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Adivasis, Integration and the State in India: Experiences of Incompatibilities

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Anthropologists, administrators and policy makers debated the adivasis question in the post-independent India from the perspectives of isolation, assimilation and integration. Amidst discourses, integration approach was followed to address the adivasi issues in the post-colonial period. Following the integration approach, the Indian state made series of promises to the adivasis in terms of granting equal citizenship rights in social, economic, political and cultural spheres; providing equal opportunities and committed to preserve and protect adivasi culture and identity. Despite such promises, adivasis continue to live at the margin of the post-colonial state, and thereby experiencing different forms of marginalization, dispossession and deprivation. They have developed cynicism towards the integration policy and experiencing declining sense of involvement in the (mainstream) society. The integration approach of the Indian state has become a means of exclusion for the adivasis in India. Within this backdrop, the paper critically examines the contemporary dynamics of integration of adivasis in the Indian state.

Keywords: Adivasis, integration, incompatibility, state, India.

Introduction

The relationship between state and society is defined or redefined on the basis of corresponding nature of the state and different communities that are an integral part of the society. Group differences have significant implications over the functioning of modern society.

In a plural society, certain groups experience a sense of discrimination, marginalisation, disadvantage and oppression based on their group differences (Young, 1989). In Indian context, adivasis (indigenous people, the official term for the adivasis is Scheduled Tribes, STs) constitute one such important group, who are not only struggling to animate their distinctive cultural values, language and traditions but also increasingly facing indifferences, discrimination, marginalisation and deprivation. Some may argue that while there is no doubt that this group is in a disadvantaged position, surely all adivasis are not in the same situation. The voices of adivasis, as multiple, fractured and differentiated, need to be recognised as adivasis assert their identity, express their politics, and negotiate with the state and its institutions. In a way of countering such position, it can be stated that the Indian state has adopted a larger community/group rather than sub-community/group specific approach to address disadvantages and marginalisation, and distribute resources and state sponsored entitlements. Socio-economic and political indicators are being determined on the basis of social groups in India.

In the post-independent period, anthropologists, administrators and policy-makers viewed adivasi question from the perspectives of isolation, assimilation and integration (for detailed discussion, see Ambagudia, 2011, 2019a). Integration was clearly an approach to deal with the adivasis in the post-independent period. While adopting the integration approach, the Indian state made a series of promises to the adivasis in terms of granting equal citizenship rights in social, economic and political spheres; providing equal opportunities and committed to preserve and protect adivasi culture and identity. Guided by these principles, adivasis have been integrated into the mainstream social life, however, it has failed to capture the essence of adivasi lifeworld. Within this backdrop, the paper critically examines the contemporary dynamics and impact of integration on adivasis in India. Firstly, the paper focuses on social exclusion and the adivasis in India. Secondly, it explores the dynamics of inclusive policy and (in)compatibilities associated with it in the context of the adivasis in India. Thirdly, it deals with the contemporary development in response to the adverse inclusion, followed by the conclusion.

Social Exclusion and Adivasis in India

Generally, the concept of social exclusion can be understood as a condition or outcome and a dynamic process. As a condition or outcome, social exclusion is a state of affairs where the marginalised groups cannot participate effectively or fully is a dynamic process, which is the outcome of the day to day interaction and interface of one social group with the other. The discourse on social exclusion emerges in respective social, economic, political and cultural contexts. The issues of social exclusion become more prominent in relation to various social groups revolving around caste, ethnicity, gender, religion, region, etc. These variables have significantly provided the ground to construct a meaningful discourse on social exclusion and inclusion in India. The presence of 'distinctiveness' or 'differences' on these grounds becomes the context of experiencing exclusion and (adverse)inclusion by different social groups in India.

Exploring the relationship between exclusion and adivasi communities, the adivasis experience exclusion on the basis of ethnic identity and largely being outside the state and civilisation (Beteille, 1986: 316). Social exclusion is relational. It is a process through which the adivasi communities engage with the outside world. Social exclusion is nothing but the product of the day to day interaction and interface between the adivasis and the outside world within the broader framework of their group identity. The process of exclusion based on such identity becomes the causative factor for multiple deprivations of the adivasi communities in India. Practice of social exclusion enables certain groups to maintain their dominance in social, economic, political and cultural spheres of life. Such dominance restricts the entry of the adivasi communities in the public sphere at different degrees and various levels. In other words, modern society captured by dominant communities use group identity to restrict the equal participation of adivasis in public sphere and deny their equal access to goods and services in India. The imposition of such restriction denies the adivasis to participate fully in the society. Social exclusion systematically undermines the capacity of the adivasis, and damages their self-confidence and thereby contributes towards generating the growing sense of 'alienation'. It leads to the process of deprivation, marginalisation and dispossession in India. It is a process of the denial of access and control over resources. Such denials to the adivasis lead to multiple deprivations, such as income, employment, health, education, skills, training, etc. The adivasi communities have their own culture, language, traditions and lifestyles. Dominant social groups use this distinctiveness to discriminate and deprive adivasi communities at different levels and various forms.

Inclusive Policy, (In)compatibility and the Adivasis

In the post-independent period, the inclusive policy of the state was primarily driven by the larger concern of accelerating the process of nation-building in India. The state followed all steps necessary for the attainment of national integration, and thereby facilitating the process of nation-building smoothly. This process demanded the replacement of different primordial ethnic and religious identities with the loyalty to the 'national mainstream' or at least made them compatible with the 'national interest'. As a consequence, the state compromised with the rich diversity of the society, and the diverse language, culture and value system of tribes have been denied due to the acceleration of nation-building process (Pathy, 1999: 107), and thereby misrecognising the distinctiveness of adivasi communities. Taylor (1994: 26) considers that misrecognition not only reflects the sense of lack of due respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. The integration approach of the nation-state resulted in adverse inclusion of adivasi communities in the mainstream society (Nathan and Xaxa, 2012). Within this backdrop, the state diluted the credibility of diverse cultures and eroded the values of the adivasi society, and enacted a standardised pattern of single citizenship. To put it differently, as a part of integration and inclusive society, the adivasis began their career with the same rights and opportunities in the form of citizenship rights extended to the members of the larger or so-called mainstream society (Xaxa, 2008; Xaxa, 2011: 4).

The practice of single citizenship does not recognise the existing differences in the society and treats everyone in the same footing. It does not address the issue of social discrimination and marginalisation, inequality of wealth, status and power, and endows everyone the same status as peers in the political public (Young, 1989: 256). The single or universalisation of citizenship proved to be inadequate in addressing the issues of rights, liberty, justice, etc. in a heterogeneous society like India. As a consequence, the conferment

of universal citizenship rights did not help the adivasis to overcome their age-old persisting exclusion, domination and marginalisation in India. Nathan and Xaxa (2012) argue that the extension of equal citizenship rights to the adivasis did not meet the objectives of the inclusive society, rather led to adverse inclusion of gradation, which Sen (2000: 28) considers as 'unfavourable inclusion'. What the adivasis need is the recognition of their differences in terms of culture, values, language and traditions. Taylor (1994: 26) underlines that 'due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need'. Young (1989: 258) argues that communities located at the margin of society require *not equal* but *differentiated* citizenship rights, which can give adequate recognition to their differences rather than clubbing them in a homogenous category.

The framers of the Indian constitution were, however, aware about the existing diversities, and attempted to address them. As a result, India developed institutional means not only for the recognition of differences but also to have voices of adivasis in the highest decision-making bodies such as the parliament and state assemblies. The need for such mechanisms was widely discussed in the Constituent Assembly, which also had representations from adivasi communities, within the broader framework of recognising the differences and granting special rights to the disadvantaged (Ambagudia, 2011). The Indian state adopted a range of inclusive policies in the post-independent India to ensure adequate representation of adivasi communities in the public sphere. Seth (2004: 38) categorises the ameliorative policies framed in Indian constitution into three broad groups: remedial, promotive and protective. Remedial policies aim to address social and religious disabilities of certain communities which have occurred due to spatial and cultural isolation. Promotive policies emphasise on the need for promoting and facilitating equal participation of marginalised groups in public sphere. Protective policies aim to protect, if required through legislative and executive orders, the marginalised groups from all forms of social injustices and exploitation. Galanter (1984) draws three types of inclusive policies: reservation, special assistance and protection. There are reservations for the adivasis to access certain valued positions or resources. Special assistance programmes are also formulated to provide services to the adivasis such as scholarships, grants, loans, land allotments, health care and legal aid, to beneficiary groups beyond comparable invest for others. Finally, the government has enacted protective measures for the adivasi communities of India. Reservation policy has appeared as one of the most promising policies to facilitate the presence of adivasis in public sphere, especially in politics, government employment and higher educational institutions.

Political Sphere

The long experiences of political exclusion of adivasis compelled the Indian state to develop a mechanism though which adivasis can have their representation in representative institutions such as the parliament and the state assemblies. The presence of adivasis in the representative institutions is essential in order to represent the voices and concerns of adivasis in the highest decision-making bodies. The presence of adivasi representatives in the decision-making bodies can influence the public policies in favour of their communities. As a result, under articles 330 and 332, the policy of reservation has extended to the adivasis in lok sabha and legislative assemblies, respectively. The implementation of these provisions has invariably ensured the presence of adivasi voices in the decision-making bodies. It is worthwhile to mention that politics is the only sphere, where there is an adequate representation of adivasis, at least on numerical ground. So,

the extension of political preference to adivasi communities has ensured quantitative representative, without which that would have been lacking (Galanter, 1984).

As a result of the provision of political reservation, there are 47 members of parliament (MPs) and 554 members of legislative assemblies (MLAs) in India, increased from 41 MPs and 534 MLAs since 2009 due to the implementation of the delimitation of the parliament and assembly constituencies order, 2008. Ambagudia (2019c) argues that though the implementation of the delimitation of the parliament and assembly constituencies order, 2008 brought positive impacts on the overall representation of adivasis in the parliament and the state assemblies, the close regional analysis of the political presence of adivasis suggests that it has brought hope and despair for adivasis. This is due to the fact that the delimitation of the parliament and assembly constituencies order, 2008 converted some of the previously adivasi reserved constituencies into non-adivasi constituencies both at the state and national level politics. Similarly, considering the population strength of the adivasis in parliamentary and assembly constituencies, the same order also converted some of the non-adivasi constituencies into adivasi constituencies.

However, consider the flip side of the story, despite the persistent resistance by the adivasis, the British forcefully integrated them into the mainstream political system, followed by the post-colonial state, which resulted in incompatible experiences of adivasis in political sphere. The adverse political inclusion has discredited the political values of the adivasi society. The rich political tradition of the adivasi society is increasingly challenged by the emergence of a nation-state based on competitive politics. The peculiarity of taking a decision by consensus is being replaced by the struggle for power among the adivasi communities. The introduction of party politics in adivasi communities has exacerbated the difficulty of determining the genuine representative of the adivasi communities, 'who can speak for or on behalf of other'. The adivasi communities have now been forced to choose one among many of their own contesting brothers by casting votes (Bosu Mullick, 2001: 131). The introduction of modern democracy in adivasis society has led the contesting candidates from adivasi reserved constituencies to make a series of promises during election period, they, however, remained unfulfilled even after the completion of the election.

The position of the adivasi communities in politics was not only marginal in the political sphere during the colonial period (Mcmillan, 2005) but also continue to be so in the post-colonial period (Ambagudia, 2019a, 2019c). Though the adivasi communities provided an important support base to the national movement led by the Congress party, their representation is marginal not only in the formal political institutions but also at the party level. The existing literature suggests that the representation of adivasis in ministries both at the state and national levels (Panigrahi, 1998: 90; Jayal, 2006: 10; Ambagudia 2019a: 166) to certain portfolio. Except the ministry of tribal(adivasi) affairs, the representation of adivasis at the ministerial level has largely remained invisible. The exclusion of adivasis in such political sphere indicates that higher castes do not want to share the powers and valued position that they have been enjoying for centuries, and reinforces their political dominance, which may lead to the crisis of democracy (Waylen, 2015: 496). The present disadvantages of adivasis is the product of the oppressive past, or what Chakrabarty (2007: 78) calls as 'historical wound', where adivasis were made to endure social marginalization and economic exploitation.

Government Employment

Like political reservation, similar quota system has also enacted under Article 16(4) of the Indian constitution to ensure adequate representation of the adivasis in the government services. Consequently, a quantum of 7.5 percent seats is reserved for the adivasis in all levels of government services. Table 1 shows the representation of the adivasis in group A, B, C and D of the central government services during 2003 to 2013. Group A and B posts are scientific, technical, managerial and administrative in nature; while group C and D posts are typically clerical, office production and other miscellaneous non-managerial jobs. As on 1 January 2013, the representation of the adivasi communities in group A, B and C is 5.08, 5.99 and 7.75 percent, respectively. Similarly, they have represented a quantum of 4.60, 6.30, 9.50 and 15.90 percent in executive, supervisory, workmen/clerical and semi-skilled/unskilled level (Oommen, 2014: 106). The representation of the adivasi communities in central universities is documented at 5.10, 1.49, 0.63 and 3.45 percent at the levels of lecturer, reader and professor as on 31 March 2011 (Oommen, 2014: 107). This representation was possible because of the educational development of the adivasis combined with a number of affirmative policies and programmes such as capacity building programmes, free coaching and so on.

TABLE 1. Representation of Adivasis in Central Government Services (as on 1 January).

Year	A	B	C	D*
2003	4.18	4.32	6.54	6.96
2004	4.1	4.6	6.7	6.7
2005	4.3	4.5	6.5	6.9
2006	3.8	5.2	6.9	7.0
2008	4.8	5.8	7.0	6.9
2009	4.8	5.9	7.2	6.5
2010	4.5	5.7	7.4	7.16
2011	4.8	6.0	7.6	7.4
2013	5.08	5.99	7.75	NA

Source: Government of India. Annual reports, 2004-2005; 2005-2006; 2006-2007; 2008-2009; 2009-2010; 2010-2011; 2011-2012; 2012-2013 & 2013-2014, New Delhi: Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. N.B.: * excludes sweepers; NA-Not Available.

Table 1, however, reflects that there is a growing violation of reservation policy in terms of its implementation. The representation of the adivasis is not up to the prescribed 7.5 percent. The under-representation of adivasis is attributed to the non-availability of suitable candidates. This attribution, however, cannot be justified, as the Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of SCs (Dalits) and STs (Adivasis) argues that there is an availability of qualified candidates among the adivasis. However, lack of commitment from implementing authorities to give adequate publicity in adivasi inhabited arears is the main

hindrance towards fulfilling the promises of preferential policy in government employment (Asian Indigenous and Tribal People's Network, 2009: 46). The real problem, as Ambagudia (2019b: 208) argues, is not the preferential policy *per se* but poor implementation, bureaucratic apathy and the lack of political will to implement the preferential policy as well as other welfare policies that would open up opportunities for the adivasis and transform the promises of preferential policies into reality.

Educational Sphere

Unlike reservation in politics and government employment, there was no provision of 'quota system' in education for the adivasis under the original Indian constitution. Such provision was extended by the First Constitutional Amendment Act, 1951, by inserting Article 15 (4), which reads, "Nothing in this Article or in Clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes or for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes." Such clause was inserted in the Indian constitution primarily because of the fact that without educational advancement, adivasi communities would not be able to represent in government services and their political representatives would not perform their function efficiently. Consequently, like in politics and government employment, a quantum of 7.5 percent seats is reserved for the adivasi communities in educational institutions.

TABLE 2. Literacy rate of Adivasis, 1961-2011 (in %).

Year	General	SC	ST	Gap between General and ST	Gap between SC and ST
1961	28.3	10.27	8.53	19.77	1.74
1971	34.45	14.67	11.3	23.15	3.37
1981	43.57	21.38	16.35	27.22	5.03
1991	52.21	37.41	29.6	22.61	14.8
2001	64.84	54.69	47.1	17.74	7.59
2011	72.99	66.07	58.96	14.03	7.11

Source: Government of India. (2013). Statistical profile of scheduled tribes in India 2013. New Delhi: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, p. 14.

Table 2 demonstrates that the adivasi literacy rate is increased from 8.53 in 1961 to 58.96 percent in 2011. Table 2 presents pleasing statistics when we compare the educational development of all social groups/general category, which has experienced a little over two and half time (2.57) from 1961 to 2011. The literacy rate of the adivasis is, however, increased a little less than seven times (6.91) from 1961 to 2011. The increasing adivasi literacy rate is due to the formulation, enactment and implementation of a number of affirmative policies such as age relaxation, free school uniform, free books, fee concession, scholarship to meritorious students, mid-day meal, free cycle to adivasi girl students, etc. To put it differently, the introduction of different inclusive policies has facilitated the

process of opening up of the scope of education (that was confined to certain sections of the society) to the marginalised communities such as the adivasis in India.

Although the adivasi literacy rate presents pleasing statistics over the period, there are challenges in educational sphere especially in rural areas. Though most of the adivasis managed to go to schools, their dropout rate, however, is high (especially among girls) in various states in spite of the introduction of different inclusive policies. Reservation seems to become meaningless unless we address critical issues that contribute negatively towards the educational advancement of adivasis. This perhaps partially explain the reason why adivasis of some states are more into higher education and sharing the larger share of cake in government employment than the adivasis of other states. Lack of awareness and poverty also contribute to the factor.

Though the practice of inclusive policies and programmes has increased the adivasi literacy rate over the period, the quality of education disseminated to adivasi communities is highly questionable. Meanwhile, there is an increasing gap between the adivasi literacy rate and the general literacy rate. For instance, the gap between the general literacy rate and adivasi literacy rate is 19.77, 23.15, 27.22, 22.61, 17.74 and 14.03 percent in 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011, respectively. Similarly, 1.74, 3.37, 5.03, 14.8, 7.59 and 7.11 percent of literacy rate gap between SCs (dalits, former untouchables) and adivasis has been recorded in 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011, respectively. To put it differently, the adivasis are lagging behind the general and SC population while accessing educational facilities. In addition, adivasi communities in India lack the most significant source of 'cultural capital', that is, good command of the English language (Weisskopf, 2004: 73). This partially contributes to the growing dropout rate among the adivasi students and explains the increasing gap between the general and the SC literacy on the one hand and the adivasi literacy rate on the other. The adivasi communities have been forced to learn the alphabets in an alien language.

Ambagudia (2019a: 102) argues that the Indian state has growingly discriminated against the adivasi communities while choosing a language as the medium instructions in schools. For instance, while rehabilitating the Bengali migrants from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in Dandakaranya regions of the states of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh in the early 1960s, the Dandakaranya Project proposed two language formulas: Odiya and Bengali in Odisha, and Hindi and Bengali in Madhya Pradesh. Consequently, the Bengali language was introduced as the medium of instruction in primary, middle and higher secondary schools in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. In 1968, the Dandakaranya Development Authority (DDA, the nodal agency to rehabilitate the migrants) recommended that Bengali should be the medium of instruction up to class V and in the middle and secondary standard, the medium of instruction would be Odiya/Hindi in the respective states of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh and Bengali can be opted as a Modern India Language (MIL). Odiya and Hindi were to be introduced as an additional subject at the stage of class-III in the schools in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh respectively. On the contrary, the adivasi language was sidelined when it came to addressing the issues of the language of instruction in schools. The possibility of the use and protection of adivasi language that was once debated in the Constituent Assembly again lost its implications over the educational system of the country. The adivasi communities were forced to learn the language that was different from their mother tongue.

Other Welfare Measures

The inclusive policies of the state are not only designed in terms of giving preferences in politics, government service and education but also adopted a large number of developmental measures. Recognising the specificity of the adivasi communities, tribal(adivasi) sub-plan was implemented since 1974-1975 with the aim to ensure the flow of funds in proportionate to the population. The government adopted the Modified Area Development Approach to deal with the smaller adivasi pockets during the seventh five-year plan (1985-1990). The government also set up the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) during the seventh five-year plan. It has also set up National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Corporation Development (NSFD) to provide credit support and employment generation to the SCs and the adivasis. In spite of such good intention, these schemes, however, were never implemented with sincerity.

In addition to their incompatible experiences in politics, government employment and educational sectors, adivasi communities draw similar experiences in other spheres as well. The report of the High Empowered Committee (Xaxa Commission) shows that the adivasi communities of India are far from having access to health facilities. They are suffering from different kind of health problems and protein and energy deficiency. To put it differently, the adivasis are lagging behind other social groups in health indicators (Government of India, 2014: 198-203). During 2009-2010, the poverty ratio among adivasis was 47.1 and 28.8 percent in rural and urban areas, respectively (Government of India, 2013: 94). The affirmative policies of the state are unable to check the incremental transfer of adivasi land to the non-adivasis and multinational companies (MNCs) (Ambagudia, 2010: 60-67; Ambagudia, 2019a; Government of India, 2014: 253-283). The adivasis are experiencing a low level of human development index. In short, the inclusive policy of the state has facilitated two forms of exclusion in the context of the adivasi communities. One is exclusion from access to or denial of rights to various services, such as to health, education, housing and water. The other form of exclusion is that of deprivation of the right to express one's view, of representation and voice (Nathan and Xaxa, 2012: 3). So, the trajectory from exclusion to the process of adverse inclusion has led to various forms of deprivations.

Adverse Inclusion of Adivasis and Contemporary Developments

The adverse inclusion of the adivasis in the mainstream society has compelled them to confront with a number of challenges. These challenges have become more acute in the 1990s with the emergence of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG), which has propitiated the state to sign the memorandum of understandings (MoUs) with the corporate sectors. Consequently, the MNCs are pervasively engaged in exploiting natural resources from the adivasi areas in different parts of the country and, therefore, incrementally eroding adivasi rights over their means of livelihood such as land and forest. The adivasis are becoming more belligerent and engaged in different forms of struggle and resistance to protect their rights over natural resources.

Ambagudia (2019a) explores different dimensions of community conflict between the adivasis and Bengali migrants. He argues that the Bengali migrants are increasingly responsible for the alienation of adivasi rights over natural resources in south Odisha, which contributes to the process of marginalisation, deprivation and dispossession. Due to the scarcity of natural resources and the continuous adivasi land alienation, conflicts

over resources between the adivasis and the non-adivasis have become the regular feature of the contemporary India. Adivasis are also protesting against the interventionist role of the state in different parts of the country. The interventionist state may not necessarily be a developmental state. In the name of development or welfare, the state takes controversial steps by marginalising and dispossessing the adivasi communities in India. The principle of interventionism legitimises the state to intervene for a variety of purposes and all of these moves may not necessarily be justified in terms of welfare activities. In other words, interventionism can compromise with welfare orientation (Jayal, 1999). The adivasi communities are not only protesting against the non-adivasis responsible for the alienation of their rights over resources but also against the developmental projects of the state and MNCs in different parts of the country (Baviskar, 2004; Dwivedi, 2006; Ambagudia, 2019a).

The implementation of different inclusive policies has led to the emergence of a tiny section of adivasi educated middle class in India. They are increasing becoming more conscious and articulating their community rights and identities at different levels and in various forms. The emerging intellectuals from the adivasi communities are not only enunciating a constructive discourse on the changing relationship between the adivasi and state within the redistributive framework but also questioning the knowledge paradigm of the dominant community. The gathered experiences of the last six decades of adverse inclusion have provided an excellent platform for the emergence of adivasi epistemology in India. The glaring example could be the emergence of the intellectual platform, the Tribal (Adivasi) Intellectual Collective India (TICI), consisting members from the adivasi communities. It set to begin its intellectual journey by organising the first ever TICI Congress in Shillong, Meghalaya, India, on 18-19 September 2015. The guiding principle of the TICI is "unravelling, deepening and Theorising Perspectives from Within."

The aim of the TICI is not only to focus on the importance of knowledge creation from within the adivasi community itself but also abundantly challenge the existing knowledge from outside the adivasi communities. This is primarily because of the dominance of the mainstream society in the knowledge paradigm. To bring the adivasi epistemology to the public platform, an adivasi publishing house, *Adivani*, has come up in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. In addition to bringing out series of volumes with Adivani, TICI has also tied up with other lesser-known publishing houses to publish its members' work and the soft copies are made available freely. The knowledge creation of educated adivasi class (TICI) has increasingly been recognised throughout the globe (Discussion with Dr S. R. Bodi, national convenor, TICI, on 21 November 2019 at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Campus).

In addition, different conferences and workshops are being organised, where most of the participants were/are usually from the adivasi communities. In February 2015, the Department of History, Central University of Hyderabad, India, had organised a seminar on the theme, "Revisiting Adivasi Autonomy: Self, Home and Habitat" by accommodating a large number of adivasi participants. The rationale of the seminar was to revisit the changing relationship between the state and the adivasis in India and, if it is incompatible, make a case for adivasi autonomy. The broader consensus of the conference was that the forceful inclusion of adivasi communities has contributed more to the process of deprivation, discrimination, marginalisation and dispossession than benefiting them. The position taken by the adivasis in terms of knowledge creation or demand for autonomy may seem to, what Ilaih (1996: 168) calls as 'unbelievable', 'unacceptable' or 'untruthful' to the scholars from the dominant community, or lack academic rigour. However, the position of adivasis is based on 'evidence of experience'. The marginalised groups consider

that the mainstream intellectuals may not reflect on the truth on their behalf in order to retain their past dominant position in various forms. Hence, Weil (1997: 262) contends that the marginalised communities are preparing the platform to speak their own voices and address what they consider to be their own issues.

The adivasi issues may not be reflected objectively if they are represented by the adivasis themselves (Chakrabarty, 2007). To counter such position, growing non-adivasi historians and anthropologists (Biswamoy Pati and Alpa Shah to mention a few) have been writing on the marginalised and disadvantaged adivasi communities. Such position coincided with the intellectuals who have included the condition of indigenous people in the mainstream academic curriculum (Chakrabarty, 2007).

The adivasi regions are excluded from provisions of services, but they are not excluded for extraction of natural resources (Nathan and Xaxa, 2012: 2). In other words, the unequal treatment grounded in unfavorable inclusion and growing erosion of adivasi rights over resources in the name of extending welfare policies has provided the platform to examine critically the inclusive policy of the state and demand adivasi autonomy and self-governance in India. Also, the reaction from adivasi communities has provided the opportunity for the state to rethink its approach towards the former in India. Consequently, the University Grants Commission (UGC, the highest body to regulate the higher education in India) changed its approach towards the marginalised groups. The UGC, headed by the Dalit Chairman, established the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP) in different universities in 2007 and continued to function even today. The mandate of the CSSEIP is to promote interdisciplinary research on various forms of social marginality and exclusion in India.

Conclusion

The nature of 'inclusive policy' of the state has increasingly been questioned not only by the emerging educated adivasi middle class but also by their sympathisers. This is essentially because the contemporary dimensions of the inclusive policy establish trade-off relationship with the adivasis. For instance, in the name of extending welfare programmes and quota system, the state is legitimately justifying its intervention in the adivasi lifeworld. The inclusive experience of the adivasi communities is that of discrimination, deprivation, marginalisation and dispossession. They are facing multiple deprivations in the modern welfare state. Sometimes, the state is not sensitive and consistency in addressing the issues of adivasi communities. Paradoxically, some attempts have been made to recognise the relevance of adivasi way of life by enacting the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996 and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition Act), 2006, commonly known as Forest Rights Act (FRA). Both these Acts aim to revive the adivasi lifeworld by granting traditional system of governance in adivasi areas (PESA) and restore the traditional rights of the adivasi communities over forest resources by recognising the historical injustices done to them (FRA). But in practice, the traditional system of governance under the PESA has either ceased to exist or has never existed at all (Xaxa, 2010). Similarly, the FRA empowers the gram sabha, consisting of forest communities, to regulate the forest resources. On the contrary, the state of West Bengal has shown its inconsistency by recommending the replacement of gram sabha with gram sansad, the village level constituency of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (Jha, 2010: 25).

The need of the hour is to address the issues and concerns raised by incompatibilities in the relationship between the state and the adivasi communities in

India. Most of the inclusive policies of the state are not compatible with the adivasi society. Unless the state addresses the values, culture, identities, languages and traditions of the adivasi communities, their relationship will always be that of incompatible in nature. The state should develop effective institutional mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of not only the adivasi electorates but also to facilitate the meaningful engagement and participation the adivasi representatives in the parliamentary democracy. The political representatives of the adivasis should not just be the 'symbolic' representation of the community. They need to have a greater freedom to not only participate in the debate over adivasi issues in the parliament and state assemblies but also on matters that affect the nation-state at large.

In government services, it is unfortunately believed that ensuring representation of the adivasis in government services leads to compromise with merit in India (Government of India, 2007: 136). It is mistakenly reflected that social identity of a group determines the level of merit (Young, 1990: 46). As merit has no fixed meaning, it is an abstraction. The lack of any standard understanding of merit has become the mockery at the hands of the appointing authorities. The appointing authorities subjectively interpret the meaning of merit and reject the potential adivasi candidates in the pretext of *less meritorious* and *not found suitable* candidates. Such orientation towards the adivasi candidates substantiates their under-representation in government employment. Their representation would not be ensured unless the appointing authorities and the general public change their *a priori* mindset about the credibility of adivasi communities. In the educational sector, the undeniable truth is that the inclusive policy of the state is more directed towards increasing the numerical representation of the adivasis in educational institutions and pays little attention to the quality of education. The numerical representation would not substantiate the notion of *favourable inclusion* rather it leads to the process of *unfavourable inclusion* causing deprivations at multiple levels. Without giving due recognition to the adivasi values, cultures, languages and traditions, the issue of incompatibilities would not be addressed.

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