

Tribes and Indian National Identity: Location of Exclusion and Marginality

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NATIONAL IDENTITY IS GENERALLY POSITED as a feeling of consciousness and loyalty toward one's community as *ethnos* (people). As ethnos, communities have common origins (real or fictitious), histories, languages, cultures, customs, traditions, and territorial boundaries. Communities also have sovereignty, and they care specifically for their members' interests and welfare. At the same time, communities seek to preserve and promote their national identity through the enrichment and revival of language and other social and cultural customs. Given that India is a land of enormous diversity, this understanding of national identity poses serious challenges to the conception of a coherent Indian national identity.

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Religion, language, region, caste, and tribe are the most critical aspects of India's diversity. Indians practice a wide spectrum of faiths, perhaps contributing to the fact that religion in India has historically been a source of segregation, cleavage, and conflict. Religion stands as a serious challenge to the unity and integrity of the nation. Moreover, Indians speak hundreds of languages. As such, language and region also complicate the Indian national identity. The country has been divided into different regions and sub-regions that invariably present themselves as distinct linguistic and cultural zones. This has engendered demands, dating back to colonial rule, for distinct states for people of the same language and culture. These divisions and demands are especially problematic for Indian

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national development as people from distinct linguistic regions are further divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes. Moreover, there are people who fall outside of such linguistic-cum-regional societies and thereby are excluded from the caste system as well. They have been generally described as tribes with their own language, religion, culture, and geographical territories. They regulate their social and cultural life according to their own traditions, norms, and values.

This paper addresses the development of the Indian national identity, with a particular focus on tribal people. How have tribal people related to the development of Indian national identity in colonial and post-colonial India? What have they contributed to the nation-building process? How have the nation and national leadership accounted for tribal people in the nation-building process? How have they fared in this process and why? How have conflict and alienation manifested themselves?

MAPPING THE MARGIN

224 According to the 2011 census, tribal people number 104.3 million, forming 8.6 percent of the total population of India.¹ Though they represent a relatively small proportion of the entire Indian population, they are quite ethnically diverse. The Anthropological Survey of India identified 461 distinct tribal communities in 1976.² Meanwhile, the 2011 census lists 705 individual ethnic groups as scheduled tribes.³ As noted earlier, tribes speak distinct languages and have distinct cultural systems. Their languages originate from four families, and they stand at different stages of social, economic, cultural, and political developments.⁴ Thus, each tribe lives differently. Some tribes still depend on hunting and gathering for their livelihoods, others on shifting agriculture, and still others on settled agriculture. Tribes also differ significantly in size. Tribal populations range from 7 million on the high end to less than 1,000 on the low; such differences have a bearing on the Indian national identity, for the Indian state (as well as states in India) generally turns a blind eye to small tribes as their role in overall democratic electoral politics tends to be marginal. Their movements are not strongly felt unless they resort to armed struggle, and they are not able to negotiate effectively. This likely stems from their complicated demography as described above.

Tribes are scattered over the length and breadth of the country, but their distribution is far from even. The island regions have the lowest concentration of tribal populations, followed by northern and southern India. The islands contain just over 1 percent of the total tribal population, while northern and

southern India are home to just over 2 and 5 percent of the population, respectively. Slightly over 12 percent of the total tribal population is concentrated in northeast India. Thus, a very large portion of the tribal population can be found in the remaining regions of eastern, central, and western India. This is the contiguous region where nearly 80 percent of the tribal population of India lives.⁵

One commonality shared by tribes is exclusion from many social groupings that have historically, socially, and culturally been associated with India. For example, tribes are not part of the dominant linguistic groups, such as Hindi, Telugu, Bengali, Gujarati, and so on. Even more importantly, tribes do not share the religious ideas, values, institutions, and cultural practices that comprise Hinduism. Hinduism has knit the dominant linguistic groups together. These social groupings from which tribes are excluded form the key pillars of Indian national identity.

SHADES OF NATIONALISM

Nationalism in India emerged out of India's struggle for freedom from British rule. Given its geographical size; linguistic and religious diversity; and above all, fragmentation and segmentation into different castes and sub-castes, Indian nationalism was a remarkable phenomenon. In the course of its struggle against British rule, nationalism in India developed two shades and currents. One entailed the assertion and articulation of nationalism against the British. The other comprised the assertion and articulation of India's own distinctive linguistic and cultural identity and its aspiration for a distinct politico-administrative space in conjunction with this identity. The earliest manifestations of such phenomena were visible in the formation of the new provinces of Assam, Bihar, and Orissa in eastern India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The more mature Bengali nationality did not articulate such aspirations, as it enjoyed hegemony over the benefits that it had accrued under colonial rule, except when Bengal was partitioned into two in 1905. However, as nationalism gained momentum at the national level, so did the assertion of linguistic and cultural identity at the provincial levels. This was nothing short of nationalism—their demand was for separate states/provinces based on linguistic and cultural considerations. Scholars have used terms such as “sub-nationalism,” “regional nationalism,” and the like to describe such movements.⁶ This demand had remained unfulfilled for many major linguistic communities and nationalities when India attained freedom in 1947. Post-independence, there was a renewed interest in and mobilization for separate states, posing a great threat to the newly

born nation in its nation-building process. The mobilization was most intense in the case of the Telugu and Kannada-speaking people in southern India, and the Marathi-speaking people in western India. Similar demands for separate states emerged from other regions as well. Against this backdrop, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, appointed retired Supreme Court Chief Justice Fazal Ali to chair the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) in December 1953, hence known as the Fazal Ali Commission.⁷ The mandate of the Commission was to examine “objectively and dispassionately” the entire question of the reorganization of the states of the union.⁸ Throughout the two years of its work, the Commission faced demonstrations, agitations, and hunger strikes, which activists used as strategies to press their demands. Different linguistic groups clashed with each other verbally and sometimes even physically, reflecting tensions wrought by linguistic overlap on people who wanted a state based on their own language. The SRC submitted its report in October 1955 and made recommendations for the reorganization of states. Consequently, the Parliament enacted the States Reorganization Act, which came into effect in November 1956.⁹ By absorbing the aspirations and sentiments at work at the provincial level into a federal structure that formally incorporated linguistic consideration into the organization of states, India accommodated the national sentiment and aspirations of the kinds widespread in the country. Rather than weakening Indian national development, this has strengthened it as the linguistic states have fulfilled the aspirations of the linguistic communities for their rights for self-determination, although bereft of sovereignty. Indeed, the Indian national identity tends to be weak where recognition of this kind has been denied. The case of tribes is an apt illustration.

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COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPRINTS

As we have seen, the Indian national identity emerged out of the struggle for freedom from the British. The mobilization and participation of the people in this struggle was, however, far from uniform. The unevenness was primarily due to low socioeconomic and administrative positions in the structure of the society and polity under colonial rule. The British administration brought about far-reaching economic, political, social, and cultural changes in India. In the course of such changes, some regions/peoples benefited from relatively higher levels of development than others. Those who benefited, such as the Bengalis, were consequently better able to take advantage of opportunities provided under colonial rule. In this regard, tribes were the most disadvantaged groups during

this period.¹⁰

Tribes generally lived as self-contained units until the arrival of the British. This meant that tribes lived outside of Indian society and not as a part of it. Interaction certainly occurred between the two, but it was not until the arrival of the British that tribes came under the same political and administrative structure as the larger Indian

population. They were subjected to the same laws, rules, and regulations. Through land, labor, credit, and commodity markets, tribes were also brought under a single economic order. In this

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new politico-administrative system, however, tribes faced the steady erosion of control over, and access to, natural resources such as land, forest, and water. Both the colonial administration and the non-tribal Indian population—particularly traders, merchants, and moneylenders—were responsible for this phenomenon.

Tribes thus had to experience two forms of colonialism: one in the hands of the British and the other in the hands of the non-tribal Indian population. Tribes who had control over natural resources and enjoyed their autonomy of governance were pushed to the margin of the new political and economic system through fraud, deceit, debt, usury, and other related processes. This marginalization was intricately linked to the process of integration that resulted in widespread discontent, culminating in a series of revolts and rebellions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The revolts were directed against both the British and the non-tribal Indians who had moved into the tribal areas. In response, the British—having suppressed the revolts—introduced somewhat different administrative arrangements in the tribal areas. This assumed the form of isolating tribes from non-tribes with the objective of protecting them from further exploitation and marginalization. This different arrangement evolved following the enactment of the Schedule Districts Act in 1874. Under the Act, the scheduled districts were kept outside of the general administration. The Government of India Act of 1919 categorized the areas where tribes lived into “backward tracts” areas.¹¹ The Government of India Act of 1935 treated the areas the same way the 1919 Act did, and declared them “wholly excluded areas or partially excluded areas.” The administration of these areas was exclusively vested in the governor of the province.¹² The governor was empowered to decide the applicability of the general laws to the excluded and partially excluded areas.¹³ In short, enactments made by central and state legislatures were not directly

applicable in tribal areas, unless so desired by the executive authority. This arrangement allowed tribes to enjoy some autonomy and to be governed by their own traditions and customary practices. It is a different matter that autonomy so granted had more of a purpose of containing the potential revolts by tribes, as opposed to a genuine interest in protecting tribal people.

On the eve of independence, tribes were thus uniquely placed in the structure of colonial rule and administration. Tribes were first divided by whether they were inside British territory. Those inside the territory were then placed under three distinct administrative arrangements: frontier/agency tracts, excluded areas, and partially excluded areas. Tribes that did not live in such areas came under the same administrative structure that was applicable to the general population. Notably, a large tribal population also lived in territory not directly controlled by the British, but by princely states, whose administrative structure differed from the colonial administration.¹⁴

TRIBES AND THE CONSTRAINTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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Far before the concerted Indian struggle for freedom from colonial rule emerged, tribes had demonstrated resistance to colonial power and administration in order to safeguard tribal autonomy and self-governance. This is evidenced by a series of revolts and rebellions dating from the onset of colonial rule.¹⁵ However, they hardly find place, or even appear, in the official writings of the history of freedom struggle movements in India. Paradoxically, as the Indian struggle for freedom gained momentum, tribes' participation in this national movement was either absent or relatively weak. It is difficult to understand this paradox, but the increasing contradictions and conflicts between tribes and non-tribes may have contributed to it. Yet responses of tribes to the Indian national movement were far from uniform. On the one hand, the geographical distance at which tribes lived constrained the nationalist leaders and volunteers from going to tribal areas and mobilizing them. On the other hand, wherever tribes lived in the vicinity of, or alongside, non-tribal Indians, they experienced exploitation and domination by the latter. This restrained a wider participation of tribes in the struggle led by the nationalist leadership and its volunteers. Participation was confined to certain pockets and had more to do with either the civil disobedience movement, such as non-payment of tax and rent, or the assertion of rights over natural resources, than with issues of their exploitation and domination. This had a bearing on tribes with respect to their identification with Indian national identity. Thus, some tribes strongly identified with Indian national identity,

some did so less strongly, some were indifferent, and some were even hostile. It is worth noting here that there was no effort by the colonial rulers to improve the social and economic conditions of the tribal people during colonial rule. While some development did happen, it is much more attributable to Christian missionaries. The limited education imparted by Christian missionaries did give rise to modern leadership, but it was relatively tiny and predominantly concerned with addressing issues

affecting tribal communities. **Some tribes strongly identified with Indian national identity, some did so less strongly, some were indifferent, and some were even hostile.** This overriding concern and articulation of tribal elites against outsiders' exploitation of tribal people placed the tribes in conflict with

non-tribal society. Tribes took the latter as outsiders, or even exploiters, considering them the cause of their marginalization and vulnerability. This was at odds with nationalist leadership since non-tribal society did not adequately address the issues that tribes were facing. Further, even when tribes participated in larger struggles against the colonial rule and administration, they were not part of the higher echelons of leadership and thus were excluded from having roles and participating in the decision-making process.

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At the dawn of independence, tribes articulated their interests with regard to national development in varied forms. In the northeastern region, the Nagas demanded a sovereign state, which meant secession from India. The Nagas could make this demand as they had developed a strong national identity and a strongly united leadership. Among other tribal communities of the region, such as the Mizos, political articulation was far from uniform. There were some who, like the Nagas, sought sovereignty. Others, however, were in favor of integrating into India, but with political and administrative arrangements to safeguard their distinct identity. There were still others who did not articulate any position openly. The pattern was somewhat different in the case of the tribes of mainland India. Tribes on the mainland demanded the separate states of Jharkhand, Gondwana, and Bilasthan, but notably, they were articulated within the framework of the Indian union. As for other areas in the region, there was no distinct articulation of demands. Thus, a large chunk of tribes had no clear voice at the dawn of independence. In short, with the exception of some tribes in northeast India, tribes on the whole had no problem with being part of India as this did not matter to them. The tribes probably had very little understanding of the specific implications greater national identity would have on them.

And yet at no point in time were their demands seriously addressed; only after they took to violent struggle were they heard. The movements for autonomy and self-determination of the Naga, Mizo, and Tripuri tribes and the Bodos of northeast India provide apt examples. As noted earlier, this has not generally been the case with larger linguistic groups. The outcome of such differential treatment has been the alienation of tribes within the Indian state and society at large. This has been most pronounced in northeast India. A strong disenchantment was visible in northeast India within a few years of India's independence, resulting in demands for sovereignty by different tribal groups, accompanied by armed struggle. The demand for sovereignty has been accommodated by both the grant of a separate state within the Indian union and of an autonomous regional council under the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution. However, there are still groups within tribes who are unhappy with the autonomy granted in the form of existing institutions and thus continue with their struggle for sovereignty.

TRIBES AS IRRECONCILABLE WITH INDIAN NATIONHOOD

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India embarked on a path of national reconstruction after it gained independence. During this national reconstruction, the nationalist leadership took note of the tribal situation. Poor economic conditions and social and educational underdevelopment characterized the tribal situation at the dawn of independence. This reality was attributed to tribes' geographical and social isolation. However, when and where new means of communication—roads, railways, etc.—broke down geographical and social isolation and brought tribes and non-tribes into

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closer interconnection with each other, their socioeconomic condition did not necessarily change for the better.¹⁶ Rather, this process often led to a worsening of the situation as the movement of people from the outside led to the alienation of tribal land by non-tribes through such means as force, fraud, forgery, and, most importantly, usury. The cases of the Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, and Kondhs, among others in central India, can be cited as examples. In these cases, money-lenders advanced loans against land mortgages and charged exorbitant interest rates. As tribes could not repay the debt, land moved from the hands of tribes to non-tribes. This happened throughout the colonial period on a large scale and was one of the key factors of tribal revolt against the British and non-tribal outsiders.

This situation incited a heated policy debate led by Verrier Elwin and G.S. Ghurye on the eve of independence.¹⁷ Elwin made a plea for the isolation of tribes due to the record of misfortune previously experienced by tribes upon contact with the outside world. This exposure to the rest of the world had historically led to indebtedness, alienation of land, forced labor, and thereby to exploitation and marginalization. Ghurye, meanwhile, attributed the prevailing tribal situation to their geographical and social isolation, which he argued needed to be overcome through assimilation into greater Indian society. Gandhi wanted the tribes of central India to be culturally assimilated through Hinduization. In contrast, the tribes of northeast India had to be politically integrated.¹⁸ And yet, despite this debate, there seems to have been no clear statement of tribal policy in India. The provisions made in the constitution consist broadly of three kinds. That of protection is evident in Articles 244, 244a, and 29 of the constitution. The first two articles provide for special administration of tribal areas in the form of the fifth and sixth schedules of the constitution. The last is a general provision for the protection and promotion of languages and cultures in India, which is equally applicable to tribal communities. The other provisions establish reservations (affirmative action) in political institutions (Articles 330 and 332), state employment, and higher educational institutions (Article 16.4). These would be ineffective if there were no provisions for economic and social development, which we actually do encounter in Article 46. The latter two provisions are aimed at integrating tribes with greater Indian society.¹⁹

Despite constitutional protection from exploitation and land alienation, in the dominant national discourse tribal issues have primarily been couched in terms of social backwardness. Underdevelopment was routinely tied to the isolation of tribal communities, and hence their integration was viewed as a panacea for the problem. Nationalist leadership has thus implied a conflict in the simultaneous presence of tribes and the nation. It understood the nation in a particularly definite form, within which tribes did not fit. To be part of the nation, it was not sufficient for tribes to join the economic and political system; rather, this new nationalism required them to assimilate into the sociocultural system of larger India as well. Greater India had come to perceive tribes as primitive, uncivilized, lazy, and hedonistic. Tribes were thus expected to shed those characteristics under a civilizing mission. The Indian state's education curriculum played a critical role in working to achieve this. Tribes were required to learn an alien language, history, culture, and tradition, and to identify with them. Though there were provisions for the protection of tribal language and culture in the constitution, individual states took no initiatives to that end whatsoever. With

respect to religion, tribes were constrained to identifying themselves as Hindus not only in census enumeration, but also in routine statecraft and practices.

Moreover, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or the “National Volunteer Organization,” and its affiliates have long been engaged in a process of Hinduization. This process, with its genesis in colonial India, has become especially vigorous and aggressive in post-independence India. All of these processes amounted to assimilation. Any process seeking to move in a different direction, especially in the form of religious conversions and moving toward the lifestyle of non-Indic religions, has not been received well in the larger Indian population. Tribal Christians, who have intermittently been the target of various forms of attack, provide a case in point. There has been a sustained campaign by RSS affiliates to create discord between tribal Christians and tribal non-Christians. In fact, there have been social mobilization and legal cases whereby attempts have been made to deschedule Christian tribes from scheduled tribe status, thereby denying them their constitutional rights and entitlement. The Indian national identity in the case of tribal Christians tends to be even more problematic because of the foreign origin of the Christian religion. The Indian national identity has been implicitly or explicitly defined in a way that excludes existing tribal cultural forms.

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THE PRICE OF INCLUSION INTO THE NATION

While there has been a clear sense of dedication and urgency surrounding integration, similar attention has proved lacking in addressing issues of socioeconomic development and inclusive state and non-state institutions that show respect for the tribal communities of India. All institutions in India are still far from inclusive. Reservation policy in political institutions, state employment, and higher educational institutions have served as key tools for building a more inclusive society. However, the dominant national groups have generally been bitterly opposed to reservation policy, for they see it as depriving them of their legitimate share and entitlement. This opposition has consequently caused discord between tribes and non-tribes and adversely affected the cohesion of national identity.

The reservation policy, an extreme form of affirmative action, was and remains perhaps a necessity given the distinctive structure of Indian society. There is no doubt that tribes have benefited from its provisions. This is evidenced by their presence in almost all governmental institutions and at every level of government service. Yet in terms of their share or quota, the position of the tribes is far from adequate, especially in the upper echelons of government service. In fact, even by

1999 the share of tribal people in classes I and II of central government services, for example, stood at merely 3.39 and 3.35 percent respectively. Even in the case of class III (6.07 percent) and IV (7 percent) services, the percentage fell short of the stipulated 7.5 percent.²⁰ The scenario has been no different with respect to economic metrics. In 2004–5, the share of the tribal population living below the poverty line was as high as 46.5 percent, compared to 27.6 percent for the population as a whole.²¹ Thus the gap between the two remains one of the key concerns in poverty discourse in India. The same has been the case with respect to indicators of social development, such as education and health. In 2001, the literacy rate for the general population was 68.81 percent, as compared to 47.10 percent for the tribal population. The 21.71 percent gap between the two is still very large.²² The picture is no different with respect to tribal health: the infant mortality rate as per NHP-2002 was 84.2 per thousand as compared to 67.6 for the total population; the child mortality rate was 46.3 as compared to 29.3; and the under five mortality rate was as high as 126.6, as compared to 94.9.²³ Thus, an inordinately high proportion of people living below the poverty line and people with poor educational and health status come from tribes.

A number of factors seem to account for this poor state of affairs. First, the resources earmarked for tribal development, though increasing over time, have been far from adequate. At no point in time has the budget allocation under five-year-plans gone beyond 3.7 percent.²⁴ Given the inadequate funds earmarked for tribal development, few tangible gains can be expected in tribal communities. This partly explains why infrastructure, schools, and health centers, as well as the personnel to operate them, fall short in tribal regions. The ineffective implementation of the social programs also partly explains the lacking social development among tribes. Why such poor implementation has persisted for over six decades is an interesting question, but one that academics and development practitioners have so far not posed in such a manner.

It is worth noting that while on the one hand the benefits of state initiated projects have been marginal, on the other there has been a steady dispossession of tribes from control over natural resources. Despite the presence of law restricting the expropriation of land from tribes to non-tribes, tribal land has

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steadily passed from tribes to non-tribes all throughout the post-independence era. It is unimaginable to think of tribes as landless as they are traditionally and historically linked to land and forest. However, by 1993–94, as many as 47.89 percent of tribal households had begun to be enumerated as rural labor households (i.e., households with wage labor as their primary means of livelihood). Of these, 54.07 percent had some land, while the remaining 45.92, percent were landless.²⁵

Equally important to note is that as many as 42.9 percent of the operational holdings of tribes belongs to the category of marginal farmers, which means that they hold less than one hectare. Another 24.1 percent are small cultivators with a holding of 1–2 hectares.²⁶ The expropriation of land and a steady decline in landholding size have been the key factors leading to the impoverishment of tribes. The story of dispossession is, furthermore, not confined to the transfer of land from tribes to non-tribes. The biggest source of dispossession has been the state itself. As part of the nation-building process, India has embarked on a path of rapid economic development and social change in which industrialization, mineral exploitation, and infrastructure projects have been prioritized. Most of these projects—especially in the early phase of the nation-building process—came up in tribal areas as these regions were best endowed in terms of natural resources. This led to a large-scale displacement of tribal people. Between 1951–90, development projects—dams, mines, factories, and wildlife sanctuaries—are estimated to have displaced a little over 21 million people. Of the total displaced population, over 16 million have been displaced by dams, and about 2.6 and 1.3 million by mines and industry respectively. Over 1 million have been displaced by other projects, wildlife sanctuaries being the most significant. Of the total number displaced, as many as 8.54 million have been enumerated as tribal. Tribal peoples have thus come to constitute as much as 40 percent of the displaced population, even as they comprise less than 8 percent of the total population.²⁷

The benefits of this development, which Nehru described as the temples of modern India, did not accrue to the tribal people: the employment created by these projects did not go to tribes; power projects did not electrify tribal villages; and irrigation projects did not irrigate tribal land.²⁸ The projects were detrimental to the interests of tribes and adversely affected them. Tribes contributed to the making of the nation, but this sacrifice was not acknowledged. This pattern has continued until recent years. However, the situation today has changed: tribes today are engaged in resistance against such projects, which the state has taken as critical to development and hence to the building of the nation. The oppres-


sion and exploitation to which tribes have been routinely subjected under the post-colonial regime and the lack of any development in tribal regions have drawn tribes toward the extremist politics of Maoism, thereby posing a great threat to Indian national identity. At the roots of this shift to Maoism and Maoist struggle has been the disenchantment of tribes with the Indian state, which seems to side in its everyday practice with non-tribes, and more importantly, with the dominant section of non-tribes.²⁹ This is evident in state officials' attitudes toward tribes. Tribes must not only bear state and non-state exploitation and oppression in the form of harassment and violence, but also suffer humiliation in the form of abuses and ridicule. They found solace and liberation in Maoism.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Tribes were economically and socially less developed prior to the onset of colonialism, but they had autonomy over land, forest, and water. The loss of autonomy that began under British rule accelerated under India's post-independent nation-building process and added a new dimension to their existing marginality. Their disproportionate share of impoverishment and poor educational and health status has more to do with the dispossession that has been central to nation-building in post-independence India. Bluntly speaking, the nation has been on the march, but tribes have not. In fact, no social group in India has been treated as shabbily as tribes in the post-independence national construction process.

Why tribes have fared so poorly appears to be connected to the question of national identity. After all, tribes do fall short of the standard conception of the Indian national identity. Although this concept is not adequately addressed, there are some broad frames in which Indian national identity is posited. These frames stem predominantly from Hindu religious traditions, with those who fall outside of those traditions not considered due members of the nation. There have been processes at work both at the state and non-state levels that aim to integrate tribes into what is popularly termed "the mainstream of national life."³⁰ This term is mainly used to reference the ethos, values, and traditions of the larger Indian society. It is assumed that if tribes were to mold themselves, their conditions would automatically improve. However, this has not yet happened.

After all, a large chunk of tribes have indeed Hinduized and Sanskritized, and yet there has been no corresponding improvement in their socioeconomic status.³¹ Hence, not only are the interests and issues of tribes inadequately addressed, but these tribes also undergo treatment that is exploitative, oppressive, and discriminatory. This acts as both an impediment to forging a national identity and alienates tribes from it. Tribes are not merely at the margins, but possibly even outside the margins of Indian national identity. 

NOTES

I am thankful to Jagannath Ambagudia and Roluah Puia for helping me with the references.

1. Government of India, *Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013* (New Delhi: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013), 2.

2. The Anthropological Survey of India launched the People of India project on October 2, 1985 to generate an anthropological profile of all communities in the country. It identified 461 tribal communities in India. See: Kumar Suresh Singh, "Marginalised Tribes," *Seminar* 412 (1993): 1–7.

3. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, *Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2014), 705.

4. The four distinct families are: Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan. See: Lachman M. Khubchandani, *Tribal Identity: A Language and Communication Perspective* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1992).

5. Government of India, *Report of the High Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India* (New Delhi: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014), 34–35.

6. Amalendu Guha, "Great Nationalism, Little Nationalism and Problem of Integration," *Economic and Political Weekly* 14, no. 718 (1979): 456; Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and Politics of Nationality* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

7. The other members of the Commission were K. M. Panikkar and Hridaynath Kunzru.

8. Government of India, *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1955), i.

9. Following the recommendation of the States Reorganisation Commission, many new states were added into the union and the boundaries of many of the states were redrawn, keeping in mind the linguistic considerations. In all, 14 states and six union territories were created.

10. Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 141–84.

11. National Commission for Schedule Tribe, *Good Governance for Tribal Development and Administration: Special Report* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2012), 2.

12. Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order, vol. 99, 1936, 734–43.

13. See: R.C. Verma, *Indian Tribes through the Ages* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1990), introduction and chapter 10; B.K. Roy Burman, "State and Tribes in India," *Mainstream*, November 26, 1983, <http://www.india-seminar.com/>.

14. The Indian administrative structure was divided into the British administration and approximately 600 princely states. The princely states were relatively free in their internal administration except for the payment of a tribute as part of their loyalty to the British. Elsewhere, there were British residents, who acted as liaison officers between the British and the king. British residents interfered in the internal administration of the kingdom as and when they saw fit.

15. The tribes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had waged about 50 revolts against the British. See: V.R. Raghavaiah, "Tribal Revolts in Chronological Order: 1778–1971," in *Peasant Struggles in India*, ed. A.R. Desai (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1979).

16. See: Indra Munshi, ed., *The Adivasi Question: Issues of Land, Forest and Livelihood* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012), 1–24.
17. Elwin was an Anglican Missionary who left the mission and subsequently went to tribal areas and lived among them. He has written extensively on tribes. Ghurye was a sociologist teaching at Bombay University.
18. T.K. Oommen, “Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Nation: Situating G.S. Ghurye,” *Sociological Bulletin* 60, no. 2 (2011): 239.
19. See: Verma, *Indian Tribes through the Ages*, introduction and chapter 10.
20. Planning Commission, *Report of the Steering Committee on Empowering the Scheduled Tribes for the Tenth Five Year Plan: 2002–2007* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2001), 25.
21. Ashok Mathur, “An Overview of the Jharkhand Economy and Perspectives for Human Development,” (background paper read at the National Seminar on Growth and Human Development, Jharkhand: Perspectives and Policies, Ranchi, India, July 4–5, 2008).
22. Government of India, *Report of the Working Group on Empowerment the Scheduled Tribes for the Eleventh Five Year Plan: 2007–2012* (New Delhi: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2007), 21.
23. *Ibid.*, 27.
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