

AN UNBROKEN HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

Exploration from a tribal perspective

*Pradip Prabhu*¹

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429437076-14/unbroken-history-broken-promises-pradip-prabhu>

The starting point of this critical review is that the history, of the dealings of the post-colonial Indian state with the tribal people, is inextricably linked to the independent nation's failure to recognise the incessant uprisings of the tribal people against the colonial state as freedom movements.² Tribal India was in ferment right from the beginning of the East India Company's forays into the tribal tracts. Already in 1778, Tilka Mahji led the fierce resistance of the Pahariya people and fought the illegal entry of the sepoys of the East India Company into their forested homelands in the Mal-Pahariya Region. Tilka Mahji paid with his life for the nascent struggle for freedom, grossly misinterpreted as a mere act of insubordination. Political arrangements, which recognised tribal 'nations' co-existing with established states and empires prior to the colonial period, were due to the absence of dominant commercial interests in their forested tribal homelands. In retrospect, subsequent uprisings in the tribal areas were triggered, almost totally, by intrusion into their territories and attempts at domination by the colonial powers and their minions.

The consolidation of colonial rule in India was virtually co-temporaneous with forest denudation both in the British Isles and its earlier colonies, making capture of India's rich forests an important goal of colonial conquest. But intrusions into their forests were stoutly resisted by the tribal people, ensuring that conquest with a strong military thrust into resistance areas including the remote forested regions remained the goal of the colonial rulers till 1887. In a calculated exercise, tribal areas were opened up to civil and military officials, timber contractors

in erstwhile feudal states adjusted to colonial rule following surrender of their erstwhile livelihood, as it meant no more than a shift in loyalty from one ruler to another or erstwhile rulers functioning under the supervision of the new rulers. But the same did not prevail in the tribal homelands as the imposition of the colonial rule was viewed as an act of subjugation. Therefore 'confrontation' continued as the quintessence of the situation in tribal areas after the rise of the 'colonial state' as a formal political and administrative authority. Widespread discontent led to the first Ho uprising of 1820, which was quelled only to re-emerge in 1821. The Oraons rebelled in 1820, 1832, 1890. The Kols organised an insurrection in 1831-32 which was directed mainly against government officers and private moneylenders. A more stirring source of inspiration for future struggles was the Santhal uprising of 1854-57 led by Kanu and Sidhu, two brothers in their mid-20s (Banerjee 1984: 15-16).

While the uprisings were brutally suppressed by the military might of the colonial powers, legislative measures aimed at addressing tribal protest were simultaneously put in place. As early as 1773 the Houses of Parliament, admitting the reality of long disturbed tracts and a virtually uncontrolled empire, passed a Regulating Act making the company responsible for governing these territories and appointed Warren Hastings as Governor General of Bengal with supervisory authority over Madras and Bombay Presidencies (Hibbert 1980: 18). Hastings introduced a cultural policy advocating an informed mode of governance, grounded in liberal political thought. Its political implications were spelt out in the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, consisting of two complementary components of colonial strategy for governing the tribal homelands: regulate protest and conflict and practice cultural non-interference (Savyasaachi 1998: 9).

But though theoretically the political rulers in Great Britain postulated cultural non-interference; its representatives displayed hardcore opposition to the cultural and politico-legal institutions of the tribal people as they challenged colonial domination and commercial exploitation of natural resources. Additionally 'opposition' continued as a significant intervention against the Forest Department, who 'in the name of "scientific management" sought to eliminate the "wasteful practice of shifting cultivation" and evict tribals from their homelands by creating "Reserved" forests' (Report of the Bombay Forest Commission 1887: 132). These measures severely threatened the social and cultural certitude of tribal communities, rooted in their way of life

with the forest at the centre (Prabhu and Shiraz 2013: 8) and with physical and cultural survival under threat as a result of the restrictions, 'the Rampa leaders found adherents . . . and soon five thousand square miles were affected by the rebellion' (Haimendorf 1992: 36-7).

Each rebellion against colonial rule, of which close to a hundred have been unearthed by subaltern historians,³ calls for a critical distinction in the historical narrative of freedom movements in regions where citizen subjects quickly adjusted to the transfer of power from various ruling dynasties to the new colonial rulers and the uprisings in the tribal homelands. The important questions are: what were the distinctive ground realities in the tribal tracts which made them consistently reject and continuously rebel against colonial rule? Were the rebellions of the tribal people in colonial India similar to the rebellions of other Indigenous people against colonial domination in other parts of the globe?

A careful examination of fragments of history, oral traditions, narratives and socio-political systems leads to a tentative answer – that the tribal people in India, as did other Indigenous peoples across the globe, considered themselves in their homelands as 'first nations'.⁴ Tribal confrontations with the colonisers, interchangeably termed as 'uprisings', 'rebellions', 'insurrections', were actually an attempt to overthrow the yoke of colonial rule while re-affirming their own politico-legal systems and institutions of governance. Whatever be the level of 'primitivity' that mainstream scholars assign to their political formations, the 'tribal first nations' were constituted by a 'people' who adhered to sui generis participatory democratic 'governance systems' developed by them within their 'homelands' from distant times which were de facto recognised and respected by other neighbouring rulers. Therefore the numerous 'tribal nations' principally identified the incursion of the British as an attempt at conquest of their 'nation' and therefore fought the 'capture' of their territories, the imposition of the alien system of colonial governance on their traditional institutions and obliteration of their citizenship of their nations, as was the situation in most other first nations across the globe.

Modern scholarship would admit that tribal communities developed technologically, philosophically, ideologically and socio-politically, following a trajectory vastly different from the caste-stratified Indian people. The tribal societal construct is grounded on the respect for the 'other', including nature, which in turn is sustained by ecological lifestyles and cultures. While distortions have emerged, resulting from an imposed modernity, tribals developed and still subscribe to relatively

egalitarian, inclusive societal self-governing systems which still survive in several regions. Tribal communities evolved sophisticated mechanisms of internal solidarity to provide for the dis-advantaged and dis-privileged; their investment in nature was to address need and not promote greed; practices of community administration are not adversarial and seek to restore harmony; community positions are offices of service and not power; silence is not submission but deference when relating to the other. Their ethical standards are rooted in not taking advantage of another's disadvantage (weakness) and trust is based on respect for the other. Their choices have been based on conviviality with all life forms; consuming forest food, generally associated with poverty, is actually enjoying nature's nutritional security. Ecological lifeways can be erroneously associated with poverty and backwardness.

An important feature that needs recognition is that the matrix of philosophical premises around human being and becoming, ethical standards and ethos, living cultures and functional relations are organic parts of an evolved civilisation, observed with a great degree of similarity in most tribes. The 'backwardness' being imposed on 'advanced' tribal consciousness is a construct of the elites espousing a modernity advocated by capitalism. The ruling elites seek the integration of the tribal in their mainstream on their terms, which has remained an important feature of a global history of external and internal colonisation over the past four centuries. Hence we view backwardness as an essential construct of colonisation, both external and internal.

Admittedly, a distinctive eco-socio-political environment prevailed in the tribal tracts. Ironically, isolation from mainstream Indian society provided the matrix for tribal society to evolve an independent civilisational construct, distinctive political organisation of society and standards of human behaviour in a continuous dialectico-dialogical interface with their natural and social environment. These patterns of collective survival persisted for centuries and survive to a degree in the 'excluded areas of the northeast', where colonial hegemonic expansion, constrained by resistance and combined with inaccessible terrain, ensured traditional tribal/Indigenous lifeways and human-nature relationships to survive. Land was viewed not as a commodity but the basis of survival, citizenship, historical mooring, political organisation and symbolic significance. Nature ensured a sense of identity and rootedness because of its durability and permanence and a deep sense of the supernatural, spiritual and ancestral attachment, so much that the entire eco-socio-politico-cultural life revolved around land to which they belonged (Longkumer 2014: 23-4).

Orality also played an important role in the eco-socio-politico-cultural construct of the tribe and contributed to the development of its philosophical foundations, metaphysical reasoning, ethical standards and critical thought. The relational frame was founded on mutual affirmation of the other and the collectivity, an example of which is the philosophical narrative of the Warli people; *Kahankar & Ahankar* (Prabhu and Bulsara 2014: 2-7). Two major inferences can be drawn from the narrative in the present. The first inference is the 'word is dynamic and infused power' and respected as a 'word of honour'. Orality also evolved into the principle of mutual 'affirmation' as the core of societal formation and engagement, built on affirmation of the other rather than assertion of the self as the basis of civility. It was manifest in internal solidarity which remained a central feature of their collective existence. Orality affirmed and reproduced conviviality, inclusive of all life forms and the interdependence of human and nature at the core of their social ecology.

Resistance to an alien state was also built into their consciousness. A thought-provoking illustration is the rite of passage of initiation a new born into the community through the chanting of the *suin* (midwife). The ceremony, performed for every new born child, reiterates and reinforces the four tenets of tribal Warli consciousness. The first two tenets affirm dictates are associated to conviviality with nature. They begin with *wagha, nadgala bihijas nako* – don't fear the tiger and the bear, live with them as part of your 'extended family'. The second tenet is *vizlaval tar paljas nako* – don't run away from lightning and thunder, align your life with the forces of nature. The third tenet is the principle of internal solidarity *dari koni aala tar bhukha ghaljosh nako* – never send anyone who comes to your door hungry; and fourth tenet is the principle of self-governance, *sarkarchya payrya chadjas nako* – don't remain in awe of the state, govern yourselves and deal with the state on equal terms. The *suin* then continues with other tenets of tribal life. Tribal consciousness traverses multiple conceptual terrains, political, historical, social, sacred, emotional and existential. Most importantly their homeland territory is referred to as 'des' (nation or country) (Sharma 2010: 28) the site of belonging as a people, within whose boundaries the community manages its affairs according to their customs and whose boundaries have been defended with their lives.

Forced to address the continuous uprisings emerging across the tribal homelands, the British introduced two administrative arrangements to diffuse conflict and prevent its spread. Inaccessible areas

predominantly inhabited by 'un-reconciled tribal populations' were kept, under notional military control but without a civilian administration, as non-regulated areas while accessible territories had a civilian administration provided by the Regulation Act 1834, based on the experience of the 1820s in the Aran Hills in North East India (Singh 1982: ix). As early as 1874, the British administration promulgated the Scheduled Districts Act to administer the tribal tracts, enabling the government to notify laws appropriate for enforcement in the Scheduled Districts (Mehta 1991: 77-8). The Government of India Act, 1919, allowed the Governor General in Council to declare any territory in British India to be a 'Backward Tract' where a law could apply only if the Governor General so directed. By defining the role of Governor to be a 'cultural administrator', colonial historians sought to deny the rationality of nationality behind tribal resistance and revolt. In line with their 'cultural imperialism' revolts were labelled as 'backward looking' and 'un-progressive', 'blind hitting out' of a people enslaved by a 'primordial' or 'superstitious consciousness' (Hardiman 1992: 2).

The practices of the colonial administration were formalised in the Government of India Act 1935 and the Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order 1936, which classified the tribal areas of the relatively inaccessible northeast as 'wholly excluded areas' and the more accessible and thickly forested Central Indian tracts as 'partly excluded' (Agency) areas. By excluding these areas and keeping administration to a minimum, the British unwittingly ensured that the tribal people retained their traditional self-governing institutions. Ironically Government of India continued the same policy after Independence though earlier the nationalists saw the administrative arrangements as a device to retain British control over selected areas (Haimendorf 1992: 39). The resistance did not stop; the tribals rose in revolt, were suppressed with brute force and occasionally handled through special arrangements, like the Wilkinson Rules, which recognised the autonomous Munda-Manki system of governance in the Kolhan region of Jharkhand (Prabhu 1998: 232).

On 13 December 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru moved the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly of India, which proclaimed that the soon-to-be-free nation would be an 'Independent Sovereign Republic'. Its Constitution would guarantee citizens 'justice, social, economic and political; equality of status; of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality'. The

AN UNBROKEN HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

resolution went on to say that 'adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes'. In moving the resolution, Nehru invoked the spirit of Gandhi and the 'great past of India', as also modern precedents as the French, American and Russian Revolutions. The debate on the Objectives Resolution went on for a week. Among the speakers were Purushottomdas Tandon, a conservative Hindu; Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a right-wing Hindu; Scheduled Caste leader B.R. Ambedkar; liberal lawyer M.R. Jayakar; socialist M.R. Masani; woman activist Hansa Mehta and communist Somnath Lahiri. After all these stalwarts had their say, a tribal leader and former hockey player Jaipal Singh rose to speak.

'As a jungli, as an Adibasi', said Jaipal,

I am not expected to understand the legal intricacies of the Resolution. But my common sense tells me that every one of us should march on that road to freedom and fight together. Sir, if there is any group of Indian people that has been shabbily treated it is my people. They have been disgracefully treated, neglected for the last 6,000 years. The history of the Indus Valley civilisation, a child of which I am, shows quite clearly that – most of you here are intruders as far as I am concerned. It is the newcomers who have driven away my people from the Indus Valley to the jungle fastness. . . . The whole history of my people is one of continuous exploitation and dispossession by the non-aboriginals of India punctuated by rebellions and disorder, and yet I take Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru at his word. I take you all at your word that now we are going to start a new chapter, a new chapter of independent India where there is equality of opportunity, where no one would be neglected.

(Guha 2016: 105)

Freedom from colonial rule did bring new hopes and aspirations as the cause of the tribal people was accepted as a national task with a clear constitutional commitment. But for the tribal people, the history of dishonouring the promises made to the valiant fighters for freedom had just begun.

During British rule, as one would have expected from any colonising power, an administrative perspective existed which considered the homelands of tribals fighting for freedom as 'unregulated and

inhabited by un-reconciled tribes'. It would be presumed that the initial colonial definition of the regions of tribal revolt to be subsequently revised to 'backward tracts inhabited by savages' and later redefined to 'excluded and partially excluded areas' inhabited by primitive people. The tribal people felt betrayed with the post-Independence nomenclature of 'scheduled areas inhabited by backward scheduled tribes' which was a continuation of the same colonial definition of the tribals. It is no surprise that Jaipal Singh, a tribal member of the Constituent Assembly, began to seriously question the 'hope' that the independent nation held out to the tribal people, who by no stretch of imagination were 'backward'.

The betrayal of tribal aspirations in the new independent nation began with the refusal to recognise the tribal uprisings as attempts to free their 'des' by overthrowing colonial rule. Sadly while laying the foundations of democratic India, the Constitutional Fathers neither examined the logic of 'excluded/partially excluded area' arrangements during colonial rule. Nor did the leaders of Independent India make a serious attempt to ascertain why the tribal people fiercely resisted British conquest and what the tribals sought from an Independent India. Continuing to adhere to the colonial view that the tribal people were primitive and backward, the Constitution sought to deal with problems of social justice without examining issues of cultural difference. The provisions for the tribal people, evolved in the debates, followed the parameters of the liberal political tradition adopted by the British rulers. The hundreds of tribal uprisings and the blood of thousands of valiant fighters from the forest lay in vain.

The failure to reject the colonial thought matrix of 'excluded/partially excluded area' was clearly reflected in Article 244, even though the Constitution created a special niche for the tribal areas, the Fifth Schedule was claimed a 'Constitution within the Constitution'; financial requirements for welfare and administration were made a 'charge on the Consolidated Fund of India' and the executive power of the Union extended to giving of directions concerning administration and welfare of Scheduled Tribes. The lack of serious anthropological discussion and debate leading to an informed perspective impacted the process to define 'tribes' and understand 'ethnicity'. To make things worse, tribal communities were perfunctorily classified as Scheduled Tribes with no conscious efforts made to ascertain tribal expectations. Centuries of continuous tribal struggles for freedom from British rule were not even examined, let alone understood. It was a sad day in the history of the tribal people of Independent India when the term

'Scheduled Tribe' was clearly viewed by the nation builders as an intermediate stage of 'backwardness' prior to the absorption of the primitive savages into the 'civilised mainstream'. Tribal aspirations for self-governance were perfunctorily subsumed under the task of nation building with the definitive goal of 'assimilation' of 'backward tribes' into the national mainstream.

The backward appellation suited the ruling elites as it provided a convenient way to follow a strategy no different from the ones which were imposed on the tribal people of the first nations, where the process of development began with 'residential schools' to de-school and alienate the children of the Indigenous 'red indians' of their language, history, culture, traditions and knowledge and subsequently colonise their minds, alienate them from their 'un-civilised past' and then prompt them to follow the 'teachings' of the coloniser. Sadly this practice continues in the present educational practice of the 'ashram schools'.

The dice was cast, when the prolonged tribal freedom struggle of 20 decades was subsumed as an anecdotal footnote of history when defining the agenda of nation building itself. It is not clear whether it was an error of history or a deliberate strategy to splinter organically linked tribal homelands so as to pre-empt a tribal upsurges like those of the colonial period. To pre-empt a Bhil leader of the stature of 'Tantya Bhil' or a 'Khajya Naik', terrors for the colonial rulers till their summary execution by hanging; the homelands of the Bhils were split four ways in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra; with the Bhils of Rajasthan speaking Rajasthani, those of Madhya Pradesh speaking Hindi, Bhils of Gujarat speaking Gujarati and the Bhils of Maharashtra speaking Marathi. None of the later generations of the erstwhile Bhil community would be able to communicate with each other. Like the homelands of the Bhils, the ancestral homelands of the Gonds in the central Indian tracts, often referred to as Gondwana, was distributed in four states, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra, with the Gonds of Chhattisgarh speaking Chhattisgarhi, Gonds of Madhya Pradesh speaking Hindi, those of Maharashtra speaking Marathi, Gonds of Adilabad speaking Telugu. The suppression of the Gondi language as a medium of education soon after independence effectively eliminated any possibility of regrouping of one of the nation's largest tribal communities. It was no different with the Jharkhand tribal communities. Their homelands were also split in four parts. One part of tribal Bihar was merged with Bengal and spoke Bengali, another part was remained erstwhile Bihar,

a third part was merged with Madhya Pradesh and spoke Hindi, the fourth part was merged with Orissa and spoke Oriya. It was a repeat of the Tower of Babel as the different sections of a tribal community were not able to communicate with each other and were effectively fragmented, never to rise up again.

In 1958 in his Foreword to the second edition of *A Philosophy for NEFA* by Verrier Elwin, the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, articulated a set of premises of development in his Panchsheel Policy for the tribal people, a classical manifestation of Gandhi-Nehru socialist humanism influenced by Verrier Elwin. Recognition and respect for difference and diversity of culture, affirmation of rights, enhancement of the quality of life and the dignity of the people as important development indices were at variance with what was the stated or presumed though unstated agenda of mainstreaming and development. 'Panchsheel' presented an alternative development paradigm enshrined in five fundamental principles: (1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture. (2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected. (3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory. (4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions. (5) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.⁵

The Panchsheel Policy best reflected a model of tribal emancipation and advancement, which would ensure development with dignity for the tribal people (Bhowmik 1985: 11). The approach to tribal development after Independence consisted of adopting a middle path between the extremes of complete insulation and free play of market forces in the tribal homelands, as differentiated from the 'leave alone policy' of the British rulers. Nehru believed that the national leaders 'cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas'. At the same time 'we should avoid over-administration in these areas. It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function' and desired that development space be ensured for the tribal people to develop along the lines of their own genius. Concern was shown for the cultural heritage of the tribal people, which would infuse into the development

process. This would mean development would be routed and modified to ground realities through their own social and cultural institutions and not overwhelmed and displaced by the maze of modern, formal, economic institutions. Thereby the strengths of tribal societies would be the foundation on which would be built the edifice of development.

Administrative policy repeated at nauseam 'the tribesmen come first, last, and all the time' but this approach was meant for public consumption only and operationally the tribals were the losers. Take the examples of roads. Linking of tribal areas with the plains was considered a strategy to break historical tribal isolation, provide the easy exposure to interact with the men of the plains. But the tribals gained nothing of the speculated road benefits. Roads made the entry of traders into the tribal villages easy. All they did was to enhance consumerism. Entry of non-tribals also shattered the health of the tribals. Robbed of whatever little forest fruit and produce they had enjoyed, all they received from the traders who temporarily resided in the tribal villages was serious venereal diseases. Islands of wealth, largely composed of the urban and rural elites, were surrounded by a sea of poverty and misery, peopled by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe population (Doshi 1997: 18). Power attracted privilege and development was the bonus for the privileged few at the cost of the marginalised. Although the results of the first four Five Year Plans highlighted the failure of the dominant growth-driven agenda to restore security and dignity to the marginalised, the growth-driven approach continued⁶ with what was called greater emphasis, or by hindsight lip service to the advancement of the weaker and poorer sections of society.

Following the dismal results of four plan periods a new strategy for tribal development was launched during the Fifth Five Year Plan. Areas of tribal concentration were identified for larger investments and more focused efforts, with the goal of bridging the yawning gap between the rich and poor and resolving growing tribal and non-tribal economic disparities, but the intended goal was to bring the tribals into the national mainstream.⁷ The Tribal Sub Plan was conceived as a plan within the plan and envisaged pooling of all available fiscal and personnel resources in an integrated effort. In states with substantial tribal concentration, units comprising a few CD Blocks were selected, called Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) and made the focal point in planning and implementation of what came to be known as the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP). But it was not merely the proverbial slip between planning and implementation, but the logic of the development process unleashed on the tribal people which laid

low the high hope of the plan; the efforts to mainstream them divested them of their survival resources, placed them at the bottom of the heap and at the margins of the capitalist economy as ecological refugees.⁸

The Sixth Plan document on the approach to tribal development described the state of affairs without mincing words: 'In the name of tribal developments we have spent a lot of money during the last several Plans, but, notwithstanding Constitutional safeguards for the tribals, accounting at the end of the last period showed that actual benefits trickling down to the tribals have not been consistent with the promise we have made . . . 75 per cent of the total benefits have not reached that tribals'.⁹ Notwithstanding lofty premises, the sixth plan did no better and the evaluation of its achievements noted that achievements were found wanting in eight out of the nine indicators namely: i) the TSP was merely an agglomeration of state plans, ii) with little or no consultation of tribal beneficiaries, iii) arithmetical considerations in family-oriented programmes defeated efforts at poverty alleviation, iv) defective integration in administration of ITDP with other same level development programmes, v) totally ineffective implementation of protective measures particularly relating to exploitation, vi) unscientific territorial and population coverage of the programme, vii) failure to enhance inputs of appropriate technology and viii) inconsequential monitoring and evaluation. The state of affairs revealed only marginal gains and that too with small sections¹⁰ in widely dispersed locales. The TSP had failed to live up to expectations (Doshi 1997: 18). Once more a betrayal of the chance of a better life.

A radical review and reformulation of the TSP calling for depth and consistency of the thinking behind the approach and the system of implementation was called for. But notwithstanding repeated reports of ineffective and defective implementation which in effect undermined the goals of the Tribal Sub Plan, no serious thought or change took place in the subsequent plans. The observations during the current Tenth Five Year Plan are as revealing of the malaise in tribal development as the observations, without mincing words, indict the development executive at the central and the state. The ITDPs/ITDAs have by and large become defunct. It is an accepted fact that the TSP, in the form it is being implemented now, is not a success and the failure of the TSP can be attributed to the fact that seriousness in the implementation of the TSP concept was always lacking both at the central and state level. TSP allocations were not pursued seriously in letter and spirit and there were no concerted efforts to ensure that such resources benefited the target groups.

AN UNBROKEN HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

The report also observed that there was no enforcing mechanism to watch that allocations were actually spent on STs and not just reported notionally. It noted with alarm that most ministries merely make some notional allocations towards TSP every year. ITDPs/ITDAs, many a time, did not even get these funds from the state governments in time. The report highlighted the unpleasant fact that state governments have often not been willing to make a claim for central funds because of their own disinclination to bring in their own share with respect to centrally sponsored schemes, where cost sharing between the central government and the states is necessary. The report goes further to point out the reprehensible acts of some states to defraud the centre, on several occasions, by not contributing their own funds after availing central funds in spite of an agreement to contribute their own share.¹¹

Tribal peoples' dreams of development appear to have been subverted. They believed the process of development of Independent India, in the main, would be freedom from exploitation, restoration of their homelands and community survival resources appropriated from them under the colonial law of *res nullius*, emancipation from the colonial categories of poor, backward and primitive, affirmation of their communitarian culture of internal solidarity and co-operation, strengthening of their traditions of interdependence with nature, assertion on their strengths, both individual and communitarian, that would recognise their rights and restore their dignity. It was not to be.¹²

On the contrary development became a process of expanding liberties and license for the elites to appropriate their survival resources. Development led to the creation of elites, who mediated the presence of both the development bureaucracy and the outsider and leveraged their influence to syphon off both their survival resources, like land and resources earmarked for tribal development, increasing stratification, differentiation and fragmentation of their relatively egalitarian and solidarity-based societies, inculcation of tendencies of dependence and subservience to elites within and without their society, destruction of their communitarian strength based on a culture of independence and dignity.

In addition, the juggernaut of development displaced them by the millions, reducing them to ecological refugees, victims of a strategy of growth which forced them to pay the price for development while others reaped the fruits.¹³ A price which called for the surrender of their past, present and future and rendered them mute witnesses to

a hegemonic development paradigm they could not understand, let alone negotiate.¹⁴ It would not be an exaggeration to conclude that the developmental paradigm, systematically put in place as the core of the agenda of nation building, has been without doubt the most significant cause for the erosion and disintegration of the tribal way of life.

It would be too facile an explanation to limit the blame for the present situation on widespread corruption, place the onus for poor performance on lower functionaries, and reduce the dismal situation to an implementation failure. While these factors have played a role, the roots for the failure of development, as the process of expanding freedoms, lie in a failure to understand the tribal world, the overt dilution of the vision for tribal people¹⁵ and their place in nation building and the unchallenged imposition of the dominant development paradigm, which has effectively subverted the goals of tribal development.¹⁶

The reflections of Jawaharlal Nehru to say a decade after he presented his concept of Panchsheel for the advancement of the tribal communities remain as applicable to the present situation as ever:

I am alarmed when I see – not only in this country but in other great countries too – how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way to living. We are welcome to our way of living, but why impose it on others? . . . I am not at all sure which is the better way of living, the tribal or own. In some respects I am quite certain theirs is better. Therefore, it is grossly presumptuous on our part to approach them with an air of superiority, to tell them how to behave or what to do and what not to do. There is no point in trying to make of them a second-rate copy of ourselves.

(Shashi 1990: 24)

Mainstream administrative thinking refused to recognise that tribal resistance was grounded in the right to their survival resources, land, forests, culture and self-governing institutions. As a result, the history of near to seven decades of 'planned development' sadly indicate that internal colonialism replaced British rule, which viewed tribal homelands as a resource base to fuel India's march towards development, with little thought to the inevitable devastation of the tribal people. The widely pervasive powers of governors were never used and failed to protect the entitlements of the tribal people despite constitutional provisions and guarantees. Continuing the colonial practice of divide

and rule, compact areas of tribal majority are divided in different administrative units rendering the tribal people a minority in each unit, errors in scheduling tribal majority areas in 1954 remain uncorrected, tribal areas in West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala remained unscheduled. Colonial legislations like the Indian Forest Act, the Land Acquisition Act continued to ravage tribal homelands while the administration remained foreign in spirit and deed and the system made criminals of those who followed their age-old traditions (Sharma 1998b: 8).

Reports of Commissions on Tribal Questions, the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commissions, the Sheila Ao and the Debar Commission collect dust even while valuable cultures and languages are suppressed, traditional councils superseded, self-governing institutions disrupted by state-sponsored Panchayats and development patronage, tribal people forced to become part of the 'mainstream' in the name of development. This development, however, justified open loot of resource-rich tribal homelands, while dams, industries and mining have displaced more than 10 million tribals post-Independence. 'Public good' opened tribal homelands while the administration subserved the 'interests' of development as alienation of lands, displacement, bondage, disorganisation of their lives and destitution and starvation deaths were the 'gains' development had to offer (Prabhu 1992: 2528). The situation in tribal tracts can be equated to internal colonisation and the condition of the tribals, the destruction of their language, culture, history and ethos and spirituality borders on 'ethnocide' (Prabhu 1994: 480).

On the one hand, by not providing them with decent education and healthcare, the Government of India has dishonoured its constitutional guarantee to provide the tribals equal opportunities for social and economic development. On the other hand, the policies of the government have more *actively* dispossessed very many tribals of their traditional means of life and livelihood. For the tribals of the mainland live amidst India's best forests, alongside many of its fastest-flowing rivers, and on top of its richest mineral resources. Once, this closeness to nature's bounty provided them the means for subsistence and survival. However, as the pace of economic and industrial development picked up after Independence, the tribals have increasingly had to make way for commercial forestry, dams and mines. Often, the tribals are displaced because of the pressures and imperatives of what passes as 'development', sometimes, they are displaced because of the pressures and imperatives of development's equally modern

other: namely, 'conservation'. Thus, apart from large dams and industrial townships, tribals have also been rendered homeless by national parks and sanctuaries.¹⁷

But with history as a mute witness, Panchsheel was seen as a minor aberration and diversion from the overarching logic of capital and given a quick burial. The goals of tribal development were subsumed under the logic of capitalistic growth and its attendant indices. The tribal people were to be sacrificed on the altar of development as the nation marched forward plan after plan, till experience of the first four Five Year Plans, demolished fond expectations of growth and economic advancement and forced the planners to sit up and take notice of the fact that the rise in the standard of living did not result in equitable distribution of the national income. A candid analysis of the plan period shows that the elites have been out for the selling of the tribals. Without understanding the tribal social structure and its socio-historical ups and downs, assumptions were formulated at total variance with the realities of their structure. Under the guise that tribals enjoyed some constitutional safeties and securities and protective discriminations, according to which priorities of development benefits have to be given to the tribals. Administrative policy repeated at nauseam 'the tribesmen come first, last, and all the time' but this approach was meant for public

How many tribals have lost their homes and lands as a result of conscious state policy? The estimates vary – they range from a few million to as many as 20 million. Even if we cannot come up with a precise, reliable number, to the question 'How many tribals have been involuntarily displaced by the policies of the government of India', the answer must be: 'Too many'. The sociologist Walter Fernandes estimates that about 40 per cent of all those displaced by government projects are of tribal origin. Since tribals constitute roughly 8 per cent of India's population, this means that a tribal is five times as likely as a non-tribal to be forced to sacrifice his home and hearth by the claims and demands of development and/or conservation (Fernandes 2006).

Already, by the 1960s, reports commissioned by the Government of India were demonstrating the utter failure of the state in providing a life of dignity and honour to its tribal citizens. Nor was this a generalised critique; rather, the specific problems faced by the tribals were identified – namely, callous and corrupt officials, the loss of land, indebtedness, restrictions on the use of the forest and large-scale displacement. The evidence offered in these (and other reports) should have called for a course correction, for the formation and implementation of

policies that ensured that India's industrial and economic development was not to be at the cost of its tribal citizens (GoI 1961).

Much of the poverty and degradation they saw, said the committee, was the fault of us, the 'civilised' people. We have driven [the tribals] into the hills because we wanted their land and now we blame them for cultivating it in the only way we left to them. We have robbed them of their arts by sending them the cheap and tawdry products of a commercial economy. We have even taken away their food by stopping their hunting or by introducing new taboos which deprive them of the valuable protein elements in meat and fish. We sell them spirits which are far more injurious than the home-made beers and wines which are nourishing and familiar to them, and use the proceeds to uplift them with ideals. We look down on them and rob them of their self-confidence, and take away their freedom by laws which they do not understand.¹⁸

In the central Indian tribal tracts, the British were continuously confronted by tribal uprisings and as they were unable to curb the repeated uprisings by force or machination, they set in motion administrative changes to erode the tribal capacity to revolt. Central to their agenda was the abolition of community ownership of land and alienation from the forest, which was recognised as central to sustain community cohesion and internal solidarity. The colonial rulers rightly assessed the criticality of loss of land and forest in the life and psyche of the tribal people which could never be under-estimated (Prabhu 2007). Hence the colonial government segregated tribal homelands depending on administration's ability to quell revolts. The central Indian tracts, where quick military intervention was possible and state presence could be kept low by using the feudal and comprador bourgeoisie to facilitate population control and resource-extraction for the rulers, were declared 'partially excluded', while the hilly tribal tracts beyond the Brahmaputra were declared 'excluded' hence traditional systems survived.

The introduction of the alien concept of private property began with the permanent settlement of the British in 1793 and the establishment of the zamindari system which conferred control over vast territories; tribal territories were designated to feudal lords for the marginalised; the growth-driven approach continued with what was called greater emphasis, or by hindsight lip service to the advancement of the weaker and poorer sections of society. Sixty years have passed since Jaipal took Nehru and all the others at their word. What has been the fate of his people, the tribals, in this time? This chapter

will argue that, in many ways, the tribals of peninsular India are the unacknowledged victims of six decades of democratic development. In this period they have continued to be exploited and dispossessed by the wider economy and polity. At the same time, the process of dispossession has been punctuated by rebellions and disorder. Their relative and oftentimes absolute deprivation is the more striking when compared with that of other disadvantaged groups revenue collection by the British (Bijoy 2007).

The seizure of tribal homelands and their conversion into government property as Reserved, Protected Forests, Grazing and Wastelands accompanied the process of re-ordering land relations, from community to state to individual, across tribal areas of Central India. One example are the tribal tracts, adjacent to Mumbai in Thane district, where 'by a simple notification, nearly 401,566 acres of community lands, not privately owned, belonging to the tribals and controlled . . . through their elders, were classified as wasteland and taken away overnight and merged into Government Forest land amounting to nearly 50 per cent of the forest area of the District' (GoB 1887). By 1850, the colonial administration had brutally suppressed the practice of collective jhum cultivation, forced them out of the forest and resettled them in more or less permanent habitations on the fringes of the forest (Prabhu 2007). Community life broken and resistance shattered, the tribals were pushed into debt bondage and serfdom with their land alienated to merchants, traders, timber and excise contractors.

Tribal ecologic-social systems came under greater threat post-Independence, as the entrenched comprador class facilitated the transfer of power from the colonial powers and consolidated themselves in political and economic systems. The Indigenous or tribal civilisations were categorised as 'backward hindus' and subsumed to facilitate 'building a modern nation-state', at immense cost to their distinct societies, cultures and governance systems. This was considered a necessary condition for the Indian state to facilitate extraction of the mineral and natural resources in the tribal homelands. The state refused to recognise the existence of a distinct tribal civilisation and the compulsions of democracy curbed repression of alternative civilisational aspirations, though protection of their unique lifeways was promised by the first prime minister in his Panchsheel for the tribal people. Hence we need to recognise the distinction between the premises of conservationist versus consumptionist civilisations and recognise the premises of human development of the tribals accordingly. Blindly adopting standards of consumptionist capitalistic civilisations as the normative

AN UNBROKEN HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

order and comparing the present tribal conditions to the premises of the ruling elite will cause grave harm to the tribal people and the 'value' based lives that they live.

Almost all tribals without exception recognise that landlessness is the result of state surrender to land, mine and industry lobbies resulting in its indefensible failure to protect tribal land, a result of the lack of political will, complicit bureaucracy, dysfunctional governance, failure of the political elite, defenceless citizens, failure to uphold the law and Constitution, while meekly surrendering to a market-driven development paradigm of the dominant elites. This view is the basis of the Supreme Court's view in the Samatha Case, 'the purpose of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules to the Constitution is to prevent exploitation of truthful, inarticulate and innocent tribals and to empower them socially, educationally, economically and politically. . . . The Constitution intends that the land always should remain with the tribals'.¹⁹ This position is in akin to International Conventions (ILO 107 and 169), which call on governments to 'respect the special importance for the cultural and spiritual values of the people's relationship with lands or territories, or both as applicable, which they occupy or otherwise use, in particular the collective aspect of their relationship'. About 45 per cent tribals are landless today (Sharma 2000).

Maoist supporters emphasise huge class and wealth disparities in Indian society, especially in rural areas and the worsening situation since the 1990s, fed by a total failure to implement either land reforms right from Independence, or decentralised democracy in Scheduled Areas envisaged in PESA. Maoist supporters criticise mainstream political parties for colluding with exploitative structures defeating land reforms. From a position of supporting big dams in Andhra Pradesh, Maoists have recently made strong statements against the spate of secret deals with mining companies and the trend of tribal displacement, though evidence shows protection money from mining companies is often a main source of Maoist funding and leaders have been reticent on their own policy regarding mining (Dandekar 2013).

Indeed, many feel the tribals pay the price for development and official estimates place the number of project-displaced tribal people at 60 million since Independence with not even a third properly resettled. Most of the displaced are now asset-less rural poor, marginal farmers, quarry workers and migrant labour. Around 80 per cent are tribals. Official statistics testify that tribals have been the worst off on all indicators of development. Already at the bottom of the development pyramid, being deprived of their land completely pauperises

them, forcing many to move and live in subhuman conditions in the metros. The last two decades have also seen unprecedented agrarian distress, with more than two lakh farmers committing suicide, as per the National Crime Records Bureau, unparalleled events in Indian history (Shah 2015).

It is in this backdrop that we look at the palpable anger over forcible land acquisition. With 90 per cent of coal and more than 50 per cent of minerals, prospective dam sites and industrial enclaves mainly in tribal regions, tension over land loss grows, posing questions on our development strategy; the delicate fabric of Indian democracy is terribly frayed at the edges. In the remote tribal heartlands, the tribals feel a deep abiding sense of hurt, alienation and cynicism that they have allowed themselves to be helplessly drawn into a terrible vortex of violence and counter-violence, even when they know it will lead nowhere. There is no political will to protect tribal land to save the Indigenous/tribal communities in India. In the debates around the history and future of tribal communities, the role of the state, the role of mining and industrial development, private property and the landscape of legislation around tribal rights cannot but be on top of the agenda.²⁰

Every promise was broken by the political thrust of nation building which totally excluded the genuine aspirations for self-governance of their homelands, and worse still reduced the core of their expectations as first nations to wishful thinking. Almost 50 years after Independence, seeing an opportunity to bring in the issue of tribal self-governance in the 73rd Amendment, Dr. B.D. Sharma, then Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, ensured that a special act was made for the Scheduled Areas. Hence on the 23 December 1996, when the president of India gave his assent to the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, a new paradigm of governance was put into place, the praxis of administration was tempered in the crucible of tradition. A new chapter in the history of modern India was waiting to be written or re-written (Sharma 1998a: xiii). The authors of the new history would be the tribal people of India.

PESA was a qualitative leap forward for the 73rd Amendment. Gram Sabha (the village assembly) became part of the Constitution. Democratic decentralisation reached its logical conclusion in directly empowering the 'citizen' through 'participatory democracy'. PESA moved from 'development delivery' to 'empowerment'; from implementation to planning; from 'circumscribed involvement' to 'conscious participation'. PESA constructed tribal self-governance around six axes: i) affirmation that an organic self-governing community was

a habitation, ii) people and not the state are competent to be seized with all matters concerning their day-to-day life, iii) common tribals acting through community could decide the path of their development, enjoin the Gram Panchayat to prepare and implement developmental projects, iv) communities have right to be consulted on acquisition of or access to land and land-based resources, v) community has the capability and competence to adjudicate on and act to end all exploitative relations including land alienation, moneylending, market relations and alcohol, iv) the powers of the Gram Sabha, whose powers could not be usurped by a superior body.

Notwithstanding PESA's constitutional status and the mandatory compliance required, states with Schedule V areas were reluctant to amend their PR laws to protect the powers of the ruling elites; cosmetic amendments were introduced to give a semblance of compliance under pressure; PR laws of all the states are not in conformity with the central act, vary in their application and at times are even contrary to PESA. As PESA provides the opportunity for government to move away from 'eminent domain' to constructive 'trusteeship', but state governments still enjoy the colonial legal frame. Infusion of participation and transparency would uproot corruption, nepotism and diminish contractor-driven development, but it lies shattered as state governments refuse to put rules in place. 'Public Interest' has undermined 'Peoples Survival'. Minimal rules in ensuring compliance, and despite safeguards put in place by PESA, rights of the villagers are being violated with impunity. When the villagers voice their opposition in the consultation process, the final authority remains with the DC to overrule the opposition, a power that emanates from the colonial concept of 'eminent domain'. What are observed are adversarial relations between the officials and the villagers, with the state considering the demands and protests of the villagers to be a nuisance and in some cases even anti-social. It is critical that the observations of the Supreme Court in 'Samata v/s State of Andhra Pradesh',²¹ calling for a fundamental change in considering the tribals as shareholders rather than stake holders which could become the basis of resolution of this ticklish problem, are not even considered. Sadly most of the governments are ignorant of the observations of the Samata Judgement or follow them in the spirit in which they are formulated.

Land laws have failed to stop tribal land alienation following massive incursion of non-tribals into tribal areas. Estimates suggest that 48 per cent of the total land in Scheduled districts is in possession of non-tribals, while hundreds of thousands of cases are pending disposal

for decades. PESA took a radical step of conferring the right of identifying 'tribal alienation' where it takes place and with whom it takes place and the responsibility to take action to remedy the wrong at the place where the land lies and in the interests of justice. Sadly no state has taken any concrete legal steps with the exception of Madhya Pradesh where the Land Revenue Code incorporates the provisions of the PESA.

Our study showed that about 99 per cent of the members of the Gram Sabha and the elected representatives of PRIs and about 90 per cent of the official functionaries working at the village and block levels have said that they are not aware of PESA or the state conformity acts and their provisions. State governments have not made any specific efforts to educate the people about the provisions of the acts which aim at giving specific protection to the economic and political rights of tribal people in the Scheduled Areas and their traditional and cultural practices. Sad but true. There is blindness and feigned blindness, while the former calls for sympathy, the latter is nothing but criminal.

Where do we go from here is in the minds of tribal activists across the nation. 'Our life is one long struggle' has been on the lips of most activists of a myriad of tribal movements. Even while they seek to contend with the multiple betrayals and negations that have punctuated the interface of the Indian state with the tribal people, the movements seek to redefine their agendas in four directions, reaffirming of the tribal self, recapturing the control over resources, reclaiming political domain and redefining development. This nascent shift from resistance to resurgence, if taken to its logical conclusion, will be synonymous with ethno development. Broadly speaking ethno development is the practical manifestation of internal self-determination which is essentially in conformity with the constitutional provisions. Ethno implies respect for peoples, societies and cultures and their wishes and desires while development refers to a total phenomenon combining economics, politics and culture in an all-encompassing whole defined by the concerned people themselves. Ethno development then means control of the ethnic over its lands resources, social organisation and culture; it implies that the tribal ethnics have the right to freely negotiate with the state the kind of relationship they individually wish to have. In other words, it conveys that tribals will choose to confront the challenges posed by pseudo-modernity rooted in their traditional institutions and values. This is not a self-imposed isolation or political secession but redefining development and nation building on the basis of the legitimate aspirations of culturally distinct groups. Ethno

development should not be confused with romantic tribalism and does not seek to keep tribals outside the matrix of change or take refuge in the supposedly unadulterated romanticised past. It recognises the history of repeated betrayals of the tribal peoples, but it affirms the tribal peoples' right to elaborate and change as a strategy of survival. While assimilation, integration and apartheid condemn the future of tribal peoples into a blind alley, ethno development pleads that they have the right to choose what to conserve and what to change, what to adopt and what to reject from other cultures, and all these in what pace and intensity in this fast-changing world.

Tribal movements have come a long way. Twenty-five decades of struggle is a treasure of experience few communities can boast of. The tribal ethos, the way of life, the logic of relationships between person/person and person/nature could provide answers to the questions the world is asking. Tribal societies, particularly those who have retained their systems of meaning and traditions of community solidarity, egalitarian relationships, basic honesty and internal integrity, even in the face of a continuous onslaught, may perhaps provide solutions to a troubled planet. Tribal movements as processes of discovering and articulating synergistic solutions can probably contribute in a large measure to the learners of tomorrow. I hope this chapter serves as a step in that journey.

Notes

- 1 The title of this chapter has been specifically chosen in honour of Dr. B.D. Sharma, an IAS Officer who spent his entire career as a civil servant and, after a premature retirement from the Indian Administrative Service, his entire waking hours in the promotion and defence of the rights of the Indigenous/tribal people, beginning with an important assignment as the Vice-Chancellor of the strife-torn North Eastern Hill University, Shillong; which was established to cater to the academic aspirations of the tribal people of the North East, to turn around what could have deteriorated into an academic misadventure and to bring the University on an even keel. Dr. Sharma returned from NEHU to shoulder the responsibilities as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In his new assignment, Dr. Sharma produced two path-breaking reports, which placed before the Central Government the critical issues confronting the tribal people in the nation, particularly emergent internal colonialism. After finishing his term, Dr. Sharma led the Bharat Jan Andolan and played an irreplaceable role in the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Dr. Sharma repeatedly referred to the history of the treatment of the tribal people by the state in post-colonial India as an 'Unbroken History of Broken Promises'. His last book also used the same title. As a close colleague of

- Dr. Sharma and a member of the core committee of Bharat Jan Andolan, the author is using the same title as a mark of honour and respect for a person whose life was circumscribed by the struggle of tribal India against de facto disempowerment, alienation of their resources and destruction of their ethos and identity.
- 2 The arguments put forward in this chapter are the result of four decades of careful participant learning from a long history, both recorded and oral, of struggles of the tribal/Indigenous peoples across the nation and the rationale behind their incessant aspiration for freedom both during the rule of the colonial state and subsequently the post-colonial Indian state, albeit with different nuances. Though recorded history has been significantly deficient in its registry of post-colonial and post-Independence tribal uprisings, more recent efforts of scholars from the subaltern school have been able to unearth a large measure of historical anecdotes from the oral traditional knowledge of a large number of tribal communities.
 - 3 Subaltern historians have unearthed a wealth of information of tribal resistance to the colonial intrusion into the homelands (*des*); listed below are a cross section of tribal uprisings that have been identified so far. The first 1778 – The revolt of the Pahariyain Bihar-Malpahariya Region; 1784–1785 – the Kolis of Maharashtra; 1789, 1794–1795, 1801 the Tamar of Chota Nagpur in present-day Jharkhand; 1795–1800 the Chuari Movement in Bihar; 1803, 1822, 1862, 1879, 1880 – the Koyasin Andhra Pradesh; 1807–1808, 1811, 1817, 1820 – the tribal revolts in Chotanagpur; 1809–1828, 1846, 1857–1858 – Bhils in Western India; 1818, 1831–1832 – Kols in Chotangpur; 1825, 1828, 1843, 1849, 1869 – Singphos in Assam; 1827, 1855 – Mishmis in Arunachal Pradesh; 1828 – tribals of Assam; 1829 Khasis of Assam; 1820, 1832, 1867, 1889 Mundas of Jharkhand; 822–1823 – Kherwar uprising in Jharkhand; 1834–1841, 1842, 1850, 1860, 1871–1872, 1892 the Lushais of Assam; 1835, 1872–1873 – Daflas of Assam; 1838, 1868 – Naiks of Gujarat; 1839–1843 – Khampti in Assam; 1842 – Gonds of Bastar in Chhattisgarh; 1850 – Kondhs in Orissa; 1854 – North Kachari hill people of Assam; 1855, 1869–1870 – Santhals in Jharkhand; 1858 – Naikdas in Gujarat; 1860–1862 Syntengs of Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya; 1861 – Phulaguri uprising in Assam; 1861 – Juangs in Orissa; 1867, 1883 – Sentinel Islanders in the Andaman Islands; 1868–1869 – Raigmels of Assam; 1879, 1932, 1963–1971 – Nagas of Nagaland; 1811 – Bastar tribal uprising; 1913, 1914, 1920, 1921 – Tana Bhagat rebellion in Bihar; 1941 Gond and Kolam revolt in Andhra Pradesh; 1942 – Koraput revolt in Orissa, 1942–1945 – revolts by Andaman Island tribes against Japanese occupation army; 1945–1950, 1956–1958 – Warli revolt of Maharashtra; 1966–71 – Mizo revolt in Mizoram; 1967–1971 – Naxalbari in West Bengal; 1967–1969 – Srikakulam Uprising; 1990–1998 – Adilabad Uprising; 2000 – Resistance of Bastar Gonds.
 - 4 The term 'First Nations' is still being used by the Indigenous people of the American continents to distinguish their government systems, based on political construct of governance of citizens and their homelands as totally alien to the governance of the colonisers. For a clearer expose on the governance of land of the Indigenous tribes of North America, read the 'Letter of Chief Seattle to the Great Chief in Washington' in 1855.

AN UNBROKEN HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

- 5 'We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just not take interest in them. In the world of today that is not possible or desirable. At the same time we should avoid over-administering these areas and, in particular, sending too many outsiders into tribal territory. It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function'. – Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi, 9 October 1958.
- 6 'In the first twenty five years of India's independence, despite massive inputs, only nominal benefits reached down to the tribal people. The tendency to ignore subtle tribal differences and underplay the diverse needs of different tribal groups allowed an unimaginative bureaucracy to work for the solution of what it saw as the tribal problem. Programs were not need based; unwanted reforms were foisted, a rigid and ham handed approach obscured development objectives and blocked the attainment of specified goals. Non tribals benefited more from the funds that were earmarked for the development of the tribes' (Dube in Sharma 1978: ii).
- 7 'A new strategy for the Fifth Five Year Plan period was development and reducing tribal non-tribal economic disparities . . . but the ultimate objective was to bring tribals to the national mainstream' (Singh and Bhandari 1980: 2013).
- 8 'Development implying higher consumption and a better quality of life, cannot per se be accepted as an unqualified goal of development, literature on economic development equating tribal society with poverty is neither sound, based on entirely different premises and has no relevance to the tribal scene . . . communities living in inaccessible regions, with plentiful natural resources, sufficient to meet their basic physical needs, cannot be termed as poor. Their needs are limited and resources plentiful. . . . Use of monetary norms to compute income and expenditure is irrelevant' (Sharma 2010: 4).
- 9 Approach to Tribal Development in the Sixth Plan: A Preliminary Perspective, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
- 10 'Consequences of development have gone against them, increased the chances of a few of newly emerged elites and non-tribals, largely high-caste Hindus. Government departments, voluntary agencies, nationalised banks, corporate sector, multinationals are all partly or largely party to the sabotage of the course of the tribal development. The sociologist or anthropologist are no exception' (Doshi 1987: 17).
- 11 Report of Standing Committee on Inter-Sectoral Issues Relating to Tribal Development, *Planning Commission*, 2005.
- 12 'An objective appraisal of different tribal areas would show that in our over-enthusiasm we have caused much greater harm to the tribes. We have not redressed their grievances, but have imposed our will on their affairs in such a manner that tribals are fast losing their confidence in the present order. Social workers sermonise in a manner that offend the tribals. Administrators of different denominations want to shape things according to their own reference. They achieve little and make the tribals apathetic to various programmes' (Das 1972: 193).
- 13 The essence of this sentiment is reflected in subaltern poetry and music. One classical example is the Bhil song *Deshbhakt Log Tomara, Tyag Amha ka Mangatha* which translates as 'You, who claim to be the patriots

- of the nation, why do you continuously demand sacrifice of us' composed by Vahru Sonavne, a Bhil intellectual.
- 14 'Earlier tribals knew three types of officials; revenue collector, village chawki-dar and forest guard. After the CD program the long arm of administration reached remote corners. Tribals could not comprehend the development-oriented administration. As CD program stressed targets and area development erstwhile exploiters and non-tribal middle class got all schemes and benefited from development projects meant for the tribal people. Block staff, mostly from non-tribal areas were corrupt. It was impossible for a tribal to get any grant, subsidy or loan without bribing venal officials. Development spread disaffection . . . everything sponsored by the bureaucracy was seen with distrust and suspicion, efforts to train the bureaucracy in tribal life and culture were ineffective, policies framed for economic betterment of the tribals were unrealistic, special projects failed due to bad administration and avoidable red-tape. Non-tribals cornered funds, government policies did not address economic or educational or employment issues' (Sachchidananda 1972: 173).
 - 15 'The consequences of development have gone against them, have increased the life chances of a few of their newly emerged elites and non-tribals. Government departments, voluntary agencies, nationalised banks, corporate sector and multinationals – are all partly or largely party to the sabotage of the course of the tribal development. The sociologist and the anthropologist are no exception to this neglect or omission' (Doshi 1987: 17).
 - 16 'As they possess constitutional privileges for their development, we sell most of our things in their name. Items of development, be it a school, dispensary, rail road, telephone, cooking gas and what not are all accounted as tribal development. . . . Those in the development market, understand little of the realities of the tribal society . . . our approach of tribal development has been misdirected, we have imposed values, structures and aspirations of the super-ordinate ruling elites on tribal society. In "alliance" with social scientists, intellectuals and corporate sector have provided an exaggerated dimension to the consumerisation of tribals barely living at the subsistence level' (Doshi 1987: 20).
 - 17 Rangarajan and Shahabuddin (2006).
 - 18 Government of India (1960).
 - 19 Government of India (n.d.).
 - 20 Chanchani (2007).
 - 21 'Samata v/s State of Andhra Pradesh AIR 1997 SC 3297'.

References

- Bannerjee, Sumanta. 1984. *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising*. New Delhi: Select Book Service Syndicate.
- Bhowmik, K. L. 1985. 'Perspectives of Current Researches on Rural Development', in *Current Anthropological and Archaeological Perspectives, Volume VII: Rural Development*. New Delhi: Inter-India Publications.
- Bijoy, C. R. 2007. 'Tribals of India, A History of Discrimination, Conflict and Resistance', in *This Is Our Homeland*. Bangalore: Equations.

AN UNBROKEN HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES

- Chanchani, Aditi. 2007. *This Is Our Homeland: A Collection of Essays on the Betrayal of Adivasi Rights in India*. Bangalore: Equations. https://www.equitabletourism.org/files/fileDocuments493_uid10.pdf (accessed on 13 July 2018).
- Dandekar, A. 2013. *Why and Wither the Maoists*. New Delhi: NAC Note.
- Das, Nityanand. 1972. 'The Tribal Situation in Orissa', in K. Singh Suresh (ed.), *The Tribal Situation in India*. Shimla: HAS.
- Doshi, S. L. 1997. *Emerging Tribal Image*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Dube, S. C. 2003. 'Foreword', in B. D. Sharma (Author), *Tribal Development: The Concept and the Frame*, pp. 9-10. New Delhi: Sahyog Pustak Kuteer Trust.
- Fernandes, W. 2006. 'Development-Induced Displacement and Tribal Women', in Govind Chandra Rath (ed.), *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Government of Bombay. 1887. *Report of the Bombay Forest Commission*. Bombay: Government Central Press.
- Government of India. 1960. *Report of the Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs. <http://dspace.gipe.ac.in/xmlui/handle/10973/26430> (accessed on 13 July 2018).
- Government of India. 1961. *Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Committee*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- Government of India. n.d. *Issues of Social Justice: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes - An Unfinished National Agenda*. New Delhi: National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution. http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/publications/const/issues_of_social_justice_scst_obc.pdf (accessed on 13 July 2018).
- Guha, Ramachandra. 2016. *Democrats and Dissenters*. London: Penguin.
- Haimendorf Von Furrer, Christoph. 1992. *Tribal India: The Struggle for Survival*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hardiman, David (ed.). 1992. *Peasant Resistance in India 1858-1914*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hibbert, Christopher. 1980. *The Great Mutiny India 1857*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- Longkumer, Lanusashi. 2014. 'Nagaland-Land Alienation, Dynamics of Colonialism, Security and Development', in *Status of Tribal/Indigenous Peoples Land Series-6*. New Delhi: Aakar Books.
- Mehta, Piarey Lal. 1991. *Constitutional Protection to Scheduled Tribes in India: In Prospect and Retrospect*. New Delhi: H. K. Publishers and Distributors.
- Prabhu, Pradip. 1992. 'Tribal Deaths in Thane District: The Other Side', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27(47): 2527-30.
- Prabhu, Pradip. 1994. *Sustainable Tribal Development*. Golden Jubilee Issue on Sustainable Development. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration.
- Prabhu, Pradip. 1998. 'Tribal Movements: Resistance to Resurgence', in Desai Murli et al. (eds.), *Towards People Centered Development*. Mumbai: Tata Institute of Social Sciences.
- Prabhu, Pradip. 2007. *Legally Looted and Cheated: Land Reforms and Tribals in Maharashtra*.

- Prabhu, P. and S. Bulsara. 2014. *Wisdom From the Wilderness*. Baroda: Bhasha.
- Prabhu, P. and B. Shiraz. 2013. *Wisdom From the Wilderness*. Baroda: Bhasha.
- Rangarajan, M. and Ghazala Shahabuddin. 2006. 'Displacement and Relocation from Protected Areas: Towards a Historical and Biological Synthesis', *Conservation and Society*, 4(3): 359-78.
- Report of the Bombay Forest Commission*. 1887. Volumes 1-2. Government Central Press.
- Sachchidananda. 1972. 'Tribal Situation in Bihar', in K. S. Singh (ed.), *Tribal Situation in India*. Shimla: HAS.
- Savyasaachi. 1998. *Tribal Forest Dwellers and Self Rule*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- Shah, M. 2015. 'Land Development and Democracy', *The Hindu*.
- Sharma, Bhram Dev. 1998a. *Self Rule Laws: Madhya Pradesh*. New Delhi: Sahyog Pustak Kutir.
- Sharma, Bhram Dev. 1998b. *The People Versus the System*. New Delhi: Sahyog Pustak Kutir.
- Sharma, Bhram Dev. 2000. *The Fifth Schedule: Volumes I & II*. New Delhi: Sahyog Pustak Kutir.
- Sharma, Bhram Dev. 2010. *Unbroken History of Broken Promises*. New Delhi: Freedom Press.
- Shashi, S. S. 1990. *Nehru and the Tribals*. New Delhi: Concept.
- Singh, B. and J. S. Bhandari (eds.). 1980. 'Dynamics of Development', in B. Singh and J. S. Bhandari (eds.), *The Tribal World and Its Transformation*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Singh, K. S. (ed.). 1982. *Tribal Movements in India*. New Delhi: Manohar Books.
- Verrier, Elwin. 1957. *A Philosophy for NEFA*. Comments by Jawaharlal Nehru (Prime Minister of India).