THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE : A STUDY OF DISPLACEMENT AND CHANGING TRIBAL IDENTITY

Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have come to fruition had it not been for the unstinted generosity and support of a great many people. Foremost among them is my supervisor at the Centre for Political Studies, Dr. Niraja Gopal Jayal. It is not out of the imperatives of formality, but from the heart that I wish to thank her for the very genuine interest that she took in this work. It was her trust in me, more than anything else, that made me believe in myself, and that saw me through the muddy theoretical waters upon which I chanced, every once in a while. It was with great equanimity that she bore everything that I put her through-from tears to frantic phone calls made at ungodly hours. It is indeed, difficult to imagine what would have happened to me and my dissertation had she not been there, to put to rest all doubts and worries, as and when they arose.

Thanks are also due to Prof. C.P.Bhambhri, who could always be counted upon for help, of whatever nature, whenever needed. An affection such as his is difficult to come by when one is away from home. I cannot but thank him for his reassuring presence that made all problems, however big, appear within the bounds of solution.

I would like to make known my gratitude to Avni Sharma, Snigdha Banerjee, Sudipta Sil, Deepa Easwaran and Shiffon Chatterjee. Snigdha, I would like to thank for her letters which were a constant source of amusement during what was a long and somewhat monotonous summer. My gratitude to Deepa knows no bounds. Her offer to help me out with clearance as well as corrections save me a badly needed breather in those last days prior to submission. Sudipta continues to be the helpful soul that she always was, and Shiffon deserves a special vote of thanks-- not only for being my companion in the holidays during which she proved to be an excellent listener [she must by now be fully acquainted with the woes that dissertation - writing entails] but also for being kind enough to compile the bibliography at my request.

There are two people who deserve a very very special mentions. They are my friend and room-mate of four years -- Dorjee Lhamu Bhutia, and the irrepressible Manmath Narayan Singh. I want to grasp this opportunity to thank them both, not that thanks would ever repay the debt that I owe them. Dorjee has been an incredibly understanding room mate; talking to her was all that I ever needed to do when things were going wrong. As for Manmath, I really do not know how I would have managed to write this without him - from finding untraceable books to acquiring typists - there is little that he did not help me out with. He also put up with my moods, which for no rhyme or reason frequently visited themselves upon him. Saying thanks

is but a small step towards redressing such injustice but there is little else that I can do, the deed being already done.

This dissertation would not have seen the light of day had it not been for 'Dada' -- my typist at SSS II, who retrived my work from about half a dozen floppies into which it had been dis-assembled by his predecessor. It was extremely kind of him to agree to help me, when I went to him, with about two days to spare.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Ritu and Buddhadev Guha. Had it not been for them, I would not be writing these words today. They have always believed in me, especially when the chips were down. I can only hope, for their sake and mine, that I am able to live up to their expectations. And a very very special thanks to my sister, Malini, who initiated me, as a child, into the world of books and taught me to love learning. To all three of them, with all my love, I dedicate this work.

New Delhi
21st July 1998

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

POSING THE PROBLEM

The patterns of economic development that have been adopted by Indian planners over the past five decades have made the large-scale displacement of people inevitable, and such displacement, more often than not, has specifically affected the politically and economically weak. The state, by virtue of its power of 'eminent domain'[1] has acquired land occupied by tribals and other rural marginal populations and has proceeded to evict them, causing large-scale dispossession and alienation. As tribal populations are mostly dependent on the natural resource base for their subsistence, displacement for them has meant a loss of livelihood and habitat. For a majority of tribals, displacement has also brought with it socio-cultural disruption, caused by the severance of the close ties that obtain between their geographical space, social organization and cultural identity.

The breakup of the traditional community has been accompanied by an unleashing of various modernizing forces. The displaced tribal communities are often resettled in areas close to urban settlements. Alternatively, they are affected by the factory-culture that grows around the newly built industries for which they are displaced and which employ many of them as unskilled labour. As such, few of them remain

unexposed to urbanizing influences. Besides, the new schooling and career opportunities sometimes provided by the government as part of a rehabilitation package alter the life-prospects of the younger generation, leading to a break with traditional occupations. The transition to a money economy paves the way for economic inequalities in what were, in some places, egalitarian societies. And an awareness of their increased bargaining power vis-à-vis the state enhances political consciousness to an extent previously unthinkable.

It would appear, therefore, that displacement and the resettlement following it have consequences that definitely border on social change. Moreover, as is the case with all social change, it leaves an impact on the manner in which the changing community perceives and defines itself, and is perceived and defined by others. We are thus brought to the issue of identity which lies at the core of my enquiry and to which we shall have occasion to return later. For now, it should suffice to say that,even if we were to reject a static understanding of tribal identity, modernization today has become synonymous with homogenizing processes which ignore the spiritual dimensions of tribal life. This is, at least, the mainstream academic perspective. In other words, when tribal cultures are not viewed as rigidly archaic obstacles to needed progress, they are looked upon as *beleaguered conservators of precious values threatened by the corrosive powers of rapid change, particularly political and economic modernization. Little attention is paid to cultural development in and of itself, to the*

regularities of transformation which occur in the ritual and belief systems of societies undergoing comprehensive social revolutions. As Clifford Geertz put it, we expect cultures to prosper or decline, we do not expect them to *change*.[2] Extending this argument to the issue of identity, it may be reasoned that identity is not neccessarily something that we have or we lose ___ there is always the possibility of its being reconstructed. Admitting this would lead us to the following questions: How are the processes of modernization perceived by the tribals undergoing them? That is, do they perceive these changes as threatening their identity, or can they envisage accommodating them without compromising their uniqueness? If it is the latter, then we have not a *loss* but a *restructuring* of identity.

I would also like to explore the link between culture, economy and polity, as it manifests itself in this particular context. This will enable us to understand how culturally disinherited communities revive and use their lost culture as a rallying point to organize themselves as pressure groups and to place demands of an economic and political nature before the government. Apart from *reviving* culture for strategic eco-political purposes, we also have a creative *reconstruction* of culture [wherein some elements of the original tradition are retained and others expelled and some elements from other traditions added] with a view to make one's identity more viable and more amenable to political manipulation.

Some of the questions that I shall be raising then, are:

In what ways have displacement and consequent resettlement affected the tribal community, culturally speaking? Has it altered the way in which others perceive the community and, more important, the way it perceives itself? Do the forces of change appear to be of a menacing nature, or does adaptation seem a viable option? In the event of a restructuring of identity, how is the new identity different from the previous one? Is it more inclusive or exclusive? Does the newly forged identity consolidate existing traditional identities or does it reshape and enlarge them? What is its role in solidarity-building, in goal-setting and goal-attainment? And finally, how does this identity affect pre-existing primary loyalties and the nationally desired terminal loyalties? In other words, does displacement lead to a forging of identities that are viable from the point of view of nation-building?

In order to avoid any confusion that is likely to arise on this score, it needs to be stated that I have not limited myself to merely probing the effect of displacement on the tribal way of life. My subject is tribal identity in transition, and it is a subject whose scope is wide, warranting an exploration of the historical processes whereby various influences and actors, both state and non-state, have brought about changes in [i] the lifestyle of tribes, [ii] others' perception of them and [iii] their perception of themselves. The state and its actors have done this primarily by undermining the tribal economy and by following a policy of assimilation as a means to nation-building. Through their interaction with non-state actors, some of it forced, tribes have been

exposed culturally and civilizationally to the national mainstream. Thus, some of them have taken recourse to Sanskritization to join the caste order, others have adopted Christianity.

But even as conformist tendencies have prevailed and tribes have succumbed to homogenizing pressures, there has been a movement in the other direction - a concerted effort towards a reclamation of identity that has found expression in the phenomenon of 'retribalization' and the rise of nativist movements that have called for a return to roots. In British India, this call, essentially a civilizational one, has assumed political import when it has been interpreted at the political level to signify protest and resistance against both the colonial and indigenous feudal forces. In modern India, primordialities are the plank on which the greatest mobilization is attained in tribal politics, not least because of the rights guaranteed to Scheduled Tribes by our Constitution. What happens here is that a collectivity held together by a feeling of ethnic distinctiveness ends up functioning as a pressure group, placing eco-political demands before the state. Identity, in other words, serves a political function, and more significantly, is deliberately made to do so.

It is with this background understanding of the dynamics of identity that I come to the issue of displacement. Displacement has uprooted indigens from their ancestral land. Most significantly, this land for them is not merely an economic entity ___ it is where their forefathers lie buried and it is where the spirits of the living too shall reside following death. Land, in other words, is what holds the past,

the present and the future together and ensures the continuity of the clan. Uprooting, therefore, amounts to a catastrophe that shakes the tribal world-view to its very foundations. From the economic point of view, displacement renders them bereft of their means of subsistence. The encroachment of the state on customary forest rights doubly ensures impoverishment. Some turn to wage labour as a last resort and suffer an irreversible decline in social status.

Displacement is part of the age-old story of land alienation and in so far as such alienation has not gone unopposed, displacement too finds a place on the agenda of tribal movements against the state. The Jharkhand agitation, essentially a cultural phenomenon, has an economic content, and displacement, on account of its economic and psycho-cultural impact, guarantees to be a prime mobilizational issue within the movement. Struggle is known to effect further consolidation of identities. Thus we have a situation where displacement, even as it jeopardizes the tribal way of life, serves, ironically enough, to reinforce a tribal political consciousness which necessarily presupposes their self-perception and self-affirmation as tribals.

Before ending this section it ought to be stated that this work deals with the tribal experience in Chotanagpur. It was not possible, for both lack of time and fear of eliciting inadequate results, to conduct a case-study. I have relied instead on secondary sources.

AN AGENDA OF DEROMANTICIZATION

My subject then, is social change amongst tribal populations, that

engendered by displacement in particular, and its repercussions for tribal identity. Any process of social change would have consequences both favourable and adverse for those affected. While much has been made of the cultural disruption caused by developmental displacement, sparse attention has been given to the onset of modernizing processes, not all of which are as devoid of positive value as social anthropologists often make them out to be. It may, of course, be argued that it is difficult to see modernization as anything but an imposition in all those cases where such change has been involuntary, sudden and definitely not the product of conscious decision. But the problem is that anthropologists tend towards a radical critique of the modernist vision of life, even when such a vision has been adopted voluntarily. How one evaluates change depends, at least in part, on what one sees as a substantive good, which consequently becomes one's criterion for evaluation. Veena Das, describing a village in Tamil Nadu where the introduction of canal irrigation led to the investment of cash inflows in education and consequently changed the kinship and marriage practices of the community, comments on how critics of modernization would see in this the destruction of traditional life-styles, whereas those who think in terms of objective substantive goods and count literacy as one of these would point to the greater opportunities being enjoyed by women.[3] So, whereas a modernist orientation is insensitive to cultural loss, a traditionalist orientation is over-sensitive to it. Each could produce evaluations that are at odds with the

orientation of the subjects themselves.

However, given the nature of my subject, namely, change, and the anthropological predilection for pathologizing change, and seeing it 'almost as a fall from the grace of original tribalism'[4], I am more likely to fall into the traditionalist trap than the modernist one. It is, therefore, against a nostalgic retrospection that it is necessary to guard oneself. As Malinowski put it, 'the scientific anthropologist must be the anthropologist of the changing Native. Because what exists nowadays is not a primitive culture in isolation but one in contact and process of change'.[5] Pleading that the figment of the 'uncontaminated' Native be dropped from research, non-existent as he was, he considered culture change a most significant historical event, to evade which would be to evade the real issues of the day. Veena Das, arguing in a similar vein, writes that social anthropology must transcend its role as the purveyor of dreams and stop articulating tradition as a notion of normality that may challenge the pathologies of modern society.[6] This would, in the context of the present study, make the representation of the interests of those facing displacement an issue of concern. Also, a careful comparison of pre- and post-displacement scenarios would be required, as the question very often is not one of displacing affluent populations by development projects, but of protecting populations already vulnerable to disaster.

So far as the predisposition to romanticize is concerned, the

anthropologist is not alone. Sociology, Political Science and History have all taken to protesting the present, and nowhere is this more evident than in the nostalgic treatment of certain subjects, such as 'tradition' and 'change'. The essentialist treatment of the concepts of 'community', 'tribe', 'identity' and 'ethnicity' also draws on this academic tradition. This trend may be explained as part of a wider academic effort to grapple with the crisis of pluralist democracy that has occurred in an age of farcical representative government. Against the background of a desperate search for means to curb the abuse of power, the emergence of communities as new political actors has brought fresh prospects of decentralization, and has offered fresh hope. Moreover, the traditional ways of life that these communities embody have appeared as attractive alternatives that could possibly counter the modernizing onslaught of a ruthlessly homogenizing state. Hence the need to champion this cause.

The call for pluralism is doubtless a worthy one, but it must not blind us to the dangers of a blanket legitimization of the primordial. History abounds with instances where 'culture' and 'community' have been made to do very dirty work. The communitarian ideal has loomed large in socialism, and has been invoked in justification of the atrocities committed in Stalinist Russia. The war-time Right, on the other hand, gave 'community' a nationalist colour and cultural content, and used it to identify and exterminate *the enemy*.[7] [The Jews, being the only sizeable minority in Europe were automatically cast in this role, the

more easily because of the different language and dress that they maintained in the ghettoes of Eastern and Central Europe.]

Having made my point about the need for a balanced perspective in the study of change and the related concepts of [i] Tradition [ii] Ethnicity [iii] Identity [iv] Community and [v] Tribe, I now propose to look into their academic constructions and to identify the strain of romanticism so often running through them. I shall also highlight a counter-trend, one that hinges on a deromanticized and pragmatic perspective, and which for that reason is better able to capture the psychological reality of the day. This second orientation also has the advantage of showing a change-situation to be inherently dynamic ___ rather than attempting fruitless comparisons of pre- and post-change scenarios, it sees change as a *process* and looks to the future.

Tradition

The idea that, with the development of modern societies, tradition gradually declines in significance and eventually ceases to play a meaningful role in the lives of individuals has been one of the most powerful legacies of classical social thought. It is the contention of a large body of social theory that the cultural history of the West can be periodized in terms of a clear-cut break with 'the traditional'. This 'tradition-becomes-modernity' narrative is a simple script of 'then-and-now', 'before-and-after' or 'here-and-there'. And it suggests that then/there/before, God/Nature/Ancestors had established authoritative sets of rules for the regulation of our cultural and social life, whereas

now/here/after, these pre-given divine/natural/ancestral orders are being contested, lost, ignored or forgotten. A classic formulation of this rupture that involved the liberation of individual agency was provided by Jacob Burckhardt in his book ***The Civilization of The Renaissance in Italy.*** Arguing that the autonomous self was a creature of the Renaissance, he portrayed the medieval self as other-dominated and embedded, 'conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family or corporation ___ only through some general category'.[8]

Recent years have seen this old tradition-modernity dichotomy theorized in a new way in the form of the 'detraditionalization' thesis. Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, amongst others, have used terms such as 'individualization' and 'post-traditional society' to describe what they see as an inescapable aspect of the formation of modernity.[9] Whereas in the early phases of modernity, institutions depended on traditions that were characteristic of pre-modern societies, advanced modernity sees these traditions increasingly undermined and social activity increasingly stripped of traditional mechanisms of support.

As John B. Thompson points out, these arguments seem, at first glance, little different from the old debates about rationalization and secularization. But there are some differences, and he mentions two. First, the theorists of detraditionalization argue not for a disappearance of traditions, but for a change in their status in the modern world. As traditions are more and more exposed to public

scrutiny, they become less taken-for-granted and are no longer considered unquestioned truths. They do, however, survive in various forms, for instance, as fundamentalism which rejecting the call of discursive justification, stubbornly asserts the inviolable character of tradition. The second distinctive feature of detraditionalization literature is that 'it explores the relation between the changing status of tradition and the process of self-formation'.[10] Traditions once provided a stable framework for the self. Today, however, 'individuals are obliged increasingly to fall back on their own resources to construct a coherent identity for themselves'.[11] It may be added that tradition survives, on this account, as a refuge for individuals who are unable to cope in this age of radical uncertainty.

To sum up, then, detraditionalization involves a shift of authority from 'without' to 'within'. The individual subject is called upon to exercise authority in the face of disorder brought on by the decline of the pre-given. Yet another way to conceptualize detraditionalization is to posit oppositions such as closed [ritualized] vs open [revisable]; fate [pre-ordained] vs choice [reflexivity]; necessity vs contingency; security [certainty] vs risk [uncertainty]; embedded [socio-centric] vs disembedded [autonomous]; self under control vs self in control; and virtues vs preferences. Detraditionalization is then seen as involving the *replacement* of the closed with the open, of fate with choice and so on.[12] Needless to say, the characteristics of the past and the present are seen as mutually exclusive.

It, however, has to be said that, as distinguished from theorizing which accords a pre-eminent role to the shift from authority 'without' to authority 'within', there is yet another strand of theorizing which sees detraditionalization as taking place *alongside* or *together with* tradition-maintenance, retraditionaliza-tion and even the construction of new traditions. The former trend, which assumes that the radical swing from tradition is intrinsic to modern reflexivity, is labelled by Paul Heelas the *'radical thesis'* whereas those who argue against a 'triumphalist' version of detraditionalization are said to advocate a *'coexistence thesis'*.[13]

The theorists of coexistence argue that 'the traditional' is not as tradition-dominated as might be supposed; nor is the modern/post-modern as detraditionalized as is claimed. The main reason for this is that detraditionalizing processes do not occur in isolation from processes informed by the maintenance and revitalization of traditions. 'The task therefore', as Barbara Adam claims, 'is not to achieve comparison on a hierarchical 'before-and-after' basis but to find ways to conceptualize the complexity, the *and*'.[14] What we have is a fusion of incompatibles ___ as such, it does not suffice to think in terms of adding on or replacing, or of moving from tradition to de- and post-tradition. We need to conceive instead of multiple adjustments where the old figures in the new and the new modifies the old. It is in response to this imperative that cultural historians have coined expressions such as 'the modernity of tradition'[15] and have sought to describe how

traditional institutions like caste have survived the onset of modernity by modifying their functions. With the coming of democratic politics to India, caste has increasingly shed its ritual character and functions today as a primary mobilizational base of electoral politics. On the other hand, there is also a 'tradition' of modernity that social theorists have woken up to only lately. 'After six generations of nearly complete dominance as the organizing force in social institutions and practices'[16], modernity itself has become a tradition. Robert Bellah thus argues that the modern day faith in the value of individual autonomy is itself tradition-informed: 'We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves . . . live our lives as we see fit is not only morally wrong, it is *sacrilegious*'.[17]

It is also an assumption of the coexistence thesis that purely tradition-informed and purely autonomous modes of being are impossible. People *always* live in the midst of conflicting demands, emanating on the one hand from authoritative realms transcending the self, and on the other, from the realm of individual desires, expectations and aspirations. Barbara Adam furthermore makes the perceptive point that a shift from traditional to new *external* authorities may be deciphered in modernity.[18] A non-traditional society, ideally speaking, dispenses with final authorities. But this did not happen. Expert knowledge, particularly in the realm of the sciences, began to be regarded as the final court of appeal. Though science has lost a good

deal of authority since, it cannot be denied that expertise today has replaced tradition as a source of certainty.[19] As such, the shift from external to internal authority seems to remain more an agreed need than an all-pervasive fact of modernity.

The third assumption of the coexistence thesis is that traditions are never simply received ___ they are open to human agency and as such, their inviolates are always subject to some degree of revision. It would be useful at this point to look into the etymology of the term. As Raymond Williams writes in ***Keywords***, it derives from the Latin root '*tradere*' [to hand over or deliver] and has survived in the English language as 'a description of a general process of handing down' with 'a strong and often predominant sense of this entailing respect and duty'.[20] In temporal terms, therefore, tradition is an active process, something that is created afresh at each moment of renewal. However, this creative aspect of tradition is seldom emphasized in classical social science literature. Max Weber, for example, stressed only its habitual and automatic aspects, suggesting a complete lack of agency on the part of those participating in it.[21] Contrary to this, recent research in anthropology has revealed that small-scale, supposedly isolated societies are far from being 'islands' in the sense of not knowing about alternative ways of life. It would follow from this that participants in such societies are not entirely unreflexive about their own beliefs. More significantly, such societies have been found to be internally pluralistic. Members approach tradition each from his own political or social point

of view and as such, do not see things in the same way. In the words of Renato Rosaldo [in specific reference to the Ilongot of Northern Luzon] life is 'more actively constructed than passively received'.[22]

It is also the contention of some that the decline of certain functions of tradition goes together with increased reliance on others. John B. Thompson, distinguishes between four aspects of tradition[23]:

the hermeneutic: tradition provides a set of background assumptions, an interpretative scheme or framework for understanding the world. As emphasized by Gadamer and Heidegger, all understanding is based on pre-suppositions.[24] In this hermeneutic sense of tradition, therefore, the Enlightenment, with its notions of reason, scientific knowledge and emancipation, far from dispensing with tradition, itself constituted a new tradition.

the normative: traditions can constitute norms either through the routinization of certain practices handed down from the past or through the grounding of certain practices in tradition, i.e., justifying with reference to tradition.

the legitimative: tradition serves as a source of support for the exercise of power. Obedience is due to a person because he/she occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority [Weber's traditional authority], and

the identity aspect: tradition provides the symbolic material for the formation of identity both at the individual and the collective level. The sense of oneself and the sense of belonging are both shaped ___ to varying

degrees ___ by values transmitted from the past. Thompson then goes on to argue that there has been a gradual decline in the traditional grounding of action and in the role of traditional authority, i.e., in the normative and the legitimation aspects of tradition. However, tradition retains its significance as a means of making sense of the world [the hermeneutic aspect] and as a way of creating a sense of belonging [the identity aspect].[25]

And for those who argue that tradition, being spatially specific and spatially defined, has been dealt a severe blow by modernity's tendency to de-stabilize sites and collapse settings, Thompson has an answer ready. He acknowledges that traditions are uprooted from the shared locales of everyday life. But this for him does not imply that traditions become free-floating ___ on the contrary, they are re-embedded in new contexts and re-moored to new kinds of territorial units that encompass but exceed the limits of shared locales. The advent of mass media has transformed, for instance, the traditions associated with the British monarchy ___ it has disconnected them 'from their historical embeddedness in court life' and has increasingly made them 'available to the population as a whole'[26]; it has reconnected them to the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, the unity and integrity of which these rituals have been increasingly designed to represent. To quote Thompson, 'In so doing, the meaning and purpose of these rituals have changed. Today, they are no longer concerned with the re-affirmation of the corporate solidarity of the metropolitan elites; rather,

the great ceremonial occasions of the monarchy have become mediated celebrations of national identity which all citizens, wherever they may be, are able to witness and in which they are invited vicariously to take part'.[27]

Those who oppose the duality of the traditionalization thesis also take recourse to the ideas of 're-traditionalization' and 'the invention of tradition'. Paul Morris describes re-traditionalization as a parallel process in which the tradition to be overcome is constructed in opposition to and normally as an earlier stage of the detraditionalized present.[28] 'The invention of tradition', on the other hand, involves not an overcoming of tradition, but the construction of new ones, using material from the past. The aim is to establish continuity with a suitable historical past, this continuity most of the time being largely factitious. The need to invent thus arises when there occurs a break in history, for when the old ways are alive, traditions need neither be revived nor invented. Invented traditions are thus 'responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations'. What is striking here is 'the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant'.[29]

A word of caution needs to be sounded here. Traditions are doubtless invented when a rapid transformation of society weakens the social fabric for which the old traditions had been designed, and when the latter do not prove sufficiently flexible to survive the new

conditions. This, however, should not lead us to assume that old traditions are necessarily rendered unviable by social change. This is not the case at all.

To bring the debate to a close, it may be said that tradition has come under attack not once, but several times. Following the Enlightenment project of reason, thinkers across a spectrum of disciplines and pursuits have maintained that we live in a post-traditional order. While sociologists like Beck and Giddens have advocated a theory of 'reflexive modernity',[30] political philosophers like Rawls and Habermas have proposed a rational ethical order and a procedural liberalism in which there is no place for values.[31] Again neo-classical and Marxist economists have conceived the individual as a rational, tradition-free agent possessing preference schedules and interests in the market. And finally we have had the deconstructionists who, ironically enough, have deconstructed such notions of rationality only to have pushed the destruction of tradition even further.[32] To quote Scott Lash, 'fragmentation of the self and hypostatization of the other' constitute the core assumptions of this genre and this, logically enough, has promoted 'the vastest and widest iterations of intellectual, sub-cultural and national alterity'. The problem, however, is that a radical political culture cannot have its core assumptions only in ideas and practices of difference. It must just as much have its basis in the thought and practice of solidarity, i.e., solidarity within the same. And abstract collective interests are not

a sufficient basis for solidarity within the same. 'Not common interests, but shared practices, shared meanings and shared traditions constitute solidarity. Solidarity is based on value, and the core values of deconstruction, as of liberalism, do not concern so much the revaluation but rather the irrelevance of values'. Tradition, moreover, is also important for solidarity with 'the other', whether this be female, ethnic, gay or nature. Difference, clearly, is not enough. There must also be *recognition*. And recognition presupposes not just alterity, but understanding, a certain kind of inter-subjectivity and some sort of shared tradition.[33]

Ethnicity

Daniel Bell, in a theoretically useful classification, divided social movements into two categories ___ symbolic-expressive and instrumental. While the latter had an objective basis for cohesion, namely, interests, the former depended on subjective emotional ties for a common symbolism and shared consciousness. Both for him had their problems. The symbolic-expressive groups were amenable to quick mobilization in periods of stress but tended to burn themselves out in the absence of a real sustained interest. The instrumental organizations, on the other hand, had to continuously re-adapt themselves to new purposes once the old ones were realized. Those social units which combined symbolic and instrumental purposes were clearly the most effective and Bell cast 'class' and 'ethnicity' as the two such dominant modes of coherent group feeling and action in the

twentieth century.[34]

Of late, a good deal of attention has been paid by social scientists to the instrumental dimension of ethnicity. Ethnicity has traditionally been regarded as an 'innate pre-disposition', but lately it has been noted that a good deal of instrumental reasoning goes into the construction of ethnic identities and that ethnicity therefore need not be understood solely as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities have to re-emerge, but also a strategic choice of individuals, who, in other circumstances, would choose other group memberships as a means of gaining power and privilege. Seen in this light, ethnicity becomes not merely a matter of 'persona' but also of salience.[35]

S.C. Dube, outlining two approaches to the understanding of ethnicity, describes the *primordialist approach* as one that considers common descent as the most important factor. The other approach known variously as *'situational, subjectivist or instrumental'* emphasizes a group's perception of itself as being different from others and the implications of this for that group's present status and future prospects.[36] The phenomenon of ethnicity demands a use of both these approaches, for even as the symbolic and cultural aspects of ethnicity are important in themselves, they very often get politicized because ethnic conflicts are in the final analysis demands for a larger share of economic resources and for a greater role in the decision making process. Daniel Bell, in an attempt to understand why ethnicity, in

itself a cultural phenomenon, has increasingly taken on political forms, identifies some structural factors. One of these is the shift from market to politics as the key arena of societal decision-making. To quote Bell, 'The essential point about the change from market . . . to political decisions is that in the latter instance, everyone *knows* where the decision will be made.... A market is dispersed and the actors largely "invisible". In politics, decisions are made in a cockpit and confrontation is direct'. It is this which 'forces the organization of persons into communal and interest groups defensively to protect their places and privileges, or advantageously to gain place and privilege'. It is to this increasing communalization of society [in the sense of people organizing themselves into some community or other] that Bell attributes the politicization of ethnicity.[37]

Sachidananda deals with the transformation of expressive ethnicity into instrumental ethnicity well. Acknowledging, on the lines of Bell, that cultural ethnicity is closely linked to economic and political aspirations [politics being construed here in the broad social sense to mean manipulation of power at any level] he goes on to describe how exactly this link is forged. 'Those interest-groups which cannot organize themselves formally tend to use cultural mechanisms to articulate their feelings and aspirations . . . the concept of ethnicity throws into relief . . . the processes by which the symbolic patterns of behaviour implicit in the style of life or the subculture of a group . . . develop in order to articulate organizational functions that cannot be

institutionalized formally'. [38] As such, ethnic groups often resort to a dynamic re-arrangement of customs, many of which remain unchanged in form with functions changing dramatically.

Ethnicity could even become a matter of reconstructing the past as per the imperatives of the present. As Dube points out, the choice of elements that go into the portrayal of a tradition can be highly eclectic and generally responds to existential realities ___ to changes in the socio-cultural environment and to needs generated thereby. The situation could even demand a wholesale discarding of one's ethnic past. Dube cites the example of the Malays in Malaysia, who are making an effort to forget their pre-Muslim past. Indonesia, on the other hand, continues to demonstrate pride in its cultural tradition: despite the adoption of Islam, Indonesians still take Sanskritic names and the Ramayana and Mahabharata are very much a part of their living culture. Sensitive situations can arise when a group has to delink itself from one great tradition and find its moorings in another. Pakistan has not delinked itself from the Indus Valley Civilization, but it nevertheless finds the presence of phallic symbols and Mother Goddess figurines uncomfortable. Whole cultural heritages may be expelled during the remaking of traditions, often at great cultural cost and looking to expediency. [39]

It may be worthwhile to point out that it is the project of nation-building more than any other that has called for the re-making of ethnicity. De-emphasizing primordialities and moving towards more

inclusive identities are necessary for nation-building and obviously call for a reconstruction of tradition on integrative lines. However, disenchantment with the polity, or failure to create a 'civil theology' as a locus of identification [for example, Rome as a symbol, Americanism as a civil religion and so on][40] may find primordial loyalties regaining strength, leading to quite a different kind of reconstruction of ethnicity, namely, on parochial lines. Ethnicity, therefore, is a highly flexible instrument in the hands of those participating in it. Its diverse and sometimes contradictory strains can be developed this way or that, drawing boundaries now tighter, now looser, as demanded by the challenges of the day.

Identity

The discourse about identity is, in an important sense, distinctively modern mainly because the social changes that marked modernity made the production and recognition of identities newly problematic. As Craig Calhoun puts it, 'It is not simply . . . that it matters more to us than to our forebears to be who we are. Rather, it is much harder for us to establish who we are and maintain this own identity satisfactorily in our lives and in the recognition of others'.[41] This is because modernity has meant, in part, the break-up or the reduction to near- irrelevance of most all-encompassing identity schemes, like kinship or the notion of a 'great chain of being'. The philosophy of individualism has located the self as the source of morality, as opposed to God, say, or the idea of the Good. This is part

of the massive subjective turn of modern culture, a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths. Charles Taylor, in his book ***The Ethics of Authenticity,*** writes, 'Being true to myself means being true to my own originality and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the modern ideal of authenticity and to the goals of self-fulfilment or self-realization in which it is usually couched. . . it is what gives sense to the idea of 'doing your own thing' or 'finding your own fulfilment'.[42]

There is, however, another element to the debate about identity. There are those who essentialize biological/psychological human identity and argue that identity is given naturally and that it is produced purely by acts of individual will. These philosophical arguments are rooted in Aristotle, who, distinguishing between 'essence' and 'appearance' or between the true nature of phenomena and epiphenomenal variations, maintained that the pursuit of identity lay in realizing the former. This appeal to nature was reinforced and transformed with the rise of both arguments about the biological roots of human identities and the Romantic demand for individuals to express and be true to their inner natures. Essentialist reasoning was further reinforced by the rhetoric of national identity and the advance of universalistic moral reasoning, as for example, the notion of human rights which was grounded on a presumed essential commonality of human beings.[43]

Opposed to this strain of reasoning, there arose a different school ___ the constructionists ___ who stressed the construction of self in social life. They also challenged the essentialist notion that individual persons can have singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic identities. And by the same token, constructionist arguments challenged notions of *collective* identities as based on some essence or set of core features shared by all members of the collectivity and no others.[44] The point of this exercise in the deconstruction of essentialist categories was to emphasize the incompleteness, fragmentation and contradictions of both personal and collective existence.

This theory of social construction of seemingly natural identities, however, has been characterized by some as 'as determinist as naturalizing approaches' in its tendency to deny or minimize 'personal and political agency by stressing seemingly omnipresent but diffuse social pressures'.[45] Also, the position that differences are constructed rather than innate, has served to reinforce a nature/culture division that should instead be deconstructed. And, most important, the opposition between essentialism and constructionism blinds us to a reality, namely, that the choice between deconstructing and claiming identities is often shaped by strategic considerations and not dictated by normative principles.[46] Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the contradictions within the feminist movement. Several feminist thinkers have argued that it would be dangerous to forgo essentialism,

the argument being that where a particular category of identity has been repressed, delegitimated or devalued in dominant discourses, a vital response may be to claim value for all those labelled by that category, thus invoking it in an essentialist way.[47] Thus, it would have been vital, in the early years of the women's movement, to appeal to the presumed commonalties in the experience of women. But this way of thinking clashes with the post-structuralist project of displacing identity. 'Woman', it is said, effaces the difference between women in specific socio-historical contexts; women of colour and lesbians argue that an essentialized gender identity cannot subsume their experience, structured as it is on white, heterosexual and for that matter, middle-class presumptions.[48] Yet, ironically enough, black women and lesbians have in their turn depended, for their politics, on the evocation of specific quasi-essentialist categories.

There is little doubt that every collective identity is open to both internal sub-division and calls for its incorporation into some larger category of primary identity. Calhoun writes, 'This is not only an issue for alternative collective identities, but for individuals who are commonly treated in this discourse as though they were unitary and internally homogenous'.[49] There are always internal tensions and inconsistencies among the various identities and group memberships of individuals. Thus, acting on certain identities must frustrate others. As has been pointed out with regard to black nationalism, many black women understand themselves to be fundamentally both feminists and

African-Americans, and as such experience the hostility of conventional black nationalist discourse not simply as an external constraint but as an internal tension.

By way of concluding, I quote Calhoun: 'The road forward from the early predominance of essentialist approaches . . . lies not in simple reversal...To essentialist reason, we *add* constructionism and to this dualism, we add the possibilities of both deconstructing and claiming identities'. And of course, in claiming identities, we are not obliged to make either/or choices. It is often our prerogative and perhaps our best strategy to insist on the option of both/and. In other words, 'essentialism itself need not be essentialized' as 'there are a plethora of claims to basic or root or essential identities that stand on different grounds, that co-habit with different political bedfellows, that open [or foreclose] different insights, or coalitions or conflicts'.[50]

Community

Raymond Williams notes, community 'unlike all the other terms of social organization [state, nation, society, etc.] . . . never seems to be used unfavourably and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term'.[51] Everyone today is for community, be it the Left or the Right, political philosophers or religious leaders, modernists or post-modern theorists. This modern ethic of community is 'built upon the deprivations implicit in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment', it is a 'reaction to a universe where men's superiority lay in their knowledge, and where knowledge led to man's

domination over nature and politics but left him naked and unprotected'.[52]

The revival of social solidarity is undoubtedly one of the dominant themes of modern thought and by reverse logic, liberal individualism is under fire. It is denounced as 'dehumanizing' and the kind of society that it informs as 'alienating'. It is said to rest on a model of man that is descriptively inadequate and morally defective, and the quasi-contractual theories of human association that derive from it are found to be invalidated by their faulty foundations. Socialism, by contrast, accords a very high place to the communitarian ideal, chiefly through the centrality of the concept of alienation. Marx had argued that man is potentially the only subject in a world of objects and of human creations; anything that turns man into an object, that subordinates man to powers outside himself is inhuman and therefore immoral. Man's alienation, as such, comes to be when man's forces, products and creations ___ all of which are extensions of man's personality ___ are split off from man, when they acquire independent status and power and turn back on man to dominate him as his master. Whereas 'feudalism enslaved the whole man, capitalism split man's functions off from man and used them to enslave him . . . Under capitalism, the worker is not only alienated from his product, from the working-capacity that he sells on the labour market, from other men who confront him as employer-exploiters or employee-competitors, he is also alienated from his own political functions . . . The Republic of the

Market conceals the Despotism of the Factory. Because law in a class society deals with abstract men, men solely in their legal and political capacity, it can proclaim all men equal before the law and equal as citizens while leaving them to remain unequal in fact, in their material, economic capacity'.[53]

It was in the stage of communism that this alienation was to be overcome. This was to be achieved through revolution — the seizure of state power in order to socialize the means of production, distribution and exchange. 'Communism', Marx wrote, is 'the *positive* transcendence of *private property* as *human self-estrangement* . . . Communism, therefore, is the complete return of man to himself as a *social* being'.[54] It is important to note here that Marx, though beginning with a conception of man as 'rational' and 'self-determined', studiously avoided the conclusion that man's only duty was to his egoistic self, by flatly denying that man could be understood as an individual ego. Man, for him, was a species-being, a social being. Only in society could man find freedom, only in and through society could he become fully a man.

The modernist project, it may be recalled, was originally one of liberating the individual from communal authority and tradition. However, the rights-oriented liberalism, in terms of which this modernist agenda couched itself, was soon discredited for having completely overlooked the modern man's desperate need to 'belong', as it were. The institutions of an absolute, impersonal capitalism

had created the traditionless self ___ rudderless, bereft of personal connections, de-politicized, without clear guidance or certainty ___ this grim reality compelled social theory to take a fresh look at itself. The result was a reformulation of some classical themes culminating in a new focus on community. Modernity, however, had progressed too far for us to go back all the way; the community now theorized was thus a 'community beyond tradition'[55], a community shorn of traditional modes of identification. It is within this tradition of social thought that Marxism, with its call for working- class solidarity, may be situated.

Another significant alternative to 'traditional community' also became available in the form of the 'nation'. Paul Morris writes, 'The seventeenth and eighteenth century theorists of the state revived this Augustinian model, replacing the individual Christian who overcomes his isolation by participating in corpus Christi, the life [body] of Christ, with the individual citizen who overcomes his separateness by participation in the 'body politic', in the life of the state . . . Paul's demand that the participants [in Christ] be detraditionalized in terms of ethnos and gender, is paralleled in the modern state by the insistence that the differences of occupation, locality, dialect, race, gender and religion are irrelevant to the individual's absolute status as a participating citizen. This is the basis of the claim that the modern liberal programme created a 'neutral' space ___ beyond tradition and community ___ in order to allow for the new community'.[56]

As opposed to those who theorize a detraditionalized community,

there are a group of thinkers who hope to retrieve something of the past sense of community, understood as a shared culture of institutions, moral values and practices. They are the communitarians and some of their major themes are: the strengthening of family life, encouraging political participation at all levels, and shifting the liberal emphasis on rights to responsibilities. They object to John Rawl's argument that justice requires that the state ensure the rights of the individual who should then be free to rationally pursue his chosen goals. The Rawlsian individual, according to them, not only entails an illegitimate evacuation of history and memory, but also denies the possibility of community by pitting his rights against society. 'They argue that individuals are not separate and atomistic at all, but formed, and constituted, in and by their families and local communities. The self, they argue, is a much richer and more contextualized notion than the liberals will allow and prioritizing the justice of the rights of the individual is an unwarranted reduction of the reality and complexity of the self and its attachments'.[57] The issue, however, is not a simple one, for the programme to shore up communal and family values can very easily degenerate into a backward-looking campaign, with the rejection of some hard-won liberal freedoms. Likewise, it is very difficult to defend the cult of authenticity while subscribing at the same time to a strong notion of community. Paul Morris, commenting on Charles Taylor's attempt to do so,[58] writes, 'Even if we assume that Taylor is successful in persuading reasonably large numbers of

authentic selves of their communal obligations, the nature of this community is entirely dependent on the authentic choice of its members to continue to be so. At any given time, the reality of community rests only on the immediate authentic choices of authentic selves who could just as authentically choose to reject community'.[59]

Whether of the moralistic type, or the detraditionalized kind, the idea of 'community' has some dangers inherent in it, and it would be wise to sound ourselves out on them. This, indeed, becomes a pressing concern, in view of the hold that a certain romantic construction of the term has gained in social science. This romanticization of community has occurred because the quest for community has always been linked to the hope that human conflict can in some golden age or by some miracle or moral regeneration be overcome. This hope, moreover, has a long human history. Eugene Kamenka, writing about the origin of the communitarian ideal, traces it to the fifth century B.C., through medieval European thinking on Utopia and the Ideal Society, through the French Revolution and eighteenth-century Enlightenment to nineteenth-century thought, both socialist and non-socialist.[60] The themes of alienation and dehumanization gained currency amongst nineteenth-century non-socialist writers and were captured at the end of the century by Ferdinand Tönnies's contrast between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. The former referred to the unalienated organic community based on a common ideology and face-to-face social relationships and the latter to the atomistic society based

on abstract individual interests. Though socialists did not care for Tönnies's emphasis on hierarchy and inequality of status in the Gemeinschaft, they did accept fully his description of the Gesellschaft and they longed for a new, secular and egalitarian Gemeinschaft [for Marx, Gemeinwesen] in which all persons will once more be part of an organic community that elevates the common life and absorbs individuals fully within it.

But the notion of an organic community is somewhat problematic. First, it is conceptualized as a *spatially-bound realm of face-to-face relationships*. It is precisely this immediacy of interaction that gives this community its innate moral character and constitutes it as a revitalizing sphere of life that heroically resists a Weberian impersonal rationality. Such a perspective, however, is hopelessly unrealistic, for, as Veena Das has pointed out, 'the community institutes itself in the modern world not as a face-to-face sphere of human relations, but as an imagined community demanding allegiance from people having no concrete relations with one another'. [61]

Second, social science literature has treated the organic community as constituting the opposite pole of modernity, and of the alienation created by modern structures of governance. It has completely overlooked the fact that community in contemporary society is defined as much by modern rational structures as by a customary order. Those who romanticize community in this manner make the mistake of forgetting that neither tradition nor modernity is available

anywhere in untainted form. Even as modern institutions have been coloured by tradition, so traditional structures have taken on modern functions. As such, we can neither take recourse to the notion of progress to critique tradition, nor bank on a nostalgic construction using the ideas of traditional community for building an alternative to modernity.

Finally, history bears testimony that when realized, community often becomes brutal and oppressive. This is true both of the socialist as well as the fascist attempts to create community. The main criticism of the communitarian ideal within the socialist movement has been that every successful revolution known so far has been inaugurated on a wave of anarchist sentiment directed against the old regime and has ended by putting a new and mightier state apparatus in its place. Kamenka, quoting Berdyaev writes: 'Utopia is always totalitarian'. It is in Karl Popper's phrase, a closed society. 'Most of the utopias have been more concerned to reduce consumption than to increase production; most of them are prepared to regiment the citizens of utopia to a degree that few ordinary decent people would find acceptable today ...They are concerned to shape men, and the utopian who is doing the shaping is normally treated as the unhistorical, dispassionate representative of reason'.[62] This is grossly violative of the modern concern for individual freedom ___ whatever the content of the contemporary desire for community, it is certainly not a desire to be merged into a single organism.

The distortion suffered by 'community' in the hands of the war-time Fascist forces was slightly different. The Right gave to the ideal of community a nationalist form and this nationalism was in turn given a cultural content. The National Socialists believed that common origin, shared language and geography formed the emotional unity of the nation ___ this national mystique, however, had a dangerously conservative side. It thrived on exclusivism and on an identification of 'the enemy' ___ both external and internal. As Mosse writes, 'The enemy within proved more important than the enemy without; he was more immediately present and simpler to identify'.[63] The Jews thus fell victim to a xenophobic cultural nationalism, to a sense of community founded solely on a common allegiance to a Germanic faith.

It may be safely concluded that community is a highly problematic ideal, very useful as a critical standard but degenerating the moment it is realized in a historically specific way. The picture of unproblematic harmony that it offers is no doubt seductive. The fact, however, remains that short of assuming drastic changes in nature and man, such harmony is rarely possible except through an unwarranted degree of regimentation. Community, therefore, has a good deal of reactionary potential. Finally, there has been a tendency to pit 'community' against 'the state', i.e., to vindicate the natural goodness of man by suggesting that it is only social systems, or tyrannical power that prevent human beings from living in a natural state of cooperation. No doubt, it is essential for us to protect small groups

from the threat posed to them by larger entities, such as the nation. [For instance, in America and Australia, the cultures of indigenous groups have been decimated due to forcible conversions to Christianity and the practice of hunting aboriginal populations]. But there is no need surely to 'assimilate all local experiences and national histories to this dominant paradigm'.[64]

Tribe

Many of the arguments put forward in the preceding section on community apply to the question of tribes. The crucial elements in the definition of a tribe has become those of 'isolation' and a 'separate tribal culture'. S.C. Dube identifies the popular indicators of tribalness in the Indian context as :

1. Their roots in the soil date back to a very early period; if they are not the original inhabitants, they are, at least, some of the oldest inhabitants of the land.

2. They live in the relative isolation of the hills and forests.

3. Their sense of history is shallow, for among them, the remembered history of five to six generations tend to get merged in mythology.

4. They have a low level of techno-economic development.

5. In terms of their cultural ethos -- language, institutions, beliefs and customs -- they stand out from the other sections of society.

6. If they are not egalitarian, they are at least non-hierarchic and undifferentiated'.[65]

Few of these indicators, Dube writes, can withstand critical scrutiny. It is difficult to speak of 'original' inhabitants, for tribal

traditions themselves make repeated mention of the migrations of their ancestors. And there are several groups, now absorbed into Hindu society, which can make an equally tenable claim to being 'original', or at any rate, very old, inhabitants. Again not all tribes have lived in isolation. The four million Gond, the equally numerous Bhil and the three million Santal were all regionally dominant groups ___ as such, this criterion hardly applies to them. Moreover, geographical isolation does not imply cultural isolation. The Hindu ethos has freely absorbed elements from the older indigenous cultures and in its turn, influenced the latter. The argument regarding their sense of history is valid, but it is perhaps equally true also of other non-literate groups even though these latter may belong to the world of 'great traditions'.[66] And a low level of technological development and a distinctive cultural ethos are found also among groups that are not categorized as 'tribal'. And finally, as regards the claim that tribes are non-hierarchic, this is true only of small communities ___ of foodgatherers, shifting cultivators and primitive artisans ___ but certainly not of the large tribes. Where tribal dynasties ruled, the distinction between the patrician and the plebeian was real. The Gonds of Chattisgarh were, for instance, divided into three endogamous groups ___ the Raj Gond [descendants of the rulers], the Amat Gond [descendants of the local chiefs] and the Dhur [dust] Gond [descendants of the commoners]. Where a number of tribal groups live in symbiosis ___ such as in the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu or in the Adilabad district of Maharashtra ___ subtle patterns of stratification

emerge and at times, even ritual pollution is observed. Thus 'the cultural-trait inventory' does not take us very far in being able to distinguish between tribes and non-tribes.

Yet the distinction continues to be made and one cannot dispute it, for it is based on a political criterion. The Constitution of India recognizes some groups of people specified from time to time as 'Scheduled Tribes' and there are provisions in the Constitution entitling them to special protection and privileges. There are, however, various loose ends. Several communities, traditionally believed to be tribes, are included in the schedule, but some have been left out. Others not conventionally regarded as tribes find mention. For instance, the Muslim inhabitants of Lakshadweep and all the native inhabitants of the Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh [who constitute an agglomeration of several Hindu castes that have been lumped together as the Kinnaura] are now classified as 'Scheduled Tribes'. Again, a tribe may have several sub-groups. In some cases, these subgroups have been listed as independent tribes and in some others as part of the parent tribe.

The debate over the definition of a 'tribe' is largely sterile ___ a 'tribe' may be best viewed as 'an ethnic category defined by real or putative descent and characterized by a corporate self-identity and a wide range of commonly shared traits of culture'.[67] In other words, they believe that they have a common descent, *consciously hold a collective self-image,* and possess a distinctive cultural ethos that is

shared by the collectivity. D.N. Mazumdar, when writing on changing tribal identity, particularly the change-over from tribe to caste, observed that a tribe remains a tribe so long as it *thinks of itself as a tribe* and as a category different from Hindu castes.[68] While we are on the topic of collective self-image, it may be mentioned that the question of identity can be broached from two angles ___ the perspective of 'the other' and the perspective of the community itself. These two perspectives very often do not match for the simple reason that the criteria used by outsiders to construct identity are different from those used by the community. Roxanne Hakim, describing Vasava identity in transition, [the Vasavas being a community of subsistence farmers in Gujarat] writes how the Vasavas use the term *'dungri'* [of the hills] in a positive manner to describe themselves and how, for the *'deshis'* [those of the plains], hill life implies images of backwardness. Moreover, economic security and self-sufficiency in production and consumption form the core of the distinct dungri Vasava identity, whereas the deshi articulates his superiority and thus his distinctiveness from the dungri Vasava in terms of his food, dress and religion. As such, a Hinduised or a *'sudhrelo'* Vasava is often viewed by the *deshi* population as having lost his distinctiveness, but he himself does not think so. This is because changes in the social and religious spheres are not perceived by the Vasavas as a direct threat to their identity. They are much more apprehensive about adopting the deshi mode of market-dependent production.[69] It must also be

understood that the development, on the part of individual members, of individual identities and the functioning of the tribe as the principal unit of larger group loyalty [beyond the kin, clan and residential local group] do not constitute sufficient grounds for us to deny a tribe its identity. But it does, however, point to the need to recognize the ethnicity of racial, religious and linguistic groups and to study tribal ethnicity alongside the ethnicity of such groups.

The issue here is that a timeless, essentialist and primordialist view of 'tribe' cannot be taken seriously. It is unrealistic and blinds us to the dynamic aspects of tribal identity ___ it prevents us from seeing how this identity is made more exclusive or inclusive, how it aligns itself with other identities and loyalties [those of region and religion, for example] in order to serve the interests of its participants. A rigid essentialism would also render us incapable of exploring the ways in which traditional bases of solidarity like tribe and caste have acquired tremendous political relevance in modern India by acting as bases of mobilization in democratic electoral politics. It is crucial that we understand that tribal ethnicity has both expressive and instrumental dimensions ___ whether tribals emphasize a primordial identity or go about modifying it will depend on what their economic and political situation demands ___ the goal, in either case, is to project an identity that is viable and aggressive. We can, therefore, make the further observation that in addition to thinking in terms of 'maintaining' and 'losing' identities, it would be useful to consider 'revival' and

'restructuring' of identities as well.

A NON-ESSENTIALIST FRAMEWORK AND THE 'POLITICS' OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN JHARKHAND

In the preceding section, I have described the two strands of reasoning, essentialist and non-essentialist, that is apparent in the sociological theorizing on certain themes, and have adopted the non-essentialist theoretical framework as my own. It is my contention that, being free of the binary oppositions of classical sociology [Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, mechanical and organic solidarity, folk and urban society etc.], it is a great deal more accommodative of the complex, not to mention, dynamic social reality that a changing tribal identity represents. A study of tribal societies in transition is rarely validative of classical oppositional thought; the reality, instead is very often found to straddle these opposites. To continue to think oppositionally in such situations, therefore, would amount to giving up all claims to valid interpretation. Tool-less, we would be unable to explain new social phenomena, such as the modernization of primordialities, or the role of such primordialities in civil politics.

It is, however, not immediately obvious how a non-essentialist theoretical framework, obtaining at a fairly high level of generalization is relevant to our particular situation, namely, identity change in tribal Chotanagpur. It is essential that certain links be established and the framework be justified with reference to Chotanagpur. Nothing would be more essential to this task than a brief outline of the ground-level picture.

The tribals of Chotanagpur have been engaged in struggle with other groups for the sharing of public resources, and ethnicity has provided an idiom to this struggle. A singular feature of the growth of ethnicity in Chotanagpur has been the *supersession of distinctive tribal identities by a macro-adivasi identity*. As early as in 1912, the leaders of the Chotanagpur Charitable Association [organized to provide scholarships for tribal students] had began to impress upon its members the need for unity among all tribals, and the Adivasi Mahasabha formed during a militant phase of struggle, claimed the membership of many tribes. Soon after independence, however, the Mahasabha was would up and its place taken by the Jharkhand Party, which threw its gates open to all the inhabitants of Chotanagpur, whether tribal or not. This saw the movement turn from an ethnic to a regional one, and the goal of achieving the separate state of Jharkhand articulated. In 1967, the Jharkhand Party, however, split into factions and the next organization to achieve a modicum of political success was the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, which was constituted in 1973 as a result of an understanding between the Chotanagpur Kurmi leader Binod Bihari Mahto and the Santal leader, Sibu Soren and which continues to be a presence in the region. It may be pointed out that the entry of the non-tribal poor into the folds of the movement, as symbolized by the Kurmi presence at the leadership level, helped rejuvenate the movement by broadening its mass base. The pejorative term *diku*, though literally meaning 'non-tribal', does not, operationally speaking, include the blacksmith, the

barber, the dom and other low castes. The tribals have made common cause with the non-tribal downtrodden diku now indicates those immigrants, especially from North Bihar, who have descended on Chotanagpur and, taking advantage of contractual law, have dispossessed the indigens of their ancestral land and have proceeded to deprive the inhabitants, tribals and non-tribals alike, of their livelihood.

Both the forging of a pan-Adivasi identity and the subsuming of this identity into a Jharkhandi regional identity show that 'identity' and 'ethnicity', substantively speaking, have an elastic content. What constitutes an identity is a question that has no fixed answer. True, there is a whole stock of endowments that awaits a newborn ___ he acquires a family/group name as well as an individual name, and the history and origins of the group into which he is born. This group's cultural past automatically endows him with his nationality or other condition of national, regional or tribal affiliation, with his language, religion and value system [the inherited clusters of mores, ethics and aesthetics] and the attributes that derive from the geography of his birth place. But a member of a group comes not only into his inheritance of the past but also into all the *shaping circumstances of the present* and it is these latter which determine what he does with his inheritance ___ whether he claims it as his own, whether he abandons it for a new cultural baggage or whether he works on it, modifying it this way or that. Identity is thus never wholly ascriptive, it is almost

always partially 'made'. A second sense in which identity can be said never to be fixed is that even while restricting ourselves to ascriptive identities, there are always many of these to choose from. All the levels are not equally significant at any one point of time. Contexts change, and the individual moves from one level to another and sometimes even straddles a few of them. In the case of Jharkhand, economic and political rationale has prompted the separate tribes to rise above their differences and unite under the banner of super-tribalism. They have, at least, for political purposes, chosen first and foremost to be *adivasis* [tribals], and only secondarily to be Santals, Hos etc. The same political pragmatism has neccessitated a breaking of barriers with the exploited Hindu castes of the region. The Jharkhand Movement has raised the dust that it has because it represents a coming together of three different movements ___ a tribal movement with cultural overtones, a class movement with economic overtones and a regional movement with political overtones. In this, it is the tribal movement that has forged links with the other two, the tribal identity that has merged itself into wider class and regional identities and has made itself politically salient.

So far as the tradition-modernity debate is concerned, the point that I would like to make is that in modernizing societies where the tradition of civil politics is weak, the process of governance tends to accentuate and indeed, revolve around the mobilization of primordial loyalties, rather than the so-called modern loyalties of class, party,

business, union, profession or whatever. Clifford Geertz, commenting on how the project of nation-building in the new states affect primordial solidarities, writes, 'The integrative revolution does not do away with ethnocentrism; it merely modernizes it'. He goes on: 'Yet modernizing ethnocentrism does render it more easily reconciled to the presence of developed national political institutions. The effective operation of such institutions does not require the simple replacement of primordial ties and identifications by civil ones. In all probability, such a replacement is a sheer impossibility. What it does demand is an adjustment between them'.[70] The Jharkhand movement is proof that such an adjustment is being made in Chotanagpur ___ the movement has, at one and the same time, enabled the tribals to claim public acknowledgement of their group-uniqueness and has drawn them into a political society cast in a mold wholly different from that of their own 'natural' community.

To sum up, then, a non-essentialist paradigm gives up 'either-or' frameworks of meaning and is that much better equipped to grasp the complex 'and'. Where identities are optional and flexible, their boundaries easily revisable, where the content of tradition is manipulable and pre-modern structures are invested with modern functions, we cannot do worse than adopt limiting binary schemes which cannot grasp the prevailing simultaneity, multiplicity, uncertainty and ambiguity. Change, particularly modernizing change need not be seen as facilitating the disintegration of hitherto isolated

and integrated communities. It need not, moreover, be seen as necessarily unwelcome. Such a perspective ignores the dynamic and evolutionary potential of old cultures, and also their resilience; it overlooks their ability to adapt to alien circumstances by way of transformations in the realm of beliefs and rituals, as well as in the realm of societal structures. This is not an effort at justifying the organized destruction of primitive cultures by 'great civilizations' ___ I am merely positing that this established and dominant paradigm need not subsume all experiences of primitive cultures in transition. *Primitive cultures are sometimes successful in resisting efforts at assimilation, not through insistence on isolation, but by way of strategic and intelligent adaptation.* Thus, the *dhumkuria,* or the Oraon youth dormitory, was once an elaborate institution with definite social functions. It was the traditional mechanism for passing on the stored wisdom of the community to succeeding generations, it was also a school for training in tribal music, dance and folklore. Under the influence of missionaries and the modern school system, however, the dhumkuria had become ineffective. It was then that a tribal leader, Julius Tigga, organized at Kanke an institution called the Dhumkuria School. He proposed to build up a university on the traditional Oraon pattern and impart education through the medium of dance, drama and music. A similar effort was made in respect of the institution of *Parha.* Traditionally, this was an inter-village confederacy and an appellate court of appeal against verdicts of the village panchayat. But the Parha

had fallen into disuse on account of the establishment of statutory panchayats. In the early 1950s, an effort was made to revitalize the system and as a result, the Parha regained its importance in many areas. Later, a constitution was drawn up for a Parha Mahasabha, invested not only with judicial but also administrative and development functions. Ethnographers working in Chotanagpur have even referred to a process of 'Santalization'[71] as opposed to the dominant themes of Sanskritization and Hinduization. The Santals, it appears, have remained aloof from the caste system, having come to realize that as a tribe, they have certain rights and privileges through which they can work for their own development. They have accepted modernity because it answers the challenge to their ecological and economic needs. At the same time, they have revived their traditions with a view to reinforcing their ethnic consciousness, and with good reason. For it is ethnicity that has helped the Santal in the realization of their political destiny and has prepared the way for their participation in the democratic political process. It cannot but be recognized that there is a somewhat deliberative dimension to change such as this. It is not as though the tribes have had no control at all over the direction of change. They did, even if this control was largely limited to the realm of responses to larger structural changes with regard to which they had no say. The direction determined, moreover, was definitely advantageous to their eco-political prospects ___ hence, the 'politics' of change.

AN OUTLINE OF THE DISCUSSION

The first chapter recaptures the processes whereby the state --- pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial--- has undermined the material basis of adivasi existence in Chotanagpur. The adivasis have not only been dispossessed of their land; the natural resource base, or the 'common property resources' which constitute the basis of their subsistence has also been made increasingly inaccessible over the years. It is the unique significance of land in the adivasi world-view which makes this dispossession so traumatising in its consequences. It not only signifies a loss of habitat and of a means of production, but also of a way of life. The state, as such, can be held responsible for undermining the tribal mode of being, and hence, tribal identity. It is this role of the state that this chapter seeks to examine.

In the second chapter, I focus on the role of non-state [or social] agents, as well as processes, in the erosion of tribal identity. As such, this chapter discusses the impact of industrialization, education and most important, a proselytizing Hinduism and Christianity, on tribal life. The latter half of the chapter, however, argues that even as tribals have succumbed to the forces of homogenization and cultural hegemony, so there has occurred a movement in the opposite direction, namely, a reawakening of tribal cultural and political consciousness, resulting in a renewed affirmation of their identity as adivasis. I have also dwelt on the phenomenon of 'tribalization' and have cited historical evidence that shows that there was a time when Hindus, of both high and low

caste, adopted with ease tribal mores, rituals and indeed, their whole way of life. Hindu peasant communities share, even today, a common economic and socio-cultural field with adivasis. I have argued that there is a need to focus on these contra-acculturative trends, if for no other reason than to challenge a sociology dominated by the categories of Hinduization and Sanskritization.

The third chapter makes the relationship between culture and politics its subject. It argues that it is not for nothing that adivasis today have taken up the project of cultural revivalism. A cultural reawakening, among other things, helps reinforce internal solidarity, this solidarity being essential to a thriving identity politics. Culture thus emerges as a political tool, its various manifestations being shaped by political imperatives.

The last chapter explores the politicization of ethnicity against the background of displacement. It is on the strength of their primordial identity that tribals have emerged as a political force to reckon with. They have shown remarkable political acumen in making use of their subaltern status, and have as a consequence emerged as an important pressure group in Indian politics. Even while facing displacement, or alternatively, on already being displaced, adivasis have demonstrated the political will to resist the state. Jharkhand has seen many an agitation against development projects -- here, once again, it is their status of 'the wronged' that the adivasis have proved capable of manipulating in their quest for justice, in this context, for the

withdrawal of a project or alternatively, for resettlement and rehabilitation.

NOTES

1. The power of eminent domain refers to the power to acquire private property for public use. This power is regarded as an attribute of sovereignty and as essential to the existence of government. It is recognized on the principle that the sovereign state can always acquire the property of a citizen for public good, without the owner's consent [as defined by the Supreme Court in Ram Chand vs Union of India, 1994].

2. Clifford Geertz, 'Internal Conversion in Contemporary Bali' in Clifford Geertz, ***The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays***, Fontana, London, 1993, p.170.

3. Veena Das, 'Dislocation and Rehabilitation: Defining a Field', ***Economic and Political Weekly***, Volume 24, June 15, 1996, p. 1513.

4. Bronislaw Malinowski, Phyllis M. Kaberry (ed.) ***The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa***, Yale University Press, USA, 1945, p. 27.

5. Ibid., p. 6.

6. Veena Das, ***Critical Events***, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, p. 4 & p.51.

7. George L. Mosse, 'Nationalism, Fascism and the Radical Right' in Eugene Kamenka (ed.) ***Ideas And Ideologies: Community As A Social Ideal***, Edward Arnold, London, 1982, p. 30.

8. Jacob Buckhardt, ***The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy***, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1890, p. 129, cited in Paul Heelas, 'Introduction: Detraditionalization and Its Rivals' in Paul Heelas, Scott Lash and Paul Morris (eds.) ***Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity***, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996, p. 8.

9. See Ulrich Beck, 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization' and Anthony Giddens, 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society' in Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, ***Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and***

Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994.

10. John B. Thompson, 'Tradition and Self in a Mediated World' in Heelas, Lash and Morris (eds.) ***Detraditionalization,*** p. 90.

11. Ibid, p. 90.

12. Paul Heelas, 'Introduction: Detraditionalization and its Rivals' in Heelas, Lash and Morris (eds.) ***Detraditionalization,*** p. 3.

13. Ibid, pp. 2-3.

14. Barbara Adam, 'Detraditionalization and the Certainty of Uncertain Futures', in Heelas, Lash and Morris (ed.) ***Detraditionalization***, p. 143.

15. See Susanne H. Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, **The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development of India**, Orient Longman, Chicago, 1967.

16. Timothy W. Luke, 'Identity, Meaning and Globalization' in Heelas, Lash and Morris (ed.) **Detraditionalization,**p. 117.

17. Robert Bellah et al, ***Habits of the Heart***, University of California Press, London, 1985, p. 142, cited in Paul Heelas, op. cit. 12, p.10

18. Barbara Adam, op. cit., 14, p. 139.

19. Anthony Giddens, op. cit. 9, pp. 87-91.

20. Raymond Williams, **Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society**, Fontana, London, 1981, pp. 268-69.

21. See Max Weber, Talcott Parsons (ed.) **The Theory of Social And Economic Organization**, Macmillan, London, 1964, p. 116 cited in Barbara Adam, op. cit.,14, p. 139.

22. Renato Rosaldo, **Ilongot Head Hunting: 1883-1974**, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1980, p. 22, cited in Paul Heelas, op. cit. 12, p. 8 .

23. John B. Thompson, op. cit. 10, pp. 91-93.

24. See Martin Heidegger, [John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson translated] **Being and Time**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1962 and Hans Georg Gadamer, ***Truth and Method***, Sheed and Ward, London, 1975.

25. John B. Thompson, op. cit. 10, p. 93.

26. Ibid., p. 101.

27. Ibid., p. 102.

28. Paul Morris, 'Community Beyond Tradition' in Heelas, Lash and Morris (ed.) **Detraditionalization,** p. 225.

29. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terenee Ranger (ed.) **The Invention of Tradition**, Cambridge University Press, USA, 1988, p. 2.

30. See Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, op. cit. 9.

31. See John Rawls, **A Theory of Justice**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973 and Jürgen Habermas, ***Knowledge and the Human Interests***, Heinemann, London, 1971.

32. See Jacques Derrida, '"Genesis and Structure" and Phenomenology' and 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmannel Levinas' in Jacques Derrida, **Writing and Difference**, Routledge, London, 1978; Martin Heidegger ***Sein und Zeit***, 16th edition, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tubingen, 1986; and Emmannel Levinas, ***The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology***, Northwestern Univessity Press, Evanston, 1973.

33. Scott Lash, 'Tradition and the Limits of Difference', in Heelas, Lash and Morris (eds.) **Detraditionalization**, pp. 250-52.

34. Daniel Bell, 'Ethnicity and Social Change' in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.) **Ethnicity: Theory and Experience**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975, p. 165.

35. Ibid, p. 171.

36. S.C. Dube, 'Ethnicity: Myth, History, Politics' in A.M. Shah, B.S. Baniskar and E.A. Ramaswamy (eds.) **Social Structure and Change: Development and Ethnicity**, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 199.

37. Daniel Bell, op.cit. 34, pp. 144-46.

38. Sachidananda, 'Emergence and Growth of Tribal Ethnicity in Chotanagpur' in Shah, Baviskar and Ramaswamy (eds.) **Social Structure and Change**, p. 236.

39. S.C. Dube, op. cit. 36, p. 196.

40. Daniel Bell, op. cit. 34, pp. 143-44.

41. Craig Calhoun, 'Introduction', **Social Theory and the Politics of Identity**, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, p. 10.

42. Charles Taylor, **The Ethics of Authenticity**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991, pp. 28-29.

43. Craig Calhoun, op. cit. 41, pp. 15-18.

44. See Michael Dyson, **Reflecting Black: African American Cultural Criticism**, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993.

45. Craig Calhoun, op. cit. 41, p.16.

46. Craig Calhoun, op. cit. 41, p. 22.

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48. See bell hooks, **Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self Recovery**, South End Press, Boston, 1993.

49. Craig Calhoun, op. cit. 41, p. 27.

50. Craig Calhoun, op. cit. 41, p. 19.

51. Raymond Williams, op.cit. 20, p. 66.

52. George L. Mosse, op.cit. 7, p. 27.

53. Eugene Kamenka, 'Community and the Socialist Ideal' in Eugene Kamenka (ed.), **Ideas and Ideologies: Community As A Social Ideal**, pp. 15-16.

54. Karl Marx, **Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844**, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 96.

55. See Paul Morris, 'Community Beyond Tradition' in Heelas, Lash, and Morris (eds.) **Detraditionalization.**

56. Paul Morris, op.cit. 28, p. 227.

57. Paul Morris, op.cit. 28, p. 229.

58. See Charles Taylor, **The Ethics of Authenticity**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991.

59. Paul Morris, op.cit. 28, p. 231-32.

60. See Eugene Kamenka, 'Community and the Socialist Ideal' in Eugene Kamenka (eds.) **Ideas and Ideologies.**

61. Veena Das, op.cit. 6, pp. 50-51.

62. Eugene Kamenka, op.cit. 53, p. 20.

63. George L. Mosse, op.cit. 7, p. 30.

64. Veena Das, op.cit. 3, p. 1514.

65. S.C. Dube, 'Introduction', S.C. Dube (ed.), **Tribal Heritage of India: Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction**, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1977, p. 2.

66. The approach to analyze social change with the help of the concepts of Little and Great Traditions was first used by Robert Redfield in his study of the Mexican communities. Milton Singer and McKim Marriot have utilized this conceptual framework to study social change in India. This approach is based on the evolutionary view that civilization or the structure of tradition [which consists of both cultural and social structures] grows in two stages: first, through orthogenetic or indigenous evolution, and second, through heterogenetic encounters or contacts with other cultures or civilizations. The social structure of these civilizations operates at two levels, that of the folk or unlettered peasants and that of the elite or the 'reflective few'. The cultural processes in the former comprise the Little Tradition and those in the latter constitute the Great Tradition. There is, however, a constant interaction between the two levels of traditions.

    Unity of a civilization is maintained by its cultural structure which creates a unified world view through cultural performances. These cultural performances are institutionalized around the social structure of both Little and Great Traditions. The important arrangement of roles and statuses appearing in corporate groups such as castes, sects, or in teachers, ritual leaders, etc. which are concerned with the cultivation of the Great Tradition form the social structure of this tradition. The social structure of the Little Tradition consists of its own role-incumbents such as folk artists, medicinemen, tellers of riddles, proverbs and stories, poets, dancers etc. Change in the cultural system occurs through interaction between the two traditions in the orthogenetic or heterogenetic process of growth. [See Yogendra Singh, **Modernization of Indian Tradition: A Systematic Study of Social Change**, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1988, pp. 13-16].

67. S.C. Dube, op. cit. 65, p. 4.

68. D.N. Mazumdar, **Races and Cultures of India**, Universal Publishers, Lucknow, 1944, p. 95, cited in K.N. Sahay, 'Tribal Self Image and Identity' in S.C. Dube (ed.), ***Tribal Heritage of India,*** p. 53.

69. Roxanne Hakim, 'Vasava Identity in Transition', **Economic and Political Weekly**, Volume 24, June 15, 1996, pp. 1492-95.

70. Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiment and Civil Politics in the New States' in Clifford Geertz, **The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays**, Fontana, London, 1993, p. 308.

71. See M.K. Gautam, **In Search of an Identity: The Case of the Santals of North India**, published by author, Leiden, 1977.

CHAPTER I

The State as an Agent of Change

THE STATE AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

The Chotanagpur Plateau lies in the north-eastern portion of the Peninsular Plateau of India. It is a forested upland, a region of great unevenness that is drained by several rivers, such as the Damodar, Barakar, Subarnarekha, Brahmani, Baitarani and Mahanadi. Chotanagpur was known as *'Khukhra'* prior to the British conquest of India. In 1780, it was designated by the British administration as the 'Ramgarh Hill Tract' and in 1833, it was renamed the 'South West Frontier Agency'. However, following a series of tribal uprisings [in 1811, 1818, 1820 and 1832] against atrocities committed by the Raj, the 'South West Frontier Agency' was rechristened the 'Chotanagpur Division' with a view to create a sense of cultural and ethnic identity among the tribal people. To this day, Chotanagpur remains a part of the administrative set-up of Bihar, though some territory formerly included in this division has been lost during the reorganization of states.[1]

S.C. Roy, in his book, ***The Mundas and Their Country***, suggests that Chotanagpur was with Bengal until 1912. When Bihar was separated from Bengal in 1912, Chotangapur, Bihar and Orissa

were formed as a separate state of Bihar. Further, in 1930, when Orissa was carved out as a separate state, most of Chotanagpur remained with Bihar. It is due to this intermittent bifurcation that Chotanagpur remains divided over the four states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

The Chotanagpur plateau is not only a geographical entity ___ it has a specific historical identity and is, in itself, a cultural unity. The tribals of this area refer to themselves as *adivasis* [which means original inhabitants] and fiercely proclaim an ethnic distinctiveness which they fear is being gradually eroded by the process of state formation, and its economic and cultural ramifications. It is, indeed, the effort to reclaim this ethnic distinctiveness that may be said to underlie the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand. *Jharkhand*, which literally means 'forest tract' is an ancient name given to Chotanagpur. Of late, the term has acquired a political connotation, due to its association with the agonies and aspirations of the masses residing there and their struggle for cultural and eco-political liberation.

The proposed Jharkhand state, is an area of 1,87,646 square kilometre with a population of 40 million. It covers twelve districts of Bihar ___ Singbhum, Ranchi, Gumla, Lohardaga, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Palamau, Dhanbad, Dumka, Godda, Deoghar and Sahebganj; three districts of West Bengal ___ Purulia, Midnapore and Bankura; four districts of Orissa ___ Keonjhar, Sundergarh, Mayurbhanj and

Sambalpur; and two districts of Madhya Pradesh ___ Raigarh and Surguja. Of the total population, the percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would be about 47%. Of this section of the population, 13 million belong to tribal communities, 6.05 million are Harijans and 7.5 million belong to 'other backward communities' [OBC]. The prominent tribes living in this area are the Munda, Oraon, Santal, Ho, Gond, Kharia, Bhuiya, Bhumij, Birhor, Dom, Turi, Sadan, Kamar, Kumhar, Kurmi, Tamaria, etc. Whereas the Santal, Munda, Kharia, Bhumij and Ho belong to the Austro-Asian or Austric group of tribes, the Oraon, Kurmi and Gond are of Dravidian origin. Besides, there are also those who migrated from the Indus Valley Civilization and Maharashtra to Chotanagpur, i.e., those of Aryan origin. Chotangapur, therefore, offers one of those rare instances where the three streams ___ Austro-Asian, Aryan and Dravidian ___ have converged into a synthesized formation of culture.[2]

ADIVASI-STATE RELATIONS IN THE PRE-BRITISH PERIOD

In the analysis of a change-situation, it is often impossible to isolate the impact of the different factors of change. It can, however, be asserted fairly confidently that many of the processes that have worked towards altering the tribal way of life in India can be traced back to the state and its workings. The history of Chotanagpur, in particular, has been a history of conflict between non-state lineage communities and

state societies.

Contrary to what is widely believed, it was even before the arrival of the British that the process of state-formation through conquests of the tribal regions had begun. This happened with the advent of the Aryans in India, which brought forth the first phase of interaction between tribals and non-tribals. In the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, it began towards the middle of the first millennium B.C.[3] In the face of the growing states and their ever-expanding territories, the different indigenous lineage communities had to choose one of two alternatives: they could either be drawn into the varna/caste hierarchy of the new system or retreat towards the frontiers of the states after initial resistance and consequent defeat. Many opted to retreat and these migrating communities reclaimed land, founded settlements and reproduced the organization of their earlier society in the new locale.[4] It was by way of a displacement-settlement-displacement continuum that these communities were finally pushed into the densely wooded Central Indian Plateau. They were joined here, in later periods, by similar groups of people migrating from the east and south with the formation of states in the plains of Bengal and Orissa. This relative insulation from the invading states was, however, short-lived as the colonizing forces entered Chotanagpur. The valleys of the Son and the Koel were seized first; the areas next exposed were the Ranchi Central Plateau and the Damodar Valley, with the Subarnarekha Valley

following suit.

The formation of state by the Nagbanshis in the very heart of Chotanagpur initiated another spell of retreat on the part of some orthodox sections towards further south and south-west. There was strong resistance in some areas ___ this, besides restraining their pockets of influence also forced the Nagbanshi Maharajas to shift their seat of power from one place to another time and again.[5] Further, the people refused to pay tax which checked the pace of consolidation of the states.

Retreat and resistance, however, was not the whole story. There was some acculturation as well ___ the royal cults had to combine exogenous Brahmanic traditions with varieties of endogenous ethnic traditions. The Mundas developed a ritual relationship with the Nagbanshis and folklore confirms social interaction between the kings and the indigens in various fields, particularly martial arts.[6] On the other hand, the indigenous communities accepted various elements of the ruling culture and organizational system. A linguistic colonialism that was to gather tremendous momentum in the coming years dispossessed the Bhumij, Kherowars, Cheros and Korwas of their tongues; there was heavy 'corruption' of the Mundari and Kharia languages in Panch Pargana and Simdega respectively. Non-indigenous elements were absorbed in the performing arts and literature as well; the Surya cult of the state religion and later, elements of the Shaiva,

Rama and Krishna cults were accommodated in the tribal belief system.[7]

Sanskritization, therefore, was an essential component of the state formation process. Ironically enough, it was also one that persisted during the Mughal period. For the Mughals did not rule Jharkhand directly. The states merely paid tribute to the Mughal Emperor, thereby compelling the Rajas to exact more surplus from their subjects. The indigenous communities, which earlier paid the state a nominal subscription [*chanda*] were now forced to pay regular tax [*malgujari*]. It was during this time that the Brahmanical base of the states grew stronger, and society was fragmented into distinct strata based on a corresponding distribution of power defined in terms of ritual status. As such, it was only in the periphery that the Mughal presence was strong. For all practical purposes, the state, for the indigens, was a Hindu state ___ this explains how protest against state oppression often took the form of conversions to Islam.

CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE BRITISH

The myth of frictionless coexistence of tribals and non-tribals in the pre-colonial phase paints the pre-British era as the golden age of moral economy when adivasis lived well, perfectly in harmony with each other and with nature.[8] This is not true and serves only to create an impression of a relatively unambiguous transition from an ordered past

to a disordered present. It is true, however, that while the Aryans had pushed the indigens into remote areas, they had, by and large, followed a policy of non-interference. The British, on the other hand, tried to integrate these people into a wider society: the extension of a centralized administration over areas which had previously lain outside the effective control of princely rulers deprived many of the aboriginal tribes of their autonomy, and though most British administrators had no intention of interfering with the tribesmen's rights and traditional manner of living, the establishment of a uniform network of law and order throughout the empire exposed the aboriginals to the pressure of more advanced populations.[9]

It was, however, in the realm of the tribal economy that British rule wreaked the most havoc. The nature of the traditional tribal economy was very simple. Economic activities were limited primarily to collection of forest products, hunting and minor cultivation.[10] It was a self-sufficient barter exchange system, with the clan of the first settlers, who had cleared the forests and established the village, claiming customary ownership of the land and the land-based resources within the traditional village boundaries. It may be pointed out here that the customary rights in land need not necessarily be held exclusively by the first settlers ___ they may be jointly held and enjoyed with others in the village. This is especially so in the case of hunters and food-gatherers or even the swidden cultivators; when the customary

rights over certain land or forest are allowed expressly to be enjoyed by another lineage or another village community outside, it is in the nature of a temporary concession, to be retrieved as and when neccessary by the rightful 'owner' group.[11]

The *khunt-kattidari* rights, as the first settlers' rights are called, were, on the whole, recognized by the Nagbansi kings. It was only in the later part of the sixteenth century, when the Nagbanshi kings were reduced to tribute-paying chiefs under the Mughal Governor of Bihar, that the traditional khunt-katti system was transformed into the *Jagirdari* system [landlordism] and the khunt-kattidars were made to pay tax. Even so, the Mughal empire did not encroach upon the privileges that the tribes had been enjoying in land and forest. The forest area was still in abundance and there were no restrictions on free movement, reclamation and settlement. Those indigens who did not wish to make a compromise with the new system preferred to resettle in the jungle and re-establish their traditional customs. As such, though inroads were definitely made, the hangover of a communal mode of production and ownership continued to a large extent.[12]

It was the British who, for the first time, made a clear-cut distinction between a 'natural mode of acquisition' and a 'legal mode' and over-rode the former as illegitimate. The legal concept of absolute private property does not recognize the tradition of joint ownership. Thus, the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 turned common land into

individual property, transforming the Rajas into zamindars and the peasants and indigens into serfs. However, as British rule was initially imposed in Chotanagpur through the mechanism of the earlier state power, the confrontations that took place between the indigens and the state [for instance, the Kol insurrection (1830-31), the Bhumij rebellion (1832) and the Santal hul (1855-57)] were directed against the old enemies, namely, the Rajas, the Jagirdar-turned-landlords and the newly arrived zamindars rather than the Raj itself. However, when the revolt began to spread throughout the country, threatening to paralyse the new order, the East India Company was compelled to reach an agreement with the indigens. Thus, the Wilkinson Rules were framed in 1833 with a view to prevent further alienation of tribal land in some parts of Chotanagpur and Mayurbhanj. But under these Rules, the *Mundas* and the *Mankis* [i.e., the secular traditional leaders of the Mundas and Oraons respectively] were treated as landlords, thereby breaking the complementarity of the social functions performed by the secular and sacred leaderships. The *Pahan* or the sacred leader lost his authority and retaliated by getting the village to refuse to pay revenue to the head-man. This often resulted in court cases being filed by the head-men and finally, alienation of land in their favour.[13]

There occurred, consequently, a major change in the leadership pattern. The traditional leadership of the 'heads' of the Parha confederacy [a number of villages formed an organization called the

Parha] as well as that of the village head-men was disowned and leaders from the people emerged. This disruption of the economic and political structures of the past had a very strong impact on social cohesiveness. The traditional mechanisms of maintaining equality in society and the practice of *madaiti* [cooperation] and *mehmani* [the social custom of offering hospitality and inviting guests to consume surplus food] lost their relevance amidst the weakening of traditional production-relations. Thus, K.S. Singh writes, 'the breakdown of the Mundari agrarian system was not a mere agrarian event; it shook the old society to its roots . . . The old way of life gave place to a strange new order: the village, family, and the morals of the race were shaken up and their ties were loosened'.[14]

The autonomy promised under the Wilkinson Rules never came to be. Despite the administrative changes in the following years, such as the introduction of the Commissionership in Chotanagpur replacing the 'South West Frontier Agency' and the passing of the Chotanagpur Tenures Act of 1869 [Act II] the alienation of tribal land continued unabated. It was the 'ulgulan' of Birsa [1874-1901] and the Tana Movement [1914-19] in Chotanagpur, together with the Kherowar Movement [1872-79 and 1880-95] in the Santal Parganas that paved the way for the enactment of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act [1908] and the Santal Parganas Tenure Act [1912]. These movements, apart from advocating reinterpretation of the traditional tribal belief systems and

reforms in social life, also had a political core. The Birsa Movement of the Mundas, for instance, gave an explicit call for non-cooperation with the British government, demanded the grant of self-government from the local ruler of Surguja state and wanted the abolition of kingship and rent. The Tana Movement of the Oraons was essentially a revolt against the unjust structures of the day ___ social, political and economic, while the Kherowar Movement was overtly anti-British. The context also warrants a mention of the Sardari Movement [1858-95] or the *Muluki Larai* as it was known ___ this was an agitation of Christian converts from amongst the Mundas, Oraons and Kharias, initiated to recover their lost land from the native zamindars and other land-grabbers. Taking advantage of the British legal system, the sardars, in the initial phase, accepted the existence of the 'dikus' [non-tribals], but objected to their terms for access to land. Later, however, the petitions became more political, dwelling more on adivasi rights than current agrarian complaints.[15]

Despite the gains registered by the Birsa, Tana and Kherowar movements in the form of passage of the Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana Tenancy Acts, these movements were ultimately crushed, as a result of which the process of reclaiming alienated land suffered a setback. Sachidananda writes, 'By the end of the nineteenth century, out of 7052 square miles of Chotanagpur estate . . . only 96.94 square miles were in the possession of *Bhuinhars*'[16] [the original settlers].

The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, aiming as it did to restore to the tribals their traditional rights, succeeded in securing only 156 villages as intact Mundari Khuntkatti villages. Section 49 of the Act empowered an occupancy raiyat or any member of a Bhuinhari family to transfer his holdings or tenure with the consent of the government for ten codified purposes.[17] These purposes, however, began to be mis-interpreted deliberately, thereby enabling land transfer from tribals to non-tribals to take place legally. Again, the Act enabled land transfer to take place in either of two ways ___ through *Bhugutbandh* mortgage upto seven years or *Mukarari* lease of uncultivated land for cultivation. It has so happened that land transferred under these provisions have never been restored to the tribals. The transferees have trapped tribals in a way so as to prevent them from going to court seeking restoration. The Act moreover provided that after twelve years of possession, the transferees are to obtain the status of settled raiyat on the land. It may be mentioned that the Act of 1908 [with several amendments from time to time] is effective in the region even today, as a result of which tribals are losing land constantly.[18]

Even as an overwhelming majority of tribal people derive their sustenance from land, tribes are, without exception, dependent on the forest either exclusively or in a large measure. Swidden or shifting cultivation [also known as *jhum* or slash-and-burn cultivation] invariably takes place in the forest. Again, minor forest produce such

as plants, fruits, flowers and leaves are used not only as food but also as a source of income. The Birhors, for instance, are rope-makers; the Kharia primarily forest-produce sellers. The plants with food value are too many to list ___ the best known are the *mahua*, the *bel*, the *sal*, the *ramphal*, etc. Among the Munda of Chotanagpur, *ara* is the generic term for edible leaves that are used by them as potherbs, and Hoffman mentions seventy-one wild plants that qualify.[19] It should be evident from this that customary rights over forest are essential for the sustenance of tribes.

Colonial regulations, however, accorded the utmost priority to revenue considerations, and to industrial, commercial and military requirements. As such, new and enlarged forest boundaries were created and agricultural and food-gathering communities asked to keep away. Mahapatra writes, 'Tribal customary rights over forest may continue to function, to the extent and till the time the state, represented by the chief or king, depends on the tribal people's support for political survival or integrity'.[20] Thus, the Rajas in most of the ex-princely states of Orissa would decide to sponsor immigration of Mundari and Oraon groups from Chotanagpur and farmer militia [*paik*] of agricultural castes from coastal Orissa in order to reduce forests to farmland for higher production and revenue, and especially to reduce and checkmate their dependence on the indigenous tribes. It was, however, only in 1865, when 'sleepers and wooden bodies had become

imperative needs for the railways'[21] that a real incursion was made. With the Forest Policy of 1854, the tribals had already begun to lose control over the forest resources. But the Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878 increasingly asserted the monopoly rights of the state: a 36 square mile area of Damin-Eko was declared protected forest in 1871, and 1872 saw the Forest Department instituted officially for overseeing the administration of the jungle. Trees such as the *sal, mahua, kendu* and *kusum*, all of which sustain the tribals, were included in the protection policy and 292 square miles of Santal Parganas were declared government forest land. The formation of the Forest Department further brought forest administrators [*thikadars*] into the area. These people invariably came from the cities and were thoroughly insensitive to the needs of the indigens; they would resort to unnecessary harassment and illegal extortion of money and even had the British government brand some of the more rebellious tribes, such as the Korwa, Lodha and Gheria as 'criminal'.[22] During 1893-94, all waste lands in villages, the ownership of which was vested with the government, were constituted into protected forests. Forest settlement operations were launched and measures taken to determine the rights of the forest dwellers. K.S. Singh writes, 'Villages in forests were marked off in blocks of convenient size consisting not only of village sites but also cultivable and waste lands sufficient for the needs of villagers. Outside the blocks lay the protected forest areas in which rights were regulated,

even curtailed'.[23] He goes on to describe how these administrative orders were often misunderstood by local officers who acted as if all rights of forest dwelling communities had been curtailed. Comparing the Forest Reservation Act passed by the British in 1894 with India's National Forest Act [1952], Sajal Basu writes that whereas the old law contained provisions for reclaiming the forest for cultivation/habitation, these had been scrapped in the new law. Again, whereas the former law allowed people to collect wood from the jungle for household use as fuel, for making agricultural implements, etc., the law of 1952 has taken away this right and the forest people have been asked to create village jungle of their own.[24] It is in fact held by many that the British were kinder to the indigens, so far as forest policy is concerned, than the independent Indian state has been.

INDUSTRIALIZATION, MONETISATION, AND OUT-MIGRATION IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The alienation of land and forest in Chotanagpur occurred simultaneously with the commercial exploitation of its minerals. Chotanagpur, incidentally, is the richest source of minerals in the country. Huge reserves of coal are to be found in the Gondwana rocks of the Damodar basin, while Singbhum is a veritable reservoir of non-fuel minerals like iron-ore, copper, uranium, chromite, asbestos, kyanite, china clay and manganese. The pre-Cambrian rocks of the Singbhum-Orissa border constitute one of the richest iron-ore belts in

the world and copper occurs along a 129 kilometre belt running from Duarpuram to Baharoga through Kharsawan, Seraikela and Dhalbhum. Both uranium and kyanite deposits are concentrated in Singbhum, the former in Jaduguda and the latter in Lapsa Buru. Mica is found in the northern parts of Hazaribagh and Giridih districts and bauxite, the raw material used in aluminum industry, in north-west Ranchi.[25]

There was little chance that this tremendous mineral wealth would go unnoticed and untapped by the British. Industrialization thus began with the establishment of the first coal mining industry in Ranigunj in the year 1774. 1843 saw the first joint stock company, M/s Bengal Coal Company being formed. After this, a chain of collieries were established on the left bank of the Damodar river and the Jharia, Bokaro and Karanpura coalfields started working in 1856. It was the opening of coal mines in Dhanbad during the second half of the nineteenth century and the establishment of the Tata Iron and Steel Company [TISCO] in Jamshedpur in Singbhum district in 1907 which inaugurated the era of organized, large-scale exploitation of minerals.[26]

Industrialization, combined with the imposition of land revenue, hastened the replacement of the barter exchange economy by a money economy and this in turn led to indebtedness and further alienation of land. Haimendorf writes, 'The primitive subsistence farmer had lacked the means of drawing on outside resources to tide him over a crisis, such as crop failure, or to acquire goods of a value exceeding that of his

accumulated resources'. They did not 'borrow money or grain if their crops failed to last them for the whole year, but eked out their food supplies by gathering wild tubers, roots and forest plants'. But with the arrival of the cash economy at their doorstep, 'they became used to meeting a shortage of food grain by borrowing from merchants and moneylenders . . . thus had started the vicious circle of repaying borrowed grain by delivering to the creditor one and a half times the borrowed quantity as soon as the next harvest was reaped. Unless that harvest was exceptionally good, the repayments usually resulted in the recurrence of the need to borrow grain for consumption later in the year'.[27] This process very often led to the mortgaging of tribal land, which the tribals rarely succeeding in getting back. The consumerist ethic that comes with a money economy also hit the tribal economy badly. Earlier, needs were modest and people were easily satisfied with what was grown on the fields. But the availability of novel commodities in shops newly set up in tribal areas created a craving for such goods. To satisfy this craving, ready cash was required, and the solution offered itself in the form of production of crops of a high cash value. But the merchants dealing in these cash crops deprived the tribals of the full profits due to them. Moreover, the replacement of food crops by cash crops made it imperative to buy grain, whereas earlier, every tribal household would be self-sufficient in grain.[28]

The opening of mines and the installation of industries also

brought aliens from amongst the neighbouring Hindu and even Muslim populations in the midst of the tribals. The improvement in communications that occurred under the British, and the construction of motorable roads in particular also hastened this process. The 'dikus' as these outsiders were known, collaborated with government officials to disrupt the eco-cultural balance and the communitarian values of tribaldom. They set in motion a spiral of impoverishment, whereby the indigens were dispossessed of their land, constantly in debt and reduced to the status of landless agricultural labour, or even worse, bonded labour under the Forest Department [the British often included whole tribal villages within reserved forests, in violation of the Indian Forest Act of 1878, which clearly stipulated that proper inquiry had to be made into the rights of the people of the area before declaring any tract a reserved forest. Some of the villages so included were declared 'forest villages' and the residents retained as bonded labour.[29]]

Another striking feature of the socio-economic life of Chotanagpur was the expanding non-tribal presence in the plateau, coupled with the out-migration of the tribals themselves. This is a trend that the post-1947 Indian state has been unable to arrest and is an indicator of the marginalization ___ socio-economic and cultural ___ that the indigens have had to face, primarily from the late eighteenth century onwards, in their own land.

To conclude the section on Adivasi-state relations in the colonial

era, it may be pointed out that British policy vis-à-vis land, forest, etc. led to a restructuring of relations between the adivasis and nature, and between the adivasis and the state. No longer was nature their's for the taking ___ a pugnacious colonial state, completely unmindful of customary rights, had put in place a set of feudal land relations, and had reduced these rights to 'concessions' that it would grant to the tribals as and when it saw fit. Given the spiritual connotations accorded to land in the tribal world-view, the repercussions of its progressive alienation could not be limited to the economy, but spilled over into the realm of the socio-cultural. Thus, not only were whole production systems dismantled, but there also occurred desecration of ancestral sacred zones, the scattering of kinship groups, the disorganization of social control mechanisms and the like. As Amita Baviskar has put it, adivasi identity in India has been largely constituted in the context of expanding state and market structures.[30] A great deal of it has, of course, developed in opposition to these structures. But that is something we will discuss only in the next chapter.

THE INDEPENDENT INDIAN STATE AND ITS IDEOLOGY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

That we should be cautious when emphasizing a break in history and be open to the continuity between regimes is a lesson one may draw

from the Indian experience. The attempt to achieve modern industrial growth on the basis of 'an unchecked use of the earth's resources' and the 'transformation of people into a dispossessed working class' has been part of our colonial history. But the same attempt has been made by the independent Indian state, though legitimized in a different way. Whereas modernization for the British had been part of the imperial mission of civilizing the natives, the independent state saw it as essential to the project of national development.[31]

The builders of modern India have been, right from the beginning, faced with two alternative visions of development: the Gandhian project of reviving the village economy and Nehru's plan for prosperity through rapid industrialization. The Gandhian strategy of employing simple labour-intensive technologies was essentially geared towards providing jobs and a decent livelihood to India's rural population. To quote Baviskar, 'The liberation that Gandhi promised was not merely an economic independence; it was, most profoundly, an assurance that the cultural traditions of the Indian peasantry would reign ascendant'.[32]

This, however, was not to be, the main reason being the increasing hold of Indian capitalists over the Congress organization. Their initial distrust of the party had dissolved when they realized that Gandhi wished to mobilize all sections of society in a common struggle and they contributed handsomely towards its expansion. Moreover,

despite the theoretical primacy of Gandhi within the Congress, in operational terms, his vision was eclipsed by the ideas of Nehru, Patel and others. Answering a letter written to him by Gandhi in October 1945, Nehru wrote, 'It is many years since I read ***Hind Swaraj*** and I have only a vague picture in my mind. But even when I read it twenty or more years ago, it seemed to me completely unreal...A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment'.[33] Like Nehru, most Indian nationalists believed that the path to progress lay through industrialization and the infusion of modern science and technology, a programme that was vociferously supported by the Indian capitalist community, who saw in the state's investment in infrastructure a chance for private industry to flower.

It was the Nehruvian vision that was sought to be realized with the adoption of the 'industrialize or perish' model of economic development in the Second Five Year Plan. The heavy tilt towards industry, investment-wise, was a trend that went unchecked for a long time, despite the fact that industry employed merely 11% of the population, as against the 75% employed in agriculture. The results of these choices made fifty years ago are now there for all to see: self-sufficiency in food production, a diversified industrial base, a healthy growth rate and an improvement in the quality of lives. *But poverty continues to mar the Indian landscape ___ more than one-third of the*

nation remains below the poverty line. It had been assumed by Indian planners that the benefits of industrial expansion, increased production, employment and income would 'trickle down' through the economy to those at the very bottom. This, however, did not happen ___ economic growth did not create jobs and income for the masses. The United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] attributes this 'jobless growth' to the application of inappropriate capital-intensive technology in a society with a high labour-to-capital ratio. Technology, in these circumstances, will always tend to cater to the interests of the richer sections, leading to a concentration of purchasing power in their hands.[34]

It has also been argued by planners that the benefits of economic growth have been neutralized by the high rate of growth of the Indian population. According to this argument, the pressure of ever-increasing numbers on a finite resource-base explains the persistence of poverty. However, statistics of present food production and projections for the future tend to show that India is more than capable of feeding its citizens adequately. It is not population pressure as such, bur rather the *inequitable distribution of food* that causes hunger.[35]

Social inequality, then, has been intrinsic to the planning and development process. The economic policies of the state are largely devised by bureaucrats and technical experts, in collaboration with big business and large farmers' lobbies, with negligible popular

participation. Even the income redistribution measures undertaken by the state have been half-hearted. So far as land reforms are concerned, the zamindars have been deprived of land above a prescribed ceiling but the holdings of middle and rich peasants have been left intact. As such, the status of the landless poor has remained unchanged.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRIBAL DEPRIVATION

Coming to the tribal question, promoting the economic interests of tribals has been one of the basic planks of planned development. The planners had presumed that the tribal population would benefit by the general development programmes in the normal course. Owing to the failure of the 'trickle down' theory, this, of course, did not happen. Also, planning for the tribes, before the Fifth Plan, was marred by a monolithic conceptualization of the tribal problem. The Fifth Plan, however, discarded this unimaginative approach and introduced the specificities of tribe and region into the planning process. The Sub-Plan strategy made an effort to view all the issues connected with the development of tribes in an integrated way, thereby cutting through the sectoral hurdles and initiating a number of poverty alleviation programmes through the Integrated Tribal Development Projects. By the end of the Sixth Plan, 540 Multipurpose Tribal Development Programmes and 181 Integrated Tribal Development Projects had been

formulated and 3.46 million Scheduled Tribe families covered during the Sixth Plan period alone. Despite this, no significant changes seemed to have taken place and Haimendorf, commenting on the Fifth and Sixth Plans in the Foreword to B.D. Sharma's ***Planning for Tribal Development***, wrote, 'The tragedy of the present situation is that although at no period in history the Government of India has supported the cause of the tribals with so generous an allocation of material resources as it has done during the past ten years, there has never been a time when exploiters succeeded in making such deep inroads into the tribal economy as they visibly do today'.[36] There have been other hindrances as well: for instance, tribal development strategies are often operationalized as area development plans. Thus, between 1985-89, 37% of the total outlay under the Tribal Sub-Plan [TSP] from the State Plan was for infrastructure in Bihar. In some states, it was higher than 50%. There is also more stress on quantitative investment than qualitative achievement, and schemes tend to be implemented without being adapted to the needs of the specific tribal group.

DISPOSSESSION OF INDIGENS IN JHARKHAND

The Jharkhand region has become a hub of industrial activitiy since the setting up of Tata Steel in 1907. The establishment of huge iron and steel plants in Rourkela and Bokaro has made these towns important industrial centres, and the same can be said of Ranchi where

the Heavy Engineering Corporation has been installed at Hatia. Non-metallic mineral industries are concentrated in the Damodar Basin, near Dhanbad and Ramgarh ___ there are cement factories at Japla, Jhinkpani, Sindri, Khalari and Rajgangpur; fertilizer factories at Sindri and Rourkela; refractory works at Dhanbad and Ramgarh; glass factories at Kandra and Bhurkunda, mica industries at Jhumri-Telaiya and Giridih, and coal washeries and coke oven plants in Hazaribagh and Dhanbad districts. The main thermal power plants are at Bokaro, Patratu, Chandrapura and Sindri in the Damodar basin and at Jamshedpur in Singbhum. Hydro-electricity is generated by the Damodar Valley Corporation at its plants in Telaiya, Konar, Pachet and Maithon . These plants supply power for industries in Jharkhand and adjoining areas.[37]

Towards the beginning of the present century, the Jharkhand area had very few urban centres. Those that were there were largely administrative towns. However, with the intensification of mining and manufacturing activities, especially after independence, there was a phenomenal growth in urbanization and from less than 2% at the beginning of the century and 11.5% in 1961, the urban population stood at 21.25% in 1991. There was also a rise in the number of towns ___ from 8 in 1872 to 134 in 1991. This rapid urban growth was obviously the off-shoot of the industrialization that had occurred in the region.[38]

The tribals of the area, however, have gained little from this

developmental and modernization drive. On the contrary, planned development has worsened their situation. The state, armed with the Land Acquisition Act [which empowers it to acquire tribal land for public purposes] has succeeded, again and again, in uprooting them on the pretext of initiating mining operations, installing industries and constructing dams. The state's power of 'eminent domain' [defined as the power to acquire private property in the national interest] has enabled it to over-ride the provisions of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act [1908] which aims at preventing the alienation of tribal land. The CNT Act, apart from having a lot of loopholes, has moreover been amended in 1947, and Section 49 has been added, which has further helped the state in its mission of acquisition.

A significant factor behind land alienation and displacement in Chotanagpur has been the mining industry, especially coal. Following the nationalization of the coal industry, coal mining in the region has been entrusted to Coal India Limited [CIL] and its subsidiary companies, namely, Bharat Coking Coal Limited, Eastern Coalfields Limited and Central Coalfields Limited. According to an estimate, between 1981 and 1985, Central Coalfields Limited had acquired 1,20,300 acres of land and between 1980 and 1985, Eastern Coalfields Limited 30,000 acres. Although more than 32,750 families were displaced, Coal India could offer jobs only to 11,901 displaced persons. This happened because modern coal projects tend to be highly

mechanized, thereby requiring technically skilled personnel, and the tribals obviously fail to qualify.[39] The story repeats itself if we consider the dispossession caused by industrial concerns. At the time of its selection as a steel plant site, Rourkela was a remote area in Orissa with a 70% tribal population. The Dhebar Commission Report had it that 1,231 tribal families were displaced for this project from 8,158 acres of land. Of these 1,231 families, only 843 were settled on land. Again, on the eve of the construction of the Bokaro Steel Plant, 62% of the Bauris [an indigenous community] of the Chas-Telidih area and cent per cent of the rural Bauris had their own house sites, though only 24% of the former and 88% of the latter had cultivated land. After 1965, however, large areas were acquired for setting up the plant and the accompanying township, and by 1978, the Bauris were completely pauperised. Not only were households evicted, but it so happened that less than 5% remained engaged in agriculture in the Chas-Telidih area, whereas in the rural area, almost every family had sold at least a part of its cultivable land.[40]

The trauma of displacement can be mitigated, though only marginally, through compensation. Compensation may be seen as the means of reducing the injustice inherent in acquisition. But as it happens, the limited understanding of compensation in India has eroded its moral base. Though the Land Acquisition Act has a provision under Section 11[3] for the grant of land in lieu of money compensation, the

provision has seldom been used, and is certainly not a binding obligation of the state. Even cash compensation, when it is made, is made in terms of market value. The state thus chooses to ignore the fact that the lives of the affected population are not constructed around formal legal rights, making market value an irrelevant criterion for them. In this way, it manages to evade the task of providing for the replacement value of the land or rights lost.[41] Till February 1986, there was a practice, especially in coal companies, of giving jobs at the rate of one person per family in addition to cash compensation. In February 1986, however, the Bureau of Public Enterprises instructed that 'any understanding, formal or informal, in regard to the offer of employment to one member of every dispossessed family will stand withdrawn'. This, together with a shrinkage in the employment opportunities generated by projects, particularly in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, has severely restricted the scope of effective rehabilitation.[42]

Yet another source of tribal discontent has been forest policy. Ramachandra Guha, commenting on the implications for the direction of forest management in general, and for the rights of forest-dependent communities in particular, were the Draft Forest Act circulated by the government in 1980 to be passed, wrote, 'A careful reading of the Act shows that its real aims are [i] to restrict people's rights in reserved forests which are owned and managed by the state; [ii] to sharply limit

the area or extent of village forests in which local communities could exercise more effective and independent control . . . Sections 1.12 and 13 (d) state that the exercise of rights in reserved forests, such as the collection of fuel, fodder etc. can be continued subject to the carrying capacity of the land". As the Act does not define "carrying capacity", 'a forest officer can arbitrarily decide that the "carrying capacity" of a particular patch of forest will not permit the exercise of traditional rights and thus stop access to the area in question'. Again Section 22A provides that all rights can be commuted, i.e., extinguished with a one-time payment if the government considers this to be necessary for preventing the degradation of the said reserved forest. 'Most crucially, the Act states that village forests cannot be constituted from reserved forests...This is a truly retrograde step, for in most states the greater proportion of forest land has already been constituted as reserved forests'.[43] It was in response to this thoroughly discriminatory Bill that the adivasis, together with the landless peasants of Chotanagpur, launched the *Jungle Bacchao Andolan* [Save Forest Movement].

It was the corruption that is rampant within the Forest Department that was responsible for the failure of the Social Forestry Programme, initiated with a view to involve forest communities in the protection of trees, particularly those necessary for fuel and medicine. In Singbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and Purulia, officials involved in social forestation had ecology-balancing trees like *sal* and *segun* cut

down and replaced by eucalyptus and *akashmani*. As the latter are used in the making of paper, the forest department was presumably dancing to the tune of paper mill owners, not caring that the implantation of eucalyptus and *akashmani*, wherever it had occurred, had caused the grass to wither away, indicating the on-set of soil erosion. Moreover, the plants that they had ordered cut down, like *mahua, kendu, kul, haritaki, amlaki*, etc. constituted along with *sal* and *segun* vital elements of the tribal economy.[44] As Amita Baviskar has pointed out, this constant depletion of forest resources by the state has forced indigenous communities to give up their much-admired sustainable ways and take to environmentally destructive practices themselves.[45]

The commercial exploitation of land and forest in Chotanagpur has taken a heavy toll on the environment. Open-cast mining has laid waste large tracts of agricultural land and forest, affecting the flora and fauna. It has destroyed existing vegetation and altered the soil profile, causing severe soil erosion and silting of adjoining water courses. Underground mining has precipitated subsidence of land, rendering it unsafe for habitation, agriculture and grazing, and even warranting, in some areas, the shifting of roads, railway-lines and townships. Over forty-nine localities have been declared unsafe for human habitation in the Raniganj coalfield alone. Mining has also affected he ground- water table in many areas, reducing the yield of water from wells; and acid

mine drainage, liquid effluents from coal-handling plants, colliery workshops and mine sites as well as suspended solids from coal washeries have caused serious water pollution, adversely affecting fish and aquatic life. The Damodar, Karo and Subarnarekha are highly polluted rivers, carrying radio-active and chemically contaminated wastes that the millions living on their banks are compelled to drink. The problem of air pollution is no less serious ___ coal dust is emitted from Patratu, Bokaro and Chandrapura, all housing thermal power plants; there is cement dust from cement factories at Jhinkpani and mica splittings and rejects spread all over Jhumri Telaiya, Kodarma and Giridih.[46]

The situation, no doubt, looks very bleak. And is bound to get bleaker still, for as part of the New Economic Policy of the Indian government, Chotanagpur is to be thrown open to multinationals from Australia, Canada and Britain that are known for their mining technology. Under the 1993 National Mineral Policy, these foreign companies will be allowed 100% equity participation in mining projects and restrictions will be removed on thirteen minerals previously reserved for the state sector. The Bihar government, following the dictates of globalization, has entered into agreements with five companies based in Singapore and Thailand. Under Bihar's New Industrial Policy, the lease period of land-use for industries has been

extended from thirty to ninety years and there is provision for a ten-year deferred payment of sales tax for new industries. The industrialists may install generators upto 500 KVA without prior approval of the state electricity board and set up captive power plants upto 25 MW without any payment of electricity duty. Under such facilities, the Industrial Development Corporation has identified twenty thrust areas for development, including mining, mineral-based industries and agro-based industries.[47]

It would thus appear that B.D.Sharma is more than justified in painting a very dark picture of the emerging tribal scenario in Chotanagpur. In his recent book, ***Globalization ___The Tribal Encounter***, he writes that a post-globalization Chotanagpur would be one that would embody the rejection of the tribal sub-system, the suppression of 'habitat' and 'community' concepts, the superimposition of the idea of individual rights, the domination of the oral tradition by the written word and finally, the state's support to the frontier spirit of plunder and loot.[48]

THE STATE AS AN AGENT OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE

I have already mentioned that the adverse consequences of

economic policies have not been confined to the realm of the economic ___ they have been of a socio-cultural nature as well. The commercialization and opening-up of the tribal economy has naturally intensified the economic dependence of the tribals on outsiders. This has rendered obsolete the traditional *esprit de corps* of a tribal community and has encouraged individualistic tendencies. Haimendorf writes, 'The social order which used to regulate the interaction of tribesmen rooted in the same or related traditions could not withstand the presence of intruders motivated by aims and a value-system entirely distinct from the indigenous population. The disturbance caused by this admixture of novel elements to the social scene is all the greater as the newcomers are almost invariably economically and politically more powerful, and in no way inclined to fall into line with the old order'.[49] This disturbance manifested itself in a number of ways ___ for instance, in the relaxation of social customs and breakdown of the traditional authority system. Sachidananda, writing about the patterns of family and marriage that have emerged among the Oraon and the Munda, observes that a major change has taken place in so far as young people are no longer maintaining the reserve and restraint that is expected of them while having affairs with members of the same clan or village. Previously, such sexual lapses warranted very heavy punishment, usually meted out by the father and the village panchayat. Recently, however, such *dhuka-dhuki* marriages have been on the rise and he

describes how, in the case of one such marriage [where both the bride and the groom belonged to the Kacchap clan], the matter was laid to rest with the mere payment of a fine that was levied by the panchayat and paid by the groom to the girl's father.[50]

The breakdown of traditional authority has been precipitated by the introduction of a statutory system of grassroots democracy, or *panchayati raj* by the government. Since 1949, *gram* panchayats are being established in tribal areas, creating a conflict of jurisdiction between the traditional village panchayats [known as *hatu* panchayats] and themselves. Some ethnographers have observed that the tribals [the Mundas, for instance] rarely take their cases to be decided by the gram panchayat. It cannot however be denied that the hatu panchayat has lost out to the gram panchayat in many pockets, primarily because of the declining influence of traditional leaders over the young and educated sections of the tribal populace. In those cases where the parties come from two different villages, the traditional body to approach is the Parha panchayat. The Parha panchayat meets not only to consider cases, but is also the mouth- piece of people's wishes and is the organization through which the Jharkhand Party used to work. Though the Parha continues to be a social, judicial as well as a political body in some areas, in others it has begun to decay, its jurisdiction limited only to social offences related to the breach of tribal custom. But despite having undermined the traditional institutions of governance,

the panchayati raj bodies have failed to live up to the task of empowering the tribals. Haimendorf, delving into the issue, writes, 'In those areas where tribals are in a minority . . . decentralization has had far from desirable results. As early as 1963, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes expressed in his report...the fear that, due to the existing pattern of concentration of social and economic power in the hands of a dominant section of the population, democratic decentralization may lead to a more extensive exploitation of the Scheduled Tribes. The apprehension was fully justified, for recent experiences have shown that the *panchayat samiti* and *zilla parishad* which in some states took over the functions of the former district officers, were dragging their feet in the implementation of tribal welfare schemes, for the simple reason that their leading members belonged to the very classes which traditionally profited from the exploitation of the tribes'.[51] The main thing to note about the decline of the indigenous institution of self-governance is that it symbolizes the marginalization of the indigenous system of justice, and the values of participation, consensus and equality that were so central to that system.

Another casualty of the state's economic policies, especially those vis-à-vis land and forest, has been tribal religion. An important reason for the tribal resistance to projects like the Koel Karo, Subarnarekha Multipurpose Project, Netarhat Firing Range and the Piparwar Mining Project has been the impact that these projects would have on their

religious system. The tribals usually preserve a vestigial part of the forest in every village and assign it to be the abode of the village deity. The *sarna*, or the sacred grove, is usually a cluster of *sal* trees located at the outskirts of a tribal village. Under no circumstances can it be cut down, for it symbolizes the tribe's continuity with the ancient life that their ancestors lived in the forest. The sarna together with the *sasan* [burial ground for bones of ancestors] are razed to the ground once the land is acquired by the state and project-construction begins. Since they cannot be re-established elsewhere, the indigens invariably undergo considerable socio-cultural disorientation, amounting as such desecration does to the severance of ties with the ancestral land.

It is, however, in the realm of political consciousness and identity that the most sweeping changes have occurred amongst the tribals of Chotanagpur. This has been facilitated primarily by the provisions of the Constitution, which has created the administrative and political category of the 'Scheduled Tribe' and has sought to protect and promote tribal interests through legal and administrative support. A programme of affirmative action, implemented via a policy of reserving seats in educational institutions and jobs in government offices has further served to reinforce their consciousness of constituting, by themselves, a separate political entity, over and above a civilizational one. Education too, has gone a long way towards enhancing political consciousness. It is, in fact, a critical input and one with which tribals

can make entries into the power structure of the modern state. As such, the efforts of the government at improving tribal literacy rates, providing primary education and reserving seats in government colleges and institutes have gone a long way towards drawing the tribes into the national polity.

There is, however, another very interesting dimension to the phenomenon of the politicized tribal. And that is: *politicization has not necessarily occurred through the efforts of the state, it has also occurred against it. Resistance, in short, has served as a means of political education: it is not via party politics alone but also via social movements that tribals have sought to make their political presence felt.* This, as Rajni Kothari argues, must be seen as an attempt on their part to redefine politics at a time when massive attempts are being made to narrow its range, and when more and more people have been relegated, by electoral and legislative politics, outside the process of power.[52] Social movements, from the ideological point of view, are often a critique of state developmentalism. The Jharkhand movement, likewise, has an economic agenda that accords top priority to the scrapping of discriminatory land, forest, mineral and industrial policies that have gone against the grain of tribal upliftment. In so far as the Jharkhand Movement is perceived, first and foremost, to be an ethnic movement, the observation might be made, with reference to Chotanagpur at least, that developmentalism has aggravated ethnicity.

The state, in other words, is in part responsible for the radicalization of ethnic sentiment that the movement can be said to symbolize. This is so even as the state has succeeded in co-opting other tribals by enabling them to fulfill their political ambitions from within the state structure. We must not forget that the state [in operational terms, the bureaucracy] remains for many tribals the ultimate political destination. To do so would be to advocate a theoretical framework that simplifies 'politics' and 'political agency' into 'development' and 'resistance' respectively, leading to a misguided reification of the grassroots.[53]

NOTES

1. K.L. Sharma, 'The Question of Identity and Sub-Nationality: A Case of Jharkhand Movement in Bihar' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1993, p. 466.

2. Sajal Basu, ***Jharkhand Movement: Ethnicity and Culture of Silence***, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1994, pp. 2-3.

3. Romila Thapar, ***From Lineage to State***, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1980, p. 10, cited in S. Bosu Mullick, 'The Jharkhand Movement: A Historical Analysis' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, pp. 441-42.

4. Ibid., p. 157.

5. K.S. Singh, 'The Chotangapur Raj: Mythology' in Surajit Sinha (ed.) ***Tribal Politics and State Systems in Pre-Colonial Eastern and North Eastern India***, K.P. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1987, pp. 62-63, cited in S. Bosu Mullick, 'The Jharkhand Movement: A Historical Analysis', p. 444.

6. Ibid., p. 60.

7. S. Bosu-Mullick, 'The Jharkhand Movement: A Historical Analysis' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, p. 446.

8. Amita Baviskar, ***In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts Over Development in the Narmada Valley***, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997, p. 84.

9. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, ***Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival***, Oxford University Press, New Delhi,

1994, p. 34.

10. M.C. Sarkar, 'Customary Rights in Land and Forest of the Tribals in Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana Region of Bihar' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, p. 98.

11. The U.N. document of 1966 defines customary rights as 'the rights to use or dispose of use-rights over land which rests neither on the exercise of brute force nor on the evidence of rights guaranteed by government statute, but on the fact that they are recognized as legitimate by the community, the rules governing the acquisition or transmission of these rights being explicit and generally known, though not normally recorded in writing'. Customary rights are juxtaposed to statutory rights of a person/family/lineage or clan/village/community or tribe. The U.N. document says, 'one often comes across the conflict between statutory title to land and traditional land-use pattern. The state lays claim to areas of land which are 'unused' or 'vacant', but in fact the right to use these lands under traditional systems may be well-defined and accepted. In numerous instances, this failure to distinguish between statutory and traditional title has resulted in a shortfall of land said to be available for a project'. Not only this, but the tribal people who do not have the legal titles recognized by the state to land and other immovable land-based resources including forests, waterways etc. are reduced to the status of encroachers and following displacement, to that of paupers. [B.K. Roy Burman, 'Historical Ecology of Land Survey and Settlement in Tribal Areas and Challenges of Development', Council for Social Development, New Delhi (Study for the Ford Foundation) cited in L.K. Mahapatra, 'Customary Rights in Land and Forest and the State' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, pp. 85-86.]

12. M.C. Sarkar, op. cit. 10, p. 99.

13. S. Bosu Mullick, op.cit. 7, pp. 449-50.

14. K.S. Singh, ***The Dust Storm and Hanging Mist***, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1976, p. 7, cited in S. Bosu Mullick, 'The Jharkhand Movement: A Historical Analysis', p. 450.

15. S. Bosu Mullick, op. cit. 7, pp. 451-55.

16. Sachidananda, 'The Bhagat Movement in Chotanagpur' in S.C. Malik (ed.), ***Indian Movements: Some Aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reforms***, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1978, p. 162, cited in S. Bosu Mullick, 'The Jharkhand Movement: A Historical Analysis', p. 455.

17. The ten codified purposes under Section 49 of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act are [i] Charitable [ii] Religious [iii] Education [iv] Industrial [v] Irrigation [vi] Building ground for any such purposes [vii] Access to land use or registered for any of these purposes [viii] Mining [ix] purposes subsidiary to mining and [x] access to land use or registered for mining. [See M.C. Sarkar, op.cit. 10, p. 101].

18. M.C. Sarkar, op. cit. 10, pp. 101-3.

19. J.B. Hoffmann, ***Encyclopaedia Mundarica***, Volume VIII, Government Printing Press, Patna, 1950, pp. 179-87, cited in John Deeney and Walter Fernandes, 'Tribals: Their Dependence on Forests, their Traditions and Management Systems' in Walter Fernandes (ed.) ***National Development and Tribal Deprivation***, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1992, p. 52.

20. L.K. Mahapatra, 'Customary Rights in Land and Forest and the State' in Mrinal Miri (ed.), ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, p. 93.

21. Ibid., p. 93.

22. Sajal Basu, op. cit. 2, pp. 29-30.

23. K.S. Singh, ***Birsa Munda and His Movement: 1874-1901***, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1983, pp. 41-42.

24. Sajal Basu, op. cit. 2, p. 50.

25. Mathew Areeparampil, ***Tribals of Jharkhand: Victims of Development***, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 4-5.

26. Ibid, pp. 5-6.

27. Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf, op. cit. 9, p. 98.

28. Ibid., p. 78 & p. 99.

29. Mathew Areeparampil, 'Forest Policy and Denial of Tribal Rights' in Walter Fernandes (ed) ***National Development and Tribal Deprivation***, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 169-71.

30. Amita Baviskar, op. cit. 8, p. 51.

31. Ibid., p. 35.

32. Ibid., p. 21.

33. Sudhir Chandra, 'To My Successor . . . ' in ***Times of India,*** Sunday Review, 8 November, 1987, cited in Amita Baviskar, op.cit. 8, p. 21.

34. UNDP [United Nations Development Programme], ***Human Development Report 1993***, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 37, cited in Amita Baviskar, op.cit. 8, pp. 25-26.

35. Andrew Webster, ***Introduction to the Sociology of Development***, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1984, p. 102, cited in Amita Baviskar, op. cit. 8, p. 26.

36. See Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf, Foreword, B.D. Sharma, ***Planning for Tribal Development***, Prachi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1984.

37. Mathew Areeparampil, op. cit. 25, pp. 9-10.

38. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

39. Ibid., p. 18.

40. Ibid., pp. 26-28.

41. Usha Ramanathan, 'Displacement and the Law', ***Economic and Political Weekly***, June 15, 1996, p. 1489.

42. B.K. Sinha, 'Draft National Policy for Rehabilitation', ***Economic and Political Weekly***, June 15, 1996, p. 1454.

43. Ramachandra Guha, 'Forestry Debate and Draft Forest Act ___ Who Wins, Who Loses?' in S.R. Hiremath, Sadanand Kanwalli and Sharad Kulkarni (eds.), ***All About Draft Forest Bill and Forest Lands***, Samaj Parivartan Samudaya, 1995, pp. 110-11.

44. Sajal Basu, op. cit. 2, p. 52.

45. Amita Baviskar, op. cit. 8, pp. 148-49.

46. Mathew Areeparampil, op. cit. 25, pp. 13-16.

47. Alexius Ekka, 'Whither Jharkhand' in Sebasti L. Raj and Arundhati Roy Chowdhury (eds.) ***Contemporary Social Movements in India: Achievements and Hurdles***, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1998, p. 70.

48. B.D. Sharma, ***Globalization ___ The Tribal Encounter***, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 24-27.

49. Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf, op. cit. 9, p. 145.

50. Sachidananda, ***Culture Change in Tribal Bihar : Munda and Oraon***, Bookland Private Limited, Calcutta, 1964, p. 42.

51. Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf, op. cit. 9, p. 320.

52. Rajni Kothari, ***State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance***, Ajanta Publishers, Delhi, 1988, p. 46, cited in Amita Baviskar, op. cit. 8, pp. 38-39.

53. Amita Baviskar, op. cit. 8, p. 228.

CHAPTER II

Retribalization or Loss of Tribal Identity?

RETRIBALIZATION OR LOSS OF TRIBAL IDENTITY?

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the extent to which the state -- pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial -- has been responsible for a gradual erosion of tribal identity in Chotanagpur. The main instrument at work in this regard, for the independent Indian state at least, has been development policy. It has deprived the tribals of their customary rights in land and forest and has exposed them to an industrial and urban [in some places semi-urban] way of life. At times, those state efforts that have aimed at integrating the tribes with the rest of the people have ended up disrupting tribal solidarity. For instance, the political decision to reserve seats in state-funded educational institutions and jobs in government agencies has served to create a tribal elite that finds itself increasingly estranged from the root society. It must, however, be recognized that issues such as education, urbanization, industrialization etc., in so far as they affect the tribal populace in question, cannot be adequately analyzed if we limit ourselves to the state alone. For these processes extend far beyond the formal state sector and have reached the tribals not merely via the agency of the state, but through the involvement of a host of social actors. Moreover, there are some crucial aspects of social change amongst tribal populations such as the change over from tribe to caste, the acceptance of Hindu values, the conversion to Christianity, change

at the level of religious beliefs and rituals etc. that have had very little to do with the state. Some of these changes have been wrought by proselytizing Christian missions, some have come about due to the pressure exerted by neighbouring Hindu populations and still others have resulted from the urge for socio-political mobility experienced by the tribals themselves. It is with these processes, whereby social actors and forces have brought change to tribal Chotanagpur, that the first part of the present chapter deals. In the latter part, however, I discuss how tribals have sought to preserve their identity in the face of tremendous assimilationist pressures. Here, I have cited scholars who argue, counter to the discourse that stresses the irretrievable loss of identity, that tribal culture and civilization is not endangered to the extent that is ordinarily supposed. They do not deny that tribals today are under great pressure to conform to the standards set by dominant societies; rather, they stress the imaginative tactics employed by them to cushion, to the greatest extent possible, the civilizational impact of 'great traditions'.

I

THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION

I have chosen to deal with the processes of education and industrialization in this chapter, rather than in the first, because, as I have just mentioned, an in-depth understanding of their impact on tribals would necessitate an analysis of the working of both the state as well as of social factors extraneous to the state.

The main significance of education as a harbinger of change amongst the Chotanagpur tribals is that it has emerged as a *cultural divider*, so much so that 'social relations are generally unintelligible today without knowledge of the education of the participants'. Martin Orans writes how the Santals, while conversing, constantly differentiate people according to whether they are 'educated-literate' [*paraoc*, derived from the Hindi *parna*, meaning 'to read'] or 'ignorant-illiterate' [*murukh* meaning 'ignorant'].[1] That education has severely weakened Santal solidarity is evident from the fact that many uneducated Santals are barely able to interact with the educated and highly acculturated. Orans, quotes a Santal who was faced with the prospect of such interaction as saying, 'I cannot go to his house, he is like a Diku; before him I feel like a black Santal' By on Orans' account, there are others who have remarked that they could not sing or talk freely before a certain educated Santal because his bearing made them ill at ease.[2] Education, it may be noted, has succeeded in widening the social and cultural gap primarily doe to its differential distribution, which in turn results from its cost. There are the direct expenses for tuition and books, living expenses away from home [in those cases where schools are located in a nearby town] plus the sacrifice of labour which farm families in particular must make in sending their children to school.[3]

It must be obvious that education produces a cultural gap because it has a *cultural content.* Part of this cultural content

comprises Hindu, or alternatively, Christian beliefs and values. Orans points out that education produces a qualitatively different kind of Hinduization than the casual acceptance of a few Hindu traits and it is the depth of change produced by it that is the key to the significance of education for tribal solidarity.[4] For instance, in the Hindu-dominated schools, many tribals have learnt not to eat beef, but what is of greater significance is the fact that they have also begun to *observe the abhorrence with which beef-eating is regarded.* This points to an *internalization* that paves way for a wholesome Hinduization rather than the piecemeal adoption of isolated Hindu practices.

As such, education not only *strains internal relations* by widening the cultural and social gap within the indigenous community ___ it also reduces the differences between the tribal and the Hindu, thereby *threatening the external aspect of solidarity*[5] [by which we mean those social and cultural boundary-markers that serve to distinguish a particular community from another]. The gradual erasing of boundaries is marked by some crucial processes, the chief characteristics of which are a diminishing sense of self-worth and the setting in of an achievement-oriented ethos formerly alien to tribal communities. These effects are, of course, not produced by the education factor alone, but they are, at least, in part produced by it. It is, therefore, to these effects that we turn now.

An interesting effect of education is the acquisition of a *secular orientation* on the part of the student. There are various

manifestations of this orientation ___ one of these, discussed by Orans, concerns beliefs about witchcraft. Amongst the well-educated, most are skeptical about the existence of witches, and some argue that witchcraft is not, properly speaking, a mystical phenomenon at all, but a kind of magical technique, only seemingly supernatural. A few positively denied the existence of witchcraft, calling it a superstition of the 'ignorant', and one student offered a totally naturalistic explanation, saying that he had read in a psychology book that people frequently imagine that they are seeing things that they are afraid of. On the other hand, this student's own father, being an uneducated man, found his son's psychological explanation thoroughly unconvincing.[6]

Yet another fundamental change wrought by education is the *sense of 'shame'* that tribals have come to feel towards certain crucial cultural boundary-markers, such as the 'pleasure orientation' of the Santals. The *leitmotiv* of Santal culture is pleasure. The Santals conceive of the good life as one with ample scope for and indulgence in pleasure, the content of pleasure being dancing and singing, eating and festivity, music, and by implication, sexual activity. Greetings between them, thus, often take the form of the query, 'How is pleasure in your region?' It is important to recognize that this pleasure complex is pre-eminently a social phenomenon ___ obtaining during festivals, indeed born of the festive atmosphere, which only the assembled community is capable of generating. It is a shared understanding which serves to cement the solidarity of the Santal and also helps them forge bonds of

unity with other Santal and participating Munda groups. By the same token, this 'pleasure complex' differentiates the Santal from other surrounding, usually Hindu, groups which not only do not share the Santal view of pleasure but also regard it as unbridled debauchery.[7]

With the acquisition of education, however, the Santals have imbibed an ethos that places great emphasis on work, study and rank-attainment and discourages pleasure. The argument runs that pleasure is time-wasting and is detrimental to the mobility and 'progress' of tribals. This new orientation manifests itself in various ways. For instance, in opposition to mixed dancing and excessive drinking of *hanria* [rice beer]. Amongst the Munda and the Oraon, education has had much the same effect. The dhumkuria or the Oraon youth dormitory used to be a school of social training where Oraon youth learnt tribal lore and imbibed those qualities that would make them useful members of the Oraon community. Education, moreover, was imparted through the folk medium of song, dance, theatre etc. In his book, ***Culture Change in Tribal Bihar***, Sachidananda writes how the Dhumkuria has increasingly fallen into disuse, mainly because it no longer enjoys any social sanction, for Oraons today see it as an unnecessary distraction that keeps children from attending school.[8] The opening of schools has also affected the attendance at the *akhra*, which is the village dancing ground. While night schools keep the adult-literates away, school-going children have to do their homework in the evenings. Yet another feature of Oraon and Munda life that has been

somewhat affected by the processes of change is the penchant for personal decoration and ornaments. Education alone, however, cannot be held responsible for this ___ Hindu and Christian influences can clearly be detected. Oraon and Munda youth for instance, have taken to wearing their hair short as a result of being educated by missionaries. Christian education has also made tribal women look upon heavy ornaments as wasteful and educated tribals have given up the practice of tattooing.[9] Also, the traditional mode of dress has become a cause for shame. School-going children are invariably found to switch from the *botoi* or *kareya* [Munda and Oraon words for loincloth] to shorts, whereas boys who have not been to school continue to wear the traditional loincloth, turban and shawl. The Christian influence is found to work in the sphere of dress as well ___ Christian Oraons and Mundas have switched to sewn, mill-made clothes, whereas in the non-Christian villages, the loincloth has been replaced by the *dhoti*, implying Hindu influence.[10]

What emerges clearly from the above discussion is that it is difficult to isolate the impact of a particular factor [in this case, education] in a change- situation. While analyzing the impact of education, a discussion of the influence of Hinduism and Christianity has thus automatically crept in. In a way, the two cannot be treated as strictly separate factors for the simple reason that education, as imparted to the tribals in most instances, has either a Hindu or a Christian content. Even in those cases where the state has sought to

provide them a secular education, neighbouring Hindu caste populations and Christian missions with their proselytizing agenda always remain factors to contend with. This, in fact, is a good instance of how separate combinations of factors are sometimes able to produce similar effects. This, however, need not deter us from the theoretical task of analyzing the impact of each factor separately, and it is to an analysis of industrialization that we now proceed.

THE IMPACT OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

The advent of the market and the failure of the Santal rebellion to achieve significant political power led to a decrease in tribal solidarity. This effect, however, was limited so long as there was no major industrial development. With the setting up of industries, the pursuit of rank through economic improvement became a distinct possibility, particularly within the context of the emerging market society. As Martin Orans has succinctly put it, the economic rank path 'not only does not require societal solidarity', but progress on such a path is 'commonly inhibited by internal ties which demand redistribution of economic gain and thereby prevent individual accumulation and investment. Unlike success in the political rank path, which promises rewards to all, economic success is essentially individual; its ultimate achievement is "passing", i.e., social absorption in the dominant society. If rank is pursued through individual economic gain, all of the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the rank-concession not only are free to run their course, but are even

accelerated as the rank path itself contributes to the centrifugal pressure'.[11] It needs to be further mentioned that it is only after independence that the political rank path became available to the tribals. In the absence of democratic political opportunity, nearly the entire phase of British control, apart from the brief periods of rebellion, saw the tribes pursuing rank almost exclusively via economic mobility combined with cultural emulation.[12]

There are various conditions associated with industrial employment [which is one of the most popular economic rank paths] that make it destructive of solidarity. These are as follows:

1. The educated are always at a relative advantage so far as grasping job opportunities in industries is concerned, and education as we have seen, is in itself a potent disruptive force, creating unbridgeable cultural gaps between the elite and the rest of the people.
2. The time demands of industrial employment are an important factor behind the poor attendance at ceremonies and festivals, for these time demands are in certain critical ways different from those of agricultural labour. A lot of factories, for instance, work on three to eight-hour shifts, while the hours of agricultural labour are typically identical for all. Furthermore, in some factories, there are no occasions, barring strikes, when work comes to a standstill. This situation makes it impossible for all the workers of the tribal community to be present for a ceremony

during any fixed period. Some industries grant a leave of absence to all their workers for major Hindu festivals, but tribal ceremonials do not always coincide with Hindu ones. Sometimes, such adjustments cannot be made even if desired, for, as in the case of the Santals, villages have no fixed day for their ceremonies and each villages chooses a day within the appointed month during which the villagers will be free of agricultural labour.[13]

3. Industrial employment is very often accompanied by migration which has been recognized by scholars such as Max Weber and Manning Nash as being a significant force of change.[14] While Weber argues that the fact of working in surroundings different from what one is used to breaks through tradition and acts as the educative force, Nash's Guatemalan study demonstrates that industrial employment without migration produces negligible socio-cultural change. Martin Orans, in his study of the Santals in and around Jamshedpur, is of the opinion that it is by dispersing the community and by placing workers in an urban environment that lacks the facilities required for the maintenance of solidarity that migration succeeds in loosening ties with the traditional society. For instance, it was found that the city Santal staying in the company houses provided by TISCO had given up ancestor worship. On the surface, this looked like an effect of secularization, but on probing deeper, it

was found that the explanation was somewhat different. Traditionally, ancestor worship is performed behind a wall that divides off a portion of the main room of the house, this space being known as '*bhitar*' [Santali and Hindi for 'inside']. This 'inside' portion is moreover guarded against pollution by menstruating women. Since it is, first and foremost, not permissible to erect a wall within the company house, and the company house being, moreover polluted by some unknown diku caste that occupied the house before them, the Santal family residing therein prefers not to perform the rite at all. Yet another obstacle to worship encountered by the city Santal is the prohibition against the brewing of rice beer,[15] which is closely associated with religious ceremonies.

Another reason for the attenuation of ceremonies amongst immigrant Santal communities is the lack of attachment towards the city. Migration rarely results in the acquisition of land or position ___ as such the immigrants fail to identify with the place. The only two immigrants whom Orans found to be participating in the ceremonies of the Daredih *basti* [slum] were people who had established links with the place ___ one had bought land in Daredih whereas the other was a very early immigrant who had become assistant headman.[16]

Immigrant Santals, being relatively free from parental and village restraint also tend to form liaisons easily. While intermixing occurs to some extent in traditional villages as well, women on the

whole have difficulty escaping the watchful eyes of parents and kin. In the city, on the other hand, no one is interested in preventing liaisons and the resultant freedom is yet another manifestation of the weakened ties with the traditional structure, ties that are not replaced by the city. It is, in fact, this freedom that explains the shift from arranged marriages to unarranged or love marriages [known in Santali as *napam bapla*] amongst immigrant Santals. Marriage for them becomes a matter of individual concern ___ since the bride does not live in the household/village of the groom, neither his parents nor the villagers are much concerned with her. All those social ties that are so dramatically expressed in marriage ceremonies and which are consistent with arranged marriages are virtually inoperative for migrants to the city. Unarranged marriages therefore result from the decreased solidarity that migration engenders.[17]

Prior to concluding this section, I would like to make an interesting point. It may be observed that *industrialization and urbanization have somewhat checked the trend towards Hinduization.* They have acted as agents of westernization, and westernization, in a strange way, has been seen as a *leveller* by way of which the tribals have attained the same status as Hindus, without stooping to emulate the caste-system. However, even though the caste-system stands rejected, the higher Hindu castes continue to remain the point of reference: hence, the emphasis on the equal standing of the adivasis and these castes. Also we encounter here a construct that is a product

of the colonized perception of the world ___ 'the universal west as the source of equality'. The counterpoint of the west is India; India, moreover, is equated with the caste system, Hinduism and inequality.[18]

The question may arise: how exactly has industrialization affected the tendency to Hinduize? Orans answers this question very well in his analysis of Jamshedpur as an industrial city. According to him, Jamshedpur is 'a city as much dominated by modern industry as a medieval city was by its cathedral. . . . Caste persists as an institution for regulating marriage, for assigning employment in certain traditionally degrading occupations and to a certain extent in structuring social interaction. But class in the traditional western sense is increasingly displacing caste as the organizing principle of membership in social groups and in social interaction'.[19] As a result, rank in Jamshedpur is largely dependent on wealth translated into appropriate material possessions, and very little on the attributes of high Hinduism. It is common to see Brahmins being subservient to men of low caste who hold high positions in the company hierarchy. The aspiring Santal who is well-acquainted with Jamshedpur would adopt western clothing, an automobile or motorcycle and a modern house rather than vegetarianism and a sacred thread.[20] Thus, industrialization by throwing open opportunities for economic mobility, has stemmed the adoption on the part of adivasis, of caste attributes and has thereby inhibited assimilation. It is, of course, a fact that the economic rank path provides for individual, rather than group mobility.

Hence, it cannot of itself produce a new solidarity in the form of a movement aimed at improving the rank of tribals as a group, but it can, and indeed has, stopped the emulation of Hinduism that was the only means of mobility for individual adivasis in the absence of the economic option.

THE IMPACT OF HINDUISM

The Motivation Behind Hinduization

Scholars hold different views about the purpose served by Hinduization and the motivation behind it. David Hardiman holds that it is by adopting the values of the ruling Hindu group, through which the latter exercises its hegemony, that the adivasis seek to neutralize that hegemony.[21] Orans, again, sees Hinduization as a means of rank-improvement. Propounding what he calls 'the theory of the rank-concession syndrome', he argues that the adoption of Hindu traits cannot ensue without 'conceding rank' to those traits, i.e., recognizing them as being socially superior. Adivasis admit to themselves that 'the diku are big and knowing people' ___ it is thus that they strive to 'raise themselves' to the level of the diku. The acceptance of social inferiority that rank concession implies, almost always, produces a tendency towards emulation. This emulative tendency, if put into practice, may at first result in blind copying. This, however, is definitely not sufficient to effect rank-improvement; for that, an internalization of emulative attitudes is essential.[22]

In Orans' view, rank concession almost always implies power concession, which generates its own emulating tendencies, which Orans calls 'power incorporative borrowing'. What happens here is that the powerful society's traits are seen as possessing a special efficacy, by projecting on to these traits the power of the dominant society. An instance of power incorporative borrowing would be the chanting of Sanskritic prayers, and the singing of Bengali and Oriya songs during the performance of Santal curing rites. In themselves, these elements are certainly not more efficacious than the Santal curing practices. Yet the Santals have seen fit to include them primarily because they connect them with the status and efficacy associated with all things Hindu.[23]

A third basis of emulation, after rank and efficacy, is the pressure that is brought to bear by the dominant society to adopt its customs. The basis of this pressure, for Orans, are the solidarity needs of the dominant society. 'Surrounding dominant societies must demand allegiance to at least the official symbols of its suzerainty; acceptance of a number of other customs is likely also to be demanded as the solidarity needs of the dominant society increase'. [24] Over and above this, there will also be a tendency to reform those customs of the encysted society that the dominant society finds repugnant, for instance, cow sacrifice and beef-eating.

The emulation that follows rank-concession undermines both external and internal solidarity in much the same way as education

does. Borrowing obviously reduces distinctiveness by eradicating boundary-markers, and by reason of being differential, i.e., concentrated among segments of the encysted society with superior status, also endangers internal solidarity. This differential emulation arises because of certain conditions: [i] the elite is more likely to interact with members of the dominant society, since they usually represent their society in inter-societal relations and [ii] emulation in the absence of political/ economic power cannot achieve rank-improvement. As such, the wealthy and the powerful alone are in a position to attain higher rank through emulation.[25]

From Tribe To Caste: The Debate

The discussion centering around the Hinduization of tribes begs the raising of the question: is the concept ' of the adivasi' an existential reality or, as Baviskar puts it, have Indian tribes 'melted into the Hindu embrace?[26] It is because of the porosity of the boundary between 'tribe' and 'non-tribe' in the Indian context that this question arises in the first place. It is definitely a fact that caste as a structural organization is indissolubly linked with a Pan-Indian civilization, so that caste-like features are found even among non-Hindu communities all over India.[27]

Baviskar relates how the tribe/caste issue has been further problematized by the process of preparing schedules for the Constitution.[28] Official anthropologists, most of them British members of the Indian Civil Service, propounded the isolationist view of 'tribe',

arguing that adivasi communities had a distinct identity that distinguished them from the rest of the nation. They were opposed by nationalist anthropologists, who in their zest for integration argued that tribal people were just a poorly integrated part of mainstream Hindu society. This second group had a vociferous spokesman in G.S. Ghurye, who, determined to foil the British strategy of divide and rule, designated the tribals as 'backward Hindus'. [29] The Constitution has added to the confusion by accommodating both these view-points ___ it recognizes that 'tribes' and 'castes' constitute two separate categories, yet treats tribals, with exceptions, as Hindus all the same.[30]

I have already argued , in the section on tribes in the Introduction that the isolationist view of 'tribe' is thoroughly unacceptable ___ the ideal-type that it constructs is no longer a historical reality. This, however, should not be seen as lending credence to the view that tribes have become, culturally speaking, one with the Hindu world. Rather, *tribes should be seen as negotiating their identities within the larger context of Hindu cultural dominance and subordination.* This subtle negotiation is the subject of the second half of this chapter. For the present, we shall concentrate on the fact of their subordination to the Hindu system and their reaction to this subordination in the form of rank and power concession, and consequent emulation.

Hinduism And Material,
Social and Religious Change

Sachidananda writes, 'It is generally believed that whenever changes are taking place in a culture, the material aspects of life

change at a faster rate than the non-material aspects.[30] It is in the material sphere, therefore, that the influence of Hinduism can be detected the earliest, and it is to this changing material scene that we turn now.

In a discussion on changing housing-patterns among the Mundas and the Oraons, Sachidananda describes the houses of the Hinduized Bhagats [an Oraon sect] as being more spacious and open with a courtyard and verandah running on all sides. As the Bhagats do not keep their fowls and pigs inside, their houses are a great deal cleaner than those of others. Each room, in high caste Hindu tradition is smeared daily with white soil and cowdung.[32] It is, however, in the sphere of dress that change is most immediately visible. The greater part of this change has been brought about by education and Christian missions; Hinduism has had a minor role to play here. However, the *lungi* has become popular among the youth and is worn at the time of festivals and during dances at the akhra. The dhoti, however is deemed more respectable and is worn by men when they venture out to visit relatives or go to the *bazaar* [market]. The attitudes recorded by Sachidananda make it clear that 'dressing well' has become a matter of somewhat high priority as it enables adivasis to pass themselves off for more 'advanced' sections of the population. It is especially crucial when it comes to gaining social acceptance, which is important for those who are required to interact with members of other communities in the course of their work. It may be mentioned here that the Tana Bhagats,

who have been profoundly influenced by the Congress movement and Gandhian philosophy, make themselves conspicuous by the use of *khadi* [hand-woven cloth], be it the saris the women put on, or the dhotis worn by the men.[33] The Gandhian creed of simplicity has also discouraged the Bhagat women from wearing ornaments around their necks, apart from the sacred thread which has been borrowed from Hinduism and which is regarded as a symbol of purity. Here, as in the case of the Santal pleasure-complex, we have a conflict between age-old custom and the dictates of upward mobility, translated, in this particular instance, into the clash between the craving for embellishment and the non-ostentation that is ordained by the creed adopted by the Bhagats.[34] It may be noted that *the observance of Hindu customs governing dressing and ornamentation has very often paved the way for the internalization of Hindu values that these customs may be said to embody.* The development of colour-consciousness among tribals, for instance, heralds the setting in, first and foremost, of an alien conceptualization of beauty, and second, of the notion of inequality, in one of its many forms.

So far as food and drink is concerned, adivasis in this area are generally non-vegetarians, with the exception of the Bhagat Oraons. There are, however, certain taboos that are observed by certain sections so far as consumption of meat is concerned. Non-Christians, for instance, abstain from beef and pork. Mutton and fowl, on the other hand, are eaten with relish. A distinct change may be observed in the growing preference for vegetables and milk. It may be noted that

adivasis do not generally milch their cattle and milk is not taken unless someone is very weak. Recently, however, they have come to appreciate the value of milk as an indispensable item in the diet of children. Here, the upper caste Hindu influence can be detected, though the recent popularity of tea and the mushrooming of tea-stalls at roadside bus stops can be attributed as much to Christian and urban influences as the Hindu one. The undermining of the adivasis' enjoyment orientation has affected the consumption of the indigenous hanria and *illi* [traditional drinks prepared from rice and *mahua* respectively] and has consequently affected solidarity, for the drinking of hanaria is considered absolutely essential at festivals and celebrations and during the worship and propitiation of deities. Moreover, *hanria* which is low in alcohol content, and has to be consumed in large quantities to cause intoxication is giving way to distilled liquor which not only encourages drunkenness and brawls, but being expensive and habit-forming, leads to a squandering of family incomes.[35]

We now come to the realm of socio-religious change caused by Hindu influences. Here, as we consider the processes affecting the various tribes, it would be essential to weigh the impact of the various revitalization and reform movements[36] that have affected tribal society in Chotanagpur. The most significant of these is the Birsa Movement [1874-1901] of the Mundas. Apart from seeking to establish Munda raj and independence, this movement had a distinct socio-religious

dimension with both nativist and reformist elements. Birsa, its leader, was profoundly influenced by the Vaishnav cult and its doctrine of non-violence which led to his giving up hunting and non-vegetarian food. He asked his people to worship only one god, *Singbonga* [the Supreme Being] and to eschew violence and the consumption of meat. He also forbade the taking of hanria and advocated usage of the sacred thread, and purity of the heart at the time of worship. The elderly Mundas were disturbed by some elements of Birsa's teachings ___ for instance, they were afraid that the stoppage of sacrifices might anger the various *bongas* [Mundari word for deities] and some calamity might consequently befall their village. There are, in fact, many problems that Birsaites have faced, as a result of which more and more of them have begun to lose faith in their religion. For instance, there is the custom that if a Birsaite marries a non-Birsaite girl, the girl will have to be admitted into the Birsaite fold. Since few want to abstain from meat and drink, it becomes very difficult to find a mate for the Birsaite man. And the Birsaites being a small community, it is not always that Birsaite girls of marriageable age can be found. Again, it has been very difficult for the Mundas, who are accustomed to worshipping a host of bongas, to internalize the belief in one God. At the time of illness and other misfortunes, Birsaites have been known to approach the *sokha* [witch-doctor] who is not a member of the community and who often prescribes a remedy involving the propitiation of the offended spirit through the sacrifice of a goal or hen. As such, even as they abstain

from meat, Birsaites very often cannot abstain from animal sacrifice.[37]

The Mundas, it has been observed, have adopted a great many Hindu practices without understanding their true import. Thus, they have been wearing the sacred thread since time immemorial without knowing its use at a particular time of worship. Nor do they have a sacred thread ceremony ___ anybody can put it on whenever he likes, and change it when it becomes old and dirty. They believe that donning the thread makes a man pure ___ without it, Mundas are not considered fit to worship their own gods. The Vaishnav influence has been of great import ___ hence the influence of the *Bhakti* cult. Sachidananda mentions one Munda who had obtained a *rudraksha mala* ___ these beads, he believed, would protect him against evil spirits; not even the bongas would dare harm him. This is an indication that tribals have begun to lose faith in their bongas to some extent ___ these gods are no longer believed to have the powers with which previous generations invested them. Even as they conduct sacrifices to propitiate the bongas, many believe that the wrath of the gods can be rendered ineffective by the 'purification' of the body,[38] which is a Hindu notion.

It is, however, amongst the Oraon that Hinduism has made its greatest impact. Many of the Oraons have forgotten their past religion. This is especially true of the Bhagats of different descriptions. The Vishnu Bhagats in some areas call their religion *Dhela Bhakti* [earth worship], the earth being symbolized by a lump of clay. Their highest god is the Hindu deity *Vishnu* ___ other gods, they believe are the

manifestations of his various powers. *Indra, Mahadeva* and *Parvati,* all of whom belong to the Hindu pantheon, are revered by this Bhagat sect. They have no priesthood however ___ anyone who knows the rituals can perform the worship.[39]

The other sect of Bhagat which has been profoundly influenced by Hinduism is the Tana Bhagats. The Tana Bhagat Movement was started in 1914 by Jatra Oraon, an Oraon youth who proclaimed that he had received the divine message, together with the divine power necessary for the restoration of Oraon raj. In its initial stage, the Tana Bhgagat movement was social-reformist in character ___ it was only later that the agrarian issues came to the fore. The programme of social reform comprised, first and foremost the 'pulling out' [*tana*] of ghosts and spirits whose worship degraded the people, and the purification of their lives through the adoption of monotheism, vegetarianism and teetotalism.[40] Following Hindus, converts took to worshipping the cow as a deity and were careful to use only buffaloes for the purpose of ploughing. They however, did not offer animals as sacrifices to God, perceived to be a formless being ___ their only offering consisted of milk, flowers, fruits etc. It may be further mentioned that the Tana Bhagat movement merged with the Congress-led Non-Cooperation Movement when it arrived in Chotanagpur in 1921. The Congress worked upon the corpus of agrarian ideas then prevailing and thus managed to ensure cooperation. The integration of the Tana Movement with Congress ideology led to a radicalization of agrarian issues. The Tana

Bhagats declared that they would not pay rent, and *swaraj* was interpreted to mean not just freedom from British rule, but also freedom from the oppression of dikus and zamindars. They were particularly influenced by Gandhi and his philosophy of *swadeshi* and it was with great enthusiasm that they boycotted foreign goods and took to khadi. It is interesting to note how the cooptation of the movement by the political mainstream has served, in the long run, to consolidate the hold of Hinduism over this section of the Oraons. From the way it appeared to them, the idiom of the Congress was a Hindu idiom. This was probably the way the Congress wanted to project itself in order to create a stronghold in Chotanagpur ___ note how the dream of a restored tribal world of freedom, agrarian and forest rights was cast in the language of '*ram rajya*' and '*dharam raj*' [the Kingdom of Ram and righteousness respectively]. 'Ram' and 'dharam', it may be remembered, have an unambiguous association with Hindu mythology and philosophy.

It is not the Bhagats alone, but other Oraon communities as well who have imbibed Hindu influences. Sachidananda describes how the Oraons of Chiri have taken to performing the *swani* puja on the seventh day of the moon in the month of *sawan*. Some Oraons are known to worship *Mahadeo* and *Devi Mai* regularly, and the *Kartik* and *Deothan* festivals clearly show Hindu influence. Indeed Sachidananda describes the former as a 'tribal-cum-Hindu festival'. In one village a Hindu cow-herd [*ahir*] who looks after the cattle of the Oraon, is found to take

the lead, as he goes dancing with his family from house to house. In another, earthen lamps are lit in the cow-sheds and the cows washed, anointed with oil, garlanded and fed grain the next day. Adult members of the household observe a fast during worship and sing *bhajans* [devotional songs] after breaking it. The Deothan festival involves the worshipping of a male child who is said to represent God. At present, only a few Oraons observe it but there was a time when it used to be observed by all Oraon households every year.[41]

The Santhals too had their share of revivalist and reformist movements, as did the Bhumij and the Ho. The Kharwar movement was born against the background of the Santal Hul [1855-56], the rebellion that resulted in the constitution of the Santal Parganas as a separate non-regulation district. Bhagirath Manjhi, a resident of Tardiha, declared, following the famine of 1874, that he had been commissioned by God to redress the grievances of the Santals and to be their king. On 24th July, 1874, he was appointed the king of the new Santal raj at Baunsi, following which he abolished all demands for rent, ordered the slaughter of pigs and fowls which he declared unclean, and prohibited drinking and dancing among his people. The new Kharwar religion, as K.S. Singh puts it, 'was couched in Hindu idiom'. The presiding deity of the Kharwar was the *Singbahini* [mother goddess] of the diku, followed by the Santal sun god, *Chando*. One Hindu, Matadin, was appointed as advisor to the King and a shrine was set up at Tardiha on the basis of Hindu principles, with a Santal *panda*

[priest] to conduct services. Despite the arrest of Bhagirath and the dismantling of his shrine, the Kharwar cult survived, and its votaries, the 'clean' Santals [*Sapha Hors*] spread the movement far and wide.[42]

So far as the Hos are concerned, one finds historical records of a new religion, known as *satya* or *punya dharam* [true or holy religion] that was propagated in 1907 by a Ho by the name of Singrai in the region of Barkela Pir. The followers of this religion worshipped only one invisible and omnipotent God ___ *Sat Malik* or True God. Denouncing idolatry, they worshipped him by means of *dhyan* [meditation] and *jap* [devotion]. They wore the sacred thread, turned vegetarian, and gave up dancing and the drinking of rice beer. They bathed daily and were in fact obsessive about cleanliness. They did not take medicine believing that prayer to God would save them from sickness. At the time of the Permanent Settlement, around three hundred adherents of this religion were found in the villages around Chaibasa. At present, however, there are none left.

It is, however, the Haribaba Movement which is the most famous of the Ho movements. It was led by a Ho named Duka who called himself Haribaba and who, together with a Santal leader named Tarachand, exhorted the people to fight for swaraj. The Haribaba-Tarachand Movement attracted a large following from among the Hos and the Santals and soon became a threat to British rule in the area. In July 1931, both Haribaba and Tarachand were arrested by the British, following which the political phase of the movement, died down.

The Haribaba Movement was especially directed against the worship of evil spirits and the practice of witchcraft. A hectic search for bongas [spirits] was carried out amidst the beating of drums and everything suspected of being the abode of evil spirits, such as black goats, chicken etc. were driven out. Haribaba also initiated a frenzied witch-hunting drive, during which many people lost their lives. The Haribabaites believed that Singbonga had created oxen on a Tuesday on which day consequently these animals were rested from work. They moreover believed that the Goddess *Lakshmi* resided in the cow; as Lakshmi was created on a Thursday, they did not use cows for work on this day. Haribaba moreover prohibited the killing of cows and buffaloes and the eating of beef. Earlier, the Hos used to sacrifice a buffalo to *Marang Bonga* [the Big Spirit] and eat its meat ___ this practice stopped after the Haribaba Movement.

The two other Ho movements worth mentioning are the Kripa Sindhu Movement and the Adi Samaj Movement. Singbonga, as the saying goes, revealed himself to Kripa Sindhu, and told him about the path that the Hos must follow in order to obtain happiness. He forbade bonga-worship and the practice of witchcraft and the *Sindhu Dharam* preached by Kripa Sindhu discarded the traditional methods of worship prevalent among the Hos. Instead of the *desauli* [Sacred Grove], the Hos now had a pentagonal temple where they gathered every fifteenth day of the month to hold a prayer meeting. This temple, known as the *Mulim Owa* or *Jhandi Owa* had no image of Singbonga ___ rather they

prayed to Singbonga in the shape of the Blue Sky. The Adi Samaj Movement, started by Lakho Bodra aimed at the revitalization of Ho society and was modelled on the teachings of Birsa. As such, the Samaj advocated the discarding of sacrifice, pure living, vegetarianism and the wearing of the sacred thread. Bodra's doctrine recognized Singbonga, represented by the sun, Marang Bonga, Marang Buru [the Big Mountain] and the goddess *Canala*. The worship of the holy syllable 'Om' through a special symbol revealed the Hinduistic influence.[43]

Having dealt so far with the new material and religious trends that have emerged in Chotanagpur tribal society, it would be appropriate to conclude this section on Hindu influences with a short discussion of changes that have affected the sphere of societal ideas and practices. In a discussion on the changing patterns of family and marriage among Oraons and Mundas in tribal Bihar, Sachidananda observes how the dominant family pattern has changed from being nuclear to extended, especially among the Oraon. Hinduism alone, however, cannot be held responsible for this ___ Christian missions, especially Catholic ones, have encouraged tribals to adopt the patrilineal extended family model, and by preaching against birth control, have also caused the size of families to increase.[44] The extraordinary sexual freedom that is hallmark of tribal societies has also been somewhat compromised by the spread of orthodox Hindu ideas about mixing between the sexes. This is especially true of the Bhagat Oraons, who have internalized the heavy Hindu premium on morality.

The Bhagats, as such, have no provision for akhra dancing; also, Bhagat girls, in Hindu style, go to the groom's home immediately after marriage.[45] The Bhagats have also taken to the practice of marrying within the same clan/village. This is partly owing to Hinduization and partly to the fact that Bhagat clans generally live very far away from each other. Yet another effect of Hinduism on tribal marriage customs has been the lowering of the marriageable age for girls. Girls in Hinduized villages tend to get married at the age of fifteen or below, whereas in a Christian village, they marry between the ages of sixteen and twenty.[46] The sphere of funeral customs and beliefs have also succumbed to Hindu influence. A person who dies of cholera or of small pox is not buried, but cremated and the funeral rites are performed ten days after death. The relatives of the dead man are required to collect his bones and ashes immediately after cremation; a pot is hung on a peepal tree and the man who lit the pyre offers water to it everyday for ten days. This is a clear imitation of Hindu custom. People have even begun to believe in the transmigration of souls and in the theory of *karma*, saying that a dead man may be reborn as man or animal and that the performance of good deeds in this life alone ensures rebirth as man in the next. The males among the Tana Bhagats shave their heads when a death occurs in the family in what is a clear imitation of Hindu custom.[47]

A caveat, however, needs to be added. Even as the movements discussed above have called for reforms on orthodox Hindu lines [note

the recurring advocacy of vegetarianism, teetotalism, etc.], there has been an equal emphasis on the return to roots, with some advocating practices that go completely against Hinduism as it is ordinarily practiced by Hindus. Such, for instance, is the doctrine of monotheism propounded by Birsa who taught that there was only one Supreme God or Singbonga and the oft-repeated stance against idol-worship. It is also to be noted that the movements have not entirely succeeded in their mission of bringing about the desired changes. People continue to believe in spirits and even witchcraft is practised by some. The Vishnu Bhagats, who claim to have given up worshipping spirits and who denounce treatment by a *mati* or an *ojha* [spirit doctor] have been known to call in an ojha in difficult times, for instance, when a cattle epidemic broke out in 1956.[48] Sachidananda relates an incident where government efforts at vaccination following the breakout of a small pox epidemic were resisted on the pretext that the people had already promised to make a sacrifice to *Ikir Bonga* to ward off the disease and that taking the vaccination would amount to loss of faith in *Ikir Bonga*.[49]

Hinduization As Effected Through The Construction Of Tribal Self-Image

Hinduization as a process, is multi-faceted, and definitely not exhausted, so far as the means of achieving it are concerned, by the adoption of Hindu practices and customs. It is sometimes sought to be effected through very imaginative channels, for instance, the construction of tribal names and myths of origin. It needs to be

mentioned here that several tribes have two names ___ a popular name by which the tribe is known to its neighbours and the name that is used by the tribe to identify itself. It may happen that the name attributed to it by the dominant society is derogatory, and mirrors the unfavourable and lowly image that such a society has of the tribe. We are, for the present purpose, interested primarily in the other kind of name, that by which the tribe calls itself. An analysis of the etymological meaning of such names often reveal an effort on the part of the tribe to Hinduize, i.e., trace its ancestry to a Hindu, preferably of high caste, and at times, a more general effort to cast itself in a good light. The image that the dominant society holds of the tribe cannot of course, be ignored, for the simple reason that rank attainment depends not only on the effort made by the aspiring community, but also on the decision of the dominant society to concede rank. The dominant society may or may not agree to such rank concessions; that, however, does not make the effort to attain rank any less worthy of investigation.

As has been pointed out by S.C. Roy, the Oraon, in their own language call themselves '*kurukh*'.[50] This term has a close resemblance to the Sanskrit root word '*krs*' [to plough] and the similarity with '*krsak*' or '*kisan*' [ploughman/ farmer] is too obvious to ignore. According to K.N. Sahay, it is this agriculturist association evoked by the name 'kurukh' that enabled the Oraon, on their first arrival in Chotanagpur, to assume a pride of place among the tribes they found already occupying the plateau. It may be further mentioned that their

assuming the name of 'kurukh' is meant to be a reminder of their close association with the ancient King Korakh.[51]

The legend that deals with the origin of the Oraon is yet another instance of attempted rank-attainment, for it is a story that is undoubtedly complimentary to themselves, giving them a respectable ancestry and an honourable occupation. The legend goes as follows: "a *muni* or ascetic...sat absorbed in divine contemplation in the heart of a dense forest...year after year, he remained seated in the same posture on the self-same spot...till at length his body got rooted to the ground and was covered over with an ant-hill. Round the ant-hill grew a thorny creeper, a long thorn from which eventually entered his chest. At length it so happened that a woodcutter mistook the ascetic for the ant-hill covered stump of a tree and... struck the butt-end of his axe to shake off the ant-hill... The ascetic thus rudely disturbed, got up ...As he stood up, the thorn... got broken and blood began to ooze out of his chest. The ascetic, not willing to allow a drop of his own blood to stain mother earth, took all the blood in the folded palm of his hands. As however, he had now to satisfy a call of nature, he put the blood in a cup improvised for the purpose out of a korkota leaf and placed the cup in a shady place close by. When the ascetic was about to leave, out of the blood there came into life a boy and a girl [called in the story *Bhaiya-Bhayin* or brother and sister]. They called out to the ascetic and said 'stop...it is you who brought us into the world. And now if you leave us here, what shall we do to get a living?' The ascetic replied,

'you shall be cultivators. Clear this jungle and make agriculture your occupation' ...Thus, they, the Bhaiya-Bhayin, the first parents of the Oraons, having been born of the blood of the chest [Sanskrit, *uras* or *ur*] of the holy ascetic, their descendants came to be known as *Uragon Thakur* or *Uraons*. And in those olden days, they were quite as respectable as the Brahmins and wore the sacred thread. When later, the Uraons fell from their high state and began to eat indiscriminately whatever food, clean or unclean, that came to hand, they forfeited their claim to the name of Uragon Thakur, and came to be called Oraons'.[52]

The Chero tribe of Chotanagpur, like the Oraon, claim to be descendants of a Brahmin. This Brahmin moreover was married to a Rajput woman and it was she who bore the first Cheros. The story goes like this: Kesho Narayan Singh, a Bohndya Rajput and Raja of Ghurgoomtee in Bundelkhand, was blessed with an only daughter. A learned Brahmin who drew up her horoscope at the Raja's request declared that it was ordained that the girl would marry none other than a muni. On learning this, the Raja decided to proceed to a holy shrine and offer his daughter to the first muni he met. He started on his journey, taking his daughter with him. While passing through Morang country, he encamped one day near a *teela* or mount. On making inquiries, he learnt that this was the living sepulchre of a very pious muni. Cheered by the good news, the Raja called for spade and shovel and unearthed the holy man who was in the act of praying. Having offered his daughter to him, the Raja considered his duty done and set

off home. The muni, however, remained oblivious to these happenings and continued praying. When his thoughts finally reverted to things terrestrial, he condescended to address the young lady and asked her several pertinent questions. Satisfied with her replies and forgetting his vows, he married her without further ceremony. From this marriage sprung the Cheros or the Chauhanbansi Rajputs. The descendants of these Cheros moreover, were, said to have ruled Kumaon and Bhojpur for several generations.[53]

Claims to have descended from an upper caste, whether it be Brahmin or Kshatriya and assertions of royal ancestry and their own kingship in the past are clearly meant to enhance the status and prestige of the tribe doing the claiming. This is a very interesting dimension of the Hinduization effort and deserves to be studied for two reasons. One, it falls within the oral tradition of myth-making and story telling, and the flexibility and deftness with which this art is exercised [the same tribe may have different myths of origin that trace its origins to different sources] goes to show that it is a very useful tool, and one among the many that are used by adivasis to carve out a niche for themselves in what is, to a large extent, a Hindu world. Second, academic discourse on Hinduization has largely limited itself to a discussion of the adoption, by adivasis, of high caste Hindu customs. It has remained largely oblivious to the large corpus of anthropological literature that has dealt with the phenomenon of myth-making among tribes, and the surprisingly clever and pragmatic ends that this has

been made to serve. Myth-making remains a vital ingredient in the larger project of constructing a self-image, and in so far as an upbeat self-image is crucial for upward social mobility, we must, in our study of social change, take cognizance of myth-making.

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY

Susana B.C. Devalle, in a penetrating analysis of the place of Christianity in the tribal scheme of things, observes that Christianity has helped in the formulation of identity by acting as a 'replacement community'. In her words, 'Christendom... offers a solution to the uncertain identity of the members of the adivasi petty-bourgeoisie'. On the one hand, these people 'distance themselves from the ethnic style of their rural communities of origin by their class situation, on the other hand, they do not fully belong to the Indian middle classes...since they are still catalogued in ethnic/racial terms and perceived as 'different', no matter how decultured they may be'. The problem is solved by conversion to Christianity ___ they now become members of what is considered a prestigious community, a powerful world organization that will lead them to progress and out of the derogatory stereotype.[54] Their Christianity thus serves a dual purpose: it counters Hinduization and helps them acquire a powerful ally in the form of the world Christian community. It may be pointed out here that both Hinduization and Christianization are routes to upward mobility, the difference being that while the former involves 'giving in' to the surrounding dominant

society, the latter implies a turning away from it. Making Hindu society our point of reference, the Hinduization option alone appears conformist. However, in so far as both choices involve discarding an indigenous culture-complex for the more sophisticated cultural baggage of a prestige community, the latter being deemed more efficacious from the point of view of 'progress', there is little difference between the two.

Conversion to Christianity, in much the same way as Hinduization, affects solidarity within the tribe. External solidarity however is not affected to the same extent, because Christianization does not involve adopting traits of the surrounding dominant society and eradicating thereby the distinctions between that society and the indigenous community. Rather, Christianization creates for itself a third socio-cultural space *within* the indigenous community and thus stratifies it. K.N. Sahay writes how tribal converts begin to consider themselves different from the non-Christians and acquire a sense of superiority over the latter. People engaging in spirit-worship are considered 'inferior'; Christian converts are also particularly averse to excessive drinking, mixed dancing and the use of filthy language.[55] It is not known, however, how they regard those Hinduized tribals among whom these so called 'vices' are absent, and who try, like the Christian converts themselves, to uphold an alien and puritan 'morality'.

One more thing that needs to be said while as we are on the subject of solidarity, is that Christian converts among tribals do not constitute a homogenous category. There is a good deal of conflict

between the two main denominations, namely, Catholic and Lutheran converts. The Catholics consider themselves to be true adherents of Christianity and the followers of the Pope and think of the Lutherans as 'deviants and hypocrites'. It is, however, the contention of the Lutherans that the Catholics have changed the original commandments of the Bible and have taken to image worship in the form of devotion shown to St Mary. Sahay writes, 'It is significant that Oraon society which was culturally homogenous has come to be divided now because of the workings of various denominations of Christianity; with conversion, their self-image and identity have undergone tremendous transformation. Denominational loyalty has conspicuously cut across kinship and ethnic loyalties and the Christian converts of a particular denomination now consider themselves closely associated with another convert of the same denomination, even though he may be a non-relative and may even come from another tribe'.[56]

However, missionary activity has, on the other hand, led to an arousing of political consciousness, and has encouraged the development of a strong sense of self-esteem among the tribals. This has also manifested itself in the revival of traditional political institutions like the Parha. Sachidananda writes how the functioning of this age-old institution has been thoroughly rationalized in some villages, and how the Munda, converted as well as unconverted, take pride in managing their own affairs through this medium. The Parha in Tapkara is apparently so active that the local statutory gram panchayat does not

have to entertain any disputes at all. The Parha, in some places, also worked as the mouthpiece of the Jharkhand Party and Parha workers were often active party members.[57]

Missionaries have also helped promote social welfare organizations. In Silphari, they established the *Sangat* which is an organization of Christian Oraons that volunteers its collective labour as help to any villager, whether Christian or non-Christian. This organized voluntary labour has a dual purpose: first, a small family which may find it difficult to carry on its agricultural work by itself is helped in a manner which is very cheap [the Sangat asks for only 25% of the market labour charge] and second, the Christians are able to raise some funds for the village Church. A large number of Munda families were found to have joined this organization, some of them being non-Christians themselves. The Sangat generally names one member of the village panchayat who has to be informed when somebody needs Sangat labour. Another remains in charge of attendance ___ members of the Sangat who are absent from work on a particular day are required to make up for the loss the next day. If they fail to do so, they are fined.[58] It is thus in the sphere of social participation that the missions have done their most creditable work. They have, however, achieved this only in those villages where converts are in a majority. Otherwise, the village is divided into two sets ___ each dedicated to a separate programme of rural development.

It is Sachidananda's contention that Christianity has affected the

realm of beliefs and rituals in only a marginal way,[59] and that its real influence has been restricted to the realm of the material. No doubt, there have been changes in living conditions among converts ___ for instance, they have taken to using tin-trunks in place of the traditional bamboo basket; the use of metal buckets and glass tumblers has also become quite common among them. The few households using cots and chairs are invariably Christian. Also, they have stopped performing certain traditional rites concerned with day-to-day living. The Mundas, for instance, generally observe a ceremony at the time of selecting the site for a house, the purpose of the ritual being to find out whether the bonga of that locality has any objection to the house being built. The digging of the foundation is preceded by the propitiation of Singbonga through the offer of *arwa* rice [rice prepared from unboiled paddy] and after the house is completed, a ceremony, '*Nawa Ora Re Bonga*' [worship of the new house] is performed and is attended by friends and relatives. This traditional ceremony is no longer performed by Christian tribals. In some places a house-warming ceremony is performed but the rites concerned with the laying of the foundation stone are overlooked.[60]

Christian education has made a deep impact on the realm of dress. The traditional loincloth is hardly to be seen, and sewn and mill-made clothes have become fashionable. Young men have taken to trousers and bush-shirts, as well as shorts and vests, and some adults have acquired the habit of covering their heads with scarves. In

unconverted families, children below the age of two remain naked and are made to wear traditional clothes at the age of four/five . In Christian households, however, children are invariably dressed, even when they are babies, in frocks, or shirts and shorts. Again, among the unconverted, middle-aged and old women rarely wear anything above their waist while they remain within their homes. Those who can afford to do so don a blouse before venturing out. Converts, however, wear a blouse at all times. Christian women, in fact, are much more concerned about their dress than about their ornaments. They are very particular about wearing good saris and blouses, and keeping themselves tidy and smart ___ ornamentation on the other hand is considered an ostentation.[61] This orientation, decidedly, is out of keeping with the traditional tribal ethos of self-decoration and beautification; tribal women, traditionally speaking, never considered it important to cover their bodies meticulously in the manner of the converts. As such, the premium on minimum exposure is definitely alien to indigenous tribal culture.

And finally, Christianization has affected attitudes towards dancing, which was once an all-favourite pastime. Mixed dancing at the akhra has been depicted by missionaries as promoting immorality. As such, children today are discouraged from learning the art, and those who know it are often too shy to indulge themselves. Even so, where the dhumkuria exists, dancing occurs daily or on alternate nights, and during the big tribal festivals such as *Sarhul*, *Karma* and

Sohrai, dancing lasts for twenty four hours in continuous relays. But there is little doubt that dancing has lost its popularity, primarily because of the stigma that Christian missions have succeeded in attaching to it.[62]

In the sphere of socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs, Christianity has not made much impact. The belief in spirits and witchcraft, for instance, is too deeply entrenched for conversion to make a difference. Converts are prohibited, by their faith, from believing in or associating with witchcraft and it is believed that a person practising this art would be doomed to hell after his death. When eight to ten Oraon Christian families in a village near Silphari invited a mati to ward off recurring trouble, the matter was brought to the notice of the Parish Father and they were fined, but they were neither ready to pay the fine nor give up the practice. This resulted in their being expelled from the Church.[63]

Death and mourning customs for converts are the same as in any Christian community. There is no ceremonial mourning and the relatives of the dead are satisfied so long as the dying person has been administered the last sacrament by a Mission Father. The dead is buried, and at the door of the room where the dead body rests, a tile containing burning charcoal and a small cup of oil is kept. The members of the funeral party apply the oil on their hands, feet and head. This, and the putting of earth in the grave by everyone assembled is an old tribal custom that is not enjoined by religion. The

funeral feast is held several weeks or even a year after the death, depending on the convenience of the relatives. Some members of the family get their heads and beards shaved ___ this, too, is not required by Christianity.[64]

It is Munda custom to erect memorial stones [*sasandiri*] in the burial ground [*sasan*]. When a stone has to be put up in the memory of a departed person, the word is spread through the beating of drums and people gather with spades, ropes etc. The stones are required to be big and as such, the man-power needed is large. Against each memorial-stone, one sheep is set aside to be slaughtered and after the stone is erected, a feast is held in which everybody partakes of the meat of the sheep as well as of hanria. The converted Munda place stones on the graves at the time of Easter. These stones are carried by family members of the deceased, but no particular ceremony is held. If a slab is heavy, many people are employed to carry it, and are given a meal by the family. But the air of ritual is decidedly absent.[65]

THE ELITE PHENOMENON

Before concluding the first part of this chapter, we shall dwell on a subject that has been briefly touched upon in each of the preceding sections, namely, the emergence and the coming to age of a tribal elite. We have already discussed the factors that have contributed to elite-formation: they are, to put it in a nutshell, the differential access to education and employment and the differential adoption of Hinduism and Christianity. As has been mentioned before, the differential access

to education is explained by its cost whereas differential access to employment is in turn explained by differential access to education, the educated being better equipped to grab available jobs. So far as differential Hinduization is concerned, the explanation lies in previously existing differences of economic rank and political power within the community, for it is only those who have both who are able to attain rank via cultural emulation. The adoption of Hindu customs, in the absence of economic and political status to support the effort, is more often than not a fruitless exercise. A similar logic may be extended to understand the differential conversion to Christianity.

The gap that opens up between the elite and the other members of the tribal community is thus two-fold ___ it is both a class gap and a cultural gap. The class gap is obvious and does not need much defining, but the culture gap is subtle, and Devalle grasps it very well when she writes: '"Mundas sing to remember themselves...", an adivasi intellectual explained to me. Social tunes, however, differ according to the voices that utter them and those who listen to them. By no stretch of the imagination are those who sing in the fields while working 'remembering themselves' in the same way as the family of an adivasi professional that, being Christmas time, sang gospel songs in English, to the accompaniment of a tape-recorded guitar, under the shade of a plastic Christmas tree...Even a superficial situational comparison provides a picture of the enormous class and cultural gaps existing ...the human voice in chorus *versus* a tape-recorder; music for work *versus*

music for leisure; the fields *versus* the living-room; nature *versus* the consumer's market tree'.[64]

The adivasi petty-bourgeoisie, which comprises the elite, faces a serious identity crisis. The culture of this social sector is a mixture of some old elements detached from their living indigenous social roots, and newer alien elements. Over and above, this strata, to quote Devalle, 'presents two non-integrated levels of social consciousness'. At one level, they are aware that they belong to a subordinated ethnic category, and thus present a muted resistance to subordination. On another level, as a 'transitional class without a defined class consciousness', they act as a dominant sector vis-à-vis the lower sectors of their own ethnic groups. This contradiction produces a serious conflict of identity and an 'unclear formulation of a social project'.[67] The members of the elite claim solidarity with the non-elite on ethnic grounds. But this is only a temporary solidarity which breaks down when the class interests of the elite take precedence or when a class consciousness develops among the subaltern sectors of tribal society.

The elite, therefore, is a conservative force in tribal society and one that is the most vocal in proclaiming its 'tribal' identity. The romantic tribal construct has, in fact, found a very strong ally in the adivasi elite and for good reason. For it is the tribalist ideology that has permitted them to enter the political arena and dominate the field of education, provided by missions also promoting the tribal construct. [The Church's attachment to the tribal construct is related to the

conception of missionary activity being at the same time a civilizing mission]. Moreover, the elite's promotion of tribalism helps push underground class affiliations, and thereby helps present social conflict in Jharkhand in terms of ethnic confrontation alone.[68]

II

Having dealt with those anthropological and sociological perspectives that see tribal identity as the victim of an irreversible process of homogenization, we shall now focus on a different trend of thinking, one that recognises the resilience of tribal cultures, and seeks to understand the processes feeding, and fuelling that resilience. This is also a school of thought that diverts our attention from the familiar theme of Hinduization to fix it on the processes of 'tribalization', whereby Hindu castes have been influenced by elements of tribal civilizations and have gone on to imbibe them. This school thus recognises that culture - flows are never uni-directional and, moreover, that there are certain spheres of culture whose mosaic-like character can be explained only by admitting the fact of cultural amalgamation.

SOCIO-CULTURAL RESURGENCE, ETHNIC ASSERTION AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

A very good instance of a tribe maintaining its tradition amidst intrusion by a dominant culture is offered by the Santals. J.D.Mehra writes, 'In the titanic struggle between tradition and modernity, the Santal world-view changes to adopt to the circumstances of the existential state, not however to become unrecognizably metamorphosed

but retaining a fundamental, albeit, truncated form'[69]. This may, at first sight, appear to be at odds with the observations made by Martin Orans, who worked among the Santals in and around Jamshedpur. Orans' theory of 'rank concession' seems to imply that the Santals did, by and large, regard the emulation of Hindu traits as an important means of achieving social mobility. Datta - Majumdar,[70] who worked among the Santals around Santiniketan [in West Bengal] also believed that he observed the Sanskritization process[71] at work, having noted the adoption of the sacred thread, the worship of Hindu deities and the assumption of Hindu names by the community in question. It, however, needs to be pointed out that Orans, in the latter part of his book, ***The Santals : A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition,*** has acknowledged the efforts of the Santals to forge a new, dynamic and sustaining cultural rubric that is viable and prestige - maintaining. In fact, he has pictured the Santals as striving to cling to a cultural anchor as a protective mechanism in the vast, alien waters of a threatening ocean of change. They have achieved this by forging their own 'great tradition', which has acted as a bulwark against the waves of impinging cultures. The making of this 'great tradition' is something we shall be exploring very soon. For the time being, it should suffice to say that it symbolises a native socio-cultural resurgence with literary, religious and linguistic dimensions.

Sachidananda is of the opinion that it is only when they are observed in an urban and industrial set-up that Santals give the

impression of Hinduization. Otherwise, Santals have never accepted the caste ideology, and have closely observed tribal endogamy and clan-cum-village exogamy, as well as the cult of the bongas,[72] Gautam, in fact, has talked of 'Santalization', or the ongoing process of assertion, by Santals, of their native culture and has seen in it, like Orans before him, a valuable mechanism of self-preservation[73]. Thus, not only have the Santals maintained their nuclear household with secular and sacred head-men, the worship at the *Manjhithan* and the *Jagarthan* [Santali for Sacred Grove] etc., they have also taken to reinterpreting some old institutions so as to prevent them from dying out. Thus the *naeke* and the *godet* have been invested with new functions—the former now occupies the position of a priest and the latter functions as the barber. Thus, even as the Santals have imbibed a few elements of Hindu social and religious organization [the offices of priest and barber], they have adopted these to suit their own culture. Instead of following the Hindus in instituting a separate priest and barber, the naeke and godet, traditional functionaries both, are now made to the perform these functions. This is somewhat similar to the attempts made by the Oraon and the Munda to revitalize the decaying institutions of the dhumkuria and the parha respectively.

Sachidananda, though unhappy with Gautam's use of the term 'Santalization', [his argument being that 'Santalization' would seem to refer to a process by which persons belonging to other communities are brought within the ambit of Santal polity, norms and traditions, and

that those who already belong to the community cannot be conceived as being 'Santalized'] however agrees with him that the Santals have skipped the process of Sanskritization on their way to being modernized and secularized. *It ought to be noted that the revival of ancient Santal tradition has not meant a conservative embracing of the past.* On the contrary, they have accepted the development schemes meant for their economic upliftment without any reservation whatsoever and has enthusiastically embraced improved technology and democratic politics[74]. The political process introduced by the Constitution has been especially enabling, and has helped not only them but all tribals to make their political presence felt. In fact, it is the opinion of some that it is the Constitution [with its provision for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in legislatures] which has arrested the trend towards Hinduization amongst tribes. The latter have realized that they have more to gain by asserting their tribal identity than by embracing the Hindu way of life[75].

The phenomenon of socio-cultural resurgence is definitely worth looking into, once we see it for what it is, namely, a mechanism for resisting the hegemony of dominant cultures. Orans, describing this resurgence as it has occurred amongst the Santals, writes, 'One might say that the Santal have been in search of a 'great tradition', since the time that they conceded the social and cultural superiority of their Hindu neighbours. Having taken much from these neighbous, but

desirous of maintaining their identity, they decided to create a 'great tradition' of their own rather than accept the one belonging to their neighbours'[76]. Thus, there has been an attempt to codify Santal traditions in writing and even the development of a distinctive script in which to record these traditions. Again, an essentially inexplicit religious ideology embodied in ritual has been replaced by an explicit religions philosophy that emphasizes morality, and there has also occurred an elaboration of literary forms that are wholly unlike the unpretentious oral ones. The point to note here is that, *while these developments, no doubt, involve the rejection of various Hindu practices, they, at the same time, affirm certain fundamental values of Hinduism [for instance, the emphasis on script, written literary tradition and rational religion]. Thus, while particular native traits are re-emphasized, the configuration and orientation underlying Santal culture begin to resemble those of the Hindus*[77]. Furthermore, this is not so much an unintended effect as the result of conscious decision on the part of those doing the re-shaping, and reveals their awareness of the fact that a simple nativism cannot succeed in resisting the forces of cultural homogenization; what is needed, over and above a revivalist ethos, is a *dose of pragmatism* and it is this latter that the deliberate adherence to Hindu forms has sought to provide, even as the contents have been aggressively Santal.

Nowhere is the effort to forge a '*great* tradition' more evident than in the field of script-evolution. Sajal Basu, who has dwelt at length

on this process in the book *'Jharkhand Movement : Ethnicity and Culture of Silence'*, writes how a Santal leader, Raghunath Murmu, has devised the *ol chiki* script and has demanded its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Prior to the inception of ol chiki in 1927, the Santals used to use scripts foreign to the Santali language, such as Nagari, Bengali and Roman, the latter developed by the missionaries. The ol chiki, it is said, has fulfilled the long-desired aim of expressing the suppressed phonetics in the pronunciation of Santali words. And the fear that it might lead to the isolation of the Santals from the Ho, Munda and other non-Santal communities has been mitigated by the efforts to extend this script to the whole Austric group of languages, comprising Santali, Mundari, Asur, Ho, Birhor, Kheria and Mahali[78].

Murmu, in fact, has emerged as a key figure in the making of a 'great' Santal tradition. He has written a long epic-heroic play, *Kherwar Bir,* which serves as a Santal equivalent of the Mahabharata. The essence of the plot is that the Santals, then known as the Kherwars and the possessors of a great kingdom, lose a war with a people who have the attributes of Hindus, and the victors take many members of the royal family prisoner. Murmu deftly reverses the usual Hindu pattern by portraying the Santals' opponents as cannibals who are prepared to eat their Santal prisoners. Fortunately, a young Kherwar prince, following the call of duty despite great danger, succeeds in rescuing the prisoners and defeating the enemy. This play is both a

parable about duty as well as a charter for independence. In addition, being a *written* epic, it succeeds in elevating the rank value of Santal culture[79].

This is how the pattern goes. Murmu has even emerged as a creative linguist, having derived Sanskrit from Proto-Mundari on the basis of structural similarities, and having consequently argued that 'many believe Valmiki Risi [the author of the Ramayana] himself to have been a Santal'[80]. He is also the founder of a cultural organisation known as Sarna Dharam Semlet, i.e., the Sacred Grove Religious Organisation. This organisation was established before the census of 1951 for the purpose of persuading the tribals of the region to return their religion as 'Sarna'. Just as Hindu organisations like the Arya Samaj pressurize for Hindu returns, so Semlet was created to uphold the solidarity of the tribals. It succeeded in its purpose, for 237,310 tribals from Bihar alone returned themselves as followers of the 'Sarna' religion[81]. There is no native word in any of the tribal languages which designates their religion, thus the word, 'Sarna', meaning 'Sacred Grove' in Mundari, had to be officially chosen for the purpose[82]. Yet another dimension of the 'great tradition' has been the emphasis on hard work and the concomitant discouragement of pleasure. As I have said before, this orientation is obviously borrowed from the Hindus --- it has, however, been made to fit the resurgent ethos by couching it in a traditional form. It is, thus, through the medium of Santali songs that the enjoyment-orientation is degraded. One particular song carries the

following message :

'At work time I become drunk and forget my work.
At the time for study I spent my time making friends;
I forgot all about reading and writing.
Babu, boys the same age as you have become pandits at Tata school.
Oh brother, in the city of Delhi they have become members of Parliament.
Oh brother, you were born in a long village.
Oh brother, you grew up among friends.
Oh brother, you have become a pundit in divorced women.'[83]

And finally, there is an organized effort to prevent attendance at, and participation in Hindu ceremonies. One of the dangers inherent in such participation is the emulation of Hindu ways, whereas another stems from the manner of participation, i.e., the tendency to engage in mixed dancing, to become drunk etc. This negative effort has, moreover, translated positively into the celebration of tribal festivals with great pomp and splendour. As Sachidananda puts it, 'The tribals for long have been noticing the Hindus and Muslims in urban areas celebrating their own festivals with great éclat and enthusiasm, where the religious character of the celebration is eclipsed by the keenness of people to make a grand pageant. Of late, the tribals have been stung by the same spirit.'[84] Thus, major tribal festivals today are celebrated in a big demonstrative way, with processions being taken out, cultural events being organised and high-flown speeches being delivered. There is a lot of flexing of muscles, shouting of slogans, display of weapons and beating of drums. These processions are, for most of the time, modelled on the militant forms of

Ramanavami and Muharram. Also, tribal leaders such as Sidhu and Kanu[85] among the Santals, and Birsa among the Munda and Oraon, have become cult-figures, with grand celebrations being held on their birthdays, amidst recounting of their deeds. Being symbols of rebellion against injustice and exploitation, they are regarded as particularly relevant in modern times. As such their subaltern status is radically stressed but the manner of doing so, and the fanfare attending it is definitely borrowed from mainstream cultures[86].

It ought to be clear from the above discussion that the socio-cultural resurgence that one sees in Chotanagpur is motivated by the urge of the adivasis to maintain their distinctive identity. In so far as the maintenance of a distinctive identity is crucial for tribal politics [in that it helps forge solidarity and thereby enables the emergence of tribals as a significant pressure group], there is a clear link between cultural revivalism and the political process. As this is the subject of the third chapter, I do not intend to dwell on it in detail at present. But I would like to describe the connection in brief and for that purpose, now quote Orans : 'I do not want to portray this striking cultural development as more profane than it is by giving undue emphasis to its connection with political objectives and the pursuit of rank. Nevertheless, one must begin by recognising that this is its source. As very grossly advocated by a somewhat naive Santal industrial worker who has become a 'Member of the Legislative Assembly', the movement is spoken of in the following terms : 'We should not leave our religion;

we should continue to use rice beer; we should have our worship at the Sacred Grove; also we should not stop eating beef. If we stop eating it, our Santal caste will be gone. We will call our religion Sarna Dhorom and will tell everyone that our religion is Sarna Dhorom'.[87] There is apparently such stress on culture in certain Jharkhand political rallies that one might easily imagine oneself at a festival rather than at a political meeting. Orans adds: 'So potent a political weapon is culture that the great crime of a Santal-elected official was that he wrote a pamphlet in which he argued that the Mundari languages were related to Oriya.'[88]

It must, however, be acknowledged that despite being motivated by politics, the cultural movement has, in the long run, acquired an impetus of its own. The sophisticated Santal seriously believes that he is, through his cultural effort, contributing to a resurgence of tribal tradition, and at the same time, raising it to a higher level. Moreover, there are other factors, [such as personal expression, pride of creativity and public recognition of culture-producers] that come into play and thereby ensure that a cultural movement that began largely as a means of reinforcing solidarity for political gains is transformed into a genuinely creative one, though it must, of course, continue to satisfy the requirements of the original impetus.

While we are on the subject of the link between ethnicity, culture and politics, it may be mentioned that cultural retribalization for political purposes is not a phenomenon that is new to the Chotanagpur

area. It has happened many times before, the 'ulgulan' of Birsa being the best historical instance. The Birsa uprisings at the end of the nineteenth century sought to mobilise the Mundas against alien rule; it was, however, Birsa's socio-cultural agenda, namely, the revival of the lost status of the Mundas and the restoration of their aboriginality, which forged the solidarity necessary for the political success of the movement.

It is its solidarity-forging capacity that makes cultural revivalism so crucial for tribal politics. The distinctive traits re-emphasized are almost always of low rank value, which makes them ideal boundary-markers. Beef-eating and cow-sacrifice, traditional dances, drinking of hanria and worshipping traditional gods at the Sarna serve not only to bind a particular tribe together but are held in common by most of the tribes supporting the cause of Jharkhand. As such, these are the banners under which the Jharkhandis march, not least because their contrast with Hindu banners is strikingly conspicuous. It is true that the elites, thoroughly decultured as they are, find it difficult to embrace beef eating and dancing. However, the very fact that they *advocate* these practices [as leaders of the socio-cultural movement, they can do little else] is enough to breach the gap between them and the ordinary adivasis somewhat[89]. Thus, socio-cultural revivalism serves to reinforce both external and internal solidarity, by heightening adivasi - Hindu differences and by creating an unanimity of cultural opinion, if not practice, within the adivasi community respectively. The further

observation might be made that this solidarity is different from the spontaneous traditional solidarity of yore in so far as *it is created, and based on interests, rather than sentiments.* As such, it lasts so long as the community is able to function as an interest-group. After that, it is likely to fall apart, given the absence of the affective basis of traditional solidarity. But the reality of this created and temporary solidarity is not in doubt and in no way does its instrumental character detract from its vitality as a sociological phenomenon.

I would like to end this section with a brief discussion of the relationship between the political process on one hand and socio-cultural resurgence, solidarity-forging and ethnic-assertion on the other. All three of the latter have received an initial impetus from the imperatives of identity-politics; they have, also, over time, been sustained by this politics. Not only has politics demanded a coming together of adivasis on cultural and identity grounds; but political struggle has, in turn, radicalised the adivasi consciousness of culture and identity. True, politics has given a new lease of life to ethnicity; this, however, has been possible only because ethnicity, in its turn, has proved capable of sustaining political protest. These dynamics need to be grasped if we are to avoid an undue romanticization of subaltern forms of experience. It is not enough to know that adivasis, despite the heavy odds, have managed to keep their traditions alive; we must go on and ask the further question --- what has motivated them to do so ? In other words, what purpose have these tribal traditions, revived and

even reinvented, been made to serve?

CONTRA - ACCULTURATIVE PROCESSES : TRIBAL INFLUENCE AND HINDUS

Ajit K. Danda makes an useful distinction between three categories of populations : (i) the Scheduled Tribes; (ii) those ones described as tribes but who do not any more belong to the schedule; and (iii) communities pressing to be identified as tribes.[90] It is this third category which is of interest to us, for among them are some communities who were ever-eager to assert their non-tribe identity during the pre-independence days, but who have become very vocal in their claim for the status of Scheduled Tribe, apparently for the entitlement to certain benefits extended by the independent Indian state to this special category.

In Chotanagpur, the most prominent instance of such a people is offered by the Kurmis. In the late 1920s, a section of Kurmi leaders, in a bid to get a berth in the Hindu hierarchy, organised the Kurmi Kshatriya Mahasabha in Manbhum district, Bihar. With the proposed formation of East Bengal, the leaders of the Congress were intent on playing their Hindu card to outmanoeuvre the politics of the Muslim League. As such, they were ready to grant the Kurmis the status of Hindus, and since 1925, the pleaders in local courts of Manbhum started registering the religion of their Kurmi clients as Hinduism. But the problem was that the Congress leaders ended up designating the Kurmis as *jalchal* (touchable); their Kshatriya-hood was not recognised.

It was against this background that the Kurmis of Chotanagpur decided to lobby for tribal status, and thus began to deny their involvement in the Kshatriy movement. Though close to the Santals in tradition and culture, the Kurmis have been excluded from the Scheduled Tribes list. The 1931 census, which amended the list of aborigines, kept them out even as the Gond, Kamar, Nama- Shudra, Rajbansis, etc were included. Their determination to be registered as a tribe has seen them emphasise their dissimilarity with the Kurmis of Uttar Pradesh and north Bihar who are divided into sub-castes like Awadinha, Ghamalia, Joswar etc and who moreover have titular *gotras* (clans). The Kurmis of Chotanagpur claim to be undifferentiated and moreover, totemistic, their clans being Hindoar, Ghilbinda, Kesria, Katiar etc. The active participation of the Kurmis in the Jharkhand Movement is yet another dimension of the effort to emphasise and institutionalize their tribal status.[91]

The ambiguous social position of low Hindu castes striving for tribal status is depicted rather well by S.C.Sinha, Jyoti Sen and Sudhir Panchbali in a piece on the concept of 'diku' amongst the tribes of Chotanagpur.[92] They observe that it is the religious/ritual aspect of tribal life that determines social distance in the sense that groups which can share with adivasis their religion or ritual life as equals are considered their own people. It is thus significant that non-tribals are not allowed to participate in tribal rituals; they may have easy access to the tribal social polity and may even observe the same cycle of

festivals, but the latter is done separately and not together with the tribals. Thus, the Maghe and Sarhul festivals saw both the adivasis and the local Hindu castes of Khunti performing the same rituals --- the latter, however, were going about it in a 'socially sanctioned segregated manner',. Even as they came together in drinking and merry-making, a barrier arose once again over the question of mixed dancing. Sinha, Sen and Panchbali relates how, in a village in Singbhum during the Maghe festival, some Tanti, Tamaria and Gope boys told them that they felt handicapped in not being allowed to dance with tribal women.[93]

We have here a clear reversal of the Hinduization process, with low-caste groups seeming desirous of removing the stigma of social distance that the adivasis insist on maintaining. In Singhbum, one comes across originally Oriya - speaking castes such as Gopes, Lohars, Kumhars and Tantis who have adopted Ho as their mother tongue and have forgotten Oriya altogether. Their mode of living also seems to have conformed to the tribal pattern. It seems relevant, at this juncture, to make a point emphasised by K.S.Singh, that 'claiming tribal status is one thing, accepting tribal mores is another.' Singh, in fact, is reluctant to consider the efforts of privilege-seekers to embrace tribalism as a dimension of a genuine process of tribalization. As he points out, among communities such as the Kurmis of Chotanagpur, or even the Bhumij [who, having once claimed to be Kshatriyas, like the Kurmis, have discovered fresh merit in retribalization], participation in tribal festivals and worship at tribal shrines is still weak.[94] Honest participation alone

is a feature of genuine tribalization, and it is this process to which we shall now turn.

Historically speaking, some of the tribes were also the dominant community in certain parts of India, and as such, exercised political authority in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, laid down the law and set the example for emulation by immigrating communities. Though this occurred on a small scale, it was an interesting process and one that merits some attention, given the pre-eminence accorded to the Sanskritisation theme in the study of social change in India. K.S.Singh differentiates three dimensions of the tribalization process : the traditional aspect, comprising the acceptance of tribal mores, rituals and beliefs by incoming communities; and the relatively little known aspects, namely, tribal participation in Hindu coronation ceremonies and their role as custodians and priests at Hindu shrines.[95]

Historians have written about the Vratyas, a band of Aryans, who, following interaction with the non-Aryans, adopted the latter's way of life,. They neither performed *yagnyas* nor practised Vedic rites; rather, they accepted the local deities and their priesthood, participated in tribal festivals and borrowed many elements of tribal life-cycle ceremonies. Such de-Sanskritisation [the giving up of Sanskritic beliefs] has occurred whenever Brahmins and other high caste groups have emigrated to tribal majority areas --- in Bastar, for instance, the non-tribals have taken to eating meat, drinking alcohol etc., bidding goodbye to Sanskritic notions of purity and pollution.[96]

The tribalization of high-caste Hindus is a somewhat different process than the one entailing the assimilation of low caste groups into the cultural world of the tribe. Singh is of the opinion that the acceptance of tribal mores was easier for those in the middle and lower rungs of the caste hierarchy, given their background of 'animistic belief'. These low caste groups, in fact, mixed so well with the adivasis that they were not even considered 'aliens' after a stage. In some areas, they performed social and economic functions for the tribes and even rose in revolt with them when such revolts occurred. The Lohara of Chotanagpur are a good example, and a paradoxical one is provided by money-lenders who, despite their usurious practices got so involved with the tribals that two of them were among the leaders of the peasant uprising in Chotanagpur in 1921.[97]

An interesting aspect of the acceptance of tribal mores was the respect commanded by the tribal priests and medicine-man, as well as by tribal deities.[98] Even where the tribals themselves had been driven out of a village, their priests were maintained to propitiate the local gods who, it was thought, would otherwise become angry. The patronage of tribal deities was also a principle of state policy. In Orissa, for instance, the legitimacy enjoyed by the Garhjat rajas in the tribal hinterland, up to the early nineteenth century, depended on their subscribing to the cult of the tribal *'thakuranis'*, who usually had become the *'rashtradevatas'* or official deities of their states [eg. *Bhattarika* in Baramba and *Maninageshwari* in Ranpur]. It was the

patronage of these powerful goddesses which secured the kings the support of the tribes and thereby the safety of their states, so much so that, in the tribal areas at least, the Jagannath cult and its temples enjoyed only a minor importance.[99]

The second aspect of tribalization, namely, the association of tribes with Hindu state formation, became manifest in the high ritual status offered by the rulers to tribals, which in turn was symbolized by the tribals', participation in the coronation ceremony. It was the custom, in many parts of northern India, for a succeeding Rajput chief to have his brow marked by blood taken from the thumb or toe of a Bhil. The Khonds of Kalahandi (Orrisa) not only participated in the coronation ceremony but also insisted on the marriage of a Khond girl with the Raja as a necessary ritual. The Bhuiyas of Keonjhar took a direct hand in selecting the chief --- they also provided him with concubines from their own clan (from such unions sprang the Rajkuli Bhuiya) and selected the site for his fort. According to K.S. Singh, these rites of participation, symbolized, for the tribals, their partnership in the establishment and continuation of the state.[100]

The third dimension of the tribalization phenomenon relates to the tribal management of Hindu temples. The shrine of Shiva on the Panchmarhi hills was under the hereditary guardianship of the Korku chiefs, whereas the Jagannath temple of Orissa is associated with the Savaras, the deity sculpted in wood being regarded as a uniquely tribal innovation, Hindu deities, in contrast, being made of clay or stone. In

Chotanagpur today, there are plenty of temples where the local tribal priest, or the pahan, officiates. Tanginath, a temple on the border of Madhya Pradesh in Ranchi, is one such example and the temple of the mother goddess at Diuri another. K.S.Singh, describing the tribalization of the rituals at the Diuri temple, writes, 'As the first wave of Sanskritisation represented by the construction of this temple reduced, the tribals firmly took over the management of the temple services and sought to establish their identity with the temple. The raja of Tamar issued a land grant to a brahmin of Disipara to perform worship, but a good working arrangement seems to have been established between the brahmin and the pahan. The brahmin turns up every Thursday, [a day of special *puja* for the mother deity], and on the *mahaasthami* to conduct the puja as laid down in the scriptures. On other days and on the occasion of major festivals the pahan holds away. There are, thus, Sanskritic aspects too, of the worship at the temple'[101] The interesting point to note here is that most of the Hindu temples where tribal priests officiate belong either to *Shiva* or the mother goddess, both of whom are associated with *tantra*, magic and witchcraft which are widespread in tribal areas. Also it is striking that no 'pollution' attaches to tribals, and that their role as priests and custodians is accepted by the larger community. Brahmanical versions of the association of tribes with shrines, in fact, assign a central role to them.

TRIBAL RELIGION : REFUTING THE BRAHMANIZATION THESIS

Nirad C. Choudhuri writes, 'There has grown up a definite school of historians of Hinduism, especially at the popular level, which regards the fullgrown religion as the product of an interaction between the Indo-European religion of the coming Aryans and the religion of the aboriginals of the country.... I am convinced no such interaction ever took place..... no scrap of evidence exists to prove the existence of any kind of developed religion among the aboriginals of India.. Yet the myth of aboriginal influences still dog the history of Hinduism'.[102] K.S.Singh, critiquing this perspective, points to the mass of ethnographical evidence that establishes the interaction, at the grassroots level, of tribal and Hindu religions. It is the opinion of many anthropologists that tribal communities have contributed a great deal to local forms of Hinduism; these contributions moreover have been identified in terms of the primitive concepts of taboo, mana and soul substance, ancestor worship, etc. Singh is of the further opinion that many religious elements described as 'aboriginal' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly those belonging to the tantra traditions, have been absorbed into the 'great traditions', both Buddhist and Brahmanical. Not only have tantra works been written down in Sanskrit but tantra deities, icons, symbols and rituals have become part of the organised religions.[103]

There has however been a trend to regard such absorption not in

the light of simple give-and-take but as a dimension of a larger process of assimilation, or a 'swallowing up' of tribal religion by dominant ones. An influential formulation of this assimilationist perspective was provided by Sir Alfred Lyall, who argued that Brahmanism was essentially a proselytising religion particularly in relation to tribes: 'Among these aboriginal..... communities a continued social change is going on; they alter their modes of life to suit improved conditions of existence; their language decay, and they gradually go over the dominant Aryan rituals. They pass into Brahmanism by a natural upward transition, which leads them to adopt the religion of the castes immediately above them in the social scale of the composite population among which they settle down.'[104] Even J.H.Hutton, [an anthropologist who reconstructed tribal religion as an integrated whole, identified the parameters of its autonomy and the range of its linkages with Hinduism], was prone to describe this religion as 'the surplus material not yet built into the temple of Hinduism.'[105] Such perspectives, were, in fact, supported by census figures. In 1931, of the total number of tribals estimated at 24.6 million, 8.28 million, i.e., only about one-third, was returned as adhering to tribal religions. The majority were Hindus; there were also Christians and a growing number was made up of Buddhists and Muslims. Despite this, Singh argues that tribal religion are in many areas as vibrant as ever. The evidence of present-day tribal deities being Hinduized is not very strong. The Mundas' Singbonga, the Oraons' *Dharmesh* and the Gonds' *Burha Deo* remain as tribal as ever,

despite attempts to link them to gods of the Hindu pantheon.[106] Moreover, as I have mentioned in the section on socio-cultural resurgence, adivasis today have taken to reviving their religion with tremendous zest. Religious revivalism has, in fact, been made a basis of solidarity-generation and has thereby helped an assertive identity-politics.

More than Singh's arguments regarding the maintenance by adivasis of a distinct religious identity, it is those pertaining to the close links that obtain between tribal religions and local forms of Hinduism that appear truly persuasive. It ought to be noted here that there are 'little traditions' within Hinduism itself, i.e. Hindusim and its corpus of rituals in not exhausted by Brahmanical / Sanskritic elements alone. This has to be understood if we are to appreciate the commonalities that mark the religious world of adivasis and rural caste-groups. Both peasant and tribal communities, for instance, are steeped in black magic and witch craft. Thus Shiva and *Chandi* , both Hindu gods associated with tantra, are worshipped by the tribals and the entire corpus of Sabar Mantra [or incantations] are sometimes in the local dialect of Hindi rather than in the tribal languages. Christian missionaries who believed that witchcraft is alien to the tribal way of life discouraged its practice among converts. But as recounted earlier, the faith often went too deep to be shaken off lightly. The incidence of witch- killing, even today, continues to be the highest in tribal areas. Again, Shamanism is practised by both peasants and tribes; it is an

area where they have interacted in the rural setting to cure diseases, ward off evil and restore harmony disturbed by malevolent spirits [107]. Apart from the existence of such common spheres of religious interaction, the coexistence, side by side, of *shastric* [classical] and *lokachara* [folk] rituals may also be noted. For instance, Kali, at one point, is a folk deity worshipped by low-caste Hindus; at another, she is a Sanskritized deity worshipped by high castes. Thus, not only is there a clear recognition of the distinct roles of Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical rituals ; the latter, moreover, continue to survive despite the growing influence of high Hinduism mediated by local Brahmins. [108]

By way of concluding this section, I would like to observe that there is little doubt that Christianity and '*Sanatani*' [classical] Hinduism have, over the years, vied with each other for influence over the tribal areas. In the post-independence years, as Christianity has spread, the Hindu backlash has intensified. The Hanuman cult has become more and more visible, with his image installed in the most unlikely places; the Oraons have been depicted as the devotees of Ram ['Oraon' being derived from O-Ram] and so on. However, even as adivasis have succumbed to these proselytizing forces, there has occurred a simultaneous return to roots. Though the motivation behind this nativism has been largely political, the movement has nevertheless acquired an independent momentum. This trend of religious revivalism has been further strengthened by two factors: first, Christianity, in tribal areas, has begun to indigenize itself by borrowing from local

traditions , and second, even as efforts to impose 'Sanatani' forms of Hinduism continue, there has been a greater appreciation of the need to preserve the local ones.[109] This new sensitivity may, very well have been prompted by the need to widen the social base of the Jharkhand movement by making common cause between the adivasis and non-tribal poor, both Christians and Hindus. Whatever the imperative, this development has served to revitalise indigenous religion and to arrest its Sanskritisation and is, for that reason, noteworthy.

TRIBE VS NON TRIBE : AN EXAGGERATED DICHOTOMY

Here, I shall develop a theme already touched upon in the preceeding section, namely, the sharing, by tribe and low caste Hindu groups, mainly peasants, of a common social field. The rise of a peasant culture among the tribes of Chotanagpur in the second half of the nineteenth century may be attributed to the breakdown of the tribal agrarian system. The introduction of cash rent, the advent of a money-economy and the alienation of tribal land, together with the implementation of alien land laws, helped create individual proprietorship of land in the tribal areas.[110] With this, the agrarian conditions obtaining amongst the adivasis became similar to those obtaining among the Hindu peasantry and the stage was set for the technological and cultural exchanges that were to follow.

The role of peasant and artisan communities in the diffusion of technology has been more significant than that of Brahmins. It was by

imitating the agricultural practices of such peasant communities as the Bhoglas, Kurmis, Ahirs and Koeris that the Mundas of Chotanagpur learnt the use of the plough and was consequently transformed into a settled peasant community. The non-Mundari and non-Oraon nomenclature of most of the agricultural implements used by Chotanagpur tribals shows the extent of transfer of technology from the peasants to the tribes. The same may be said about the tools used in the manufacture of cloth and household wares.

In the realm of culture, there arose a link language called Sadani which served, and continues to serve, as the medium of communication between the adivasis and the peasants. This link language has been influenced by both tribal dialects and the Hindi that is spoken by the Chotanagpur peasantry. Also, a whole corpus of local customs *lokachara* and *desachara* - shared by both adivasis and peasants, have come into existence. One of the questions being raised in this regard is whether the application of *sindur* [vermillion] as a symbol of marriage, a custom that is widely prevalent among the Hindus of eastern India, is not essentially a Kolarian custom as practised by the Santals. Again, the emigrating peasantry is considered to have played a significant role in the spread of epic traditions and the Bhakti movement from the plains of the north to the hills of central India, known for its large tribal population. [111] K.S.Singh writes, 'The vitality of the epic traditions is attested by the fact that they, among other factors, inspired the rise of modern literature in many of the tribal languages.

The tribals have not simply borrowed from the common sub-puranic and epic traditions but they have also re-created a good deal of them, and these recreations together with their own rich folklores formed part of what has been called an aboriginal purana'.[112]

The revivalist-reformist movements that arose among the tribes are also said to have borrowed their notions of Hinduism not from high caste Hindus, but from peasant and artisan communities coming to tribal areas. Thus, the most articulate expression of the Bhakti cult that influenced the tribals was provided by the poetry of Bhima Bhoi, the Khond mystic poet and one of the foremost exponents of the Mahima cult in Orissa. Bhima Bhoi's teachings appealed to tribes and peasants alike and a recent study of the cult shows that about two- thirds of its followers belonged to the Chasa [farmers] and allied castes, about eight percent were tribals and four percent harijans. [113] It is indeed to such influences that the similarity between peasant and tribal religions may be attributed. The worship of ancestral gods, a vague belief in a Supreme Being, feasting, dancing and noisy processions as prominent features of ceremonial life, animal sacrifices and ritual offering, a belief in reincarnation, etc. are features that make the religious life of adivasis and peasants alike. [114]

The 'tribe-peasant continuum' is more a reality in Chotanagpur than anywhere else. P.K.Mishra, citing Virrotam, makes the point that Chotanagpur was invaded by the Mughals at least three time during the years 1585-1707, as a result of which the relative isolation of the

tribes was somewhat broken.[115] Moreover, the network of traditional weekly markets and the more recent phenomenon of industrialisation [and the attendant emigration of outsiders to the area] has ensured considerable interaction between adivasis on one hand and various Hindu castes on the other. The theory of the 'tribe-peasant continuum' is further consolidated if we consider the changing connotation of the derogatory term 'diku', originally used by the tribals of the area to designate non-tribals. As has been pointed out by Sinha, Sen and Panchbali, the term 'diku', operationally speaking, no longer includes the blacksmith, the barber, the Dom and other low castes. The meaning of the term has changed--- it is now used to describe 'exploiters' and as such the poor peasant and artisan communities, who share the unhappy economic situation of the tribals obviously do not quality.[116]

It ought to be clear from the above discussion that the academic usage of the dichotomous categories of tribe and non-tribe is somewhat misguided. Tribe-peasant and tribe-artisan interaction has been a historical reality and needs to be acknowledged as such. Also, the brahmanical model of Sanskritization that has come to dominate Indian academic discourse on social change [both inter-caste mobility as well as the change-over from tribe to caste] has overlooked the other models, such as kshatriya, vaishya and shudra. Neither for low-caste Hindus nor for tribals have brahmins been the only reference point—the dominant caste or social group in a region / sub-region has often set the pattern of emulation. An appreciation of this process world help us

understand the phenomenon of tribalization which involves the acceptance on the part of Hindus [of both high and low castes], of tribal mores and customs. The further point may be made that the so-called brahmanical elements of vegetarianism, teetotalism etc., the assertion of which was an essential part of the process of Sanskritization, were not only brahmanical values in that they related to non-brahmanical systems as well. Vegetarianism, according to Singh, was the food-practice of cattle-rearing communities which was transformed into a tenet of Vaishnanism.[117] Again, the Jains and the Buddhists were strict vegetarians. B.R. Ambedkar, in fact, traces the origin of vegetarianism in India to the attempts made by the brahmins to outdo the Buddhists in the practice of meat-abstention. [118]

Before concluding this section, I would like to make the point that tribals have not been as averse to even high Hinduism, leave alone folk forms, as is often assumed. Reform movements in tribal societies have seen them borrowing liberally from both Sanatani Hinduism and Christianity, and the invention of tribal tradition that has marked the political movement in Chotanagpur has seen an ingenious naturalization of borrowed Hindu traits. Oraons captures this process very well: 'The conflict between emulation and solidarity which is engendered by rank-concession has certain characteristic cultural consequences. These consequences may be understood as attempts to reduce the conflict by transforming emulated traits into somewhat distinctive ones or by claiming that they are actually indigenous. The

latter practice is especially effective among tribal and peasant peoples where history-mythology is so commonly used to validate contemporary practice ; all that is required is a demonstration that what is borrowed is in reality a forgotten indigenous custom.'[119] Even as the Jharkhand movement demands tribal socio-cultural solidarity, the political elites leading the movement are thoroughly decultured . As such, the only recourse, for such an elite, is to simultaneously preserve distinctiveness (and thereby solidarity) on one hand and express their own deep evaluations of what is true, beautiful and worthy of rank on the other. In other words, the only way out is to produce their own 'great tradition', which is likely to be very similar in fundamentals to that of the dominant society but will differ conspicuously in lesser matters retaining distinctive traditional practices. However even the imported fundamentals are naturalized, 'both to maintain distinctiveness and to penetrate successfully the non-elite'[120] There is an obvious element of pragmatism in such cultural practices, a pragmatism that a romantic view of adivasi consciousness will tend to ignore. On the contrary, I believe that it is a reality that cannot be overlooked, being a pointer to the fact that even as the subaltern consciousness rejects domination, it is not always averse to appropriating dominant ideologies for its own ends.[121]

SELECTIVE HINDUIZATION AND ASPIRITUAL CONVERSION

It is a known fact that the material aspects of culture change

faster than beliefs and rituals. In describing culture-change among the Mundas and Oraons, I have pointed out how they have been quick to accept innovation in the realms of dress, ornaments, housing etc.; change at the level of religion and social beliefs and practices, however, has been slow to come. Even when it comes, such change is often superficial; as such, adivasis in trying circumstances have been known to revert back to their original customs. The belief in witchcraft and in the power of spirits, for instance, has proved to be too deep-rooted for education or Christianity to have any effect. S. Bosu Mullick, commenting on the accommodative history of Jharkhandi tribals, writes, 'only those alien elements are accommodated which are compatible with the central value system of their societies...Although incompatible elements are also admitted in a situation of compromise, they always remain superficial in nature and are readily rejected during a phase of conflict...Only when an indigenous people lose permanently the strength to reorganize themselves for a phase of conflict do they become the victim of cultural assimilation. The parallel history of rejection, on the other hand, signifies the inherent urge of the people to maintain their social identity'. [122]

Hinduization is not always complete, in that the adoption of Hindu traits does not necessarily imply their internalization. Orans thus relates how some Santals have learned the rank value of vegetarianism, but have not internalised the appropriate feeling of repugnance towards beef-eating. As such, they continue to eat beef but

do it on the sly, since they want to be known as abstainers.[123] The case is similar as regards the drinking of rice-beer, dancing at the akhra, etc. Bosu Mullick has described as 'aspiritual conversion' and 'tactical proselytization' the processes whereby adivasis in the nineteenth century embraced Hinduism and Christianity with a view to gain allies in their struggle for their economic rights. The early converts to Christianity accepted the new faith on the basis of the promise made by Christian missionaries to restore to them their lost land. Thus, the Sardari agitation was launched by Christian converts whereby they sought, with the active support of missionaries, to recover their land from the native zamindars. Whereas the Christian converts among the tribals aimed at getting rid of the native aliens, or 'dikus', with the help of the British [the latter acting through the missions], the Hinduized tribals compromised with the native elements of the earlier state system with a view to resist the British. In both cases, the adivasis were used as pawns, but the fact remains that it was with their own interest in mind that they embraced Hinduism and Christianity. However, the situation changed as interaction with these alien religions gave rise to a new level of reformist tribal consciousness and the adivasis became aware of the need to reconstruct the moral and cultural basis of their society. Initially, therefore, conversion took place on tactical grounds; later, however, there occurred a meaningful interaction between Hinduism and Christianity on one hand and tribal religions, on the other.[124]

And, finally, it is a fact that the efforts of Hindu organisations like the Arya Samaj to portray India as culturally homogeneous has led to census irregularities. Adivasis have been pressurized by local Hindu authorities to register themselves as Hindus. In other cases, ignorance has played a major role in projecting skewed returns. Martin Orans, citing Culshaw, writes how some Santals were fooled into returning themselves as Hindus. The census-takers, speaking in Oriya, asked, 'What is your religion [dhorom] ?' Many of the Santals did not understand the word, and when it was explained to them, answered 'Santal religion'. The census taker then said 'That is your caste [*jati*], not your religion. Are you Hindu, Muslim, Christian or what?' By this means, the census takers often obtained the desired results.[125] It becomes evident from this that the actual extent of Hinduization was much less than what it appeared to be from the reading of the census.

By way of concluding, it may be said that the danger of tribal cultures being 'swallowed up' by a dominant Hindu ethos is not as big as might be ordinarily supposed. This is, indeed, what the latter half of this second chapter tries to establish. Not only have the adivasis of Chotanagpur revived their traditions, they have also recaptured, in the process, their dwindling solidarity and it is very much in their political interest to keep both alive. Moreover, we ought to take note of all those instances, both historical and present, where tribal mores and rituals have been imbibed by caste-populations, countering, albeit on a small

scale, the much-hyped process of Sanskritization. Alongside, we need to acknowledge the commonalities that have marked the socio-cultural life of Hindu peasants and tribes, rendering irrelevant the ahistorical distinction between 'tribe' and 'caste'. Finally, it must be recognised that Hinduization, for some adivasis, has not gone too deep, being resorted to, in the first place, for tactical reasons. Moreover, only those traits have been accepted as would fit into the tribal world view without wreaking any major havoc.

Having said this, the observation might be made that the social absorption that has so far been resisted by the Chotanagpur tribals would have become a definite reality had it not been for the opening, before them, of the political rank-path in 1947. Otherwise, Sanskritization, or mobility through cultural eumulation would have become the dominant norm. And given the impossibility of attaining this goal without any concomitant economic/political power to provide support, adivasis, it may be predicted, would have adopted the economic rank path *en masse*. Taking into account the centrifugal tendencies of the economic way to mobility, tribal solidarity would have been severely affected. It is, therefore, to the democratic political process instituted by the Constitution that the present reality of a thriving tribal culture might be attributed. It is indeed, this connection between culture-maintainance and the political process that the next chapter aims to probe.

NOTES

1. Martin Orans, ***The Santals: A Tribe In Search of a Great Tradition,*** Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1965, p. 50.

2. Ibid., pp. 52-53.

3. Ibid., p. 55.

4. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

5. Ibid., p. 55 .

6. Ibid., p. 54.

7. J.D Mehra, 'The World-View of Indian Tribes' in S.C.Dube (ed.) ***Tribal Heritage of India : Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction,*** Indian Institute of Advanced study, Simla, 1977, pp. 71-72 .

8. Sachidananda, ***Culture Change in Tribal Bihar : Munda and Oraon,*** Bookland Private Limited, Calcutta, 1964, p. 65.

9. Ibid., pp. 15-17.

10. Ibid., p.11.

11. Martin Orans, op. cit. 1. p. 129. The terms 'rank concession' and 'economic' and 'political rank paths' require explanation. 'Rank concession' is defined by Orans as the conceding of rank to a dominant surrounding society and by implication, the acceptance of social inferiority. Such acceptance generally produces a tendency towards emulation, and such emulation is not only an effect of rank concession, but evidence for it as well. By 'rank paths', Orans mean avenues of mobility, and he holds that while some rank paths [such as the political] are supportive of solidarity, some others [such as the economic] undermine it.

12. Ibid., p. 133.

13. Ibid., pp. 82-83 .

14. See Max Weber, ***The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,***George Allen and Unwin, London, 1930; and Manning Nash, 'Machine Age Maya' ***The American Anthropologist,*** Memoir No.87, April 1958, cited in Martin Orans, ibid., p. 57.

15. Martin Orans, op. cit. 1. pp. 84-85.

16. Ibid., pp. 79-80.

17. Ibid., pp. 58, 63 & 71.

18. Susana B.C.Devalle, ***Discourses of Ethnicity : Culture and Protest in Jharkhand,*** Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 160-61.

19. Martin Orans, op. cit. 1. Introduction, pp. XII-XIII.

20. Ibid., p. 101.

21. David Hardiman, ***The Coming of the Devi : Adivasi Assertion in Western India,*** Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987, cited in Sajal Basu, ***Jharkhand movement : Ethnicity and Culture of*** **Silence**, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1994, p. 12.

22. Martin Orans, op. cit.1. pp. 123-25.

23. Ibid., pp. 125-26.

24. Ibid., p. 126.

25. Ibid., p. 127.

26. Amita Baviskar, ***In The Belly of the River : Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley,*** Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997, p. 85.

27. Ibid., p. 86.

28. Ibid., p. 86.

29. G. S. Ghurye, ***The Scheduled Tribes,*** Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1963, cited in Amita Baviskar, ibid, p.86.

30. Andre Beteille, The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India, ***European Journal of Sociology,*** XXVII, 1986, p. 317, cited in Amita Baviskar, op.cit. 26., pp. 86-87.

31. Sachidananda, op. cit. 8,p. 6.

32. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

33. Ibid., pp. 11-15.

34. Ibid., p. 16.

35. ibid., pp. 17-19.

36. A revitalization movement has been defined by Wallace as "a deliberate organised conscious effort by numbers of a society to construct a more satisfying culture". Mclaughlin identifies two main types of social movements *'revolutionary'* and *'reform'* movements. Both, according to him, "seek to influence social order. But whereas revolutionary movements attack existing norms and attempt to substitute new ones, the reform movements accept existing norms and use them to critcize the social defects they oppose". He uses both these types as a continuum and places revitalization movements towards the revolntionary end of the spectrum. [Barry Mclaughlin (ed.) Studies in Social Movements, Free Press, New York, 1969, ciled in Gopal Bhardwaj, 'Socio-political movements among the Tribes of India' in S. C. Dube (ed.) ***Tribal Heritage of India : Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction*** *pp. 143-44.*

37. Sachidananda, op. cit. 8 , pp. 91-95.

38. Ibid., pp. 87-88.

39. ibid., p. 99.

40. K. S. Singh, ***Tribal Society in India,*** Manohar New Delhi, 1985, pp. 158-59.

41. Sachidananda, op. cit. 8, pp. 96-99.

42. K. S. Singh, op. cit. 40, pp. 132-33.

43. For a brief history of socio-religious movements among the Hoas, see Matthew Areecparampil, 'Socio-Cultural and Raligious Movements among the Hoa Tribals' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1993.

44. Sachidananda, op. cit. 8, pp. 37-38.

45. Ibid., p. 43.

46. Ibid., p.46-48.

47. Ibid., pp. 81-83.

48. Ibid., p. 81.

49. Ibid., p. 78.

50. S. C. Roy, ***The Oraon of Chotanagpur : Their History, Economic Life and Social Organisation,*** City Bar Library, Ranchi, 1915, pp. 3-7, cited in K. N. Sahay, **'Tribal Self Image and Identity' in S. C. Dube (ed.)** ***Tribal Heritage of India : Ethnicity Identity and Interaction***, pp.12-13.

51. K. N. Sahay, 'Tribal Self Image and Identity' in S. C. Dube (ed.) ***Tribal Heritage of India***, pp. 12-13.

52. S. C. Roy, op. cit.50., pp. 14-17.

53. L. R. Forbes, cited in N. Prasad etal. (ed.) ***Land and People of Tribal Bihar*** , Bihar Tribal Research institute, Ranchi, 1961, pp. 182-83, citeo in K. N. Sahay, op. cit, 51, pp. 35-36.

54. Susana B. C. Devalle, op. cit, 18., pp. 163-64.

55. K. N. Sahay, op, cit.51, p.54-55.

56. Ibid.,p. 56.

57. Sachidananda, op. cit. 8, p. 109.

58. Ibid., pp. 110-11.

59. Ibid., p. 107.

60. Ibid., pp. 7-10.

61. Ibid., pp. 11-17.
62. Ibid., pp.19-20.

63. Ibid., pp. 72-73.

64. Ibid., pp. 82-83.

65. Ibid., pp. 84-85.

66. Susana B.C. Devalle, op. cit, 18, pp. 157-158.

67. Ibid., p. 155.

68. Ibid., p. 154.

69. J. D. Mehra, op. cit.7., p. 71.

70. N. Datta Majumdar, ***The Santal : A study in Culture Change,*** Department of Anthropology, Government of India, Memoir No. 2, 1955, citeo in Sachidananda, 'The Santal Odyssey : A Quest for Identity,' ***Man in India,*** vol.71 : No.1, 1991, p. 133.

71. The concept of 'Sanskritization' has been used by M. N. Srinivas to designate the process of change either in a tribal community or in a lower Hindu caste towards approximating the beliefs, rituals and modes of behaviour of the higher Hindu castes, particularly Brahmins.

72. Sachidananda, 'The Santal Odyssey : A Quest for Identity', p.133.

73. M. K. Gautam, ***'In Search of an Identity : A Case of the Santal of Northern India,*** 'Leiden, 1997, cited in Sachidananda, 'The Santal Odyssey: A Quest for Identity,' p. 133.

74. Sachidananda, op. cit. 72, p.134.

75. P.K. Mishra, 'Patterns of inter-Tribal Relation' in S.C .Dube (ed.) ***Tribal Heritage of India***, p. 86.

76. Martin Orans, op.cit.1, p.105.

77. Ibid., p.105.

78. Sajal Basu, ***Jharkhand Movement :Ethnicity and Culture of Silence,*** Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1994, pp. 20-22.

79. Martin Orans, op. cit. 1. pp. 114-15.

80. Ibid., p. 114.

81. Census of India, Vol. V., Bihar, Part II, A tables, p. 309, cited in Martin Orans, ibid., p. 113.

82. For a description of the Sarna Movement, see Martin Orans, op. cit. 1, p. 113.

83 Ibid., pp. 108-9.

84. Sachidananda, 'Emergence and Growth of Tribal Ethnicity in Chotanagpur' in A. M. Shah, B. S. Baviskar and EA. Ramaswary (ed.) ***Social Structure and change : Development and Ethnicity***, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 243.

85. Sidhu and Kanv were the two brothers who emerged as the leaders of the Santal Hul. The Hul of 1855 directed its fury against the *Mahajans* (money leaders) the *amla* (petty officials) and the *saheb* the British), all of whom were engaged in expoloiting the Santals. Though Damin-Eko was the centre of the Hul, it soon spread all over the Santal belt, comprising Bhagalpur, Birbhum and Giridih. Following the suppression of the Hul, the Santal Parganas was constituted as a separate non-regulation district and kept ont of the application of general laws.

86. Sachidananda, op. cit. 84, p. 244.

87. Martin Orans, op. cit. I, p. 106.

88. Ibid., pp.106-7.

89. Ibid., pp. 107-8.

90. Ajit K. Danda, ***Ethnicity in India***, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1991, p. 17.

91. Sajal Basu, op. cit. 78., pp. 23-26 & 94.

92. S.C. Sinha, Jyoti Sen and Sudhir Panchbali, 'The Concept of Diku among the Tribes of Chotanagpur', **Man in India**, vol. 49 : No. 2, 1989, pp. 128-9.

93. Ibid., p. 129.

94. K.S. Singh, op. cit. 40., p. 102.

95. Ibid., p. 87.

96. Ibid., 87-88.

97. Ibid., pp. 88-89.

98. Ibid., p. 89.

99. Hermann Kulke, 'Kshatriyazation and Social Change : A Study in an Orissa Setting' in S. Devadas Pillai (ed.) ***Aspects of Changing India : Studies in Honour of professor G. S.***

Ghurye, cited in K.S. Singh, ibid, pp. 90-91.

100. K. S. Singh, op. cit. 40, pp. 91-95.

101. Ibid., pp. 98-99.

102. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, ***Hinduism : A Religion to Live,*** B. I. Publications, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 96-98, cited in K.S. Singh, 'Hinduism and Tribal Religion : An Anthropological Perspective' ***Man in India,*** vol. 73 : No. 1, 1993, p. 2.

103. K. S. Singh, 'Hinduism and Tribal Religion An Anthropological Perspective,' p. 3.

104. Sir Alfred Lyall, ' Asiatic Studies: Religion and Social' vol. 1, Cosmo Publishers, New Delhi, p. 135, cited in K.S. Singh, ibid., p. 4.

105. J. H. Hutton, 'Census of India 1931', vol. 1, p. 399, cited in K. S. Singh, op. cit. 103, p.5.

106. K. S. Singh, op. cit. 103, p. 3.

107. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

108. Ibid., p. 10.

109. Ibid., p. 13

110. K.S. Singh, op. cit. 40, pp. 127-8.

111. Ibid., pp. 63-66.

112. Ibid., p. 66.

113. Ibid., p. 67.

114. Surajit Sinha, ' Tribe- Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continua in Central India' *Man in India,* vol. 45: No. 2, 1965, cited in K.S.Singh, ibid., p. 67.

115. B. Virrotam, ***The Nagabansis and Cheros,*** Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1969, p. 197, cited in P. K. Mishra, op. cit. 75., p. 97.

116. See S. C. Sinha, Jyoti Sen and Sudhir Panchbali, op. cit. 92.

117. K. S. Singh, op. cit. 40., pp. 61-62.

118. B. R. Ambedkar, ***The Untouchables***, p. 117, cited ibid, p. 62.

119. Martin Orans, op. cit. 1, p. 130.

120. *Ibid., p. 132.*

121. *Amita Baviskar, op. cit. 26., p. 87.*

122. S. Bosu Mullick, C.K. 'The Jharkhand Movement : A Historical' in Mrinal Miri (ed.) ***Continuity and Change in Tribal Society***, p.440.

123. Martin Orans, op. cit. 1, p.52.

124. S. Bosu Mullick, op. cit., 122, pp.451-52.

125. W.J.Culshaw, ***Tribal Heritage***, Lutterworth Press, London, 1949, p.15. cited in Martin Orans, op. cit. 1. pp.89-90.

CHAPTER III

The Jharkhand Movement : Exploring the Culture - Politics Linkage

THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT : EXPLORING THE CULTURE - POLITICS LINKAGE

I have already made the point that the vibrant cultural movement that one sees in Jharkhand today, is, to a considerable extent, politically motivated. In other words, culture in Jharkhand, is being made to serve a political purpose, and has emerged, after extensive honing, as an effective political tool. It is this culture-politics linkage in its many dimensions, that this chapter seeks to examine. *Not only has the cultural movement helped revive solidarity by emphasizing distinctive traits of the tribal community; culture has also emerged as the mode in which protest against, and resistance to the state often manifests itself.* By serving such a dissident function, culture has forged its own critique of power, part of which is spoken in the face of the dominant, and part of it behind their back. Thus even as culture has informed open rebellion, so it has also informed a backstage discourse of resistance, which has folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, myths and rumours as its myriad vehicles. This dissident sub culture becomes a fascinating subject of study, being a pointer to the fact that *there are many levels at which politics plays itself out, including some where it ceases to look like politics at all.* This last must be kept in mind, especially in those contexts where a political movement has, by

and large, failed to attain its objectives, and may be perceived by some as dying out, as well as in those where the covert and low profile (but nevertheless consistent) nature of political activity may fool some into deeming such activity non existent. Also, as said before, the instrumental nature of cultural revivalism should not blind us to the fact that, despite the political imperative, such efforts in the realm of culture are often self-rewarding, lending thereby, to the entire exercise of cultural regeneration, a certain autonomy from politics.

After probing the manner in which politics feeds culture and culture sustains politics, I propose to explore, in brief, the mutual support that ethnicity and politics lend each other. Ethnicity, in independent India, has emerged as an important mobilizational plank - it is by stressing their ethnic identity that marginalized communities like tribes have succeeded in propelling themselves onto the stage of mainstream national politics. Again, politics, in its turn, has reinforced ethnicity -- ethnic groups who owe their emergence as political actors and pressure groups to the politicization of primordialities have every reason to treat that primordiality as sacrosanct and bolster it whenever the opportunity presents itself. It would thus appear that, contrary to popular perception, ethnicity has helped rather than sabotaged the process of nation building by encouraging hitherto isolated groups to take part in the democratic political process. It needs, however, to be kept in mind, that ethnicity is a two-pronged weapon. In the event of

any ethnic community nurturing a sense of neglect, or a sense of having been overlooked by the state in whatever manner (say, in the distribution of benefits accruing from development), there is the very real possibility of the community resorting to parochialism, whereby the boundaries of loyalty and identification are drawn more and more tight.

In the last part of the chapter, I shall be discussing the Jharkhand Movement per se, with a focus on its problems and particularly its contradictions. The conservative role of the tribal elite that has provided leadership to the movement, and its attempts to brush the class issue under the carpet warrants close attention. Moreover, the manner in which different sections have sought to hijack the movement for their own purposes and the desperate attempt by intellectuals to impose a false theoretical harmony on what is, in reality, a conflict- and paradox-ridden state of affairs will be examined. My purpose, in so doing, would be to expose the limitations of a romanticizing sociology that chooses to ignore a discrete, fragmented and theoretically cluttered reality.

I

EXAMINING THE CULTURE - SOLIDARITY LINK

Politics, at any time, requires in-group solidarity; identity politics,

in fact, makes such solidarity its very premise. As such, anything that bolsters solidarity aids politics and it is thus that the link between culture, with its great unifying potential and politics, is forged. Here, it needs to be mentioned that it is not merely the capacity of culture to foster unity within the community, but also to mark that community as distinct from other communities that make it such a valuable aid to identity politics. In other words, culture bolsters both 'internal' and 'external' solidarity: the former, by setting up certain civilizational themes [if such themes are not already in existence] around which the entire community can be successfully made to rally, and the latter, by highlighting,in particular, those elements of a society's ritual and customary worlds which are singularly peculiar and unique to that society. *Moreover, the task of building solidarity may be fulfilled not just by bringing into light previously existent but largely forgotten identificatory schemes and boundary-markers, but also by inventing fresh ones. The observation might, therefore, be made following Hobsbawm, that traditions that appear old may in fact, have been recently invented,*[1] the culture-makers, however,being very careful to graft onto the invented traditions an ancient look. The need for this last arises because the appearance of a practice as continuous with a community's historical past enables that practice to be quickly accepted as legitimate by that community. Thus, following the release of Birsa Munda from jail, the Birsaites sought to reaffirm their cultural identity

with visits to the temples of Chutia and Jagarnathpur, and the fort at Naw Rattan. The belief was propagated that these landmarks had been built by the Mundas, who were later forced by the dikus to abandon them. The Birsaites also looked for a copper plate in Chutia where Munda land rights were said to be recorded. There was, however, no historical basis to these claims, and the grounds for identifying these places as part of the Munda heritage were fictitious.[2]

One further point that I shall make with regard to the solidarity-forging capacity of culture, is that culture is a very flexible instrument; *after having had forged unity around a certain identity via the generation of the appropriate cultural symbols and boundary markers, it can, if politics so demands dissolve that identity into a larger identity and work towards the forging of unity at this new, higher level. Similarly, culture can serve parochialism just as well, by rearranging its symbols so as to reinforce increasingly exclusive identities*. Thus, we have in Jharkhand the simultaneous forging of Santal, (or alternatively Munda, Oraon etc.) pan-tribal and pan-regional identities with politics dictating which of these should supersede the others at a particular historical moment.

Having already described, in the preceding chapter, the culmination of the politics-culture link in a movement towards socio-cultural resurgence, there is little point in repeating that argument again. But there are certain tensions within this movement

that I would like to highlight, first, because they reflect the cultural dilemma in which a decultured tribal elite, now faced with the need to strengthen tribal solidarity, finds itself, and second, because these tensions have in part determined the kind of culture that has come into being in Jharkhand in recent years.

The Need for Solidarity vs The Urge to Emulate : The Emulation-Solidarity Conflict

The Constitution, by providing for the reservation of seats in Parliament and state legislatures, for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, has made available to these communities a new avenue of social mobility, namely, politics. With the opening of the 'political rank path' after 1947, politics has replaced education and Hinduization as the most effective means of attaining rank, status and power. However, just as education and Hinduization proved to be successful rank paths only when the aspirants possessed economic and political clout, so politics too has enabled only the relatively educated to rise up the social ladder. In other words, the opportunities afforded by democratic politics have been seized by a minuscule section of the tribal populace, and it is not entirely a coincidence that this section is not only highly educated but also highly decultured, i.e., removed from the organic traditions of their root society.

It is the members of this tribal elite who fill most of the elective offices in Jharkhand, and hold the coveted positions within Jharkhand

political parties. Those in high positions are invariably acculturated, whereas the lower officials and unpaid volunteers are drawn from the subaltern sectors of the community. Taking into account the economic and prestige awards that stem from political action, it is, without doubt, this elite which has the most to gain, particularly in tangible terms, from tribal politics. The situation, however, is not as smooth as it appears, because, as I said at the very outset, politics demands solidarity, and tribal politics demands tribal solidarity. As distinguished from the economic rank path, which makes for individual mobility, rank improvement via politics makes for group-mobility, and itself succeeds only against the background of group-solidarity.[3] In itself, this is not a problematic requirement, and given the stake that the elite has in a thriving identity politics, it is only to be expected that they will make a sincere effort to foster the wanted solidarity. And they do. *But it does not do to forget that the elite, as a set, is completely alienated from traditional tribal values; acculturation, in their case, is not skin-deep, but amounts to a deep internalization of the ways of the dominant society. Given this situation, the political need for tribal self-affirmation cannot but generate some degree of discomfort amongst the elite.* It is to this emulation-solidarity conflict' as Orans calls it,[4] that we now turn.

It is a fact that many of the leaders of the movement for social

solidarity and cultural separatism in Jharkhand had been following the assimilationist path prior to the opening of the political one. Historical evidence suggests that acculturation was quite pronounced amongst certain tribes of Chotanagpur, and Martin Orans, tracing the history of cultural emulation and rank concession among the Santals, writes, 'The history of Santal-Hindu relations has provided the Santal with sufficient reason to hate and fear, as well as admire their Hindu neighbours. The earliest historical information indicates not only that rank concession must have begun considerably before British control, but that it was particularly pronounced among the traditional Santal elite. There is, for example, the myth of the Kisku king who became a Hindu... and the myth of Santal society constructed as a set of functionally specialized castes with each clan occupying a caste position'.[5] Culturally speaking, the entire period stretching from pre-colonial times to the onset of political democracy was one of increasing Hinduization. Except for the brief periods of rebellion, the Santals pursued rank almost exclusively via economic mobility and emulation.[6]

Even if we accept the proposition that all societies manifest, at all times, some pressures on behalf of solidarity, it is difficult to deny that such pressures are likely to be less when the rank path adopted is economic than when it is political. It is when a society switches from the economic to the political rank-path that the solidarity pressure

mounts, and with it, the emulation - solidarity conflict mounts as well.[7] For even as the new political option appears attractive, there are those who prefer the path of emulation. However, as the political option cannot be exercised until and unless the community as a whole rallies behind it, the sections favouring emulation have to be won over. But the tendency towards emulation does not disappear altogether -- it remains under the surface, rendering the societal attempt at political mobility far from smooth. And the tribal elite finds itself in the most ambiguous of situations -- its members are sure of assuming office in the event of political victory, but the tendency to emulate is also the strongest among them. They are clearly the bearers of exogenous cultural values; their politics, on the other hand, requires them to extol the indigenous values of tribal life.

CULTURAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE EMULATION - SOLIDARITY CONFLICT

The contradictions discussed above are bound to manifest themselves, sooner or later, in the realm of culture, for it is here that the real battle between acculturation and retribalization is waged. And they do, in the form of the ingenious attempt to forge a 'great tradition', which, though indigenous in content, is not so in form. In its fundamental orientation, this great tribal tradition forged by the Jharkhand elite is very similar to Hindu tradition. Note, for instance, the emphasis placed on the written form of literature, as opposed to the

indigenous oral form, and the further composition of epics and plays, which, even as they glorify folk tribal heroes and emphasize the need for a reawakening of tribal consciousness, borrow the thematic structure of the Ramayana and Mahabharata.[8] This, in fact, is a very good instance of configurational borrowing, where borrowed alien configurations are filled in with familiar indigenous content. Martin Orans has, in fact, argued that Santali cultural dynamics effectively counters of argument made by Ruth Benedict in her book ***Patterns of Culture***. Benedict has argued that what is borrowed by a culture either 'fits' its own configurations or is likely to be modified so as to fit.[9] Orans' viewpoint, however, is that, were this the whole story, 'either there would be no change in cultural configurations at all or all such change would be essentially endogenous. Santal absorption of Hindu orientations and even of specific antipathies makes it clear that even configurations can be borrowed'. As such, 'cultures may change without remaining really the same'.[10]

It is, indeed, only by accepting Orans' argument that we can make sense of the acceptance, by adivasis, of new values. For change in the realm of values is indeed fundamental, or 'configurational' change. Moreover, the devaluation of traditional forms of enjoyment, such as dancing, drinking etc, the stressing of the alien values of hard work and achievement, and the dissemination of these messages through the indigenous media of song and theatre would seem to lend

credence to Herkovits' view that the new values accepted by a society often change the cultural significance of old forms.[11]

Configurational change apart, the extraneous values of the elite are also reflected in their conception of culture and the resulting distortion. Susana B.C. Devalle quotes from an interview given to her by a Jharkhand Party leader : 'I organized a cultural society for the Mundas with young artists... Through this organization I wanted to say that all this culture can and should be *preserved* also in an urban setting. In this new setting we try to *present it to a new audience.* In the akhra one dances to *enjoy, not to perform*. Therefore, for the dances [in a performance] I thought of a uniform [trousers for the boys and saris with blouses for the girls] *so they will not be ashamed.* Otherwise, they would be *naked*...[12] [Italics original] As Devalle goes on to say, for the adivasi peasants who have created these dances, dance is never a performance, but a collective activity where men and women, young and old, come together to enjoy themselves, acknowledging only the authority of the pahan and the village elders. Devalle records how this point was made firmly by adivasis in the countryside': 'We dance for ourselves. Nobody can ask us to dance for them and then sit and watch us'. The dancers, moreover, are certainly not naked, but are described as such by the elite, many of whom have acquired puritanical values, filtered through the missions and have consequently come to consider the western mode of dress as the hall mark of civilization.[13]

Yet another interesting consequence of the elite's attempt to dignify original tribal tradition has been the *emergence of culture as a commodity*. Thus, dances are planned for commercial shows and are sold to the non-tribal public in the name of 'folklorical ballets'-- yet another attempt to ape the forms of mainstream culture.[14] The point to be noted here is that, it is in a highly idealized and romanticized mode that the elite tends to present tribal tradition to the world at large, attempting at the same time to give to it a much-needed veneer of sophistication. The result is so unreal and bizarre, not to mention artificial, that one cannot help regarding these antics as the 'invention' of tribal tradition, rather than simple exposition.

Finally, the elite has also introduced in Jharkhand a conception of morality alien to adivasi society. This moralizing has, on the whole, revolved around the issues of 'pleasure' and the situation of women. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha [JMM] approached the issue of liquor consumption with the powerful slogan '*Kalali Toro, Jharkhand Chhoro*' [Smash the liquor shops, Quit Jharkhand]. Liquor consumption in Jharkhand had indeed become a fostered vice, reinforcing indebtedness as adivasis spent their meagre earnings in liquor shops. Thus the anti-consumerism campaign led to the saving of scarce resources and the avoidance of heavy debts, but it also ignored the fact that, for the adivasis, liquor is associated with social [communal drinking] and religious [propitiation of deities] occasions. The Morcha also took to

discouraging polygamy and the practice of divorce, and disallowed young tribal women from working as maids for dikus as this was regarded as being conducive to concubinage and prostitution. These efforts, however, introduced attitudes that were completely alien to the adivasi perception of women's status in society. Earlier, it was not deemed immoral for a woman to work outside the house, nor were women blamed and stigmatized after an incident of rape. The Morcha, as such ignored 'a lived ethnic style and its supporting past' as expressed in religious and social celebrations, forms of marriage and divorce etc, in its urge to 'purify' society and create a 'new man'. In this endeavour, the Morcha was helped by the culture pundits, who invented some useful traditions. The JMM activists, for instance, went around proclaiming that monogamy and restricted divorce were very much a part of organic adivasi custom.[15]

CULTURE AS A MEDIUM OF PROTEST

So far, we have been discussing how culture aids politics by forging solidarity-bonds, and how obstacles in the path of societal solidarity are mirrored in the realm of culture and are even sought to be removed through cultural innovations. In this section, we shall be dwelling on the role of culture in shaping resistance, whether this be via the making of myths that glorify a radical subaltern consciousness, or the forging of heroes and cult-figures out of the real-life material of tribal political leaders of past and present. A study of cultural

resistance would also be incomplete without taking into consideration the development of a rich oppositional imagination which manifests itself through story-telling, and the making of folk tales, proverbs, jokes, gestures etc. It is further to be noted that even as this oppositional culture openly declares itself in the face of power, some of it almost always remains clandestine, i.e. confined to the ritual backyard of the adivasi world.

The Tradition of Protest in Jharkhand

It would be appropriate at this point to distinguish between two dimensions of subaltern oppositional political action, namely, a *'tradition of protest'* and a *'culture of protest'*. Devalle, who makes the distinction, writes that a tradition of protest presupposes that protest is not confined to the isolated events when actors openly rebel. As such, it 'refers to a continuous, not just occasional, stance of opposition to the established power when this power is experienced as oppressive... More importantly, it reveals the long historical duration of... struggle, a duration which enables the formation of a pool of cumulative experience from which new political actions may develop' A culture of protest, on the other hand, 'refers to the existence of a consciousness of opposition and resistance -- the ideas that back political actions, their emergence and development, the means to channel protest in daily life and at the special times of overt rebellion can be found in this culture'.[16]

It is eminently clear that Jharkhand boasts of both a tradition

and a culture of protest. Focussing, for the time being, on the former, it may be said that the initial development of a political consciousness among the adivasis of the area may be traced to the colonial period, and it is during this time that they unmistakably appeared as actors on the stage of history. Colonial intervention made the forging of the *'we-they' opposition*, so essential to the development of radical consciousness, a much more complex affair than before. The 'other' was no longer the 'diku' in isolation, but a plural 'other' comprising a combination of powerholders; landlords and money lenders, the colonial government, its representatives and allies. It was against this composite 'they' that the adivasi peasantry launched its' protest on the *double bases of class and ethnic solidarity*.[17] For this protest was not only an agrarian struggle, striving for economic redress, but also a *defence of the historical identity of the community*.[18] Colonialism had not only added new socio-economic inequalities to previously existing ones, but the culture introduced by the colonisers through the Christian missions had also come to pose a serious threat to the fabric of indigenous society. Moreover, independent India, with its federal structure and pluralist politics added a new dimension to the 'we-they' opposition; solidarity, now began to be expressed in regional and communitarian terms. The reorganization of states, no doubt, also contributed to this development.

To return to the colonial era, there is very little historical evidence to suggest a subjugated and passive adivasi peasantry. True,

the adivasis did not always resort to violence-- they primarily relied on the means of passive resistance, non-cooperation and, failing this, legal action. Thus, whole communities abandoned cultivation and stopped production, and organized themselves for non-cooperation. The Sardar Movement of 1855 saw the adivasis adopt legal channels; memoranda, petitions and documents, to make their grievances known. It was only when such tactics proved unsuccessful that they resorted to armed struggle. This was clearly the case in the Santal movement of 1855, where the legalist approach persisted even at the time of selecting targets and announcing attacks. If such movements turned excessively violent in the end, as they did, it was because every other means had been tried, but to no avail.[19]

Given the persistent nature of political protest engaged in by Jharkhandi adivasis over the last two centuries, and the odds against which it was undertaken, it appears unfair to judge it by its rare successes and the failure to attain power. Peasants, in most circumstances, fight an unequal war against powerful opponents, the foremost among them being a hegemonic state apparatus. As such, to quote Devalle, 'peasant movements should be evaluated not in terms of their 'success' of 'failure', but in terms of their role in the history of the subaltern social sectors.'[20]

The Culture of Protest

We come now to the *culture* of protest that has been nurtured by

the tradition of protest and that has, in its turn, sustained it. It must be mentioned at the very outset that it is *the subaltern sector's collective will to live, and not just to survive in the face of pervading oppression that is the most significant and basic manifestation of a culture of protest.*[21] The further point may be made that 'culture' here is understood in its deepest meaning, as 'foremost and always social, forming part of everyday social reality and closely linked to material life'.[22] In so far as *the social is, at its most fundamental level, lived and sensed and felt, culture, being a reflection of the social, is not only a way of life, but also a way of feeling.* Culture, in other words, has an important constitutive role in the element of feeling, or the 'sensing of social phenomena' or what Raymond Williams calls 'the undeniable experience of the present' facing 'all that is present and moving, all that escapes or seems to escape from the fixed and the explicit and the known, [and that is] grasped and defined as the personal; this, here, now, alive, active, subjective'.[23]

For the subaltern, a very important part of the 'lived social' is the experience of subordination. As such, it is an oppressive social context that shapes their culture but the fact that this is a vibrant culture of resistance, rather than that of surrender, may be seen in itself as the most significant act of resistance and defiance to an attempted hegemonic order.

The culture of protest, developing as it does against a background of subordination, is a direct response to a *culture of oppression*. Devalle defines this culture of oppression as 'the aggregate of dominant meanings and values, accompanied by practices in which violence and coercion enter as significant constitutive elements in the reproduction of the hegemonic order, by which the powerholders aim at maintaining and strengthening their super ordinate position'.[24] This culture is usually found to dominate the public realm, where it manifests itself in the form of a *theatre of power*, pushing the subordinate classes' text of protest underground. The theatre of power, moreover, can develop into a *theatre of terror*, which for Devalle, has certain extreme characteristics in so far as it aims 'to cause terror, not just fear of authority; to be repetitive, not finite; pervasive, not localized; and inculcating self derogation, not just compliance.' Terror, as a mechanism to enforce subordination, does not stop at being part of a theatre of dominance -- it actually makes for an actual *practice of terror*, experienced by its targets as *reality*. To quote Devalle once again, 'the theatre and the practice of terror attempt to pervade the whole area of *lived* experience in order to make it *lived* dominance and *lived* subordination'.[25]

There are various discourses that inform the culture of oppression as it operates in Jharkhand.[26] These are :

1. **Conceptions of Superiority-Inferiority and Dominance - Subordination:** Adivasis, particularly those in the lower economic range, are conceived as inferior; biologically, in intelligence and achievement, as well as culturally. The use of the terms *'junglee'* [people of the jungle] and *kaliparaja* [from the Sanskrit *'kali'*, meaning black, and *'paraja'* meaning 'born of another', i.e. a member of another community; alien; different] to describe adivasis has led to an internalization, by adivasis, of these devaluative attitudes, and a considerable fall in self-esteem. The 'freedom' and 'naivete' of adivasi women are often invoked to justify their prostitution, and the latter is understood as an 'accident' resulting from the irresponsible nature of the tribals. From this overall assignment of inferiority flows the view that adivasis should rightfully occupy a subordinate position in society, and that they are fit to perform only menial tasks, or those requiring strength and endurance rather than skills. Such prejudiced stereotypes, it may be noted, help maintain tribals in the unskilled positions in the industrial sector and also help create labour - supplying areas.

2. **Violence as a Right of the Powerful:** Devalle writes, 'Violence has acquired for the dominant classes in Bihar the weight of a 'value' -- the normal condition of life necessary to maintain the existing order -- legitimized as the 'right' of the powerful'.[27]

Violence, however, to have meaning must have an object, i.e., it must be directed against somebody. This object is provided by the operation of the values of inferiority - superiority/dominance - subordination. Moreover, the practice of violence completes the process of objectification, in so far as the target is looked upon as a mass, dehumanized and without identity. 'The victims are not clearly identified - they are just a vague 'somebody', violence is seen as a normal part of life [it is 'usual'], as an autonomous force [it is 'inevitable'] and it's agents usually remain concealed in speech by the use of the impersonal [*there is* anger,' '*there is* firing' etc.] [28]

3. **Perception of Subordinates as Dangerous:** In those circumstances where the subordinates' thoughts and intentions are difficult to grasp with certainty, there arises among the elite a paranoia associated with a fear of retaliation. For the powerful, a faceless mass of adivasis appears a phenomenon replete with concealed threats. The adivasis' bows and arrows, in particular, evoke terror, mainly because they kill silently. As such, the ban on the possession and carrying of bows and arrows in Bihar and the requirement of licenses to carry them was interpreted by Devalle as not so much intended to curb the incidence of violence as to assuage the fear that inexplicably gripped the dominant at the sight of them. The sound of tribal

drums, similarly, arouses panic amongst the powerful -- it no longer suggests dancing and festivity but defence and rebellion. This is partly due to the association of drums with past tribal protests -- the Santal Hul, for instance, involved a good deal of drum-beating, and even today, drums are beaten in many Jharkhandi villages to warn the people about an impending clash with the police, who had probably already surrounded the village. Sometimes, the sound of drums is reason enough for the police to open fire.[29] As such, even as subalterns can use to their advantage the menacing presence of the crowd and the anonymity that it provides as part of a strategy of popular action,[30] so the powerful can, and do invoke this very menace as a justification for arming themselves, allegedly against the unpredictable insubordination of the subaltern.

Dominant populations, everywhere, have depicted indigenous peoples as not having a history prior to the moment of conquest. But not only is such a history there, it is, moreover, vibrantly alive in the collective memory of the community in question and finds expression in their oral tradition, in aesthetic forms and in the shared activities of daily life. In other words, *it is culture that keeps this history alive and it is in the realm of culture that hegemony is sought to be countered on a day-to-day basis. It is thus that cultural activities become*

impregnated with political meanings, and we see the formation of a culture of protest. This culture is active in open rebellion, but in the absence of channels for the open expression of grievances, this culture turns clandestine, i.e., it is expressed in codes that protect the contents of the message of resistance. Also, when driven underground, the culture of protest nurtures a great deal of activity in the aesthetic realm, which is a field that remains under the control of the subaltern classes.[31]

Let us now explore the various ways in which a culture of protest has been forged in Jharkhand.

Devalle has discussed the *role of silence* in the theatre of the powerless. For her, an important expression of resistance, is paradoxically, the use of silence, i.e., expression through non-expression. She writes, 'The impressions I recorded of peasant marches [as those of forcible harvests]... illustrate the *text* of silence. Drums were certainly sounded, but somehow this merely served to emphasize the absence of the human voice. We should also remember that the lightning quality of the arrow resides in its' silence and in the silence of the person who shoots it'.[32] Silence is also a component in some of the attitudes of resistance that aim to avoid frontal opposition, such as the feigning of servility and *'behind the back' gestures*. Devalle cites the instance of an adivasi boy, who having been slapped with a towel by his 'master' uttered not a word; instead, he threw the towel on the floor, wiped his

feet on it and finally stamped on it, all of this accomplished when his master was not looking. Thus, even as he played the meek servant before his master, this meekness did not last behind his back. Similarly, we have rickshaw-pullers spitting -- not because of betel-chewing, but after a certain class of passengers alight from the rickshaw. Also, comments such as, 'The dikus are dirty. They do not take off their clothes when they bathe and they do not even clean their tongues' are made 'behind the back,' cleverly returning the insulting adjective 'dirty' that is so often used by the dikus to describe adivasis.[33]

Adivasis also resort to *laughter* to hide the contempt that they often feel. Laughter enables them to dismiss incidents of humiliation as a 'show', thereby allowing them to ridicule the demonstration of superiority that the 'show' was intended to be. *Caricature*, again, performs the psychologically satisfying function of ridiculing, and demystifying images of authority. The image of ineffective, lazy and prosperous officials [described in word and gesture as 'fat, with big round bellies'] is very popular in the urban areas. In the villages, the prevailing image of the 'diku' is 'the one who robs' and 'one who is a greedy cat', coveting the food of others and 'showing the nails' to get it.[34]

Yet another element in the forging of a submerged text of resistance is the use of the *metaphor*. In a story told about elephents, the tribals had the following to say:

> 'They are dangerous; they come in big herds; they are big and step on everything: people, fields. They can kill... They are like

> the dikus: they come from beyond the village and like to steal... They come and start looking for the liquor that is stored in the houses.. they may break the roof in order to put their trunks inside and thus get the liquor. They always get what they want...
>
> Once X [one of the villagers] was dead drunk... An elephant smelled the liquor inside him and followed him. The elephant was upset because this jug [the drunken man] did not seem to have an opening [to take the liquor out]. The elephant got mad, picked up X and started shaking him... Not a drop was spilled and so the elephant, being so upset and liquor-less, decided to leave X on top of a bamboo tree. There we found X still dead drunk [laughs]. This is the story of the diku elephant who thought himself more cunning than drunken X, but left without a drop of liquor and could steal nothing [more laughs].'

It may be noticed that the metaphorical elephant, the diku, gradually takes precedence over the real elephant. The super-imposition of the two texts occurs in the description of the herd of wild elephants coming into the village, the need to watch their approach and how they do not stop before fields or people [the exercise of power], the destruction they cause and the fear they arouse, thus making people flee [the impunity of the powerful], their greed to take away food and liquor [taking away joy and rest] etc. Moreover, like the diku, the elephant squeezes the poor peasant to get what he has and may be hiding. The laughs, however, come because the elephant fails to extract the liquor from X [the liquor symbolizing his self, his belongings]. Thus, drunken X becomes the hero of the story, having cheated the mighty elephant.[35]

It maybe noted that we have here a coded and concealed text,

hidden beneath a different and open text. In fact, all the strategies of resistance we have been discussing so far are of a 'behind the curtain' nature, if we may use such a phrase i.e. they are defensive methods which, while maintaining the subaltern's, spirit high and protecting their pride, do not pose a real threat to power. This is because it is only infrequently that circumstances conducive to open rebellion present themselves. At all other times, it is the need to assure physical and social *survival* that reigns ascendant, and is, as such, reflected in the modes of resistance adopted. However, as put by Devalle, 'when protest becomes explicit and politically phrased, the silence and laughter of the powerless may prove to be reservoirs of strength which can be channeled into positive political action.'[36]

The need to survive means that the subaltern cannot use the social field, in its totality, as a terrain for formulating resistance and protest. As such, the subaltern has to find those spaces in the social field that may function as zones of resistance, these zones being very small compared to the huge spaces that the 'explicit play of power-relations' occupy. It is to an examination of these coded spaces, where resistance comes to reside when driven underground, that we now turn.[37]

First, we have the *production of symbols and meanings*, of which the arrow and the drums are good instances. The image of Birsa, to

cite another example, has been abstracted from the past and its symbolic contents institutionalized in a statue erected on the road to Khunti. This statue places Birsa beyond time and beyond the social context in which the leader of the 'ulgulan' once operated. He has now become the official 'father' of Jharkhand and it is not entirely a coincidence that he is depicted with his hands tied. The 'tied hands' are obviously intended to portray the adivasis as a people in bondage, and to serve as a permanent reminder of what remains to be done.

Next, we have the *domain of work*. Work, when performed collectively, is a breeding ground of resistance and has been one of the classical grounds where oppositional attitudes and activities have been put into practice successfully. It has been suggested that the inability of the adivasis to comply with the time-work-discipline ethos of industrial capitalism could, in reality, be a skill aiming to resist total subordination at the work-place. The phenomenon of forcible harvesting also illustrates the potential that the realm of work has to foster a culture of protest. Forcible harvesting necessarily takes place at the time of harvest; what is not known however, is the field where it is going to take place. This combination of exact timing and unknown target ensures the effectiveness of this form of resistance, since it makes the adivasis' action visible on the social stage.

But it is *oral history and literature*, which for tribals, are the realms of resistance par excellence, and it is within this genre that

story-telling, myth-making etc come. The oral tradition, roughly speaking, performs three functions: *it tells history, provides ethnic definition and pronounces opinion.* The songs of rebellion composed around the theme of peasant movements of the nineteenth century perform the first of these functions. The following song, written in the 1960s, evokes the figure of Birsa:

> 'Looking for you again
> Muchia Chalkad is asking for you
> Dombari Hil is searching for you,
> Is looking for you.
> With arrows and axes ringing [as they touch]
> The rumbling of guns searches for you
> Bows and arrows touch [making a sound]
> For our mother country.[38]

A song such as this is repeated, remembered and reinvented, the repetition serving to strengthen the message of the song. Myths too record history, and tend at times to be organised around heroic tribal personalities of the past such as Sidhu-Kanu, Bhagirath, Birsa etc. Yet another dimension of the oral tradition, that performs the function of recalling history, is the forging of modern-day tribal leaders into heroes with mythical powers. Extra-ordinary powers have thus been ascribed by adivasis to the Santal leader, Sibu Soren. Soren has been portrayed as a supernatural hero, and has reportedly been seen riding a motorbike over water and appearing in fours and fives, so that there were many Sibus, all alike, working in many places simultaneously. As Devalle has pointed out, peasant heroes tend to become omnipotent.

They are everywhere and nowhere, a characteristic that has a practical side in times of danger, implying anonymity and mobility as it does. Often they are even believed to be immortal. As such, long after they die they remain as a lingering presence in the peasants' landscape. They will always return, it is believed, although in another shape.[39]

Reliving the past and recalling the deeds of rebels long dead and gone is by no means an idle pastime. On the contrary, such reminiscing provides momentum for future political action; as such, the vehicles of remembrance [songs, myths etc] are of crucial importance when it comes to organizing overt protest, as well as nurturing a submerged, yet vibrant, ethos of resistance.

Coming to the assertion of identity through oral tradition, it is by referring to land and territory [and the right of the adivasis over them] through the medium of songs, poems etc that such assertion is achieved. And the songs of opinion' express a concern for the problems suffered in Jharkhand. The following song, which refers to the effect of industrialization in the area, is one such ;

> 'Ranchi road shines!
> The steps of the white men sound
> As torrential rain [satob satob]
> Hatia Village trembles [in the distance while]
> The metallic sound [jirib jirib] of the workers' tools can be heard....
> Ah! from the slopes they did uproot rocks and stones
> They made the god of the mountain [Marang Buru] flee.
> When they brutally threw away the guardian god,
> Hatia collapsed in the dust like stones
> Falling on green leaves'[40]

This clearly bemoans the dispossession and destruction that has been the lot of Hatia following the installation there of an industrial complex.

And, finally we come to the fertile space of *leisure*. The thing to note here is that, leisure, for adivasis, is necessarily a social and not an individual event. Being societal in nature, it automatically enhances solidarity, and solidarity, in its turn, encourages the sharing of what are, otherwise, discrete individual experiences of subordination and humiliation. It is in this way that leisure nurtures a shared response to a commonly lived social, the response normally being that of resistance.

Having so far discussed the various ways in which an underground text of resistance is forged, it would be appropriate to end this section with a few comments on protest when it becomes overt or rises to the surface, so to say, and the cultural discourse that serves it. In Jharkhand, it is a combination of a *sense of justice*, the experience of injustice and blocked legal paths that have inspired rebellions in the past. Such rebellions have seen instances of counter -terror, which is not merely a 'show of force and of direct insubordination' but also 'contains the element of making justice by ones's own hands, together with the search for satisfaction through vengeance.'[41] Counter-terror, however, is not the only way in which adivasis go about seeing justice done. There have been cases of 'trials Jharkhandi style' conducted at the outskirts of the village where the wrong occurred, with the offender

being punished by beatings. It is around the time of these trials that the saying 'The wicked must be punished and the good protected' became popular among certain sections of the JMM.

However, even the justice-injustice discourse does not confine itself to the sphere of open political protest -- it has, alongside, covert verbal and symbolic manifestations. Thus, statements such as 'We are all equal' implies 'but are not treated as such'. Again, there, are adivasis who refer to themselves as the 'victims of progress', 'the undeprivileged' etc. Symbols too are used -- the arrow, for instance, is depicted as an instrument of justice in a world turned deaf to suffering. Thus it is said that 'the arrow knows where it goes - it is never wrong.' The message of the drums is clearer still: they convoke people and always'say' something to somebody. The message, for the dominant, is a menacing one--thus, at harvest time, landlords initially used to flee at the sound of the drums that heralded the approach of peasants. Soon, however they learnt to answer the drums with guns.

CULTURE AS A PRODUCT OF STRUGGLE

Amita Baviskar discusses in her book, ***'In the Belly of the River'***, two divergent perspectives on culture: the anthropological and the Marxist.[42] Anthropology understands culture as being autonomous, as enduring over time 'not without its own internal contradictions, but at least with its own integrity against the world', Marxism, on the other hand, views culture as a product of struggle. This view, no doubt, flows

from the standpoint of economic determinism -- culture is seen as ideology and struggle as taking place in the material realm. In so far as the material explains the ideological, so struggle accounts for culture. I too hold that struggle contributes, in a big way, toward the making of culture, but not for the reasons forwarded by orthodox Marxism. I see culture not as ideology but as being very close to 'the material' and being as much 'lived' and 'felt' as the latter.

The adivasis of Jharkhand, it may be noted, are constantly engaged in struggle: social, economic and political. Struggle, for them, is a vital ingredient of their lived social reality. As such, culture, being itself born of lived social experience, must at some level feel the impact of this struggle. In other words, culture being, in the deepest sense, social, cannot but make place for the experience afflicting the social. This is how the confrontational mindset resulting from the constant indignities that a community suffers socially, sooner or later translates into a confrontational mode of culture.

Devalle thus writes, 'Culture is ethnicity's privileged field in two senses : First, culture expresses the collective identity and consciousness of a people. Second, through culture, a first level of social awareness develops, the one that sustains the political expressions of ethnicity.'[43] Given this, it is surprising that anthropology has often treated culture and politics as watertight compartments, and cultural theory has studiously ignored material and power issues. It needs to

be emphasized that politics is not always obvious - 'voices of resistance are often uttered in modes and meanings that may appear marginal to explicit political discourses'. A mechanical outlook would thus miss the politics submerged in culture and would tend towards the dichotomy of resistance - acquiescence. Such a dichotomy is however invalidated by reality - the absence of overt rebellion hardly signifies the negation of protest, for protest develops far beyond the formal scenario of politics.[44]

II

ETHNICITY, PRESSURE GROUP POLITICS AND NATION-BUILDING

We now come to a theme that has been running as a constant thread throughout this work, namely, instrumental ethnicity and its links with politics. I have already discussed two notions of ethnicity : the primordial and the instrumental. The primordial view holds ethnicity to be a deeply held phenomenon, and stresses the commonality of customs, mores, rituals, language etc that help to forge this deeply held identity. The instrumental perspective, on the other hand, highlights the *uses* to which a particular ethnic group puts this identity -- ethnicity, in this light, appears *not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end*, whether we define this end in terms of development benefits, social prestige or political power.

We shall focus here on how Jharkhandi tribals have asserted their ethnicity to make political gains, as well as economic ones,

economic impoverishment constituting as it does, an important element in their overall situation of deprivation. It is this economic dimension that has, in fact, prompted the forging of a broad worker-peasant alliance, comprising adivasi peasants and workers as well as non-adivasi ones. The broadening social base of what began as an adivasi movement indicates that the adivasi community is well aware of the capacity of class solidarity to sustain political protest; hence the decision to forge links with those who, though non-tribals, live under the same conditions of socio-economic deprivation as the tribals themselves. Moreover, class solidarity is a phenomenon that Chotanagpur has seen even prior to the Jharkhand Movement. Devalle writes that, even as the adivasi revolts of the nineteenth century 'have been perceived as 'tribal' with no participation of the general peasantry which supposedly remained passive spectators', there is, contrary to this perception, 'evidence of the support and participation of the general peasantry in these movements, as in the Santal Movement of 1855 when all sectors of the peasantry - tribal *and* non-tribal - were mobilised.' She continues, 'it is perhaps in the selection of the targets of attack that the class character of adivasi peasant insurgency is most evident. The rich and the powerful were invariably subjected to violence, while peasants and artisans were carefully spared.'[45] It is also a fact that the current leadership of the Jharkhand Movement has desperately sought to underplay the factor of class, and has thus shifted

the emphasis to 'regionalism' - this development, is, in fact, something we shall be examining in the next section.

Clearly, the boundary of an ethnic group is not static; depending on the circumstances and specific goals of the time, this boundary is redrawn, either on divisive or on amalgamative lines. Thus we have seen specific tribes submerge their individual sub-tribal identities to facilitate the crystallization of a pan-tribal consciousness, as first exemplified in the experience of the Adivasi Mahasabha. Not only this, ethnic groups have also not been averse to making common cause with communities which, though they cannot exactly be described as 'ethnic', share with the ethnic groups concerned, a lived societal experience, mostly, of subjugation and subordination. The rationale, in both cases, has been the need to emerge politically visible, to occupy a part, no matter how small, of the political space, with a view to press home grievances and demands.

It is on the basis of their ethnicity that the adivasis of Jharkhand have succeeded in becoming actors on the national political stage, and a crucial factor in this whole process has been their *emergence as pressure groups*. Adivasis, through their presence in Parliament and state assemblies, have lobbied for their rights over land and forest, for the recognition of their languages and their inclusion in the Eighth Schedule and against dispossession through displacement. Over the last, they have been supported by numerous

non-governmental organisations and environmental groups, and public opinion against arbitrary developmental displacement has become very loud, placing the government under considerable pressure. The point to note here is that, *even as the adivasis have embraced a modern day interest-group politics, their interests, and the issues articulated by the movement have clearly retained their ethnic character, in the sense that they have sprung from a specific ethnic experience.*

It is on the basis of such instances, where primordialities have geared themselves to meet the challenges of modernity without endangering the latter, that Sajal Basu argues: 'India could delegitimize the western social scientists' prognosis of dangerous decades and the probable collapse of democracy with the rise of primordial loyalties. The so-called primordial loyalties as caste, language, ethnicity have given rise to local, sub-regional movements without any disruptive fall-out on the democratic system. Rather ... it is held that these movements, through politicization of primordial loyalties have extended the social base of the democratic 'system in India'."[46] Basu is of the opinion that it is ethnicity, rather than class, that has been the well-spring of the Jharkhand movement. The infusion of the class dimension by Marxist leaders such as A.K. Roy has no doubt strengthened the movement, but it is the civilisational base that has sustained it over time.[47]

To conclude this section, it may be said that it is via their

ethnicity that the tribals of Chotanagpur have responded to the modernist project of nation building. But there is one dimension of this response that has not boded well for the movement, namely, the mergers with and the consequent co-optation by mainstream political parties. In order to capture this process it will be necessary to look into the history of the Jharkhand Movement in brief.[48]

The movement in Chotanagpur began at the turn of the present century with the rise of institutions designed to introduce reforms and stimulate development among the tribes, mainly along denominational and even inter-denominational lines. The year 1912 however, saw pan-tribal solidarity manifest itself in the form of the Chotanagpur Charitable Association, which was organised by Christian and non-Christian adivasis alike, to raise funds for scholarships for students. The pan-tribal consciousness was further reinforced with the formation of the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj, which sought to secure employment, reservations in the services and legislative bodies and the formation of a sub-state. A militant movement was initiated with the coming into being of the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938. The Mahasabha was formed against the background of the first elections of 1937 under the Government of India Act of 1935 where the Congress swept the polls. This persuaded the adivasis, particularly the Christians, to close their ranks. The Mahasabha commanded a wide political base, but the

militancy endorsed by it failed to pay off and it was routed by the Congress in the 1946 elections.

The period 1949-58 saw the rise of th Jharkhand Party. At that time, the Constitution had just been framed and the tribals had been recognized as a special category -- the 'exclusion', as such, was over. But the Census of 1951 showed that the tribals did not, by themselves, constitute a very large community, and the Jharkhand Party was thus thrown open to all Chotanagpuris, adivasis and non-adivasis alike. This was also in keeping with the secular stance fashionable in those days, that language or region, but not ethnicity should determine the formation of a province. The party extended its influence over Orissa in the second general elections and displayed remarkable unity. This success, however, was not meant to last, and the late 1950s saw the party decline. The main factor behind the decline was the split between the advanced Christian and the relatively backward non-Christian tribals, which arose out of the competition for better educational facilities, employment opportunities and control over development resources. The non-Christian tribals started looking to the Congress and the Jan Sangh for support in the late fifties, enabling these all-India parties to strengthen their presence in the region. The Jharkhand Party, moreover, did not have an agrarian programme and had, on top of that, allowed a sizeable chunk of 'Jharkhand' to be given away to West Bengal. The 1962 elections thus saw a sharp fall in the

number of seats it commanded, paving the way for a merger with the Congress in 1963.

Following the collapse of the Jharkhand party, there was no organized political movement in Jharkhand. There was, however, a considerable radicalization of politics, with agrarian issues coming to the fore. The leftist parties entered the region in a big way, stressing political education for workers and peasants, the linking up of local and all-India politics and the militancy of means. The Jharkhand Party also underwent a good deal of fragmentation - the old guard thoroughly disapproved of the merger with the Congress, and as many as three groups emerged from within the party, all of whom claimed to represent it. Thus 1967 saw the All-India Jharkhand Party formed, which split in 1969-70 owing to conflict between its leaders. While one faction moved close to the Congress(O) and the Jan Sangh, the other moved close to the Congress (R). The split became permanent in 1971, the first faction retaining the name of the party and the second reverting to the old name, the Jharkhand Party.

Another major split occurred in the old Jharkhand Party when the Santals separated themselves from the other tribals and formed the Bihar Prant Hul Jharkhand Party. The Santal had always nursed a grievance that although they were more numerous than the Munda and the Oraon, they did not command adequate command over the movement. This party too split into two factions in 1972, the

breakaway faction calling itself the Progressive Hul Jharkhand Party.

Yet another significant development of this phase was the forging of a political alliance between the Kurmis (Mahatos) and the Santals. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (1973) formed out of this alliance led to a pan-Santal awakening, with the Hul Jharkand supporting it and the Santals of Hazaribagh, Giridih and Dhanbad coming together with those of the Santal Parganas.

The last thirty years have seen an intensification of earlier trends, particularly the erosion of the electoral bases of Jharkhand parties, the fragmentation of these bases and the growing impact of national-level parties. The Bihar Assembly elections of 1977 saw the Janata wave sweeping Chotanagpur; earlier, in 1972, the four splinter groups of the Jharkhand Party had polled only 81,227 votes as against the 3,61,187 votes cast. The parliamentary elections of 1980 saw the All-India Jharkhand Party move closer to the Janata Party, while the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress (I) continued to dominate the strongholds of the old Jharkhand Party. Even the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, which emerged as a considerable force in state politics particularly after 1980, entered into an electoral understanding with the Congress, thereby straining its relations with its constituents. The understanding reached between the JMM and the Congress automatically weakened its alliance with the Marxist Coordination Committee, causing the backward Mahtos to walk out of the party. It

is not surprising, therefore, that the JMM's showing in the Bihar Assembly elections of 1985 was poor - it captured just seven out of the twenty eight seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the state.

The general elections of 1998 has seen the JMM tie up with the Congress (I) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal, a regional formation floated by Laloo Prasad Yadav. As such, the eighties and even the nineties have confirmed the trends of the sixties; heavy-weight parties, most of them of a pan-Indian character have been quick to spot the divisions within tribal society and capitalize on them, and the tribal parties, have done their bit by aligning with mainstream formations of the left, right and centre, rather than among themselves. This latter trend may be partially explained by the mistaken belief, among tribal leaders, that a share in power is all that is needed to protect tribal interests, which, can as well, [if not better] be secured by joining the Congress, or the BJP, or whatever. The need for funds is yet another factor which has led to wrong alignments. And finally, there have been the contradictions within tribal society itself, which have not only made it impossible for one single adivasi party to command the loyalties of all sections, but have also encouraged particular denominations to lend support to outside parties, with a view to undermine the support base of a party dominated by their rivals. Thus, with the Hos, Mundas and Santals dominating the Jharkhand Party, the party failed to command the support of the Oraons who switched to the Congress and the Jan

Sangh.[49]

Thus, even as adivasis have relied on ethnicity to capture a section of the national political space, they have, at times, come very close to pushing that ethnicity underground, and losing thereby their distinctiveness as political actors. K.S. Singh thus opines that, while tribal ethnicity has receded into the background, the regional factor has come to the fore.[50] This can be seen in the efforts of mainstream parties to form a 'regional set-up' and in the nature of the issues articulated by them as constituting the core of the Jharkhand problem. There is very little reference to language, or identity or culture, but a great deal of talk about 'regional' development and 'regional' antonomy. The solution obviously lies in the recapturing, by adivasi parties, of the political space that they had initially succeeded in carving out for themselves; these parties should, moreover, aim to reclaim and retain to themselves the privilege of setting the political agenda and articulating, on their own terms, the issues comprising it.

III

DE-MYSTIFYING THE GRASS ROOTS : THE INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS OF THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

It may appear odd that a political constituency that has the ethnic factor as its trump-card should go about sidelining it. But it is not without reason that the ethnic character of the movement in

Chotanagpur has been somewhat eclipsed by the regional accent, and it is not just 'outside' parties, but the *tribal leadership itself* that has been responsible for this shift. The function served by the regional emphasis is a dual one; it manages, at the same time, to divert attention from the issues of class and ethnicity.

The early JMM had attempted to be a class-based movement, and had defined the Jharkhandi as 'a producer, irrespective of caste, tribe or religion, within the boundaries of Jharkhand'. The conception of community sought to be fostered by the party was constructed on the basis of the socio-economic experience of workers and peasants in and around the Santal belt, and Jharkhand as such came to be defined with social, economic and cultural contents rather than as a mere geographical conception. It is not surprising therefore, that the demand for a separate state receded into the background during this early period of the JMM, and that social and economic transformation of the peasants' and workers' situation was stressed instead.[51]

The demand for '*Lalkhand*', however, became weak in the early eighties owing to a change in ideological orientation emerging from class differences present in the movement's new social composition. The JMM at this time began to attract well-to-do Jharkhandis and those elements of the adivasi elite who wished to avoid direct confrontation with the state. This new leadership, under Jaipal Singh, once again brought into pre-eminence the territorial conception of Jharkhand. It

may be noted here that those who demand a separate Jharkhand state tend to define the issue in terms of a right to territory and to self-determination. By contrast, the adivasis see the issue in terms of a denial of rights over land *as a means of production.*[52] This difference in perspective is, moreover, not incidental - it is prompted by the differential class situation of those holding the perspectives, and it is with a view to defend their class interests vis-a-vis those of the poor adivasis that the tribal elite pushes the territorial demand.

It is interesting to note that, even as the transition from 'class' to 'region' was made, this 'region' or 'state' continued to be defined in ethnic terms, making full use of the tribal construct, Thus, the adivasi elite claimed solidarity with those in the lower ranges of their own societies *on ethnic grounds.* Ethnicity thus served the same purpose as territorialism, eclipsing class contradictions within tribal society. However, being only a facade, the myth of ethnic brotherhood did not survive the surfacing of class contradictions -- it broke down whenever the class interests of the elite took precedence over their ethnic affiliations, or when a class-consciousness was found to develop among the subaltern sectors of ethnic communities.

It is only of late that the ethnicist orientation has more or less gone, with the categories of 'region' and even 'nationality' ruling the roost.[53] One important reason for this has been the need to include the Sadans, who are old dikus, within the fold of the movement. It is

believed that the Sadans, and the dikus in general, would use their money to bribe tribal leaders and sabotage the movement for a purely tribal state.[54] Thus, the present leadership has adopted a pragmatic stance and has taken to projecting Jharkhand as an all - embracing polity, from which no one would be excluded on the basis of language, religion or ethnic ascription. We also need to mention here another effect of the regional emphasis, namely, the renewed forging of bonds that were already existent between the adivasi peasant and worker population on one hand and Hindu peasants and workers on the other. Thus, even as territorialism has made for the embracing of rich dikus, so it has allowed, ironically enough, the forging of a working - class solidarity across the ethnic-non ethnic divide. The latter phenomenon has considerably extended the base of the movement, even as the former has compromised its integrity.

Jharkhand, therefore, has been defined at different points of time in different ways - with respect to class, ethnie and territory respectively. It may be noted here that despite the recent ascendancy of the regional factor, ethnicity has remained the most potent base of mobilization in the region. And Marxist leaders like A.K.Roy have admitted that tribal identity is more important in strategic terms [mobilization, solidirity] than class. To return to the problem of definition, the situation has been further compounded by the conflicts that exist between different sections of the adivasi community itself.

The ambivalent attitude of Catholic tribals towards the Protestant - dominated movement, the militancy of the Munda - Santal - Ho combine versus the resilience of the Oraons, the tensions between the larger and the smaller tribes[55] - have all contributed to the confusion. And finally, we have had a tribal leadership which has, at times not been averse to cooptation by the state. It is, in fact, the aspirations of the elite that has aided the state in its task of coopting. This newly emergent and educated strata have very high hopes of making it big in the world, and are, as such, very easily won over through promises of position and status.

By way of concluding, it may be said that it is important to see the Jharkhand Movement for what it is, namely, a movement ridden with contradictions -- between an acculturated tribal elite and an adivasi non-elite more or less rooted in indigenous tradition; between the elite's heart-felt affinity for high culture and the political need to foster a cultural retribalization; between a leadership that demands autonomy and a peasantry wanting land - rights, and so on. It does not help to turn a blind eye to these tensions, theoretically inconvenient though they may be. It is a fact that the status quo hides a fragile class unity and that the leadership has welcomed into the folds by the movement, conservative elements who are thoroughly insensitive to adivasi issues and who go by the name of 'Jharkhandis'. Accepting these realities would help us construct a more nuanced version of adivasi

politics and, at the same time, help dispel the mistaken notion that everything about the adivasi world is pristine and pure. Here too, politics comes, like everywhere else with it notions of power, status, prestige etc.; here too, a political class, educated at the expense of the backward sections of their own communities, go about betraying their people without suffering any pangs of conscience.

NOTES

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3. Martin Orans, *The Santals : A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1965, pp.101-4.
4. Ibid, pp.123-34.
5. Ibid, p.124.
6. Ibid, p.133.
7. Ibid, pp.129-32.
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9. Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, cited in Orans, ibid, pp.139-40.
10. Martin Orans, op.cit. 3, pp. 139 & 144.
11. Melville J. Herskovits, *Man and His Works*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1949, p.553, cited in Orans, ibid, p.140.
12. Susana B.C. Devalle, *Discourses of Ethnicity : Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p.174.
13. Ibid, p.174.
14. Ibid, p.175.

15. Ibid, pp.188-89.

16. Ibid, pp.111-12.

17. Ibid, p.110.

18. Ibid, p.112.

19. Ibid, pp.113 & 116.

20. Ibid, p.112.

21. Ibid, p.193.

22. Ibid, p.194.

23. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p.128 cited in Devalle, ibid, p.197.

24. Devalle, op.cit., 12 p.200.

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26. For a discussion of the various discourses which form part of the culture of oppression, see Devalle, op.cit. 12, pp.200-9.

27. Ibid, p.207.

28. Ibid, pp.207-8.

29. Ibid, pp.208-9.

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31. Devalle, op.cit. 12, pp.210-11.

32. Ibid, pp.212-13.

33. Ibid, pp. 213-14.

34. Ibid, p.214.

35. Ibid, pp. 215-16.

36. Ibid, p.216.

37. For a detailed discussion of the zones of resistance, see Devalle, op.cit 12, pp.218-27.

38. R.D. Munda, 'Muchia Chalkad Do,' *Seled*, Sahkari Prakashan Samiti, Ranchi, 1967, p.53 [translated from Mundari to English by Devalle] cited in Devalle, ibid, p.223.

39. Devalle, op.cit. 12, p.182.

40. Song/poem by R.D. Munda, *Hisir : An Anthology of Twelve Munda Poets*, Sahkari Prakashan Samiti, Ranchi, 1967, cited in Devalle, ibid, p.226.

41. Devalle, op.cit, 12, p.217.

42. Amita Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River : Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997, pp.5-6.

43. Devalle, op.cit. 12, p.235.

44. Ibid, pp.235-37.

45. Ibid, p.118.

46. Sajal Basu, *Jharkhand Movement : Ethnicity and Culture of Silence*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1994, p.37.

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55. K.S.Singh, op.cit. 49. pp.224-26.

CHAPTER IV

Displacement and Tribal Identity

DISPLACEMENT AND TRIBAL IDENTITY

In this chapter, we address the issue of displacement -- developmental displacement, to be specific, and its impact on tribal identity. It may be noted that the construction of development projects, in independent India, has almost always necessitated the uprooting of large sections of the rural poor. As such, it is eminently possible to situate the issue of displacement within the development-democracy debate and argue that it is a very good instance of how the developmentalism of the Indian state, far from fulfilling the originally envisioned goal of social transformation, has ended up violating the rights of the marginalised sections of the country's populace. The experience of displacement, for any community undergoing it, is a traumatic one, setting in motion a 'spiral of impoverishment'[1] as it does. But for the adivasi community of India, [and it is they, more than anyone else, who have been affected by it], the ensuing situation is especially disheartening. This is because displacement involves uprooting from ancestral land, and land being replete with socio-cultural, and even spiritual significance for adivasis, the post-displacement scenario is one that is considerably marked by a deep and lingering sense of cultural loss.

The situation, however, takes a surprising turn. It does not do to forget that the adivasis of Jharkhand are an embattled lot -- heir to a

rich heritage of struggle against economic exploitation and cultural domination. It is indeed, on this heritage that they draw as they organize themselves to protest against the usurpation of their lands by the state. Displacement as an issue, thus succeeds in triggering off movements against particular projects; apart from this, it also finds place on the larger agenda of the Jharkhand Movement. The point to note here is that, the adivasis are able to turn a potentially disadvantageous situation of impending displacement or alternatively, their status of 'displaced people' into a politically advantageous one. In other words, they have the political acumen to gain mileage out of the situation in which displacement, impending or otherwise, places them. Also, the taking up, of their cause, by certain political parties creates in the adivasis an interest in the political process. This is of some significance, given the tendency of subaltern movements to deliberately remain outside the mainstream political space.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISPLACEMENT AND VIOLATED JUSTICE

Niraja Gopal Jayal writes, 'Development and democracy were arguably integral and even non-negotiable parts of the modernizing project of the Indian state at independence... development was unproblematically assumed to encompass not only an industrial economy, but also a democratic polity and a programme of social transformation'.[2] This comprehensive vision of development was not

however realized. With developmental planning becoming the preserve of technical experts, an economic justification of projects [particularly the cost benefit analysis], became ascendant and the human factor, together with the egalitarian emphasis, came to be totally sidelined. Development and democracy, as goals, looked set to collide, with development projects failing to satisfy their chief justificatory principle, namely, the common good of all. Far from being empowering, 'development' tended instead to reproduce socio-economic inequalities and denied the backward the rights of equal citizenship.

Nowhere has this been more true than in the case of developmental displacement. Unlike displacement caused by natural disasters, developmental displacement caused by development projects is the outcome of a planned political decision. This being so, it is all the more shocking that such displacement should so flagrantly violate the rights of disadvantaged social groups, such as adivasi and peasant communities, who have historically depended on the natural resource base for their subsistence and who do not have the resources needed to absorb the shock and rehabilitate themselves.

The Twenty-ninth Report of the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Tribes notes that even though tribal people constitute roughly around 7.5 % of the population, over 40% of those displaced till 1990 came from these communities.[3] An estimate made by Walter Fernandes[4] shows that the proportion of tribals among those displaced

has been increasing in recent years. For example, of the 11.6 lakh persons to be displaced by twenty representative dams above 50 metres either under construction or being planned in the 1990s, 59% are tribals. This scenario is also true of mining. A majority of mines are located in tribal areas. And in addition to direct displacement, mining activity severely affects livelihoods, as water tables get disrupted, overburden is dumped on fertile agricultural land and forests are cut. In Singrauli,[5] which is being developed as the energy capital of India, the growing number of super thermal power projects represent a new trend. Instead of building power plants near urban centres, as was the practice in the past, they are now being built near coal mines and the power is being fed into grids. Lower transaction cost is the obvious reason for this change, the other being that pollution and environmental degradation here remain less 'visible'. And finally, if they have any objection, there is little the disempowered adivasis of the area can do about it. A part of the reason why it is usually the marginalized and not the relatively privileged sections who are affected is that a large part of the natural resources required for industrialization lies in the interior - in the hilly and forest areas, which are mostly inhabited by adivasi and peasant communities. The other factor that explains the unequal sharing of development - costs relates to the broader question of the distribution of power. Smitu Kothari writes, 'Despite constitutional mandates and an emphasis on favouring the underprivileged, in an

overwhelming number of cases, national and regional (and increasingly global) interests -- the primary beneficiaries of the development process -- transgress from or violate the interests of politically and economically weaker groups and individuals. In decisions on who should be displaced and what should be the treatment meted out to them, the more powerful interests have continued to prevail, especially when they have encountered poor and politically weak populations. The question is, therefore, essentially linked to democratising the planning process itself and integrally involving the historically underprivileged and disempowered in decisions that so crucially affect their lives, livelihoods and lifestyles'.[6]

Development, on account of its association with 'national interest' has acquired the status of an article of faith, which helps explain the argument of 'public purpose'. The principle of 'eminent domain', the exercise of which, following past colonial practice, allows the state to acquire land, confers upon the government the power to take over private property for 'public purposes'. 'Public purpose' thus emerges as the justification; what should legitimately constitute 'public purpose' is, however, not an issue that is open to discussion. It is clear that the principle underlying the argument of 'public purpose' is an utilitarian one -- the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' is invoked here to 'lend respectability to making the lives of communities into a cost, *in the public interest.*'[7] [italics mine]

The working of this principle, is to be seen, moreover, in a host of statutes, all of them relevant to displacement. We may begin with the controversial Land Acquisition Act of 1894 [LAA], through which the land requirements of public sector projects as well as of the major private sector ones are met. This act is concerned with the acquisition of rights over land from *individuals* who have *legally recognized and compensable rights*. As such, when this act is stretched to envelop the displacement of whole communities, those members [of the community displaced] who have no individual patta or legal title to land [this is common enough among adivasis, many of whom subscribe to the notion of community ownership of land] are left without any basis for claiming compensation from the state. Compensation, moreover, to quote Ramanathan, 'as a measure to take the edge off dislocation following compulsory acquisition, retains its market value connotation, the statutory responsibility of the state ceasing upon such payment.' As such the displaced person is treated as a willing seller, and the part that coercion plays in the law is not accounted for. Moreover, the option of compensating land for land merits a mere mention in the law; it is not, in any event, a binding obligation of the state. As such the law 'does not acknowledge displacement and its traumatic overtones, does not mention resettlement and is unwilling to take the responsibility of rehabilitation. This view is only reinforced by a reading of the 1984 Amendment which recognized a public purpose in providing for '*persons*

displaced or affected' by projects; which yet continued to ignore the existence of displaced *communities* and... recognized, no rights in the displaced persons to rehabilitation through state intervention.[8] [italics mine] Thus the law makes compensation not a right, but 'a discretion to care'. Similarly, rehabilitation remains very far from being defined as an entitlement.

The other acts that have been instrumental in causing displacement are the Forest Act (1927), the Manoeuvres, Field Firing and Artillery Practice Act (1938), the Railways Act (1989), the Airports Authority of India Act (1994) etc. Though these are not exactly related to the issue of economic (agricultural and industrial) development in the sense that dams, or canals or mine-sites are, they nevertheless represent certain dimensions of the overall ideology of development, as put into practice by the state. Quite unlike the LAA which was premised on the private ownership of property, the Forest Act was aware that long-established usership and an intricate mesh of dependency characterized the rights it would dislodge. Yet the continuance of the rights of the people have been made dependent on individual determinations by state functionaries. And even as the law, in its language and working, has remained essentially unchanged, it has been given a new-found morality' -- as the protector of the tree.

As the Forest Act rests its case on conservation and the environment, so the Manoeuvres, Field Firing and Artillery Practice Act

invokes 'national security' as its justification, the argument being that open spaces should be made available to the army for its field firing and artillery practice and that it is in the 'interests of safety' that all persons should be removed from the danger zone. The Railways Act provides that, for the purpose of constructing or maintaining a railway, a railway administration may construct 'in or upon, across, under or over any lands, or any streets, hills, valleys, roads, railway tramways...' as it thinks proper. Interestingly, the one limitation on this power is when government property is involved -- then the administration can act only with the consent of the concerned government. Displacement while inevitable, is neither in the statement of the flaw, nor in its apparent concern. Ramanathan has pointed out that the Airports Authority of India Act was passed in 1994, even as the immensity of the problems of displacement was acknowledged, and the attempt at articulating a policy was engaging the attention of, at least, six government departments. The LAA was invoked by this act to effect the acquisition of land, inevitably, for 'public purpose'. She thus concludes, 'The habits of law-making introduce a reiterative quality to the law; and laws all too often are reproduced in their own image.' The acts concerned are all instances of a statutory order which, in its ordering of priorities, does not reckon with displacement. Instead, it attributes a cost to the process of acquisition, displacement being an 'unstated incident' in this process.[9]

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISPLACEMENT

We come now to a discussion of the consequences of displacement, as experienced by the displaced community. These consequences are especially well brought out when compared to the situation faced by voluntary migrants. Whereas voluntary out-migration is influenced by both 'push' out 'pull' factors -- the former forcing people out of traditional localities and the latter attracting them to new ones, involuntary population movements are caused by 'push' factors alone[10]. Voluntary mobility reflects people's willing pursuit of new opportunities and stimulates economic growth. Involuntary resettlers, on the other hand, do not have the choice to remain -- they face more risks than opportunities.[11] As such, levels of anxiety and insecurity are higher among then. Also, unlike voluntary migration, where those migrating mostly comprise young families in the early stages of their household life-cycle, involuntary population movement presents a situation that is indiscriminate -- here entire populations, comprising both young and old, are forced to more. And finally, the voluntary process is gradual. As such, social and economic ties with the original environment are maintained and serve as a cushion in adverse conditions in the new environment. Forced displacement, in contrast, disrupts the diverse risk avoidance mechanisms present in the traditional locality, placing the population in a particularly vulnerable situation.[12]

Michael M. Cernea has further shown, through the use of a risk -

model, how impoverishment can occur as a result of displacement.[13] He points out that, when displacement and relocation leave people worse off, a set of risks tend to set in. These are :

1. **Landlessness :** The expropriation of land takes away the foundation upon which social and economic production systems are constructed. Unless this foundation is reconstructed elsewhere, or replaced by income-generating employment, social and economic productivity cannot be re-established and the affected families are impoverished.

2. **Joblessness :** For those categories of people whose existence depends on jobs, (landless labourers, shop-keepers etc.) the displacement effect works through the loss of jobs rather than through the loss of land.

3. **Homelessness :** In India, especially, where resettlement and rehabilitation are so poorly conceptualized and operationalized, loss of shelter may remain a chronic condition for those displaced. The risk of homelessness is increased when compensation for demolished shelters is made at assessed market value rather than at replacement value.

4. **Marginalisation :** Marginalization occurs when families cannot fully restore their lost economic strength. For instance, middle income farm households may not become landless, but may regress to being smallholders. Again, families that have so far

just managed to remain above the poverty line may fall below it and never recover.

5. **Morbidity** : People forced to relocate have a higher degree of exposure to illness, and to comparatively severe illnesses, than those who do not.

6. **Food Insecurity** : Displacement increases the risk of chronic food insecurity, defined by the World Bank as calorie-protein intake levels below the minimum necessary for normal growth. Under - nourishment results from sudden drops in food production and loss of harvests, resulting in turn from disruption caused and land lost due to displacement.

7. **Loss of access to common property** : Fruit and other edible forest products, firewood and deadwood for use and sale, common grazing grounds etc. account for a significant share of the income of poor households. The loss of such common property constitutes, for poor and marginal people particularly the landless and assetless, a very important cause of income deterioration.

8. **Social disarticulation** : Displacement leads to the dismantling of social support networks, thereby compounding individual loss with a loss of social capital. The various manifestations of social disarticulation are growing alienation, the loosening of bonds, weakening of control on interpersonal behaviour etc.

THE LOSS OF LAND : THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISPLACEMENT FOR ADIVASIS

While the consequences described above are found to apply to all displaced communities equally, whenever such communities have not been adequately resettled and rehabilitated, there are some special ways in which displacement affects tribal communities, which make it worth our while to explore it as an agent of social change among adivasi populations. While the significance of displacement, for the displaced, lies primarily in the loss of land, it may be noted that the meaning attached to land differs significantly between tribals and non-tribals. Whereas the latter see land in material and economic terms, say, as a means of production or a house site, the former imbue it with socio-cultural and religious meaning. As such, while displacement entails, for non-tribals, the destruction of the foundation of economic production, the loss of shelter and of access to the commons, for adivasis, it means much more -- the repercussions, for them, encompass a deeply felt sense of cultural loss and spiritual disembeddedness.

It is this special place that land occupies in tribal life that we shall now examine. In the first place, [this continues to be true for some, though not all tribes] ownership of land amongst adivasis remain vested in the community. As such, no individual has the right to permanently alienate the land from the community, making the tribe as a whole, the trustee of the land that it occupies. Moreover, the

community or tribe includes not only living members, but also ancestors long dead and gone as well as the coming generations. It is this, more than anything else, that explains the association made between land and blood. Land is, as it were, a crucial factor in a tribe's consciousness of its historical continuity; it follows from this that it is also a source of identity, in so far as history, or a sense of past remains essential to the constitution of self, whether individual or communitarian.

The significance attached to land derives, in an important way, from the relationship of adivasis with nature, as a whole. Respect for nature is profound and permeates all aspects of life, but there is very little that is ostentatious about this respect. It is not demonstrated through spectacular and elaborate rituals -- simple reverence is all that is there. This may be attributed to the fact that nature, for adivasis, is hardly an external category; it is, on the contrary, deeply imbued with the social, with a sense of everyday living.

It is partly because of the conjunction of the natural and the social that displacement, by uprooting the community from an old, lived environment -- a virtual repository of cumulative social significance -- causes social disarticulation. Devalle, at some point in her work ***Discourses of Ethnicity : Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*** talks of a 'life-song-community-history complex' among the Mundas,[14] arguing that it is through song and dance that community is realized, that history is relived and life is lived in this adivasi community. One may

safely add nature to this complex -- nature,like song and dance, is a medium in which life is lived and social harmony is attained; it, furthermore, carries with it a sense of past.

Not only is nature 'socialized' by adivasis; it also happens to be a source of religion and mythology. As Baviskar points out, adivasi religious beliefs tend to revolve predominantly around the natural.[15] In fact, the natural and the supernatural are sometimes indistinguishable. Hills, trees, stones are imbued with spiritual power and actively intervene in people's lives; the bongas said to reside in them are worshipped, and even propitiated in those sites marked by shrines, that are sacred to them. So pervasive is the cult of the bongas among Jharkhandi tribals that even the mines that have come up in the area are believed to harbour bongas. Matthew Areeparampil relates an incident where he found a family trying to drive away the Rungta bonga through sacrifices when one of its members fell ill. Rungta, incidentally is a mine-owner in the area.[16]

An important feature of tribal religion is the *element of the sacred*; this sense of the sacrosanct, moreover, extends to nature, which is the object of religion. This 'sacralization of nature' as Baviskar describes it,[17] is nowhere more evident than in the case of land. An important part of the mystique of land derives from its being one's birthplace, as well as the birthplace of one's ancestors -- the 'ancestral homeland', as it were. Harold R. Isaacs writes, 'The physical element

in basic group identity has to do not only with body but also with place, the land, the soil to which the group is attached, literally, historically, mythically.[18] Land was 'seen by many ancients as the "centre of the world", the "navel of the universe", as "paradise where the spirits of the dead dwell" and as "the group's real or mythical place of origin"'. There is a belief, among some African tribes that to leave one's place is to die. As such, movement from a place is sought to be counteracted by carrying and eating every day some of the soil of the place that was home.[19]

Given this treatment of land as sacred, it is not surprising that land should occupy a special place in adivasi mythology, especially in myths of origin. The Ao Nagas, for instance, believe that their ancestors came out of the earth at *Lungterok* or 'Six Stones', and worship this site as a shrine.[20] It has also been noted by K.N. Sahay that an examination of the etymology of tribe names suggests that adivasi communities are acutely conscious of themselves as part of a larger ecological setting.[21] Thus the names of some tribes, when translated into English, would stand as the following : 'hill men' [or *paharia* as the Maler of Santal Pargana call themselves], 'those who live in villages' [*ur* meaning village and *awan*, meaning inhabitants adding upto 'uraon' which according to some, is the correct name of the Oraon] etc. Again, the tribe names of the Muria and the Mannan, according to Sahay, reflect the people's consciousness of the fact that they are aboriginals,

or sons of the soil.[22]

Thus, for the adivasis, land is clearly not a geographical space where men live and work. It is rather, the only possible space for them to live. They define themselves and their lives in relation to land simultaneously conceived as a source of sustenance a sacred landscape and a historical site. Land being the foundation of all the vital manifestations of the community, all aspects of life are endangered when the relation between land and men is put at risk. It is this which explains the grave spiritual dilemma facing displaced adivasi communities.

Having discussed the significance of land in the adivasi world view and the repercussions of displacement given this significance, it may be now noted that the impact of displacement is not exhausted by the socio-cultural repercussions of the loss of land. It is true enough that the processes of industrialization and urbanization are too far-reaching not to have had an impact on tribes. This is especially true of Jharkhand which is virtually the epicentre of mining and industrial activity in India. Furthermore, it serves no purpose to treat tribes as isolates -- history vitiates this conception and provides ample evidence of interaction between tribal and non-tribal communities since the coming of the Aryans to India. As such, it can hardly be argued that displacement involves the uprooting of adivasis who have, so far, been

living an idyllic, pre-modern existence. However, it can be said that displacement, does in a fashion, hasten the working of certain processes of change. For instance, small landholders engaged in agriculture in the original environment are forced, failing resettlement, to work as unskilled labour in the neighbouring mine or industry. The change in occupational status is very common among landless labourers, who, having no legal title, have no basis for claiming compensation from the state on those rare occasions when such compensation is made in terms of land. Those who were relatively well-off, even prior to displacement and as such were able more or less, to rehabilitate themselves are affected in other ways. The dispersal of the community, made somewhat inevitable by displacement, encourages acculturation. As such, the better-off start sending their children to schools and fast acquire the values of the society among which they find themselves. Cautioning once again against an exaggerated contrast between pre- and post-displacement scenarios, it might be said that, even in those cases where the situation approximates the tradition-to-modernity story, it would be naive of us to assume that adivasis nearly always stand opposed to all that is included in the package of modernity. They are definitely not opposed to development and are found to grasp with both hands employment opportunities generated in the industrial sector. It may, of course, be argued that given the impoverishment that generally characterizes the post-displacement situation, the adivasis have little

choice but to adapt, the issue being that of survival. There is no doubt some truth in this but it is, at the same time, difficult to accept the proposition that modernizing change has always been thrust upon adivasis. That adivasis are not all that averse to 'modernizing' themselves is well borne out by their discerning attitude towards change. While they clearly oppose cultural imposition of any sort, intervention in the fields of education and health, for instance, is welcomed. Culture-change is a realm that they want to chart on their own terms, but chart it they do, in ways that help them evolve viable and strategic identities.

THE POLITICS OF DISPLACEMENT

The alienation of land and the loss of access to common property resources makes displacement a factor in the restructuring of relations between adivasis and nature. Displacement also restructures the relationship between the adivasis and the state in so far as the state emerges as 'the sinner' and the adivasis 'the sinned against'. It is this status of the 'the wronged' that the adivasis draw upon when pressurizing the state to withdraw planned projects that would cause displacement in the near future, as well as when demanding resettlement and rehabilitation as their right.

Resistance put up by adivasis against an unjust developmentalism is not new to Chotanagpur. By the middle of the nineteenth century itself, the adivasi communities of the area had

mobilized themselves to oppose colonial policies of resource extraction. There were protests and rebellions against colonial laws such as the Forest Act of 1876, which saw tribal peasants waging struggles against state intervention in forest resources. The first protests in the country against dams occurred as early as the 1920s, when Senapati Bapat launched an organized resistance in Maharashtra. The 1960s saw protests both against displacement as well as against the logic of large technological interventions in nature, made by tribals and arising out of a perceived threat to their livelihood and lifestyle.

The voices of engineers such as Kapil Bhattacharya [who documented the fallacies of the Damodar Valley Project], inspired political activists and leaders, [Ram Manohar Lohia among them], and collective resistance [and the demand for better resettlement] grew in several parts of the country.[23] The 1970s saw the issue of displacement reflected on the agenda of the Jharkhand Movement and trade-unionists from the collieries, led by A.K. Roy, engaged in a struggle against the coal companies in Dhanbad and Hazaribagh.

Recent years have seen increased resistance in Chotanagpur, as the people have sought to make known their discontent against the projects being planned. There have been protests against dams like the Koel-Karo, Kutku and Subarnarekha, mining projects like Piparwar and Rajmahal, the field-firing range at Netarhat and other large-scale industrial projects. In some cases, like Koel-Karo and Netarhat, the

projects have been successfully stalled.

The Netarhat project aims at acquiring tribal land for field firing and artillery practice for the 23rd Artillery Brigade. The army had been practising field firing in the Netarhat Plateau since 1956. In 1981-82, a move was made by the army to acquire the area, but due to strong opposition from the people the project was shelved for the time being. In 1992, the army, in collusion with the government took recourse to the Manoeuvres, Field Firing and Artillery Practices Act and issued a notification under Section 9(1) of the Act. This notification specified the area within which, for a period of ten years [commencing from 12th May 1992 and ending with May 2002] the carrying out of field firing and artillery practice was authorised. The defined area included 156 villages [127 in Gumla and 19 in Palamau]; another notification, issued earlier in November 1991 included 89 villages [66 in Gumla and 23 in Palamau], making the total number of villages affected 245. An estimate coming from the PRO [army], Ministry of Defence, put the total area affected at 1471 square km.

The number of villages population and area that the Netarhat Project would have affected is no doubt the largest in the history of Chotanagpur. The Chawni Visthapan Sangharsh Samiti Palamau, had estimated that the people affected would be 2,24,940, of which 1,75,952 [nearly 78%] were tribals, mostly Oraon, Munda, Birjia, Kisan, Kherwar, Asur, Korwa, Birhor etc. The adivasis had every

reason, therefore, to be agitated, fearing landlessness would set in following displacement. But what infuriated them most was that the earlier proposal of locating the test-firing range in the Dumri-Dumra region of Gaya was shelved, the reason being that Dumri-Dumra was a highly populated area, with places of religious significance and a civilized town. The adivasis might well have argued that a similar reasoning could have been used to stall the Piparwar Coal Project, located in the Northern Karanpura Valley, which is widely known for its archaeological significance especially ancient tribal art.

It was to be expected therefore, that the adivasis would go up in arms. The Jan Sangharsh Samiti (JSS) was formed to resist possible displacement . The Samiti began at the village level, had block level committees and an apex body in Gumla. It commanded the complete loyalty of the people, and the slogan *Jaan denge, jamin nahin denge* [We shall give our lives but not our land] could be found written everywhere -- on walls, roadsides, tinboards, in the fields etc. Towards the end of the movement, however, the slogan had become more militant -- *Jamin nahin denge, Jaan bhi nahin denge* [We shall give neither our land nor our lives], reflecting the inflexible resolve of the adivasis to attain their goal.

Resistance took on many forms. Petitions were written, mass rallies were organized at local and national levels and the army's entrance into the area was blocked. Activists held meetings with local

political representatives and opposition parties were provided platforms to voice their concerns. Cultural forms of resistance also came to light - torch-light processions were taken out on Sunday evenings, and on Saturdays, women hung green mango leaves on their front doors as a symbol of protest. Everyday, the beat of drums brought the people of the region together in a procession which concluded in information sharing.[24]

In case of the Koel Karo Project, resistance took on a decidedly militant from. Whenever the project team went to the worksite at Lohajimi it encountered heavy resistance from armed local tribals. The project incurred heavy cost and time over-runs on account of this resistance, and the project cost had to be revised upwards from Rs.405 crore to Rs.1200 crore. The Narmada agitation, on the other hand, was more Gandhian in character, and by and large, marked by an absence of violence.[25]

It is clear therefore, that adivasis have adopted various modes of struggle in their quest for justice. The popular mood, in some cases, has been aggressive, encouraging the adoption of militant methods. In others, there has been a quite determination, which has manifested itself in non-violent non-cooperation. Again, some tactics have been overtly political, while others have belonged to the cultural realm. It may be concluded from this that adivasi resistance politics has definitely come of age in India.

At this juncture, a question needs to be asked. The resistance put up by tribals, on the face of it, aims at stalling development projects with a view to prevent displacement. Is it possible, however, to attribute to this resistance a deeper meaning, or to situate it within a larger scheme of significance? Does this resistance, affect in any way, the political lives of adivasi communities and transform their identity as citizens? It is to these questions that we turn now.

It may be noted that the question of displacement does not stand isolated from the other issues that comprise the adivasis' list of grievances. As should be obvious from the discussion on land and its significance for adivasis, displacement, is replete with social and cultural significance. As such, a struggle against displacement automatically translates into a struggle for the preservation of adivasi cultural identity. Thus, the Koel Karo or Narmada agitations cannot be understood simply as an assertion of land-rights, or of the right to economic survival. In the same way, the tribals' striving for material empowerment is not just that. Once we acknowledge the fact that economic marginalization serves only to reproduce and reinforce existing cultural hegemony, such striving appears a bid for cultural empowerment as well.

Again, industrialization, which necessitates displacement, has an adverse impact on the environment. As such, the struggle against mines that cause soil erosion, factories that pollute rivers etc., cannot but be

of some ecological consequence. Thus adivasis, through their agitations, become the practitioners of an Ecological Marxism that marries a concern for conservation with the issue of social justice.

Moreover, a critique of displacement is also a critique of the state. For those adivasi communities who had been enjoying access to the commons prior to displacement, displacement leads to a restructuring of the relationship between the adivasis and the state. But for those tribes for whom displacement is the latest episode in a long history of deprivation, the critique of the state continues or is developed further.

Coming to the realm of politics, the observation may be made that the politics of the marginalized and the subaltern generally occupy the political space left unoccupied by mainstream politics. Subaltern sectors are usually alienated from the political process; as such, social movements arising in this sector tend consciously to keep out of electoral politics. Given their pre-occupation with obstructing the state, such movements could even be described as 'anti-politics ' T h e politicization necessitated by anti-displacement agitations, however, succeeds in bringing about a subtle change in this situation. The experience of struggle not only enhances the sense of political community but also leads to an expansion of political horizons. Organizing an *andolan* [movement] often involves an usage of legal channels, and associating with political parties and leaders sympathetic

for whatever reason, to the adivasi cause. In some cases, the political party may take it upon itself to make displacement an electoral issue, in which case the adivasi constituency cannot but vote for that party, having now a stake in the electoral process. Yet another element that contributes towards the evolution of a participant political culture among tribals is their realization that they command considerable bargaining power vis-a- vis the state. The numerical strength enjoyed by them in adivasi-majority areas forces mainstream political parties to accommodate their interests. As such adivasis end up using the issue of displacement, and the other related issues of socio-economic upliftment, political autonomy etc., as a basis for challenging an elitist conception of democracy. Yet another fact that comes to light is that displacement, even as it saps the strength of adivasi communities by dispersing them, serves at the same time, to reinforce their sense of solidarity as and when the affected decide to fight for their rights.

Before concluding there are certain observations that I would like to make.

I have tried in this last chapter to put forth a deromanticized understanding of displacement. That displacement is a traumatic experience cannot be denied and I have recognized it as such. But reality does not always warrant the characterization of displacement as marking a radical change-over from pre-modernity to a lamentable loss

of tribal tradition. The contrast is not that simple, in cultural as well as economic terms. Culturally, adivasi communities have been exposed to acculturative influences over whole centuries; as such, they are hardly in a state of cultural isolation. Economically, though displacement does at times precipitate severe impoverishment the situation, often enough, is not one of displacing relatively prosperous populations but ones who are already considerably vulnerable to marginalization.

I have also described those processes whereby the displaced [or those about to be displaced] have sought to make the best of the situation, politically speaking. They have capitalized on their status as 'oustees' [potential or otherwise] to initiate a politics of resistance which has led ultimately to a tacit acceptance of the political process. Displacement, as such may be said to have been a factor, however small, in the evolution, amongst tribals of political consciousness that goes beyond exclusivist primordial categories. For even as they emphasize their tribal status in the course of agitations, the tactics adopted by them at times resemble those of pressure groups working in a secular setting. This bodes well, though in a remote manner, for the process of nation-building. For even as adivasis contest, through their politics, the decisions of the state, the legislative, elective and legal channels adopted by them signify an overall acceptance of its legitimacy.

NOTES

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Conclusion

CONCLUSION

My project, as stated at the outset has been the demystification of the processes of social change amongst the adivasis of Jharkhand. There is a very large corpus of anthropological and sociological literature that deals with the Hinduization, or Sanskritization of tribes in India. There is a great deal of historical evidence that suggests that tribes, like low Hindu castes, took recourse to cultural emulation [whereby they sought to adopt the ritual life-styles of the higher castes] as the path to social mobility. While this remains an uncontested truth, it is, however, not the only truth. There was a time when adivasis were the dominant community in many parts of India, exercising political authority and generally laying down the law. Pre-colonial history provides evidence of Aryan communities who, upon migrating to such adivasi majority areas, gave up the Sanskritic notions of purity and pollution and wholeheartedly embraced tribal ways of life. Such tribalization was also frequent among Hindus of low castes, especially peasants who had in any case, a lot in common with the adivasi populace. This phenomenon of tribalization, however, finds rare mention in works on social change, helping thereby in the emergence of a wide-eyed anthropology that is forever bemoaning the onset of universializing processes of homogenization that claim tribal culture and identity as their victims.

These homogenizing processes are, without doubt, an established reality. Furthermore, the counter-acculturative trend represented by tribalization is too marginal to effectively counteract this larger and dominant trend of homogenization. But it is, even so, a trend all right and deserves to be recognized as such. Not to do so would be to subscribe to an unidirectional theory of culture-change, that refuses to acknowledge that culture flows upwards from 'little traditions' to 'great traditions' even as it, for most of the time, flows downward in the opposite direction.

The issue of preserving the sanctity of tribal culture has necessitated a discussion of the socio-cultural resurgence that is a feature of the Jharkhand movement in its present stage. This reawakening of cultural consciousness among Jharkhandi adivasis offers fresh evidence that tribal culture is far from being dead. What is of particular interest, however, from the standpoint of my deromanticizing agenda, is the motivation behind this reawakening. Culture, in this case, does not emerge as an end in itself, but as a means to an end, the end being defined as the reinforcement of solidarity, demanded in its turn by the imperatives of tribal politics. Culture, therefore, in not as pristine a realm as we would like to imagine -- here too, the demands of politics leave their impact, determining, in a crucial way, the shaping of culture.

What is true of culture is also true of 'identity' and 'ethnicity'. I

have adopted here the distinction made by S.C. Dube and others between primordial and instrumental ethnicity.[1] Whereas primordial ethnicity is deeply held and emerges out of the commonality of race, instrumental ethnicity is more concerned with the uses to which it can put the distinctiveness emerging out of this commonality. I have argued that Jharkhandi adivasi politics is best understood through the category, of instrumental, rather than primordial identity. Adivasi politics in India, as a whole, is heavily dependent on the invocation of 'tribal' status. In Jharkhand too, it is the identity of the people as 'adivasis' rather than as 'poor', or 'downtrodden' or 'Jharkhandis' that has given politics in this region its particular flavour. Marxist leaders, trying to forge a worker-peasant alliance in the region have gone so far as to say that it is ethnicity, rather than class, that is the crucial strategic factor in the area. No wonder then that the issues articulated, and demands made by the Jharkhand movement have tended to predominantly, reflect the adivasi nature of the constituency -- witness the demands for the recognition of ol chiki, its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule, and so on.

Ethnic identity, together with culture, have thus proved malleable tools in the able hands of Jharkhandi leaders. Both have been made to serve a rabidly political purpose, ethnicity as a factor in mobilization and culture in its solidarity-forging capacity. Jharkhand furthermore permits us to draw the conclusion that identity is

essentially an elastic phenomenon - its boundaries subject to being drawn tight or loose, as the occasion demands. It is the contention of some that it is ethnicity that has provided the civilizational base of the Jharkhand movement. This however, has not prevented the leadership of the movement from defining Jharkhand as a 'nationality' comprising both adivasis and non-adivasis, peasants and landlords alike. This recent trend not only diverges sharply from the definition of Jharkhand as the 'land of adivasis', but also from its definition, by the Marxist Coordination Committee as '*Lalkhand*', symbolizing primarily a worker-peasant solidarity. It emerges clearly therefore that identity, projected if not real, can serve the conservative purpose of hiding class conflict as well as the radical one of bringing it to the surface. How identity is defined by the leadership in question depends not only on the circumstances, but also on the political colour of the leadership. As for the masses, while they have clearly shown a preference for ethnicity, in so far as the choice of banner is concerned, they have proceeded to define that ethnicity at many levels. Jharkhandi politics today sees a pan-tribal consciousness in operation, within which individual tribes have submerged their sub-tribal identities. But these sub-tribal identities remain realities, to be asserted when the need presents itself. The flexibility of boundaries is further demonstrated by the forging of linkages with the poor Hindu peasant and artisan populations of the area, who share with the adivasis a common economic experience and

socio-cultural field. These linkages have considerably extended the social base of the movement. It however needs to be mentioned that such bonds, forged with the subaltern sectors of Hindu society, should be distinguished from the opportunistic embracing by the leadership, of rich dikus, who are in every possible way opposed to adivasi interests and have merely joined the movement to make political capital.

It ought to be clear from the above discussion that a nostalgic theoretical framework, that sees reality in terms of the binary oppositions of classical sociology [tradition vs modernity; folk vs urban society; mechanical vs organic solidarity; Gemeinschaft vs Gesellschaft, etc] cannot be applied to the case of Jharkhand. The emergent reality here, in fact, invalidates such oppositions. Thus we have communities that owe their emergence as political actors to the mobilization of primordialities; having so emerged, however, they have little hesitation in embracing a modern, secular, pressure-group politics. India, in fact, has proved that primordial identities, far from endangering civil politics, extends its social base. Here, we have clearly an invalidation of the tradition - modernity dichotomy. As Clifford Geertz put it,[2] the democratic political process does not do away with ethnocentrism; it merely modernizes it. As such, it is on the basis of ethnocentrism that communities such as tribes are able to carve out their own political space, and ironical as it may sound, make easier the task of nation-building.

By way of concluding, it may be said that there are often many realities underlying a situation, and conflicing ones at that. To take the situation arising out of developmental displacement, we have a community suffering from economic dispossession and socio-cultural disarticulation. But the story does not end here. The community uses its 'wronged' status to pressurize the state for resettlement and rehabilitation, claiming these as their rights. As opportunistic political parties, looking to their own electoral gain, cash in on the situation and place the issue of rehabilitation on the electoral agenda, the displaced adivasis acquire a stake in the electoral process and participate in it. Thus, we have on one hand, a situation of extreme alienation and anger, and on the other, the emergence of a political will to redress their status, that, ironically enough, serves to mitigate that alienation. For it is through the state apparatus that rights have to be demanded, and redressal sought. Here, we see the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of domination that has throughout characterized the history of adivasis in India.[3] Like Sisyphus, they have sought to transform their condition even as they have remained limited by it. They have sought to reject the dominant ideology and construct their own; in this effort, however, they have not been averse to appropriating elements of that very dominant ideology that they set out to reject. It is this pragmatism that has ensured their survival even as they have tried to transcend that pragmatism.

NOTES

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