Prologue
The Damodar Valley Project attracted me since my childhood, as I was brought up at Maithon, one of the important centers of the Project. The familiarity with the township, that had grown in and around Maithon, nurtured in my mind a curiosity that gradually became matured. From my school days I used to meet often with, and talk to, tribal boys and girls, who used to come to our residence occasionally. I felt disappointed at the sight of their poverty stricken appearances in the midst of growing urban prosperity that was supposed to be the outcome of the Damodar Valley Project. In course of my educational career, I met hardly anyone who might provide me with a clue to the solution of the questions that gradually accumulated within me for a long time. When I was working as a part-time Lecturer in History at Nistarini College, Purulia, I chanced to meet Dr. J. B. Medda, Inspector of Colleges, Burdwan University, who visited our college for routine-inspection. It was from him that I for the first time got a hopeful signal that an investigation might be made in the changing canvas of the tribal life in spite of the valuable work already done so far by eminent anthropologists and sociologists, both Indian and Western. Dr. Medda suggested that a study of the tribal society and culture in the Damodar Valley was a desideratum. In fact, I had a long-cherished desire to examine the impact of the Damodar Valley Project on the tribal society and culture. The choice of research theme was obvious.

The question would arise as to whether the changes in the tribal society and culture should be connected with the implementation of the Damodar Valley Project. In fact, the process of transformation, whatever might be its nature, had its beginning with the beginning of the British-raj. It was under the British rule that the tribal labour was exploited for agriculture on a wide-scale after the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Again, the tribal labour was also utilised in the Railways. Incidentally, railway line
from Howrah to Raniganj was first laid in the middle of the 19th Century. The cheap labour of the tribal people was made available in the mines of the Raniganj-Jharia region. Further, the Indian Iron and Steel Company (IIsco) near Asansol also hired tribal labour. Under the colonial rule, therefore, different groups of the tribal people were made to come in contact with the non-tribal people living either in villages or in towns. The tribal people who came from Santal Parganas for the purpose of working as agricultural labourers used to go back in the off-seasons. In course of time, however, they began to set up their new colonies around the land where they used to cultivate. On the other hand, the tribal people employed either in mines or in the Iron and Steel factories had to live in the bustees made for them near about the places of their work. Apparently, the economic reasons determined, to a great extent, the process of migration and settlement of the tribal people far from their original home and created a scope of their interaction with the non-tribal people in both rural and urban settlements. The interaction caused no-doubt exchange of socio-cultural ideals and ideas and thus initiated a process of change in the tribal society and culture. It should, however, be borne in mind that the change, referred to, concerned only those who had come to settle in some parts of West Bengal lying in the Lower Damodar Valley.

The process of change that had its beginning in the Lower Damodar Valley reached the Upper Valley of the Damodar in post independence India, when the Damodar Valley Project was implemented. The implementation of the D.V.C. Project also had an element of compulsion so far as the habitation of the tribal people was concerned. The tribals who had been settled in more than 400 villages were displaced and rehabilitated. As a result, most of the tribal people were dissociated from their rural moorings and were made to live in and around the urban centers. The uprooting of the tribals from their hearth and home happened under the scheme of "dispersal" followed by the DVC authority. The DVC Project was
implemented for the overall national development. The changes in the socio-cultural life of the tribal people were incidental, although the 'tribal welfare schemes' were initiated in post independence India with a noble ideal of bringing the backward people (that is, the tribals) within the mainstream of the society. However, it has been found out by our field-survey that the tribals who were rehabilitated in rural areas under the DVC Project succeeded to maintain their age-old customs and traditions, in spite of the on-going process of acculturation. But the tribals who had to come in close contact with the urban people of mixed character could hardly uphold their age-old social structure, customs and traditions. Gradually, they could not avoid an adaptation with the industrialised urban culture, although their rituals connected with the life-cycle, extending from birth to death, continued to be performed on a family-level.

D. N. Majumdar (*Races and Cultures of India*, Bombay, 1973) has also pointed out that the changing economic environment forced tribal and backward people to new moorings and industrial economy superseded the time-old leanings to agriculture. But such transition from one economy to the other did not help the tribals to effect a permanent adjustment to conditions found inevitable or inescapable.

While making the field-study of the tribal villages for the purpose of determining the factors behind change in the socio-economic life of the tribal people, it was found out that the impact of the Damodar Valley Project had a new dimension in comparison with the impact of the British rule and economic policy. While the colonial rule affected the society and culture of the tribal people who had come in search of employment and ultimately settled mainly in the Lower Damodar Valley, the post-independence Damodar Valley Project had its impact on the social and cultural life of those tribal people who had been displaced from their native villages lying mainly in the Upper Damodar Valley.
For the purpose of the field-study a questionnaire or an interview-schedule was framed incorporating questions on the general information of the village such as (i) the family structure, (ii) the socio-cultural activities at the family level, (iii) the pattern of socio-political leadership in the village, (iv) customs, (v) conventions and tribal laws with regard to property, (vi) the linguistic characteristics of the people living in the village with particular reference to the development of bi-lingualism among the tribals of eastern India, (vii) miscellaneous information relating to inter-personal relationship amongst the tribals and non-tribal people. The schedule was printed and its copies were distributed among the group of surveyors duly oriented by me. The questions of the schedule were put before the local inhabitants at individual level by making arrangement of private meetings in their leisure-hours. Myself being a lady I enjoyed an opportunity of making enquiries from the female members of the families. The prolonged dialogue with both men and women-folk helped me to ascertain the intrinsic nature of the social behavioural pattern that was rooted in the culture of the tribal people. The questions with regard to the personal likes and dislikes in the private life of the women-folk, especially those related to their conjugal life, child-rearing, participation in fairs and festivals etc. revealed to me the factors responsible for the continuity and change in the tribal society and culture. For documentation of the dialogues with my target-group of people, I made use of tape-recorder and also used to take photographs, as and when necessary. Not only the questionnaire and the interview method but also the participatory observation method was also adopted by me, especially during the seasons when traditional fairs and festivals were held. The extent of community-involvement in those fairs and festivals could be measured by the method of participatory observation. The nature of the traditional leadership in the tribal life could also be determined.

In addition to the field-study undertaken in thirty villages in the
districts of Ranchi, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh in Bihar and of Burdwan, Purulia, Bankura in West Bengal. I consulted the District Gazetteers to take into account the reports of survey of the tribal society, economy and culture, as well as the District Censuses furnishing dependable account of tribal population distribution. While the reports of the previous surveyors as well as the scholarly study of the anthropologists and sociologists gave me an insight into the root culture, my own field study undertaken for a period of five years provided me with a perspective of the changes that had taken place in the tribal life. Besides, I could derive valuable data from the papers of the D.V.C. which were made available to me by the courtesy of some in-service personalities including my own father. By the study of those Papers, which actually provoked me at the very beginning to think over the tribal problems, I could examine not only the development schemes under the DVC Project, but also make an in-depth study of the method of rehabilitation of the tribal people, displaced from their original native villages.

The present dissertation has been divided into three main chapters, of which the first one contains an introduction to the territory and people of the Damodar Valley and the pre-and-post D.V.C. conditions in the social economy. While discussing about territory, we have dealt not only with the geographical and physical features, but also the ecological characteristics which should be regarded as the background in which a particular culture, society or economy flourishes. As regards the people, we have given more stress on the demographic map connected with the tribal population, because it is more relevant to our study than the non-tribal population. In connection with the territory and the people, we have examined from historical point of view the antiquity of culture in the region under our study on the basis of indigenous literary texts as well as archeological evidences. The socio-economic scenario in the pre-D.V.C. period has been discussed to highlight the changes that have been brought about in the post-DVC.
period. The claim that the D.V.C. was responsible for initiating the process of industrialisation as well as urbanisation has thus been subjected to fresh scrutiny.

The second chapter of the dissertation aims at tracing the root-culture of the tribal society. In this connection, we have faced a genuine methodological problem. It is very difficult to identify the root-culture of the tribal people in view of the fact that the tribals who emerged from hills and jungles to settle in plains in the remote past have already undergone a process of change through centuries. The rate of progress in the process of change, however, varied from region to region. In spite of this, we have made an attempt to trace back the root-culture on the basis of the prevailing one in the regions lying far away from urban settlements or centers of industries. Our study has revealed how the decrease in the distance between a tribal habitat and an urban centre has gradually deprived the tribals of their identity. Besides, the social anthropologists have already done commendable work on the history of the tribal culture. We have carefully studied their findings and have compared them with our own. We have begun with the social structure of the tribal people and its characteristic features including totem and taboo. The society has appeared to us to be based upon the economic life. The occupations, whether hunting in the forests or hill-cultivation or cultivation on the plain land, are found to be associated with some practices which are rooted in their religious beliefs. Those beliefs determine not only their family life, but also their social or community-living. In this connection, we have considered the rites and rituals connected with their life-cycle, their belief in animism and ancestor worship, religious festivals based upon a firm belief in magic and also their creative activities which have been generated from their religious beliefs and practices. The cult of fertility and productivity is universally invoked by tribal people belonging to different stages of economy and culture.
In the third chapter, we have made an attempt to show to what extent the tribal society and culture have been transformed under the impact of the Damodar Valley Project. The D.V.C. has been found to be responsible for introducing the dispersal scheme or the scheme of rehabilitation of the tribal people uprooted from their native villages. In this connection, we have drawn attention to the fact that most of the tribal people displaced from their own villages have been granted habitation in places situated near either the mines or the steel factories or some centres of the D.V.C. Project itself. Of course, a microscopic minority of the tribal people have been granted lands for cultivation and money for construction of their houses in the rural areas. But mostly their rehabilitation pattern is such that their labour may be utilized for industries. It has already been pointed out that the agricultural practices of the tribals are closely associated with their religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, the tribal identity has remained almost intact and the root-culture of the tribals has been preserved, to a great extent in the rural areas where they have been given an opportunity to engage themselves in agriculture. It should, however, be borne in mind that with the advancement of science and technology in post-independence India, easy communications between rural and urban areas have shortened the distance between the rural and urban settlements. But still the tribal people in the rural areas find a scope to persist their age-old customs and tradition in community-life. In case of the tribals granted habitation near the urban or industrial centers, they have been deprived, to a great extent, of their community-life, although they have been trying their utmost to maintain their beliefs and practices at the family-level. Their food-habit, dress and house-pattern have been urbanised, although they are living like non-privileged working class in the bustee-areas. Besides, the D.V.C. authorities have implemented the dispersal scheme in such a way that the tribal people have been forced to come in contact not only with non-tribals, but also with different ethnic groups. Again, the Hindus, Muslims and Christians have exerted their influences on the tribals beliefs and practices.
We have discussed at length the process of exchange of cultural ideas and ideals between the tribal people, on the one hand, and the so-called Hindus on the other. Because, there is least doubt about the fact that the propensity of the tribals to be influenced by Hinduism appears to be more prominent due to a sort of inner unity between animism and Hindu pantheism, or between the spirits appeased by the tribals and the Puranic divinities worshipped by the Hindus. That does not necessarily suggest that the influence of Christianity was marginal. In fact, efforts made by the Christian missionaries amongst the tribal people have brought in a change that is more apparent. But, it may be pointed out that the tribal people educated in the Christian missions have been de-tribalised and individualised. The process of de-tribalisation, in another form, is found in the incorporation of some tribals as lower castes in the Hindu society. So far as the influence of Islam is concerned, the tribals have shown their positive aversion and disinterestedness towards adoption of any element of Muslim culture. Over and above all these, however, the economy has played the most crucial role in the present-day tribal society and culture in the Damodar Valley. In the background of expanding industrialisation and urbanisation, an attempt has been made by the Government, as well as the Social Welfare Agencies to stream-line the tribal society and culture without giving an attention to the need for change of their attitude to life and acquisition of skill by them for work. As a result, tribal society and culture are found to be in the midst of a tension which is predominantly psychological. Whereas the exterior influence of the economy has been bringing about an apparent change in their life-style, it is extremely difficult for them to shake off their age-old beliefs and customs. Whether it should be considered as a phenomenon of change and continuity in the tribal society and culture requires further examination. Because, change and continuity in South Asian culture as a whole seem to have a different and district importation.
In order to collect data for the present dissertation we have visited different libraries and institutions. Mention may be made, in this connection, of National library, Calcutta; Central library of the D.V.C., D.V.C. Towers, Calcutta, Libraries of the D.V.C. Maithon, Central library of the University of Burdwan and also Private Collection of books of the disposal of Dr. J. B. Medda, Inspector of Colleges, Burdwan University. I owe my indebtedness to the authorities of the institutions concerned. I remain also indebted to those who helped me in carrying on the field-study and survey in different districts of Bihar and Bengal. The list of names should be too lengthy. The co-operation was extended to me unhesitatingly by the heads and members of the tribal families visited by us. I remember with gratitude how the tribal people in different villages allowed me to participate in the fairs and festivals held on different occasions.

I could not undertake the present investigation, if the D.V.C. authorities would not grant me an official permission to the effect.

Lastly, I have derived enormous help and advice privately from Dr. J. B. Medda, to whom I should express my gratitude. So far as the research guidance and supervision are concerned, Professor Bhaskar Chatterjee, Department of History, the University of Burdwan, my respected teacher of the P.G. department has done what an Āchārya does for his disciple. I know not how I should express my indebtedness to my teacher.

It is an occasion to seek the blessings of my parents without whose support and encouragement I could not carry on my research till the completion of the present disassociation.

Dated : Burdwan
11th March, 1935

Anjaneya Ghosh