement is a paper by McGee (1975) on Malays in the city of Kuala Lumpur" (Dasgupta, 2014, p. 19). The similar effect trend of urbanization is seen among the ethnic native tribes of Tripura in their capital city Agartala. The capital city's main inhabitants have been affected by non-tribal migration from beyond the border. The social and cultural distinctions between tribes and non-tribes are affecting municipal and state settlement patterns and must be addressed. Tribals' primitive

lifestyle in rural areas and forests didn't encourage city migration. Some migrants go to Agartala outskirts and countryside. The push and pull aspects of social tension and government policies must be explored to understand tribe and non-tribal migration to Agartala.

### 1.2. Review of Past work

Ethnic migration in Agartala connected to pull and push causes is a multidimensional issue. To understand Agartala migration, the research needs many viewpoints and aims. Some associated research offers information concerning ethnic community movement in Agartala, although they do not cover the whole scope of the problem. Urbanization and the Tribals of Tripura by Malabika Dasgupta (2014) examines tribal migration in Agartala and the position of tribals in urban Tripura. In Land, People Economy of North-East India, Dikshit (2014) covers ethnicity composition and migrations in North-East states and Tripura.

Gourishwar Choudhuri's (2014) "Partition, Migration, and the Ethnic Movement in Tripura" studies Tripura's socio-political developments after India's 1947 Partition. He outlined Tripura's primary immigration phases. His research shows how the large-scale migration of Bengali Hindus from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) changed Tripura's demographics, causing conflict between the indigenous tribal groups and the migrants. Salim Ali (2011) explores Tripura's tribal and non-tribal tensions and how they led to ethnic settlements. In 'Migration in the past hundred years of Manikya rule in Tripura: Investigating the historical facts', Nilanjan De (2013) describes ethnic migration before Tripura joined the Indian Union. Adhikari (1988) and Deb (2018) published by Tribal Research Center, Tripura described about the socio-cultural status of four immigrants' tribes and their route of migration from central tribes' region to Tripura and North-East India. Devvarman (1986) on his dissertation on Tribes of Tripura published by Tribal Research center illustrated the 19 tribes of Tripura, their migration and classification of tribes based on native Tribes, Assam tribes, central tribes, Himalayan tribes and Arakan tribes.

Sharma (2013) examined 'Duality in urban development: Marginalization of city tribes' in Guwahati. The research found that initial settlers and aborigines struggled to adapt to urban life and race, therefore many were forced out of Guwahati. Doley (2014) examined how the Mising tribe of Assam has been assimilated and lose cultural retention in urban settings more than in rural regions. Migration began in the hilly Princely state of Tripura in the colonial period, but in the 20th century, immigrants outnumbered the aborigines and changed the state's socio-economic and political structure. Tripura's

modernization under the Manikya administration was anchored by the large number of immigrants, notably Bengali immigrants, especially in the past fifty years. Tewari (2017) described the Land Alienation in Tripura led the tribes of Tripura with the interference of non-tribals. R.K. Debbarma's (2017) Newsletter article on Agartala as a Settler Colonial Town investigates Tripura's capital city's history and socio-politics via settler colonialism. The research examines how Bengali immigrants, especially after the 1947 Partition of India, marginalized indigenous tribes in Agartala. Das & Das (2014) studied tribal migration in urban Agartala, its causes, and economic adaptation.

### 1.3. Research Gaps & Significance

The study focuses on migration in Agartala, India, examining the impact of international migration, population growth, density, and urban concentration between tribal and non-tribal communities. However, it is difficult to find studies separately for different ethnic community groups like Tripuri, Bengali, Manipuri, and Nepali. Most studies are economic and political and do not discuss the reasons for migration among major ethnic groups in Tripura. Many descriptions of ethnic migrants are based on the state as a whole and not specific to towns or the capital city. The study aims to incorporate geopolitical aspects of Agartala City, examining both pull and push factors influencing social group interactions, livelihood patterns of tribes, and migration from beyond the boundary. The demography of this state is a diverse mix of various ethnic stocks. The plains are home to the distinct Austro-Asian race of Europoid man, while the hills display the Mongoloid-featured Tibeto-Burman language groups. The plains also host a heterogeneous mixture of Aryan, non-Aryan, and Dravidian types. (Ali, 2011). The city is unique to hosts a Portuguese-descent community and other ethnic communities from Southeast Asia, the Northeast, and the Himalayas. The study focuses on how these different ethnic groups contribute to the diverse composition of Agartala.

### 1.4. Features of Study area & Geographical setting

Agartala bears a multiethnic population composition of various communities and races, of which tribal and non-tribal communities form the broad inhabitant division of the city. The capital, Agartala, is a historical town that had served as a capital under princely monarchy and now under the Indian State Union. The city witnessed stages of peopling and diverse population backgrounds at different periods of time. The capital, which had primarily represented more of the indigenous Tripuri tribes' residents during princely rule and prior to merger with the Indian Union, has been outnumbered by the flow of large immigrants from beyond the border since 1949. The large inflows of non-tribes' immigrants in the town have affected the primary tribal dwellers of the capital, Agartala. At present, Agartala is the second most populated city after Guwahati, with a population of around 400,004 (2011 Census).

The study area's capital Agartala is located in the West Tripura district in the northeastern part of India. It is situated in the westernmost part of Tripura, adjacent to the international boundary bordering Bangladesh. The plains of Agartala are an extension of the Bangladesh plains in the midst of the flood plains of the Haora River. The city extends between 23°45'0"N to 23°55'0"N latitudes and 91°15'0"E to 91°20'0"E longitudes and is considered the only international border capital of the Northeast and in the whole country of India. This unique geo-setting attracts people for settlements and hosts diverse people from within the country and from the borderline country, Bangladesh. The location and geopolitical setting favoring migration are presented through Figure Map 1. The compilation of maps displays the strategic location of the study area, its setting before the partition of India and East Pakistan (Bangladesh), Agartala, and the extension of the Bengal Plains enabling movement of people from mainland India and Bengal towards the Northeast Region. The migration of central tribes was mostly during colonial rule. The mass exodus of Bengalis in the state of Tripura and Agartala took place in several phases and events, and also other Chittagong hill tribes trespassing to the state. Also, during colonial rule, Tripura had larger boundaries, which are now part of Bangladesh, favoring large immigrants after the partition. At present, Tripura sided jointly with the Indian Union.



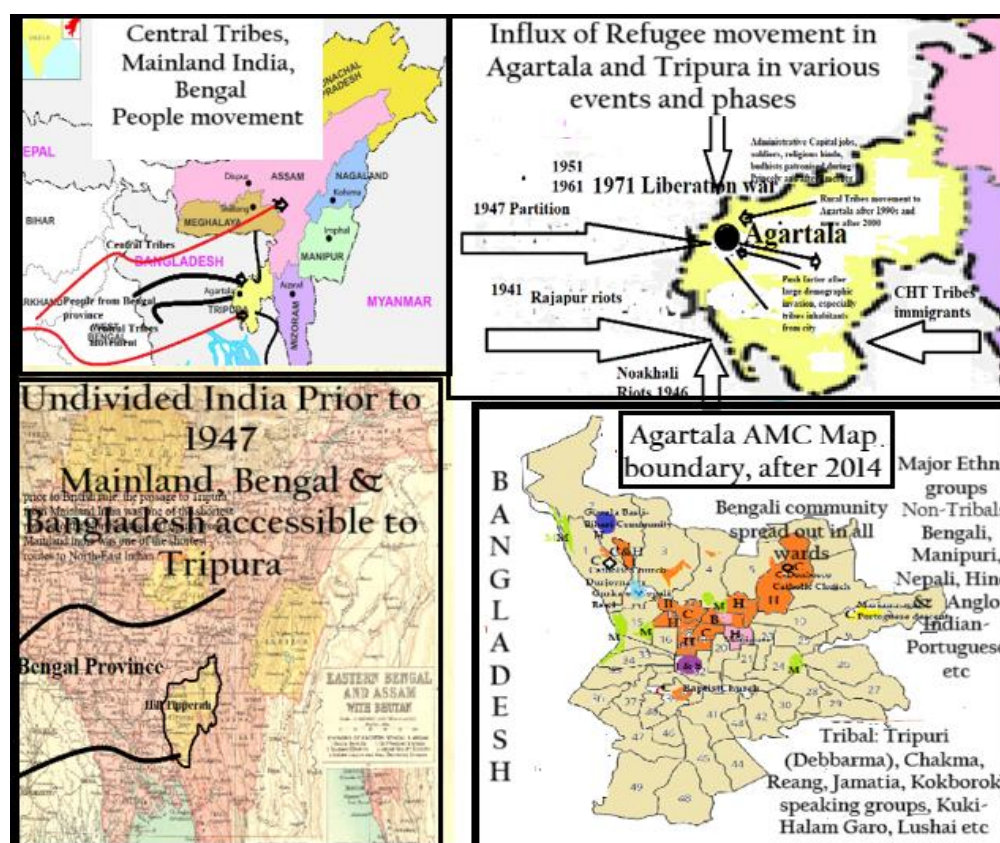


Figure 1. Location and Geopolitical setting of Agartala city

**\*Note:** The authors have compiled and edited four maps that illustrate the geostrategic location, migration streams, and ethnic minority settlements in Agartala.

**1.5. OBJECTIVES:** The study concentrates on the following objectives:

- To ascertain the causes and trace the course of ethnic migration populating the city of Agartala across different historical periods.
- To analyse the migration patterns, the push and pull factors of the tribes, in connection to the predominance of non-tribal residents in the city.
- To comprehend the socio-economic and political determinants influencing the tribes' attitudes towards urban culture and livelihood, both favourable and unfavourable.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study focuses on ethnic people in different phases of time and their routes of influx migration into the city, and therefore historical documents and textual data have been examined to trace the ethnic peopling in Agartala city. The growth of the urban ST (Scheduled Tribes) population in urban centers in Tripura, with more specific to Agartala, derived from the census data of India and Tripura from 1901 to 2011, has been analyzed to know the urban composition trend of tribes and non-tribes'

inhabitants in the city. The study on the aspects of migratory influx in the city is analyzed from historical records, articles, journals, books, and reports available on the topic discussed. The C-16, Population of Mother Tongue, 2011, in urban cities of India, has been referred to know the ethnic communities of Agartala city from the latest available census records. The data on immigrants and urban migration statistics from the Census of India in different decade periods are reviewed for projecting displaced international immigrants and other migration from rural to urban. The primary general observations of the city with regard to socio-economic and political factors and understanding behavior and patterns are helpful in analyzing the 'pull and push' factors of tribes and non-tribes' migration in the city of Agartala.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Results and Discussions has two sections of study findings. The first section makes inquiries about the history of migration and settlement in Agartala, including different stages of migration, population growth of tribes based on census data, and patterns of international migration over time to understand the various ethnic groups, both tribal and non-tribal, in the city.

The second section deals with the study of finding 'pull and push factors' of ethnic migrants of both

tribes and non-tribes in the city shaping the urban composition and trend of ethnic inhabitants of Agartala over time.

#### **4.1. Peopling and Ethnic Migrants and Settlers to Agartala**

##### **4.1.1. Agartala, as a historical capital city, is the host of diverse ethnic settlers**

One of the oldest administrative capitals in Northeast India, Agartala has been the capital of Tripura since 1878. Historically, the city was ruled by both the princely monarchs of Tripura and later the Indian Union following merger (Debbarma, 2017). The population of Agartala was estimated to be around 875 people in 1864 (Hunter, 1973:45). The *Census Biharani 1931* provides detailed records of Tripura's demographic composition during the early 20th century, offering crucial insights into the population distribution among tribal and non-tribal communities before large-scale migrations began (Debbarma, 1997). Agartala has seen successive waves of migration from rural interiors to the capital city, from neighboring states, and across international borders—due to a mix of administrative centralization, socio-cultural changes, economic possibilities, labor needs, and geo-political events (De, 2021). Particularly for religious and security concerns, the division and communal tensions in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) set off notable ethnic migration into Tripura following India's independence in 1947. This movement changed the demographic make-up of the state and city, hence affecting administrative and settlement limits (Hazarik, 2013).

The Agartala migration study's "Tribes and Non-Tribes" chapter emphasizes the many nationalities living in the city. Maharaja Ratna Manikya was credited by the Rajmala, Tripura's royal chronicle, with first settling Bengalis in the area, hence indicating the earliest recorded wave of non-tribal migration into Tripura (Bhattacharjee, 2004). Non-tribal inhabitants have expanded to include Bengalis, Manipuris, Hindi-speaking people, Nepalis, and even modest numbers of Portuguese ancestry over time (Chakraborty, 2015). Among these, Bengalis remain the majority non-tribal population in Agartala and representing larger ethnic community in the state of Tripura (Roy, 2018).

##### **4.1.2. Phases of migration and growth of Tribes and Non-Tribes**

The capital, Agartala, a town in Tripura, has a long history of ethnic peopling and stages. The findings are based on statistical records and census, and general observation phases of ethnic migration are discussed from the origin of settlers to recent settlers. The discussion proceeds as follows:

Native tribes from the Debbarma/Debbarmen sub-tribe of the Tripuri Community, including the royal ruling class, were the first to settle in the area (Malabika, 2014). The majority being Raja's relatives, retainers, and people connected to local courts and offices. The other minorities included Manipuri, Nepali, and other ethnic communities. During that period, significant Hindu Bengali officials and Hindu priests served in the royal court of Tripura. The Muslim Bengalis who have been welcomed as agriculturists and royal building construction workers also form the significant population composition of the initial administrative capital center. The secondary settlers (1939-1971) were mostly non-tribal Bengali Hindu immigrants from beyond the border. The city's international border location led to a large ethnic flow, leading to a demographic invasion of the city and state. The intermediate settlers (1972-1990) consisted of both rural non-tribal and tribal migrants into the city. This period saw large non-tribal populations moving towards the capital city, with tribal movement remaining stagnant. The period from 1991 to the present saw considerable movement of tribals from rural areas since the 1990s, with this movement accelerating after the year 2000. Non-tribals also moved to the capital from various parts of the state and smaller towns.

##### **4.1.3. Ethnic migration of the Tribes in Agartala**

The city's main settlers are the Tripuri royal clan Debbarma/Debarman. Locals call royal novelty class 'Kartas.' It is unclear if these groups considered themselves tribes before the Indian Union. The Tripuri are now categorized under Scheduled Tribes (ST), a status given to most tribes and backward classes in India. Some Tripuri warriors who relocated from rural areas to the capital for royal service were awarded pieces of land for settlements by the kings. The Debbarma clan of the Tripuri community primarily inhabited Agartala and nearby places in the city. As a result, this tribe maintains stronger ties to the capital, and a significant number of its members have relocated to suitable towns, forming the state's leading intertribal community. Tripura also comprises 19 diverse tribes who have inhabited Agartala at varying degrees of concentration. The Tripura tribes, basically belonging to Tripuri (Debbarma), Jamatia, Reang, and Tripura, form the dominant population composition among the tribes of Tripura.

Chakma is the second community after Debbarma of the Tripuri community in concentration. Agartala's Buddhist Chakmas have been associated with the city since the last king of Tripura founded the Buddhist Vihara Temple in Radhanagar before India's independence. Mostly Chakma ethnic localities are emerging in the city, as more Chakmas migrate from

the inner countryside to the capital. New Zealand Baptist established a Baptist Christian Mission compound at Arundhutinagar, Agartala, in 1938 on land provided by the last King Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur. The Kuki, Lushai (Mizo), and Halam tribes reside in the mission compound. The non-Tripuri tribes and distant forest and hill inhabitants of the state embraced mostly Christian religion. Some tribes' families temporarily stay in quarters or the mission compound premises to avail themselves of English-medium education at St. Paul School and other related missionary work. In Agartala, the Garo community has their area with their locality named 'Marak Para,' indicating one of the Garo clans. The Garo people settled in Nandanagar long ago, and they are not considered to have migrated from rural regions. Their inhabitants' proximity to the town has been included in the locality under the urban municipal complex after 2013. The locality Nandanagar ward is currently part of Agartala Municipal Corporation and Greater Agartala Planning Area and is right now witnessing the rising trend of tribal migration around the Catholic Christian schools of Don Bosco School and Auxilium Girls' School.

#### 4.1.4. Non-tribal ethnic migrants into the city

According to the Rajmala, the royal chronicle of the Tripura Kingdom, Maharaja Ratna Manikya was the first king to establish Bengalis in the kingdom in the 15th century (Ganguly, 2010). This starts a notable cultural and demographic change in Tripura. Non-tribal groups—including Bengalis, Manipuris, Hindi-speaking communities, Nepalis, and even little groups of Portuguese ancestry—made up the second significant migrating wave (Chakraborty, 2015). Amongst these, Bengalis have come to rule the non-tribal population of both Agartala and the larger Tripura area. Their demographic domination is directly related to migration from across the border, especially from East Bengal during British colonial rule and then from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during and after the Partition of India in 1947 (DebBarma, 2017). Hindus and Muslims make up the Bengali population of Agartala; their religious and cultural differences have sometimes led to the development of separate group identities (Roy, 2018). Bengali Hindus' affinity with the Tripuri kings has long historical background. Though the Tripuri rulers were initially indigenous, Bengali Brahmins' influence led them to join Hinduism. Inviting Bengali Brahmins and academics to his court, King Ratna Manikya (reign: 1464–1489) began a long-standing relationship with Bengali Hindu customs (Ganguly, 2010). This cultural transformation intensified under rulers like Krishna Manikya (reign: 1760–1783), who actively incorporated Bengali language, customs, and Vaishnavite religious practices into the

royal court and administrative structures, a process described as Sanskritization (Bhattacharjee, 2004; DebBarma, 2017).

The indigenous Tripuri tribes of Tripura traditionally practiced shifting cultivation on hill slopes and were predominantly unacquainted with wet-rice cultivation in the lowland plains. Consequently, Muslim agriculturalists from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) were introduced to cultivate the fertile plains of Tripura, particularly in regions like Agartala and Kailashahar (DebBarma, 2017; Roy, 2018). The pattern of agricultural migration elucidates the existence of substantial Muslim populations in rice-rich lowlands, exemplified by Kashipur, Agartala, which is encircled by extensive paddy fields and serves as a notable instance of such settlement (Chakraborty, 2015). The Manipuri population in Agartala, consisting of Meitei and Bishnupriya Manipuris, represents another significant non-tribal community. The presence of Manipuri individuals in the city dates to the late 18th century, notably after the royal alliance between Princess Harisheshwari of Manipur and Maharaja Rajdhar Manikya II of Tripura. The dynastic marriage resulted in cultural exchanges and promoted the gradual settlement of Manipuri families in Agartala (Bhattacharjee, 2004). A Manipuri colony emerged in Mekhlipara, adjacent to the capital, where the Meitei and Bishnupriya communities coexist, preserving their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness (Singha, 2012).

Every Northeast Indian city has a Hindi community. Around 10,000 people live in Agartala (Census by mother tongue, 2011). Bihar's Bhojpuri community dominates among Hindi communities. Since the population relies on cattle and milk, they have a hamlet in Agartala called Gowala Basti.' Hindi Community Bihari migration to Northeast India began during colonial times when tea plantations, roads, and other infrastructure required labor. The Hindi community from Bihar moved to Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya after independence for greater economic prospects. Small businesses, dairy farming, and labor-intensive industries employed the Hindi community in Bihar. These migrants settled in Guwahati, Shillong, and Agartala (Baruah, 2019). The Tripura kingdom, especially under Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman in the early 20th century, aspired to expand its military. According to Chakraborty (2016), the Royal Army of Tripura attracted Gorkha Nepalis, known for their courage and military prowess, from other princely kingdoms and areas in India. This enlistment brought many Gorkha families to Agartala, where they formed Gurkhabasti, a community around their military duty. Roy (2018) states that many Gorkha soldiers and their families moved to Agartala after joining the Royal Army. Gurkhabasti came to denote



"settlement of Gorkhas," where these Nepali folks lived.

Agartala's Portuguese community has colonial mercenary roots. After Portuguese colonies were established in India, especially in Goa, many Portuguese-descended people came to Tripura to work as mercenaries or soldiers for local rulers. Portuguese maritime exploration and commerce helped people traverse the Indian Ocean and reach the subcontinent (Newitt, 2015; Allen, 2013). The descendants of these immigrants still identify with Portuguese colonization in Agartala's culture and society (Figueiredo, 2011). A story tells how this Portuguese family settled in Tripura. Under Indra Manikya's reign, a small group of Portuguese merchants arrived in Tripura in the 1530s. He encouraged mercenaries in Chittagong and Noakhali (now Bangladesh) to strengthen military support with European gun weapons. The King was pleased with the service and gave them a plot of land near Khayerpur to dwell on, and their locality came to be

known as 'Mariamnagar,' named after Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.

#### 4.1.5. Growth of Tribes and Non-Tribes population from the Census Statistical records

The relationship between tribes' migratory phases and urban expansion is difficult to explain. Table 1 illustrates the growth trend of Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Non-Scheduled Tribes (Non-ST) in Agartala from various census years. Tribes were important in the city from 1901, with 6415 persons, to 1931, with 9580 persons, mostly early Tripuri immigrants who founded their capital at Agartala. It is to indicate that ST and non-ST data reports were not segregated until 1961. From 1901 until 1961, Agartala was the sole urban center; thereafter, several small towns grew exclusively in non-Tribal regions. The surprising jump in population from the 1931 census to the 1941 census, from 9580 to 17693 persons, demonstrates that immigrants flooded into Agartala, deemed high given the urbanization of the time.

**Table 1. ST (Tribes) and Non-ST(Non-Tribes) Urban Population of Agartala from 1961-2011**

| Year | Agartala Urban Popn | ST Popn in Agartala | (%)  | Non -ST Population of Agartala | (%)   |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1901 | 6415                |                     | 19.6 |                                |       |
| 1911 | 6831                |                     | NA   |                                |       |
| 1921 | 7743                |                     | NA   |                                |       |
| 1931 | 9580                |                     | 21.1 |                                |       |
| 1941 | 17693               |                     | NA   |                                |       |
| 1951 | 42595               |                     | 3.6  |                                |       |
| 1961 | 54878               | 3346                | 6.1  | 51532                          | 93.90 |
| 1971 | 100264              | 4822                | 4.80 | 95442                          | 95.1  |
| 1981 | 132186              | 6100                | 4.61 | 126086                         | 95.38 |
| 1991 | 157358              | 8601                | 5.46 | 148757                         | 94.53 |
| 2001 | 189998              | 15616               | 8.21 | 174382                         | 91.7  |
| 2011 | 400004              | 21356               | 5.33 | 378648                         | 94.66 |

Source: Directorate of Census operation Tripura, Agartala of various decadal years.

\*ST: Scheduled Tribes. \*Non -ST: Non-Scheduled Tribes. \*Popn: Population

The pattern of urban migration among the STs is quite opposite. The Scheduled Tribes underwent de-urbanization from 1951 to 1991. Those times had an influx of refugees and ethnic riots, resulting in the displacement of tribes to the interiors.

#### 4.1.6. Phases of growth of Non tribal population in Agartala

Historical records and reports show Agartala has many non-tribal residents. Despite changing its name from East Bengal (British India), East Pakistan (Under Pakistan), and now Bangladesh, Agartala's non-tribal population is mostly influenced by international migrants. These large non-tribals migrants were Bengali Hindus, not Bengali Muslims. It is to mention that Bengali Hindus lived in Agartala

during the Royal Kingdom of Tripura, since the capital foundation and were active in administration, serving in court offices and priestly duties. The evidence comes from office census and record statistics. Before India's independence in 1939, Noakhali riots in Bangladesh expelled Bengali Hindus into the city during Princely Tripura. After Indian union in 1949, religious conflicts between majority Muslims and Minority Hindus beyond the international border in Bangladesh triggered forced international migration. Migration from East Pakistan after Partition significantly altered Tripura's demography, leading to the marginalization of indigenous communities and fueling ethnic movements (Choudhuri, 2019). These descriptions proves that there was international migration from the neighboring border.

Hindus, Buddhists, and other religious groups have settled in Tripura, West Bengal, and Assam, as partition of Pakistan was based on Islam religion. The East Pakistani internal displacement is shown in Table 2. Before 1951 and 1961, only Agartala, Tripura's capital, was an urban center in Sadar

Subdivision of West Tripura. The city alone had 19286 persons of East Pakistani refugees, drastically changing Agartala's population growth. In addition, Bangladesh's 1971 founding sparked many migration waves after 1951. The Data on these aspects was hidden or unrecorded.

**Table 2. Tripura: No of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan, 1951**

| Subdivisions     | 1951 census |       |        | Total other<br>Survey<br>(latest) | Increase over<br>Campuses | 1951 |
|------------------|-------------|-------|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------|
|                  | Urban       | Rural | Total  |                                   |                           |      |
| Amarpur          |             | 354   | 354    | 300                               | 2646                      | 747  |
| Belonia          |             | 7681  | 7681   | 27108                             | 19427                     | 253  |
| Dharmanagar      |             | 11002 | 11002  | 35300                             | 24298                     | 221  |
| Kailashahar      |             | 5275  | 5275   | 26095                             | 20820                     | 395  |
| Kamalpur         |             | 5973  | 5973   | 16215                             | 10242                     | 171  |
| Khowai           |             | 9809  | 9809   | 29764                             | 19955                     | 203  |
| Sabroom          |             | 2651  | 2651   | 9703                              | 7052                      | 266  |
| Sadar (Agartala) | 19286       | 29701 | 48987  | 188902                            | 139915                    | 286  |
| Sonamura         |             | 3687  | 3687   | 23062                             | 19375                     | 525  |
| Udaipur          |             | 5781  | 5781   | 14815                             | 9034                      | 156  |
| Total            | 19286       | 81914 | 101200 | 373964                            | 272764                    | 276  |

**Source:** Statistical Abstract of Tripura 1978& 1981

For Agartala Bengali Muslims, the situation was clear. Hindu-Muslim riots were unknown in princely history. Sen (2003) and Mian (2006) write that when Bengali Hindus left in large numbers after partition, many Agartala Muslims moved to East Pakistan. Rich and educated Muslims could leave Agartala leisurely in the 1950s and settle in East Pakistan after legally exchanging their property with Bengali Hindus willing to settle there because there was no apparent hostility between the two communities. After the 'exchange' stopped in the 1960s, anti-social elements forced some Agartala Muslims to move to East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

The number of scholars and reports that claimed Agartala city was migrants preferred urban center due to its proximity to the international border. The report said the 'Rehabilitation Department' rehabilitated most refugees in and around Agartala first. Thus, "most of the refugees who migrated to Tripura through Agartala check post have been settled in Agartala town" (Census of India, 1961(b), Vol. XXVI Tripura Part II Sub-Part (I): 114). Most East Pakistani refugees who sought refuge in Tripura entered through a checkpoint and settled in and around Agartala with family or friends or in refugee camps. Tripura and Agartala saw migration waves since 1941. Small-scale migration continued silently after the 1941 Rajapur riot, 1946 Noakhali Riot, 1947 partition, 1951, and 1971 Bangladesh liberation war, and even today. Bhattacharya (1974) in Census operations of India also noted that large influx of refugees abruptly the presence of non-tribals population in the State. Migration from Bangladesh

has significantly shaped Tripura's demographic structure, with census data revealing that nearly 99% of international migrants into the state originated from Bangladesh (Deb & Mahato, 2021). These migrations boosted the number of non-tribals, mostly Hindu Bengalis, who made up 94% of Agartala's 2011 census population.

#### 4.4. The Pull and Push Factors of Ethnic Migration in Agartala

##### 4.4.1. The pull factors of Non-Tribes Migration

##### • The Pull factors of Historical, Political, and Religious of Non-Tribal Migration

Historically, Agartala has drawn non-tribal ethnic immigration because of its administrative and economic core of Tripura. Agartala stayed the only urban center from 1901 to 1951, thereby focusing urban development (Malabika, 2014). Tripura kings encouraged settlement throughout the princely period by means of policies like land transfers to upper-caste groups on specified rentals (Hunter, 1876). These deeds built a multi-ethnic basis for the city. Especially when other possible urban centres were economically separated because of the division, the capital's centrality persisted after independence. The royal custom of settling soldiers in Agartala and their enlistment were also major influences. While Portuguese mercenaries and Nepali Gorkhas were settled in "Mariamnagar" and "Gurkhabasti" respectively, tribals in royal service were given land (Dasgupta, 2014, p. 42). Demographic variety was also influenced by matrimonial ties. Marrying princesses from Nepal, Manipur, Panna, and



Khairigarh, the Manikya rulers caused migration of attendant populations (Singha, 2014).

Migration was also influenced by religious pull forces. Promoted by the Maharajas, Hinduism especially after 1880 when tribal communities were urged to embrace Hindu traditions. Land grants and job possibilities drew upper-caste Hindus, who were viewed as carriers of cultural prestige and administrative support (DebBarma, 2017). These projects made Hinduism the prevailing cultural and religious framework. During the religious violence in British India and East Pakistan, cross-border migration—especially of Bengali Hindus—surged. Refugees looked for refuge and resettlement in Agartala, hence hastening the city's urban growth (Dikshit, 2014). Emphasizing Agartala's status as a shelter, administrative center, and urban magnet, this migration surge set the stage for its multi-ethnic nature.

- **Geographical, Economic, and Infrastructural Factors Driving Migration to Agartala**

The rich lowland plains of Agartala, a continuation of Bangladesh's topography, provide perfect environment for wet rice farming. Rivers such as the Haura and Katta Khal have historically supported agricultural communities, drawing non-tribal farmers (Dikshit, 2014). The absence of natural or governmental obstacles helped early migration from Bengal, while Tripura's low population in comparison to areas like Chittagong and Noakhali promoted mobility. Displaced Bengalis—many from non-agricultural industries—settled in Agartala after the Partition, buying land with financial reserves and driving urban growth (Bhattacharyya, 1988). The city's proximity to state rehabilitation programs made it attractive.

Agartala still serves as Tripura's commercial, medical, and administrative center today; good air, rail, and road connections motivate everyday travelers from all throughout the state and cities including Kolkata. Its closeness to Bangladesh increases its regional relevance even further. Remarkably, some 40,000 Bangladeshis lawfully visit Agartala every day for services, healthcare, and employment (Saha, 2004). It is the only Indian state capital directly bordering another nation. Many Bangladeshis fly into Agartala Airport to reach significant Indian cities for medical care. Visitors from Asia, Europe, and the Americas as well as foreign visitors come for cultural and medical reasons. These forces support Agartala's global expansion and demographic variety.

#### 4.4.2. Push factors of non-tribe migration

Non-tribal and tribal push elements are inversely linked. Non-tribal people seldom leave the capital for other cities. From the general observations and interaction experiences with Bengali community about migrating to other places in the country. It is found that Elite Bengali Community from Agartala and also has tendency for migration to big cities for better facilities and security. As Bengali community are predominant in West Bengal and Tripura. The group shared common cultures, hence many affluent Bengalis from Agartala have relocated to Kolkata and other areas of west Bengal. Tripura's insurgence-era tribal-nontribal strife could explain this tendency. Many Bengalis purchase flats or houses in Kolkata or in other major Indian cities for improved living and business. Rich and elite Bengalis might view Kolkata city as second home based on general observation and studies.

Many non-tribal towns sprang up after 1961, hence lessening the trend of non-tribals moving to the capital city from other areas of the state. The growth of towns in non-tribal areas like as Dharmanagar, Udaipur, Khowai, Kailashahar, Kumarghat, Teliamura, Belonia, Sabrum, Sonamura, Ambassa has greatly lowered non-tribal Bengali community migrants to the capital Agartala.

#### 4.5. The Pull and Push Factors of Tribes Migration to Agartala

**4.5.1. Pull factors of Tribes Migration:** The findings on pull factors inducing tribes' migration in Agartala is illustrated as follows: -

- **Period of Insurgency and Extremism**

Tripura had an increase in violent crimes between 1991 and 2001, with 36.7% of the state's documented violent crimes occurring during this time (Manas & Paul, 2009). In order to escape threats including extortion, arson, and violence, many tribals were driven to migrate to metropolitan regions like Agartala during this time of extremism involving both tribal and Bengali militants (Dasgupta, 2014). Constant CRPF and police patrolling aggravated the anguish and drove tribal government workers to look for safety in urban areas. Fear of false accusations of rebel ties led tribal leaders and their families to leave. Bengali instructors shunned tribal villages because of abduction threats, which affected education as well.

- **Educational Pursuance and upliftment of Socio-Economic Status**

The changing socio-economic features of STs between 2001 and 2011 caused more tribal migration to Agartala. Many tribals, particularly those working in government services, relocated to the city to seek better education for their children (Dasgupta, 2014). Catholic missionaries significantly

contributed to the improvement of rural tribal education by constructing schools in underprivileged communities. Many indigenous students therefore relocated to Agartala for tuition and higher education, usually living in rental homes and eventually settling down. The rubber plantations, introduced in the 1960s, have become a vital source of income for tribal families and are considered a major tool for rural tribal upliftment (Government of Tripura, n.d.; Datta, Debnath, & Shil, 2019). This lift in some sections of tribal families, especially belonging to Tripuri-Debbarma and other native tribes of Tripura, is to grab land in the city despite soaring prices. In fact, the tribes' fierce competition for obtaining land plots in the city has significantly increased land prices, making Agartala one of the most expensive city capitals in Northeast India.

#### • Embracing Urban livelihood and Tenant Migration

Though land and construction are expensive, Agartala saw more indigenous tenants. With livelihoods maintained by both govt formal professions and informal professions like rickshaw pulling, vegetables and meat vendors, many tribal families live in rented homes to seek education and work. After 2005, many Tribal educated who have pursued higher educations after 2001 are qualified in higher rank jobs, enabling many families to purchase plots in Agartala. The new settlement by tribes' migrations is in Nandanagar, Barjala, Gurkhabasti and Kunjaban locality of Agartala. Despite owning houses and plots in Agartala, many tribal families keep rural voter IDs and land ownership in the villages, demonstrating ongoing ties to their rural communities. In the Census 2011, the figure data show just 21,359 tribal residents in Agartala. In speculation, the real presence is far greater.

#### • Religious Integration and Cultural fusion

Tribal settlement patterns have been shaped by religious factors. Largely integrated into Hinduism, Tripuri tribals commemorate Kharchi Puja at the Chadda Devata temple in old Agartala. Buddhism adherents Chakmas and Mogs settled close to the Buddha Mandir Venu Bihar built during princely rule. Christian tribes like Lushai (Mizo)-Kuki, Halam, and others have come to the Baptist Christian Mission compound—donated by King Bir Bikram Manikya—for educational and religious services. The Nandanagar area has also grown to be a centre for Christian tribal people in recent decades.

#### 4.5.2. Push Factors of tribe's migration to Agartala

##### • Demographic Invasion and Land Displacement

The migration of tribal communities to Agartala has been significantly influenced by demographic changes following the influx of non-tribals, especially post-Partition. Sen (2003:130) recounts the words of a Bengali refugee who observed that tribal homes in Krishnagore, once owned by indigenous families, had been overtaken by Bengali settlers. These settlers were initially sheltered as refugees but gradually assumed ownership (Dasgupta, 2014, p. 37). This experience of displacement is echoed in a melancholic Kokborok song cited by Debbarma (2017): "Phaanthor o tongmani, Hachwkkabaikha, Rangchaknihaa le kwmakha" ("Was dwelling in the plains but have been pushed to the hills, the golden land is lost").

##### • Socio-Cultural Incompatibility with Urban Life

Urbanisation has posed further challenges for tribal settlement in Agartala. Tribal communities often prefer low-density, ecologically harmonious areas and find urban life incompatible with their traditional lifestyles. The transition to an urban environment often leads to cultural dissonance, identity crises, and the loss of traditional livelihoods. The integration of tribals into urban spaces is hindered by cultural and socioeconomic differences from the dominant non-tribal populations (Iwamura et al., 2016). Varying cultural values between Tripuri Mongoloid tribes and Indo-Aryan Bengalis also lead to social distancing and hinder community cohesion.

##### • Ethnic Riots and Fear of Violence

Ethnic violence has also shaped migration decisions. The 1980 Tripura riots between indigenous tribes and Bengalis, though largely sparing Agartala, generated widespread fear and led to massive displacement, property destruction, and social fragmentation. As a result, many tribals retreated into safer, rural tribal zones, while non-tribals sought refuge in urban areas. This shift reduced tribal presence in Agartala and deepened inter-community mistrust (Ali, 2011).

##### • Impact of the Tribal Areas Autonomous Region Formation

The establishment of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) in 1985 created an administrative divide in the state. While it was meant to empower tribal regions, it also reinforced spatial segregation. Agartala, not part of the TTAADC jurisdiction, came to be viewed as a non-tribal space. This reinforced ethnic boundaries and discouraged tribal migration to the capital, creating a dual perception of "tribal" versus "general" areas.

##### • Socio-economic barriers to Urban Migration

Beyond historical and ethnic factors, practical challenges like high land prices, flood-prone geography, racial and language barriers, and ongoing tensions between tribes and non-tribes have long deterred rural tribals from relocating to Agartala. The psychological effects of past violence and continued soft conflicts contributed to a general tribal mistrust toward the urban environment.

#### • Changing Perceptions and Recent Urban Trends:

Since 2001, there has been a noticeable shift. Educated and economically better-off tribal individuals, especially from the Tripuri Debbarma and Chakma communities, have increasingly migrated to Agartala. This trend is gradually transforming tribal views on urban living. Nevertheless, many immigrant tribes such as the Santhal, Munda, Oraon, and Bhil remain rare or absent in the city, indicating ongoing reluctance among certain tribal groups to fully integrate into urban society.

#### 5.CONCLUSION

The flow of ethnic migration into Agartala has shaped the city's diverse population. As a former princely capital and administrative center, Agartala attracted various ethnic groups, including migrants from East Pakistan and Bangladesh, driven by religious and political conflicts. Its proximity to the international border and access to services made it a preferred settlement choice for many non-tribal immigrants, altering the original tribal demographic makeup. Historical and geopolitical factors—such as the legacy of princely rule, partition-related violence, and fertile floodplains—have significantly influenced the settlement patterns in the city. These factors created sharp cultural contrasts between immigrant non-tribes and native tribal communities, contributing to social and ethnic tension.

Studies reveal both inflow and outflow migration trends among tribal communities, shaped by distinct "push" and "pull" factors. Urban migration for tribes remained low due to cultural reservations and social mistrust until the 1990s. However, migration increased post-2000 due to improved education, urban exposure, and socio-economic aspirations. The pattern of tribal migration differs from non-tribes, who moved to the city earlier for safety, livelihood, and development. In contrast, tribal communities were slower to urbanize due to fears of cultural loss and identity dilution. The limited tribal presence in Agartala, compared to other northeastern capitals, underscores this gap. The study highlights the need for more robust primary data from recent settlers to fully understand tribal migration trends. General observations are insufficient; wider field research is necessary to

make conclusive findings about urban ethnic dynamics in Agartala.

#### Author Contributions

The first author has written introduction, literature Review, Results and Findings while Discussion, Analysis and conclusions has been contributed by the second author.

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