

COMMENTS AND REPLY

Debate on Approaches to the Tribes Substantiated
with the Case of the Lepchas of Sikkim, India

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—Managing Editor

COMMENTS

—I would first like to comment on the concept of 'tribe'. I quite agree with the authors that the traditional concept involving 'a relatively isolated or semi-isolated community, having its own cultural system, (etc.)' is not, and probably has never been, quite valid, except in rare cases. Tribes have indeed been in contact with each other and with non-tribal groups far and near, in a network of *jajmani* relationships. However, several other points need to be noted here: (1) a 'tribe', or more precisely 'scheduled tribe', is 'notified' as such by the government without using any objective criteria, which is very arbitrary (Basu, 1990); (2) there may be considerable differences between different sections of the same tribe in respect of several socio-economic traits (in the Kalimpong subdivision, Darjeeling district, West Bengal we have the case of the agriculturist Sherpas working on their own or neighbours' land, the wage earner Sherpas working in government owned medicinal plantation, the forest dwelling Sherpas living on forest products and selling some of them in local markets, and economically well off, well educated Sherpas living in Kalimpong, Darjeeling or even abroad); (3) there may be nothing in common between a Himalayan high altitude tribe and one from the Deccan plateau or from a remote island in the Andaman/Nicobar archipelago; and (4) tribe, as an exclusive category of social group, does not exist in India, and presumably elsewhere in the world, in the sense that many of these tribes share economic depri-

vation and/or social oppression with many other rural, minority or even urban downtrodden groups. It is therefore conceptually and operationally more meaningful to use the descriptive term 'disadvantaged group', defining the disadvantage in terms of some economic, social and such other trait (Basu, 1989). These points, particularly point (4) relating to the question of 'tribe' vis-a-vis 'disadvantaged group', assumes special importance in the context of the recent nationwide turmoil on the government's proposed reservation policy.

I would next like to comment on the concept of 'integration'. One can visualise integration in terms of increased cohesion (1) among subgroups of a single tribal group, e.g. the Sherpas of Kalimpong mentioned above; (2) among the various tribal, caste and linguistic groups sharing a broad ecological zone and constituting a broad multiethnic society, e.g. the hill people of northern West Bengal; and (3) among the tribal or disadvantaged groups and the mainstream. The first two processes, which Bhasin and Srivastava would perhaps prefer to designate as 'solidarity', are likely to operate under specific social compunctions and I shall briefly deal with the second one later. As to integration with the mainstream, I would like to raise the following questions: (1) is there a single national mainstream? (2) if not, which mainstream a given disadvantaged group is supposed to integrate with and to what benefit? and (3) does integration into the mainstream (s) not automatically imply assimilation?

Regarding the first and second questions,

in my opinion Bhasin and Srivastava's plea that the disadvantaged groups should 'integrate with modern democracy, productive organizations like factory and industry, the unity and identity of Indian society, in other words, with the sentiment of nationhood is too utopian. For, given the level of education, communication, transport and technology of many of these groups, the concepts of modern (Western type) democracy, factory and industry are too unfamiliar and of a pan-Indian nationhood too vast to visualise. In fact, even among the well educated, modernised non-tribal Indians is there a common 'sentiment of nationhood'? Why then is there a 'we-group vs. they-group' sentiment in almost every Indian State or part thereof?

Regarding the third question, even assuming that the disadvantaged groups are supposed to integrate with the mainstream, i.e. socio-economically dominant group in the general area, the question stands unresolved. I shall cite the case of the Chakmas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts across the border in Bangladesh. To cut a long story short, the Chakmas and several smaller groups have been living in these tracts for long, handling their own affairs under the governance of their native Rajas. The British did not infringe upon their autonomy except levying land tax. With the end of the British rule in 1947, the area was infiltrated by a Muslim-Bengali population, the Kaptai hydro-electric project set up to feed the industrial and port city of Chittagong submerged 20,000 ha. of cultivable land of excellent quality and displaced 100,000 or more people. With the emergence of Bangla Desh in 1971, the situation worsened. The tribal : Bengali ratio declined from 90 : 10 in 1950 to 50 : 50 in 1981, on a rough count. Approximately one third of the Bangla Desh army is said to be deployed in this area. 'The army, the police force and the Bengali settlers cooperate in burning villages and crops, raping women, killing people, dishonouring Buddhist temples and torturing prisoners' (May, 1984). Tormented tribals fleeing to India or Burma are thrown back to become fugitives on their own native soil. All this followed invitation to the Chakmas and the smaller groups of the Chittagong Hill Tracts to integrate

themselves with the mainstream by successive Heads of State. (This account on the Chakmas has been taken from May, 1984). The vexing question here is, while we point an accusing finger at Bangla Desh, can we guarantee that we have not followed in their footsteps any where in India at any point in recent times? And the crucial policy question is, while we are unequivocal that 'a middle path between the two extremes of complete insulation and free play of economic forces' as advocated by Nehru and Pant (Sharma, 1978) is the best, do we know how to operationalise it? If not, is not 'integration' tantamount to 'assimilation'?

I shall now briefly mention the increased cohesion among various tribal, caste and linguistic groups inhabiting the hill areas of northern West Bengal. I shall make passing reference to the Lepchas, but any references will be confined to the Lepchas of the Kalimpong subdivision where I have worked since 1976. I shall refer to other groups of the area as well. However, I do not claim any applicability of my observations to the situation in Sikkim, although most of the group I shall be dealing with inhabit Sikkim too.

The point at issue is the movement for local autonomy under the banner of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), which was able to bring together such discrete groups as Lepcha (Buddhist and Christian), Sherpa, Bhutia and various Nepali-speaking group under the composite ethnic designation, Gorkha. In my opinion, the movement represents a general awakening among, and efforts for assertion of group identity by, various groups inhabiting a broad ecological zone vis-a-vis the socio-economically more dominant plains dwellers. These efforts are prompted by the subordination of the ethos of these people by the dominant groups. However, the very fact that the movement is led by relatively well educated, well to do and well connected elites of the hill society, who by definition are somewhat isolated from the general populace, imposes a built in limitation. Once the immediate objective of carving out the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) is achieved, cracks are likely to appear within the composite Gorkha identity between the elites and

the masses, the traditional ethnic identities, e.g. Lepcha, Sherpa, etc. may tend to resurge, and these two phenomena may often overlap and reinforce each other. Lepchas, the indigenous of Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya but socio-economically the weakest, may feel renewed pangs of deprivation, not merely vis-à-vis the plains dwellers but also more immediate neighbours. The composite Gorkha identity, carefully nurtured by the GNLF/DGHC, may then tend to fall apart as a result of pressures from within—indeed signs of cracks are already visible in the form of getting together of several local political groups disenchanted with the performance of the GNLF/DGHC. A similar composite identity designated as NE-BU-LA had indeed formed and fell apart in the past (Bagahi and Danda, 1982). The point that I am trying to make here is that a disadvantaged group, or a conglomeration of disadvantaged groups, suffering from various kinds of real or perceived disadvantages, may appear, disappear and reappear (i.e. their individual group identities may submerge and resurge) under varying social compunctions. The phenomena of solidarity or integration will have to be looked at in a dynamic context.

I do not know whether such a situation is occurring, or may occur in Sikkim. Indeed, every social situation is unique. However, from my limited experience of working in Sikkim, and from Bhasin and Srivastava's detailed account, I gather that all the ingredients of such a situation in the form of ecological setting, ethnic and demographic history and composition, socio-economic disparity, etc. exist, and treating Dzongu as a Lepcha Reserve will not prevent (and has not prevented) group interactions in much the same manner as in the Kalimpong/Darjeeling area. The best possible approach therefore will probably be, in any case

To organize, develop and utilize the available resources of land, water and manpower in such a manner that the entire rural population dependent on these resources has an equal (or at least an equitable) opportunity to meet, as a minimum, their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter with reasonable facilities for education and health and can live together in a positive and healthy social environment' (Aziz, 1978).

This indeed is a perceptive and comprehen-

sive approach. But, the question that lingers on is how to operationalise this approach? Ideally, the operationalisation should be carried out with the initiative and participation of the people concerned. But, again, the question is who will generate this initiative and how?

I shall address these questions, and the others raised earlier, to Bhasin and Srivastava, planners and administrators, social activists, fellow workers as much as myself, to ponder on, and try to find answers to.

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—Bhasin and Srivastava in their paper have raised certain fundamental ethical and ideological questions. An extremely well written and well substantiated argument is put forward in favour of a kind of select isolationism to favour indigenous development of groups whose cultural characters make it particularly vulnerable to dominance by outsiders. The authors are not in favour of a blanket policy of integration without taking into consideration the particular social, historical and cultural context.

However I feel that the argument fell short of some more fundamental ideological issues and which in light of the concrete examples cited could have been tackled to lend greater depth to

the discussion. Looking at the evolution of human cultures over a long term historical perspective we have seen that some cultures have always tended to dominate over others, situationally and sometimes over long term historical periods and which may be attributed to their greater adaptability to particular ecological niches. As Sahlins had termed the law of cultural dominance. The ethical question here is, should we let history take its own course or do we go by the axiom that all peoples have equal rights to survival and hence take special protective measures in favour of the weak?

Secondly and more importantly from the developmental point of view, there is always the question of looking at development from the point of view of different entities at different levels of inclusion to the higher entity. The possibility of clash of interests at different levels is always present and again poses fundamental ethical questions. It is very true that the north-eastern tribes have progressed far more than some others in central and middle India. But the political question of secessionist tendencies is also very much relevant in this context. An overemphasis on ethnic identity may well be at the cost of a national identity. One need not advocate a superimposition of any dominant culture but perhaps hybridization is a better solution.

Over a historical period of time all cultures change and one should not shy away from such change in the name of loss of tradition. In India at least, a dichotomization of mainstream culture from marginal or tribal cultures is a fallacy because the mainstream culture itself is an interwoven fabric of multiple cultures. Economic and social vulnerability may lead to a periodic set back but over a sufficient period of time most groups tend to develop their internal systems of adaptability and survival.

The paper is highly relevant however in that it raises some very fundamental questions of academic interest, at the same time providing rich ethnographic information.

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"In a well documented piece, Bhasin and Srivastava have debated the approaches to tribals, some of which were almost relegated to the background. The central issue is of uplifting the tribals so that they are brought in the Indian mainstream. But what constitutes the mainstream is a pertinent query. According to the authors it is an idea of national unity or sentiment of nationhood envisaged through one Constitution and one territory. Although the latter have been achieved because of the unremitting efforts of the national leaders, the present endeavour is to have what is usually termed as 'sentimental unity'. India being a heterogeneous, polycentric, multilingual, multireligious and multiracial country, it is indeed a great challenge to achieve integration of diverse groups and communities north-eastern. Integration necessarily means keeping cultures intact and uniting them for some greater goals.

Considering the mainstream of Indian society in terms of certain socio-cultural correlates is fraught with risk. For a westerner, the Indian society is portrayed in concepts like conservatism, rural, religious-oriented, etc. There cannot be any one socio-cultural stream, each community will have its own cultural traits despite the forceful changes accelerated by historical process. Thus it is advisable to talk of a sentimental unity while identifying the mainstream of Indian society. Let us take an example to further substantiate the problems that come while considering socio-cultural aspects in defining the mainstream. It has been observed that some of the tribals do not dance any more. Their dances and songs have become anachronistic, but does it mean that they do not constitute the core of their culture. With the oncoming of western style of life, the traditional practices become weak and when serious attempts are made to revive them, they easily emerge because they always comprised the core of a culture. Even people from rural India, those who have accepted the western way of life—wearing western dress, staying at urban centres—do not follow or have forgotten their traditional practices. Education through English medium has become quite common with the North-Eastern states. Integration with the market has also been achieved there. The influence of

these factors would always result in abandoning certain traditional practices. In other words they are aspects of the whole process of change.

Bhasin and Srivastava have chosen to describe contact situation as one of the major causes of tribal exploitation. Yes, the tribals were once upon a time a relatively self-sufficient and having a well balanced eco-system in tune with the natural resources and they never had to starve. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf in his D.N. Majumdar memorial lecture (1976) stated that the tribals had adequate food supplies; they could boast an overall quality of life superior in some ways to that of large section of Indian peasantry, they had a non-exploitative social structure and they were characterised by equality of sexes and remarkable tolerance of inter-tribal relation. But the tribal life was disrupted by materially more advanced populations who invaded their habitat, occupied their lands and even reduced them to landless labourers. A somewhat similar case is that of the Lepchas. The encroachment of Bhutias and even people from Nepal have reduced them to a minority. In addition, the middle men, either the Marwaris or any other group, have exploited them through illegal monetary and other economic transactions. Considering this, the then Maharajah of Sikkim established a Lepcha reserve. But it did not offer solution to the pressing problems. Although the Lepcha land could not be transferred, the entry of the middle men remained uncured.

For the development of the Lepchas, or for that matter any small tribal community, individual plans of area specific and culture oriented nature need to be carved out. For instance, marketability of the local products could be conveniently done by the Government machinery by employing the mobile vans. In the Lepcha case the price of cardamom is quite high outside, but the people are not able to get their due share. So the elimination of middle men, and direct purchase of cardamom from the Lepches could be a useful process as well as it could definitely give them a good constant income. Moreover other forest produce such as timber, fruits etc. could be marketed in the same way.

An important thrust of the development endea-

our of the government as well as non-government agencies is of mass awareness programme through all the media particularly that of education. For this is required a battery of well trained personnel. Many suggestions have been given in this regard, but their implementation is not devotedly done. With regard to education, the Lepchas are to be trained so that they take up the role of teachers in their region. Impact of education has really created a lot of difference as was found in the case of Apa Tanis. For that matter, one should be clear that any development measure would not ameliorate the whole community as such. But once the process starts, the community is bound to have some effects. In a community of fifteen thousand people (the Ape Tanis), if 15 are in gazetted posts and 342 in non-gazetted, the impact is certainly destined to be very high—as those benefited with modern education would inspire others; at the same time they would heavily invest on the education of their children.

Let me take a case from my study of the Kondhs of Phulbani, Orissa. They are not different from the exploitative situation that prevailed in other parts of the country. Illegal occupation of land, middle men factor, and money lending practices by outsiders resulted in mass scale indebtedness, bonded labour and also most of them were reduced to landless labourers. Many development programmes were initiated under the Community Development Programme and Tribal Development Plans. The programmes got a major thrust in the 1980s. The question here is, after so many years of implementing the programmes, has there been a visible change in the quality of life of the people.

Here the important issues are that of the rights of the tribals and the effects of external agencies. Traditionally the Kondhs had right over land and forest. Adopting simple method of cultivation with crude implements and also practising shifting cultivation freely as well as collecting minor forest produce, they were rich enough to export the materials outside. But this state of affairs drastically changed after the contact situation. Their rights over forest were lost with the advent of British administration. Their land was misappropriated by the outsiders and they were

pushed to a state of poverty. Introduction of cash economy was definitely a cause; now the Kondh needs money for managing his daily life. But are the forests safe now? There is illegal mass scale cutting and felling of trees for timber by the contractors who are given the forest on lease. Even to pluck *tendu* leaves and to collect other minor forest produce, the Kondhs have to give commission to them.

The development programmes have not met with success because of many reasons. Some of the schemes were not congruent with their requirements. For instance, the cattle scheme could not provide them a sustaining income because, firstly, the Kondhs do not consume milk; secondly, there is no marketability of milk; and finally, there is no appropriate fodder available to feed the high-breed cows. However it has been found that in the Phulbani block, all the tribal households have become beneficiaries under one or the other scheme. A number of financial agencies of the Government and semi-Government are included in this massive development projects. But have they been able to check the money lending system with high interest? The Kondhs for domestic requirements and other festive occasions often take loans from money lenders and even mortgage their land secretly.

Thus the issue of interference by external agencies has caused a great setback among the tribals. For the successful integrating process, first of all there should be complete non-interference from the external agencies, secondly, the rights of the tribals over forests have to be reconsidered carefully. Only then we shall be able to think in terms of any development programme to ameliorate them, or give them an enduring income, to impart education and thus integrating them into the mainstream of Indian society.

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—Result of assimilation and integration of tribals is often not as expected due to some erroneous structuration of causation in our theory. As a legacy of positivism frequent conjunction of events is analyzed as cause and effect. As tribal

culture and spatial isolation often occur together, the latter is construed as the cause of the former. However, as pointed out by the authors, the Apa Tanis have broken their isolation adapted to non tribal professions and yet retained their culture. The Lepchas, on the other hand, live in protected reserve but their material life is degrading.

Spatial isolation can well be effect of tribal culture or a relation which tribal people reproduce in their daily practices. These people are self sufficient in needs of their material, emotional and spiritual life. There is no necessity of developing physical contacts with their neighbours even where such contact is feasible. Where contact is difficult there is no effort to develop it. This gives conjunction of isolation and tribal way of living.

Integration and assimilation of tribal people is an attempt to provide them access to the material comforts available to their neighbours. This is possible by channelising their exchange capacity. Self sufficiency does not operate at the level of all individuals and families. One had always been dependent on others for such needs as blades, beads and bangles. Dependency has changed now to clothes, salt and sugar with kerosene as the latest addition in the list. Needed things are obtained through exchange at equal basis among members of the clan or other tribal people. This is their barter system. The system is extended to non-tribal people where things unequal in their monetary value are treated on equity basis with disadvantage to the tribal people. Tribal people are rich in things precious to non-tribal people. Cardamoms of the Lepchas is one example. These people can have material gains of the monetary economy if the things they are ready to exchange are linked directly to the market needing it. Gains which could have accrued to the Lepchas by overcoming their spatial barrier are obstructed by the Marwari middlemen while the Apa Tanis have progressed through direct spatial links.

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—The polemics of tribal 'isolation-assimilation' in the wider context of national mainstream

remains far from resolved. Since several decades now academic and administrative climate has remained suffused with dialectical arguments advanced by isolationists on the one hand who recommend guarding the tribal against exposure to the contact with the outside world and by assimilationists on the other who advocate welding the tribal with national centrality. The froth of discussion is underlain by the question of tribal identity—its protection or maceration. The theme continues to challenge enthusiasts engaged in preparing grounds for or involved in the actual processes by devising, implementing and evaluating strategies for tribal development.

Against this backdrop, Bhasin and Srivastava raise crucial issues dealing with ecology and economy as vital ingredients of tribal development policies; after indicating disastrous consequences of both over advertence as well as inadvertence they argue for middle position between the two extremes. They cogently propel contentions tipped in favour of integrating the tribes with "sentiments of nationhood" corroborating them with a case from the Lepcha of Sikkim compared with that from the Apa Tanis of Arunachal Pradesh. The scope of the paper extends beyond improvising models for tribal development to furrow related areas of concern as detribalization, tribal exploitation and endogenous efforts proffered by the tribal to manage the situation of changing socio-economic conditions thrust upon them from the exterior.

Bhasin and Srivastava portray social transaction between tribals and outsiders as essentially uni-directional (from latter to the former) and as one charged with intentions of exploitation and seizure of the resources of tribal areas that restricts local entrepreneurial initiative and alienates the tribal from their cultural traditions. I was left wondering whether the tribes of India have been recipients of only the disdainful. They appear to support the policy of screening the outsiders before being allowed to embark on tribal areas. The suggestion, however, does not take cognizance of its feasibility. Further, does reduction in the number of immigrants to tribal areas ensure conditions of integration or separatedness? There appears a hiatus between the policy of init-

iating the tribal to aspire for higher education and coveted posts in private and public sectors and that of insulating them from outsiders (as the Inner Line Policy). Rather than being carefully protected within the folds of plans and policies they should be encouraged to fight exploitation and forces that seek to grind their cultural identity.

The authors refrain from approving the evolutionary approach to the tribals that encircles them as survivals of the past or as arrested stage in the evolution of humankind but later swim in the same water. They station the tribe as passive entity subjected to diskindness and imprecation of outsiders. They plead for government parentalism that matures into dependence. On policies and plans even for their perpetuation across time. Guardianship by an external agency should be coupled with generation of strategies from within the system that make for its effective continuity.

In meticulously reconstructing Lepcha history, the authors of this celebrated article have abraded the subject of tribal identity with emphases on its dilapidation, distortion and resurrection after successive intrusion by the Bhutiyas, Nepalese and British. I was intrigued to read about their self-concept as contained in the term 'Rong' by which they call themselves sharply contrasted with that employed by outsiders—'Lepcha' and 'Nepali fish' that smack of ethnocentric disposition. The socio-psychological paraphernalia surrounding the nomenclatural system would have strengthened the crisis in identity considerably.

The data base buttressed with historical facts and contemporary situation strongly supports the authors' approach to the tribes and the generalizations emanating from exemplary cases seem to apply well across cultures. Integration does qualify as the most suitable perspective on tribal development. Bhasin and Srivastava have analyzed the Lepcha at grass-root level. I was fascinated to discover the segmentation of the Lepcha into two types—the "Dzongu Lepcha" and the "acculturated-assimilated one" on the bases of inter-mixture with outsiders and imbibition of their cultural traits. The ramifications of this dichotomy have spread in their socio-cultural dimensions. Intra- and inter-Lepcha relationships are crucial to maintenance of their identity as cul-

tural beings. These facets have been explored with remarkable insight. This paper is a welcome corrective of misconceptions that shroud the tribal. It contributes positively toward settling the inherent controversy in approach to the tribal.

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—Bhasin and Srivastava's discussion on the approaches to the tribe creatively outlines the issues relevant to anthropologists and administrators. The article significantly moves the argument on 'tribal question' and paves the way for a more fruitful comparative discourse. Working squarely within the dialogue on the controversy centering around isolation-assimilation-integration perspectives, the paper importantly illuminates the basic notions about morality, value neutrality and ethics, so crucial in anthropological debate.

While appreciating and fundamentally agreeing with their conclusions, I feel the need to remark to some basic issues contained in the article. The present paper relies heavily on Elwin's ideas on the question of tribe and it would not be futile to indicate here that the authors seem overtly sympathetic to his views, thereby apparently neglecting the positive side of other approaches. This orients the argument in a lop-sided manner.

The authors frequently talk about retention of cultural identity. Nevertheless whether this identity is emically or etically defined is not clear? Moreover does it reflect on maintaining ritual paraphernalia (p.128) or identity in terms of 'welfare' i.e. sentiments (p.129) and so on?

The theme benefits from the substantiation of arguments of Lepchas with meaningful reconstruction of a historical background, however the case of Apa Tanis appears oddly ahistorical. Being deprived of contextual interpretation and basic differences in material-political situation central to any exploration of dissimilarities becomes a limitation of the otherwise forceful discussion.

It is disturbing to see that Bhasin and Srivastava talk of only education and entry into bureaucracy by few select Apa Tanis as indices of their advancement. Does it sufficiently indicate the social emancipation of the tribe on the whole? In addition

to this they adhere to apparently different parameters in comparing and generalising about tribal situation in these instances. Comparison to be meaningful must rely on ethnographic description that are faithful to the cultures being compared. Further citation from the Naga case has led to what may at best be called over generalisations which appear far fetched in context of other tribal societies. At this juncture I feel that more critical appraisal of the finer details of cultural and ideational changes is wanting.

Besides, the authors appear to miss out on discourse on global situation of tribals which would have provided a broader perspective in this area of interest. After all, the debate is neither pan-Indian nor exclusive to the subcontinent.

None of these criticisms undermine the overall argument. The paper is indeed a significant contribution to the field of tribal development in that it surfaces the hitherto less talked about aspects. It shall interest not only anthropologist and administrators but also those rooted in allied and even diversified fields.

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—In a fascinating and forceful essay, Bhasin and Srivastava have admirably clarified the confusion often associated with approaches to the tribes of India. Most of the text books prescribed for the graduate students in anthropology clearly brand Verrier Elwin as a propagator of the policy of isolation during the colonial rule. I remember as a graduate student of anthropology in 1980, I was taught—in the class room as well as by the books—that Elwin suggested the policy of isolation, and later on the policy of integration, for the tribals. The primary motive behind his policy of isolation, as interpreted by others, was to preserve the tribals in some kind of 'anthropological zoos' as museum specimens and 'materials' for anthropological research even at the cost of their economic development and quality of life. Further I always found it difficult to understand how a person who advocated isolationism could favour integration. It was to Bhasin and Srivastava's credit to have demonstrated that how Elwin's idea of tribal reserve, especially in the

context of the Baigas in 1939, never implied complete isolation for the tribals, on the other hand it aimed to protect the tribals from the exploitation of outsiders—moneylenders, traders, government officials and self styled social reformers, and also aimed at proper and timely integration of the tribals with the wider market economy of the state and nation. The aim of integration, though not explicit, was very much inherent in his statement of 'tribal reserves'.

The definition of 'integration' calls for elaboration. Designating 'integration' as a processual concept, Bhasin and Srivastava define this process as "linking up, attaching, joining parts with the whole" (p. 121). The authors proceed further to inquire into the nature of the "exterior whole" with which the tribes of India are envisaged to be integrated. Though they do not say anything explicitly on what should be the nature of the 'link', 'attachment' or relationship between the parts and the whole, it is implicit in their discussion of the nature of the exterior whole. Some elaboration on the nature of this link/relationship is needed here. This link/relationship can be political, socio-cultural and psychological/sentimental/ideational. Integration, as a process and as a product, is to be viewed at different levels of social reality. No doubt a sociological/anthropological definition of 'integration' has to be holistic considering its political, socio-cultural and psychological/sentimental dimensions. These three dimensions of integration, which have relevance only at the level of analysis, occur at different levels of reality, at different times with varying degree. For example, in the case of India, we have already attained political integration which is evidenced by one Constitution, one parliament, single citizenship and the existence of one nation. This is certainly a 'given fact' and does not remain as a mere 'matter of interpretation' or analysis. In India, political integration is a product of a long process which was initiated much before independence and continued till the merger of Sikkim into the Union of India in 1975. This process is not continuous but an intermittent one.

Socio-cultural integration refers to the linking up of (or uniting) diverse societies into the mainstream culture. A deeper analysis of this problem

reveals that the role of "regional traditions" in providing a cultural link between the local and national tradition can not be overlooked. This process of socio-cultural integration, if not in all cases, is often unconscious and spontaneous. Culture contact, universalization and acculturation are the processes which facilitate socio-cultural integration. This type of integration is to be mainly deciphered by the analyst and is also a given reality to some extent.

In contrast to socio-cultural integration, which lies in the objective domain and the realm of behaviour, the psychological/ideational/sentimental one fall in the realms of ideas/sentiments and subjective domain. It exists in the individual psychology of the concerned group; their feeling and attitude towards the mainstream culture. If they feel attached to the mainstream culture, the psychological/ideational/sentimental integration is said to have been achieved.

However, the problem of national integration crops up when these three dimensions of integration do not go together. For example, Pakistani society shares many common elements with that of India. Once upon a time both of them were parts of a common cultural tradition. But with Pakistan, we have neither political nor sentimental/ideational integration. Similarly within India there are many communities/groups which do not feel attached to the national mainstream (psychological/sentimental/ideational integration) and many others which share very few (and very marginally) culture traits with the mainstream culture (socio-cultural integration).

Finally, Bhasin and Srivastava's article represents a step forward in resolving the confusion associated with the approaches to tribes and tribal development in India.

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—This paper deals with a region which is still almost inaccessible to even Indian scholars and with a people who have arrested the attention of anthropologists, administrators and travellers alike right from 1840s. Bhasin in particular should be congratulated for being able to reach out there and back to readers like us. She is also

one of the first few to have worked in yet another inaccessible region called Lachen-Lachung though these are two separate valleys. This paper therefore deserves a careful scrutiny.

I divide my comments into the following parts.

1. The authors have forsaken the concepts of "isolation" and "assimilation" and argued in favour of "integration". But ironically they draw it from Verrier Elwin who was the most well-known propounder of the policy of "isolation", which was sanctified by Nehru's approval and strengthened by the supportive writings of Furer-Haimendorf and Nari K. Rustonji. But the policy of "integration" was actually advocated by Late G.S. Ghurye of Bombay University, who argued strongly against the isolationist policy of Elwin.
2. It is doubtful if "integration" as it is understood today is the best approach as claimed by the authors. Apart from the widespread repulsion against this concept in the north-eastern states today, the concept itself has certain problems. For instance, it implies persuasion by a central authority whose interests are at stake unless "integration" is effected. The problem is compounded when the concept of "mainstream" is appended to the concept of "integration". "Mainstream" is indeed a vague concept and the effort of the authors to define it, though praiseworthy, has epistemological snags. For instance, "the sentiments of nationhood". This implies that the authors assume or take it for granted that the frontier peoples lack the same.
3. The authors do not seem very sure about their stand in favour of "integration". This is evident in their favourable treatment of the Apa Tani case and their silence about whether or not Dzongu should be retained as a "Lepcha reserve". The confusion deepens when they express disapproval of the "Nepalese immigration" to the Lepcha habitats like Dzongu, which to many has resulted in the "integration" of the Lepchas (as also of Bhutias) with the Hindu "mainstream" of India. Of course, they seek to combine the "good" points of both "isolation" and "assimilation", which is welcome, but such a combination does not, at least conceptually, amount to "integration" as they

claim.

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REPLY

Expressing gratitude to all the commentators on our paper, we shall like to begin with a note of self-clarification.

Since the inception of the tribal studies, first under the rubric of the study of primitive societies that could illuminate the hitherto unknown sociological and cultural past of the Western society, two ideas have been nurtured in an entwined manner.

Firstly, these non-Western societies, holistically different as they were from their Western counterparts, had their own styles of organizing social behaviour and survival in their respective habitats. These studies covering all the facets of their existence in a concatenated frame would illustrate the alternative designs of social organization—the designs that the people improvised in historical and ecological conditions of diverse origin. Those who studied these societies were mostly the white administrators and anthropologists. They justified their vantage point of being observers of participant variety by taking recourse to the idea that the people in a system know what their rights and duties are; they fully know how they have to behave and what expectations entail from being the incumbant of a particular position in their social structure, but of what they are less knowledgeable is how their entire system functions (Malinowski, 1922 : 83). Further, these anthropologists advised that each piece of information gathered from the 'other culture' is involuntarily subjected to comparison with the social and cultural experiences of the investigator's (anthropologist's) moorings. In other words, an ethnography is created in a *situation of comparisons*—the 'other culture' being unexceptionally compared to the 'own culture', the culture of the investigator. Each ethnographic piece, therefore, has a uniqueness of its own, and the *raison d'être* of this uniqueness is the comparative backdrop—the comparative categories of a white anthropologist would be different from a 'native', but both in their own ways and pre-

dispositions, which are less amenable to objective analyses, create and recreate the pictures of alternative designs, colouring them with what they believe or what they have been made to believe is the local knowledge of the people.

Secondly, even when the concept of tribe was defined in terms of isolation—the tribals have their own territory, dialect, system of law and order, culture and folklore—the anthropologists reported the cases and tormenting episodes of acculturation under dominant conquerors, missionaries and other religious reformers, and because of the flooding of unscrupulous landlords, moneylenders and itinerants in their areas. Those who kowtowed to functional methodology were less impressed by a series of changes that were heralded in the so-labelled 'primitive societies' by the conscious impact of the exterior world. When the local authority system was prostrating before the violence unleashed by dominant powers, when local wealth was being plundered to weaken the people or was being transported for building up industrial empire at home, when the tribal land was being colonized for cash crops or installation of income-generating institutions and the 'free and unfettered' people were being reduced to the state of serfdom, when local religions and belief structures were summarily designated as 'pagan', or 'concerned with devil', when local women and children were mercilessly maimed and humiliated, and when local styles of living and thinking were being effortlessly proved as nothing but 'children's play', 'primitive' and 'vestiges of the past', the anthropologists trained to look for internal order and equilibrium and paint the people as masters of their own destiny, spared no effort in describing the societies as maintaining homeostasis rather than undergoing the devastating experiences of disintegration.

But soon were exposed the biases and limitations of the functional method. The harsh reality of disintegration of primitive societies, which by then were called by a seeming neutral nomenclature—the tribal societies, was unshrouded. Cultural relativism had infused sufficient humanism in anthropological writings, and theoretically the tribals were treated as equal partners to Western societies, although they had

become debilitated because of the sinister exploitative designs imposed on them by the vested interests of the outsiders. Anthropology at the outset had promised to offer solutions to the crises of human predicament and the tribals provided an ideal setting for experimenting with the programmes of welfare and amelioration that logically entailed from the pre-occupation with applied anthropology.

But why the tribals could not have carried out the programmes of their upliftment and safeguarding of their interests?

Any sort of development required resources that fell beyond the reach of the tribals. The incessant exploitation had deprived them of a meaningful control over their territory and resources, and the loss that thus accrued was largely irrevocable. The exploiters had established their unquestioned political dominance over the people, and with their gradual hegemonistic control over tribal territories and local resources—forests, water, minerals, physical site—their dominance was further reinforced. Assertion of tribal identity and attempts to denounce the yoke of exploitation hafted on the tribals by their rulers of alien origin met with little success. The history of tribal administration is full with examples where tribal uprisings and revolts were uncompassionately razed to ground. Some tribal leaders did emerge who undauntedly organized their people against all strands of exploitation and 'shared with the national freedom movement its anti-British credo' (Singh, 1983: 213)—and today these leaders are commemorated by their respective people as symbols of their unity and identity—but it was impossible perhaps for a part to nullify the effect of the whole. Revivalism, as was believed by these leaders as the perfect solution to the crises, was in fact infested with many shortcomings; 'going back to the past' was utopian as the changes that had surfaced in the internal as well as the external orders demanded the emergence of a system that was definitely different from what it was in past. Revivalism had sentimental overtones; it did unify the community, especially when it was large and diverse, but less it equipped the people with control over material and political aspects. Having witnessed the crushing of their identity

movement and revolt against the exploiters, the tribals had no option but to yield to the kind of treatment that was meted out to them by their exterior order. It was, thus, left to the anthropologists to think about the future of the tribals, to save them from exploitation, and devise a strategy in which their culture must be saved and at the same time they are not short of resources essential for a dignified living. The anthropological advice on the future of tribals was not deemed to remain confined to anthropological monographs and writings, but was to be put into practice; therefore, it must be expected that these pieces of advice hold the attention of the centres of power and the latter should be prepared to part with resources and equipment for tribal development and agree to enact laws that recognize the traditional rights of the people over their territory and resources.

It is in light of the nature of problems that the solutions are improvised. Anthropologists studying Indian tribals—who now constitute about 7.8 per cent of the total population—described the causes of their disintegration to asymmetrical contact situations. And obviously, the first solution was to curb all those contacts—of tribals with non-tribals, or of tribals with exploiters—that destroyed the economic and social fabrics of tribal societies. When these outsiders, entrepreneurial and merchant class in search of better land and opportunities, had not envisioned the tribal territories as possible gainful sites, the tribals lived, relatively speaking, in the best state—they were the decision makers of their life and resources, and regulated the equation with their habitat in a manner they wanted. Fearlessly they pursued their cultural life; vigilantly they guarded their territory; thriftily they utilized their resource-bank; reverently they submitted them to the nature around, and religiously they clung to their culture. With the entry of the outsiders, who flocked in once the 'tribal country' was opened up, the tribal culture was disrupted analogous to a situation when the doors and windows of a closed record room are suddenly opened and the fans are switched on, and we witness the papers flying in all sides—the quietness and order of the room is suddenly disturbed, and it would require hard labour to put the things in order.

Hard labour was expected to keep the tribal culture in order. Although the painful effects of acculturation, tribal-non tribal interaction, or the interaction between dominant and passive cultures (see Madan, 1983), were described by many erudite observers of tribal societies, Verrier Elwin was perhaps the first one to delineate some concrete suggestions for initiating the process of returning dignity back to the tribals. The policy of isolation he thoughtfully considered for the Baigas, was not notorious as was thought out to be. Those who had not closely read his statement in *The Baiga*, and had only extrapolated from the usual meaning of the word 'isolation', unhesitatingly charged Elwin as desiring to keep the tribals in the 'anthropological zoo' (if there is anything like that) so that the subject matter of anthropology—what was 'primitive society' and today largely is 'tribal societies'—did not hear its premature funeral ode. It was ridiculous to think that once the tribals were de-tribalized, social anthropology would have nothing to study; and equally mischievous was to think that rather than evolving a unified India, the anthropologists favoured to fragment the country into different communities and groups by inspiring them to live as they were without introducing any modicum of change. Elwin, very emphatically, said that the 'tribal reserve' did not mean 'anthropological zoo'; it was a method to check the exploitation of the tribals at the hands of the outsiders (for a succinct discussion on reservations and tribal problems at the global level, see Singh, 1985: 243-248). Here, it may be said that there is no dearth of examples where the unrestricted entry of the outsiders wreaked havoc on the relative self-sufficiency, tranquility and order of the tribal life. A recent report on the tribals of the Gudalur valley states:

The Gudalur valley, lower Nilgiris, in Tamil Nadu is the home of five tribes, the Paniyans, Katunaickens, Betta Kurumbas, Moolukurumbas and Irulas. At the time of independence, the Gudalur valley was densely forested... Soon after independence there were invasions by land hungry Malayalis from neighbouring Kerala. This was followed in the 80s by a Sri Lankan repatriate influx. Although the tribals were numerically superior, the predominant influence was of the non-tribal culture. In their very own homelands, tribals had their culture, their customs, their speech

and their dress denigrated and ridiculed... the Chetans (Malayali Christian settlers) arrived penniless. Tribals helped them clear land, often fed them only to find that the Chetan, soon fenced off tribal property rendering the host tribal homeless and a refugee in his own land. Tribal culture did not perceive the need for papers (title deeds) for land. So soon most tribals lost over most lands and produced valid documents to prove their ownership. Tribals watched the outsiders growing more prosperous and powerful though they had arrived penniless (Thakkar, 1957: 34).

To check the exploitation of the tribals, similar to one quoted above, Elwin thought of the National Park.

In our article, we endeavoured our best to clarify Elwin's position with respect to tribal problems. Still, we think a couple of statements from his works are required here to show that the idea of the National Park did not mean a barbed enclosure having the unremitting flow of electric current fatally punishing any interaction between the insiders and the outsiders. Elwin did not suggest the creation of a closed/unventilated system; he favoured allowing the tribals to have some basic privilege on their land and resources which traditionally belonged to them. Our sympathy to him is not borne out of any particularistic predisposition, and also we do not suggest to remain ensnared by the academic romanticism his twenty-six monographs on the tribals of India aptly demonstrated (see Srivastava, forthcoming). Our humble submission in the article was to have a fresh look at his writings—did his idea of the National Park really connote the creation and sustenance of a changeless society? or, did he suggest *temporary isolation* as one of the effective instruments to save the tribal culture and its interests from being macerated? In *The Baigas* (1939), to recapitulate, he suggested:

[The] gloomy future [of the Baigas] could be averted by the creation of the National Park..., or at the least by handing over to the Baiga part of the great tracts of forest that can never be exploited commercially. So remote and inaccessible is this forest that it can be of no value to the State, yet it might be of the highest importance in saving from extinction one of the most interesting, most delightful and most ancient of all the peoples of the Central Provinces of India. Those who believe in 'Homo-Religio' for India should at least see to it that the original owners of the country are given a few privileges (p. 519).

Several years later, when he pondered over the

future that the creation of the National Park brusquely evoked, he wrote:

It is true that I myself, writing many years ago when India was under British rule, advocated a policy of *temporary isolation* for certain small tribes, but this was not to keep them as they were, but because at that time the only contacts they had with the outside world were debasing contacts, leading to economic exploitation and cultural destruction. Nothing positive was being done for their welfare; national workers were not admitted into their hills; but merchants, moneylenders, landlords, and liquor-vendors were working havoc with their economy and missionaries were destroying their art, their dances, their wearing and their whole culture (1957: 46).

In the commemorative volume edited in Elwin's honour, Pradhan clarified:

One of the criticisms heard against Verrier Elwin in some anthropological quarters in India is that he advocated the policy of *laissez faire* or 'tribal zoos'. This is incorrect. He was against any such policy. But he was also against the policy of introducing administrative changes without careful consideration of their effects upon tribal life. Similarly, he was against exposing tribal people to the greed of moneylenders, merchants, etc., who were infiltrating into the tribal areas with the clear design of exploiting them (1969: 16).

Regardless of what Elwin actually meant, isolation *per se* was conceptualized as fragmenting the country into tiny cultural conglomerates, each stressing its own identity. The protagonists of assimilation—the prominent being A.V. Thakkar and G.S. Ghurye—rejected Elwin with vehemence, and this was not unexpected because at the time of national struggle when national unity was urgently desired, assimilation of different—sometimes diametrically opposed—groups into one was hailed as the ideal step to fight colonial regime. In other words, the thesis of assimilation envisaged a singular culture, perhaps the majoritarian culture, in which different groups must melt; their individual culture and identity, it was thought, would be a setback to national unity. Assimilation could rally support around it because in certain academic circles, the Indian tribals were—though erroneously—called 'backward Hindus'. And as the tribal movements unfolded themselves, it became clear that the tribals vociferously rejected their classification as Hindus in official documents. Instantaneously, one is reminded of the Santals who lodged a strong protest against their being included under the appellation Hindu in Census of India, 1951 (Orans, 1965).

History is ruthless. It is on no one's side; it presents the events as they have taken place. The dream of the assimilationists was belied; we did not see the 'melting' of different cultures in a singular whole. On the contrary, primordial ties and loyalties, instead of disappearing with the encroachment of commercial and industrial frontiers, were further strengthened. Religion, language and ethnicity were crucial elements, and each one of them demanded a better deal from the centre. A linguistic basis of the division of states provided an avid opportunity for developing purism in a language. Revival of an unadulterated religion also made headway with groups falling on the borderline of different religious streams often being urged to give up what appeared pagan to the puritans. In spite of mass-scale changes that were imported in communities because of external agencies, the ethnic identities remained unmitigated. Cleavages of culture and society—that divided the whole into many parts and distinguished one from the other—were deepened ironically with the modern secular state and industrialization that theoretically celebrated the individual while relegating to the background the primordialities that flourished in the womb of community (Srivastava, 1989).

The ideological and cultural puritanism as envisaged in the thesis of assimilation was nowhere to emerge. It smacked of zealotry and violence—all should become one but not by homogenization, not by a single language, culture and religion. Attempts to do so by the centre of power would breed violence and catastrophe. Intellectual sterility is the outcome when all melt into one. The strength of Indian civilization, it has been historically proved, sprouts from the celebration of diversity and difference. Veena Das (1989 : 46; also see 1990 : 345-398) eloquently expresses it:

It is imperative for us now to search for other models of pluralism within our own history and mythology, for images of the self and the other, of being and meaning, in order to develop them creatively. It is not frozen metaphors that we seek from our past, nor exotic myths and rituals that bear no relation to life whatsoever. What we are looking for is alternative designs for life based upon the recognition of difference. The quest for homogeneity and similarity—the premises for the idea of harmony in the modern world—ends

up by treating society as a mere "collection" of people. To my mind this has simply sanctioned increasing violence and the worship of death.

The issue is not of tolerating the divisions of Indian society or its plurality—and not much will be attained by voicing the cliché like unity in diversity—but efforts are to be directed to discover a theory of survival in which pluralism, the multi-religiosity, multi-linguism, multi-ethnicity, and polycentrism, provide the 'design of and for life'.

And such a theory is based on the ideas of integration: integrating the divisions and differences of Indian society into the mainstream of Indian nation without subjecting any of its groups to the violence of homogenization (Das, 1989: 55—here we have in mind her statement, '... the search for homogeneity leads to violence'). As far as we know, there will be less disagreement on the basic premisses of integration. Where we might have divergence of opinion is how best we accomplish the ongoing task of integration. It was with an attempt to examine the operationalization of integration policies that we analyzed the Lepcha case.

Why was the Lepcha reserve established? To save the Lepcha land from being expropriated by the outsiders. Though the term 'reserve', or 'park' (as Elwin uses), may produce an image of isolation (or even 'anthropological zoo'), the singular aim of such a 'reserve' was to recognize the rights of the tribals over their property and resources, and these rights should not be infringed upon by the malafide intentions of the outsiders. The non-tribal outsiders should not be permitted to buy land or start business in tribal areas; effective legal surveillance is needed to check any case of illegal transaction of land or forests; or attempts to convert people to 'middle class Hinduism' (Thapar, 1991: 40) should be nipped in the bud. The tribals need to be saved from the commercialization of their resources and land, the process which can take-off with the untrammelled entry of the outsiders in their regions. In those ecologically-difficult areas, where the merchants and entrepreneurial communities could not gain free access and where the state also protected the interests of the local people, the results of development have been encouraging. For substantiating this, we briefly discussed the Apa Tani case. To remember, Furer-Haimendorf (1983 : 1-25)

compared the Apa Tanis with the Gonds of Central India, and the relative prosperity of the former was attributed to ecological-cum-administrative protection of the people.

Is the idea of 'reserve' inhuman? Does it hinder the free mixing and mobility of the people? We minced no words in saying that it is criminal to suggest isolation of the people, but at the same time, it is equally criminal to permit the resourceful, dominant outsiders to settle down in tribal territories and exploiting the local people. When the traditional territorial rights of the people and their rights over resources are recognized and effected, there results a tract of land which legally belongs to them. Take the case of the Baiga Chak. It is in the Satpura forest range of Mandala district in Madhya Pradesh. Comprising fifty-two villages, predominantly having the Baiga population along with some Gonds and Pankas (the weavers), the area does not permit the outsiders (tribal or non-tribal) to acquire land or commercially exploit the local resources. The Baiga Chak Development Agency identifies programmes for the upliftment of the people. In these forest and revenue villages, the individual households have been given land and are being persuaded to switch on to plough cultivation. There are certainly no restrictions on the mobility of the local people. The aim of the administration is to safeguard the interests of the people and provide them with regular employment in forest and other small scale industries.

When traditional rights of the people are recognized, they will have every opportunity to preserve and, if they so desire, change their cultural identity. The expression 'cultural identity' is frequently used to denote the feeling of solidarity that crystallizes from partaking and sharing of the common cultural items and traits. Subjectively defined by the community, it continues to thrive even in cataclysmic changes. It is not static and has enough malleability to adapt to changing circumstances.

It may not be correct to assume that a community has only one level of identity. Depending on the context of interaction, the identity consequently changes. Perhaps the fusion-fission model may be useful in understanding the change from one identity to the next, and this has a

methodological implication. Cultural identity is of a community interacting at a particular stratum with the other—the people construct their identity from the given artifacts of material and ideational nature and this is done in relation to the other. It is in situations of opposition or juxtaposition that the identity surfaces; cultural identity is defined with an *emic standpoint*, though like any sociological phenomenon, it may be studied with an *etic perspective*.

The exact opposite of integration is separatism. Cultural identity figures in both of them; in integration, it creatively justifies pluralism, in separatism, it denounces plurality and works towards homogenization. In integration, cultural identity is prepared to learn and change; in separatism, it is closed, becoming puritan and fundamental. In integration, the ideal of peace is cherished by cultural identity; violence becomes central to separatism.

It may be noted here that every state needs a 'national philosophy' for its sustenance and unity. In nation-states (and India is one of its good examples, see Oommen, 1990: 31-33, 124-125), which are composed of diverse societies and cultural practices, a unifying national philosophy is imperative for keeping intact cultural pluralities of different origin. If a nation-state succumbs to any of the primordial factors, either of the majority or any of its ethnic constituents, irreparable damage is caused to the ongoing process of nation-building. Even the slightest patronage or sympathy to these factors by the state can voluminously release the obdurate forces to hold the rein. Important therefore it is to a nation-state to evolve a national philosophy which transcends all the primordial factors and searches for ingredients and goals common and acceptable to all.

The concept of mainstream is vague (as one of our commentators says) when it is intuitively thought that the complex diversity would always stand in the way of transforming a nation-state into society. But when one proceeds on the lines of national philosophy, it may not be difficult to delineate the ingredients of the mainstream to which diverse groups and communities are to be knitted. We suggested that it is not popular Hinduism or Gandhian values that constitute the mainstream of India, although their reverberating influence on pan-Indic culture cannot be

denied. We tend to believe that the seven national goals—national unity, parliamentary democracy, industrialization, socialism, scientific temper, secularism and non-alignment—which Jawaharlal Nehru identified in modernisation, the national philosophy of India (Parekh, 1991: 35-39, 41-43, 45-48), provide crucial ingredients for defining the mainstream of India. It is to these goals that different groups are to be effectively linked. The gains of economic development should be equally distributed rather than remaining concentrated in urban centres. Technological innovations that relieve the people of hard manual labour should be easily accessible. Particular groups are to be desisted from monopolising decision making process. In this context, Srinivas writes:

There are tribal ministers and tribal cabinet ministers in the north-east, and tribal ministers elsewhere, but the triumph of Indian democracy will be made complete when positions such as those of the prime minister, president and vice president are occupied by tribals (1990: 2840).

The idea is that integration will not succeed unless at the material level the tribals are able to take advantages of the development programmes that are especially devised for them. With this, as some of our commentators remind us, sentimental integration—at the psychological and ideational level—with the nation, its Constitution and territory is extremely important.

Finally, let us submit that we are not unsure about our stand in favour of integration. Every tribal policy or approach, irrespective of the title it bears, has two fundamental themes. Firstly, the tribals should be saved from the exploitative designs perpetrated by the outsiders. The territorial rights of the people and their rights over the resources are to be fully recognized. Each tribe should be seen as providing an alternative design of ordering relations and establishing an equation between life and environment. Damaging stereotypes and pejoratives that have come to be attached to the tribals need to be fully eliminated.

Secondly, culture-specific development programmes are to be devised in consultation with the proposed beneficiaries. A periodic evaluation of these programmes is essential to watch whether the results are consistent with the huge expectations from the development programmes.

Integration of the tribes with the mainstream, as defined in terms of the national philosophy, requires that the state recognises the traditional rights of the people, guards them against exploitation, designs modern productive and human resource development organizations for them, and provides them full freedom to preserve or change their culture in the way they like to.

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