Chapter Six

THE POLITICS OF PROTECTION AND TRANSFORMATION:

The final chapter of this thesis examines the terms of the 'exclusion debate' and focuses on the period 1930-45. This period marked the end of an era of speculation concerning the future of forest communities. The earlier chapters have shown that the control of dhaiya subsistence activities and the expansion of 'civilizing influences' had resorted to coercive mechanisms to force the adivasis to comply with official measures to transform their subsistence forms. The process of transformation of these societies was dependent on efforts to change both their 'material reality' and the adivasi thinking about themselves. The previous chapters have shown that in some cases the patterns of adivasi behaviour and nature of the articulation of their identity had changed in accordance with the needs of modern life. But there were other cases, where the non-compliance of forest laws was accompanied by indifference of the forest communities. The officials implementing the policies realized that this indifference was perhaps the greatest obstacle in transformation of adivasi lifestyles. Therefore the need to change the attitude of the forest communities towards state initiatives was essential. The newfound importance of 'tribal education' was in itself an acknowledgment of this realization.

The second feature of the debate was the division of opinions along political lines. The 'spirit of protection' which the excluded areas were to signify, was itself a political ideology based on an anthropological method. The forest communities were classified according to their customs, state of their economy, level of education and other such factors. Then they were to be categorized according to their level of 'backwardness' and accordingly the areas where they lived were to be declared 'protected' or 'partially protected area'. These areas were to be excluded from the working of the Constitution and placed under the direct control of the Governor General and his council. The responses to the proposed measures for exclusion were based on political and ideological lines. While most officials agreed with these 'isolationist' measures, differing only on
the nuances of control, the Congress rejected the measures outright as they were seen as an obstacle to the 'making of a nation'. It is altogether a different thing that in independent India, nationalist anthropologists and governments advocated similar measures for the adivasis.

The Exclusion Debate and its Beginnings:

Though the provision for the demarcation of 'excluded' and 'partially excluded areas' was first included in the Government of India Act of 1935, the 'spirit of protection' was prevalent in many measures adopted before this legislation. Here I consider both, the series of measures that embodied the 'spirit of protection' before 1935 as well as the terms of the debate itself.

The earliest evidence of the protection of the interests of the forest department and forest dwellers was the formation of the Baiga Chak as discussed in chapter one. Simultaneously forest villages were created in the late 19th century. The first forest village regulations were issued in 1890. Under these laws forest villages could be established within the limits of any 'reserved' forest with the prior consent of the Conservator. The location would be decided by the District Commissioner and the Divisional Forest Officer (D.F.O). Forest villages were to be designed solely for the permanent supply of labour and were not to be made with the intention of extension of cultivation. Lastly forest villages were to be made up of those communities that were "habituated to the extraction of forest produce". ¹

These measures became a part of the scheme to 'conserve' forests and control bewar. They also established administrative control over labour supply and the exploitation of the forest communities by contractors and outsiders. The forest department had a claim to the labour of all adult villagers: no employment

¹ ARF Prog 'A' No:16-17 of May 1891, p.1.
could be taken up without the consent of the D.F.O. The D.F.O. was solely responsible for the administration of these tracts. Each household was to be allowed a patch for cultivation at fixed rates per plough; free grazing was to be allowed for a limited number of cattle. The forest dwellers were also to be allowed free thorns and wood to repair their houses, and would have the first claim to forest work for which they were to get fair wages. As far as the village organization was concerned the patel or the headman was to be appointed from amongst the villagers and was to enforce the collection of rents and cesses and see to the sanitation of the area. All advances for cultivation were to be forwarded by the forest department and this department was also to be responsible for health and education. Thus the forest department had arbitrary control over these villages. They regulated the forest community's relationships with contractors (if the forest was leased) and determined what kind of 'subsistence relations' would be developed amongst forest dwellers.

In this context, 'protection' acquired a dual meaning. It meant the protection of the forest from the "ravages of the forest tribes". With the initial failure of the Chak experiment the creation of forest villages became an important part of the strategy to control bewar. Restrictions were placed on the movement of the forest dwellers as they were enclosed on all sides by 'reserved forests'. In the case of the Chak the absence of 'reserved forests' in neighboring areas made the control of flight more difficult. Protection also implied the exclusive right of the forest communities to some labour opportunities. With the creation of subsistence opportunities (in the form of forest work and labour) the officials sought to neutralize the disadvantages that forest dwellers would have incurred due to displacement. But with the security of employment for forest dwellers came the stricter control over their everyday life. This was essential for the

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2 Ibid., pp.2-3.
success of colonial objectives. While all conservation ideologies implied the 'spirit of protection' (generally towards the forest), the forest villages were the first to highlight its multi-faceted character.

In 1895 the first results of the establishment of forest villages were evident. In Mandla 16 in Jabalpur 8, in Narsingpur 4, in Betul 26 and in Nimar 23 villages were established since 1892. By 1897 there were 38 villages in Balaghat, 29 in Chanda, 7 in Chhindwara and 7 in Seoni. By the turn of the century there were 454 forest villages in the Province. R.H.E Thompson, the Conservator of forests even held that the forest dwellers were reaping "considerable advantages from labour opportunities." By 1915, the permanence of these villages was sufficiently established to settle them as ryotwari tracts. In Balaghat in many cases forest villages and the ryotwari villages were the same. The khasras of these villages show that though these villages were assessed on the basis of ryotwari settlements the revenue recovered from them was minimal. This was mainly because of the nature of their terrain and the nature of land use. A study of the khasras of five villages selected on a random basis shows this. A part of present-day Baiga Chak, these villages were in an area neighbouring the Chak area in 1878. Most of them were in the Saletikri zamindari - an area where migrant Baigas settled in large numbers once the Chak was formed.

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3 As we know there were two main objectives of the forest department: a) the securing of perennial profits and reproduction of forest resources through the conservation of forests; and b) for extracting the maximum revenue from forests by extracting produce by as cheap a method as possible. By eliminating competition for the labour of the forest dwellers the government ensured that it was the sole employer of these people and could fix the rates advantageous for them.

4 FRCP 1895-1900 (Combined Volume), pp.36-38.
TABLE 6.1: THE PATTERN OF LAND USE IN FIVE FOREST VILLAGES OF BAIHAR TAHSL, 1915-16:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Village</th>
<th>Total Area</th>
<th>Assessed Area</th>
<th>Unassessed Area</th>
<th>Cultivated Area</th>
<th>Uncultivated Area</th>
<th>Land fallow for more than 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pandripani</td>
<td>825.12</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>29.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lailpur</td>
<td>1076.47</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakra</td>
<td>5198.58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bori</td>
<td>1275.80</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutna</td>
<td>11177.28</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Khasras of villages, Balaghat District Record Room, Hindi Section.)

The table above show the extent of cultivation in these villages. In almost all the villages more than half the land is 'unassessed area'. In official classification two kinds of lands were included in this category - lands that consist of 'unculturable' terrain like roads and hills on the one hand, and nistar lands or lands with ghaus on the other. Hills, where bewar cultivation took place were also classified as 'unculturable' lands. Chapter One has shown the topographical difficulties that need to be taken into account if extension of plough cultivation is to take place. In all these areas the practise of bewar cultivation did not stop despite the establishment of forest villages. In all villages, apart from Pandripani, the high percentage of unassessed area shows that the scope for the expansion of permanent cultivation was limited. In all cases the area of the land which is lying fallow for more then three years is higher than land lying fallow for less than three years. This meant that the plough cultivators had to adopt some bewar techniques in cultivation because of the nature of the soil and slopes. But since the cultivators could not shift their fields, the crop out turns were lower than in bewar cultivation. From all these factors it is possible to conclude that despite the introduction of the plough, few settlers had taken up plough cultivation as a sole means of their subsistence.

The reason for this was expressed in Thompson's words:

The question of excision in Mandla is different as the forests have been honeycombed for patch cultivation in ryot settlements. The problem is to provide land with sufficient proportion of good soil in
addition to Burra for settlers and still keep good forest lands in compact plots.\(^5\)

The problem with Balaghat was the same as it formed the part of a same ecological belt inhabited by the Baigas. Due to sedentization, cultivators practised intensive farming techniques. This led to a decline in production and the forest dwellers were unable to fulfil subsistence requirements. The forest communities were forced to depend on seasonal labour for their livelihood. As late as the late 1930s and early 1940s the main source of subsistence in forest villages remained forest labour. In 1940 the Governor Wylie wrote of the forest labour in Mandla and Balaghat that:

> In both tahsils (Dindori and Baihar) the principal activity of the Forest Department is the extraction of sal timber in the shape of sleepers for railways... There is a complaint that the present daily wage of 3a for forest labour is too low. Let this not be dismissed as a whine. We are dealing with people whom their admirers describe as the ancient lords of the jungle but whom I personally prefer to consider as forest labourers isolated from the normal working of the law of demand and supply and as such at the mercy of the Forest Department who are the sole pervayors of the labour from which, if the inhabitants of the forest villages are to stay there at all, they have got to make a livelihood.\(^6\)

Wylie showed that cash payments were not enough to meet their requirements and he called upon the forest department to have a more humane approach towards the problems of forest labour. He questioned the scale of wages paid to labour for felling and carting and demanded an early report on the subject. He also spoke of the problem of piece work: the Baigas were made to labour on roads till they were physically in a most "unsatisfactory shape". Thus he concluded that the conditions under which these Baigas worked affected their

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\(^5\) FRCP 1896-97, p.2.
health. Lastly, the Baigas were exploited by the forest department: there was a
departmental extraction of 'illegal and forced labour' during harvest and sowing
time. The forest department made the labourers work more than 8 hours a day
without paying them extra money. According to Wylie this was equivalent to the
practise of begar. The department forcefully extracted supplies for visiting forest
officials in the 'reserve'. Wylie demanded careful consideration of all these
points if the forest department wanted the active cooperation of the forest
dwellers.7

Keeping these points in mind, an enquiry was conducted into the conditions of
the forest labourers by the office of the Conservator of Forests, Jabalpur
division. It brought into focus the entire mode of subsistence of these labourers.
Reporting on these issues, the D.F.O in Dindori said that the rise in the price of
food grains by 33 per cent entitled the labourers to a wage hike. But adivasi
labourers grew their own grains and did not depend on the market for their food
grains, the wages that they got were sufficient to meet their needs. He also said
that the forest villager already enjoyed more protection and advantages than
the labourers in malguzari villages and towns and the department could not
afford to pay him more, considering the amount of work he did.8 The
Conservator of forests of Baihar and Dindori justified the low pay for forest
labourers on the grounds that they received many more concessions than other
villagers, and that a higher scale of wages would affect the surplus of the forest
department. Both the Conservator and the D.F.O denied any other complaints
that were registered by Wylie. They especially disputed the charges that the
forest villager was called to work at cultivation time and that he was made to do

7 Ibid., pp.1-4. Wylie quoted Symington to emphasise this perspective: "The State has a clear right to extract
from all its forests all the profits that can justly be derived from them but justice demands that forest labourers
should be treated somewhat better than slaves....". (see p.2)
8 Ibid., p.73.
unpaid work on roads.\textsuperscript{9} The Conservator of forests was demanding a total review of forest policy.

Grigson also disagreed with Wylie. He considered forest villages as "model villages" and said that \textit{adivasis} preferred to live in forest villages because they were provided sufficient land at low rents for cultivation, and they were protected from \textit{begar} and other 'illicit' extraction. Forest villagers were assured work at better wages and paid regularly. Grigson showed that the population of 11 sample forest villages in Mandla had increased from 1687 to 1983 in the space of four years between 1937-41. He asserted that there was an influx of people into the forest villages. Changes were necessary only in the carting of logs by forest labourers. Grigson suggested that rail heads and metalled roads should be extended into forests and lorries should be used by the \textit{adivasis} transport logs. The lorries and the carts should in turn be supported by cooperatives of the \textit{adivasis}, which could decide the rates for transportation.\textsuperscript{10}

There were thus two opinions regarding the conditions of the forest villages. Whereas local forest departments and Grigson said that the forest villages were very popular amongst Gonds and Baigas, the Governor felt that the forest villagers were treated "as slaves" in these villages. Wylie was convinced that the conditions of life in the forest villages needed to be vastly improved if the forest department was to achieve its objectives through 'just' means. Thus the problem of survival of the forest dweller was becoming important for colonial administrators. This in turn led to the realization that the forest communities needed to be 'protected' if their exploitation was to be prevented in a modern world. The 'spirit of protection' focused on the protection of the forest in the mid-19th century, and on the protection of labour opportunities for forest dwellers in the late 19th century. In the early 20th century the protection of Gond tenants

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., pp.93-98.
\textsuperscript{10} Grigson, \textit{Aboriginal Problem of C.P's}, pp.349-352.
acquired importance in the official scheme for the transformation of *adivasi* subsistence. By 1935 the need for 'exclusion' of forested areas was came out of the motive to purge the *adivasi* society of the undesired consequences of modernism.

**The 'Aboriginals' and their Exclusion, 1930-45:**

The 'excluded' and the 'partially excluded territories' were constituted under the Government of India Act of 1935. The main thrust of the act was elaborated by Verrier Elwin in the following way:

Sections 52 and 92 of the Act provided for the reservation of certain predominantly aboriginal areas (to be known as 'Excluded' or 'Partially Excluded') from operation of Provincial Legislatures. The executive authority of Provinces extends to 'excluded' and 'partially excluded areas therein', but the administration of excluded areas is under the Governor at his descretion, and partially excluded areas are administered by the ministers subject to the special responsibility for their peace and good government imposed on the Governor by Section 52(e) of the Act. Thus the Governor is given the power to control the application of legislation, whether of the Federal or Provincial Legislature, and make regulations in both these areas.11

Under this scheme, the position of the Governor became similar to that of the forest department in the forest village. But the crucial difference was in the nature of authority. While both the forest department and the Governor had some measure of arbitrary control over their respective areas, the exclusion of the protected areas from the working of the constitution was a landmark decision. For the first time certain areas and communities of the Provinces were excluded from the ambit of legislative procedures. These provisions were vigorously debated within official and other circles were subjected to severe

criticism. Here I separate out the different positions and compare them with each other.

**Official views on exclusion**: The official opinions on exclusion could be broadly classified into three strands. First there was the opinion of people like Grigson, who fully supported the Act. Writing a conclusion to his report on the 'aboriginal problem', Grigson defended the Act thus:

It was not the purpose of Partial Exclusion to label or stigmatize for all time any area of the province as backward: these provisions of the Government of India Act were only drawing attention to the existing state of affairs. In the province almost every era of civilisation from the Stone Age to the twentieth century can be seen in the life of different communities in different districts. Can it be asserted that a Kamar or a Bharia-Bhumia or a Maria can by the stroke of a pen be transformed into an intelligent citizen or a voter in a modern commonwealth? Partial Exclusion came therefore only to protect the interests of the tribes not yet fit to hold their own under the stress of modern civilisation until they have been fitted to hold their own. 12

Grigson contended that the aim of the 'partial exclusion policy' should be to make Indians increasingly aware of the 'aboriginal problem', and to take stock of the cultural, political and economic situation of this section of society. He felt that an attempt should be made to develop a plan for the future treatment of the 'aboriginals'. 13 Grigson gave the British government the benevolent task of educating Independent India’s rulers about the needs of the "most backward people in India". To this end he stressed the importance of teaching anthropology in Indian universities. This was essential in order to weaken the "political prejudices" of the nationalist leaders. His position was also a defence

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of the British efforts to improve the conditions of forest communities in the past. Refuting Elwin's charges, that the forest dwellers living in 'reserved areas' were worse off than before, he argued that government policies had been justified by the "aboriginal happiness and prosperity" in these areas. This was in stark contrast to the situation in private forests where contractors worked the forests and exploited forest dwellers. But Grigson emphasized that the adivasis were not ready for "political democracy" and needed to be educated for it under government protection. The question of political democracy was linked with economic democracy:

Above all there must be an approach to some elements of 'economic democracy' if the aboriginal is to play his due part in the India of the future....There is no political democracy without economic democracy.

For Grigson 'economic democracy' denoted ownership of land, freedom from indebtedness and from exploitation of labour at unusually low wages. To achieve 'economic democracy' outside intervention in adivasi areas had to be restricted and government protection ensured.

Grigson stressed the need to preserve the language and community customs of forest dwellers so that they were not completely bewildered by the process of modernization. He referred to this aspect in the particular context of 'tribal education'. He felt that the "disastrous aesthetic effects" of modern education alienated the forest communities from their own people. He agreed with Elwin that in order to avert the possibility of adverse psychological effects on adivasi people, the "preservation of the tribal language and culture" was essential. An incorporation of the "useful and beautiful" elements of this culture would take place through the process of education.

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14 Ibid., p.36.
15 Ibid., p.39.
16 Ibid., p.41. Also see Grigson, Aboriginal Problem of C.P's, pp.400-401.
The main opposition to this stance came from Winston Churchill in the House of Commons. Churchill stated:

To leave this matter to be decided by an Order-in-Council in another Parliament is a most extraordinary step to take, and it shows that if there had only been a little more support, the government could have been turned from this misguided policy. I was amazed that the government should have taken such a step...and plunged a population of 22,000 in uncertainty.... The speeches that we have heard indicate that if these people were included in the ordinary steps of the working of the government their lot would be worse than if they were left outside this scheme. The statement very much disquiets me.17

Thus Churchill pointed out that the Act was a half-hearted measure which did not take into account the achievements of the British government in India. He felt that the Government had forced the issue and plunged the life of all "aborigines in uncertainty" by making one man solely responsible for their future. He held that the scheme itself had contradictory ends. In the first place there was an effort to exclude these people from the "evils of the government", but yet their "evil habits were to be preserved" under this system. For Churchill the government was probably the lesser of the two evils.18

The third opinion amongst the officialdom considered the merits and demerits of the scheme from an administrative point of view. The Governor of the Province wrote: "I proceed on the assumption that, as to the larger part, our aboriginal problem is administrative and not a legislative problem."19 According to Wylie, the Governor, this view was a consequence of the prevailing inhuman conditions which received little attention from the administrator. He emphasized that the local conditions had to be taken into account while dealing with different areas

and different communities. The exclusion of areas was justified because the administration has failed to protect the needs of the adivasis against the "more clamant demands of the developed parts of the Province". For this reason he recommended the setting up of a Special Enquiry into the questions concerning the 'aboriginal problem' of the Province.20

While Wylie's argument merely provided a support base for the first type of political stance, it was different in that it had an introspective tenor as far as the state of the administration was concerned. The real challenge that came from within the official discourse was from conservative convictions like that of Churchill. Grigson's view ultimately won the day amidst heated debate and a strong nationalist challenge which argued that the 'exclusion policy' was a part of the 'divide and rule' policy.

Congress challenge to official discourse, 1936-4421: Congress antipathy to the exclusion of the forest communities was a product their general skepticism of colonial policies, and their hostility towards that strand of anthropological writing which celebrated the distinctiveness of adivasi culture. In fact the adivasis do not figure in the Congress discourse till the 1930s. It was only after the bill for exclusion was proposed that the nationalist views on the 'aboriginal question' came into sharp focus. In the 1936 Faizpur session of the Congress a resolution was passed denouncing the measure. It read:

this congress is of the opinion that the separation of excluded and partially excluded areas is intended to leave out the larger control, disposition and exploitation of the mineral and forest wealth in those areas and

20 Ibid., p.10. Grigson was posted as Special Enquiry officer for the purpose.
21 This discussion is concerned only with the Congress Nationalists of the Central Provinces. They were one of the only notable segments of the Nationalists to participate in the 'Exclusion' debate within the Province. Any reference to Congress policy outside the Provinces is directed towards a more detailed analysis of the stance that the Congressmen of the Central Provinces adopted towards the colonial 'aboriginal' policy.
keep their inhabitants apart from India for their easier exploitation and suppression.\textsuperscript{22}

For the Congressmen this was yet another way of dividing India and obstructing the growth of democratic institutions and nationalist sentiment. Two years later, Rajendra Prasad reiterated the same sentiments adding to it the nationalist concern for the welfare of the forest communities. But where was the Congress concern before the mid-1930s? Neither the Congress nor its provincial and nation-wide leadership clarified their position regarding this question. The first evidence of their concern came only when the nationalist government’s jurisdiction in the Provinces was threatened. Then the ‘exclusion bill’ was attacked as part of the strategy to curtail their power.

The Congress stance on the exclusion policy was explicitly stated when the demand for a separate Santhal state was made by the Bihar ‘Adibasi Sabha’ 1939. The Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Krishna Sinha, wrote that the demands for the 'partial exclusion' and establishment of the a separate Santhal state was not justified. Reacting to a comment by Jaipal Reddy, the president of the 'Adibasi Sabha', he said : "This is the real object of the Adibasi movement. It is to keep Chhotanagpur always backward so that it may have no provincial advancement so that it may always be governed by the governor."\textsuperscript{23}

Though Shri Krishna Sinha rejected the demand for a separate Santhal state, he also emphasized the Congress concern for the adivasis. He said that the Congress was a "friend of the poor" and was therefore bound to "espouse the cause of the aborigines". The protection of the adivasi interest was seen as a natural consequence of the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest champion of the poor. He contended that the adivasi interests would be best

\textsuperscript{22} Quoted in Elwin, Loss of Nerve, p.7.
\textsuperscript{23} R.P. Papers 1-M/39 of 1939, p.16. This comment was made in response to Jaipal Reddy's statement that since Chhotanagpur was declared a 'partially excluded area' the governor should exercise his special powers over it. Further he held that the legislators had no interest in the problems of the adibasis and therefore should not be allowed to decide their future. (see p.15 & p.3)
served through their exposure to modern influences (like education) and the implementation of conservation laws. The industrialization of forest produce was considered essential for the 'progress' of adivasi society.\textsuperscript{24} Shri Krishna Sinha's views highlighted the nationalist claim that the 'exclusion policy' was aimed at keeping the adivasis out of the nationalist movement which hoped to initiate a process of building a democratic and modern society. The case of Chhotanagpur showed that the official views of the Congress party had not changed since 1936.

The Congress stance on 'exclusion' implied the rejection of anything that celebrated the 'distinctiveness of cultures'. Anthropology, in this scheme of thinking, deserved contempt. Two leaders of the Central Provinces M.S. Aney and N.M. Joshi charged all anthropologists with desiring to keep all the "primitive races of India uncivilized and in a state of barbarism as raw material for their science in order to add to their blessed stock of scientific knowledge".\textsuperscript{25} Instead most nationalists emphasized the need for the 'assimilation' of the adivasis into the mainstream of Indian society - a dominant part of which was the Hindu society. The identity of the adivasis as a non-Hindu and a distinctive specie was questioned by sociologists with nationalist and Hindu leanings. In this sense Ghurye's monograph \textit{Aborigines - so called and their future} is an important contribution to this debate. Of exclusion or isolationism (as it was to be termed later) he wrote:

\begin{quote}
To enable the so called aborigines to live their lives according to their traditions and customs without active interference from non-aborigines, is certainly a desirable end as natural as the grant of responsibility in their administration to other people. But to exclude
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid., p.17.}

\textsuperscript{25} Elwin, \textit{Loss of Nerve}, pp.47-48. To buttress this claim further Elwin quoted extensively from the \textit{Bombay legislative Council Proceedings}: The nationalists said: "It is arranged like this: if they (the Bhils) are made into small States, they will preserve their own traditions, just like the anthropologists who want these people as exhibits in a museum for all time to come! You will see a Bhil as he was in the 17th and 18th century, because somebody wants to study his own traditions customs and habits", (see p.48).
these tracts from the operation of the full constitution for this purpose implies that the facilities for such a life are likely to be denied by a general community, if the so called aborigines are placed under the same administrative and political machinery. This is not borne out by history.26

Ghurye believed that the forest communities did not need to be protected from Hindu society. He tried to show that hinduized Gonds, Baigas or Korkus were not in a socially inferior position or were not 'untouchables' in that society. Because of their prosperous conditions and past power they were nearly equal in status to the Kshatriyas and Rajputs. He disputed the fact that extensive loss of land had occurred amongst these communities due to their contact with Hindus. He said that the loss of land had occurred because the rulers of that period were partial towards one caste while making land grants. There was never a general trend of expropriation of land by all Hindu castes. As far as religious degradation was concerned, Ghurye felt that if they were 'assimilated' into the new society properly, adivasis would witness moral and economic betterment. He argued that adivasi dance and music would be allowed in Hindu society; and even if some part of their 'tradition' was lost, they would be at an advantageous position in the long-run.27 Keeping this in mind he explained the intention of 'exclusion' thus:

Isolationism or assimilationism does not therefore appear to owe its inspiration either to a supposedly queer academic interest of the anthropologist or to the possibility of the perverse mentality of British administrators. It is very largely a matter of opinion as to (which is) the best way of preserving the vitality of the tribal people only secondarily complicated by other considerations.28

27 Ibid., pp.33-77. See chapter on 'So called Aborigines and the Hindus'. A similar tenor of argument was advanced in the Bihar Legislative Council Debates: "They said we want protection. Protection against whom? Against the Brahmans, their own brethren? How ridiculous! They were made to go to this extent, to say they wanted to be protected from their kith and kin". (see Loss of Nerve, p.47).
28 Ibid., p.185.
Ghurye stated that the exclusion of the forest communities was a political statement which was to be opposed. Ghurye was not the first nationalist sociologist to do this. He was merely developing an argument initiated by A.V Thakkar and D.C. Mazumdar. In 1941 Thakkar wrote:

> the aborigines should form a part of the civilized communities of our country, not for the purpose of swelling up the ranks of this religion or that, but to share with advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general social and political life of the country. Separatism and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and they strike at the root of national solidarity.  

Thus Thakkar saw the 'assimilation' of the forest communities as an essential part of their development process and therefore objected to the policy of 'exclusion'. But, unlike Ghurye, he did not defend Hindu society. His concern was modernity. Nor did Thakkar discount the existence of the 'tribal' identity. He just opposed its preservation for he felt that this identity represented a politically and socially backward culture.

The polarization of political opinions in this manner led to an intimate association between academic writing and political stances. On the one hand British and other ethnographers emphasized the need to protect and the distinctiveness of the 'aboriginal' and 'tribal' identity. On the other hand scholars like Ghurye denied the existence of a 'tribal identity'. If they recognized the identity, as in the case of Mazumdar and Thakkar, they opposed exclusion on political and social grounds.

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30 For example Ghurye wrote: "This being the present state of our knowledge, regarding the peopling of India, it is hazardous to look upon one section of the population as aborigines of India. The Indo-Aryan type is peculiar to India." (see Ghurye, Aborigines - so called, p.14).
Verrier Elwin and 'exclusion', 1936-44: Verrier Elwin was quite disillusioned with the tenor of the exclusion debate:

The actual result, therefore, of this admirably intentioned move for the protection of tribesmen has probably been to destroy any real chance of protecting them at all. Partial Exclusion indeed gives very little advantage to the aboriginal. He lives under the ordinary system of Government and is exposed to every form of political and social propaganda.31

Elwin did not see the question of 'exclusion' as a point of political debate. His defence of the exclusion policy was social and moral. He preferred complete 'exclusion' and was against 'partial exclusion'. What did Elwin mean by complete 'exclusion' of the adivasis? In the first place Elwin felt that adivasis should be protected from modern political and social opinions. He argued for the protection of the 'aboriginal mind' and for the natural development of their environment. In this way Elwin expressed his dissatisfaction with the manner in which modern society had developed. Describing a modern and an 'advanced' society as "exploitative and unjust", he wrote in *Aboriginals*:

The aboriginals are the real swadeshi products of India, in whose presence everyone else is foreign. These are the ancient people with moral claims and rights thousands of years old. They were the first: they should come first in our regard.32

Elwin described the rights of adivasi people Gandhian vocabulary. He used the term 'swadeshi' to denote the moral right of the 'indigenous' people to rule over their land according to their own values. 'Swadeshi' did not connote a broad Indian identity for him as it did for the Gandhians. It was used to identify the 'original' inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent i.e the adivasis. In this sense Elwin's description of the forest communities was reflective of an idealistic

32 Elwin, *Aboriginals*, p.32. It is this notion that Ghurye criticized in Ghurye, *Aboriginals - so called*. Ghurye's polemic was specifically against Elwin.
sense of the past. For him the values of 'tribal life' were the most 'civilized values' and the 'tribal society' was a more humane society. So 'exclusion' was necessary not only for the protection of *adivasis* from exploitation, but also for the preservation of the 'moral fabric' of their society.

For Elwin, 'exclusion' meant the restoration of *adivasi* rights in the countryside, the freedom to cut *bewars* and removal of the restrictions over *adivasi* movements in forests. These demands derived their justification from the moral argument described above. Elwin remarked that there was no use introducing conditions to which the forest communities could not adapt. Instead the natural culture of the *adivasis* had to be preserved; especially their dance, drama, art and religion. Elwin believed that exclusion would also lead to the economic betterment of the *adivasis*. This part of Elwin's plan was almost identical with that of the British administration. He agreed with all British administrators that the Gonds and Baigas had suffered the loss of land and livelihood due to encroachment by peasant societies. He also stated that the forest dwellers could only survive within a colonial economy if they were protected from its evils.

Many people criticized Elwin for these views. Ghurye called him a 'revivalist' and a 'no changer' who wanted to revert the forest communities to the "primitive ages". He implied that Elwin had no sense of history. But then nationalist concerns were very different from Elwin's. Unlike them Elwin reiterated that the role of the anthropologist was an important one. He believed that local conditions were never similar and there could be no general plan of development for culturally diverse people. The nationalists aimed for a general political programme for the country. With different political agendas, the nationalist anthropologists and Elwin seemed to occupy different political spaces. However

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33 Ibid., p.29.
34 For this point see Ghurye, *Aborigines - so called*, p.186 and Elwin papers No:162, 1936.
there was a strikingly similarity between the views of the post-colonial
government and Elwin.

The British administration was less critical of Elwin. This was partly because
Elwin's stand constituted some 'unofficial' support for the policy. There were
however differences between Elwin's proposals and official policy. Elwin was
totally opposed to the official concept of 'partial exclusion'; and wanted the
complete political isolation for the adivasis so that their own institutions could
develop. Elwin also opposed the British policy of extending of modern
commercial economy into these areas, and wanted a relaxation of forest rules.
Despite these reservations Elwin supported the government policy of exclusion
in this period (1936-44).

The 'exclusion' policy in independent India : From 1936-44 the main focus of the
discussion of 'exclusion policy' was on the survival of the forest communities as
well as the preservation of their culture. In the colonial period the dominant
thinking within the Congress nationalists had opposed the preservation of
'tribal culture'. But in the first few years after independence the focus of the
Congress policy shifted from "assimilation of the tribes" to their 'integration'
into the nation. The first clear indication of this was given by Jawaharlal Nehru
in 1952, opening the first session of the 'Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas'
conference he said :

For half a century or more we have struggled for freedom and achieved it. That struggle
apart from anything else, was great liberating force. It raised us above ourselves,
it improved us and hid for a moment some of our weaknesses. We must remember that this
experience of hundreds of millions of Indian people was not shared by the tribal folk....we
must approach the tribal people with affection and friendliness and come to them as a
liberating force. We must let them feel that we have come to give something and not take
something from them. That is the kind of psychological integration that India needs. If,
on the other hand, they feel you have come to
impose yourselves upon them or that we go to them in order to try and change their methods of living, to take away their land and to encourage our businessmen to exploit them, then the fault is ours, for it only means that our approach to tribal people is wholly wrong.35

Nehru admitted the failure of the Congress led national movement to express the aspirations of the forest communities in India. He also acknowledged the existence of an adivasi identity and felt that they should be treated with tolerance and empathy. He emphasized the need to protect the 'tribal economy' from the 'market economy'. In 1954 he wrote that:

Normally speaking, these tribal economies have not come within the scope of a market economy which is governed by the rule of the survival of the fittest. It is therefore necessary, as our Constitution has laid down, that we should prevent the incursion of the market economy in these people's areas. We have to prevent the rich people from acquiring land and dispossessing the tribal people. We do not want to upset the tribal economy.36

Through statements such as these Nehru implied that the protection of the 'tribals' was not only justified but also necessary. The only "peaceful way" of dealing with the 'tribal question' was to allow these areas to develop in a 'natural' way. Thus the social and economic betterment of the adivasi people was to be initiated through the process of indirect intervention. In 1958 Nehru laid down five measures through which intervention in adivasi areas should take place: a) people should develop on the lines of their own genius and their own art and culture should be encouraged; b) 'traditional rights' in land and forests should be respected; c) a team of their own people should be built up to carry out administrative and developmental work; d) development should take place through adivasi social and cultural institutions; and e) the progress of

adivasi people should be judged not by the amount of money spent but by the kind of "character evolved".\textsuperscript{37}

Nehru's ideas formed the basis of the 'tribal policy' of independent India. They also showed that the ideas of nationalist rulers had changed after independence. Like Elwin, Nehru emphasized the need to preserve the values of 'tribal life' and restore 'traditional' rights in forests. But he did not agree that the adivasi society should be purged of all 'foreign' influences. He felt that outside influences should be minimized only as far as the physical presence of outsiders and their institutions was concerned. But modern ideas should be allowed to permeate the institutions of everyday life through the education and employment of the adivasi people. Thus he agreed with British administrators, like Grigson, that the progress of the 'tribals' could only take place if opportunities of development were provided to them under a 'protected atmosphere'. In this sense he was influenced by the ideas generated through the debate over 'partial exclusion' in the Central Provinces between 1936 and 1945.

Though Nehru was influenced by some of Elwin's ideas of the 1939-44 phase, Elwin's own ideas on the 'tribal question' had changed. In \textit{A Philosophy for NEFA} he argued that both the policy of 'complete isolation' and 'assimilation' were inadequate to meet the needs of the adivasis. He felt that Nehru's alternative was the most viable option of dealing with the 'tribal question'. Defending Nehru's policy he wrote:

\begin{quote}
Above all we hope to see as a result of our efforts, a spirit of love and loyalty for India, without a trace of suspicion that the government has come into the tribal areas to colonize or exploit, a full integration of mind and heart with the great society of which all tribal form a part and to whose infinite
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{37} Nehru suggested these measures in a foreword to the second edition of Elwin's \textit{A Philosophy for NEFA}, (1960 Shillong).
Thus Elwin wanted to join Nehru's mission of creating a common Indian identity by a process of the integration of different community identities. The key concept in development strategy became 'national integration' or 'unity and diversity'. It was argued that India was a confluence of many cultures and that successful nation-building involved the intertwining and 'assimilation' of cultures in such a way that the equality of all cultures was maintained. Here it is important to note that assimilation as conceived of by Nehru and his successors was quite different from the 'assimilation' advocated by Ghurye. As late as the mid-1950s Ghurye continued to write of the adivasis as 'backward Hindus'.

The interaction between the nationalists and Elwin in the post-colonial era shows that the 'exclusion' debate of 1939-1944 played a crucial role in defining the parameters of official policy in Independent India. The Indian government inherited certain 'partially excluded areas' in the Central Provinces and chose to put them under the administration of development agencies. The zones of protection were defined by Grigson's enquiry (1943). The territories and people affected were:

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38 Elwin, *Philosophy for NEFA*, pp.53-54.
39 See Wilkinson, 'Isolation and assimilation' and K.S Singh, *Biswa Munda and his Movement*. Also the works of Von Furer Haimendorf such as *Tribes in India*, (1982, Delhi).
TABLE 6.2: LIST OF PARTIALLY EXCLUDED AREAS AND COMMUNITIES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NAME OF AREA</th>
<th>NAME OF COMMUNITY</th>
<th>NAME OF AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baiga</td>
<td>Jabalpur, Mandla, Baihar</td>
<td>Kamar</td>
<td>Dhamtari in Raipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhinjiwar</td>
<td>Bhandara, Bilaspur, Raipur</td>
<td>Kanwar</td>
<td>Durg, Raipur, Garchiroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Sironcha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaina</td>
<td>Bilaspur</td>
<td>Kol</td>
<td>Sihora, Mandla, Bilaspur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharia</td>
<td>Jabalpur, Mandla,</td>
<td>Korku</td>
<td>Betul, Nimar, Hosh'abad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilaspur and Amarwara</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chhindwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhil</td>
<td>Nimar</td>
<td>Nihal</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanwar</td>
<td>Bilaspur and Balod</td>
<td>Oraon</td>
<td>Raipur, Bilaspur Jagirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhoba</td>
<td>Mandla</td>
<td>Pab</td>
<td>Bilaspur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gond (Marla, Murla)</td>
<td>Whole Province</td>
<td>Sawara or Soanar</td>
<td>Bilaspur, Sagar, Raipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardhan</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>Panka</td>
<td>Mandla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haliya</td>
<td>Durg, Raipur, Garchiroll</td>
<td>Majhwar</td>
<td>Bilaspur</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Sironcha</td>
<td></td>
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</table>


From the table above it is clear that almost the entire eastern part of the Province was partially excluded while only three districts of the western part had some excluded areas. In fact areas were excluded on the basis of how difficult it was for them to meet their subsistence requirements. For the excluded territories the period 1935-43 proved to be important as it marked the culmination of a process which began almost eight decades ago. The 'aboriginal' and 'tribal identity' was now given an official recognition in the independent nation-state. The adivasis of the excluded territories were given the status of 'Schedule Castes and Tribes' in the Constitution of independent India.

**Education and the Process of Transformation in Adivasi Societies:**

Most perspectives on 'exclusion' emphasized the need for changing the prevailing conditions of adivasi society. Elwin and the British government asserted the need for changing their economic status in the society. They showed that the adivasis lived in exploited and deprived conditions. The protection of the forest dwellers meant not only protection from exploitation, but also the empowerment of the people so that they could defend themselves from their exploiters. The missionaries, social reformers and people like Ghurye advocated another dimension of change. According to them the adivasis were not only economically 'backward', but also socially and culturally 'primitive'. 
The missionaries, Ghurye, Thakkar and others saw "detribalization as the only possible future of India's tribesmen". 40

The specific stances taken by the participants in the 'exclusion' debate were dependent upon the vision they had about the future of adivasi communities. For example Ghurye was against exclusion because he felt that the future of the 'tribes of India' lay with their assimilation into the Hindu fold. Similarly both Grigson and Elwin were pro-exclusion because they thought that the adivasis could only advance if they acquired the benefits of modernization without losing their identity. In this sense processes involved in the 'exclusion' and 'transformation' of adivasi society were closely linked to each other.

By the 1930s the question of transformation was as intensely debated as the 'exclusion policy. Within the debate there was one point of agreement: everyone believed that the spread of education in the adivasi areas of the Province would help to achieve the objectives of the 'exclusion policy'. The introduction of education as a major programme on the official agenda showed that the entire strategy for the transformation of adivasi subsistence had to be revamped. It expressed faith in the dictum that 'change had to come from within'. To this end Grigson wrote:

> everything pointed to one main desideratum, education, and it is because of the lack education that leaves the aboriginal so much of his exploiters and prevents him from using his numerical superiority to control local bodies and properly influence government through Provincial Legislature. 41

Grigson realized that if the objectives of 'exclusion' were to be successful and if the adivasis were to be fully incorporated within a capitalist and modern lifestyle, they would have to change their way of thinking. This was a common

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40 Elwin, Philosophy for NEFA, p.48.
41 Grigson, Aboriginal Problem of C.P's, p.396.
feeling amongst those concerned about the future of the forest communities. By the 1940's it was amply clear that the nature of education to be introduced was integrally linked to the question of transformation. In this context the debate over the nature of education in the Central Provinces assumed great relevance for the forest communities of this region.

**Early efforts at education and transformation of adivasi life till 1920:**

The initial forays into the adivasi areas were made by Christian missionaries who came to these Provinces in the 1830s and 40s. Stephen Hislop's Nagpur mission was one of the first missions to institutionalize its work in these Provinces. Then came some Church missions in and around Jabalpur, a Canadian mission in Indore and Samuel Baker's Friends' mission society in Hoshangabad. The Balaghat and Mandla missions were only started by the end of the 19th century. The main aim of these missions was to spread "amongst the unenlightened, whether abroad or at home, the unsearchable riches of the Gospel of Christ". An early missionary traveller described the urgency for the missionary work in the following words:

> while the heathen homes of India should have our earnest help and sympathy, the heathen in India were also our fellow subjects, and the most important responsibility rested upon us with respect to them. There was some thing in idolatory so degrading, so pervasive of the religious and moral feelings, and so thoroughly imbuing the nature of those brought up in it, as to render the platform of the heathen child in India decidedly lower than the so-called heathen of this country.42

Missionaries believed that Christianity was a religion 'superior' to all others and it was their duty to teach "all heathens the merits of Christianity". The missionaries saw 'western' society as more 'enlightened' and 'progressive' than the rest of the world. The social and cultural transformation of Indian society

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and the "introduction of the enlightened Christian thought" to the Indian masses was to be carried out through education.

The missionaries were the first people to realize the value of education in the 'civilizing mission'. In 1843 Stephen Hislop wrote that:

Our Christianity is recommended to natives by our secular knowledge. It is for the latter they come; and if they cannot get it at a good religious semenary, they would never think of coming to such an institution over another semenary, when it is given good and unadulterated they would think with piety.43

According to Hislop providing access to 'secular' and 'scientific' knowledge would give the missionaries a basis to preach their religion. Like all missionaries he contended that the development of an 'enlightened' mind and a 'scientific temper' were essential attributes of Christianity. Christianity signified 'civilization' and it was the missionary duty to teach the 'heathen' the principles of a 'civilized' life. For example Dr. Miller spoke of the aims of Free Scottish Church as establishing schools and colleges with the express aim of preparing the population of India for Christianity through the introduction of moral and 'rationalist' education. Thus the missionaries identified themselves with an 'enlightened western civilization' that was to be the basis of the formation of a world-wide Christian community.44

For the missionaries, 'spiritual' and 'secular' training were two sides of the same coin. In 1894 a missionary wrote an article in the Indian Witness emphasizing that the main flaw in secular education was that it enforced "western traditions on an otherwise degenerate society". These high "intellectual traditions of the west" were considered as relevant only to an 'advanced' mind of some 'moral standing'. This could only be achieved if religious and secular education were

44 See Dr. Miller, Educational Agencies in Missions, (1893, World Congress of Missions, Chicago).
combined together. Further the missionary criticized the government for not taking the responsibility of the 'moral advancement of the Indian people'. The government lacked the enthusiasm to promote religious education in government schools.45

Almost every mission society in India started its work with the setting up of orphanages and primary schools. The spiritual instruction was to consist of training in the Christian doctrine and the secular training was to develop the 'intellect and the whole character and all the powers of, at least, the rising generation of Christians' so that they may be fit to hold high positions and exert influence over their surroundings. The educational aims of Christians and non-Christians were not very different from each other.46 Education was to be through orphanages, formal schools and industrial work.

In each of these settings different types of education was imparted to students. In orphanages children were taught the basics of a good Christian and modern life. They were taught how to cook and sweep, polish their shoes, and do their own homework. In this way they were taught how to cultivate an 'austere' and 'self reliant' daily routine - the essential attributes of a 'Christian life'.47 In formal schools students were provided education by prescribed government standards which was to initiate them into modern life. The third type of missionary work aimed at introducing students to practical work in the local 'craft' of the region. It also trained students in better techniques of agriculture. Agricultural education was also of a specialized nature. It taught children how to propagate seeds and improve their variety and the theory of plant life and made them experiment with various types of fertilizers for the improvement of the crop. Along with these a training in mathematics, science and geography

46 Huizinga, Missionary Education in India (1909 publisher/place unknown), pp.95-97.
47 Pumphery, Samuel Baker of Hoshangabad, p.75.
which was essential to any kind of farming. But the most important part of this programme was the experimental farm where all students were given one acre of land to practice what they studied. One such farm school existed in Powarkheda in Hoshangabad. Here the students came from all parts of the province and were sent up from mission schools once they became proficient in the basics of agriculture. It will be seen later in this chapter that technical education became the focal point of the debate on the transformation of adivasi life.

In non-adivasi areas, the impact of the early missionary activity was felt mainly in the field of education. In 1910 a Methodist missionary, F.R Felt, reported that the missionary schools in Jabalpur had evoked a good response. This was primarily because the government schools had few well trained teachers and were very badly run. On the evangelical front however, the success was limited. The primary reason for this was the caste system. In 1879, Samuel Baker noted that 'caste' was the biggest hurdle in the evangilization of the Indians. The missionaries encountered a strong resistance from the Hindu communities because they expected students to perform all tasks together irrespective of caste barriers. It will be seen later in this chapter that their dislike for the caste system provided an additional motivation to convert adivasi people to Christianity.

The impact of missionary activities on adivasi society : Till the 1920's, the primary initiatives in the education of forest dwellers were made by three Churches - the Scotland Free Church in Nagpur, the Methodist Episcopal Church with its branches in Bastar, Balaghat and Nimar and the Anglican Church in Mandla. Here I consider the case of the Methodist Episcopal Church

48 Rev Alex Meliesh, 'Industrial and agricultural work' in Methodist Education, Methodist Centre Bombay, (hereafter ME) 1921, Vol.1 No:1, pp.41-45.
49 Central Provinces Methodist Church Conference, 1910, p.21.
50 Pumphery, Samuel Baker of Hoshangabad, p.45.
and its activities in Balaghat and Bastar. The process of the spread of the missionary influence in Balaghat district shows that education was spread through orphanages, Sunday schools, regular schools, experiment farms and industrial work.

The Balaghat mission was started by John Lampard with the establishment of an orphanage for children who suffered from the loss of their homes and parents in the famines of 1894 and 1896. The mission was at an advantage as there was no other educational and social work (not even government work) in the area of the Baihar. Consequently, Lampard's mission got government sanction and aid for an orphanage for Gond and Baiga children. By 1900 Lampard claimed that the children in the orphanage had learnt how to read the old testament in Hindi. It was clear that in the beginning the mission's educational activities were entirely spiritual. Lampard said that the object of the mission was to:

\[
\text{train children for christian work thus} \\
\text{supplying our very great need for spiritual} \\
\text{and capable native Christian Evangelists,} \\
\text{teachers and other workers.} \tag{51}
\]

Thus the importance of education lay not only in its role as a 'civilizing' agent, but also in aiding the spread of mission work. Two types of schools were started in the area. The first was a regular school and the other was a Sunday school. The Sunday school was run by the pastor of the church for children who could not attend the regular school. In an area like Baihar, the number of these children was substantial. The importance of the Sunday school was stressed by the 1905 Central Conference of the Church:

\[
\text{While reaffirming the importance of the sunday school as an educational factor we} \\
\text{would emphasize its character as a direct soul converting agency, and would urge all our} \\
\text{pastors and sunday school teachers to make}
\]

\[51\] BJJ No:1 of 1 March 1900.
the conversion of children as a direct aim of all their efforts.⁵²

These schools taught hygiene, temperance (i.e. repulsion and abstinence of liquor and opium, frequently used by *adivasis* in ritual life), reading and writing. The object of the mission was to bring about fundamental changes in behaviour and habits so that the initiatives for reformation came from within the community.

In Balaghat, religious education and spiritual training were the central focus of 19th century missionary education. Through such training, the missionaries hoped to offer the Gonds and the Baigas a social alternative to the Hindu system. The Gonds and the Baigas were 'primitive' people, who did not believe in idolatry. The missionaries were also against idolatry which they considered 'barbaric' and very 'Unchristian'. The mission hoped to attract the Gonds and Baigas into a new religion because of this similarity of views on idolatry. Further, in missionary opinion, the Baigas did not seem to possess a caste system which was the biggest hindrance to the spread of Christianity. The missionaries contended that Christianity would not only modernize the *adivasis* but also save them from the "evil and exploitative effects" of Hindu society.

Though Lampard maintained that it was very difficult to judge the success of 'spiritual and moral' activity upon the *adivasis*, the Balaghat mission took its first step forward when a Gond, Amru, was appointed as a local preacher in 1901. After this there were several reports of success amongst the Gond community in Nikkum and Khursipar.⁵³ In his field notes Lampard noted that a remarkable movement was taking place amongst the Gonds of Nikkum against alcohol. About the nature of the movement he said:

> Quite recently however an abstinence movement has sprung into existence, originating entirely amongst the people

⁵² Methodist Church Conference, Central Provinces, Methodist Centre Bombay, (hereafter MCCP), 1905, p.17.
⁵³ BJJ No: 5 of May1901.
themselves. The reason alleged is, some leading Gonds have come to realize that their loss of material possessions and of the dignity they once enjoyed as the ruling race is largely a result of their drinking habits.  

The Gonds made a rule that anybody found drinking alcoholic liquor would be excommunicated from the community. The mission held that this introspection amongst the Gonds was a result of the education that they had been imparted to the Gonds for the last 15 years. They argued that out of the 30,000 Gonds who had originally pledged abstinence, most had withdrawn from the movement. But the Gonds of Nikkum (who were influenced by missionary ideas) abstained from alcohol despite the withdrawal of the movement by the leaders of the community. The sustenance of the movement occurred because of the influence of the oldest missionary center in this place. The missionaries pronounced that the prevalence of a reformist feeling amongst the Gonds was a direct result of their efforts at 'moral education' amongst the community. They hoped that the Gonds would gradually realize that "their religious superstitions and sins are foolish and injurious in a deeper sense, and that they will turn from these things to the worship of true god and his son Jesus Christ". In particular the missionaries emphasized the need to eliminate the evils of caste system from Gond society.

Though the missionaries achieved some success amongst the Gonds, amongst the Baigas their efforts were a total failure. The Baigas were especially reluctant to join mission schools. Their logic was simple. They thought that if their boys had sense enough to read a book, they had sense enough to earn the family livelihood, and thus going to school would be a distinct loss to their

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54 BJJ No:20 of June 1906, p.1.
55 BJJ No:25 of 15 November 1907.
56 BJJ No:20 of 15 June 1906. In 1935, the government released a pamphlet on the Moral and Material Upliftment of the Aboriginal. This pamphlet debated questions regarding the banning of drinking and the distillation of illicit liquor amongst the aboriginals. It was clear by the division of opinion amongst the District Commissioners that such a decision could not be imposed on the forest communities because of its ritual and customary importance. Never the less we can see that missionary ideas had some effect on official thinking.
family. But the most important reason for this was perhaps the content of the education in these schools. Apart from spreading Christianity the mission also attempted to teach plough cultivation to Baiga and Gond students. The missionaries had demonstration farms at Nikkum and other field centers at Khursipar and Rengakhar. The government was especially interested in this aspect of the mission work because it aided their efforts to control bewar and induce people to settle in sedentary farms. Further it took over relief operations during troubled times and saved government expenditure in the mission areas. In fact the government tried to work through the mission in these areas.

The Baigas probably considered the efforts to promote plough cultivation as the ultimate 'sin'. The plough was taboo in their society and any efforts to promote the plough were met with strong resistance.

The resistance to missionary activity was expressed in several ways. In his journal, Lampard described the experiences of one of the missionaries thus:

In one large village Mr Macmillan had difficulty in getting food for his people, and the people showed a proud and superstitious spirit. Our brother anticipated that the 'lantern' would break down this attitude and that he would get a good meeting at night. Judge his disappointment when at the appointed hour not a soul put in his appearance and on going through the village to see where the people were, he found some five hundred of them assembled in the headman's house to witness the performance of some immoral dancing girls.

In most cases the Baigas either ignored the missionaries or expressed an open defiance to the advent of the missionaries. Biblical tracts were torn up and burnt in front of mission representatives. In other cases the people just refused to respond to missionary queries for fear of being declared as 'outcast' in their

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57 BJJ No:24 of 15 June 1907.
58 BJJ No:1 of 1 March 1900.
59 BJJ No:14 of 15 July 1904
own community. The authority of the priest was used often to ward off missionary efforts. In 1904 Macmillan noted that in most Baiga villages the Baiga headman and *pujari* were instrumental in warding off missionary influence. The sanctions appeared to be so stringent that the Baigas ran away as soon as they saw a missionary approaching them.\(^{60}\)

The resistance to the mission was mainly because of the clash of two different faiths. If Christianity valued temperance, drinking was an important part of the life of the forest communities. Missionaries scorned all 'indigenous' lifestyles and knowledge increased the distance between them and the *adivasis*. The resistance to one system of education appeared to protect a system for the dissemination of 'indigenous' knowledge. In particular I refer to the *ghotul* system of the Marias where all Maria youngsters stayed and learnt the lessons of everyday life. The *ghotul* reproduced and reiterated the codes and beliefs of the Maria society in the same way as the way the modern educational system does in a modern society. It taught the Maria youngsters the values of community life. All the Maria boys lived together in the *ghotul* and followed *ghotul* discipline. The *ghotul* had a headman and a panchayat like the village and any infringement of the community unity was considered a breach of *ghotul* discipline. Of *ghotul* offences' Elwin wrote:

> Their offences cannot be properly understood except in the background of the moral and social life of the tribe. To the Muria, as to most aboriginals, tribal solidarity is the supreme good, and anything that breaks this precious unity must be condemned. Individualism is a great sin. For this reason quarreling and homicide are rare (in the *ghotul*).

> \(^{61}\)

Those who fail to perform their duties in the *ghotuls* were punished. The other prominent dimension of the *ghotul* is its games. These had particular

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\(^{60}\) BJJ No: 13 of 15 March 1904.  
educational value as they taught the girls household duties, and the boys hunting practices. Elwin noted that the purpose of the games was not merely to teach the ghotul members the duties they were to perform later in life, but also to make the learning process more attractive to the young boys and girls.\(^6^2\)

All missionary success had been achieved amongst low caste Hindu communities. The Baigas especially had resisted the missionary influence to a considerable extent. This failure made Grigson, Elwin and their contemporaries rethink the strategy on the education of the forest communities. The discussion on transformation of adivasi society between 1935-45 focused on the nature of education in the Central Provinces.

**Education and transformation in 'excluded areas' 1935-1945:**

Education was seen as one of the most important mechanisms for affecting the transformation of adivasi societies. The benefactors of the forest communities, like Elwin, Grigson and the Congress nationalists, argued that literary education was not enough to provide adivasis the skill to survive in the modern capitalist society. It alienated them from their community and left them psychologically inept to handle any form of transformation. But with the state and other voluntary agencies making an effort to educate the 'aboriginal', the missionary position in adivasi areas changed significantly.

'Technical' education in 'excluded areas': In 1934 Verrier Elwin wrote that the prevailing system of 'literary' education was not suited to adivasi needs. Of 'literary education he said:

> Schools totally divorced from the life of the people ...which treat tribesmen to despise their own culture, to abandon their natural and simple dress, dancing and other recreation, are opened in the remotest areas and there is a desire on the part of some

politicians - although Gandhi and the Congress have condemned this type of education in emphatic terms - to introduce it on a compulsory basis wherever they can. The opening of workshops in which carpentry, agriculture and teaching people how to make useful and beautiful things would be, of course, invaluable. The miserable little schools for introducing unwanted literacy are worse than useless.  

Elwin stressed the need to 'revive the crafts' of the forest communities. He felt that education in crafts production would help the adivasi people to cope with change, both mentally and materially. It would give them an economic basis for their survival as well as help to preserve some aspects of their cultural life.

The problem of crafts education came under Missionary focus in 1921. In its Report of the Commission on Village Education the Methodist Church stated its objectives quite clearly: "Village education is integrally linked to the economic conditions of the village and economic problems should be done full justice in economic programmes." The report stressed the need to develop village schools as community centres. This attitude was most suited to the development of vocational training centers in middle schools. Bishop Thornburn suggested that vocational training should begin between the ages of 12-15 years. where the children would be taught improved methods of tanning, weaving etc. At first there would be no effort to persuade the children to give up their caste occupations, but later they could be prevailed upon to do so. Thus a Chamar's son would be taught tanning, a Dhulia's weaving and a Gond's basket-making. The meaning of the term 'community' as defined by the missionaries was twofold. First, the missionaries referred to the 'village community' where all castes lived in harmony with each other and were self-sufficient. The attributes

63 Elwin. Aboriginals, pp.32-33.
64 Methodist Church Report on Village Education, 1921, Bombay.
65 Ibid.
66 Rev. Thorborn, Modern education in villages of India in Methodist Education (hereafter ME), Volume 1, 1921.
of love, peace and harmony that Christianity hoped to spread were to be characteristic of this life. The harmony stressed upon was between man and nature; amongst men; and of man with himself. Secondly the community identity was an amalgamation of caste identities which were reflected in the production of 'handicrafts'. Thus Elwin had spoken about the excommunication of individuals if they took to in occupations tabooed in community law. Grigson pointed out that for this reason the Gonds could not be taught any trade other than basket-making for they despised the castes that pursued these occupations. By encouraging caste-based crafts education, the missionaries were preserving these identities, at least in the short term. The missionary attitude towards caste was ambivalent. On the one hand they argued that it impeded the spread of Christianity, while on the other hand caste exploitation promoted the chances of lower caste conversions to Christianity. Here it is important to remember that the missionaries in the Central Provinces, as elsewhere, focused on and achieved success amongst lower caste groups. It is obvious from this that crafts education by the missionaries served more than just a subsistence purpose. They helped to strengthen caste identities by promoting caste-based crafts education.

The 1930s saw many efforts to implement 'crafts education' amongst the forest communities. Chief amongst them were efforts made by Verrier Elwin’s Gond Seva Mandal. Formed in Karanjya in 1934 its main objective was:

to serve the Gonds and other forest tribes of the Central Provinces of India. In furtherance of this objective, the Mandal shall carry out medical and educational work, and shall undertake activities - other than missionary or political - which shall contribute to the well being and enlightenment of the forest tribes.68

67 Grigson, Aboriginal Problem of C.P's, p.281.
The 'enlightenment' process was to be governed by the following principles: a) truth (should direct not only speech but also actions); b) the spirit of universal love; c) purity of personal life; d) regular prayer; e) austerity; f) the spirit of learning and probe for knowledge; g) bread-labour (i.e. an orientation towards manual labour and the identification with the poor through sacrificial spinning and all members doing their own work); h) the fostering of a national and international 'spirit of tolerance'.

It is quite apparent that the Mandal was inspired by both missionary and Gandhian values. Gandhi's 'basic education' was the main influence over Elwin's thought. The idea that the main aim of education was to provide material and spiritual sustenance inspired all experiments in 'crafts education' in the Gond Seva Mandal. Within the Mandal complex at Karanjia there was a carpentry workshop, and a workshop for iron smelting and basket-making. The effort was to introduce crafts which would allow local people to be enrolled as teachers. On the staff of the Mandal there was an Agaria and a Basor teaching their respective crafts.

While Elwin was influenced by Gandhi's 'basic education', the first attempt at introducing 'technical education' at a provincial scale was made by the nationalist government of the Province in 1938. The nationalist policy on education was underlined in the Report of the Zakir Hussain Committee on Basic Nationalist Education. In this report crafts training was visualized as the central focus of the nationalist education scheme. The overall aim of this type of education was:

It (the present educational system) does not train individual members to become useful productive members of the society, able to pull their own weight and participate effectively in its work. It has no conception of

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69 Ibid., pp.56-59.
70 Ibid., p.54.
the new cooperative social order, which education must help to bring into existence, to replace the present competitive and a human regime based on exploitation and force. There is therefore a demand from all sides for the replacement of the present system of education by a more constructive and human system, which will be better integrated into the needs and ideals of national life and better able to meet pressing difficulties.\footnote{Basic Nationalist Education, 1938, Bombay, p.7.}

Education, in the nationalist thinking, was to perpetuate a 'nationalist ideal' and a 'common identity'. The committee thought, craft work would allow a balance the between intellectual and practical activity. The committee asserted that every child required "literacy of the whole personality". Socially, the introduction of this education was expected to break down the existing barriers between mental and physical labour. Economically, the productive capacity of the workers would be enhanced and their leisure time better utilized.\footnote{Ibid., pp.9-10.}

The nationalist government put into practise these ideas under the 'Vidya Mandir Scheme' or the 'Wardha Scheme' as it was better known. The scheme contemplated:

That every village within the radius of a mile having no school and where about 40 boys and girls of a school going age are available shall have a Vidya Mandir. The Vidya Mandirs will be nothing more or less than a house of learning. In all Vidya Mandirs the medium of education will be the mother tongue.\footnote{Vidya Mandir Scheme, 1938, Nagpur, p.6.}

Though this scheme was meant for all schools, Elwin noted that it was particularly useful to forested regions. Neither Baiga nor Gond children were capable of completing the curriculum of regular school. 'Crafts education' afforded a good alternative to regular school and trained adivasi children to cope with the changes in their society without getting alienated from it. It also

\footnote{Basic Nationalist Education, 1938, Bombay, p.7.}
helped the community to maintain its 'traditional crafts'. The scheme was endorsed by the Imperial government. In the process the officials and Elwin (whose sympathies lay with nationalists), aided the formation of a nationalist identity. The missionaries criticized the 'Wardha Scheme' for its lack of emphasis on religious education.74

**The reformation of 'literary education' for adivasi areas**: In his inquiry into the conditions of forest communities, Grigson suggested that the aims of 'aboriginal education' should be threefold: a) to conserve and develop 'tribal culture', religion and institutions; b) to equip 'tribals' to defend himself against those elements of civilization that threaten to destroy and degrade them; and c) to improve their economic condition. He advocated that aboriginal education should be treated as a specialized branch of education whose main problem was to choose the right type of curriculum, the right type of masters and the right system of control by aboriginal bodies.75 Advising the government on the development of educational programmes for the 'partially excluded areas, Elwin emphasized the need to consider literary education as a small part of the programme. He wrote:

> As far as the aboriginal is concerned one or two years at school are seldom wasted. Indeed it might be suggested that the real wastage occurs when the aboriginal spends four years at school, for the last year or two are of no practical use to him. Again and again I have witnessed during the last 10 years that considerable benefits have been gained by the aboriginals as a result of acquiring the three R's and a little bit of self-confidence.76

Elwin and Grigson advised that the adivasis should be excluded from the regular seven year course of primary and middle schooling. They felt that two years were enough to teach the forest dweller how to read and write, and some

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74 E.W. Menzies, 'The critique of Wardha Scheme of Education' in ME Vol 9 No 3, 1939.
75 Grigson, *Aboriginal Problem of C.P's*, pp.399-400. Also see FDECCO Case file No:XVI-M of 1940, p.3.
arithmetic. This would enable the *adivasi* to partake of civilizational benefits. Elwin's main idea was (and Grigson agreed with him) that the forest dweller should be preserved in his own cultural surroundings, but the economic benefits of civilization should not escape him. Aboriginal languages, songs, dances, games and values were to be made a part of the curriculum. To this end the importance of employing local *adivasi* teachers with a knowledge of Gondi and Korku was underlined. This education was to be under the direct control of the provincial administration. The times of sowing, harvesting and gathering should be considered holidays and schools were to be shut on all *adivasi* festival days. Both Elwin and Grigson (the official supporter of 'tribal' education) were dealing with the problem of adaptation of the forest communities to the 'modern educational system'.

The main hallmark of Grigson's proposition was the incorporation of some elements of *adivasi* culture in the educational system. This was done because there was a feeling that the prevailing system had 'alienated' the Gonds from their own surroundings. If reform was to come from within, then the educated *adivasi* had to be in touch with his own society. The educational system was to be geared towards giving the educated Gond confidence in his own society rather than degrading it in his eyes. From the 1930s and the 40s the Central Provinces witnessed determined efforts to change *adivasi* thinking about themselves so that they would be able to adapt to a modern life without loosing their uniqueness. In declaring the forest communities a 'protected' or a 'reserved' group, the basis of their relationship with modern politics was laid. Thereafter their problems of survival manifested themselves in demands for a special status.

By 1940 the effect of Grigson's education policy was reported by the D.F.O's of different forest divisions. In Mandla out of 250 teachers only 5 could speak Gondi. The medium of instruction was Hindi which all forest dwellers
understood. The teachers disliked being posted to forested areas and needed special allowances as incentives to live in these tracts. The D.F.O warned against local appointments, for he feared that local teachers might organize *adivasi* resistance. About 39 Bhumia schools had been recently started in the district and mission schools were preferable to other schools. In Balaghat the D.F.O noted that though few forest schools existed the Gonds were anxious to educate their children in the hope that they would "get government jobs". He stated that since the Gonds had started getting educated they were living in a "neater and cleaner way". In Bilaspur however the situation was a total contrast. The Gonds were refusing to go to school and were particularly against a Christian teacher. The medium of instruction was mainly Hindi which Gonds understood. The success of changes in the educational system and the introduction of 'technical education' in the excluded territories was partial. By 1945 the welfare and modernization of the *adivasis* was becoming an issue of concern for all actors in provincial politics.

The changing position of the missionaries in 'excluded territories': There is no direct evidence of the missionary stance on exclusion. All generalizations are derived from stray remarks of mission workers and from their perceptions of forest communities. From the point of view of 19th century missionary thinking exclusion of the forest dwellers was not opposed to missionary interests. Though the missionaries were opposed to the secular appearance of the state and its pandering to "communal passions" through the Communal Award, they accepted the state as an ally. This was the position till the middle of the first decade of the 20th century. By 1936, however the situation was quite different. The Central Conference of the Methodist Church aptly summarized the situation:

77 *ibid.*, pp.9-19.
The Nationalists often looked upon us (the mission) as a foreign institution and as the religion of the British Government. Christianity has been opposed by ardent advocates of Swaraj. Since religious communalism has been brought into the struggle by the Awards, conversions are resented by those who are thinking of the numerical strengths of various religious groups. The leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church have been forced to take note of the political movements in India in the last 15 years.78

In this review of the relations with the nationalists it was held that in the past Christianity had been made to identify with western civilization and Indians made it appear that the "failures of the West were the visible proof of the falsity and inadequacy of Christianity". Keeping this in mind the church was determined to undergo a process of 'Indianization'. It also decided to support the demand for swaraj. The Central Conference of the church passed the following resolutions: a) that the movement declare swaraj as its ultimate goal; b) that the Indian Christian community identify with such national movements that reflect its genuine aspirations; c) that social contact with non-Christian communities be established; and d) that all cooperation of the church with the nationalists should not only provide an attitude towards political development but also pave the way for inculcating the ideals of national righteousness and rationalist thinking. A year later the Methodist Episcopal Church in India included the demand for Dominion status in the Resolution of its Central Conference.79

The Methodist missionaries were willing to acknowledge the growing influence of nationalism in the country and adjust to its needs. Thus they were trying to adjust the mission objectives with the objectives of the national movement. However this was not true of all mission societies. For example, in the case of

79 Ibid., pp.150-51. Elwin's criticism of the missionary solution in 1940 was that the church's solution of the aboriginal question was unviable as it sought to replace tribal religion with Christianity.
the Mandla missionaries, it was noted that after the exclusion of the Baigas (in 1944), missionaries were "proselytizing on an unprecedented scale" and were arbitrarily usurping many functions of the sarkar. Their main aim was to control the state apparatus so that they could oblige and control the Baiga people. Similar tendencies were seen in the case of Chhotanagpur by the nationalist government in Bihar. In fact the Chief Minister of Bihar had held that the demand for a separate Santhal state was supported by the missionaries who were in favour of the exclusion of the Santhals. The main reason for this support was the desire to convert 'tribals' with state protection.

With the division of ranks within the missionary organizations there were two different stances that the missionaries could have vis-à-vis 'exclusion'. Some missionaries (like those in Mandla) were inclined to support the government because the governments strategy for the education of the forest dwellers gave the missionaries an important role. Others like the Methodists were not inclined to support 'exclusion' because they felt that it had become essential to establish contact with non-Christian communities.

In either case the changing nature of the church's stand was a reflection of the growing conflict between the Congress, the state and the church. It is clear that from the 1930s adivasi welfare became a matter of political concern. In the period between 1850 and 1920 the church was the sole harbinger of welfare activities in the adivasi areas. The state worked through the missionaries or worked through coercive methods to implement plans for transformation of subsistence. But after the 1930's the administration, the Congress nationalists and the voluntary associations got interested in these areas thus breaking missionary monopoly over them. The post-British scenario in Madhya Pradesh

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82 Report of the Christian Missionaries Enquiry Committee Volume II.
showed the intensity of conflict between the Congress and the missionaries. It also showed that the Methodist response to the growing conflict between the different agencies was probably an exceptional one in the given circumstances. In 1956 missionary activity was banned in the 'partially excluded territories' of Madhya Pradesh. The reasons given were: a) oppression and conversion of the *adivasis* prior to the formation of the Madhya Pradesh; and b) forcible conversion of people and misuse of state power to facilitate conversions. The Congress government felt that banning missions would improve the 'moral life of the tribals'. They argued that the missions were only surviving because of state help in the colonial era. By withdrawing this help the independent state hoped to 'protect' the *adivasis* from the missionaries. Amongst other things, 'protection' thus began to imply 'protection' from the missionaries.

**Conclusion:**

In this chapter I have shown that the 'exclusion' and *reservation* of the *adivasis* was the culmination of a century-long process. By 1945, the 'aboriginal' identity came to signify the conflict between the forces of 'assimilation' and of 'isolation'. The problem of survival was subsumed within this conflict of forces. While the 'exclusionists' believed that protection of the forest communities would prepare them for their struggle for subsistence, those against the policy held that they would remain 'backward' if this was done. These clear-cut positions were not merely a result of previous experience, but also a consequence of political and ideological beliefs that began to govern the options on the 'tribal question'. Each of these convictions flowed from the specific ideals of 'tribal transformation', and accordingly enumerated the measures that should be undertaken for this transformation. The one common point that all these schemes acknowledged was the importance of education in changing *adivasi* life. The content of

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transformation could not be described in economic terms alone, but also had a vital cultural dimension. The policy of 'exclusion' sought to deal with this facet of change.