Epilogue
"The problem of primitive tribes of India who have remained unattended to for centuries needs very great attention now. Effective measures have to be taken to develop these tribes in order to enable them to make rapid progress in social as well as economic and political spheres so that they may be on a par with other sections of the citizens of India. Hence, there is a great need today to concentrate attention on the development of the aboriginal and hill-tribes as well as the areas inhabited by them." With these words Mr. A. V. Thakkar has recommended that the Government should take the initiative in these matters and immediately prepare schemes for intensive work among them. According to him, these schemes have to be launched and worked out with the help of the people who have had some experience in this field.

We may recall the suggestions of Mr. Thakkar, when we consider the change in the tribal society and culture under the impact of the Damodar Valley Project. Presumably, the said project was not implemented with an intention of undertaking the plan of restructuring the tribal society and reorienting the tribal culture. The Damodar Valley Corporation was formed with an ulterior goal of total development at the national level. The question naturally arises whether such development is possible until and unless the primitive tribes of India are brought on par with other sections of the citizens of India. The reply should be obviously in the negative. But the problem is whether the dispersal as well as rehabilitation plan of the D. V. C. and the Social Integration Programme with an emphasis on education, health and amelioration of the living condition have actually promised to the tribal people socio-economic and political progress. As already pointed out above, the question of the tribal development has proved to be incidental to the Damodar Valley Project, and therefore the problem of socio-cultural transformation of the tribal people appears to:
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have been viewed by the DVC authorities concerned casually.

There is a school of thought upholding the view that one should not bother about the root-culture of the tribal people, because various customs and practices of aboriginal India are no longer integrated in the cultural setting of the tribes, as they were in the past. It is useless to harp on a people's past unless the people can adjust its pretension and profession in the context of material problems affecting its life and happiness. In fact, the tribal people have been trying their utmost to make a permanent adjustment to the material conditions found inevitable or inescapable.

There is another view regarding the dynamics of tribal culture. It has been suggested that a re-orientation in the socio-economic life of the tribal people is a necessity. But at the same time, one cannot ignore the problem of maintaining a continuity of cultural life. The tribal people who are rehabilitated in their new settlements within the milieu of an industrial economy can hardly part with their age-old traditions and customs. In the new situation, it is difficult for them to maintain their customs and tradition with their paraphernalia both at the family and the community level. However, they cling to their cultural tradition and social values at least within the framework of the family-life. A sort of maladjustment is, therefore, inevitable. We can hardly lose sight of the moorings of tribal identity.

The Damodar Valley Project has no doubt, brought about a change in the demographic map of India. It is also responsible for giving a new pattern to the distribution of lands. The project also involves the employment of people bearing different ethnic, linguistic and cultural traits. The pattern of land-distribution has been such that the lion's share remains under the monopoly of industries, while a little share is apportioned for rural economy. Therefore, it may be said that the Damodar Valley Project is responsible for promoting a mixed culture as well as a mixed
economy with an overtone of industrialisation and urbanisation.

In the industrial sector the tribal people serve mostly as menial labourers. They possess houses of their own. The pattern of their houses is by no means traditional. A marked feature of departure from the traditional pattern is visible in construction of walls with bricks and of roofs with 'Khapra' or tiles. Brick-built houses are also not unknown. Most of the tribals use the common dress of non-tribals of the locality, namely, the trousers and shirts for the males and 'sharees' for the females. The ornaments of the females are mainly imitations, purchased from the common market. Cosmetics are also used by the females. The traditional dresses and ornaments are conspicuous by their absence. So far as food and drink are concerned, the rice and chapti, in addition to the vegetables, are served in the daily dish of the tribals. Poultry meat and also mutton are their favourites. Although they prefer country-liquor, they do not show aversion to purchasing foreign drinks from the nearby market. The tribals participate in the seasonal festivals in their native villages where they go back at the time of the festivals. But in daily life, their enjoyment consists of dancing, singing or sometimes attending the local video-parlour or the cinema hall. Whenever there are occurrences of diseases, they call for a 'witch-doctor' or 'ojha'. When the 'ojha' fails, they resort to the medical practitioners of the locality. In Bihar, Munda languages have slowly given place to Bihari, which Bengali is understood and spoken by not a few of the tribes. Many tribes in Bengal speak Bengali. Bilingualism is the characteristic of the tribes. While they stick to their own language at home, they have adopted the non-tribal language of the locality, Bihari or Bengali. As language is the vehicle of culture, bi-lingualism of the tribals symbolises their mixed type of culture.

All these findings are from our field-survey. A surveyor cannot but find out that although the tribal people have somehow made an adjustment
with the environment in which they live at present, they are not yet mentally 
acclimatized to the new situation. Otherwise, they would not go back to 
their native villages for participation in the seasonal festivals. Besides, 
they are found to observe regularly, even in the present set-up, the rituals 
connected with the life-cycle. The tribals have assembled to the new places 
of their residence near the urban centres in search of employment. 
Although changes have been brought about in the sphere of their 
occupation and other aspects of their life-style, such changes are found to 
have little impact on their traditional habits and usages, their cultural ethos 
and attitude towards life.

A section of the tribal people has been brought under the influence 
of the Christianity in the dispersal scheme of the D.V.C. Some of them have 
been converted to Christianity. But it has been observed that the tribals are 
basically conservative. We met a medical-practitioner who was married a 
school-mistress, both of them being originally tribal. The couple was 
Christian and attended the church every sunday. As Christians, they went 
to the church to solemnize their marriage, but observed tribal rituals at 
home. Because, they considered that their effort to consummate the union 
without the traditional rituals would lead them to sin. Similarly, in the 
treatment of diseases, their first attempt is to treat the patient with tribal 
medicine at the advice of the 'Janguru'. In case of the failure of tribal 
medicine, they consult the physicians in the towns.

Again, the non-tribals with whom the tribals have come into contact 
in their new residence under the D.V.C., include predominantly Hindus. 
The impact of Hinduism on tribal culture is often studied by social 
anthropologists in order to show the exchanges between animistic belief of 
the tribals and scriptural religion of the Hindus. The line of demarcation 
between popular Hinduism and tribal religion is very thin and it is difficult 
to know when a tribe crosses into Hinduism. From the point of view of
Hinduism a three-fold classification of tribes is recognised. There are primitive tribes outside the pale of Hindu influence. There are tribes who have adopted Hindu customs and practices, have shown a degree of association with the Hindu castes and have attained some amount of cultural progress. Lastly, there are tribes who are Hinduised but maintain a social distance from the clean castes, although some of them are indistinguishable from the inferior rank of the caste order, interior or clean. In this connection, it is interesting to note the view of Verrier Elwin that all the aboriginal tribes except those of Assam should be considered as Hindu by religion. One may differ with Elwin on this point. However, the impact of Hinduism on the tribal culture, or vice versa, can in no way be connected with the results obtained by the implementation of the Damodar Valley Project. The interaction between the Hindus and the tribals had its beginning long ago, but might have been accelerated as a result of the proximity of the tribals with the Hindus in a common place of residence in the Damodar Valley.

K. J. Save has remarked “An ardent reformer will unhesitantly say that all improvement must be educational and the primary education is the basis of everything”. It is commonly held that the tribal people might get into the mainstream of Indian life through modern education. We met a tribal youth attending an institution of higher education at Maithon. The youth continued his study but remained completely aloof from the non-tribal youths of his age. He always sought friendship amongst the youths of his own tribe. This is an attitude on the part of the tribals which, no-doubt, is a hurdle on the path of their modernisation. Again, it should also be pointed out that in some cases educated members of the tribes refuse to share the tribal culture, in which they were born and they leave the tribal moorings soon after they secure economic rehabilitation, education and jobs. The question is whether this attitude on the part of the educated tribal youth is favourable towards an overall transformation of the tribal society.
and culture.

With the advancement of science and technology, the educated elite are found to have been in favour of launching movement against superstitions. The belief in magic ingrained in tribal culture is, no-doubt, to be distinguished from the belief in science. A scientific attitude towards the life and world should, no-doubt, gradually remove that beliefs and practices associated with magic which are commonly regarded as superstitions. It may be pointed out, in this connection, that the tribal religious beliefs and practices are closely associated with their creative activities like dance, music, drawing and oral literature. If the foundation of the tribal culture, that is the magical belief, is removed, almost the abolition of the tribal culture would be imminent. No one can deny the fact that the tribal culture is the main content of folk and rural culture. Whatever might be the progress of science, we might pause for a moment to consider whether we may afford to lose the resources of the tradition of tribal culture. On the other hand, we should also consider if the tribals should be allowed to suffer from psychological tension in the background of modernisation, when there is least effort to impart to them re-orientation of their attitude to the life and world.