

**STATE, DEVELOPMENT AND PEOPLE IN
NORTHEASTERN TELANGANA: HISTORICAL
SOCIOLOGY OF A PERENNIAL FRONTIER**

*A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research embodied in the present thesis entitled, “**State, Development and People in Northeastern Telangana: Historical Sociology of a Perennial Frontier**”, is carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Sasheej Hegde**, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge no part of this thesis has been submitted for the award of any research degree or diploma at any university. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Historical Sociology of a Region and People: Wading Through Critical Events

Nearly a decade ago, I was in the house of a Gandhian activist in a tribal village at the tri-junction of undivided Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh. A picturesque village on the Mothugudem-Donkarayi road, it was caught in a time warp on the banks of the Sabari River. It is three kilometres from the Mandal headquarters, Chintur, and five kilometres from Konta in Chhattisgarh and Motu in Odisha. The journey for possible sites to examine the story of economic transformation and social change in India – and in the context of its ‘peripheral’ regions - brought me to this village. While discussing the politics and history of the region, often rendered in official accounts and lay descriptions as a ‘Naxal infested area’ caught in a major irrigation project (the Polavaram Multi-Purpose Project), the octogenarian Gandhian asked me to leave the room and re-enter. While I knocked on the door to regain access, he refused entry. Then he posed the question: did he resist or assert? He said that since he was the lawful owner of the space, he asserted his rights over that space more than the resistance offered to an external actor. Further interaction with him persuaded me to relook at economic transformation and social change in terms of the assertion of people’s rights in the context of a neoliberalising economy and society. In the midst of the irrigation project-induced displacement, the activities of Naxalites or the Maoists, the work of independent tribal organizations, and the overarching history of colonialism, the region, subsumed under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, reoriented me. There is a problem, at once historical and sociological, that awaited social scientific inquiry.

Instead of directly mapping economic transformation and social change against the background of the major irrigation project over Polavaram and ‘the Maoist problem’, it seemed a more promising and exciting intellectual prospect to locate these concerns in the history and sociology of the region and its people. The tri-junction area, the

Bhadrachalam sub-division of the undivided Andhra Pradesh, was a ‘frontier’ in multiple senses. It was a geographical, cultural, economic, and political zone, with strident and criss-crossing interests and planes of existence. Additionally, the presence of the active Communist revolutionaries indicated that the region is a testing ground for the sovereignty of the Indian state. So also, the presence of independent tribal organizations demonstrated the possibilities of tribal politics in the country reconstituting the boundaries of the state-society relationship. All these elements promised experiences with rich sociological and historical possibilities. As has been averred:

The raw stuff processed by the sociological imagination is human experience. The end-product of the sociological imagination called ‘social reality’ is cast of the metal smelted from the ore of experience. Though its chemical substance cannot but reflect the composition of the ore, the product’s content also bears the mark of the smelting process which divides the ore’s ingredients into useful product and waste, while its shape depends on the mould (that is, the cognitive frame) into which the melted metal has been poured (Bauman 2002: 1).

The foregoing rumination from the late social theorist Zygmunt Bauman forwards one way of doing sociology, as an ongoing dialogue with human experience. Human experiences, by and large, result from the interplay between the individual and the external world regarding other individuals, processes, institutions, and events. Quite certainly, there exist multiple modalities of exchange and dialogue, which in turn can constitute different approaches and trends in sociological scholarship. This dissertation, broadly, endeavours to understand the human world as it presents itself to us, to comprehend and render the composition and relations embedded in the object of the study intelligible in a sociological language. This purpose of knowing differs from the Comtean project of ‘*savoir pour prévoir, afin de pouvoir*’.¹ Doubtless, as sociologists, we can devise different devices to know and understand. But, among the various approaches to the problem of understanding in sociology, this dissertation utilises the historical approach and framework of appraisal.

Unquestionably, the sociological imagination underpins the different forms of thinking and doing sociology. C. Wright Mills, as is known, provides a universally agreed

¹ For Comte, the sociological enterprise is geared to know in order to foresee; and, as he urged, “Future was after all the whole purpose of the colossal labours ...” (see Manuel 1962: 288). In these bearings, for some scholars, the idea of sociology is oriented towards the future.

template for the ‘sociological imagination’. For him, the ‘sociological imagination’ is a process to unravel the larger historical scene in which individuals construct meanings. It is also a process demanding shifting from one perspective to another to understand the totality of the society with its constituents. Hence, as he famously declared: “The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise” (Mills 1959: 4). In other words, a historical orientation is an attitude and sensibility informing the sociological frame. Furthermore, as he emphasised, “All sociology worthy of the name is historical sociology” (ibid.: 146). Consequentially the historical dimension of the sociological thinking grounds this dissertation. In many ways, besides, an earlier assessment of the field of sociology by the researcher, as part of a pre-doctoral dissertation on the various approaches and trends in historical sociology, inspires the present work (see Krishnan 2012). The pre-doctoral work underlined the analytical power and narrative strength of historical sociological scholarship. The study of the development of historical sociology as an orientation pointed out the possibilities of pushing the sociological enterprise by engaging its concepts and theories at a fundamental level. Surely, historical sociology as a methodology unpacks the complex constitution and entanglements across time and space of the social and the cultural. Against this background, it was amply clear that historical sociology is the fitting framework to approach objects of study that are historically entangled with multiple processes and institutions. At the same time, it enables us to rework the fundamental categories through which we experience and classify various social events, processes, and institutions.

Simultaneously, the region and its people offer multiple possibilities to examine the constitution of the state, population and development at the margins of the society. The entanglements of everyday life with colonial laws and the postcolonial necessities of the state and society push the region and its people to the frontiers of sociological thinking. This intersection of competing needs, historical limits, and conceptual possibilities demands a socio-historical examination of the experiential realities of the region and its people. Our study, entitled *‘State, Development and People in Northeastern Telangana: Historical Sociology of a Perennial Frontier’*, engages with a region and its people in Telangana, a southern state of India. This region, Bhadrachalam, is a Fifth Schedule

tribal area under the Constitution of India and represents a confluence of histories. Our attempt is a historical sociological exploration aiming to understand the constitution and trajectory of the region and the people. Undeniably, the study is not a comprehensive coverage of the events in the region; rather, it recovers ‘critical events’ and moments from the past and present. The next chapter, the second part of the introduction of the dissertation, explains the logic of recovery more fully. At any rate, the discussions and reflections in the dissertation use the region and its people to contemplate various categories and concepts so as to further the historical and sociological imagination.

The dissertation unravels in five parts – introduction, three histories, and a conclusion. The introductory part comprises two chapters. The present chapter clarifies the key concepts underlying the investigation, such as the idea of frontiers, region, historical sociology, and critical events. The next chapter, Chapter 2, *‘Compositional Toolkit: Methods and Sources’*, recapitulates the processes involved in field identification, sources of information, and the unfolding of the work both theoretically and empirically. Three analytically different but interconnected histories follow these introductory discussions – broadly ‘administrative history’, ‘developmental history’, and ‘people’s history’. The administrative history (Part I) contains two chapters, one (Ch.3) titled *‘Defining and Ruling of a Territory: Moving into Bhadrachalam’* and the other (Ch.4) titled *‘A Mosaic of Contentious Mobilities and Identities: Hovering around Bhadrachalam’*. Accordingly, while Chapter 3 places in perspective the mechanics involved in the statist definition of a region and its people, Chapter 4 engages with some complexities that arises in this wake in the context of the colonial policies of settlement. Chapter 5 labelled *‘Trajectories of Development: Configurations and Circulations of Capital and Subject Formation’* constitutes the developmental history segment, as Part II, which unravels the flow of capital and the concomitant impact and response from the people of the region. The next segment is the people’s history (Part III), which recovers the dynamics of the state-society relationship through two chapters (Ch.6 & Ch.7) – respectively *‘Vortex of Identities: New Currencies among The Northeastern Telangana Tribals’* and *‘In the Name of People: Re-engaging Maoism, ‘Development’ and Tribals in the Bhadrachalam Region and Beyond’*. Our concluding chapter (Ch.8), entitled *‘Forging Lands, Peoples and Places: The Perennial Frontier of Bhadrachalam’* uses the

unfolding structure of narration in the various segments to forward and consolidate certain historical and sociological claims about space, geography and territory.

But, of course, the mandate of the present chapter, titled as it is, namely, '*Historical Sociology of a Region and People: Wading Through Critical Events*', is to explicate further the contours of our study.

1.1 Meaning and Scope of 'Frontiers'

Broadly, the colonial and post-independence policies classified social groups living in the heartland of India as 'tribes', demarcating some of them in administrative territories or 'scheduled districts' to distinguish their 'wildness' from the mainstream 'civilised' and 'settled' peasant regions. It collapsed their culture to these geographies. However, both colonial and post-independence administration's policies displayed ambiguity by simultaneously stressing the distinctiveness of these social groups and enclosing them in designated regions, while at the same time attempting to mainstream them into civilised and modern arenas (see Chandra 2013). This duality led to the growth of conflicts and contradictions between imposed programs and the assertion of sovereign rights by various tribal movements. The 'frontier' concept is, by and large, forwarded to engage with this paradox, so as to comprehend how geographies were constituted as peripheries within the colonial and post-independence nation-state.

According to the Oxford dictionary, 'frontier' means (1) land near the line that separates two countries, (2) the edge of settled and built towns beyond which is wild and unknown, and (3) limit of what is known about a particular subject or activity. The first meaning is coterminous with borders; a body of scholarship conceptually invoking it is termed 'borderland' studies. From this scholarship it is largely evident that, while all borders can be frontiers, not all frontiers need to be borders. To be sure, 'frontier' studies focus the attention on the edges of the particular societies and the characteristics of the social groups inhabiting those spaces. In comparison, the 'borderland' or boundary studies address the social, political, and economic factors guiding interactions at those edges. Green and Perlman (1985: 4) make this analytical distinction clearer by suggesting that frontier studies "questions about the causes of political and economic expansion into new

habitats, and its effects on indigenous societies and ecological systems.” Furthermore, as they formulaically assert, “local events are not solely the product of local conditions” (ibid.).

Our study uses the frontier concept to implicate geography beyond the settled and built environment encompassing the wild and unknown. Without doubt, the colonial differentiation between ‘settled’ and ‘wild’ is present in the independent nation-state as well, thereby implicating a continuous idea of the frontier. Secondly, the region under study is used as a historical and sociological problem space. In a sense, therefore, frontier implicates a threshold, a point before new situations come to occur or begin to have an effect. The dissertation combines the latter two meanings of frontier, since it is a threshold of socio-economic, political, and cultural activities. In doing so, it implicates the social-scientific understanding of the frontier “as a zone, both literally and figuratively, that institutes a physical barrier as well as field of potentiality for engaging alternate conceptions of sovereignty, mobility, exchange, identity, and political imaginaries” (Saraf 2020: 3).

Undoubtedly, the political implication of the ‘frontier’ concept drives the energy devoted in this section. It is pertinent to recall a distinctive rumination on political concepts: “Political concepts do something more: They intervene in the allocation of power. They authorize and sanction what is deemed political and survey what counts as a political situation or a political event” (Stoler 2016: 70). Historian Kolsky (2015) appropriately reminds that the colonial administrators understood frontiers as the geopolitical edges of the empire. The colonial rulers considered these spaces as barbarous, and therefore to be administered differently from the settled, civilised spaces. According to Lord Curzon (1907: 45), the Viceroy who oversaw the annexation of the region under study into British India, there is a difference in the logics of inland and exterior frontiers. Inland frontiers follow the theory of ‘Hinterland’, as different from the ‘Doctrine of Protectorates’ and the obligation to defend a territory and its people from external aggression, the governing of external frontiers and so on. More directly, the theory of ‘Hinterland’ is an application of ‘Spheres of Influence’ advocating territorial continuity. Our study engages a colonial inland frontier. As such, the frontier expansion and

consolidation process created two types of natives - indigenous and national (Sharma 2020), a process actually traceable to the post-Westphalian tolerance and subsequent creation of minorities (see Mamdani 2020). To be sure, the administrative history part discusses in detail these dimensions and the related scholarship and debates.

The frontier concept has been deployed in the historiography of the Indian subcontinent in understanding the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act 1872 (Hopkins 2015), North-West Frontier Provinces (Kolsky 2015), Northeast India (Lalruatkima 2016), and inland frontiers (Beverley 2013; Eaton *et al.* 2013). All these discussions and analyses work on borderlands wherein there are competing interests of different sovereigns at the frontier. Simpson (2021: 5), in a recent work on the northeast and northwest frontiers of colonial India, effectively suggests, “British power at frontiers was only occasionally predicated on categorising and codifying, emanating more often from indeterminacy and upheaval.” According to Simpson, frontiers were spaces of openness, vagueness and exception, since the colonial state was not seeking to form uniform sovereign territories. Through his detailed analyses, he argues frontiers are ‘forms of spatial, epistemic, and administrative indeterminacy’ (ibid.: 262).

This dissertation deploys frontier differently. It is looking at an internal frontier within a ‘sovereign’ arrangement, constituted under British colonial conditions and continued as part of the post-colonial dispensation. Moreover, the area defined as the internal frontier is unchanged even today. In that sense, the dissertation engages a ‘perennial’ frontier - the interface of two different systems of administration and social structures. We strive to discuss the persistence of the frontier as a concept in the unfolding of the region. In doing so, the frontier as a concept helps characterise people who, despite the assimilative pressures of the colonial and postcolonial states, assert their ways of life (Parasram and Tilley 2018). As an internal frontier, the dissertation invokes ‘the racialized form of governance’ and provides a “vantage point to look at the stranger in the matrix of citizen and subject formation” (Stoler 2020: 118).

Fluidity and contestation, at once creating new identities and hybrid cultures, are the key characteristics of frontiers. In fact, an animated social production of space is available

through this concept (see Prado 2012). The frontier concept, accordingly, reveals the spatial structuring of the region and clarifies the relational arrangements between living beings and social goods at a place (see Low 2016). In other words, the orchestration of the living beings in a place unfolds not in isolation; rather, the social construction of the space highlights the socio-economic, cultural, political, and historical forces influencing the relational arrangements. At the same time, the socially constructed space shapes and moulds the relational dynamics of the social world. Therefore, the purpose of the frontier in this dissertation is to introduce fluidity to capture the historically messy entanglements of a place and its unfolding dynamics.

In more concrete terms, the Bhadrachalam region exists as a frontier in multiple ways. It demarcates a tribal area and separates itself from the non-tribal area. The history and constitution of it as a legally legible tribal area is discussed in the first part of the dissertation – as part of an unfolding and episodic ‘administrative history’. The spatial indeterminacy generates administrative and epistemic confusions and anxieties about the people in the region. Facets of our administrative history, specifically Ch.4 (Section 4.2, in particular) explores these dimensions of a frontier, so as to examine migration and belonging in a tribal universe. The fluidity of identities and contested claims are further developed in our people’s history, encapsulating Ch.6 in particular.

1.2 Framing the Region

‘Frontier’ as a liminal space marks the geographical influence of the sovereign power and the inclusion and exclusion of people within law and politics.² Liminality refers to the spatial experience of ‘inbetweenness’ marked by constant change, uncertainty, and institutional contingency (see Thomassen 2015). The spatial experience of ‘inbetweenness’ is an unending character of our region, and hence the invocation in the title of the dissertation, *‘Perennial Frontier’*. Given this nebulous nature of the frontier, the study of the region and its people demand a combination of experiences as captured through ethnography and the revivification of historical processes beyond the shifting

² Arpad Szokolczai (2000) has maintained that modernity is characterised by the condition of permanent liminality – between and betwixt flux and contingency, wherein systematization (or political order) becomes a casualty.

baselines of social meaning and experiences. Indeed, to push this point further, the recollection of experiences and meanings faces two challenges, namely, the extinction of the past knowledge in collective memory and absence of the past in the individual memory. Hence, any recovery of past processes and events beyond the experiential world involves the navigation of archives, textual documents, and events including the study of external factors and influences. All the same, messiness embeds the liminality of the frontier and evokes the imagery of chaos in governance and survival. Formulaically, chaos can help transcend creative stasis, but can pull us into a black hole (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; cited in Buchanan 2020: 87); and, consequently, the frontier can and must tread a delicate line of power and control. As such, any process of governance is, basically, a steering, through formal or informal structures and procedures, of individuals and/or groups to achieve collective goals (Briassoulis 2019: 421-422).

Any frontier is also the terrain of ‘strangers’, as it were (see Simmel 1908, for a conceptual elucidation). Indeed, the nearness and remoteness to the region animate the interactive dynamics of the migratory tribals claiming their homeland and the non-tribals supposedly settling down. The spatial feature of the territory that they inhabit – underwritten by the legal classification of the Fifth Schedule - dictates both the tribals and non-tribals. It constrains and enables their worlds, allowing the tribals to continue their way of life, while simultaneously not providing these privileges beyond the spatial confines of the Fifth Schedule. For the non-tribals, largely, the legal restrictions on political and economic activities make them unequal in the region as well as with the other ‘non-tribals’ outside this territory. At the same time, relations of intimacy and socio-economic exchanges attach them to the rest of the population and the region. More frontally, the non-tribal ‘strangers’ comprise colonial missionaries, coastal Andhra agriculturalists, government officials, and temple service providers. Without doubt, the legal classification as a tribal region transformed the non-tribal families living in the region prior to the British conquest into ‘strangers’. In fact, the historical interaction among these groups of people on the material and political planes produces the contemporary region. Levine (1977) astutely reminds us that the stranger is a specific mix of nearness and remoteness, wherein the qualities brought from outside the spatial

location affects the stranger's position within that location. For us, the distance parameter to define nearness and remoteness is the sense of belonging. Our Ch.4 (Sect.4.2 in particular), as mentioned, explores the tribal dimension, even as an earlier chapter (Ch.3, Sect.3.5 in particular) historicises the construction of the non-tribal remoteness of the region.

To reiterate, the commonality in terms of historical legal experience makes the region a coherent unit of study. Very broadly, our approach to regionality follows Sudipta Kaviraj (2017), who highlights three different forces – economic, political, and cultural – as producing of regions as a whole. One form of regionality affects the other two types of regional formations with possibilities of overlaps. Thus, regions formed by a particular mix of forces create “certain kind of currency exchanged between individuals and groups, and circulation of these objects – of political power, material goods and cultural artefacts” and producing “a zone of common experience and intelligibility” (Kaviraj 2017: 58). Noticeably, political forces created our region, with British colonialism forging the area as a political unit, an administrative frontier; and the post-colonial Indian state continues this construct as a kind of geography of exception. Various stakeholders, including tribals and non-tribals, respond to the administrative classification as a Scheduled Area and refashion our region's socio-economic, political, and cultural dynamics.

Kaviraj further opines that, broadly, three ‘analytical’ persuasions can inform the study of regions, namely, fragmentation, generalisation, and composition. Thus, ‘fragmentation’ foregrounds regions as a fundamental reality, and translates into the claim that there is no historical reality beyond the regional level. Alternatively, ‘generalisation’ is geared to the collection of primary data from a determinate region, assuming at once that it is applicable for the whole country. The incompleteness of these two analytical frameworks makes him suggest the third possibility – ‘composition’ or the dual ontology of space. In this latter framework, without denying the fundamental reality of a region, he urges us to look at the possibilities of the regions bound together by a single frame encapsulating political, economic, or social lineaments and which affects the qualities of the region and its functioning. Our study tries to follow this

compositional strategy so as to understand the region, approaching the latter as both an immanent reality in itself and a part of the external historical scheme of things. As such, we look at governmentality in the form of politics, developmental strategy and law-making, all external to the region, as essential constituents in shaping the region and its people. In this context, the dissertation may also be seen as a contribution to a place-sensitive sociology - a sociology where “place matters for politics and identity, history and futures, inequality and community” (Gieryn 2000: 482). Additionally, and perhaps summarily, the place-centred analysis addresses the deficiency in political sociology’s animation of political actors as devoid of space (see Leicht and Jenkins 2007).

In doing a place-centred sociology, we are attentive to the arguments of Doreen Massey (1994 and 1995), who had argued that places are not static and unchanging. In fact, she suggested avoiding the characterisation of place in local or parochial terms, and sought to locate it in the broader space-time matrix. In the process, she evidently privileges a place-based approach over place-bound analysis. Importantly, John Urry (2001:13) extends this framing of places, to opine that place are “set of spaces where ranges of relational networks and flows coalesce, interconnect, and fragment.” Against this backdrop, we can even render that ‘places’ are the goal and results of placements in a relational field; and, unlike spaces, they (places) are nameable, markable, and unique (see also Low 2016: xvii). These sensibilities forcefully break away from the conceptualisation of space as a container.

Our dissertation, although it deals with a state territorial space, utilises the above perspectives to map the region’s constitution in terms of internal and external factors. Doing so helps in reassembling both the internal and external factors shaping the region, and foregrounds as well the region’s impact on the people. The historical legal construction of the space, followed by the interventions in terms of infrastructural development, assembles the messy and chaotic nature of the frontier. Space thus constructed is always contested, and the study examines such contentions through the fabric of Koya organizations and the Maoist lineaments obtaining in the region. Indeed, the tribal nature of the region affects the people in different ways, and the third part of the dissertation encapsulating parts of ‘people’s history’ illustrates the testimonies and

life worlds of the inhabitants. In different forms and degrees, the forces and influences from the past are embedded in the region. Hence, the unpacking of the multiple spaces that co-exist in the region is approached through ‘critical events’ as entry points to access the play of forces in the constitution of the region. Essentially, given the fluidity of events and processes, the dissertation utilises the methodology of historical sociology in engaging the ‘perennial frontier’ of the Bhadrachalam region.

1.3 Historical Sociology: Reinserting History in Sociology

Historical sociology or sociology’s historical imagination is an orientation central to the ‘sociological imagination’ à la C. Wright Mills (1959). We already saw that, for the latter (as indeed for us), “All sociology worthy of the name is historical sociology” (Mills 1959: 146). Nevertheless, it exists as a sub-disciplinary domain due to specific disciplinary developments. Accordingly, as a conscious methodological intervention in the discipline, historical sociology is an attempt to reinsert history against the dominance of the Parsonian and conservative frames of thought that approached sociology as a discipline of social pathology requiring immediate resolution. Under these circumstances, studies on long-term socio-cultural change did not find any engagement from the dominant sections of American sociology. For instance, at Harvard, Pitirim Sorokin deployed a ‘world-historical’ perspective in his sociology, but when Talcott Parsons succeeded him as the Chair, he not only marginalised Sorokin, but also pushed him as the professor of philosophy of history. Interestingly, the intellectual inheritors of Sorokin, such as Barrington Moore and Charles Tilly, later revived the historical thinking in American sociology. Of course, the recalibration in sociology started with the involvement of radical sociologists in America, with the latter critiquing the current formulations and delving into the historical dimension in sociology. They, broadly, moved sociology away from its emphasis on ‘contemporary social problems’ and focused on critical engagements with ‘the present’ (see Adams *et al.* 2005, as also what follows in course herein).

Theda Skocpol (1984) pioneered the recovery of the historical dimension of sociology through some critical interventions. At the same time, it is important to note the characteristics of sociology as a discipline to understand the challenges and scope of a

historicized sociology or plainly historical sociology. Andrew Abbott (2001: 6) reminds us in unequivocal terms that “sociology is irremediably interstitial.” This ‘interstitiality’, obviously, extends to historical sociology, and hence we have different notions of the enterprise that covers almost every conceivable topic (see Adams *et al.* 2005; Anievas and Martin 2016; Burke 2005; Delanty and Isin 2003; Go and Lawson 2016; Hobden and Hobson 2002; Lachmann 2013; Smith 1991; Subrt 2017; Szakolczai 2000; Thornhill 2011).³ This corpus of literature ranges from the question of ‘why historical sociology?’ to the tasks of historical social sciences. In short, as defined by Adams *et al.* (2005: 2) in a pathbreaking work, “Historical sociology is one place for reflection about theory in the broader discipline and its connections to other academic and intellectual formations and to the quandaries inherent in the ‘sociological modern’ as it plays out in the social world.”

Even more pointedly, if we were to look at historical sociology as a distinct domain of intellectual labour, the concept of ‘fractals’ (Abbott 2001) enables us to trace its development and position among social sciences. For Abbott, historical sociology is a fusion of the narrative style of history and the analytical style of sociology, and as such he frames the overall endeavour as “a field where causal problems (that is, general questions like when does revolution occur) are answered by (somewhat) narrative analysis of cases” (ibid.: 14). In that sense, historical sociology is closer to history than mainstream sociology. Precisely, on this register, history is an exercise of emplotment, where the configuration of the past permeates through the subjectivity of the historian and the skills in arranging the set of ‘events’ or ‘facts’ from the past. Quite foundationally, central to the ‘dialogue of deaf,’ as Fernand Braudel (Burke 1993: 3) termed the interaction between history and sociology, is the difference of viewing the object of study. Abbott, in fact, argued that for sociologists in the 1960s and 1970s, the dynamics of social change is a mere foreground within the consistency of eternal laws. However, the examination of singular events like capitalism led to the formation of social

³ The researcher covered the literature on historical sociology for his M.Phil. dissertation under the same supervisor titled *Historical Sociology: A Review of Trends and Approaches* (see Krishnan 2012, submitted to University of Hyderabad). An updated reading of the literature reaffirms the history, definition, and scope of historical sociology as discussed (see Krishnan 2022, which further concretizes some of the methodological arguments deployed in the present dissertation).

history and historical sociology, wherein the division between narrative and analysis as methods had to be transcended for the puzzles engaged by historians and sociologists. All the same, Abbott laments the lost opportunity in the ‘rebellions’ of historical sociologists in revitalising the discipline in narrative terms, and his theorization of ‘fractals’ is meant to energize sociological reflection on this score.

Historical sociology, as mentioned earlier, was a response to the prevailing orthodoxies in sociology and, as a theoretical orientation and methodology, developed into a unique paradigm and epistemology (Gotham and Staples 1996: 483). Doubtless, using the narrative mode to examine the temporality of social action and historical events (Griffin 1993) makes historical sociology a distinct mode of sociology. This modality stems from the limitations of conventional historiography and existing sociological practices, including the Marxist structuralist approach (see Gotham and Staples 1996). Narratives, as analytical constructs or colligations, order a sequence of events in a particular order for a specific purpose by a narrator (Griffin 1993: 1097). Indeed, the processual nature of narratives helps in understanding the complex set of relationships enveloping events. Narratives thus enable us to access temporal aspects and provide a sort of explanatory logic. Accordingly, central to the fusion of narrative description and casual analysis is the synthesis of different kinds of reasoning and knowledge (ibid.: 1100). To be sure, the event is “a portentous outcome; it is a transformation device between past and future; it has eventuated from the past and it signifies the future... And its identity and significance are established primarily in terms of its location in time, in relation to a course or chain of other happenings” (Abrams 1983: 191). We shall engage with the idea of ‘events’ more systematically in the section to follow.

In these terms, historical sociology is a form of “ontological commitment ... [where] concepts are destabilised and entities are understood to be emergent rather than given” (Adams *et al.* 2006: 423). Sociologists need to learn the craft of history to refine their narrative quality and push the analytical frontiers. Undeniably, delving into history enriches sociology by engaging with the different conceptualizations of time and space. In fact, the translation of the “ontology of emergence” (ibid.: 424) promised by historical sociology needs reworking of the sense of time encoded in different cultural contexts.

As such, the promise of historical sociology lies in problematizing the linearity of time embedded in the conventional modernization thesis (*ibid.*). Moreover, the acceleration and deceleration of the ‘sediments of time’, to recall Reinhart Koselleck (2018), reminds us that the contemporary encompasses the past, and the present cannot absolve the traces of past that inform it. Alongside this understanding, another inspiration for sociologists to be historical is the feminist intervention within social theory, and the attendant transcending of the Cartesian discourse of epistemological individualism, foundationalism, and rationalism (Harth 1992: 3).

In sum, this study uses the paradigm of historical sociology in constructing an eventful sociology of a region, a place-based sociology as such. To unpack the complex set of processes, events, and actors, the dissertation modulates through various events in the region, all of which identified and mapped along an overlapping register of three histories – Administrative, Developmental, and People. To be sure, these histories individually are independent narrations of the region as well as interlinked to each other.

1.4 History through Events and ‘Critical Events’

Basically, the frontier divides the settled civilised population from the unsettled wild population. The binary of wild and civilised are perched on different nodes of time, with the latter as a forward position and the former as a backward position. The dichotomy of wild and civilised as such call attention to the co-constitution of temporal and political orders (Edelstein *et al.* 2020: 3).⁴ Without doubt, British colonialism instituted a new temporal regime in the Bhadrachalam region. And yet, the colonial rule did not completely displace the earlier socio-political organization of time, reflected in the way of life of the people in the frontier. Importantly, one way of looking at the prevalence of the colonial in the present is the concept of ‘duress’, which the historical anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler (2016: 7) has used to “capture three principal features of colonial histories of the present: the hardened, tenacious qualities of colonial effects; their extended protracted temporalities; and, not least, their durable, if sometimes intangible

⁴ A recent discussion of multiple temporalities and power is available in Edelstein *et al.* (2020). The scholars here forward a new model rendered as ‘Chronocenosis’. It theorizes multiple temporalities and the conflict among them at a particular moment to decipher how power privileges one time over the other.

constraints and confinements.” ‘Duress’ as a concept is certainly useful when the transition to the post-colonial is not too smooth or abrupt. But where the colonial intervention did not completely displace the pre-colonial forms of life and systems of rule, so also the post-colonial did not displace or subsume the colonial formations. Traces of the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial co-exist in varying degrees in any slice of the present therefore. In other words, the contemporary fuses the layers of the past, present, and future. Against this charged backdrop, how do we recover the history of our region?

Significantly, William H. Sewell Jr. combines the historians’ nuance of social temporalities, the anthropologists’ recognition and power of culture, and the sociologists’ commitment to explanatory rigour in his work *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Sewell 2005). Indeed, in his manifesto for historicising sociology, he argues for an ‘eventful temporality’ as against the teleological and experimental temporality; for him, an eventful temporality conceives history as a succession of largely contingent events (ibid.: 83). In doing so, he charts a pathway for historical sociology different from its pioneers. For one, he attributes ‘teleological temporality’ to Immanuel Wallerstein and Charles Tilly and ‘experimental temporality’ to Theda Skocpol, while actively drawing the limits of these formulations in the name of an ‘eventful sociology’. Pointedly, for Sewell: “Events may be defined as that relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transforms structures. An eventful conception of temporality, therefore, is one that takes into account the transformation of structures by events” (ibid.: 100). Herein, structures produce both agency and events, and, in turn, they transform structures. Furthermore, he suggests that there is a multiplicity of structures in a given situation, and he also fuses the material and ideational aspects of structures. In other words, for Sewell, path dependency, temporally heterogeneous causality, and radical contingency shapes social relations; and, accordingly, an eventful historical sociology will resemble a desirable historical mode of narrativization.

Of course, mapping the relationship between structures and events is tied up with fraught methodological and ontological debates. One possible way, the preferred mode in this

dissertation, is available in the works of the social theorist we indicated earlier, Andrew Abbott. In fact, Abbott (2001) too etches the significance of the event history analysis in sociology by distinguishing it from thinking in terms of sequences or patterns and thinking with variables or causes. Largely, for him, it is a methodology transcending the limits of the general linear model and causal law framework of analysis. Quite singularly, a Whiteheadian ontology given over to the instantaneous production of individuals and structures from relationships defined by the endless flow of events, forms the basis of Abbott's call for a 'processual sociology'. Broadly, the processual approach calls attention to a world of events, wherein "Events are those local consummations of action and interaction that knot contingencies of the present into new relations and structures that become the constraints and potentialities of the next moment – its past" (Abbott 2016: 1).

Evidently, both Sewell and Abbott, in their proposals for an eventful (historical) sociology, are engaging with the entanglements in the social domain, with the past and present factors constituting the social at a given point of time and space. Imperatively, this concern leads to discussions on method geared towards recovering the constitution of the social in terms of its historical bearings. Processual sociology, as a form of heuristics, approaches the making and unmaking of the social over time and across space by allowing the historical narrative to unravel the complex and messy overhangs. In fact, in this context, Sewell (2015: 9) flags the 'complex temporal conundrums' confronting the writing of historical narratives. He argues that historical events compose social processes of varying temporalities; and hence it is difficult to unpack the diverse temporalities in a sequential order and identify the dominant process defining a particular point of time. Not surprisingly, the varying temporalities of Sewell gestures at German historian Reinhart Koselleck's concept of *Zeitschichten* or 'sediments of time' (see Koselleck 2018).

Time is usually conceived as linear or cyclical – in sequential unfolding or recurrent and circular terms. Koselleck strives to transcend the linear-cyclical model of time, and uses an approach drawing on the analogy of 'sediments of time', since (as he puts it) "Historical times consist of multiple layers that refer to each other in a reciprocal way,

though without being wholly dependent upon each other” (Koselleck 2018: 4). In this framework, the acceleration and deceleration of various components of history is traceable, each allowing for the accounting and description of the varying degrees of influences of the past in the present. We could argue that such a conceptualisation fuses singular turning events and history as structures of repetition, as it were. In these terms, therefore, our dissertation follows the recent critical trends in history and historicization.

To be sure, current trends in academic historiography is re-evaluating the place of events in history. Jung and Karla (2021) identify three theoretical contexts for this academic revival, namely, the turning point thesis of the social historians, the event as a pivot in the process of narrative reappropriation by emphasising the dialectical relationship between events and narratives, and the social construction of events from cultural and media studies perspectives. Against this background, Jung and Karla argue that event is a relational category, and emphasise that as a temporal focal point it is not a self-contained entity. More certainly, events as a point of focused attention “simultaneously structures and is structured by the ways in which individuals, groups, and societies relate to their own time” (ibid.: 78). Quite emphatically, the temporal dimension of time is a significant aspect to be accounted for – with events representing the way in which time presents itself and are not mere occurrences in time (see Ermarth 2010). The analytical richness of time, therefore, lies in its configuration of past, present, and future. In this context, we may even say that the dissertation follows the spirit of Foucault’s ‘eventization’ thinking – one geared to retrieving connections, encounters, supports, blockages, and the interplay of forces. As we know, Foucault elaborated this form of historical thinking as a critique of the *désévénementialisation* of historical writing triggered by the Annales School (see Rabinow 1984).

More specifically, the modulation of the dissertation in terms of events or ‘critical events’, as urged by Veena Das (1995), accentuates the above-mentioned possibilities to forward a critical historical sociology of a region and its people. For Das, critical events are those events which inaugurate new modes of action (ibid.: 6), while going on to combine the events with everyday life so as to bring into dialogue world-historical events and the inner life of individuals. On her register, events are located across different

terrains like family, law, and state; and, through the description of ‘critical events’, like the Partition, the Bhopal gas tragedy and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, she presents an ethnography that deals with the mutual implication of various lives and institutions in the events. She does an ethnography of contemporary India, as it were, wherein the life of the nation constitutes the object of her analysis. Against this critical backdrop, the dissertation organises multiple events under three different histories to understand the transformations in a region. Inspired by Das, the dissertation looks at key moments to examine the interplay of various processes and institutions that orchestrate the ‘critical events’ in the history of the Bhadrachalam region.

1.5 Rehearsing the Historical and Geographical Imaginations

During the fieldwork, the researcher confronted a spectrum of diversities in a larger central Indian tribal landscape. The mode of housing is different within the same tribal community in the region. Some of them lived in remote hamlets with little to no ‘modern infrastructure’; some others lived in bamboo houses with satellite televisions and a few in settlements with modern amenities. There were Hindu, Christian, and Islamic tribals among them, indicating the different forms of exposure and interactions with external actors and factors. Furthermore, within a tribal landscape, there were varying degrees of nearness or remoteness to modern political institutions. A significant non-tribal population peppers this landscape, their presence traceable to waves of migration over time. Additionally, some of the tribals settled down in this region after migrating from other parts of central India. Likewise, other factors add further layers to this diverse configuration. The presence of Communist revolutionaries for the last four decades punctuates this landscape. A national irrigation project displacing hundreds of thousands of tribals and non-tribals is reconfiguring the politics and economy of this region.

All the same, a common artefact binds the diversities in the tribal and non-tribal lives - the legal classification of the region as part of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India. As an administrative-legal instrument, it protects the tribal way of life and privileges their property rights in such areas. Simultaneously, the administration orchestrates various programs and projects to ‘uplift’ and ‘empower’ the tribals in these areas. The constitutional provision continues a colonial legal instrument – *The Scheduled*

Districts Act of 1874 - differentiating the 'wild country' from the 'civilised settled' areas. The Act of 1874 created administrative enclaves for tribals with laws and regulations different from other areas - geographies of exception, as it were - to resolve the problem of governing 'wild' territories and their people. Even as there was a colonial separation of the 'known' and the 'unknown,' simultaneously the colonial rulers also initiated interventions to make these separations all the more legible. To make the 'wild' governable in time, the colonial rulers subjected them to 'progress' and 'emancipation' through 'development'. The interface of these opposing demands resulted in a duality in approaching the tribal problem in India – the simultaneity of mainstreaming and protection as such (see Chandra 2013).

The colonial power placed the tribal population outside of the civilised society since they (as was claimed) hardly had any access to modern political and social institutions. As administrators and missionaries, the colonisers embarked on a 'civilising mission' to mainstream the tribals and dissolve the difference between the wild and the settled territories within these geographies of exception. To be sure, these geographies exist at the margins of the empire, and the process of 'inclusive exclusion' as it were created differences and hierarchies within the native population. Clearly, the subordinated position of the tribals in the colonial scheme of governance ruptured the earlier Indian understanding of the 'wild'. Indeed, before British colonisation, the 'wild' constituted territories and people outside the direct control of a state. There was no civilisational intent in the interaction with such 'wild' spaces; whereas, under colonialism, the term 'wild' referred to people and territories outside modernity which required to be civilized.

Broadly, of course, the colonial differences are rooted in the power of knowledge, a phenomenon visible in all colonised nations. Various categories of analysis like the native, indigenous, and 'nationalist' figure in the intimate relationship between colonial power and knowledge for the state-making project of rule and domination. The colonial administrative scholars and anthropologists, through their ethnographic surveys, documentation, and reports, aided the project of instituting hierarchies by reinforcing the 'differences' between the tribal and non-tribal populations. Obviously, there was no critical engagement with the colonial defining and ruling processes. Against this

background, the uncritical acceptance of categories of analysis by the post-independence social sciences perpetuated the perception of tribals as a subordinate social group. Moreover, the reluctance to delink the territorial basis of the tribe category is connected to the post-colonial imagination of the nation-state. In independent India, as we all know, there was an intense debate on understanding and locating tribes within the nation-building project. The approaches have diverged from sustaining the world of the ‘noble savages’ to complete ‘assimilation’ with the larger dominant framework of caste society (see Sundar 2016, for a critical recapitulation). Nevertheless, the colonial policy of geographies of exception continued as the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India. In doing so, a supposedly static world of tribals resisting change permeates the present. Unfortunately, if we look at the post-independence social sciences, it did not consider the historical changes in the forces of production relations and people’s aspirations within these geographies.⁵ Furthermore, the post-independence social sciences did not interrogate the historicity and relevance of colonial differences and hierarchies in a post-colonial society. Broadly, the post-independence government and social sciences pursued the ‘development’ of the tribals on a territorial basis in the form of tribal sub-plan areas and integrated tribal development agency programmes.

The sociology of tribes draws heavily from the colonial anthropological documentation of the tribals and uncritically accepts the framing of ‘inclusive exclusion’, while perpetuating differences and hierarchies (see again, for instance, Sundar 2016). The lure of funding and status associated with the government planning process and nation-building projects blinded the post-independence social sciences. At the same time, the philanthropy-led initiatives as epitomised by the Ford Foundation in India, among others, geared the sociologists to look at ‘problem-solving’ empirical tasks as aligned to global capitalism and academic dependency. In this midst, the sociologists largely missed the historical and comparative sensibilities in the sociological imagination. In fact, the subordination of the tribals in the colonial and nationalist framing occludes significant processes like the collapse of tribal cultural geography to an administrative space and the differential trajectories of tribals inside and outside these administrative enclaves. The

⁵ The section on the Scheduled status of the region, in Ch.3 below, engages with the relevant literature in some detail.

sociology of tribes, thus, is confined to the evaluation of government policies and programs (see, generally, Radhakrishna 2016).

The recourse to the scholarship does not quite clarify the duality embedded in the Schedule Areas framing, that is to say, the simultaneous mainstreaming and protection of tribals. To be more specific: why would the colonialists and later the independent nation-state both affirm the protection of tribals and at the same time try to ‘develop’ them? A set of recent discussions (see Chandra 2013) pinpoint the colonial disposition of ‘primitivism’ as the guiding force to understand tribals and their areas. However, it cannot account for tribals and tribal areas outside the purview of the Act of 1874 and later the Fifth Schedule. The colonial period reveals that the colonisers did not govern all tribals and their areas as spaces of exception. Some tribal areas were colonised and settled as plantations and hill stations, and the tribals at large became wage labourers in those locations. In fact, a cursory examination of the forms of governance of tribal-dominated areas points out that the resource availability and geography determined the fate of the areas as a whole. Our study maintains that the contrast between the submissive tribal in the settled regions like the plantations and hill stations where they became wage labourers and the violently assertive tribals in the legally earmarked areas where they violently confronted the ‘others’ is fecund with historiographical and analytical possibilities.

The spatial configuration of the tribals in India is an understudied area, even as their large swathes politically assert themselves as the original inhabitants of the land, namely, ‘Adivasi’. The broad patterns of sociocultural change introduced by the missionaries of various hues and governmental schemes, as also the predatory encroachment by the colonial state and the non-tribals on the land and resources possessed, has triggered the tribal assertions as a whole. Indeed, this assertion of the tribals as the original inhabitants sits uneasily with their history of migration. Claiming homeland through the political self-definition of ‘Adivasi’ seems to have suspended their historical migration patterns, thereby arresting the fluid sense of belonging by collapsing the cultural geography to a legal-administrative territory. Furthermore, the diverse approaches, at once administrative and scholarly, to the tribals in India has created specific conditions for

them in different locations, often refurbishing the patterns of unequal citizenship and spatial minority-making processes among them. These varied political dimensions and sociocultural dynamics require us to re-look at tribal areas as frontiers of citizenship, state-making, and agency. Even more emphatically, the tension between the mainstreaming and protectionist attitudes of the state invigorates the tribal landscape, and in a manner of speaking has led to the quartering of the tribals. At one level, the mainstreaming of the tribals led to their assimilation with other social groups, which in turn has led to identity movements among the tribals oriented to protecting their ways of life. At another level, besides, the mainstreaming and resource extraction by the state has led to the articulation of tribal grievances concerning their deprivation. This has often led to revolutionary politics and the assertion of a homeland based on claims of belongingness to a territory. Of course, these tendencies play out differently in the tribal areas, depending broadly on patterns of resource endowment, the legal classification of the tribal areas, regional histories of political engagement, the strength of political institutions, and the levels of tribal consciousness.

Even more resolutely for our purposes, the diversity in the colonial approach to the tribals complicates the current understanding of development processes and marginalisation. By and large, one is inclined to think that the current discussions and analyses of India's tribal histories, cultures, societies, economies, and politics has failed to think comparatively with other tribal groups and regions in India. We must pointedly ask: were the tribals subjects of primitive ideology entrenched in the regime of toleration or contingent on the local techniques of colonial governmentality?⁶ If it is the latter- and we are inclined to think along these lines - the contingent and the local would need specific investigation by incorporating the social group's geographical and historical conditions. Moreover, to avoid an essentialist understanding, a comparative approach can deepen the historical frames of understanding and appraisal. Such a recovery of tribals in India can forward hitherto undiscussed themes and analytical axis, like geography, as indicated above.

⁶ As already mentioned, a dominant understanding is that the colonial rule governed the tribals from the prism of 'primitivism'. With its roots in colonial liberalism, primitivism has a deeper historical and philosophical root embedded in the Westphalian regime of toleration (see Mamdani 2020).

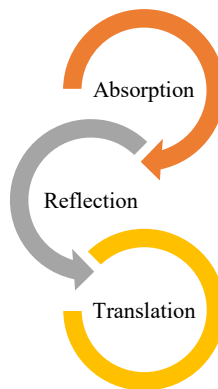
Quite frontally, the lack of epistemic engagement with colonial differences and hierarchies as present in the post-independence social sciences requires a comparative perspective for the re-insertion of the historical and geographical dimensions. This will trigger a robust sociological analysis and facilitate the problematisation of the global circuit of knowledge and power (see, broadly, Mignolo 2007 and Escobar 2008). A heuristic device that can capture mobility and flux can (and must) displace the power embedded in the framing of the 'tribe' concept. In fact, 'frontier' as a category can capture the messy entanglements and limits of state power and peoples' aspirations as a whole. Quite clearly, frontier here calls attention to the edges of settlements beyond which the unknown is taken to exist, and thus also signifies what is not-knowable about a particular subject and their activities. A study of tribes from the heartland of India through the concept of frontiers is a messy, dirty, even impure, understanding of the dialectic between the state and its people. A comparative historical approach will certainly help to unravel these conflicts, contradictions, and messiness. As a concept, accordingly, the frontier gestates disciplinary dialogues across diverse geographies; and, moreover, as a divider between the known and unknown, it serves to remind the contours of any 'national' sociology to necessarily traverse epistemic terrains for engaging the various differences and hierarchies as instituted by colonialism and subsequently by the post-colonial nation-state. Rethinking social sciences through the frontier concept can help transcend the ideologies of geography and territory, while also serving to foreground the subjectivity engrained in the modes of existence of 'subordinate' social groups in a socio-political space.

Chapter 2

Compositional Toolkit: Methods and Sources

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. [Marcel Proust]

Quite obviously, the design of the dissertation involved multiple decision-making strategies at various stages of the investigation. This ranged from the choice of the field, the process of information gathering, assembling the facts and interpreting them against the established scholarship, to deriving insights and locating the study in the larger sociological domain. These stages involved selection, rejection, and negotiation of various approaches so as to compile the work as a whole. Central to the composition, therefore, has been the following mechanism.



As should be evident, a reversible loop method animates the work and its composition. It involved the *absorption* of the field in terms of ‘facts’ and ‘insights,’ which in turn were reflected upon against the existing literature on specific aspects and dimensions of the field. These *reflections* translated into further field inquiries and reading so to clarify the phenomena under scrutiny. The field contingencies and analytical limits dictated the closure of this loop, in terms of specific gestures at conceptual *translation*. Our present chapter will detail the processes involved in composing this dissertation, with the

following three sections discussing the methodology and sources of data: *Framing the Field of Study*; *Scouring the Field*; and *Field Guides*.

2.1 Framing the Field of Study

Very broadly, and somewhat programmatically, the study originated in a concern to understand the dynamics of social change, political forces, and neoliberalism in India. With the opening of the Indian economy since the 1990s, there have been unprecedented changes in terms of economic mobility, consumption choices, and increased national pride. It resulted in increased social mobility, reconstruction of class relations, even the reconstitution of family and household, including changes in consumer culture, the expansion of urban regions, and the reconfiguration of patterns of labour. Presently, the neo-liberal policies influence every aspect of Indian social life. The story of the social change accompanying the economic and political changes has a disturbing underbelly - the 'losers' in these dynamics of change. The supposed 'success story of the Indian economy' leaves behind a considerable section of the population. Even as the Indian state is trying to alleviate the conditions of this section through various policy measures and legislative acts, there are obstacles and resistances to it. Indeed, the resistance to these changes is traceable to the multiple ideas of the meaning of change and development, as indeed the very constitution, degree and direction of change. Discernibly, these multiple ideas are predicated on the type of capital, state, and collective action possible in different temporal and spatial coordinates of our social existence.

To be sure, the process of 'creative destruction' is at the heart of socio-economic transformation as such. It highlights the interconnections between new modes of creating wealth and the concomitant destruction of earlier modalities of accumulation. Associated with this process is the displacement and relocation of earlier forms of life worlds that have a destabilizing impact on the everyday life of those who are outside the new circuits of capital. Various scholars like Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter and David Harvey have each documented and discussed the process in interesting ways. At any rate, suppose one was to agree that the process of capitalist development is both uneven and combined (to borrow from Trotsky's famous conceptualisation). In that case, the notion of creative

destruction needs to be evaluated not only on the grounds of equity, but also on the condition and status of the retrenched life world of the displaced people. Indeed, over the years, various social scientists through the lenses of the anthropology of development, sociology of development, political economy of change, local-global encounters, social movements, and collective actions have documented and debated the issue of social transformation and social change. Even more poignantly, the politics of modernity frames the context of these discussions (see, among others, Mitchell 2000; Rao and Walton 2004; as also Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan 2011). Various case studies across the globe have highlighted the multiple fault lines in the visions of modernity operating in these economic transformation processes.

Undeniably, the classical statements on economic transition within sociology can be found in the scholarship of Marx (as focussed on the changing social relations affected by the transition in the economic system and the effort to understand the transition in terms of the changing political economy) and Weber (who tried to account for a culturalist understanding of the changing relations in the economy by transcending the economic determinism, so to say, of Marxists). These prognostications later on inspired a set of scholars in the North American context primarily, like Barrington Moore, Reinhard Bendix, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Theda Skocpol. The scholarship emanating from these figures dealt with large-scale processes like nation-building, democratization, social revolutions, etc. Alongside, the Marxist scholarship continued its forays into the modes of production debate and emergent forms of capitalism, while also venturing into the interrelationships among various national economies like the dependency school. Against this background, the transition debates in the case of India can be seen in two large swathes of discussion, namely, the mode of production debate in the 1980s and the economic transition debate in the late 2000s, both trying to grapple with the complex processes of economic modernization and sociocultural change (see, broadly, Patnaik 1990 for the former, and Chatterjee 2008 for the latter). In this shifting context, the subaltern approach has highlighted the issues and concerns of the voiceless in Indian society (see Spivak 1988).

The 'mode of production' debate in India was an extension of the transition debate with its origins in a series of discussions in the journal *Science and Society* initiated by Marxist scholars such as Paul M. Sweezy, Maurice Dobb, R. H. Hilton, and Perry Anderson in the 1950s and thereafter. Scholars in India took up this debate to comprehend the direction of social change regarding economic processes in the agrarian economy (see Nadkarni 1991; as also Patnaik 1990). The debate was centred on identifying the determinate mode of production in India - the focus being on the presence or absence of a capitalist farmer class. Ashok Rudra, whose report on Punjab kick-started the debate, alluded to a capitalist mode of production in India, even as, from different standpoints, various others argued that it was rather a distorted form (see Patnaik 1972) and a semi-feudal mode (see Bhaduri 1973). However, scholars like Hamza Alavi (1975) and Jairus Banaji (1975) stressed that colonialism mediated the modern Indian economy and society, and hence should be termed the colonial mode of production. Some key methodological and epistemological issues galvanized this debate, which went on for several years without a particular closure.

So also, working poignantly outside the classical Marxian framework, Gail Omvedt (1978), among others, tried to show that the Indian agrarian economy in its contact with capitalism led to the emergence of a specific form of a capitalist class dependent on the caste identities per se. Likewise, Kathleen Gough (1980) attempted to demonstrate the presence of three forms of modes of production in her study of a region in Tamil Nadu, accordingly combining Asiatic, feudal, and capitalist modalities. These findings clearly show the complex social formations in Indian society that transcends any particular classification. With the emergence of subaltern studies as a critique of history (see Chakrabarty 1991), seminal works like Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983) questioned the nationalist historiography and enriched the understanding of social and political forces at work by narrating social history from alternative vantage points.

In more recent times, the political theorist Partha Chatterjee's (2008) understanding of the transition in neoliberal India claims the following about the peasantry and peasant communities per se. Firstly, due to the stakes of electoral democracy, the developmental

measures of the government have deepened, thereby making institutions of the state internal to peasant communities. Secondly, the strategies of peasant politics have changed in India due to the changes in the structure of the agrarian property, thereby eliminating exploitation from semi-feudal and feudal forces except in certain isolated pockets. Thirdly, the tax on agricultural land is not a significant source of government revenue, and hence the state-peasant relation is not that extractive. Fourthly, the outward migration of peasants is no longer a function of pauperization; rather, it is due to the opportunities in the urban region. Finally, due to the penetration of visual media and communication, the peasant community members look forward to upward mobility outside the peasant communities. Based on these claims, Chatterjee maintains that even though there is primitive accumulation, there is a reversal of the dispossession by the government by meeting the basic needs of livelihood. Furthermore, he argues that there is a transformation in the political power structures, from the coalition of dominant class interests of capitalists, rich farmers, and bureaucracy to the corporate capitalist class. The landed elites had hinged on electoral democracy for domination, but the case is held to be different now. There is competition among various states to woo the investors to their region, even though the state remains essential as the final arbiter of many contending issues. The urban middle class, besides (as Chatterjee claims), has distanced itself from the developmental state and is coming under the moral ideology of the bourgeoisie. All the same, notwithstanding this transformation of the power structure, Chatterjee continues to maintain that India lives through a passive revolution, although its structure and dynamics have changed (see Chatterjee 2008).

Now, of course, the integration of the peasant community with the market economy implies that it is no longer a subsistence mode of affairs and has become a part of the stratified complex network of economic relations that makes up the neoliberal economy. Accordingly, it comes to exhibit specific characteristics. For one, as Chatterjee too insinuates, even though the peasant economy is connected to the emerging forms of corporate capital, it is itself marked out as non-corporate capital, whose primary motive is not profit generation but ensuring livelihood opportunities. As such, it is further argued that there will be no more violent peasant insurrections and that the contemporary modes of peasant agitations will aim at deriving specific services from the government based on

utilitarian logic (and especially through the mechanics of electoral democracy). All the same, the future of the peasant society is held to depend on the negotiations they have with the state and capital. It may be stated, yet, that Chatterjee still vouches for the existence of marginal groups within the political society who do not have strategic leverage of electoral politics and are left outside this negotiation mechanism (*ibid.*).

Chatterjee's formulation has been contested by many, including Baviskar and Sundar (2008), Shah (2008), Basu and Das (2009) among others. Shah's (2008) observations on the Adivasi community are particularly instructive in the context of the latter's assertions happening in India. Let us look at some statistics to highlight the central problem that he foregrounds. A large social spectrum, from the Adivasis in the most remote corners of the country to the urban squatters in our cosmopolitan cities, are the victims of the creative destruction entailed by the neoliberal project. In the name of development, progress, and nation-building, these people are culled out of their world. According to a United Nations Working Group on Human Rights Report published in 2012, around 1 million people are displaced annually in India due to developmental projects, and it is the highest figure in the world. Among the displaced, 40% are Dalits, and another 40% comprises Adivasis and the rural population. We are talking of 800000 of the most underprivileged sections in India being affected due to developmental issues in absolute terms. Largely, in this context, Ploeg (2010) has argued that the peasants are embroiled in multiple resistances to maintain their livelihood and remain autonomous in the contemporary world. Basically, it is in this charged milieu that developmental projects of the neoliberal state come to be superimposed. The attendant large-scale land dealings have adverse implications on the agrarian political economy and force us to reformulate the nature of peasants and the rural population. The struggles by peasants to resist and remain autonomous can entail significant changes for the land-labour and labour-capitalist relations, contributing thereby to reconfiguring the rural landscape. Doubtless, new forms of resistance and political mobilization in indigenous people movements, civil rights advocacy groups, and environmental activists play a critical role in this charged transformative phase of the rural and the urban worlds.

Against this looming and charged backdrop, it seemed pertinent to choose a particular site so as to unravel the complexities involved in India's economic transformation and social change. Of course, the finalization of the location had to depend on the possibilities offered by the particular site and its accessibility. Hence, the researcher scouted three sites in the state of undivided Andhra Pradesh, one of the states registering high economic growth in the country. The locations were, broadly, a mining area in the tribal region of Vishakhapatnam district, a special economic zone in Kakinada, and an irrigation project in the Khammam-East Godavari districts. The feasibility of these sites was examined through two short visits in December 2012 and April 2013.

In early December 2012, the researcher visited Visakhapatnam city in Andhra Pradesh. A line of contact was made with the anti-mining activists, political groups, journalists, and NGOs. During the three intense days of the visit, multiple rounds of discussions and interactions, including examining various documents and representations, gave a preliminary overview of the issues. The mining site is in a Maoist area; and, hence, possible strategies and gatekeepers were identified for field entry. Later in December 2012, the researcher was in Yelleswaram and Kakinada in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The main organizer behind the anti-special economic zone agitation elaborated its various aspects and challenges. Information regarding the lawyers, activists, public intellectuals, and researchers working on Kakinada Special Economic Zone was collected for further use. The second visit was in April 2013 to Bhadrachalam and Chintur in the then Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh. An independent tribal group of that region invited the researcher to attend a tribal festival, *Rela Pandulam* (10-11 April in Chintur). Using this invitation, the researcher travelled the region and visited the Internally Displaced People's camps, largely consisting of tribals fleeing the *Salwa Judum* in neighbouring Bastar and other tribal locations. The region also was witness to displacement due to the massive Polavaram irrigation project and is an active Maoist zone.

Two out of three possible sites were tribal areas, and strictly the 'new' spaces of capital penetration in the neoliberal age. Interestingly these tribal areas are also the spaces of assertions and resistances, both during colonial and post-colonial times. Undoubtedly,

tribal India is an ideal site for understanding the continuities and discontinuities in the modes of assertions/resistances to the developmental projects of the state. Given this orientation, the researcher decided to focus on aspects of the anti-Polavaram agitation in the Bhadrachalam sub-division of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. Unlike the mining project in the Visakhapatnam tribal area, the Bhadrachalam region has independent tribal organizations making the field messy, entangled, and complex - a texture rich for analyses and nuanced reflections. Moreover, the assertion by the tribals translated not quite only as resistance to the developmental project, the Polavaram dam construction in particular; it also formed the basis of the 'tribalness', as it were, of the region. Needless to say, the attribution of the tribal characteristic to the region is legal – in the sense that the region is under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India - and people-centric, in that the region is predominately populated by the tribals, especially the Koyas. As such, therefore, our study investigates the nature of the region to understand the basis of this assertion. In doing so, we are not quite only interested in the assertion/resistance question in terms of its mechanics and claims. Rather, more stringently, we also strive to capture the very constitution of the region, the history and sociology of the interaction between state and people as mediated by key 'developmental moments' or 'critical events' as we termed it in the introductory chapter.

As already specified, the historical sociology of the region is unpacked as three histories – administrative, developmental, and people. The administrative history assembles the formation of the region as a scheduled area, even as the developmental history recalls the way the region evolved in terms of the movement of capital and land. Pointedly, the latter developmental history recovers the historical and political structures governing economic activities in the region. Even as the Maoist nature of the region is hinted at here, it is the people's history that engages more fully the dimensions of the 'Maoist-Adivasi-Development' matrix, while also striving to make sense of the play of identities in the region.

2.2 Scouring the Field

The notion of immersion implies that the 'field' which ethnographers enter exists as an independently bounded set of relationships and activities which is autonomous of the

fieldwork through which it is discovered. Yet in a world of infinite interconnections and overlapping contexts, the ethnographic fieldwork cannot simply exist, awaiting discovery. It has to be laboriously constructed, prised apart from all other possibilities for contextualization to which its constituent relationships and connections should also be referred. This process of construction is inescapably shaped by the conceptual, professional, financial and relational opportunities and resources accessible to the ethnographer (Amit 2000: 6).

The field is like a kaleidoscope; every twist will produce a pattern different from the other even though the constitutive elements are the same. The standpoint of the key informants and the gatekeepers is crucial in deciphering and reassembling the diverse and competing field perspectives and insights. Hence, the unravelling of forces and players embedded in the field is a challenge in its own right. To reiterate: two modes of knowing realised the objective of the dissertation, which (as we have seen) was to forge an historical examination of a region and its people. One, the ethnographic method helped in the reconstruction of the immediate past and the ongoing present; and, two, the archival method aided the recovery of the region beyond the range of physically observable phenomena. The ethnographic forays involved meeting, interacting, and understanding the region and its people, although surely “there is no cardinal way to conduct ethnographic fieldwork” (Berger 2012: 326). We will speak more about our ethnographic forays presently.

The other mode of knowing, namely, archival fieldwork covered a range, including the combing of archival catalogues, identification of relevant materials, and collection of reports, studies, theses, newspaper dispatches, documents, maps, and images. The search for textual materials to understand and contextualise the region also spanned personal holdings, libraries, depositories, and archives. Pertinently, Cole Harris, a geographer, makes a passionate appeal for “more work in the archives” beyond the hilltops and rockbound fields, since “it is there that much of the past of these places can be known; there, by extension, that much of the global human past resides” (Harris 2001: 334). In this context, it is important to note the relevance of archival ethnography, the process of deciphering the cultural context of the creation, collection, and maintenance of archives (see Gracy 2004). The archive as ‘life on file’ is a social construction representing ‘traces of something’ (Skarpelis 2020: 392). Specific acts and processes mediate the

‘archivisation’ or the representation of social life into documentary reality (ibid.: 393). In order to disentangle the layers and frames of the archives beyond the written or printed word, the archival ethnographer, as a form of the sociology of knowledge perspective on archives, helps in the post-positivist understanding of records and record-keeping. While our study did not invest completely in this register of analysis, the researcher was nevertheless sensitive to the ‘location’ of the archives (see also Featherstone 2006 and Lynch 1999), although, given the fact of digitisation, technological intervention has displaced some of the hierarchies involved in accessing knowledge. Indeed, the access to archives and records physically held in imperial centres like London is no longer a constraint for a researcher located in India.

Undeniably, the possibility of accessing multiple digital sources marks the shift from “culture of scarcity to culture of abundance,” leading to a fundamental question – namely, “Will abundance bring better or more thoughtful history?” (Rosenzweig 2011: 7). A reflection on the ‘abundance’ is definitely required before delving into the possibilities of better and more thoughtful histories. Thus, one way to contextualise the decentered digital archival materials is to snowball from specific documents. The title, authorship, and context inscribed in the documents can propel further enquiry. For instance, colonial documents like Gazetteers and official reports mentioned the presence of missionary activities in our region of study. The search for understanding the missionary activities in Bhadrachalam led to the Church Missionary Society depository at the University of Birmingham. The documents, in turn, shed light on the lace-making unit in the region. To thicken the traces of activities, a foray into the historical newspapers, specifically, the Australian depository (one of the region’s prominent missionaries came from Australia), helped in etching out a clearer picture of the missionary activities in Bhadrachalam. The historical reconstruction thus used a combination of the colonial state, missionary, and newspaper documents embedded in different logics of representation.

Getting back to our ethnographic register, a pilot study in May 2013 followed the short visit of December 2012 to understand the specific ethnographic challenges in the Bhadrachalam region. This exposed the researcher to the multiple layers of interactions

and dynamics in the field. These layers constituted different, but simultaneously co-existing universes in the region. During this phase, the region was unpacked in terms of its configuration – people, activists, missionaries, lawyers, journalists, politicians, administrators, and insurgents. Among them, a feasible pool of informants and interviewees for extended discussions and clarifications were identified. Simultaneously, the search was initiated to compile the records and documents about the region.

Undoubtedly, four major challenges confronted the researcher as part of this ethnographic traversal, namely, language, climate, insurgency, and the lack of comprehensive documentation of the region. The researcher did not speak the region's languages - Telugu and Koi; however, he could understand spoken Telugu. During this phase, the identification of individuals with proficiency in Hindi in the field resolved somewhat the communication deficiency. The extreme summer and heavy rains in the Bhadrachalam region raised obstacles of different scales. The hot, dry summer makes travelling difficult and a health hazard. Nevertheless, it has unseen benefits; the dry streams enabled access to interior villages and hamlets in the summer. Moreover, as people travelled less in the daytime, it was easier to meet field contacts as they would stay at a location. On the other hand, rains cut off access to the interior parts, and general travel was difficult.

The third crucial challenge was the presence of the left insurgency in the region. Officially, the region is part of the wider zone controlled by the Communist Party of India – Maoist. As an active zone of confrontation between the state and its challengers, the researcher took adequate protection and permission to navigate the field. Meeting contacts in the field was arduous due to the surveillance by the state and the insurgents. Therefore, interactions and discussions took place in Hyderabad, Warangal, Karimnagar, Rajahmundry, Delhi, and Kochi. The volatile political climate forced the researcher to base himself in the administrative headquarters of the region and restrict movement only between 6 am and 6 pm each day. Finally, the lack of comprehensive literary and social scientific works on the region left the researcher groping. Nevertheless, this is an

opportunity in itself and has translated into this dissertation, which hopefully will prove useful and/or illuminating.

Following the pilot study, two spells of field visits in November-December 2013 and January 2014 opened up further insights into the region. Interactions with the local non-governmental organizations, resident administrators, tribal elders, non-tribal families, missionaries, and tribal activists provided a sense of the people, geography, economics, and politics. The anticipated formation of the Telangana state captured the imagination of the people of the region and further opened up the possibility of seeing the region as a perennial frontier. The purpose of these two spells of fieldwork was to interact with a diverse set of people. Tribal leaders enabled access to their elders, youngsters, and others. The local non-governmental organizations helped in assessing the state of development and deficiencies in the region. Administrative officials posted in the region helped identify records and key informants to understand various aspects of the region. Journalists in the region helped in identifying old families, especially non-tribal families residing in the region. They also helped in understanding the local politics. At this stage, the Jesuit schooling of the researcher helped in contacting and connecting with the missionaries operating in the area. It also helped in accessing administrative officials in the region as well as in Hyderabad and Delhi. The Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellows posted in the region further helped understand the people, administration, and political economy of the region. Needless to say, the affiliation with the University of Hyderabad benefitted the researcher in multiple ways. University students from the region helped in identifying histories and key individuals, even as university colleagues enabled access to the Maoists.

During this phase, the researcher realised a unique problem – the demands of the stakeholders to document their perspective on the history of the region. The fractured tribal polity of the region generated competing leaders in the socio-political space, each with their versions of the politics, its villains and benefactors. After a few rounds of discussions and interactions, the different groups would seek the opinions and perspectives shared by the other groups with the researcher. The competition among them is very intense, to say the least. To gain recognition among their peers and other

community members, they often displayed their connections with the outside aid agencies, politicians, and journalists. As a result, one of the tribal leaders published a photo of his interaction with the researcher in a local newspaper. This incident compromised the researcher's movements and access in the field; other tribal leaders assumed that the researcher was intimate with a particular tribal formation and its leader.

The researcher moved out of the region for the reason mentioned above, and began accessing people and networks that influence the dynamics of the region. In Hyderabad, interactions with government officials, serving and retired, who had been posted in the region opened other vistas to explore. A top bureaucrat who had served in the region gave much-needed insights into the administrative make-up. Furthermore, civil society activists, tribal leaders, and lawyers deepened the understanding of the region and its people. Explorations in the State archives, the Census department, and the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute enhanced information and perspectives. These activities framed and contextualised the perceptions generated from the field.

An intense mode of engagement with the 'Maoist-Adivasi-Development' matrix started in May 2014. As mentioned earlier, due to security concerns, most of these interactions were outside the Bhadrachalam region. Two sets of contacts were drawn from within the state and the revolutionaries to comprehend the complexities involved on this theme. The state understanding of this issue probed government officials, security agencies, and task-forces in Delhi and Hyderabad. Documents from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the National Police Academy Library bolstered the oral narratives and testimonies. Covert operatives on the ground further updated the sources of information. A confidential source in the Ministry of Home Affairs even provided access to surrendered top-ranking Maoists. Through them, further contacts were developed; while discussions with those who operated or had supervisory roles in the region helped understand the nature and work of the revolutionaries, or 'insurgents' as labelled by the State. One can conclusively say that the former activists are like 'insiders-outsiders' to the study of insurgency. The distance in terms of time and space makes them outsiders to the ongoing revolution, while they are 'insiders' since they were a part of it in the near past. Furthermore, interactions with them were necessarily based on the assumption that they

will be having certain privileged information or must be involved with the ongoing revolution in particular ways, which account for their roles as insiders.

Methodologically, of course, there was the problem of the reliability of the narratives and testimonies of the former activists. Their autobiographies mediate the narratives. Hence, there is every possibility of their understanding of their actions and the context of their involvement after quitting a movement or a party to be judgmental and evaluative. However, this 'evaluative understanding' may contain the counter-argument or perspectives made invisible or marginal by the current activists. All the same, the researcher has tried to confront the challenge of 'normativised' or judgmental narratives obtained through these interactions in two ways. For one, credible journalists and security experts corroborated the claims made by the former revolutionaries. Secondly, a cross-examination through the medium of existing academic studies, official reports, and press briefings filtered and reduced the elements of fabrication in various narratives. To be sure, the interactions with active members of the revolutionary movements was restricted to Hyderabad and Kochi for security concerns. Maoist party members, ideologues, and sympathizers working in certain frontal organizations helped the researcher to attend their meetings and access documents like pamphlets, posters, magazines, and socio-economic projections.

The religious fault lines have broadly ruptured the tribal polity and society. The identification of field entry points and gatekeepers helped in mapping the identity dynamics of the region. This process, in fact, required three sets of interlocutors to gauge how the contours of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam have influenced the people at large. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) contacts helped understand their operations in the region. Specifically, discussions in Hyderabad, Khammam, and Kochi helped in understanding the conservative-nationalist interventions in the tribal areas as a whole. Activists also provided access to the operations of *Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram*, *Seva Bharati*, and *Dharma Jagran Manch* in the field. In December 2015, the researcher spent time with these activists in the field.

Christian missionaries welcomed direct interactions without any mediators in the field. They presented their various activities in the region and perspectives about the region's history and politics. Archival and face-to-face interactions helped to sketch the Christian influence in the region. In fact, as already indicated, institutional and digital archives provided documents, reports, and narratives to outline these activities. The unearthing of a colonial lace-making unit and its impact on the region was an unintended consequence of this exploration. This discovery helped in working out the facets of the colonial civilizing mission informing the developmental activities and the scheduling of the region. Besides, as already mentioned, the archival documents from Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham helped in historicizing the missionary activities of the region. Alternatively, in the region, the tribal converts to Islam are called *Burkha Adivasis*, and the Islamic conversion of the tribals is an understudied topic. This phenomenon, strictly, splits the tribal organizations in the region. It was very demanding to study this process due to the secrecy of the involved parties. However, a key informant did provide some crucial information on this score.

Needless to say, the historical presence of the non-tribals in the region demanded their documentation. Moreover, their history and narratives provide a sort of counter-factual argument about the very 'tribalness' of the region. In April 2016, extensive discussions with the non-tribals recorded their perspectives about the region and its dimensions. Unsurprisingly, they all contest the tribal status of the region. Their conviction stems from two factors, namely, the presence of non-tribals since time immemorial and the colonial invitation to settle down in this region. Some of the families even claimed that they had documents to prove the latter. Nevertheless, more archival data is necessary to investigate further the flow of people into the region.

Official online catalogues identified documents in the India Office Records, the School of Oriental and African Studies Library, and the National Archives in Delhi. An archivist helped in accessing non-digital documents from London. Additionally, a colleague visiting London for a conference in June 2016 helped in collecting further documents from India Office Records and the British Library there. These documents further clarified the field responses and claims. The combing of the archival data provided a

schema for arranging the histories extracted from the field. Without doubt, the brewing of the archival data and field claims continued for some protracted length of time. In fact, in December 2017, the researcher accessed the Central Secretariat Library, National Archives, and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, all in New Delhi, to search for more archival records. It was during this exploration of documents and records that the researcher stumbled upon the event of colonial tribal migration. A sustained analysis of this event yielded new claims on tribals and belonging in the Indian context. A publication in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* presents this claim (see Krishnan 2021). Moreover, the retrieval of certain documents helped in problematizing the tribal nature of the region in newer ways.

The basis and grounding of these insights and perspectives further consolidated during the April-May 2018 field visit. This time the researcher interacted with tribal organizations, non-tribals, and missionaries in the region to fill the gaps in the slowly unfolding story of the region. Extensive travel across the region aided in consolidating the insights and documentation. The recording of the developments after the creation of the new state of Telangana completed the requirements for stitching together the integuments of the region's history. To summarise, six spells of field visits, translating overall into seven months of fieldwork, laced with archival documentation and interactions with officials, activists, and other stakeholders outside the region helped understand the field of study. Needless to say, the fieldwork was layered and discontinuous, which in fact helped in moving across different social and political networks in the area without antagonizing competing groups and fields of contention. Moreover, as clarified at the very beginning of this chapter, the researcher's distance from the field helped distil and contextualise the 'discovery of facts, information, and impressions,' thereby sharpening further probing and compilation of data and resources. However, personal reasons like marriage and a medical operation did break the progress and momentum of the work.

2.3 Field Guides

Certainly, the ethnographic impressions guided by archival investigations and secondary readings 'revealed' the 'insights' and 'facts' from the field. The colonial government

reports, studies, and gazetteers generated the initial impressions of the region. The examination of the area in a regional political economy, as well as newspaper reports, helped to etch the contours of the region. Broadly, we can say that the patterns of colonial documentation and familiarisation with the contemporary constitution of the region have directed the researcher to examine four domains of study: (1) Law and colonialism; (2) the institution of Property rights regime; (3) Maoism and tribals; and (4) Missionaries and tribal identity creation. A close reading of the field in terms of archival and ethnographical sources oversaw additional contexts of enumeration. Evidently, a combing of the cluster of sources as mentioned have gone to constitute the contours of our investigation. At the same time, it is imperative to reiterate that the resources of historical sociology as a methodology informs this dissertation, wherein the elements of narrativization and causal analysis are sought to be brought into play and fused. Ostensibly, then, this methodological engagement with the relevant literature has been woven into the fabric of our individual chapters and their cumulative orders of narration. In this grafting process, so to say, the chapters and their sections have acquired an independent identity, even though they are arranged in a particular sequence to tell the history of a region and its people. Hopefully, the historical sociological account is a persuasive and convincing one.

Part I

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Towards an Administrative History

Chapter 3

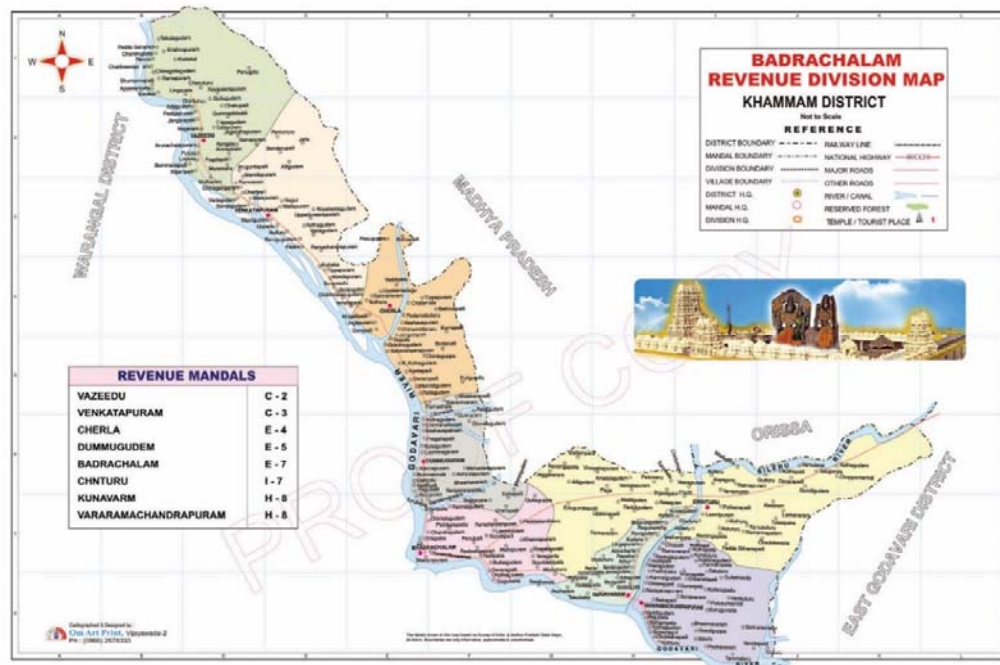
Defining and Ruling a Territory: Moving into Bhadrachalam Region

As repeatedly stated, the Bhadrachalam region is a Fifth Schedule area under Article 244 of the Constitution of India. It has a different administrative arrangement as a ‘Scheduled area’ compared to other territories. The nomenclature ‘Scheduled area’ flags territories with both a preponderance of tribals in a particular region and marked by under-development as a whole. In this context, this chapter elaborates on the definition of the region and its people. It is also the window into a kind of administrative history of the region and its people.

The first section clarifies the meaning and extent of the Bhadrachalam region as implicated in this dissertation. This opening section illustrates the multi-layered meaning of the region, following which a socio-economic profile in terms of its geography and vital statistics is offered for some further discussion. Accordingly, the first two sections of this chapter define the region under study. Additionally, it points out the general lifestyle through demography, religion, and land holdings as a statement on the nature and level of development in the region. All attempts at defining and ruling, as it were, require geographical boundedness. The last three sections of the chapter discuss precisely this boundedness and its implications. From 1860 to 2014, the region of our study has been more or less compact in size. Under various administrative regimes, the region held its physical boundaries until the creation of Telangana state in 2014, and is now spread across three districts in two states. As such, the third section narrates the ‘origin’ of the region as a compact zone of administration with the advent of British colonialism, while the fourth section deals with the shifting regimes that overlooked the region. Indeed, fundamental to both the colonial and post-colonial regimes that ruled and are ruling the region is the continuity in perceiving the region as a tribal and underdeveloped region. This perspective is further unpacked in the last section of this chapter to set up the story of the region and its people.

The analysis and discussion are not limited to Bhadrachalam, in that an attempt is also made to provide an overall understanding of the ‘Scheduled areas’ in India. No doubt, the continuity of the colonial subjectivity as affirmed on Bhadrachalam has defined its politics, economy, culture, and, unsurprisingly, its contemporary destiny. Along this course, and within the ambit of the present chapter, we shall be striving to unravel the first step of the overall story – herein through an administrative history of the region.

3.1 Bhadrachalam: Clarifying the Name



Map 1: Bhadrachalam Revenue Division

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013

Our area of study is the Bhadrachalam Revenue Division of the Khammam District in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh state. It comprises Wazeedu, Venkatapuram, Cherla, Dummugudem, Bhadrachalam, Chintur, Kunnavaram, Vara Ramchandrapuram (V R Puram) mandals.¹ The Godavari River binds the region on the southern side and the state of Chhattisgarh on the north, with the East Godavari district on the eastern side. It is also

¹ 'Mandal' is a sub-district administrative classification.

called an Agency area under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Section 3.5 of this chapter clarifies the term ‘Agency area’. Our study will refer to the geographical area officially covered under the Bhadrachalam Revenue Division as the Bhadrachalam region (**Map 1 above**). Presently, the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states have split the region. The last section of this chapter covers the details of the new administrative configuration of the area of study.

We must examine the area at multiple levels, since the region implicates different meanings to various stakeholders. At a cultural level, it is the heartland of the Koya and Konda Reddi tribes; and, unquestionably, the Bhadrachalam region is one of the important cultural zones of the Koyas. Nevertheless, there are non-tribals in the region in considerable numbers, and the area is an important location for the Hindu religion. Broadly, of course, ‘non-tribals’ are those not classified as tribes in the census operations and refer to both caste Hindus and non-Hindus in the region. Moving on, the region houses crucial locations as per the Ramayana mythology; interestingly, some of the Koyas trace their origin to Bhima, one of the significant characters in the epic poem Mahabharata. An influx of non-tribals happened from the erstwhile Godavari district of Madras Presidency, who moved into the Bhadrachalam region during the colonial period for agricultural and allied activities. As a political entity, it has been a kind of borderland and frontier since the pre-colonial period of many administrative regimes. The region is host today to many independent tribal organizations and Communist revolutionaries. The mixture of the tribal and agricultural operations dependent on the Godavari River constitutes the broad contours of its economy.

The Bhadrachalam region takes its name from the Hindu pilgrim town of Bhadrachalam. It is the site of a famous Lord Rama temple - Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple. The Ramayana, one of the epic poems of Hinduism, has a reference to Bhadrachalam, which in the order of narration was then part of Dandakaranya, a large swathe of dense forest in Central India which is supposed to have been inhabited by demons and people banished from the ancient mythological kingdoms. It is interesting to note that in the contemporary period, the same geography is still ‘troublesome’; today, one of the ‘biggest challenges to India’s internal security’ labelled as Left-Wing Extremism is

unfolding in this region and is the ‘liberated zone’ of the insurgents/revolutionaries. A large majority of the people in this region belong to the most excluded and impoverished social group in the country – the tribals or Adivasis. Our later chapters will cover detailed discussions of tribals, insurgency, and geography.

The name Bhadrachalam signifies the penance of Maharishi Bhadri, who meditated for a long time to see Lord Rama. Bhadrachalam is supposed to mean the *achalam* of Bhadri or the hill of Bhadri where he did his penance and meditation. There are locations near Bhadrachalam town referred to in the Ramayana, like Parnasala which is located 35 km from Bhadrachalam and is an important religious place that honours the time spent by Lord Rama and Sita during their *vanvas* (exile) in Dandakaranya. Pilgrims worship a rock face that is supposed to have the footprint of Lord Rama and Sita. According to the mythology, Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, abducted Sita from Parnasala. Other locations like those of Dummugudem and Jattayu Paaka or Yetapaka find mention too in the epic poem. According to the history narrated by the Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple authorities, the deities of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana were kept on top of the hill by Bhadri, and were discovered in the 17th century. An official in the Nizam’s government, the Tehsildar of Palvanchara, Kancharla Gopanna, popularly known as ‘Bhakta Ramdas’ constructed the temple in 1674.

It is important to note that there is a reference to this region in the other epic poem of the Hindus – Mahabharata - and, in fact, the ‘indigenous people’ or Adivasis of the region trace their life to this epic, and not the Ramayana. The Koya people of the region trace their genealogy to Bhima, one of the five Pandava brothers. An anthropologist, A. S. Murthy (1977), argues that the Koyas believe that they were born out of the wedlock of Bhima and a woman in the Dandakaranya forest during the *vanvas* of the Pandavas. He suggests that in Polavaram, close to the Bhadrachalam region, there is an annual festival in honour of Bhima and his brothers. The other tribal population, Konda Reddis or Hill Reddis, officially classified as Primitive Tribal Group, also have festivals honouring the Pandavas. For caste Hindus, Bhadrachalam is the abode of Lord Rama, whereas for the Koyas and Konda Reddis, the forest dwellers of the region, the temple is not a significant site for their socio-cultural practices. It might also explain why, historically, there are

not many Koyas in the Bhadrachalam temple area. According to the 2011 Census, Koyas and Konda Reddis constitute less than 10% of Bhadrachalam temple town, and the Government of India has classified it as a census town. This allusion to the demographic profile will acquire meaning as we proceed along with the narration.

As a tribal space, the region has the presence of Lambadas, a scheduled tribe group. However, the Koyas and Konda Reddis resent their presence and argue that the Lambadas are cornering all employment, education, and other facilities like the allocation of petrol pumps offered to the tribal population in the region. There is a latent conflict; and, at times, there are visible demonstrations by Koya and Konda Reddi groups against the appropriation of the social welfare benefits doled out by the state. A fourth tribal group in a small number is also present in the region, Naikpods. They align with the Koyas and Konda Reddis in asserting their needs and protecting collective tribal welfare in the region. Additionally, the insurgency problem mounted by the Maoists and the migration of Gutti Koyas from south Bastar animates the Bhadrachalam region at another level.

Places within the Bhadrachalam region are witness to multiple historical events. As a site of political assertion, it had brewed resistance in the early 1300s after the fall of the Kakatiya Empire and later during the colonial period, the Manyam Rebellions in the late 1800s and early 1900s. After the defeat of the Kakatiya Empire, Rekhapalli in the Vara Ramachandrapuram mandal was the capital for Prolaya Nayaka of the Musunuri warrior family that led the attack against the Tughlaqs of the Delhi Sultanate (Devi 1975: 42; see also Rao 1947 and Talbot 2001: 177). In 1323, after the defeat of the Kakatiya emperor Pratapa Rudra, Prolaya Nayaka claimed to be his successor (Eaton 2008: 27). According to many historians, Musunuris are the architects of the Hindu recovery of the coastal Andhra after the defeat of the Kakatiyas (see Devi 1975). In 1336, Prolaya Nayak's successor and cousin, Kapaya Nayak, defeated the Tughlaq armies and conquered Warangal. In fact, the Naikpods of the region trace their lineage to the army of these Nayaks.

Even though the Musunuri family had their headquarters at Rekhapalli, there is another claimant to our region, a claim recognized by the British colonialists. It is reported by Vadivelu (1903) that Bhadrachalam and Palvancha lying between $17^{\circ}35'45''$ and $17^{\circ}56'30''$ N and $80^{\circ}54'30''$ $81^{\circ}8'$ E covering 911 square miles was given as an estate by Maharaja Pratapa Rudra, the last ruler of the Kakatiya Empire (1289 AD - 1323 AD) to a person, Annappa, with a title of *Aswa Rao* after he tamed a wild horse. After the collapse of the empire, Annappa Aswarao secured a free, perpetual feudal tenure on the condition of supplying five hundred men to the Imperial Army of the Delhi Sultanate whenever required from Emperor Timur in 1324 AD. Anappa Aswa Rao's descendants assumed the title of Rajah of Bhadrachalam and Palvancha (Vadivelu 1903). The zamindary titled *Hussananbad Shunkergiree* was free of any assessment.



Fig. 1: Rajah of Palvancha and Bhadrachalam

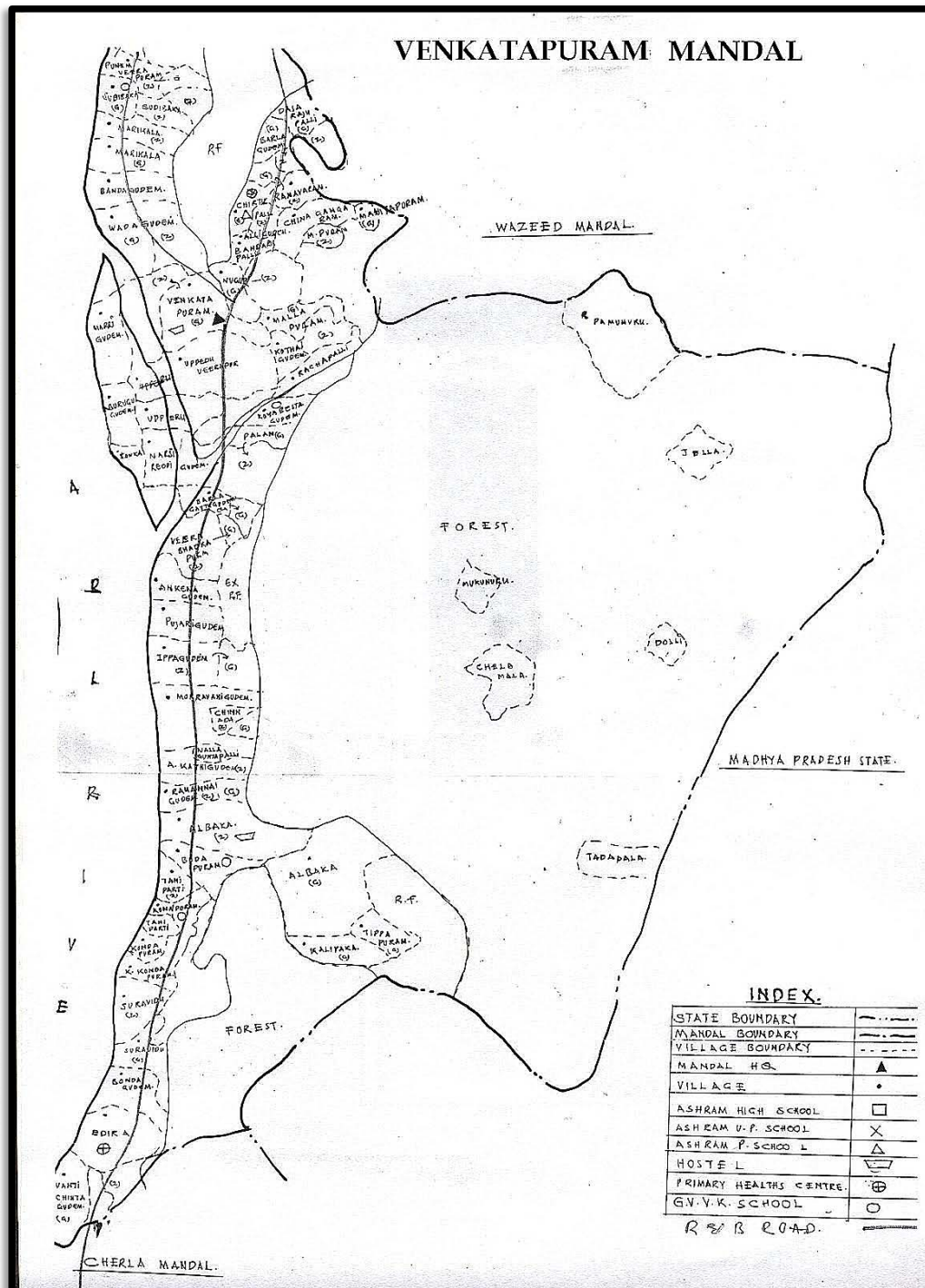
Source: *The Aristocracy of Southern India* by A Vadivelu (1903:79b)

Meanwhile, the Hyderabad region gained independence from the Delhi rulers, and Asaf Jahi became the ruler of the Deccan region. All this while, the Bhadrachalam estate was under the control of the Aswa Raos' based on the copper plate obtained from Emperor Timur. In 1769, an officer of the Nizam, due to some dispute, looted the documents and treasures and killed the Rajah, and the family lost all title deeds and other family papers

(see Glasfurd 1869). Later on, the Nizam took possession of the estate, and he managed it under the title *Parganai Hasanbad va Senkaragiri Sarkar Kammamet Subai Phirakand Buniyad Hyderabad Deccan*. Vadivelu (1903) reports that, later on, the family got possession from the Nizam, and when the British entered the region, a Rani who resided near the Bhadrachalam temple headed the family.

Like many other places, the Bhadrachalam region is a multi-layered mosaic of socio-economic, political and cultural relationships and histories. Undoubtedly, the region simultaneously exists as a tribal region, a holy Hindu pilgrim centre, a site for Adivasi politics, a Communist theatre for revolution, and an administrative frontier. The traces of these multiple trajectories and their accompanying histories present themselves in the everyday lives of the people in the region. In fact, distilling the various traces and identifying their genealogy and trajectory are critical in locating various agents, processes, and institutions in the division. As such, attempting a historical sociology of the region in terms of social change and economic transformation with a focus on developmental trajectories is quite a challenging and complex exercise. Peeling the multiple layers embedded in the region without losing sight of what constitutes the universe of Bhadrachalam as tersely recalled so far is the mandate of our study.

The region is on the northern side of the Godavari River. It shares borders with Odisha on the eastern side, Maharashtra on the western side, and Chhattisgarh on the northern side. Wazeedu (**Map 2**) is at the west end of the region, and V R Puram (**Map 9**) is at the east end and is nearly 200 kilometres apart. Post the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh on 2 June 2014, Chintur (**Map 7**), Kunavaram (**Map 8**), V R Puram (**Map 9**), and Bhadrachalam (**Map 6**) mandals except the Bhadrachalam town are part of the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, and the rest four mandals retained as part of the Khammam District of Telangana state. Now split between Bhadrachalam Kothagudem and Jayashankar-Bhupalpally districts, Dummugudem (**Map 5**) and Charla (**Map 4**) are part of the former (Bhadrachalam Kothagudem) and Venkatapuram (**Map 3**) and Wazeedu (**Map 2**) are part of the Jayashankar-Bhupalpally district. The later section in this chapter will detail the present configuration further. At any rate, the following revenue maps of the

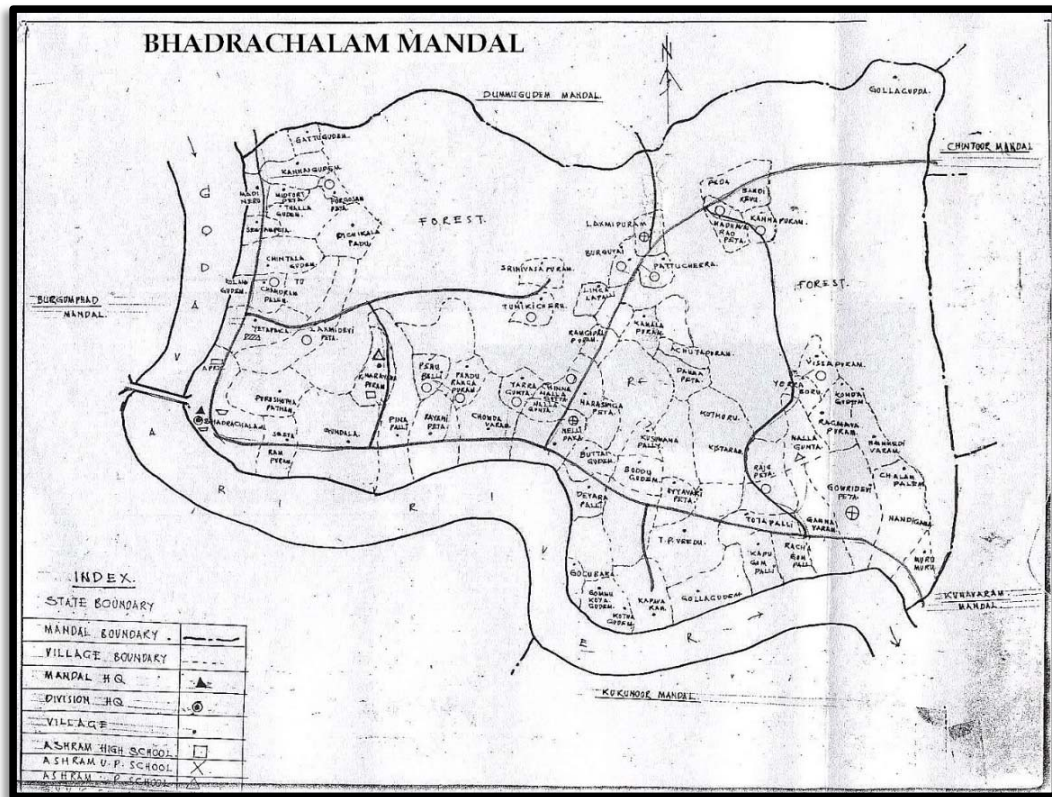


Map 3: Venkatapuram Mandal

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013

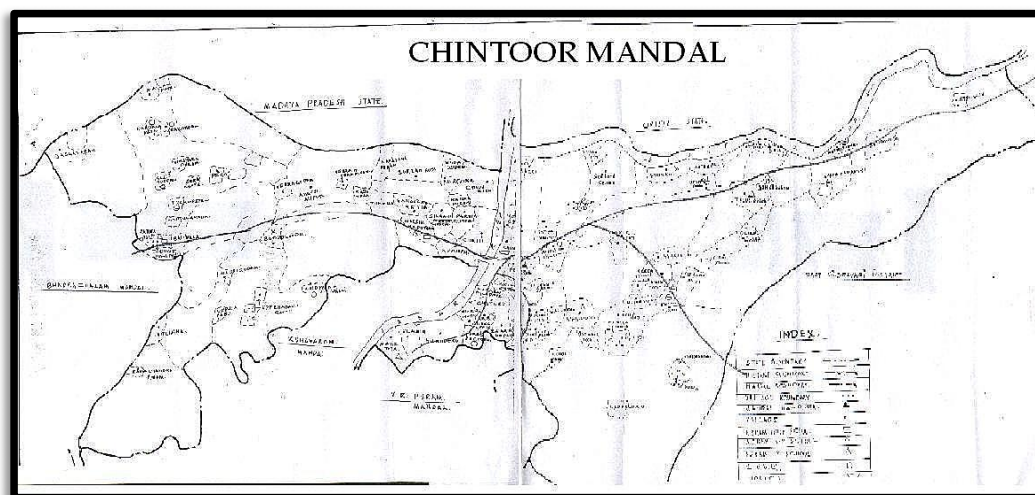
Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013



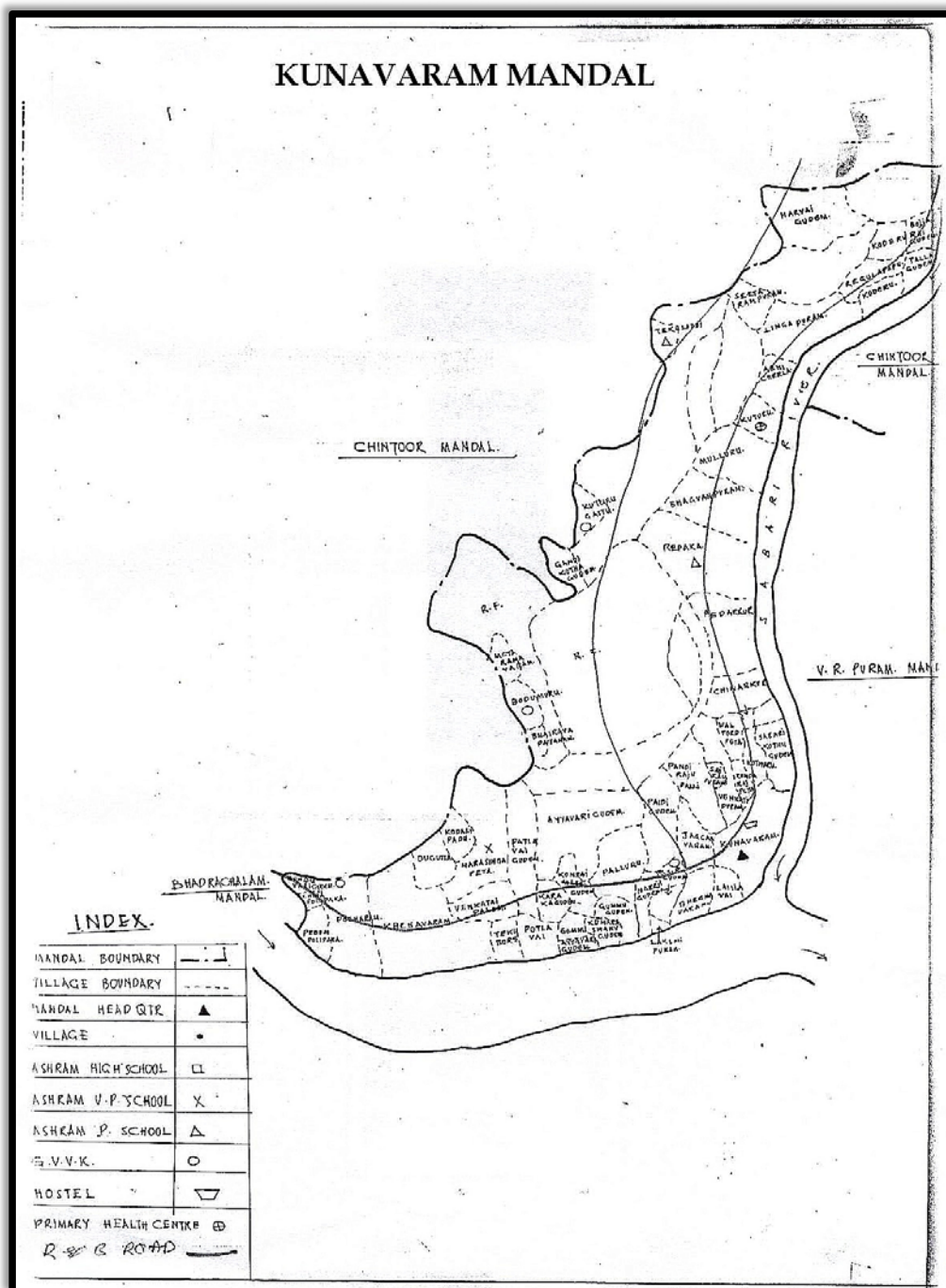
Map 6: Bhadrachalam Mandal

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013



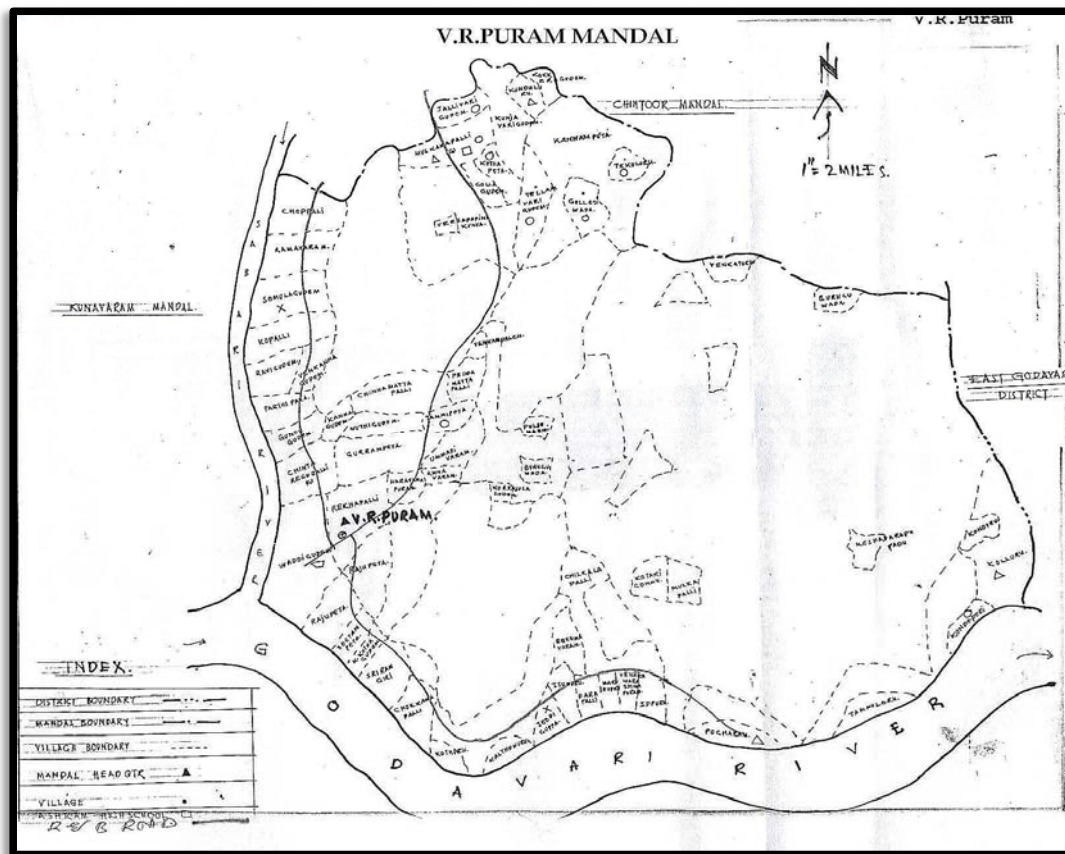
Map 7: Chintur Mandal

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013



Map 8: Kunavaram Mandal

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013



Map 9: V R Puram Mandal

Source: Sub-Collector's Office, Bhadrachalam, 2013

3.2 Socio-Economic Profile of the Region

The following statistical profiles portray a snapshot of the socio-economic dimensions of the region.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Region

Unit	No of Households	Total Population	Scheduled Tribe Population	Scheduled Caste Population	Others
Andhra Pradesh	#	7,62,10,007	#	#	#
Khammam District	#	25,78,927	#	#	#
Bhadrachalam Sub-Division	89,369	3,27,945	1, 69,699 (51.75%)	38,561 (11.76%)	1,19,685
Wazeedu Mandal	7,109	24,816	12,313	3,814	
Venkatapuram Mandal	8,798	31,765	12,452	5,050	
Cherla Mandal	11,091	42,947	23,887	5,247	
Dummugudem Mandal	12,126	46,802	32,518	5,094	
Bhadrachalam Mandal (Total)	24,233	89,048	25,292	14,156	
Rural					
Urban/Town	13,422	50,087	4,680	7,323	38,084
Kunavaram Mandal	7,726	26,245	15,886	3,187	
V R Puram Mandal	7,361	25,597	16,112	687	
Chintur Mandal	10,925	40,725	31,239	1,326	

Source: Census of India, 2011

The above table is a summary of the Census statistics. From the detailed enumeration of our region, as represented from within the Census operations, it is quite clear that the **Table 1** shows the distribution of the population in the region spread across 556 villages. Concomitantly, it may be noted that Chintur has the maximum villages in the division (namely, 87), followed by 81 villages in Dummugudem mandal; Kunavaram has the least

number of villages (that is, 55). In the division, females outnumber males both in Scheduled Tribe and general population categories. As the Census of 2011 enumerates, there are 1079 females to 1000 males among the Scheduled Tribe population and 1049 females to 1000 males in the total population of the region. These figures are higher than the state ratio of 993 and the national average of 943. In fact, the sex ratio among the Scheduled Tribe population is close to the highest sex ratio in the country, Kerala's 1084. However, only 46.66% of females are literate, as compared to the 58.16% literacy rate among males. Chintur, the largest and second-most populous mandal, with 44.65% male literacy and 32.8% female literacy, is the most backward mandal in terms of literacy. Interestingly, it is also the mandal with the maximum percentage of tribal population in the division – 77.56%. Wazeedu, Venkatapuram, and Bhadrachalam mandals have a more non-tribal population, with Bhadrachalam town having nearly 92 % non-tribal population. Bhadrachalam is the only urban centre in the region and is a census town.

In sum, as the Census Report of 2011 makes clear, there are 3,27,945 people residing in the region that forms the basis of our study (notified as Bhadrachalam sub-division in the table above), of which 1,69,699 (51.75%) people belong to the tribal or Scheduled Tribes (ST) population, 38,561 Scheduled Castes (SC) or Dalits (11.76%) and 1,19,685 (36.49%) non-tribal and non-Dalit population (officially classified as 'other population'). The tribal population consists of Koyas, Naikpods, Lambadas and Konda Reddis, wherein Koyas constitute more than 95% of this aggregation (as attested by local governmental officials to this researcher).

Table 2: Religious Composition

Mandal	Population of Hindus	Population of Muslims	Population of Christians	Religion Not Stated
Wazeedu	23,279	210	43	12
Venkatapuram	27,702	408	245	690
Cherla	37,656	952	89	26
Dummugudem	43,244	274	837	38
Bhadrachalam	74,202	2,592	1,021	157

Kunavaram	24,186	269	119	23
V R Puram	23,175	117	87	32
Chintur	35,649	735	334	40
Bhadrachalam Sub-Division	2,89,093	5,557	2,774	1,018

Source: District Handbook of Statistics (Khammam), 2011

The above table illustrates the official religious composition on the region. This is, however, is not an accurate representation; our Chapter 6 will further discuss the dimensions of this issue and its implication on the people and their politics in the region.

Table 3: Land Utilisation (Area in Hectares)

Mandal	Total Geo Area	Forest Area	% Tot. Area	Barren & Uncultivable Land	Non-Agri Uses	Cultivable Waste	Total Cropped Area	% Tot Area
Wazeedu	45,655	21,000	46.00	5,408	7,594	1,222	6,903	15.10
Venkatapuram	57,887	34,443	59.50	7,129	7,281	329	7,457	12.90
Cherla	54,336	37,478	69.00	3,499	5,446	108	8,208	15.10
Dummugudem	43,849	30,594	69.80	210	1,475	98	8,173	18.60
Bhadrachalam	37,269	25,514	68.50	159	2,015	35	8,976	24.10
Kunavaram	20,382	5,435	26.70	2,127	4,364	18	5,419	27.00
V R Puram	47,473	35,695	75.20	2,135	1,904	108	4,080	8.60

Chintur	95,529	84,380	88.3 0	220	1,028	58	8,716	9.10
Total	4,02,38 0	2,74,539	68.2 3	20,887	31,107	1976	57,93 2	14.40

Source: District Handbook of Statistics (Khammam), 2011

Bhadrachalam division is spread across 4,02,380 hectares of land, with 2,74,539 ha or 68% as forestland, and 57,932 ha or 14% as the net area sown or cropped as shown in **Table 3** above. Rice is the major food grain cultivated in the region. Except in the Bhadrachalam, Chintur, V R Puram, and Kunavaram mandals, rice is cultivated in both Kharif (monsoon-period) and Rabi (winter-period) seasons. Dummugudem and Kunavaram mandals are the major rice cultivation centres in the region. Maize is cultivated throughout the region in both seasons except in V R Puram. Redgram cultivation is extensive in the region, excluding Wazeedu, where it is a Rabi crop. Cotton is a Kharif crop produced mainly in Bhadrachalam, Dummugudem, and Kunavaram. Chillies are Rabi crops cultivated throughout the region and concentrated in the northern side of the region, across Wazeedu, Venkatapuram, Cherla and Bhadrachalam mandals. Tobacco is a Rabi crop in Venkatapuram, Cherla, Kunavaram, Chintur and V R Puram. Kunavaram and V R Puram are the hubs of tobacco production in the region. Greengram and blackgram are the other Rabi crops of the region.

There are 1,78,766 workers in the population of 3,27,945 people in the division, and 31,743 (18%) are cultivators and 81,578 (46%) are agricultural labourers. Adivasis, dalits and backward caste comprise the agricultural labouring force of the division. There are 54,132 farmers in the region as per the District Handbook of Statistics of 2011. Of this, 17.42 % hold less than 1 hectare (marginal farmers); 23.71% are small farmers holding 1-2 ha of land; 28.94% are semi-medium farmers with 2-4 ha; 24.27% hold medium farmlands with 4-10 ha; and large farmers above 10 ha of land constitute 5.79%. Wazeedu, Dummugudem, and Bhadrachalam have the maximum farmers. Chintur has the maximum large farm holdings in the region. So also, Dummugudem, Chintur, and

Bhadrachalam have the maximum land under cultivation. Lift irrigation is available throughout the region, although tanks are the other main source. Cherla and Dummugudem mandals have canal irrigation for Kharif cultivation.

The statistics as mentioned earlier on landholdings (**Table 3** above) do not capture the land leased by tribal farmers to seasonal migrant farmers involved in cotton and chilli production. By and large, as the wider scholarship has held, risk-averse farmers lease their land to protect themselves from price fluctuations of high-input cash crops (see Tsunashima 2010). Some of them also work as wage labourers in their land to augment income. Additionally, there is a mix of modern and traditional agricultural practices in the region. Contract farming is prevalent in the chilli cultivation of the region. Chilli farmers in the northern part of the region, especially Wazeedu and Venkatapuram mandals, have entered into a contract with the joint venture of Chennai-based A. V. Thomas Group (AVT brand) and the US-based McCormick & Company. The contractors ensure good quality seeds and help in the entire cultivation process. It thereby ensures high-quality products and assured purchase of the product (see, broadly, Pritchard and Connell 2011).

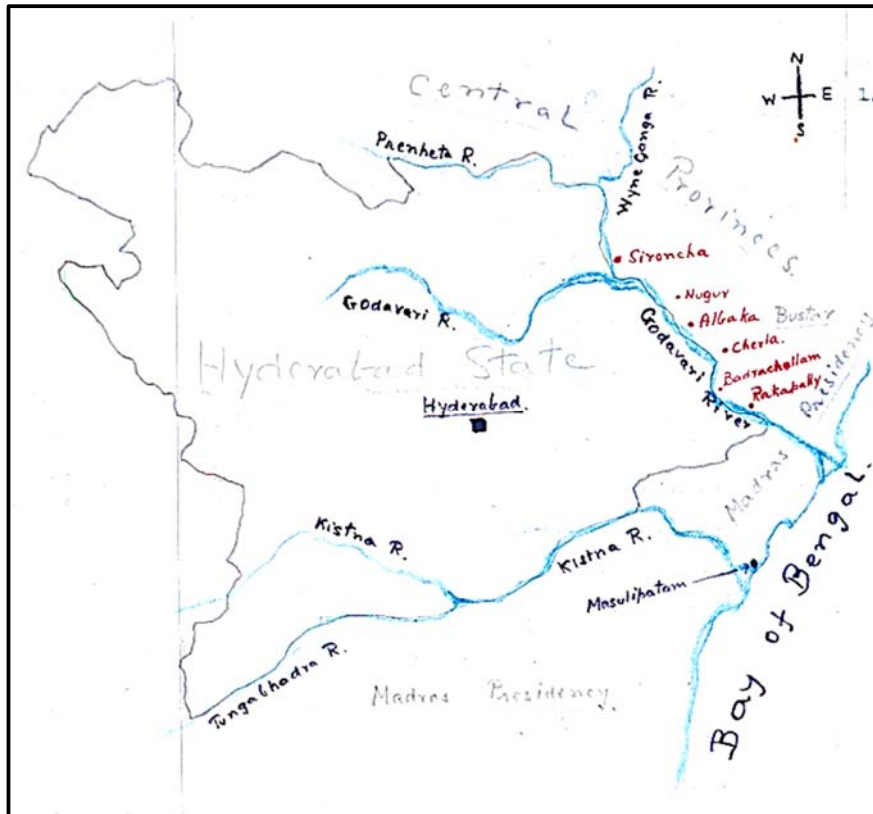
3.3 ‘White Gold’ and the Onset of British Colonisation

The earlier two sections defined our study in terms of the meanings ascribed to the region as a whole and the current profiles of its broad socio-economic composition. We move now to a distinct facet of its administrative history, placing in perspective the question of how the region became a modern legible space of rule and territorial demarcation. As is generally recognized, making socio-political spaces legible is central to state-making and the purposes of rule and governance. ‘Legibility’ as a process accords mobile, fluid, and unrecorded spaces, and the bodies inhabiting such spaces, a metric in the administrative register (see Cresswell 2006). The administrative contours largely define the rules of interactions among various social groups inhabiting the region, thereby setting into motion the possibilities of socio-economic mobilities, identity formation, and specific patterns of capitalist development. Regarding the Bhadrachalam region, the case is no different. In fact, the modern destiny of the region and its people are path-dependent on a particular moment in its history, namely, the colonial conquest. Singularly, this

particular moment is significant for two reasons: for one, it gave shape to the modern contours of the Bhadrachalam region, and, more importantly, colonial governmentality defined the people and the region, thereby giving it a form that permeates to the contemporary period.

Undeniably, the Bhadrachalam region is an unremarkable agricultural territory, and the earlier section largely testifies to this. All the same, it is important to explore why the British colonialists territorialised the region. Neither there were strategic natural resources specific to the region nor was there a significant political cause to take over the region; and yet the region had a colonial rule overseeing it. Quite emphatically, the external crucial factor that drove the region into the British administration was the geopolitics of the cotton trade, the ‘white gold’ of the 19th century. Economic historians mostly refer to cotton as ‘white gold’ as a register to capture the increased cultivation in cotton, a valuable commodity in the patterns of world trade.

In 1860, Bhadrachalam transformed from a zamindari or feudal estate to an imperial territory. On 7 December 1860, the then Nizam, Nawab Ufzool-ood-Dowlah Nizam-ool-Moolk Aspoh Jah Bahadoor ceded to the British Government the taluks of ‘Buddrachellum, Rakapilly, Cherla, Albaka, Noojood and Siroucha’ according to the Art. 8 of the Supplementary Treaty, which aimed at certain modifications in the Treaty of 1853 between him and the Queen of Great Britain (Briggs 1861: 318). This transfer was part of more significant imperial manoeuvrings. Due to the global cotton crisis, Lord Dalhousie had a more extensive project for acquiring cotton-growing areas, and the transfer of territories from the Nizam of his West Berar jurisdiction was part of this project. Indeed, in order to make the cotton-growing Berar territory more accessible, he wanted to make the Godavari navigable. It would enable the transportation of cotton from Central Provinces (Berar and Nagpur) to the eastern seaports, which would be much cheaper through the river. The acclaimed colonial engineer Arthur Cotton, therefore, was deputed to make the Upper Godavari navigable. In fact, the territory adjoining the river had to be acquired to make the river navigable (see Silver 1966; as also Umamaheswari 2014).



Map 10: Taluks transferred to Central Province by the Nizam

Source: File no R/2/76/133, India Office Records, London

More frontally, the official reasons stated for the acquisition or cessation of Nizam territories can be ascertained from the files of the Hyderabad Residency (File no 388 of 1944):²

1. To put a stop to vexatious extraction of petty zamindars carried out in defiance of the Nizam's prohibition.
2. To give full protection to life and property.
3. To enable the British authorities at Nagpur to have a better hold on Bastar and its dependencies.
4. To secure the irrigation works on the Godavari River from injury.
5. To effectively secure all the advantages expected from the measures for improving the navigation of the river and have full control over the river for commerce.
6. To make the river, the natural boundary between the Hyderabad State and British territories to the East, the actual boundary.

² This file is classified as File no IOR: R/2/76/133 titled *Note re. cession by the Nizam's Government under the Treaty of 1860 of six taluks in the Eastern side of the Godavari River* in the India Office Records, London.

Clearly, the imperial penetration of the hinterlands during the colonial consolidation was no doubt dictated by the global political economy. Beckert (2004) has outlined the worldwide geographical expansion of white-gold or cotton cultivation as a consequence of the American Civil War. This perspective helps us to specifically locate the British interest in our region. Quite precisely, our region acts as an important link to connecting the cotton-growing region of Berar to the seaport via a river navigation project. Indeed, after the establishment of railways in the Bombay Presidency, the realization of the river navigation project was dependent on the British control of a swath of land that is the Bhadrachalam region. The demands and flows of the global political economy, especially the need for a constant supply of raw materials for the British textile industry, forced the appropriation of a territory and its people to the imperial world.

The British exploration for cotton cultivation areas introduced a new form of governance in the region and set into motion certain processes that changed the way in which the people of the region conducted their lives. In most regions, a regime of private property was created and protected along with the enactment of the contract laws to create favourable conditions for the production of raw materials. Inevitably, patterns of indebtedness and peasantisation of the rural economy were the consequence of this shift in the economy. It also led to the re-ordering of the social structure generally. We will shortly discuss in this chapter the administrative changes that were introduced in our region (even as our later chapters will be discussing the non-administrative changes triggered by the imperial interest in the region).

The six taluks, as mentioned earlier, formed the Upper Godavari District of the Central Provinces and covered an area of 1755 square miles with a population of 70,000 people and revenue of Rs 20,000 per year.³ This resulted from a proposal made by a British officer supervising the Godavari project, Captain Haig, the Chief Engineer of the Works.

³ To be sure, initially, it was part of the Commissioner of 'Nagpore' when the cession happened. Later on, when the Central Provinces administration was created in November 1861, the transferred taluks got subsumed under it. Note also that the information forwarded in this section hereafter is extracted from File no 142-143, titled *Management of the Talukas forming the Upper Godavary District* in the National Archives, New Delhi.

In fact, in 1856, he had submitted a report to the Supreme Government overseeing the activities of the British interests in India through the Government of Madras seeking a permanent and natural boundary for the ‘Nagpore Province’ to facilitate the navigation works in the Godavari River. In a letter dated 10 September 1859, the Government of Madras singularly pointed out the “inconveniences arising from the possession by His Highness the Nizam of a narrow strip of territory extending for about 200 miles along the north bank of the Godavery.” Subsequently, in December 1859, it was further disparagingly noted that the Nizam, in the guise of having territorial rights over this land, was levying taxes on the itinerant traffic. So, it was decided that at least one bank of the Godavari should be in the British possession so that the improvement of navigation can be made more practical and expedient.

It can be seen that the processes in question were events that are somewhat independent of the interests within the region per se, although they were sufficiently altering of circumstances within the latter. Palpably, the transfer of this territory from the Nizam to the British was necessitated by the demands of the cotton textile industry. The effort was to connect the cotton-producing province of Berar (former Nizam territory and later on taken over by the British as part of the debt restructuring program) with the port on the Eastern coast of India through the Godavari River. A combination of contending interests (the Nizam and British; the Nizam and other Indian rulers; and Britain and East India Company) initiated certain processes of development like the railways, waterways, and irrigation works, owing largely to certain global or international imperatives emanating especially from the cotton textile industry. Undoubtedly, the regimes of power that has overseen the region can be broadly classified as the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial phases. Where the pre-colonial phase ends with the rule of Nizam of Hyderabad, the East India Company and British India oversaw the colonial phase through its administrative units – Central Provinces and Madras Presidency. This combination of events and actors thus had produced changes in the state of Hyderabad and, as a consequence, on the Bhadrachalam region in particular (see, broadly, Ray 1988; Silver 1966; and Yazdani 1976).

3.4 Redrawing the Boundaries: An Unending Exercise

The Upper Godavari district generated particular challenges for the Central Provinces administrators. There is a discussion in an 1870 report sent by W. B. Jones, Secretary to Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces to the Secretary (Foreign Department), the Government of India, regarding the difficulty in governing the new territory.⁴ Singularly, the lack of a native officer fluent in the local language made the governance difficult. The native officer had a significant role, namely, interpreting for the Deputy Commissioner, the officer in charge of the district. Broadly, this interpretive function had a dual dimension attached to it: one, making the grievances of the people legible for the administration and, two, making the rules and intentions of the administration clear to the people. The overall problems of migration, dissent, and rebellions in the region forced the administrators to look for a native officer. The next chapter (Ch.4, Sect.4.2 in particular) engages these issues in some detail. All the same, because of administrative contingencies and associated deliberations, the region was transferred in 1874 from the Central Provinces to the Madras Presidency. The latter covered Telugu speaking regions under its jurisdiction and had Telugu officers who could be the interpreters in the new territory.

Table 4: An Overview of the Administrative Relocations (From the Colonial intercession to the Present-day)

Year	Administrative Development
5 November 1860	Ceded by the Nizam of Hyderabad to the British. The region becomes the Upper Godavari District of the Central Provinces
1874	Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli taluks of the Upper Godavari District transferred to Godavari District of the Madras Presidency
1879	The region is classified as a Scheduled or Agency Area as per the provisions of the Scheduled District Act of 1874
1909	Cherla part of the Chanda District of the Central Provinces added to the Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli taluks. The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 is extended to Cherla
1925	Godavari District bifurcated into East and West Godavari Districts and the region is now part of the East Godavari District

⁴ 10 March 1871 report sent by the Chief Commissioner's office to the Secretary (Foreign Department) to Government of India, extracted from the 'Proceedings of the Home Department (Public), No 13-37, November 1871', National Archives of India.

1947	Part of Madras State
1 October 1953	Andhra State formed by carving out Telugu speaking regions of the Madras State and the region is now part of the East Godavari district of the Andhra State
1 November 1956	Andhra State is merged with the Telugu speaking areas of the Hyderabad state to form Andhra Pradesh state. The region continues to be part of the East Godavari District.
1953	Khammam district is created in Andhra Pradesh from six taluks of Warangal District
17 November 1959	The region is merged under the Khammam district of the Andhra Pradesh state
2 June 2014	Telangana state is carved out of Andhra Pradesh and the region is split between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh
11 October 2016	The region is split between Bhadradi-Kothagudem and Jayashankar-Bhupalpally districts of the Telangana state

Source: Various Gazetteers, Census Reports, and Government Orders

In the southern portion of the Upper Godavari district, Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli taluks merged with the Godavari District of the Madras Presidency due to “the racial and geographical affinities” (Hemingway 1915: 174-175). The merged taluks became the Bhadrachalam taluk of the Godavari district in the Madras Presidency. The remaining portion, comprising Sironcha, Nugur, Albaka, and Cherla, became the Sironcha tahsil of the Chanda district of the Central Provinces. Nevertheless, the colonial administrators deliberated on shifting the three taluks except for Sironcha to the Madras Presidency. The geographical location and the constitution of the people in the region were the reasons. Nugur, Albaka, and Cherla covered 593 square kilometres covering 142 villages and 20218 people; besides, it had a land administration different from the rest of the Chanda district and was cut off from the rest of the area, including Sironcha, by forest. Hence, the colonial administrators felt that the area could be better accessed from the southern side through the Godavari waterway (Begbie 1909: 340-341). Moreover, the Telugu speakers predominately populated this region. The Velamas, a Telugu farming community since time immemorial, enjoyed property rights and dominated the area. In July 1909, this area was transferred to the Godavari district of the Madras Presidency.

The merger of the erstwhile Upper Godavari district to the Madras Presidency in 1874 and 1909 resulted in a northwestern projection abutting the territory of the Nizam of

Hyderabad and Bastar in the Central Provinces. Moreover, the region became part of the Agency tracts of the Madras Presidency, which were largely the area covered under The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874. As per the provisions of this Act, a political agent oversaw the administration of such areas or tracts wherein most general laws and regulations are suspended. The following section in the present chapter, '*The Domination of the Strangers: Making of a Scheduled Region*', engages this measure and its implication in detail. Nevertheless, the scheduled status of the region is a result of its extreme geographical location and its separation from the rest of the Presidency by the Agency Tracts constituted by the Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Act of 1834. Later on, in 1925, the Godavari district was split into two – East and West Godavari for administrative convenience. These districts were bifurcated along the river Godavari, the right bank or the northern side became East Godavari district, and the left bank became West Godavari district. Our region located on the right bank became part of the East Godavari district.

At the time of India's independence, East Godavari district became part of the Madras State, a 'Part A' state, wherein there was an elected governor and state legislature.⁵ Soon, in 1948, the S. K. Dar Committee examined the possibility of forming states on linguistic grounds. It recommended retaining the status quo, even as a review committee headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramaiah ratified this decision. However, the public sentiment favoured states as homogenous cultural units. It led to the formation of Andhra State in October 1953, a state comprising the Telugu speaking regions of the Madras state. Following this formation, a Commission consisting of Fazal Ali, K. M. Panikkar and H. N. Kunzru, in December 1953, looked into the linguistic reorganisation of states in India. As a consequence of this Fazal Ali headed commission, termed the States Reorganisation Commission, the Telugu speaking regions of the Hyderabad State were combined with the Andhra State to form the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1956.

⁵ At the time of independence, states were largely organized under three categories – Part A, B, and C. Part A consisted of former British provinces ruled by an elected governor and state legislature, while Part B represented former princely states governed by a 'Rajpramukh' appointed by the President. Part C states were those governed by a commissioner appointed by the President.



Map 11: Bhadrachalam Region as part of the Khammam District

Source: Census of India, District Handbook – Khammam, 1961

In 1959, the Bhadrachalam taluk and Nugur independent sub-taluk comprising 13040 square kilometres were transferred from East Godavari district to the Khammam district as per the Government Order No. 2384 dated 17 November 1959 of the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Incidentally, Khammam district was carved out of the Warangal district on 18 September 1953 (**Map 11** above reflects this). Broadly, five taluks of Warangal were partitioned since the inhabitants of the eastern locations, comprising Khammam, Yellandu, Madhira, Bhoorgampadu, and Palvanchara, felt that they were backward compared to the western taluks. Largely, therefore, on ground of economic progress and to improve public order, the new district was formed.

Principally, Bhadrachalam and Nugur became part of the Khammam district since it was geographically contiguous to Khammam. The Godavari and Sabari rivers separated these two administrative blocks from East Godavari, and hence to avoid the inconvenience for the people in crossing the rivers, the area was transferred to Khammam. Indeed, until the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, the people in the region did not have a contiguous administrative zone that could have alleviated this problem. They were linked to Rajahmundry in East Godavari for administrative,

economic, and social activities. However, the Khammam district headquarter gave better accessibility than Kakinada, the headquarter of East Godavari. In 1985, the taluks were reorganised as mandals in the Khammam district. The Bhadrachalam and Nugur taluks became Wazeedu, Venkatapuram, Cherla, Dummugudem, Bhadrachalam, Kunavaram, Chintur, and V R Puram mandals. These eight mandals, as we have seen, constituted the Bhadrachalam revenue division of the district.

The geographical extremity of the region, now as the northeastern portion of Khammam separated by the mighty Godavari River, was a challenge for its overall administration. For instance, let us look at the establishment of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), an institution established for the welfare of the tribals. The ITDA was established in the Bhadrachalam Agency Area in 1972 and had the office in Palvanha, outside the Agency area. It was only in 1991 that it was shifted to Bhadrachalam town due to the initiative of the Project Officer, who agreed to the demands of the tribal groups in the region. The tribals are largely the majority population of the region, and the ITDA is an establishment under the Tribal Welfare Department of the state government. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, the ITDA projects are generally framed for contiguous areas of the size of a Tehsil or Block or more in which the Scheduled Tribe population is over 50%. However, on account of demographic reasons, ITDA projects in Assam, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal may be smaller or not strictly contiguous. Moreover, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa have opted for an Agency model under the Registration of Societies Act, and the ITDA projects there are known as ITD Agencies. The Project Officer heads the ITDPs/ITDAs though they may be designated Project Administrators or Project Directors. The ITDA manages all government programs in almost all sectors, whether it is agriculture, education, and health.

Clearly, the ITDA is the face of the state for the tribals. Its performance and approach are critical since it moulds the perspective of the tribals concerning the state. The performance of the ITDA is significant, and is often marked out from the other government agencies in the area, such as the revenue, forest, and police departments. In fact, unlike the coercive and rigid interface of the latter agencies, the ITDA largely marks

out the benevolent aspects of the state in terms of welfare goods and services. Nevertheless, the overall official apathy and negligence towards the tribals is very visible in our region. Field informants and tribal elders fondly recall the role of the officer who shifted the ITDA office to Bhadrachalam. He was instrumental in bringing Konda Reddis, a primitive tribal group, from the remote hills to an accessible location so that they can access various welfare schemes. Later on, they returned to the hills after his transfer due to the lack of the personal touch and attention from the succeeding officers. However, the tribals in the region fondly remember the officer, and even showed gratitude by naming their kids after him.

The administrative neglect of the needs of the tribals in the agency areas is most visible in the churning associated with the contemporary formation of the Telangana state. Largely, the redrawing of administrative boundaries did not take into consideration the voices of the region. Andhra Pradesh had been formed as per the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission. But at the same time, it sowed the seeds for the formation of Telangana. It was officially recognized that a merger of the Hyderabad State and Andhra State would lead to further backwardness in the former region. All the same, the state of Andhra Pradesh had come into existence with adequate protection to the people of Telangana region (as per the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956).⁶ This event did not deter the demand for a separate state of Telangana. The disquiet and agitation brewed for years, and in 1969 a major violent protest started from Khammam demanding an implementation of the safeguards. This agitation led to the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Eight-Point Plan on 12 April 1969, even as the formula was not implemented in total except for making a leader from Telangana as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Thus P. V. Narasimha Rao, later the Prime Minister of India, became the Chief Minister on September 1971. Following the invalidation of the Mulki Rules (oriented to the protection of jobs for native residents or Mulkis) by the Supreme Court of India, a violent agitation took place. This resulted in the resignation of Rao as the Chief Minister

⁶ This was an agreement signed between the leaders from Telangana and Andhra regions on 20 February 1956 on safeguarding the interests of the former after the formation of the Andhra Pradesh state. Note, the Hyderabad state as mentioned largely corresponds to the present-day Telangana state.

and a Six Point Formula put in place in 1973.⁷ The formation of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi in 2001 ignited the next major round of upheaval for the creation of Telangana. This resulted in the formation of the Justice B. N. Srikrishna Committee in 2010 - its official name was Committee for Consultations on the Situation in Andhra Pradesh (CCSAP) – which eventually leading to the state formation in 2014.

The perceived discrimination of the people of Telangana led to the state's formation, and thus marked the effort to assert and protect their distinct identity. However, the marginalised among them, namely, the tribals, who were part of the Telangana regional identity, failed to see any justice to their cause. Basically, during the state formation movement, there were four separate demands from the Bhadrachalam region. Firstly, the Koyas demanded a separate tribal state within Andhra Pradesh, with Bhadrachalam as the capital. Secondly, the Lambadas, a nomadic tribal group, supported the Telangana state. Thirdly, the non-tribals, especially from the taluks north of Bhadrachalam, wanted a separate district in the new state. Finally, the non-tribals residing south of Bhadrachalam demanded that, if at all the new state is formed, they wanted to be part of Andhra Pradesh, and not Telangana. Specific historical and economic reasons formed the basis of these diverse demands. Interestingly, the Justice Srikrishna-led CCSAP (2010: 350) recorded a different narrative from the region. As it noted: "During the Committee Members' visit to the tribal areas of Khammam, where the Koya tribals of Bhadrachalam had little idea of the demand or the agitation, a crowd of people shouting 'Jai Telangana' followed members into the villages" (CCSAP 2010: 350). However, they noted the tribal representation for Manyaseema, a tribal state within Andhra Pradesh.

Principally, two factors guided the demand for Manyaseema. Firstly, the appropriation of the reservation benefits by the nomadic tribes, especially the Lambada or Banjara communities. This nomadic community became a Scheduled Tribe in Andhra Pradesh in 1976 through G. O. No. 149, and has become the politically, socially, and economically the dominant tribal group. The Lambadas largely supported the demand

⁷ The Government of India established the researcher's institution, the University of Hyderabad, in 1974 as part of this intervention.

for the new state. Clearly, by placing the demand for Manyaseema, the Koyas and other tribal groups expected more share in the reservation pie with the decrease in the proportion of Lambada population in the prospective Manyaseema state. It must be noted that the Lambadas and other nomadic tribes do not enjoy Scheduled status in the neighbouring states; and hence, there was a massive migration into Andhra Pradesh. This migration led to the side-lining of the already existing tribes in Andhra Pradesh. Secondly, the pervasive scales of neglect by the administration and the domination of non-tribals in the tribal areas forced the demand for the tribal state. Prospectively, Manyaseema was envisaged to cover the northern fringes of the state from Adilabad to Srikakulam for their overall development and preserving their ways of life.⁸ Importantly, around the same time, one of the oldest Koya tribal organization, Girijana Samkshema Parishad (GSP) headed by Sonde Ramesh demanded the formation of Dandakaranya state with Bhadrachalam as the capital. This demand covered tribals areas of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Maharashtra. The Manyaseema and Dandakaranya demands were approached understandingly by the CCSAP, but clearly the latter (namely, Dandakaranya) was beyond the Committee's terms of reference. Regarding Manyaseema, the Committee held that it is unviable since it left out tribals from other districts, as also that the proportion of the tribals in the proposed geography is not significant.

As mentioned above, the non-tribals of the region took diverse positions taking into consideration their historical roots. The northern section of the Bhadrachalam region has more interactions historically and culturally with Khammam and Warangal. Hence, they supported the proposed Telangana state and, within this state proposed their own district. The years of state neglect and distance from the district headquarter were forwarded as the reason.

3.5 The Domination of the Strangers: Making of a Scheduled Region

The object of the Fifth Schedule is to preserve tribal autonomy, their culture, and economic empowerment to ensure social, economic, and political justice for preservation

⁸ The northern fringes cover nine districts – Adilabad, Nizamabad, Warangal, Khammam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam.

of peace and good Government in the scheduled area. (*AIR 1997 Supreme Court of India 3297, Samatha Judgement*).⁹

So far, we have defined the region of our study in terms of its name, boundaries, socio-economic constitution, and the shifting administrative histories that have overseen and governed the region. The most important aspect of the Bhadrachalam region is its Fifth Schedule status; and hence, by way of concluding certain key aspects of the region's administrative history, this section looks at the historical circumstances that defined the region as a 'Schedule area', entailing a specific administrative apparatus since the colonial period. More explicitly, the section deploys the comparative historical method to narrate this history as well as examine the territorial base of ruling tribals as a whole. Ann Laura Stoler's (2002) erudite suggestion of contextualising the archival clues and cues guides the engagement with the colonial legal documents. She pointedly observes that "Students of the colonial experience 'mine' the *content* of government commissions and reports, but rarely attend to their peculiar *form* or *context*" (*ibid.*: 90, emphasis in original). Accordingly, she gestures us to turn "from an extractive to a more ethnographic project, our readings need to move in new ways through archives both along their fault lines as much as against their grain" (*ibid.*: 109).

As has been documented, separate areas were carved out for administering 'tribals' in the colonial period, and independent India continued this policy in the form of the Fifth and Sixth scheduled areas. A colonial enactment in 1874 was the starting point for these administrative enclaves. However, as a category for defining and ruling particular social groups, the concept 'tribe' is more noticeable from the 1891 Census. Of course, up until the 1931 Census, there was no great clarity on the enumeration of the social groups under the administrative category of tribes (see Tewari 2017).¹⁰ The social groups, defined as tribes, took on the identity given by the colonial regime and began asserting as 'Adivasis'

⁹ From the judgement delivered on 11 July 1997 in the petition filed by Samatha, an NGO based in Vishakhapatnam, against the State of Andhra Pradesh & Others. The Supreme Court decreed that government, tribal, and forestlands in the Scheduled areas can be leased only to government bodies or tribal cooperatives, with at least 20% profit funnelled back to the development of such areas. The judgement prohibited the leasing of land to non-tribal persons and private companies for mining.

¹⁰ Tewari (2017) points out the role of the Census Commissioner Hutton in consolidating the idea of the tribe in the colonial period during the census operations. For the first time, Hutton demarcated the tribe as a distinct social group in the Census operations. See also Sundar (2016 *passim*).

or original inhabitants from the 1930s in Chotanagpur. Undoubtedly, the identity ascribed by the colonial regime can be seen in three sets of processes that were simultaneously unfolding in their domains – namely, bureaucratic engagement with various social groups that were being defined and ruled (through specific policies and laws); administrator - scholarly engagement with various social groups in the new colony (through reports and official studies); and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and worldviews between the bureaucrats and scholars of colonial India (principally through the census). The world of ‘Adivasis’ emerges in this whirlpool of ideas, law-making processes, and events. We will therefore also attempt to navigate this dynamic world of ideas, events, and processes, so as to determine the course of production of the tribal area as an administrative category.

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India is traceable to *The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874* (see National Commission for Scheduled Tribes [NCST] 2012; Chandra 2013; and Xaxa 2020). This Act consolidated regulations and laws exempting various British regions outside the purview of general laws and regulations.¹¹ From 8 December 1874, a single act covered all such regions under one administrative label, with the regions classified for exemption through the first schedule of the act coming to be known as the Scheduled districts or Agency Areas, with reference to the Agents of the Governor, the District Collector, who administered these areas. Under Part I Section III of the Act, our region (Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli taluks) became a Scheduled area. In fact, in his district gazetteer on Godavari District, the colonial official Hemingway mentions the reason for the classification. According to him, when Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli taluks shifted from the Central Provinces to the Madras Presidency in 1874, these areas were attached to a region already exempted from the general laws and regulations. As such, for sheer administrative convenience, the exemption extended to the new territories of the Madras Presidency (Hemingway 1915: 189-190). When read against the earlier section (3.4) above, it is evident that our region is tossed around in the administrative cartographic exercises for mostly reasons quite beyond the nature of its configuration. Thus:

¹¹ See *A Collection of the Acts Passed by the Governor-General of India in Council in the year 1874*, Calcutta: Office of Superintendent of Government Printing, pp. 123-130.

A precedent existed in the case of the Agencies of Vizagapatam and Ganjam, In consequence of the unceasing turbulence in them which led at length to the appointment, in 1832, of a Special Commissioner, with special powers, to restore order, these two tracts were excluded, by Act XXIV of 1839, from the operation of much of the ordinary law and were placed under the direct administration of the Collectors of those districts, who were endowed with special and extraordinary powers within them in their capacity as ' Agents to the Governor.' A similar method of administration was extended to the greater part of the present Godavari Agency in 1879, advantage being taken of the Scheduled Districts Act (India Act XIV of 1874) to constitute an Agency in the then Bhadrachalam and Rekapalle taluks, which make up the present Bhadrachalam taluk, and 'the Rampa country,' which is practically the present Chodavaram division (Hemingway 1915: 189-190).

Significantly, too, an earlier documentation of the region by Henry Morris (1878) portrays a critical aspect of the region as a Scheduled District. In tracing the administrative history of the region, he describes the Bhadrachalam town as a centre of non-tribals:

The estate of Bhadrachalam is situated on the left bank of the river. It consists of 137 villages. The Rani traces her pedigree from Anapa Aswa Row, who is said to have received the grant of the estate from the Emperor of Delhi in 1324. The town of Bhadrachalam, or rather the long straggling village, for it is little more, is the chief place in the estate. It contains about two thousand inhabitants, who are mostly Brahmins. It is built on the bank of the Godavery, which is here very deep and rapid, and is about one hundred miles from Rajahmundry, and fifteen from Dumagudem. It consists of one long and narrow street. It receives its name from being near the rock on which Bhadrada performed his devotions (Morris 1878: 42).

Evidently, the background of the Act and the constitution of the region, now classified as a Scheduled District, throw up important questions about how the Bhadrachalam region became excluded from the general laws and regulations. What follows will tread this ground in detail. To start with, since the Act of 1874 is a compilation of laws and regulations across British India, we need to examine the background of the specific act that governed the contiguous regions in the Madras Presidency so as to understand our region's classification.

Quite definitively, administrators and scholars (see Hemingway 1915; Sastry and Reddy 1991; Rangacharyulu *et al.* 2013; Dhanaraju 2015), while tracing the evolution of Scheduled areas in the Andhra region, suggest that the Act of 1874 is a continuation of

the Ganjam and Vizagapatam Act of 1839.¹² An administrative report on the disturbances in ‘Northern Circars’, roughly corresponding to the present-day north coastal Andhra region and parts of southern Odisha, is the specific background of this act. For the colonial administrators, as has been noted:

The term disturbances has been used to imply every species of rebellion and insurrection against the ruling authority started by large bodies of people or by their chiefs or by both jointly, as also the revolt of the ryots against their landed chiefs protected by British arms, and depredations committed upon persons and property on either side. It also includes purely political commotions originating from the conspiracy of ambitious or disgruntled Indian rulers which were definitely of a subversive character. It also relates to the many communal struggles of the period which, on all accounts, disturbed the peace of the country (Chaudhuri 1955: x).

In 1832, there were ‘disturbances’ in Purla Kimedy Zamindary in Ganjam of Madras Presidency, with the Government of Madras deputing George Russell, First Member of the Board of Revenue, to study the causes and recommend measures regarding disturbances in the northern frontier areas of the Presidency.¹³ The directive later extended its mandate to cover disturbances in Vizagapatam and Goomsoor in Northern Circars (1832-36). Russell was appointed as the Special Commissioner “to ascertain the causes which has led to those insurrectionary outbreaks – to devise and carry out measures for their suppression – and to recommend what future course he thought best suited to prevent their recurrence” (*Selections from the Records of the Madras Government* 1856: i). Henry Morris, a former colonial civil service officer, recounted the state of affairs in Northern Circars when the British took full possession of the territory from the Nizam of Hyderabad:

No little difficulty was experienced by the East India Company in consolidating their authority in the Northern Circars. The government of the Nizam had hitherto been little more than nominal; the great Zamindars were turbulent and refractory; and the new officials of the Company were, from the very nature of the case, but imperfectly acquainted with the customs and feelings of the people, and with the art of governing

¹² Broadly, the Ganjam and Vizagapatam Act of 1839 covered certain tracts in the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam, whereas the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 covered Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli taluks, the Rampa territory in Godavari District and the Laccadive Islands in the Indian Ocean (in addition to tracts covered by the Act of 1839).

¹³ Note, the Board of Revenue is a statutory body of the Presidency and consists of three members, normally from the Indian Civil Service. The board “is responsible for seeing that the District Collectors and their subordinates discharge their respective duties properly and that all orders and regulations are properly carried out and for this purpose is vested with disciplinary powers” (*Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol VI, 1930: 27).

them. It was considered advisable, therefore, to administer the government for the present in exactly the same way as it had been hitherto administered (Morris 1878: 244).

Now, of course, the East India Company and later the British Crown had inherited Mughal revenue and governance systems. Most of the hilly and jungle tracts had a tributary relationship with the central authority of the day. There was no direct presence of the central authority in those regions, and their internal governance was largely left to themselves. However, this changed during British colonisation. The latter needed to generate knowledge of the newly acquired territories, and it demanded military and other administrative expeditions into areas governed and managed by the people of that area. Therefore, land surveys were done, revenue or tax rates were fixed, and later on, the inheritance of zamindars were all brought under the purview of the law. This led to various disturbances across the territory occupied by the British, from skirmishes in Malabar to the hilly tracts of Northern Circars to foreground issues besieging the Madras Presidency as a whole.

The rule of law was generally absent in the Northern Circars; and Morris even reported that constant factionalism, warfare, and the absence of a central authority could prevail upon the local forces led by zamindars to be more independent and overtly aggressive. It is pertinent to note that the Zamindar of Polavaram and the Mansabdar (revenue official) of the Rampa territory resided in the hills. This location is critical in their staging of insubordination and 'rebellions', since the hills of the Eastern Ghats along the river Godavari are considered difficult terrain to administer and enforce. Morris also recorded that the courts of justice, even during the Mohammedan rule of the region, was restricted only to main towns like Rajahmundry and Ellore.

The report prepared by George Russell - the *Reports on the Disturbances in Purla Kimed, Vizagapatam and Goomsoor in 1832-36* in two volumes (hereafter referred to as the Russell Report) - on disturbances in Ganjam and Vizagapatam was finalised on 11 May 1837. Singularly, for Russell, the 'strangers' in the 'frontier' was the root cause of the disturbances – concomitant with the introduction of the Permanent Settlement and

interference by the Court of law.¹⁴ The new taxation regime entangled with succession disputes to further animate these disturbances. Various stakeholders used the hills as a place for retreat, and staging opposition to the British as well other native opponents. Russell assessed the overall situation and outlined the challenges in exercising British power in the region.

From his letter to the Chief Secretary at Fort St. George (Vol II of the Russell Report), it is clear that the colonial power was searching for means to govern the region without provoking any further challenge to their authority. Russell prominently advised the government not to be revenue-driven, but rather focus on stabilising the region through military action, win the trust of the people, and then establish the moral influence of the British government. The increasing responsibilities of the local officer (District Collector), an overall lack of knowledge about the territory, and the need to ensure peace triggered a discussion on devising an appropriate administrative structure. Russell urged the continuation of the earlier British policy of not interfering in the matters of the hill zamindars; and, hence, the attempts to introduce the permanent settlement taxation regime and jurisdiction of the Court over the matters of such zamindaris needed to be stopped. He requested an administrative apparatus similar to the Regulation XIII of 1833 devised after “extensive disturbances on the south western Frontiers of Bengal” or Regulation V of 1818 applicable in Cuttack.¹⁵

Following his recommendation, the Government of India resolved to task two judges to draft an act in consultation with the Board of Revenue.¹⁶ This act is the Ganjam and Vizagapatam Act of 1839, differentiating the administration in the plains and the hilly regions. The overall reasoning is reproduced verbatim:

1. In speaking to the greater frequency of disturbances in Ganjam than in the neighbouring province of Cuttack, people are apt to overlook the difference in their internal administration. In Ganjam the Zemindars and all connected with them are subject to the

¹⁴ The words ‘strangers’ and ‘frontier’ are directly used by Russell in his report. Note also that the first volume of the report was submitted on 12 August 1836, and the second on 3 March 1837.

¹⁵ Paragraph 59 on page no. 49 of the Third Report on Goomsoor dated 11 May 1837 addressed to the Chief Secretary from the *Selections from the Records of the Madras Government* (1856), No XXIV. Reports on the Disturbances in Purla Kimedy, Vizagapatam and Goomsoor in 1832-36 by Mr. G. E. Russell in Two Volumes. (Hereafter abbreviated as SRMG).

¹⁶ SRMG, Para 14 of the No 1619 Extract from the Minutes of Consultation on 21 November 1837.

Courts and general regulations, in common with the inhabitants of the Carnatic... In Cuttack, on the other hand, Zemindars are expressly exempted from the operation of the general regulations, free from all interference in the internal Government of their country... Another pregnant source of irritation and disturbances arising out of the permanent settlement, was the abrogation of the right of the ruling power to select the son or near relative most acceptable to the people and best qualified to fulfil the duties of Zemindar, and leaving the title of succession to be settled by the Courts.¹⁷

2. The great error was in supposing that a system adapted to Districts where the authority of Government is paramount, could be applicable to these mountainous tracts where up to the present period after a lapse of more than thirty years, if we expect those hill districts which are under the immediate management of the Collector, we in truth possess no police and no power.¹⁸
3. In my judgement the course best adapted to present circumstances will be that which, while it shall add to the weight and influence of the local authority, will remove, as far as possible, existing cause of irritation on the part of the Hill Zemindars, and I would recommend with a view to this end both in Ganjam and Vizagapatam that those tributaries, be exempted from the jurisdiction of the ordinary Courts, and placed exclusively under the Collector of the district, and that the powers now vested in the Criminal Judge and Courts of Appeal and Circuit be transferred to that Officer, modified so far as to dispense with Mahomedan law and provide for a reference to the Foujdaree Adawlut in cases where he may consider it proper to adjudge punishment exceeding the competency of the Criminal Judge... The jurisdiction of the Courts in all other parts of the districts would remain the same as at present.¹⁹

Later on, the Government of Madras introduced *The Ganjam and Vizagapatam Act of 1839* as Act no 24 of 1839. The Act exempted the operation of the rules for the administration of civil and criminal justice as well as those for the collection of revenue in 34 zamindaris and estates in the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam. Agents to the Government were appointed for the governance of these regions. Under the Act of 1839, the Collector as the agent of the Governor was responsible for revenue and administered the region, including the policing of the region.

Furthermore, Russell was “anxious to stop the barbaric practice of human sacrifice of the wild hill tribes,” but recommended a slow and gradual interaction to stop the practice, as according to him, any coercion or proscription by law will be construed as enmity

¹⁷ SRMG, Para 57 (page no 47) of the Third Report.

¹⁸ Ibid.: Para 58 (page nos 47-48).

¹⁹ Ibid.: Para 61 (page no 51).

towards the tribal religion and provoke strong clan feeling leading to further ‘disturbances’ against the British administration.²⁰ Even though the “wild race feared and distrusted the British,” he noted that their “prejudices of caste have little influence” on them, and hence “less backward for a free intercourse.” Accordingly, he concluded that “there seems every reason to hope that this peculiarity in their national character, and their taste for foreign productions, by leading to more frequent and unreserved communication with the Officers of Government and the inhabitants of the low country, and thus extending their knowledge, will gradually wean them from this barbarous superstition.”²¹

From these observations, it is quite clear that the life of the tribals residing in the frontier territory was not a determining factor in creating the administrative enclave. The colonial administration, while sensitive to the tribal nature of fear and distrust, nevertheless focused on ways and means to incorporate them into the mainstream society and people. Russell, in fact, wanted to improve relations with the tribes, and even saw them as more receptive than the caste Hindus. Undeniably, it can be deduced that a gradual mode of integration was the strategy ahead, even as the classification of the territory rested on administrative reasons like the availability of a coercive state apparatus of police to monitor and enforce the rule of law:

It has always been my study in the exercise of the power confided to me during the insurrections to the Northward, to avoid committing the Government by any order which it might not have the means to enforce... In my judgement, our aim should be to improve, to the utmost, our intercourse with the tribes nearest to us, with the view to civilize and enlighten them, and so reclaim them from the savage practice, using our moral influence rather than our power.²²

Indeed, if not for the ‘disturbances’ triggered by the zamindars, he wanted to remove all barriers for free transit and encourage the importation of goods. Russell’s intent, clearly, to win the trust and slowly assimilate them to the ‘mainstream civilisation’ needs careful scrutiny. Was the Orientalist gaze driving the paternalist attitude towards the tribals in the hills? Why did the British continue the pre-colonial arrangement of non-interference

²⁰ Ibid.: Para 67 (page nos 55-56).

²¹ Ibid.: Paras 69-70 (page no 57).

²² Ibid.: Para 73 (page no 58).

in the matters of the hill zamindars? Alternatively, is it something else operative here in these framings? Let us elaborate.

Was there a consistent ideological response to the tribal peoples and their places? According to an interesting academic interlocutor of tribal studies, Uday Chandra (2013: 140), ‘primitivism’ is the justificatory argument to govern primitive places and peoples. Broadly, primitivism as an imperial liberal ideology justified direct rule over tribal peoples and places as exceptions within the domain of law. For Chandra, the tribal zones of exception by paternalistic administrators actually secured the ends of primitivism. He even locates the formation of ‘primitive places’ for ‘most backward or least developed human societies’ in the Act of 1874. As he maintains:

Primitivism is a type of liberal imperial ideology of rule that has justified the subjugation of populations and places described as wild, savage or, simply, primitive. Primitive populations were, paradoxically, subjects of both improvement and protection in colonized societies. Much like children need to be nurtured and protected yet improved and guided toward adult capacities of reason and self-governance, primitive peoples, too, were deemed to be exceptional in their need for both improvement and protection via a regime of direct colonial rule (Chandra 2013: 138).

Evidently, Chandra’s ‘primitivism’ argument is located within the discursive terrain of classical liberalism. Indeed, through a recourse to Karuna Mantena’s (2010) framing, he asserts that upholding the customary arrangements in the tribal areas was central to the structures of colonial rule after the revolt of 1857, where earlier the colonial administration of the tribal areas had been understood as the practical exigencies of colonial frontiers. According to Chandra, the dual mandate of protection and improvement embedded in primitivism led to the passing of the Act of 1874.

Even more emphatically, Chandra urges that “[p]rimitivism should [-] be viewed as a justificatory argument to govern primitive places and as an anthropological theory that explained the most backward or least developed human societies” (ibid.: 139). Now, it seems to us that two concerns stemming from his assertion need some qualification, given the history and trajectory of the colonial law-making process. Primarily, the formation of the ‘primitive place’ needs to be located in the pre-British arrangements of administration and justice; and, by and large, the British sought to reproduce the pre-

existing legal frameworks, especially in the 1800s. Secondly, the more important question is about the forms in which the British sought to continue the past arrangements. Manifestly, these concerns hinge on the position that ‘primitivism’, as a ruling ideology, does not sufficiently help us to understand the construction of tribal areas. Indeed, reading the British colonial policy as a form of customary rights for the tribals arises due to the Scheduled districts mirroring those areas wherein there were social groups deemed barbarous and uncivilised in the pre-colonial period (cf. Damodaran’s 2006 exegesis on Chhotanagpur). Besides, the colonial stereotype of isolated and uncultured communities in the Scheduled areas mirrored the British tribal construct in Africa, and hence the arguments to the effect that the Act of 1874 inaugurated protectionism of the tribals.

Be that as it may, let us now look at certain ‘topographical facts’ pertaining to the Madras Presidency as mentioned in the colonial records. Edgar Thurston (1913), in his documentation of the Madras Presidency, lists Nilgiris, Wayanad table-land, Western Ghats (Anaimalais, Nelliampathis, Cardamom and Pirmed Hills, Palni Hills) and Eastern Ghats (Maliahs of Ganjam, Jeypore Hills of Vizagapatam district, Nallamalais and Erramalas of Kurnool district, Palkonda of Tirupati, Nagari and Javadi hills of North Arcot, Kalrayan, Kollaimalai and Shevaroy hills of Salem and Pachaimalais of Trichinopoly) as the hills and forests of the presidency.²³ It will be pertinent to note that certain wild races were identified in the islands of the Madras Presidency. At any rate, the statement of hills and forests of Madras Presidency should be seen in the context of the operation of the Scheduled districts act only in the Maliahs of Ganjam and Jeypore Hills of Vizagapatam district of Eastern Ghats, and later extended to the Upper Godavari District or the Bhadrachalam Agency Areas and Laccadive Islands. It is interesting to note that all hilly areas and their people were not classified as Scheduled districts or backward tracts or even partially excluded by the Madras Government. In this context, the colonial construction of hill-stations is an inescapable British intervention. A cursory examination of ‘hill-stations’ and their tribals can clarify the mixed British colonial attitude towards tribals.

²³ This volume is part of the ‘Provincial Geographies Series’ of British India. It was an attempt to present a detailed socio-cultural and political economy of various provinces held by the British. As part of the series, the acclaimed colonial administrator-ethnologist Edgar Thurston had recorded an overall view of the Madras Presidency.

Importantly, ‘hill-stations,’ the third colonial urban space after ‘civil stations’ and ‘cantonments,’ approximated a sense of being at home for the colonisers (see King 1976). For the colonisers, largely, these locations were a space to avoid authority, indigenous population, and a home away from home for its pleasant climate removed from all the heat and tropical diseases. According to King (1976), between 1819 and 1870, approximately 80 hill-stations sprouted across British India, which he goes on to classify as four clusters, namely, Shimla-Mussoorie, Darjeeling-Shillong, Pune-Mahabaleshwar, and the Nilgiris in South India. Shimla and Mussoorie started as military bases for defending the British India frontiers, and later, like other hill-stations, became an abode for the European children and women. A relatively lesser number of natives in the hills, due to cultural and economic reasons, also drove the colonisers into the mountains. Slowly hill-stations became spaces for travel resorts and leisure activities and the possibility of an interface with pristine nature.

Likewise, Arnold (1983) drives our attention to another utility of the hill-station for the British, in that they contemplated settling a population of at least one million Europeans in India. However, at the early stages of these discussions, the fear of a new rebellious colony following what had happened in America stalled the development of ‘settler colonialism’ in British India. Furthermore, the possibility of European cultivators upsetting the existing agrarian arrangements (which, incidentally, were the biggest sources of revenue) and the loss of respect from the Indians due to the arrival of poor Europeans and Eurasians placed more doubts on initiating settler arrangements. Importantly, the House of Commons convened a committee in 1858 for discussing the possibilities of settling and colonising the hill districts of India. The committee concluded that India could not be home for labouring emigrants like Australia or America. Besides, the Revolt of 1857 had doused the remaining vestiges of the settler-colonial project. The political and administrative restructuring after the revolt would have been disturbed for accommodating a settler community. All the same, the regional governments in Madras and Bombay scouted for possible ‘hill-stations’ for colonisation (Graham 1870).

The hill-stations reminded the British of the romanticised English village away from the regimented cantonment life. More resolutely, the British often constructed these hill-tribes as different from the plain Hindu caste groups; they even romanticised their way of living and labelled them as ‘noble savages’ in Shimla, Darjeeling, and Ootacamund (see Kennedy 1996). Indeed, the advent of the British led to different reactions from the hill communities. At some places, the latter resisted through looting and plunder like the Bhils of Mount Abu; and elsewhere they retreated into isolation like the Todas of Ootacamund (see Pradhan 2013). Furthermore, at Ootacamund, the British declared the Toda pastoral lands as wastelands or unused lands, and assigned it for coffee and tea plantations (Philip 1998). Elsewhere in the Madras Presidency, the colonial priority for resource extraction led to the exclusion of tribal communities and the hills out of the ambit of the Act of 1874. A case in point is the Malabar District. According to Innes and Evans (1915), the name Mala-bar means the hill country, and they recorded the presence of tribals in that region. The extraction of timber led to the colonial inducements for non-tribal migration and agriculture in the district, leading to land acquisition and development of private forests (Varghese 2015).

Did the identification of hill and jungle communities as spaces for protection depend on the climatic and resources endowment conditions? This is an important question to consider. For instance, elsewhere in the Madras Presidency, particularly in Salem, the tribals were seen as ‘revenue bearing souls’ (Saravanan 2006: 74). Quite often, the agrarian policy did not extend to the hill-communities due to difficulty in accessing those villages. Cederlof (2005), in the context of Nilgiris, shows the shift in the colonial attitude of conceding Toda’s pastoralist rights over land from 1819 to 1829 and later subsuming the Toda claim under the ‘superior principle of sovereign rule’ to acquire their pasture lands. The latter development coincided with the increasing influence of the Madras government in the region and the enforcement of a uniform code of rules and regulations.

But, of course, the shift in the British attitude towards land use and rights of the enclosures with custom-based common rights follows the English legal debates; indeed, for improving the land and benefit of the nation, the English courts often set aside the

customary rights (Cederlof 2005: 78). Quite definitively, the administrative approach of creating enclaves so as to hold and control the ‘wild natives’ started in Ireland during the British colonisation of Ulster in the late 16th century (Mamdani 2020: 36). Likewise, across in America, the British formulated Two Nations system to govern the natives. Besides, elsewhere, the Ottoman Empire had carved out spaces for non-Muslims for self-governance, although they were still subjected to imperial taxation and rule. The French in Algeria allowed the natives to be governed by their customs (Heartfield 2011). Importantly, as such, Thomas Metcalf (1995: x) reminds us that no single coherent idea informed the British vision of India. The colonialists did seek legitimacy through just governance, with the right to property and the rule of law taken to define a civilised people. Arguably, too, the colonial anxiety to legitimise its rule in India propelled the introduction of the rule of law. Thus, Edmund Burke’s insistence on the interests of the Indian people and the British being largely the same emerged in this context to contain the corruption of the British stakeholders in India. Importantly, Philp Francis, who visualised the rule of property in Bengal, conceded that the British there had subverted the existing system of legitimation and order. Hence, he granted the ‘right of the zamindar’ to know how much revenue is to be paid to the government. He even distinguished India’s property rule different from Oriental despotism and the European feudal system, seeing the Bengal zamindar as a gentleman-entrepreneur, the source of English prosperity (see Metcalf 1995: esp. 20-21).

Undoubtedly, the forces of liberalism, evangelism, and capitalism enveloped British rule as a whole. In fact, classical liberalism as a worldview expected that they could change people with law, education, and free trade; indeed, India was a laboratory for the liberal administrative state (see Metcalf 1995: 29). James Mill, who served the East India Company from 1819 to 1836, even proposed a code of laws oriented to securing the structure of property, since he believed it was the key to releasing individual agency. Furthermore, his son John Stuart Mill - who also served the East India Company between 1823-1858 - advocated that the benefits of representative government can only be enjoyed by people fulfilling certain conditions; singularly, the liberal idealism as best reflected in Macaulay’s 1835 Minutes on Education. In these settings, the rule of law and the integuments of legal order are meant to guarantee private property (Metcalf 1995:

35). Undoubtedly, in the context of British India, it was Warren Hastings who had sought to structure the administration with Indian content with minimum tweaking of the existing traditions and socio-economic arrangements, albeit with paradoxes as Cohn (1996) has shown. Subsequently, Cornwallis introduced the rule of law and developed systematic improvements in British administration, which coincided with the emergence of the Utilitarians, led by Jeremy Bentham, who demanded administrative and legal reforms based on simple principles of governance (see Stokes 1959). This set the stage for the 'Age of Reform' initiated by Charles Grant. Indeed, according to Michael Mann (2004), a missionary evangelism and utilitarianism pushed the agenda for reforming India.

Amidst these fluxes and pulls, as stated earlier, the Act of 1874 is a further consolidation of various non-regulation acts operating in British India. Doubtless, this process of consolidation follows the codification process of law in colonial India. In fact, administering order to the 'lawless land of India' occupied many colonial minds. On the one hand, there was Robert Orme, who blamed the existing native Indian laws for the 'disorder in India', and William Jones' advocacy for a synthesis of Indian and English laws. On the other hand, Thomas Macaulay argued for the 'superior' British penal law (see Harlow and Carter 2003, for the ground of these contentions). Of course, the 1857 Revolt did shift the colonial project of civilising Indians from a grand project to adjusting itself to the character of the native people. Thus, Henry Maine, the Victorian legal theorist and the Law Member of the Viceroy's Council in India (1862-1867), steered this change in the colonial law-making project (see Mantena 2010). At any rate, and perhaps more stringently, the application of English law started with the hanging of a person under the English Statute of 1728 (see Ilbert 1898: 387). Sir Courtenay Ilbert, a legal member in the Council of the Governor-General of India (1882-1886), explicitly stated that the East India Company undertook serious consideration for applying the law to the 'natives' only after the takeover of Bengal. Largely, Warren Hastings devised the form of administration of justice for Bengal, and did not want to overhaul the existing form of justice completely. The existing Mahommedan laws mostly oversaw criminal justice with certain modifications, even as the respective personal laws governed matters of civil justice. By the early 1800s, yet, the colonial judicial officers were using multiple

registers of law ranging from English Acts of Parliament for British India, English Common Law and Constitution, Mahommedan Law and Hindu Law to charters, regulations, and circular orders (see Cohn 1996).

In fact, Ilbert, the former colonial legal officer, gives us an insight into the making of the colonial law, especially about when and why the English law superseded the native law. He reports that, in the initial period of colonisation, the Britishers followed native laws for the natives and English laws for the Englishmen. This was largely in accord with a process that kept in mind the tradition of governing the conquered lands, and Ilbert specifically cites the Roman Empire as an example. Not surprisingly, he locates the origin of personal law in the Roman arrangement of law and justice. This arrangement of different laws, as he held, was to be followed until the colonial power attained complete sovereignty. As urged above, in the case of British India, the colonial government tried to do the same, but however they confronted serious problems. Firstly, the population of British India could not be exclusively divided into Mohammedans and Hindus; secondly, there were problems in acquiring and translating texts for usage; and, thirdly, there were multiple interpretations of the religious texts. More importantly, certain texts could not be used for arbitrating contentions such as, for example, the law of contract. An important reason, according to Ilbert, was that “native law often embodied rules repugnant to the traditions and morality of the ruling race. An English magistrate could not recognise the unregenerate criminal law of Indian Mahomedanism.” (Ilbert 1898: 403).

Due to this contingency, the Indian Law Commission was formed in 1833; and later the Indian Penal Code and the Indian Evidence Act were formulated in 1860 and 1872 respectively, for a uniform code of criminal law for all natives, whether European or Indian. Ilbert even specifically reports that “[W]hen the time came for codifying the substantive civil law, it was found necessary to steer clear of, and make exceptions with respect to, important branches of native law” (ibid.: 396). Indeed, since Hindus and Muslims did not want the court to interfere in religious matters, the native laws were not codified. Additionally, too, it was difficult for the British to frame a concrete set of rules and regulations acceptable to all sects (ibid.: 405).

The dilemmas and challenges faced by the British lawmakers, as recounted in the foregoing paragraphs, contextualise the framing and application of colonial laws and their attendant regime of administration. Ilbert, as we just saw, had suggested that as far as matters of civil jurisdiction are concerned, different social groups would have separate personal laws. The point to be remembered is that it was not a colonial construction; rather, it was the continuation of the earlier legal system. Indeed, the disaggregation of colonial law on these grounds is important to understand the underpinnings – the various motives, factors, and actors - in the composition of the colonial law. In fact, Ilbert further states that practical concerns motivated the colonial power to do what they had to do.

Now, of course, the practical concern is not necessarily devoid of ideology; nevertheless, the key is how should one understand the role of ideology in these actions? It would be pertinent to recall the remarks of the anthropologist Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf while delivering the *Sir George Birdwood Memorial Lecture* at the Royal Society of Arts on 18 May 1950. Poignantly, in the context of the inauguration of the Republic of India, he explicitly stated that:

... [A]lthough they introduced the principle of the equality of all citizens before the law, they recognized and respected certain differences between the various communities constituting the population of India, and legislated separately for groups that stood in cultural and social isolation. *In so doing they endorsed existing distinctions*; but, on the other hand, there can be no doubt that the improvement of communications and the development of a modern economy in their time greatly accelerated the assimilation of smaller and weaker communities to the general pattern of Hindu culture, and that in the British era the cultural unification of India progressed more rapidly than during any previous period of comparable duration (Furer-Haimendorf 1950: 998, emphasis added).

Arguably, the key statement made by Furer-Haimendorf here is, “In so doing they endorsed existing distinctions.” In other words, the reproduction of the existing social structures, as understood by the colonisers, was their motive.²⁴ As such, why did the colonial government specifically entrench the special provisions, expressed as Agency Laws in the Bhadrachalam region and other areas of the Northern Circars of the Madras

²⁴ Presently, many works – see, for instance, Cohn 1996 and Mantena 2010 - show how the British constructed their knowledge about India and its people. The role played by officials commissioned by the British administration, and the understanding of the key informants and translator’s attendant to the enumerative process, have largely shaped the imagination of India.

Presidency? One plausible place to look for an answer is the representation made by the Government of Madras to the Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission in the late 1920s. Following is the testimony given by the Madras Government regarding the reasons driving the colonial government to exempt these areas from the general laws and regulations:

Owing to its hilly and jungly character, the prevalence of malaria and the absence of communications, the area has hitherto remained almost completely underdeveloped and before the Reforms of 1920-21 was kept exempt from the operation of the laws in force in the plains and the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts; it was administered directly by the Governor in Council through the agency of the Collectors of the Districts; and for the guidance of his Agents and their subordinate officers a few simple and elastic rules of procedure has been framed under Acts XXIV of 1839 and XIV of 1874 (Indian Statutory Commission, Vol VI 1930: 139).

V. P. Menon, an important colonial bureaucrat and chronicler of the making of India, observed that the framing of 'Backward Tracts' in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms was based on the understanding that the areas designated as backward tracts had populations that were "primitive or politically immature, and there was as yet no material on which to found public institutions" (Menon, 1965: 48).²⁵ Indeed, considering Menon's institutional location, this observation of the colonial dispensation echoes the Russell report called attention earlier in our order of narration. To restate, the Russell report had maintained that the general administration practised in the plains are unsuitable for regions wherein authority and the rule of law of a centralised government was non-existent or new. All the same, primitiveness, according to Menon's observation, is more about the conduciveness of political institutions. However, as we have seen, the colonial administration also largely classified people in such regions as wild and savage. Nevertheless, precisely by not extending the Scheduled Districts Act of 1839 and 1874 to all the regions populated by 'savages' and 'wild races', it can definitively be claimed that it was more of a governance issue than a strict civilising mission. Moreover, in the representation made by the Government of Madras to the Indian Statutory Commission, we can further discern the administrative paternalist attitude towards the tribals:

²⁵ Vagpal Pangunni Menon (1894-1966) was the constitutional advisor to the last three Viceroys of British India. He suggested, to Lord Mountbatten, that British India should be divided into two dominions. Post-independence, he assisted Sardar Patel in his role as the Secretary and Advisor to the Ministry of States. He was a key figure in the integration of various princely states with the Union of India. As is generally known, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1918 was the basis of The Government of India Act, 1919.

The inhabitants of the tract were said to be for the most part simple and ignorant jungle tribes whose education was still elementary and who retained their ancestral customs as to tenure of and, devolution of property, family or tribal organization and social observances; they were in fact still in very early stages of civilization, used bows and arrows, wore little clothing, were timid, excitable and easily imposed upon and totally unfit for any form or degree of political advance (Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. VI 1930: 139).

Two specific observations here need some further clarification – (a) the inhabitants of the tract were said to be, for the most part, ‘simple and ignorant jungle tribes’, and (b) they were, in fact, still in ‘very early stages of civilization ... and totally unfit for any form or degree of political advance’. First, the statement on the inhabitants of the tract clearly brushes aside the presence of, we can say, non-simple and non-ignorant jungle tribes that have been living in the area. In fact, Bhadrachalam town, according to the first settlement report of the region by Glasfurd (1869), had more Brahmins than the tribals.²⁶ Moreover, the northern parts of the Bhadrachalam agency like Cherla had a considerable presence of non-tribals and was part of the Kakatiya Empire. This tangled history is crucial in understanding the present-day problems of ‘land alienation’ in Adivasi areas, which is a different story for another context. All the same, the absence of non-tribals in the area may have contributed to the administration not developing certain services that it usually would set up in other regions. A pertinent point to be recalled, besides, is that the climate of the region, being very hot and malaria-prone, made it an undesirable location for the Madras government. Secondly, as far as the conditions for ‘political advancement’ are concerned, the tract was rocked by a series of rebellions against the British policies. In fact, in its report to the Commission, the Madras Government reported ‘*fituris*’ (a local word for disturbances) and the rebellion of Alluri Sitarama Raju. It was recommended by the government that “this disturbance covering a period of two years afforded ample evidence that the conditions of the Agency had not advanced to such an extent as to justify any modification in the system of administration” (Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. VI 1930: 141).

²⁶ As part of the larger revenue and mapping exercise, Chief Commissioner of Central Province J H Morris deputed Captain Glasfurd to do the settlement report of the Upper Godavari District, and the task was completed by October 1862. The report, *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Upper Godavari District, Central Provinces*, Nagpur: Chief Commissioners Office Press published in 1869, is the first official report of the people and region.

All the same, the prevailing paternalist gaze fused into the category of the tribe in the 1931 Census. As mentioned earlier, it consolidated the administrative definition of tribes and, significantly, the Census Commissioner J. H. Hutton mobilised the support for excluding the tribals from the general administration in the Government of India Act of 1935 (see Singh 1996). Appendix II of the 1931 Census deals with primitive tribes. Hutton largely considers tribes as an administrative problem, when the latter indulges in looting, raiding, or any other form of aggression. Under those circumstances, he recommended a flexible administrative approach with minimal interference into tribal affairs. Any sudden increase of contact and development of communication would, it was held, derail the ongoing process of slow adaptation of the tribals with the nearby communities, and thus creating more problems for administration. In fact, Russell had earlier made a similar point in his report. Furthermore, Hutton also cautions about the application of 'alien laws' like excise, forest regulations, and money-lending regulations that can disturb the tribal mode of living, even while maintaining that the customary practices of inheritance and succession followed by the tribals are in conflict with the general laws. Hutton even cites an example in Assam of a tribal person who could not nominate his brother's son, according to the tribal custom, for his General Provident Fund since the law accepts only his child; and that, hence, hostility and fear is generated against the British administration. Thus, he advocates the system of non-regulation zones for administering tribal areas (see Appendix II of the 1931 Census, pp.506-507).

As outlined above, obtaining the traces of primitivism through the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 or in the classification of backward tracts or partially excluded areas is bound to be contentious. The notes from the Madras Presidency elucidated earlier illustrate the point. Doubtless, there is a multiplicity of impulses and motivations guiding the British imperial policy towards the tribals. At one level, they wanted to establish their rule of law by containing the various 'disturbances'. This was important also for the commercial requirements of the colonial state. At the same time, the larger project of colonialism was based on defining and establishing differences between the coloniser and the colonised. To be sure, the coloniser here, in order to justify colonisation as a moral and ethical commitment, operates within an ideology of primitivism, even as it must be conceded that there are multiple agents involved in the production of colonial differences

like missionaries, administrators, and anthropologists (see, among others, Bhukya 2008). However, the key question is: what actual role did they play in the production and imagination of tribals and tribal areas as registered in the law and administration of both colonial and post-colonial regimes of India?²⁷

Law as a specific socio-historical register enables us to capture the tendencies of the colonial state apparatus. The submissions made to various constitutional reform initiatives, like that of the Madras Government to the Indian Statutory Commission, give us an insight into the administrative rationality for continuing with (or discontinuing) certain policies and regulations. Having said so, it must be conceded that the formation of the tribal (or Adivasi) subject when viewed from the state, that is, the British colonial perspective, is only one aspect of the whole process of identity formation and social agency. The colonial anthropologists, missionaries, and administrators, through their systems of representation and knowledge, also contributed to the making of tribal/Adivasi subjects through the modern period. Be that as it may, our restriction to the colonial legal register is influenced by two reasons. For one, prior to British colonialism, the tribals/Adivasis were largely either independent or had a tributary relationship with neighbouring kingdoms, and it is with the advent of the British that they were systematically incorporated into a centralised system of power and authority. Secondly, with the British colonial intervention, the social groups classified as tribals/Adivasis, who are quite diverse and socially heterogeneous, were all clubbed under one label as tribals, and policies and programs were formulated for them at an all-India level, thereby affecting their life worlds forever.

Indeed, in order to administer and govern, the colonisers needed to 'know' the population that they were handling; however, along this same register, the ruling of the colonised could not wait for the process of knowing the colonial subjects to be holistic and complete. Hence, the administrators with the available information would often set up

²⁷ This critical reminder may not be necessary. But note, the allusion to the 'colonial' is a reference to both the East India Company and the British Crown. The East India Company clearly oversaw the early engagements of the imperial ideology and the 'tribals' at large. Hence, it will be analytically and historiographically important to historicize the legal foundations of imperial tribal policies and attitudes before 1858 in the registers of the East India Company, since the 'corporation' operated as a sovereign state concerning colonial British India. A helpful reference here would be Stern (2011).

administrative mechanisms. Not surprisingly, in the colonial dispensation, often construed as an 'ethnographic state' (see Dirks 2002: 43-60), the art of governing and the ethnographic enterprise as such were either at tandem or obtaining simultaneously on both the planes of knowledge and power. Such a perspective is important while excavating the location and history of ideas, concepts, and identities generated during colonialism. It helps us to understand not only what triggered the formulation of certain categories and identities, but also enables us to disentangle the effects of specific governance strategies and scholarly representations in the making of an identity (or category) during the processes of colonisation. Sometimes it is the scholarly characterisation that finds its resonance in administrative parlance; and, at times, it is the administrative characterisation that comes to be used by social scientific investigation to understand society and people, while of course there is the possibility of both the administrative and scholarly enterprises to criss-cross each other. Accordingly, in a review of the early colonial administrators and their history-writing project, Lees (2014) reminds us of the impact of the colonial knowledge production of the British Indian society in today's India. He points out that the colonial knowledge produced by the administrator-scholars of India can be seen in two ways. One way, as Cohn and others have pointed out, is the role of the ruled to be a passive object of information; and the other way, as Bayly and others have noted, is where the ruled are rendered as an active participant of the knowledge construction process wherein they are able to constrain and delimit the knowledge extraction abilities of the rulers (Lees 2014 has the details about the ranges of this scholarship). Likewise, Fuller (2016) has demonstrated the limitations of anthropological knowledge of the 'official anthropologists' regarding caste, which had limited influence in the policymaking process and the overall constitution of the colonial state.

At the same time, in the context of the colonial law-making process as a whole, the specific challenge is to tease out how the Adivasi subject was being formed. The broad contours of what happened, and did not happen, in the Madras Presidency have been outlined in the foregoing pages. But principally, in order to grasp the making of the Act of 1874, it may be imperative to get at the other enactments that it repealed. Towards

this end, one could examine the history and background of Act no 37 of 1855 and Act no 10 of 1857, which exempted the operation of general laws and regulations in the Santhal region of Bengal Presidency. Once we incorporate an understanding of how and why legislations were made prior to the Act of 1874 - like, for instance, Dhagamwar's (1986 and 2005) work on the early colonial period and the Santhals - what becomes clear is that it was overall the practical contingencies of defining and ruling more than any overarching theory or influence which had shaped the early colonial law regarding Adivasis.

More stringently, however, it is important to state that two streams of discussions animate our present engagement, namely, the idea of the local and the formation of property rights in colonial India. The relaxation of the colonial policy for incorporating new territories and population based on local conditions is, undoubtedly, a crucial register for further historical reflection. Chakrabarti (2021) has recently discussed the local as the limit to a universal model in his examination of the agrarian relations in British India, lucidly maintaining that the local is central to the structuring of the universal. Quite singularly, he urges us to address the dimensions of the property-sovereignty relationship based on the expression of the local, the pulls of political economy, and the demands of governance (*ibid.*: 2).²⁸ Alternatively, Whitehead (2010) uses Locke's category of wasteland to compare forest laws and revenue settlement laws, thereby blurring the distinction between forest and field among caste, tribe, and peasantry. Indeed, enclosing the land and bestowing private property rights on them had more economic productivity consequences than commonly held lands where a certain unkempt state of nature obtained. To be sure, the Lockean notion translated into the Permanent Settlement in India, wherein permanent property rights created a class of 'gentlemen', even as the security of tenure was supposed to increase political stability and the prospects of land revenue. Not surprisingly, on these terms, various social groups who were doing shifting cultivation or leaving their land idle or holding them in common, were construed as unproductive. The process, of course, did not help in commercialising the Bengal zamindars, and hence the rights were assigned to the tillers of the land, and the Ryotwari

²⁸ A fuller engagement with the ground of these issues is attempted later in Ch.5 (Sect. 5.2 in particular).

settlement emerged in its place. Thus, according to Whitehead (2010: 87), the revenue settlement arrangements were an amalgamation of Lockean definitions of value, productivity, and wasteland, combined with a Ricardian disdain of patristic landlordism. Additionally, the 1865 Forest Act had excluded the communities living off the forests from accessing the same. In fact, despite warnings and requests from various district commissioners that the 1865 Act would slowly extinguish forest and hill communities, the central government did not have any concern for the tribals on this front.

More importantly, the labouring of the suggestion that the Act of 1839 did not consider the nature of the people of the region – whether identified as tribals, Adivasis or indigenous people - is quite material and crucial. Later developments in the protection and empowering of tribals use the regions identified in the Act of 1839 as Scheduled areas under the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Undoubtedly, it has been argued that the Constituent Assembly debates and the later incorporation of the Fifth Schedule “perpetuate the languages and logics of Partially and Wholly Excluded Areas defined in the Government of India Act (1935)” (Chandra 2013: 155). Moreover, the Act of 1839 has to be seen in the context of the larger debates within the British Empire regarding aboriginals and native peoples. There were many discussions and debates regarding tribal/aboriginal people in the colonised territories of the British Empire. According to many commentators of the British colonial policy and its impact, as also on its relationship with the native population, it was evident from the beginning of the 19th century that the native population across the Empire was adversely affected by the colonial policies. *The Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements) 1836*, published by Aborigines Protection Society, London, stands testimony to this fact.

If that is the case, then did George Russell incorporate such concerns in his reports? Quite definitively, as we have seen, Russell was concerned about the management of revenue without provoking any violence, for after all the rule of law was necessary for efficient revenue extraction and economic efficiency. Therefore, the exemption of general laws was a precursor to establishing order and reorienting the structures of rule to aid the revenue generation mechanism; otherwise, why was there an exemption to the

Zamindaries in Cuttack, say? It may be instructive, in this context, to restate his observation:

The civilization of the wild tribes with whom we have now for the first time become acquainted, will be an object no less interesting than important... Considering how desirable it is to improve our connexion with these tribes by removing all checks to the free transit of what they may give or receive in their dealings, and by encouraging the importation of goods likely to suit them, I would suggest the abolition of all duties within the Zemindaries of Goomsoor and Sooroodah, or if that be thought objectionable, their suspension for a period of years.²⁹

Furthermore, Russell speaks about the need to civilise and enlighten the tribals throughout his rendition. The above-mentioned observation did reek of a paternalistic attitude and perhaps even had a civilisational motive, wherein commercial and church interests were fused into one. Ostensibly, the objective was to slowly and steadily use material goods to assimilate tribes and other social groups with the commercial interests of the East India Company. Hence, the pre-1858 arrangements of frontier zones of legal-administrative exception, often understood as colonial exigencies in frontiers, is the institution of property regimes in India without any distinct tribal welfare motive. To be sure, most scheduling is a form of land settlement bereft of the ‘tribalness’ of the land; and, indeed, the simultaneous existence of hill stations, plantations, and reserved forests bear the weight of this argument.

Against this background, one could as well argue that, instead of protectionism, the colonial policy was gradualism. The specific policy orientation in extending the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 into the partially excluded areas provision in various Government of India Acts can be seen as a slow and systematic process of settling the ‘tribal groups’ and ‘tribal areas’ and preparing them for ‘progress’ as a gradual movement of change. Moreover, the process of sedentarisation and invitation of plainsmen into the tribal areas for teaching settled agriculture can be construed as a variant of the form of ‘settler colonisation.’ A later chapter (Ch.5) will detail this approach of seeing the non-tribals as settler colonisers in the context of our region. More immediately, in the context of the present chapter, a decisive issue emerges in the midst of the process of scheduling a region based exclusively on administrative grounds and

²⁹ SRMG, Para 79 (page no 67) of the Third Report.

having to do with the very pace of increasing communication with the distant tribals without throwing them off balance. Precisely, how long should the process be slow and gradual? The tribal nature of the region is a crucial factor, but the provision is built to slow down the process of contact and interaction. Under these circumstances, particularly, we should be venturing the question about how long we should be denying the tribals the choice of acculturation as a whole.

Evidently, from our foregoing discussion, it should be clear that the process of scheduling of the Bhadrachalam region was at one level an administrative convenience. It was also, on its own terms, an administrative exercise to 'improve' the region until political institutions can be introduced. Undoubtedly, the climatic and resource endowments of the region had also bracketed it as a partially excluded area, and not as a 'hill-station' or 'cantonment' or even a 'plantation area'. Overall, yet, the absence of a coherent British policy towards the tribal regions underlines the schemes of defining and ruling a territory. Of course, a combination of factors over a period of time went to produce the 'tribal region', including the Bhadrachalam area. A comparative-historical study of tribal regions with differential resource endowments and climatic conditions can illuminate and complicate the production of these zones as separate administrative spaces of rule.

In sum, the status and categorisation of the region as a tribal space, and attested also by the administrative definition, places particular demands on the region, such as the protection of tribal rights, lands, and customs. In this midst, the non-tribals are quite marginal to the imagination of the state and its votaries, although their (non-tribal) presence is a sociological fact to be adequately encountered. It is primarily in this backdrop that our dissertation moves into the fragments of life histories, including engagements with other communities, triggered by the unfolding administrative structures and developmental tendencies.

Chapter 4

A Mosaic of Contentious Mobilities and Identities: Hovering around Bhadrachalam

The contours of the administrative history as sounded out in our previous chapter (Ch.3) is extended here by engaging particularly with the representations of the people and the region during the colonial times. In many ways, these are the first impressions available to us in terms of the descriptions about the people themselves who obtain in the administered area. Indeed, the history of the people from the perspective of the state (in the first instance, the colonial state) gives them an identity. This further goes to shape the perspective in which the region comes to be seen in the later years. We also present two distinct episodes in the unfolding history of the region, namely, the migration of the Koyas as a response to certain administrative policies of the British government and the formation of an 'Excluded Areas Association' as a pressure group to retain the rights of the non-tribals in the agency areas. As such, even as the chapter indexes the wider developmental undercurrents bearing on the administrative aspects of the region, a fuller consideration of the same will be deferred to the next chapter as part of our detailing.

The present chapter anchors itself around the narratives of both the administrators and the people whom they administer as presented in the various primary and secondary sources traversed. These broad narratives capture not only their respective life histories, but also the history of the region. In doing so, what is being recovered is the imagination of the region from the perspective of its people as administered and/or governed. The narrations that we will work through, especially in the last section of this chapter (Sect.4.4 below), have been detailed as they were presented to the researcher. Consequently, certain factual errors and contradictory statements have not been brushed aside or corrected, since these statements and beliefs constitute the 'truth' of their lifeworld and are a key to grasping the space of their identities and identifications. As such, these narratives will enable us to understand how sections of the population

position themselves as part of the ongoing administrative history of the region as a whole. All the same, it will be pertinent to state here that the organizing principle of this chapter is to weave a narrative about how people belonging to different social groups represent their history under the shadow of the state, as well as address how this history mediates in their everyday interactions, negotiations, and assertions vis-à-vis the structures of governance obtaining in the area. Without doubt, what is attempted in the sections to follow can also be forwarded as a presentation of events and processes in the form of a people's representation of history. But, considering that it is mediated by the state and its administrative anchoring's, the orders of our narration here will attempt to reveal the tangled nature of the histories implicating the Bhadrachalam region.

4.1 Colonial Impressions of a Remote Outpost in British India

The British colonial administration needed to document every inch of their territory for governance purposes. In keeping with this orientation, therefore, the colonial administrators had also documented the Bhadrachalam region. Understandably, Lees (2014) has reminded us of the importance of these early colonial renderings in terms of their impact on future policy initiatives. He opines that the early historical documentation of various social groups and regions were unquestioned by later scholars, thereby consciously or unconsciously accepting these representations as true and accurate descriptions. Needless to say, in the previous chapter – Ch.3, Sect.3.5 in particular – we saw how certain colonial frameworks are carried forward by independent India in formulating policies and programs, especially in the case of tribal populations.

The Gazetteer of the Central Provinces of 1870, edited by Charles Grant, contains a detailed description and qualifies to be a comprehensive source of information about the configurations attaching to even the present-day Bhadrachalam region (see Grant 1870). Importantly, Grant opines that the description is “almost entirely taken from the Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the district by Captain Glasfurd” (ibid.: 491). In many ways, therefore, the first systematic description of the Bhadrachalam region and its people uses the settlement report prepared by Captain Glasfurd (1869), aspects of which will be more fully covered in our subsequent chapter dovetailing on key aspects of the developmental history of the region. All the same, for our purposes here, we must

note that the Upper Godavari District of the Central Provinces in British India consisted of Sironcha, Nugur, Albaka, Cherla, Bhadrachalam, and Rekhapalli taluks, where except for Sironcha, the rest of the sub-divisions constitute the Bhadrachalam region as configured for our study. As part of the larger revenue and mapping exercise, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces J. H. Morris had deputed Captain Glasfurd to do the Settlement report of the Upper Godavari District. The report outlined the socio-economic status of the region when the East India Company (EIC) took over the possession of the areas from the Nizam. The following is a brief outline of Captain Glasfurd's description of the people of the region, and is used as an introduction to the colonial administrative classification of the people.

The majority of the population belonged to the 'aboriginal tribes' and was classified as Gottehs and Koya groups. These groupings were considered to be similar in customs and language, "but do not eat together or intermarry" (Glasfurd 1869: 26); the Koyas often claiming that they are superior to the Gottehs. All the same, both the groups, as stated, are part of the Gond family.¹ The Koyas, with their contact with the mainstream Telugu population, was seen to be losing their distinct customs and identity, whereas the Gottehs were seen as aloof as far as cultural contacts are considered. Captain Glasfurd, in fact, portrayed the groups as largely timid, inoffensive, and tolerably truthful in his report; and that, due to their restless behaviour, they did not practice settled agriculture. However, there are seen to be exceptions along the banks of the Sabari River, around Sironcha and Dummugudem, where they practised settled agriculture (rice) and generated wealth. Most of the cultivating class in this area, as identified, belonged to the Velama group, a Shudra caste. They also owned most of the proprietary land. The Kammas were the other landowning as well as the cultivating social group in the region, even as the Brahmins and Rajus were the other social groupings obtaining.

As per the Census data and the description provided by Grant, the large mass of the population comprised of Gottehs and Koyas; the Gottehs seemed to be a reference to the

¹ Gond is a major tribal group inhabiting tracts of Central India in substantial numbers. In 1883, Rev. John Cain, a missionary was the first one to report this connection. But note also the discussion that follows, as the section proceeds.

Kois or Koyas who inhabit the Bastar region. Captain Glasfurd had further noted that this population was a

restless race, who frequently desert one side to settle down in another and as the district is but a narrow strip, having the Nizam's territories on the one hand, and the Bustar Dependency on the other, it happens that there is a little of both emigration and immigration going on at the same time (Glasfurd 1869: 23).

An episode of Koi migration is discussed in the next section of this chapter, and some further implications drawn about the dynamics of tribals in the region. All the same, moving on further, H. Morris of the Madras Civil Service in 1878 prepared a District Manual about Godavari District (Morris 1878), which in its detailing was interested in showcasing how this area had benefitted from the irrigation facilities pioneered by Sir Arthur Cotton in the Godavari delta region. Nevertheless, there are references to the people and the region of our study in his manual. According to Morris, the estate of Bhadrachalam consisted of 137 villages, and the town of Bhadrachalam had an estimated 2,000 people, and most of them were reported to be Brahmins. The town is described as a 'temple town'; and the other place of prominence, as noted, was Dummugudem, being the centre of the operations of the Upper Godavari Navigation Works. The local tribal population, Kois or Koyas, were displaced for the public works and the workers of the engineering works taken to populate the area; some of them, as claimed, have settled down in the area. The magistrate was posted there, and the town had a police station, post office, and a telegraph office (see Morris 1878: 43).

The Kois is part of the family of the Gond tribe, based on the Ethnological Commission Report of the Central Provinces (1868), and Morris (1878) even speculated that they might have been driven into the mountains by the Brahminical conquest of the area. As the latter recounted, the Kois trace their origin to the union of Bhima and a 'wild woman of the woods', who was not a human being, during the forest exile as part of the Mahabharata retelling. The Kois is described to be a simple and truthful people with easily satisfied requirements and few needs. It is further posited that they have no knowledge or ideas beyond the daily events of their village; and hence they have an 'unsophisticated' and 'savage' way of life. Morris even suggests that "the withdrawal from civilized existence is favourable to the growth of those virtues which are peculiar

to the savage people ... and are quite an example in this respect to the civilized and more cultivated inhabitants of the plains” (Morris 1878: 89).

Morris additionally noted that the Kois are restless people since they do not stay in a place for more than four years. They supposedly shift from one place to another for the purpose of the cultivation after exhausting the fertility of the soil at a place. The Kois, as claimed, have no written language, and so they do not have any literature or sacred books; and hence no systematic worship, being largely privy to a simple and primitive religion. However, as acknowledged, there is a concept of Supreme Being and claims to worship the spirit of the mountains. There is a reference to a guardian, *Korra Razu*, who is seen to protect them from the tigers. Besides, as Morris (1878: 90) recounts, there are no sacred places or temples for the Kois, worshipping as they supposedly do their ancestors, while not averse to the village gods of mainstream Hinduism (especially among Kois who live in close proximity with the people of the plains and thus encountering facets of Hindu forms of worship). In fact, Morris explicitly records that the Kois are open to religious instructions, in the process noting missionary encounters which perceived them (Kois) to be friendly and docile with a receptive mind. He even reports the setting up of a mission in Dummagudem as a consequence of the Upper Godavari Navigation Works. In a later report as part of the Madras District Gazetteer, Hemingway (1915) outlines the work of the Dummagudem mission run by the Church Missionary Society (which, incidentally, we detail in the next chapter – Ch.5, Sect. 5.3, under the sub-heading ‘*Waterways, Missionaries, and Lace Industry*’).

In fact, the Madras District Gazetteer, as authored by Hemingway (1915), has more details in comparison to Morris (1878) about the people of the region, especially the Koyas. Interestingly, the reference of the ‘aboriginal race’ shifts from the Kois to the Koyas in this document, even as the direct description of the people as presented demands our attention: “The Koyas are a caste of jungle men found in the country on either side of the Godavari from the point where the Indravati joins it down to the apex of the delta” (Hemingway 1915: 60). Evidently, Hemingway refers to the Koyas as a ‘caste of jungle men’ and not simply as an ‘aboriginal race’, and this has to do with the shifting categories used by the British administrators in classifying the hill and the jungle people. For the

Gazetteer, he relies on the Rev. John Cain's description of the Koyas; Rev. Cain, as we will go on to see in the next chapter, was a missionary operating in Dummugudem. The differences between the Koyas on the riverside and Bastar are detailed, with some mention of the stratification within the Koyas of the Bhadrachalam region. Hemingway even provides anecdotes about the relative innocence and guilelessness of the Koyas, and explicitly concedes that they are being victimised by moneylenders from the plains. Furthermore, Hemingway outlined the marriage, funeral, and other customs among the Koyas, and even urges that they do not have any linkages to Hinduism. There is also a recounting of settlement patterns and villages in the area. In fact, in this context, Hemingway recounts the Hill Reddis, who are the inhabitants of Rekhapalli and considered by the colonial ethnographers to be less simple and stupid compared to the Koyas. The Hill Reddis were supposed to be Shaivites and Vaishnavites. All in all, the Bhadrachalam area was well known for its timber, and the plainsmen used to employ the Koyas and the Hill Reddis to cut and transport the wood. Between 1889 and 1891, 460 square miles of forest land in the Bhadrachalam taluk was notified as reserved forests. Rampa (including Rekhapalli) was not notified until 1896, due to disturbances in the area. It is opined by Hemingway (1915) that the Koyas joined the Rampa rebellion in 1879 due to the changes in the forest conservation laws. The Koyas and the Hill Reddis practised shifting or *podu* cultivation, and therefore the administration decided to be lenient in accessing the reserved forests in the area.

To complicate the terms of this detailing, W. V. Grigson in *Maria Gonds of Bastar* (1938) has opined that the Gonds from Central India to the Eastern Ghats and Hyderabad all call themselves Koi or Koitor; and that, in the Madras Presidency, the name came to be sounded as Koya. Moreover, citing Captain Glasfurd's Report, Grigson makes the following telling observation: "Much trouble has arisen from the word Koya. Glasfurd did not define Koyas or give their habitat in the report already quoted" (Grigson 1938: 53). Why is this admission important? In fact, Grigson goes on to note:

Various articles were published between 1876 and 1881 on the Koyas, whom he rightly calls Kois, by Rev. John Cain, for many years a C.M.S. missionary at Dummagudem on the Godavari in the Bhadrachalam taluq of the East Godavari Agency, and only a few miles from the southwestern corner of the Konta tahsil. These articles were the basis of the article on the Koyas in Thurston's *Tribes and Castes of Southern India* (ibid.: 54).

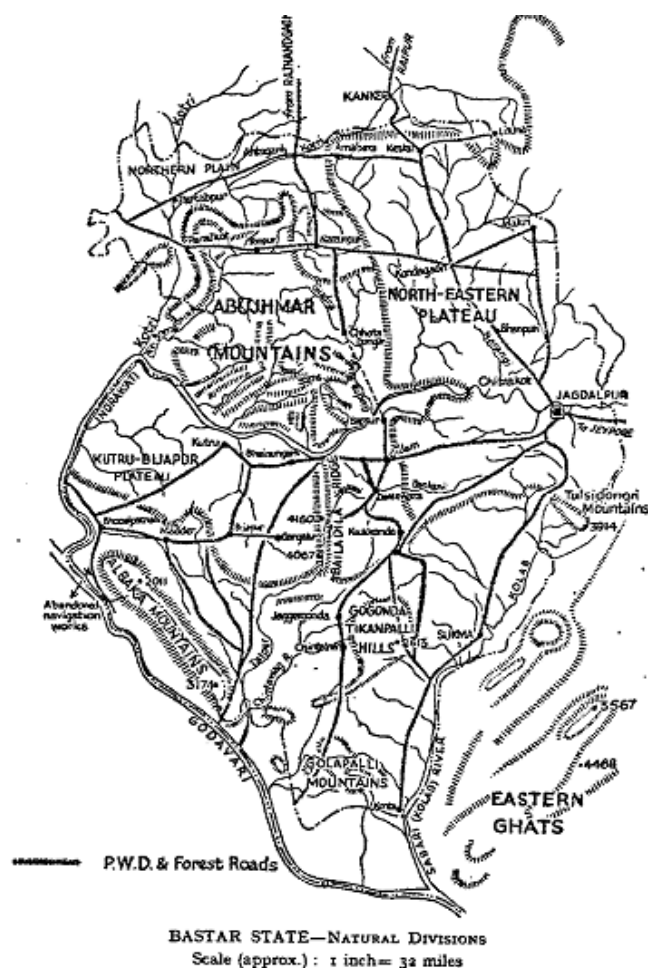
In fact, Rev. Cain bases his report on Capt. Glasfurd and Col. Haig's earlier reports which are flawed, according to Grigson. In other words, the contention is that the Koyas and the Gottehs are largely the same, with the former being more influenced by the Telugu language being the only difference. To be sure, the Telugu influence in the region has its historical background. The old Telugu kingdoms in Bastar used the tribal tracts, and the Bison-horn Maria and Koyas in particular, to protect their administrative and religious centres like Dantewara, Bhairangarh, and Bijapur. It was a kind of barrier against the Delhi invasion. Tribals in these buffer zones had developed their own culture and language in isolation without any Telugu influence, although the latter could not be totally wished away. However, as has been stated, there is little difference between the Marias and Koyas (Russell and Hiralal 1916: 238-242). Furthermore, as Grigson records, the tribals

still provide the priests and servitors of the tutelary deities of the old dynasties, such as Manikeshwari at Barsur and even Danteshwari and Pedamma at Dantewara, and keep up the old ritual in a degraded form. The farias of the Abujhmar hills seem to be the most primitive and isolated 'aboriginal race' of the Central Provinces; yet only a few miles of mountain and forest separate their habitat from these old centres of Telugu civilization (Grigson 1938.: 4-5).

Indeed, the shifting of the location of the 'Political Agent' for Bastar from Sironcha to Raipur in the wake of the abandonment of the Godavari Navigation Project led to further alienation of the Teluguised Gonds or the Koyas from the others in Bastar since 1860. It also led to lesser migration of the Telugus further deep into the Bastar region. Incidentally, Captain Glasfurd was the Deputy Commissioner of the Sironcha District and the 'Political Agent' of Bastar. In fact, the 1891 census recorded more migrants from Raipur than other regions (Sundar 1997: 121).

Clearly, in the light of these allusions, Grigson (1938) is alerting us to a certain confusion of classifications and their impact on our understanding of the history of the so-called tribes of Central India. Our reference to these complications was meant to highlight not only the challenges of historicising the tribes of the Bhadrachalam region, but also to provide a larger frame of reference in terms of the history and politics of the Bastar Dependency in shaping the life stories of the Koyas. As such, an ethnographic and

physical map of Bastar is given below to develop a larger sense of the ethnic identifications and politics that forms the backdrop of the Bhadrachalam region.



Map 12: Bastar State

Source: Grigson (1938: 20)

The region we are concerned with can be seen in the southwestern portion of the **Map 12** above - starting from Albaka Mountains to the meeting point of Sabari and Godavari. It roughly covers the entire modern-day Bhadrachalam revenue division except for a portion of Chintur mandal and the entire Kunnawaram mandal. The above-illustrated map gives an idea of the ethnic distribution of tribes in the Bastar Dependency. The spatial distribution of Koyas (the term might be contested, but it is used as a referent for the people in the Bhadrachalam division) indicate the significance of the Telugu influence among the people in this region. The tribal (Koya) and non-tribal (Telugu

speakers) interactions, in this context, need to be more carefully examined. One could arrive at the possibility of a group of Gonds being pushed out of the central regions to the periphery for various reasons and thereby culturally transformed into a distinct ethnic group - Koyas. But that is only a historical hypothesis, which will require a fuller study.

4.2 Koi (or Koya) Migration: Responding to Colonialism²

On 17 October 1870, the newspaper *Times of India* carried a report on the suspension of income and pandhari taxes in a district of the Central Provinces.³ A letter dated 6 October by the Secretary of the Chief Commissioner, W. B. Jones, to a Deputy Commissioner of the district was published in this report. This letter instructed the Deputy Commissioner to suspend the collection of taxes. The newspaper report probed whether the tax-break is restricted only to the Central Provinces or to the entire colonial jurisdiction. The rest of the report was a sarcastic commentary on the fiscal administration and the capabilities of individual officials. It seems that the objective behind highlighting 6 October letter was to make a plea for tax exemptions and relaxations. At the same time, however, the report questioned the suspension of the pandhari taxes, which it claimed was well-understood and accepted as suitable for local purposes. Pandhari tax is an income tax collected from non-agriculturalists whose income was below the minimum fixed by the Income Tax Act of 1860. A sort of trade license levied on artisans and traders, it (Pandhari Tax Act of 1867) was later abolished in 1902. In 1868-69, the total Pandhari tax collection from the Upper Godavari district was Rs 2,272 paid by 7 per cent of the total non-agricultural population (Morris 1870: xv-xvi).

Based on the newspaper report, the colonial administration initiated an inquiry to find out the reasons for the tax suspension in the Central Provinces. Colonel Keatinge, the officiating Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, informed the Financial Department that the suspension of taxes was restricted only to the Upper Godavari District. He further cited Colonel Haig's report as the justification for the tax suspension. The ensuing deliberation among the colonial officials discussed the Adivasi migration in the area. Colonel Haig, the Superintending Engineer of Upper Godavari Circle, reported to Colonel Keatinge that the tax system was burdensome. According to him, the system of administration was "unpopular and uncongenial leading to progressive depopulation

² A good portion of the narration in this section has been published in my Krishnan (2021: 533-559).

³ Page no. 2 of the 17 October 1870 copy of the *Times of India* from the British Newspaper Archive (BNA), British Library, London. Accessible at <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

of the district.”⁴ The Financial Secretary of the ‘Supreme Government’⁵ sought an explanation and found the report from Central Provinces unsatisfactory. The Secretary asserted that the decision regarding the suspension of taxes was in the domain of the ‘Supreme Government’ and so the administrators at the local level should not decide such matters. Further, the Secretary flagged the delay in reporting the matter of suspension of taxes to the higher authority and observed that, if not for the news report, the ‘Supreme Government’ would not have known about the matter. The Secretary even opined that if there was indeed a migration,⁶ it might have been because of the condition of the labour market and not because of the income tax, which very few people were required to pay in the Upper Godavari district anyway.

Colonel Haig observed that the Koyas, the tribals of the region, who constituted forty per cent of the population, were migrating from the district leading to depopulation.⁷ According to him, the district was an affluent one and poised for further prosperity. Therefore, the migration of a section of the population, especially “the advanced among the socially inferior tribe,” was going to affect the prosperity of the region. The “advanced among the socially inferior tribe” was a reference to those Koyas who had settled down on the banks of the river; they practised settled cultivation and were in the process of assimilating the habits of the non-tribal population of that region. Colonel Haig in his communication to his superior, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, even went on to lament about the effects of British rule. He was particularly concerned about how the migration reflected poorly on the administration and credibility of the British rule. He stated that the discontent and insecurity among the people of the region was the “most singular and deplorable result of British rule.”⁸ He described the material

⁴ From Central Provinces to the Financial Department, 19 October 1870, No. 2734-293, paragraph 3, extracted from the *Proceedings of Home Department (Public)* (hereafter this reference will be cited as PHD in this chapter), No 13-37, November 1871, National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi.

⁵ This is the term used in the colonial records and refers to the Government headed by the Viceroy of India.

⁶ The administration had recorded the movement of people as ‘emigration’, and not migration since the movement of people was from British India to Nizam’s territory, which is under a different sovereign jurisdiction.

⁷ Colonel Haig uses the category Kois and the various official correspondences use the terms Koes and Koewar for referring to the same set of people. Currently, the Government of India classifies this set of people as Koyas. Letter from the Superintending Engineer of Upper Godavary Circle to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Public Works Department. No 210-1151, dated Dumagudem, 12 September 1870. PHD

⁸ Ibid. Para 23 of the letter written by Colonel Haig, the Superintending Engineer.

conditions of the district in order to illustrate his point and described the people as docile and industrious, engaged in agriculture with fertile land at their disposal. Colonel Haig believed that it would not be surprising if there were an influx of people from the neighbouring regions – Nizam's territory and 'wild Bastar country' into the British-governed territory, as none of those regions had favourable material conditions or good government. Instead, he was confounded by what he actually observed:

A steady, and, in proportion to the population, a most serious, migration into these surrounding districts from our own! All this we have succeeded in accomplishing after spending half a million sterling on the river, and legislating for eight years for the simple and inoffensive people on its banks is to produce a deep and settled distrust in the minds of an important section of them, and to drive many hundreds (I have been told on good authority some thousands) out of the country. Surely, that is a fact deserving of very serious consideration.⁹

In Colonel Haig's assessment then, the reasons for migration were heavy taxation and the lack of connection between the local administration and the people, in part due to the administrators' ignorance of the local language.

It is pertinent to note that this was not the first time that Colonel Haig had reported the issue of migration. Two years before this letter, in 1868, he had reported the same to then Chief Commissioner, John H. Morris. The latter had even admitted that the migration of the tribals had something to do with the British rule and tried to make the administration more people-friendly. However, the instance in question has no archival evidence regarding any administrative response from the British to Colonel Haig's letter. At the same time, Colonel Keatinge did take Colonel Haig's 1870 letter seriously as he had full trust in the knowledge and experience of Colonel Haig about the Upper Godavari district and its people. The tax revenue was insignificant to begin with, and so the officiating Chief Commissioner had decided to suspend the income and pandhari tax collection from the district.

Interestingly, we find further discussion on the nature of administration in the Upper Godavari in the report sent by W. B. Jones, Secretary to Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces to the Secretary (Foreign Department), the Government of India in

⁹ Ibid.

1870.¹⁰ The report noted that, compared to other districts, the revenue department of the region was small and hence the revenue base was very limited. Additionally, there was no native officer as interpreter between the Deputy Commissioner - the officer in charge of the district - and the people. Indeed, from all the deliberations among the colonial officials, the significance of the role of the native officials is clear. They were seen to be crucial in not only helping the people understand the colonial form of governance, in terms of land tenure systems and taxation, but also in bringing forward the grievances of the people to the colonial administration. Understandably then, the report stated that the absence of native officials in the Upper Godavari District hampered the colonial administration in understanding the dissent and uneasiness of the local population towards the land settlement report and its implementation. Moreover, the report recorded the migration of nearly two thousand to two thousand five hundred Koyas from the district and anticipated more Koyas to migrate after the harvest. In his 1870 report to the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Godavari District Lieutenant Colonel J. Ashburner listed out the reasons for the migration: ill-treatment of the villagers by the subordinate staff employed by the Trigonometrical Survey, the prohibition of slash and burn cultivation, taxation on *mhowa* trees, taxation on grazing lands, extortion by the zamindar and his staff, and false rumour of the imposition of further taxes.¹¹

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned reports, the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council stated on 8 August 1871 that the people have been suffering under British administration and, as a consequence, some had migrated to the Nizam's territory.¹² According to the Council,

Those evil appear to His Excellency in Council to be mainly due to applying too rigidly systems in force in more civilized regions, to a tract more than nine-tenths of which is uncultivated, while the small portion that is cultivated is in part inhabited by a timorous race, only partially inured to the ways of settled life. The effect of those uncongenial systems might have been sooner discovered and their working softened, had it not been that the officials, recently at all events employed in the District, have been ignorant of Teloo goo, which is the language spoken by the greater part of the inhabitants, whether Koes or others.¹³

¹⁰ No. 470-59 dated Nagpur, 10 March 1871, PHD.

¹¹ No. 2139, dated Seroncha, 5 December 1870, PHD.

¹² No. 2722 (Home Department, Public), dated Simla, 8 August 1871; letter from E.C. Bayley, Secretary to Government of India to the officiating Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, PHD.

¹³ Ibid.

The above extract demonstrates the colonial government's acceptance of the fact that their system of administration was not in tune with ground realities. This resonates with the observation made by the office of the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, that "[I]n the settlement, the unsettled and peculiar tenures of the wild tribes were reduced to order and recorded."¹⁴ This re-arrangement of the social life of the population they were governing was seen to have derailed colonial plans of developing that area and extracting revenue and profit, in terms of taxation and trade chiefly. However, this admission of a wrong approach, a rigid application of systems of administration in a place where it cannot be implemented, is a candid acceptance of the failure of colonial administration.¹⁵ Moreover, what follows as a solution to the problem of Koya migration shows the unexplored dimension of colonial governance, namely a form of sensitivity towards the local population.

The colonial government in solving the predicament of the Koya migration, decided to depute as a Deputy Commissioner a Telugu speaking officer from the Madras Presidency. Along with this, the Viceroy ratified the suspension of the pandhari tax by Colonel Keatinge. Besides, since the Koya population did not pay income tax, the colonial government did not accord them any remission. Moreover, in order to wean away the Koyas from slash and burn cultivation, it was decided to assist them to buy bullocks so as to gradually shift them towards settled cultivation methods. This was to be done on a small-scale to assess whether it would succeed. If the plan were to succeed, then it was decided to allow them access to government wasteland, which would enable them to establish themselves as independent cultivators so that they would "not desire to leave their own homes for the Nizam's territory."¹⁶

¹⁴Para 6 of the report sent by the Chief Commissioner's office to the Secretary (Foreign Department) to Government of India, by W. B. Jones, Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces dated Nagpur 10 March 1871, PHD.

¹⁵ There have been such admissions by colonial officers, like the colonial Punjab officials in the 1870s about the '*trini*' administration (Bhattacharya 1995: 353) and the difficulty in settling Baiga population (Guha and Gadgil 1989: 152-153).

¹⁶ Para 6 of the report sent by the Chief Commissioner's office to the Secretary (Foreign Department) to Government of India, by W. B. Jones, Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces dated Nagpur 10 March 1871, PHD.

The colonial approach to retain a section of the population, the Koyas, often characterised as “timid, inoffensive and tolerably truthful”,¹⁷ is interesting because the administration was ready to tweak its policies for a section of the population. Can we read this Orientalist gaze as a part of its protectionist attitude? Of the fifty-five thousand people in the district, twenty thousand were Koyas - eleven thousands of whom were in the southern section (Rekhapalli and Bhadrachalam taluks) of the district and, among them, over two thousand had migrated. The colonial intervention shows the urgency among colonial administrators to not only retain the population for taxation and enhancement of economic wealth, but also attempt to provide a congenial environment to facilitate the civilising mission of the imperial government. This instance is in stark contrast to the colonial agenda of clearing out Adivasis elsewhere for the creation of plantations, forest reserves, and hill stations (Philip 2004: 99). This tweaking of the colonial policies is interesting, as it enables us to examine this incident from the perspective of so-called protectionism embedded in the colonial governmentality. Moreover, it is a reminder that we need to examine the colonial-tribal relationship in its local specificities with a comparative perspective to obtain a clearer understanding of the colonial tribal spaces.

Settling the unsettled: at the intersection of the administrative and developmental

The *Times of India* report, discussed earlier, praised ‘the honest advice’ of the district officers to their ‘secluded higher-ups’ requesting the latter to suspend the taxes so as to ameliorate the sufferings of the people, even wishing it were more common than it was. More than the demands in the letter, it is the characterisation of the British rulers as ‘secluded’ that one finds particularly interesting. When read along with the uncertainty of the colonial state in approaching the problem of migration and the accompanying doubts in evaluating the act, which was to say compounded by administrative difficulties, what we can see is a singular aspect of colonial governance. In perspective is the dilemma of the colonial government in the words of the historian Jon E. Wilson (2010), who in the context of Bengal, described the colonial rule as ‘the domination of strangers’. According to him, the British governance in the Indian sub-continent marked a rupture from the rule by the familiar to the rule by the strangers, wherein rulers were cultural

¹⁷ It is the description by Captain Glasfurd, the officer who did the Settlement report of the district, as already seen.

aliens to the ruled. This, according to Wilson, is the marker of modern states. Thus, drawing on the seminal essay on the stranger by Georg Simmel, Wilson argues that the lack of connectedness or the distance between the ruler and the ruled creates a space for objectivity. However, this also simultaneously creates uncertainties, thereby making modern governments indecisive and ambivalent. Undoubtedly, the colonial government is not an exception to this disposition. Sir John Morris's plan for land reclamation in Charwa, Central Provinces, is an example (see Rothermund 1977). No doubt, tribals were also constructed as strangers and outsiders to the modern world (Savyasaachi 1998: 3). Besides, the administrative deliberation as discussed in the earlier part of this section shows indecision, ambivalence, anxiety, and uncertainty in the colonial approach to the problem of migration.

There was no consensus among different officials regarding the reasons for migration in our region. This confusion was a characteristic of the form of governance in a tribal area. For taming the landscape and population, a legible form of governance was required, and hence the causes of disorder and its solution were paramount in ordering and settling. The colonial records had revealed varied reasons, such as the imperfect labour market, natural or seasonal migration, and zamindars undervaluing the revenue sources due to distress. Interestingly, the higher authorities were ignorant of the initial tax break announced by the local authorities; they learnt of it from a newspaper. The colonial confusion was accentuated by seeing the region as a source of revenue extraction and agricultural production without computing the existing mode of production and social ecosystem in the first place. One can characterise it as a clash of ideologies in defining and ruling in an objectified environment wherein the ruled were seen in an abstract relationship rather than in ties of kinship, locality, etc. In fact, this last point accentuates further the dimensions of the administrative history as alluded in our Ch.3 above.

To retain and settle the mobile Koyas, therefore, not only were bullocks given, but plans were also devised to make them learn settled cultivation instead of engaging in slash and burn cultivation. Obviously, by making the Koyas sedentary, it would be easier for the colonial state to govern and extract revenue. The imposition of this alien system of governance and mode of production is clearly a rupture in the existing tribal-state

relationship. David Baker has aptly captured the rupture in the context of Central Provinces. He observes that until the British tried to impose a capitalist system of land management, the tribals were seen as ‘harmless, industrious, hardy and daring’; and when they resisted the imposition of change and assimilation, for the British officers the harmless, industrious, and hardy tribals became wild drunk savages (Baker 1991: 346-347).

Equally, Ajay Skaria (2001) has demonstrated this rupture in terms of the changed meaning of ‘wild’. He argues that the notion of ‘wild’ used by the colonial state has a different meaning from that of its usage in pre-colonial India. In the latter usage, it implied territories and people outside the control of the state, whereas in the former, it implied territories and people who are outside the matrix of modernity. Skaria, demonstrates that the Dangis, the historical subject of his inquiry, never had any harmonious relation with the ‘wild’, nor was there any unity between the Dangis and the wild. He further delves into the construction of ‘wild’ and the ascribing of wildness in the following manner: (i) being *jangli* does not imply being in a state prior to or having been overcome by modernity or the civilisation process; (ii) the notion of being wild is palpably linked to the civilisation process; and (iii) values associated with *jangal* and *jangli* were used to create social differentiation, and thereby exercise power and authority over the forest and its dwellers.¹⁸ In fact, Atlury Murali (1995: 89) has further noted in the context of the Vijayanagara Empire that the emperor maintained a friendly policy with the tribals in the forests and expected their help for expeditions against other kingdoms. Forest areas were also a sort of buffer for protection, and acted as political boundaries. However, the forests in the centre of the kingdom were partially cleared. Alternatively, the Mughals, who considered the tribals as primitives, attempted domination of the forest fringes (Singh 1995). Agrarian society was encouraged to encroach on the forest areas for resource extraction and claiming cultivable wastelands.

Indeed, to look elsewhere across a larger historical canvas, we can use Sumit Guha’s (1999) interrogation of the term ‘indigeneity’ and ‘tribe’ in his examination of the nature

¹⁸ In this context, it is pertinent to note an excellent analysis by Bhattacharya (2019), which discusses the colonial endeavour to control grasslands, scrublands, and other spaces constituting wilderness.

of forest polities in India. He forcefully contends that there has been a complex interaction by the tribal societies with the other groups and the isolation parameter often associated with them has been over-emphasised. Moreover, as Guha also argues, the terms indigenous and tribes are historically contingent. However, in demonstrating so, he fails to establish the value systems that might have evolved through these interactions among the forest-dwelling communities and how it might have shaped their own distinct identities. Rather, he focuses only on how and what were the roles played by these social groups in the local polity. It is not to say that Guha is wrong, but a gentle reminder that he is not complete in his analysis of the various ethnic groups and their changing sociabilities. However, a closer reading of Skaria and Guha will enable us to get a larger picture of the lifeworlds of various Adivasi societies. These texts through different strategies enrich our perspective of *being* tribal/Adivasi.

Without doubt, defining and ruling was a characteristic of colonialism (see Mamdani 2012), although at the heart of this project was the struggle to grapple with the complex social structure of the colony. British India was no exception and the administrative deliberation regarding Upper Godavari is an example of this struggle. Colonial rule was largely an attempt to understand the unfamiliar society and represented a field of administration for those who were different from the people whom they governed. Undoubtedly, there were conflicts among the administrators in handling various issues. These conflicts were the by-products of the world-views of different administrators, and this difference led to different forms of administration (see Wilson 2011). Obviously, the fiscal regime, which oversaw the tax break in the Upper Godavari district, was a product of administrative competition in India, which had led to different forms of taxation such as the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwari arrangements in parts of British India. Different assumptions about the nature of socio-economic structures had determined these two forms of revenue collection and taxation. Nevertheless, within the same region, the colonial administration did tinker with the Permanent and Ryotwari settlements like in the case of Salem in the Madras Presidency. It can be deduced that the tax regimes, though set up in the late-eighteenth century, were flexible even in the late-nineteenth century.

The Upper Godavari district, as a new territory acquired in the 1850s, presented multiple challenges to the Central Provinces administration. For one, there was hardly any information about the nature and composition of the people; and secondly, the unfamiliarity with the local language made it difficult to access the local population. Besides, it is interesting and noteworthy that there was a lack of any institutional reference point for similar regions. Not surprisingly, geographies populated by the so-called ‘wild and primitive races’ were an administrative challenge for the colonial government (see Ch.3, especially Sect.3.5 – *‘The Domination of the Strangers: Making of a Scheduled Region’* - for an elaborate discussion). All the same, an important reminder at this juncture is that the term ‘tribe’ was yet to be the signifier for these populations in the administrative vocabulary in terms of its policies and regulations primarily. It is only in 1874 that a pan-British India regulation was enacted, for administering what is later known as the tribal areas (to be sure, we are referring to The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874). However, there was a realisation among the colonial administrators that the form of governance that they needed to establish varied according to the geography and population. It will thus be instructive to note a certain development in the neighbouring region of the Upper Godavari district, a part of the Madras Presidency (as discussed earlier in Ch.3, Sect.3.5 in some detail). Following the ‘disturbances’ in Ganjam that had concluded in 1832, it was decided by the colonial administrators that the system of administration that is generally followed in districts cannot be applied in the mountainous and hilly tracts.

The key question is: how can we understand the candid admission of distress among the rulers not only in the Central Provinces, but also in the Madras Presidency? The colonial administration wanted a durable system of rule, and arguably this made them sensitive to the impact and reception of the colonial rule among the ruled. In this context, it would not be wrong to affirm the following. We could say that this incident clearly illustrates that the social groups identified as tribals were not only victims of colonial social change, but were also the principals who effected the change. Having said so, the important dimension of the migration is the fact that the Koyas, the tribals of the Upper Godavari district, decided to move out of the area instead of rising in rebellion. If that is the case, how do we understand the movement of tribals outside a particular territory?

It is pertinent to recall that the southern part of the district covering Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli were also the sites of the Rampa disturbances or the Manyam rebellion that would happen shortly. David Arnold, in his study of these disturbances or rebellions, even suggests:

A Hillman had no special claim to a plot of land once he had ceased to cultivate it. The land was not seen as a property to be possessed, bought, and sold ... With a small population dispersed over thousands of square miles of the jungle, there was no land shortage to engender competition (Arnold 1982: 96).

This simple observation clearly posits that after clearing a patch of the jungle during summer, the Koyas used to cultivate it for two to three years until the productivity dropped. The mode of cultivation followed was the *podu* or slash and burn technique. It shows mobility in terms of geography, and thereby a sense of fluid belongingness to a particular tract or land. Does it mean that the Koyas and other similar social groups, later administratively identified as tribals and self-labelled as Adivasis cannot be seen as rooted in a particular territory or tract?

Surely, tribals have been migrating from one place to another for various reasons. However, this flow was arrested during the colonial period with the classification of certain tracts being excluded from the general administration. Incidentally, these regions were either hilly or mountainous, and were populated by social groups that were termed by the colonial administrators as primitive, wild, and uncivilised. Through a series of administrative steps, the colonial administration first labelled these social groups as tribals, and the areas they inhabited as backward regions and later as tribal tracts. Indeed, regarding the migration in colonial India, W. V. Grigson in his account of the tribals in Central Provinces and Berar, had noted that, unlike peasants, the tribals were not wedded to the land; and that, at times, they returned to a particular tract of land after migrating from there (see Grigson 1944: 154). It was perhaps something to do with their mode of living, as noted by Dietmar Rothermund (1977), who held that tribals were pioneers of land reclamation in the Central Provinces. Once the tribals cleared the forest and moved out, peasants would come and settle down. However, the tribals have over time settled down in certain regions at different periods in history. Needless to say, the cultural

geographies of these social groups shrunk dramatically during the colonial period, with the establishment of the colonial economy.

To be sure, containing the tribals within certain bounded regions in British India had multiple ramifications. Firstly, it broke the historical migratory tendencies and confined them to particular geographies. Secondly, policies and programmes for the tribals were confined to these geographies only. Thirdly, from the point of view of the academic scholarship at large, it has stopped us from looking at the cultural adaptations and mutations regarding the interactions between the tribals and non-tribals that might have been happening in the past and that would have happened if not for the containment of the tribals. Quite emphatically, the administrative, spatial, and cultural boundaries invented the tribe as a social category. In other words, colonial modernity mediated the ethnic formation of social groups identified as tribals across regions.

Boundedness implies rootedness to a location; and hence, can we expect the Koyas to have rebelled? However, migration indicates a fluid notion of territory that is unbounded by state boundaries and indicates a larger cultural territory. The expectation of revolt is anticipated by similar revolts in other regions such as the 1850 Kond revolt in Odisha and the 1855 rebellion by Santals at that time. The Koya region of Upper Godavari too saw a series of disturbances between 1839 and 1924.¹⁹ In fact, Arnold (1982) directly suggests that there was growing resentment among the Koyas regarding the intervention of the outsiders – British, farmers, and moneylenders from the plains. The local elite with the backing of popular support articulated the resentment, although Arnold argues that “xenophobia and peasant territoriality” (ibid.: 90) was fundamental in these resistances.

The question of belonging: a conceptual detour

The act of moving out of a territory instead of rebelling by a section of people raises a larger critical question about the nature of the tribal/Adivasi relationship with the land: Did they belong to that land? Alternatively, did the Koyas identify Upper Godavari as

¹⁹ Arnold (1982 & 1985) and Murali (1984, 1985 & 2014) are useful references for understanding these rebellions.

their homeland? In our next chapter (Ch.5) on the aspects of a developmental history bearing on the region, we will discuss how the basic form of belonging can determine the way they approach the value of a land tract. At any rate, the exploration of the relationship between land and tribals is important for the following reason. Belonging to a place is fundamental not only for the creation of identity, but also for shaping the forms of assertion. Social anthropologists Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and Gerard Toffin, in the context of Himalayan societies, have used the concept of belonging to “focus on the ways individuals and groups are caught when they want to belong” (Pfaff-Czarnecka and Toffin 2011: 2). The concept of belonging is used primarily in that spirit here, with the focus on the material attachment, and the desire underscoring it, embedded in the idea of belonging or socio-territorial belonging in particular (see also Pollini 2005).

Broadly speaking, linking migration as a form of mobility to the desire for attachment to a place or territory (as a sort of homeland) has its ontological roots in the imagination of a sedentary-nomadic binary. In fact, following Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s formulation, human geographers and anthropologists have grappled with the question of the opposing metaphysics of ‘sedentarism’ and ‘nomadism’ (see especially Malkki 1992). Even as we concede that rooting people in specific locations is a requirement for constructing identities (whether national or cultural), it must be reiterated that this process of rooting, which is largely a sedentary metaphysics, emerged with the evolution of state formation techniques that demanded definable and legible geographies and peoples to govern and sustain. In this context, the ‘sedentary’ metaphysics broadly sees mobility, uprootedness and displacement as a moral and ideological challenge to the construction of place and spatial ordering. As such, in this form of thinking, mobility and displacement are seen as pathological. On the other hand, the ‘nomadic’ metaphysics tends to evaluate mobility positively and foregrounds flow, flux, and dynamism. This latter modality, therefore, incorporates and accounts for people and region on terms that resist the patterns of state formation and capital expansion processes. Ideas of flux and dynamism, accordingly, implicate a fluid and processual basis for any identity. It guides us to engage with the contexts and frameworks, while confronting various social and cultural objects. What is important is that the moral geographies attached to these two forms of thinking can lead to diverse modes of ontology, epistemology, and politics

(Cresswell 2006: 25-26). Indeed, to transpose these bearings onto colonial India, it is pertinent to recall how the historian Neeladri Bhattacharya captures (in the context of colonial Punjab primarily) the dynamics of sedentary and nomadic metaphysics in terms of settlement and belonging:

Settlement is celebrated and feared, seen as necessary as well as tragic; it is a civilising process, but also signifies death and disease. Nomadism was a thing of the past, part of the world that had to be transformed; but it was equally a metaphor for freedom. The nostalgia for open spaces and the silence of the desert, the romance of the shepherd's flute and the camelman's love songs contrast with the cacophony of modern urban spaces. The desire for rational ordering clashes with the Romantic fear of monotony and repetitiveness (Bhattacharya 2019: 425-426).

Equally, Tim Cresswell (2006) uses this binary to capture the way the imaginations of the sedentary and nomadic have transformed within social and cultural theory. The idea of place is here taken as central in characterising the human experience of the homeland. This clearly implies that a sense of rootedness is required in defining and binding the idea of the homeland. Any mobility or movement out of that rootedness is seen as dysfunctional, and thereby undesirable. As such, therefore, the construction of this sedentarist metaphysics is the State or political order's need to order, tax, and police the population. In this context, mobility is seen as the lack of attachment and commitment; and, consequently, places marked by mobility become placeless. What is in place, according to Cresswell, is a strong sense of moral geography that denies mobility at an ontological and epistemological level. John Noyes (2004: 161) has similarly argued that the presence of nomadic social orders in the fringes of the empire challenged western philosophy since antiquity. He illustrates the programme of settler colonialism in Australia to suggest that culture is about the colonisation of land and that, in this context, the nomadic use of land is a threat to the establishment of a dominant or determinant political economy. Interestingly, Noyes also posits that nomadism can in fact be a product of the expansion of capital (*ibid.*: 166). Importantly too, it can be affirmed that capital has moved from sedentary metaphysics to nomadic metaphysics, as best illustrated by 'nomadic cosmopolitanism' (see Cresswell 2006). Indeed, with this alteration in the nature of capital, increasingly the tribals - who were inherently a nomadic social group, but now sedentarised both by their own will and by state coercion - are left out from the spaces of mobilities opened up by the re-configuration of capital.

It is important to note that both the concepts of ‘tribe’, the external identification first used by the colonial state, and that of ‘Adivasi’, the self-identification by the social groups, use the idea of locality or territoriality. In fact, the very idea of the ‘Adivasi’ presupposes the notion that they belong to a particular location or territory (see Rycroft and Dasgupta 2011). Any displacement (or even its very possibility) from their territories is often seen as moments of destruction of their collective identity. It is assumed that the socio-cultural practices of the tribals as a social group are orchestrated in the land they inhabit. As such, the tribals and their land are co-constitutive of each other. Deploying the term ‘Adivasi’ for thwarting the influx of moneylenders and outsiders to their land cannot therefore be justified if their cultural geography is fluid and changing. To be sure, as a political device, the term ‘Adivasi’ serves the purpose of self-assertion and control,²⁰ but the critical question, at a fundamental level, is: does it do justice to the history of tribals as a people? In other words, the assertion as original inhabitants of land can also signify immobility in terms of human movements; and yet, we can and must ask whether this is a true portrayal. Arguably, by being native to a place, it can also mean being confined, imprisoned, or incarcerated, even if the area is relatively large (Appadurai 1988: 37). Without doubt, being immobile and tied to a place can be a historically mediated process. However, the key question is: can all social groups which self-identify as Adivasis claim so? It is in this theoretical backdrop that we need to re-examine the term Adivasi at a social-scientific and intellectual level.

Not surprisingly, the astute historian Ranajit Guha (1983) reminds us about how the tribals use ‘ethnic space’ to assert identity and ‘physical space’ to claim homeland. He theoretically deploys belonging in terms of common lineage and common habitat therefore, with territoriality forming the basis of their intersection (Guha 1983: 279). Through the notion of a common habitat, he implicates rootedness, considering that it

²⁰ As a political device, the self-identification as ‘Adivasi’ or being indigenous to a territory has spawned many sub-national forms of politics in India, especially in the North East region. However, any critical evaluation reflecting on nationalism based on territorial belonging needs a separate treatment, which is outside the scope of our recuperation here. All the same, the political realities confronting a social group broadly determine the inclusion and exclusion of historical moments in charting their own pathways. There can be latitude by either design or default in political engagements, but any historical sociology of a region and people must account for the dynamics at play.

encodes a cultural geography that can bind an ethnic group. One may yet ask: Is the habitat as mark of a territorial dimension fixed or fluid? Guha, it seems to us, does not delve into this register. However, if there has to be a politics of belonging, undeniably, the cultural geography needs to have greater fixity in terms of the territorial dimension. Hence, the limit of a common habitat embedded in a sense of rootedness is an important component.

Of course, as Shashank Kela has reminded us, the term ‘Adivasi’ was coined in Chhotanagpur in the 1930s to express the “common experience of oppression, impoverishment, and resistance during the colonial period” (Kela 2005: 509). This expression rests on the claim that the Adivasis are the original inhabitants of the subcontinent, who were later pushed out of their habitats, first by the Aryans and later by settled cultivators. Against this backdrop, the term ‘Adivasi’ is the basis for asserting the claim for land from which they were dislocated due to the expansion of the colonial economy. Bearing that in mind, the term ‘Adivasi’ claims rootedness to a place, even as Kela argues that the term, as used widely by the non-tribals too, enabled it to gain further currency. On this register, the term ‘Adivasi’ is a self-identified form of identification, a category of practice, as it were. Can it be a category of analysis, as well? In other words, self-identification is a situated form of subjectivity, and it need not necessarily capture the objective conditions in which the identity is forged (see, broadly, Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Therefore, we need a formal, codified, and objectified system of classification to engage the latter ground. In our particular case, how do we incorporate moments and histories of nomadic metaphysics when they are self-defined in terms of rootedness to land or territory? Indeed, incorporating nomadic metaphysics into the categorisation and identification of the Adivasis is certainly an important conceptual move. And, what is more, in the context of this move, a critical question that arises is: should we conceive of Adivasi studies as a rhizome? A rhizomorphous approach (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987) will certainly help because of the mutating assemblage involved in the very category ‘Adivasi’. It will facilitate transcending broad binaries like violent and non-violent histories of assertions and the multiple life-worlds that envelop the life-worlds of the Adivasis. Such a mode of thinking will help us to organise the multiplicities and interconnections of the Adivasis without anchoring our mode of

inquiry in a limited manner. In fact, conceiving of Adivasi studies as a rhizome will further enable us to understand the contradictions and continuities obtained in characterising Adivasis within the framework of ‘primitivism’ (see Chandra 2013). A recent work by Cicilie Fagerlid and Michelle A. Tisdell (2020) demonstrates the utility of working with the idea of the rhizome.

Returning to the order of narration: Koyas and their sense of belonging

To return then to the central question of our order of narration herein: do the Koyas belong to Upper Godavari? Clearly, we need to see it from their perspective. In the metaphysics of the sedentary world-view, yes, it was their land. Indeed, if we understand belonging in an active sense, even as one is rooted in a place, they can yet develop a form of place alienation. The sociologists Mike Savage and others (2005) have demonstrated that residents who are ‘born and bred’ in an area can still experience a sense of not belonging when there is a change in the socio-demographic profile of the area, with the newer residents introducing alternative modes of living or lifestyle. Belonging is thus a relational concept, albeit fundamental in mapping the land-population relationship. In this context, migration does not quite displace the place-attachment values; rather, it gives it a more fluid sense of meaning.

Having said so, there are however instances of the mobile population settling down. Indeed, identities were constructed by rooting in particular locations because of historical factors and contingencies of living and habitation. The emergence of Rajput identity in the context of the Thar Desert as a frontier is a good illustration (see Kothiyal 2016). The settling of the Rajput clans in the Thar region enables us to grasp the broad patterns of the sedentary and nomadic transformations in the Indian context. As such, an exploration of the fluidity of belonging can enrich the sedentary-nomadic metaphysics, even providing semantic richness to how people attach meanings to places. For instance, the pastoralist populations such as the Mongols, Turks, etc., were in search of fenced farmlands or pastures, primarily for their domesticated animals. On the other hand, people practising slash and burn were in search of places for cultivation. In fact, moving on, the British conquest did entail settling and improving frontiers like deserts, mountains, and forests for rendering them useful. This was inevitably followed by

controlling the social groups inhabiting those spaces, since untamed landscapes and untamed populations were deemed dangerous to the state, making mobile communities legible, all of which became a colonial necessity (see Bhattacharya 1995).

The archival evidence for later periods in the Upper Godavari does not suggest any further migration due chiefly to taxation (although, through the history of the region, one may always infer other factors for the same). In fact, with the onset and consolidation of colonialism, the pace and flow of people was somewhat arrested, which is indicative of a more important development for our purposes, namely, the sedentarisation of the Koyas, whereon they are locked to a particular land or territory. Maybe this instilled in them a sense of assertion in terms of confrontation as seen in the later periods. At any rate, this does not rule out the possibility of the Koya migration to the Nizam ruled Hyderabad state. The spread of the Koya settlement in the northern fringes of the Nizam's state, neighbouring the Upper Godavari district, is indeed a testimony to this fact.

Let us then return to the main protagonist of our narration, the Koyas, in order to situate the event of tax-avoidance migration in its local specificity. Setting aside our question about whether the Koyas belong to the Upper Godavari, it must be conceded that they had historically, as part of the larger Gond community, fled Bastar due to famines and disputes in the 1600s (Cain 1876: 357). Some observers had even identified them as people along the riverine tracts (Furer-Haimendorf 1948), spreading from Bastar to the Khammam region of Hyderabad state, and who lived as different clans (see Cain 1881). Captain Glasfurd's Settlement Report of the Upper Godavari (Glasfurd 1869) too, as we have seen, speaks of the Koyas as having settled down in the region and, through their interactions with the Telugu population, come to redefine the terms of their identity. Of course, the scale of these changes had been set in motion during the Nizam's rule, but the sedentarisation dynamics had consolidated itself subsequently under the British Indian jurisdiction. Historians of this period of transition in the region such as Thirumali (2006) note that the colonisation of land had adversely affected the pattern of Adivasi settlements. In fact, in areas such as Palvancha, which is opposite to Bhadrachalam in the Upper Godavari district, the new agriculturalists mostly from the coastal districts of

Andhra Pradesh pushed out the tribals completely. The former was skilled in agriculture, but did not have sufficient land in their home locations, and had therefore migrated to these areas. The revenue authorities in both the Nizam and the British controlled areas had also consciously urged some of them to take up agriculture in the sparsely populated region. According to scholars such as Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil (1989: 156), this was a pattern in the coastal districts of the Madras Presidency, where agriculturalists supported by the administration wanted to control shifting cultivation. The increased presence of non-tribals and the pressure on agricultural land led to the intrusion into the world of the tribals. The consequence was that some of the tribals moved into the Nizam's territory from the Upper Godavari region when there were restrictions on shifting cultivation (Furer-Haimendorf 1945: 308).

Accordingly, the Upper Godavari district, from the above description, was a region populated by both tribals and non-tribals. The Koyas, as the predominant tribals of the region, were thus (to recall an earlier framing) in “a state of motion, a restless race” with “little of both emigration and immigration going on at the same time” (Glasfurd 1869: 23; see also Furer-Haimendorf 1945: 305). For the Koyas, clearly, the district was a place enabling them to practise their shifting cultivation and support their way of life (albeit with all the attendant pressures of change). In fact, the episode of Koya migration that we were tracking across this segment of our chapter seems to bear this out even further. All the same, the fluid nature of their place attachment does not make them outsiders to this region. Rather, they had a different sense of belonging; and it is this fuzziness that makes them, their lives, and habitats, a kind of frontier zone in both pre-modern and modern arrangements of state and capital. It may not be wrong to assert that this fuzziness attributes an identity and belonging different from the other social groups in the region.

4.3 Excluded Areas Association: The Non-Tribal Assertion for ‘Tribal Area Needs’

Obviously, in a region classified as a Scheduled area, the lives of the non-tribals would be of subsidiary interest for the administration as a whole. Very often, the assumption of the area being ‘tribal’ makes the non-tribal presence invisible; and, hence, it is not

surprising that the colonial gazetteers, reports, and surveys do not discuss them in detail. However, the non-tribal presence is an important one in the context of the region. Doubtless, the various imperfections in the land market (which we will traverse in the next chapter as part of the developmental history) had made the life of non-tribal inhabitants difficult, but not impossible. When they had to resist a law that they found inimical to their interests and aspirations, the non-tribals would channelise their demands and grievances through associational forms, court petitions, and legislative lobbying. We go on now to document one such modality of non-tribal affirmation directed at protecting their interests in a changing political context marked by administrative reforms and political decentralization. We focus in particular on the operation of the Excluded Areas Association in Polavaram and Rajahmundry – a forum operating at the level of the Madras Presidency as a whole, and to which (as our field informants disclosed) some of the landlords belonging to the Bhadrachalam region were affiliated. In fact, the Excluded Areas Association had deliberated with the Indian National Congress (INC) for the political representation of the ‘backward tracts’ in the context primarily of the Simon Commission and its Report (late 1920s and early 1930s) about overall administrative reforms. Evidently, in asking for the inclusion of these tracts under the general administrative structure, what they were seeking was an impetus to the developmental activities in their area.

Thus, in 1937, a booklet was published by P. Kodanda Ramiah, Secretary of the All India Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Association, titled *Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas of Madras Presidency*.²¹ It was strongly stated by the association that the Simon Commission had misunderstood the problems of the ‘backward tracts’. The Commission had been largely of the opinion that the people of these backward tracts (referring, principally, to the tribals) are primitive and, consequently, not ready for any modern political institutions; as such, they needed to be governed separately. Additionally, the Simon Commission had suggested that the administration of these tracts should be transferred from the provincial to the central government. Against these

²¹ File no 10, T.L.no 747, period 1937, titled Excluded and Partially Excluded areas of Madras Presidency (EPEA) by P Kodanda Ramiah in R-8623 of the Institutional Collections - All India Congress Committee in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

proposals, the Excluded Areas Association had maintained that their areas needed to have elected representatives so that their special grievances could be placed before the Central Legislature. Explicitly, the ground of argument was that “it is only the voting capacity that gives them political education”.²²

The above-mentioned booklet was published in August 1937, following the Third Madras Provincial Excluded Areas Association meeting held at Narsipattanam. Later, at a meeting held in Calcutta in late October 1937, it was decided that the contents of the booklet be submitted as a memorandum for the consideration of Jawaharlal Nehru and the INC. The meeting also decided to conduct its Fourth Annual Conference at Haripura during the 51st session of the INC (held in February 1938) in order to lobby with the prominent national leaders. Indeed, in a pamphlet prepared under the auspices of the INC, there is a clear acknowledgement of both the association and the help received from Kodanda Ramiah (see Ahmad 1937). Needless to say, this latter pamphlet, as authored by Ahmad (1937), had an all-India scope in its coverage of the issue, and comes across to us as more than a simple memorandum. In fact, the INC’s position on the Simon Commission recommendations for the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas is quite fully deliberated in it. It is pointed out that the INC disagreed on the creation of the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas, even as it is acknowledged that the political and economic emancipation of India would be incomplete if there is no struggle for the right of the tribals. Ahmad even quotes the INC resolution of the immediately preceding Faizpur session (held in July 1937) to indicate their stand on this issue, where the INC frontally objects to the creation of the excluded and partially excluded areas covering 207, 900 square miles with 13 million inhabitants with effect from 1st January 1937 (ibid.: 27). The objection is based on the argument that it is an “attempt to divide the people of India into different groups with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment and to obstruct the growth of uniform democratic institutions in the country” (ibid.: 28). The separation of these areas and people, according to the INC resolution, will make them vulnerable to exploitation and suppression. Furthermore, the resolution suggested that the creation of excluded and partially excluded areas will make those areas easier for

²² Ibid.

exploitation of resources and oppression of the people living there. On the basis of these contentions, the INC wanted the people to join an all-India agitation to bring back the excluded and partially excluded areas into the scope of the general civil administration.

In this light, we must ask: what happened to the envisaged agitation and its outcomes, if any? In fact, the Rajahmundry-based All India Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Association made a further appeal on 20 September 1946 through a printed booklet in the name of its working president, who remained Kodanda Ramiah.²³ It was claimed herein that the provincial assemblies of Bihar, Orissa, and Bombay had passed resolutions in September 1938 for the abolition of the classification and urging the merger of the territories in the normally administered jurisdiction. The booklet further suggests that this had been made possible due to the lobbying of the association. It further clarifies that the appeal contained in the booklet was being made in the context of the ensuing formation and deliberation of the Constituent Assembly based on the recommendations of the British Cabinet Mission. The demand is for a complete abolition of the classification of areas as excluded and partially excluded; and, in doing so, the efforts of the association in educating the people both inside and outside the excluded areas about its negative implications is recalled.

As per the recommendations of the British Cabinet Mission, an advisory committee on the rights of the citizens, minorities, tribals, and excluded areas was to be deliberated by the Constituent Assembly. The Excluded Areas Association, on its part, wanted the Constituent Assembly to continue the stand of the Indian National Congress as elucidated in its July 1937 Faizpur session. The association feared that the recommendation about an advisory committee was being done to perpetuate the earlier classification of the territories and make it a permanent feature of the Constitution of independent India. Clearly, it wanted the Congress, the Interim Central Government and the Constituent Assembly to not perpetuate this classification. In the opinion of the association, it was a denial of the common democratic form of government to the tribals and the downtrodden

²³ See File no IOR: L/PJ/7/10575 in India Office Records, British Library, London, which documents this appeal and testifies to the booklet prepared.

communities of those areas. The association persisted with its claim that the residents of these areas wanted to be a part of the general civil administration.

To further their cause, it was decided by the association to open an office in Delhi to lobby with the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly to stop the classification of areas as excluded and partially excluded in the new Constitution. The General Body of the association, which met at Rajahmundry on 13-14 September 1946, also resolved to make the following appeals: (i) creation of a Backward areas and tribes development department; (ii) set up an Inquiry Committee to investigate the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the areas and tribes therein, so as to recommend measures for the protection and overall development of all; and (iii) people's representatives from the excluded and partially excluded areas should be elected to the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly.²⁴ Now, what further happened in the Constituent Assembly and the perpetuation of the excluded and partially excluded areas in the form of Fifth and Sixth Scheduled Areas is interesting. Both Jawaharlal Nehru (who, incidentally, had presided over the July 1937 Faizpur session of the INC) and B. R. Ambedkar during the Constituent Assembly debate wanted to continue the colonial policy of separate administrative apparatus for the tribals. This eventually led to the formation of the Fifth and Sixth Scheduled Areas under the Constitution of India (see Chandra 2013, for further details). Clearly, the demands and aspirations of the non-tribals in the area were largely unfulfilled. Besides, the framework of regulations and laws had made them vulnerable in the region. In the post-independent India context, therefore, they shifted their demand of abolishment of the partially excluded area classification through the legislative process to specific litigation strategies in the law courts and lobbying for an exception in the Land Transfer Regulation Act to protect their interests and wider stakes.

Understandably, the non-tribals as a constituency started to articulate the lack of development in the Bhadrachalam region in terms of the restrictions on the fundamental right to property. In particular, many representations and memoranda were submitted to

²⁴ Ibid.

the Government of Andhra Pradesh seeking a relaxation of the provisions in the Andhra Pradesh (Scheduled Areas) Land Transfer Regulations of 1959. The courts were also resorted to, but to no avail, since the judicial ruling was that there could be reasonable restrictions on the fundamental right to property in the name of the common good. Importantly, the Andhra Pradesh (Scheduled Areas) Land Transfer Regulations of 1959 or AP (SA) LTR of 1959 was a modification of the Land Transfer Regulation that was enacted by the colonial government. This legislation anchors on the classification of the area as a Scheduled district and accordingly as a partially excluded area. It will be pertinent to note that the efforts of Excluded Areas Association in demanding the abolition of the partially and fully excluded areas were geared towards to having a freer land market; this was the cornerstone of their activities. Nevertheless, with the constitutional sanction provided to the tribal areas in the form of the Fifth Schedule, the non-tribals sought to link the lack of ‘development’ in tribal areas to the AP (SA) LTR of 1959.

5.4 Lives of the ‘Others’: The Non-Tribal World in a Tribal Region

At present, about 49 % of the population is ‘non-tribal’ in the Bhadrachalam region. The non-tribal population comprises people, including government officials, who have occupied the land often by manipulating the tribals and the government machinery. Some people have come and settled in the area as part of agricultural operations and temple-related services. All the same, not to be lost in the maze of illegality, some families have been part of the area since time immemorial. Some non-tribals vehemently claim that they were either asked or encouraged by the colonial administration to settle down in the area, supposedly to teach the tribals the techniques of settled agriculture. Thus, at one level, various administrative regimes and their policies ‘othered’ the non-tribals living in the region for a long time. But, at another level, those supposedly invited to ‘mainstream’ the tribals in an agency area are legally outsiders as they do not enjoy all the welfare schemes operating in the region. It is in this context that the present section attempts to understand the non-tribals in the region and their representation of the history of the region as enacted under the shadows of the unfolding administrative history.

The lives of the non-tribals, predominantly, is marked with the anxiety of a 'lack of development' in the area due to the land regulations. Most of them opine that the land is fertile and picturesque and that there is a lot of investment potential, which are however not realisable under the current regulatory framework. The bifurcation of the region during the state formation of Telangana has created further desperation among the inhabitants. The region is now spread across two districts in Telangana, and one in Andhra Pradesh. When the district re-organization exercise was done by the new state of Telangana, they thought that the residual region would be declared as a district. As such, if it was declared as a district, the people believed that there would have been more developmental activities in the area. Unfortunately, it did not happen, and the region was attached to the already developed areas, thereby reducing the governmental funds and the exclusive attention which they thought they deserved. According to some of the inhabitants, the region has become even more insignificant for the administrators.

Arguably, the invisible population of the region or the 'others' in the tribal area are also actively participating in the making of the region. Vadivelu (1903) provides a hagiography of the zamindar of Bhadrachalam and his family. In this account, the zamindar family, Aswa Rao, is traced back to the times of Maharajah Pratapa Rudra of Warangal. The family history and disputes over the ownership overwhelm Vadivelu's account, even as the zamindar is portrayed as a generous, good-mannered and sympathetic man with rich family heritage. However, our attempt in this section is to move beyond such narratives and try to tease out who the non-tribals largely are and what they think about the region. The present section, accordingly, will try to look at the region from the perspective of the non-tribals and see what it means to be an inhabitant of the region. In many ways, this is a 'non-statist' history, a history that is not found in the state manuals and records, and using a combination of oral and documentary sources.

Irrespective of when, how, or why they came to settle in the region, the operation of the land transfer regulation act has made their overall scheme of life difficult and challenging. It has made the transfer of properties beyond inheritance almost impossible between the non-tribals; land being seen, therefore, as an unviable investment. One of the residents mediating our narration is Balaji Rao, a descendant of the Gundala estate's

‘inferior proprietor’,²⁵ located in the present-day Kunnavaram, and whose maternal grandfather was the Rao Sahib of the region. Balaji Rao, a burly and calm person, is aged about 65 years and resides in the Bhadrachalam town close to the main temple. He is one of the leading advocates in the region. Recalling the history of the non-tribals, Balaji Rao maintained that the zamindars “forcibly entrusted non-tribals to cultivate the land,” and that this was part of the government plan to “show tribals how to cultivate”.²⁶ The tribals were following *podu* or slash and burn cultivation, and to transform the agricultural practices, the non-tribals were made to shift to tribal areas adjoining the Godavari River. As a non-tribal in the region, Balaji Rao is clear that the exploitation of the tribals, as well as the non-tribal tenants, had changed with the Abolition of Estate Acts of 1945. This Act, along with the law of the land tenures, defined the rights of the tenants and protected them from unlawful eviction by the estate owners or the zamindars. The Abolition of Estate Act also led to the partition of larger estates into smaller portions, and new landowners emerged from the older estates.

The Andhra Pradesh (Scheduled Areas) Land Transfer Regulation Act Amendment of 1970, popularly known as the 1/70 Act, according to him, is “a peculiar law that cannot be implemented”.²⁷ He admits that there has been ‘cheating’ of the tribals by the non-tribals; nevertheless, his concern is for those families that had come to the region at the behest of the administration. As alluded earlier, some of them came here on the beckoning of the administration to teach tribals the lives and culture of the ‘civilised people’ so that they (the tribals) can be ‘mainstreamed’. Advocate Balaji Rao holds that the amendment of 1970, as initiated by the Chief Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, had an inherent loophole. As per Clause 2 (g) of the Act, the property can be transferred between the non-tribals, if it is a will or testamentary disposition. As such, there are multiple incidents of forging wills or making wills to present the land transactions as legal after the promulgation of 1/70. As claimed, this loophole negates the whole aim of the 1970 amendment that tried to stop property transactions between the non-tribals other than by way of inheritance.

²⁵ The ‘inferior proprietor’ used to manage the landholdings of the zamindar, who usually resided away from the estate.

²⁶ Interview with Advocate Balaji Rao at his residence on 17 March 2014 in Bhadrachalam.

²⁷ Another interview with Advocate Balaji Rao at his residence on 10 April 2018 in Bhadrachalam.

Evidently, if the Land Transfer Regulations, especially 1/70, is to be implemented as per the letter and spirit of the law, no tourist or even a researcher can reside in the region. Clause 6 (a) of the Act explicitly prohibits the sale, lease, gift, mortgage or any other dealing with the immovable property except in case of the tribals. Moreover, as was claimed, the definition of immovable property was also drastically changed in the amendment; it now included timber, grass etc., thereby making it impossible for any economic transaction between the tribal and the non-tribal without attracting the penal provisions of the Act. Balaji Rao is clear that once a law is promulgated, it cannot be lifted. He goes on to point to a peculiarity, noting that the Civil Court Act has not been extended to the Fifth Scheduled Areas, unlike the Criminal Court Act. As such, the judicial functions regarding civil cases are exercised by either the Sub-Collector or the Revenue Divisional Officer. According to Balaji Rao, the revenue officials who enact the role of judicial officers are often confused and manipulated by the expertise of the lawyers, and thereby the law has been violated in several cases. As he opined, unlike the colonial period, wherein the Sub-Collectors or the Collectors had legal knowledge, the post-independence officers do not seem to have such knowledge. Additionally, the work burden of these officers is more as compared to the past, thereby giving them little or no time to study each and every case in-depth and deliver ‘sound judgments’. As disclosed, certain revenue officials indulge in ‘nepotism’ by misusing their judicial powers to issue orders. This problem has further aided the non-tribals in extending their manipulations and legalising them.

Is this predominant order of narration a kind of ‘victim story’ of the non-tribals? To corroborate the account provided by Advocate Balaji Rao, a non-landholder’s perspective was actively sought. Indeed, for a view from the outside, a missionary operating in the area was contacted to know further about the history of the non-tribals. Brother Joseph is a member of the Brothers of Sacred Heart, a Catholic congregation; he was also the state convener of the South Indian Adivasi Network (or SIAN). He is a middle-aged priest working in the area since the beginning of the congregation in the division from around 2003. It is a confederation of missionary organizations working in the tribal areas. In the division, Brother Joseph’s congregation works for the legal rights

of the tribals in Wazeedu, Venkatapuram, Cherla and Dummugudem mandals. They also have a social work centre called CAFED (Cavssanel Foundation for Education and Development) in the Venkatapuram mandal.

During one of the interactions at the CAFED office, Brother Joseph narrated his understanding of the history gathered from his interactions and experiences in the region. According to him, the 'non-tribals' majorly populate the western flank of the region, that is, Wazeedu, Venkatapuram, Cherla, and Dummugudem, and only less than 10% of them are historically from this region.²⁸ The Rajus from the east and west Godavari districts predominantly populate Wazeedu. Most of the Raju houses in the mandal are empty or inhabited by elders, whereas the younger members of the households are in Hyderabad, Vijayawada, and other towns for education and occupational reasons. Some Raju families are trying to transfer their land to the tribals and shift out due to the 'Naxal problem' and pressure from the tribals. In fact, in Venkatapuram, according to Brother Joseph, the BC (Backward Caste) people like Gowdas, Yadavs, Naidus and Telagas are settling down.²⁹ They too are from east and west Godavari; even to this day, they tend to have marital relationships among their kin from those areas. Cherla and Dummugudem, as claimed, are Kamma dominated mandals, with the caste have moved in from Guntur, Bapatla and Tenali areas. In fact, there is a Road Transport Corporation bus from Bapatla to Cherla, indicating the medium of access and linkage between the agency area and south coastal Andhra.

Another key informant, Satish Rao, a resident of Cherla and the owner of a rice mill, provided the background of the Raju dominance in Cherla. He is around 45 years, and a fifth-generation resident. His wife Divya, is a volunteer at Seva Bharati, which is a service-oriented organization working under the aegis of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Satish Rao is also an organizer of the Sangh Parivar. He reports that the Jan Sangh had started its operation in the area in 1967. As he noted, his great grandfather

²⁸ Most of my informants used the term 'non-tribals' for all social groups other than Koyas, Konda Reddis, and Naikpods. Across the space of these interactions, they did not mention any specific social group unless probed by the researcher.

²⁹ Brother Joseph gave the breakdown of the social groups only after being asked specifically. He prefers not to name any particular social grouping.

Muchhala Venkateswaru was the first person to introduce tractors in the region, with two machines being imported from England in 1932 for agricultural practices. Satish Rao's father, besides, was the first doctor of the region, whose family originally hailed from Sironcha, which is presently part of Gadchiroli in Maharashtra and is nearly 200 kilometres away. It may be recalled that Sironcha was part of the Chanda District of the Central Provinces, but became part of the land parcel that formed Upper Godavari District when the British took over the region from the Nizam. Satish Rao maintains that there were many Telugu families in Sironcha, and even today up to 30 kilometres from the Telangana border, one can witness the presence of the Telugu language and culture. As he went on to narrate, the Raju dominance in Cherla can be traced back to an earlier episode in the area's history when the Cherla king adopted a Raju child from Jangareddipuram Gudem in the east Godavari district. This supposedly initiated the flow of the Rajus to Cherla after the death of the tribal king of Cherla. In fact, the latter was subordinate to the Kakatiya king and had constructed a fort, temples, and tanks on behalf of the Kakatiyas. The area, according to Satish Rao, had multiple temples and tanks constructed by the Kakatiyas, but the Nizam's rule had destroyed many of these installations.

Reverting back, in recalling the history of the non-tribals in the region, Brother Joseph clearly urged that the migrants had told him that they were invited by the government in the 1950s to 'mainstream' the tribals. They were asked to practice agriculture along the banks of the river so that they can become the reference group for the tribals, with the attendant expectation that the tribals will shift from *podu* cultivation to settled agriculture. As we have maintained, it is claimed by the non-tribals that the government gave all the facilities, including land. However, although settled cultivation by the migrants has reached almost 10 kilometres from the banks of Godavari in the present times, most of the tribals still follow *podu* or shifting cultivation. In fact, any kind of documentary proof for the government invitation of non-tribals into the region is absent at the present. However, this largely correlates the narration of Advocate Balaji Rao of the erstwhile zamindar family of Gundala. Brother Joseph also pointed out that if the non-tribals married the tribals, the government used to give them land to further mainstream the processes of transition.

Having said so, the problem of land in terms of occupation and exploitation by the non-tribals is a constant source of tension between the tribals and the non-tribals. Brother Joseph is very categorical: “If and only if injustice is done will the tribals agitate against the non-tribals, and it is the ‘mixed groups’ that are making the problem between the tribals and the non-tribals”.³⁰ According to him, the appellation ‘mixed groups’ indicates the persons born out of a tribal and non-tribal marriage. Raju, a senior assistant at the V R Puram mandal office and a resident of Rekhapalli, however suggests that the relations have been largely harmonious with “the tribals and the non-tribals living peacefully for ages and there are no conflicts between them”.³¹ In this mixed field of perceptions, it is imperative to note that we have to grasp the tribal perspective of injustice by investigating more fully precisely when and how they perceive themselves to be at the receiving end. Be that as it may, Brother Joseph is generally dismissive of the tribal groups in the region, and even suggests that they are doing a form of ‘clientelist politics’ and are largely rentier in nature. Indeed, according to Brother Joseph, the larger failure of the Left parties in terms of addressing the problems of the tribals and the loss of their credibility as corruption-free organizations among the tribals has led to the emergence of tribal groups like Adivasi Samkshema Parishad (ASP) and Girijana Samkshema Parishad (GSP) [Our later Ch.6, broadly, will engage with the dynamics of these organizations]. He admitted that he could not quite recall any tribal organizations prior to these formations, and that the latter had taken on the mandate of negotiating with and confronting the government and the non-tribals in the division.

Brother Joseph also provided us with a snapshot of the economy on the western flank of the division, maintaining that it is predominantly producing chilli, followed by cotton and now maize (the latter slowly emerging as a crop of choice among the farmers). It is claimed that a South Indian agro-industrial group procures nearly 50% of the chilli produce, while about 40% goes to the Guntur market and the rest 10% to the Jagdalpur

³⁰ Discussion with Brother Joseph on 21 March 2014 at the office of SIAN, Bhadrachalam.

³¹ The interaction with Raju was on 18 March 2014 during a visit to V R Puram mandal office in search of documents that could help in reconstructing the history of the region. Incidentally, since the office is in a flood-prone area - the water had entered its premises in the August 2013 floods - and in the vicinity of Polavaram Project, the documents have been shifted to the Sub-Collector office at Bhadrachalam.

market in Chhattisgarh (where the price is often held to be better than the Guntur market). Largely, as we observed, contract farming is the main mode of production here, with the intermediaries or traders giving an assured price for the agricultural output.

It must be noted that the timber cultivation for the Indian Tobacco Company (ITC) Paper Boards factory at Sarpaka, which is located on the other side of the river across Bhadrachalam town, is another main organised form of economic activity in the region. The ITC had entered into an arrangement with the Department of Forests, Government of Andhra Pradesh, and with farmers at the individual level, for the production of timber as required for the paper factory at Sarpaka. To the individual farmers, they give seeds and saplings at a price, including technical support, and assured minimum returns even if there is crop failure. This has encouraged farmers to do eucalyptus farming in the region. It is seen as more lucrative than other choices of cropping. However, it is alleged that due to these timber farms there is groundwater depletion, even though the company claims the contrary. Evidently, ITC is significant in the everyday life of the region, not only in changing the land use pattern of the area, but also as the biggest provider of employment. There are around 10,000 contract jobs available at the ITC, and this is a major site of negotiations and power leveraging among various people in and beyond the division. More importantly, the tribals have been lobbying for more regular jobs at the ITC, and have waged numerous agitations in this respect. This latter circumstance resonates with the agitation by the tribals at the Mothugudem Power Station in Chintur mandal in the past. Interestingly, this latter agitation was formulated and conducted by the local tribals without the support of any political or tribal group. However, nothing constructive or tangible has evolved out of these agitations and conflicts. In fact, Brother Joseph even alleged that factory emissions are polluting not only the air, but also the Godavari River, and that the authorities are largely indifferent to these issues.

The landowning non-tribals were politically active, participating both in the Excluded Areas Association discussed in the earlier section and also in the independence movement. In fact, the region had its brush with the independence movement through its resident, Kotagiri Kondala Rao (1909-1989), a famous freedom fighter of Andhra

Pradesh.³² He was the son of the Estate Receiver of Shannivarapetta, Gummadapu Srinivas Rao. The estate was part of Nuzuwud Samasthan of the Nizam territory and covered V R Puram and Chintur mandals of the present-day Bhadrachalam region, and bordered Perandapalli Estate. The Rani of Bhadrachalam referred in the British documents belonged to Nuzuwud Samasthan.³³ In 1910, her land was taken over by the Estate Receiver who then was the Tahsildar of Polavaram. Later, Srinivas Rao was appointed as the Special Deputy Collector of Bhadrachalam and the Nugur taluks. The family had originally come from West Godavari, and Kondala Rao had married a fellow Velama caste woman from Bhadrachalam.

Kondala Rao was a Pradesh Congress Committee member and the Vice-President of the East Godavari District wing of the party. He discharged many functions in the party, and his proximity with the politicians was used as an advantage to bring certain developmental activities in the region. According to his younger son, Kotagiri Prabodh Kumar, a retired manager of Grameen Bank, his father was instrumental in the introduction of the bus service in the region. The tall cheerful Prabodh Kumar recalled the past while sipping tea in his spacious living room. In 1945, a service was started between Bhadrachalam and Kunnavaram, and subsequently to Wazeedu, which was then extended to Peruru. The bus transport service continued except during the monsoon until 1972, when it was taken over by the state government. Prabodh Kumar even claims that his father, Kondala Kumar had pressurized the then Chief Minister Neelam Sanjiva Reddy to sanction the bridge across the Godavari after the Boat tragedy of 1957. He recalls that the Chief Minister had laid the foundations of the bridge and also their house on the same day in 1960.³⁴ Under his father's leadership of the Bhadrachalam Temple Development Committee, besides, the *kalyanamandapam* of the temple was constructed in 1964-66.

³² He was one among the 10 freedom fighters feted by former Chief Minister N. T. Rama Rao at Hyderabad in 1982.

³³ The Rani had a house near the present-day Bhadrachalam Post Office and was called 'Addalmandapam' (Glass House), which was dismantled in 1967.

³⁴ Their home had been named Bharat Bhavan by the Chief Minister in August 1960.



Fig. 2: Chief Minister Jalagam Vengala Rao with Kotagiri Kondala Rao

Source: Prabodh Kumar, Bhadrachalam

Prabodh Kumar's fondest memory of his father is the battle that the latter had waged against the Nizam's henchmen, the Razakars. Kondala Rao, as claimed, had mobilised both the tribals and the non-tribals to maintain cannons at two possible places from where the Razakar raiders of the Nizam could enter the Bhadrachalam region, which of course was under the British Crown. The raiders used to cross the river and loot the people, even indulging in rape, arson, and killings. Burgahampad and Tondipakka across the river in Palvancha were supposedly the two staging points of the raiders, given the fact that they were also Muslim dominated areas. Diagonally opposite to these two crossing points, one near the temple and the other at Devarapalli near Nellipaka in Bhadrachalam mandal, Kondala Rao and his militia had maintained the cannons so as to thwart any intrusion by the Razakars.

Even though his father was a much-respected man in the region and honoured by the State government, Prabodh feels that the Indian National Congress had failed to honour

Kotagiri Kondala Rao and his work. He consciously mentioned that he did not want to join the CPI (M), which is the dominant political party in the region, since he felt that they are outdated in their policies and philosophy. As he declared: “In the recent times, the government is formulating and delivering welfare policies for all social groups; land is given to the poor and at times certain social welfare programs are devised without any popular agitation. Under these circumstances, consequently, the Communist parties have lost all relevance”. Therefore, after his retirement in 2014, Prabodh became a Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) supporter, and gave rent-free space for the TRS office in Bhadrachalam.

C. V. K. Rao is considered the historian of the region, and is seen as a chronicler of the developments of the area between Parnasala (Dummugudem) to Lutpetagandi (Wazeedu). He is also a former Congressman, having served as the Secretary of the District Congress Committee, Khammam, and as the President of the Bhadrachalam Division Congress Committee. CVK provides a history of the region in his representation to the Justice Srikrishna Commission constituted by the Government of India regarding the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh state. Some aspects of this history have been covered in the Third chapter, especially Sect.3.4, although presently we will be addressing the history of the region from the perspective of land rights. Venkatapuram was the headquarters of the erstwhile Nugur taluk and had the presence of the non-tribals since 18th century. According to CVK, the non-tribals had come from Guntur, Nellore, and Godavari districts, as also from Madhya Pradesh. These non-tribals had come and settled down to become landlords. However, according to CVK, at present most of these settlers have abandoned their land, since the labour wage rates are pretty high and agricultural profits are declining. They have relocated to the towns, and the remaining non-tribal landholders have given their land to tribals for tenancy farming.

CVK is an octogenarian residing on a roadside house. His sharp memory and wit bely his age, and he jokingly says that his lawyer son has not inherited half his wit and memory. CVK’s family had come from Guntur and settled in Ricepeta village in 1929. He had worked as a social education officer in Ranchi, and later he became the community development officer at Venkatapuram and V R Puram. CVK is clear that

most of the Koyas who are in Cherla had come from Bhopalpattanam and Bastar in present day Chhattisgarh. Likewise, he is clear that the Kapus and Chowdary clans (the latter belonging to the Kammas) came after independence, and settled in Cherla and adjoining areas. Speaking in particular about the Land Transfer Regulations and its violations, CVK recalled an incident. When D. Subbarao (who later became the Governor of Reserve Bank of India) was the Collector of Khammam district, he had supposedly directed the tribals to occupy the non-tribal properties. This created a huge tension in the area and the non-tribals appealed to the then Chief Minister, Marri Channa Reddy to transfer him and mitigate the social tension. In CVK's perspective, the Land Transfer Regulation Act, and to be specific 1/70 Act, is a problem not only for the non-tribals, but also for the tribals and the government. As he asserted: "1/70 is harmful to the entire society". He further says that one Srikakulam Collector had made a report based on the specific contexts of the place without doing a comprehensive study of all the tribal regions in Andhra Pradesh.³⁵ This report became the basis of 1/70 amendment. In doing so, CVK argues that the law actually prohibited legitimate and voluntary transactions between the tribals and the non-tribals. It also created, as claimed, problems for the tribals in utilizing their land resources as an investment or saving. The prospects of financial growth through ownership and sale of land were no longer possible, and that thereby there is no progress in the region.

Further elaborating, CVK consciously pointed out that the government by constructing buildings and quarters for its administration had defeated the Act. A new pattern of migration inevitably occurred, with most of the government staff after retirement settling down and constructing houses in the region, all of which undoubtedly was in collusion with the administration. CVK largely laments that the tribals have rights, entitlements, land and political representation, whereas the non-tribals are presumed to be outsiders and expropriators and thus making them almost secondary citizens. He is categorical that there is no Act like 1/70 in any other tribal region in the country, and charges the bureaucracy of myopia in envisaging such an impractical law.

³⁵ Most of my interlocutors suggested that the officer in question seems to be B. N. Yugandhar, the much-acclaimed IAS officer who went on to be a Planning Commission Member and Secretary to the then Prime Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao.

Quite notably, swathes of people had also moved into the region for the economic opportunities that it provided as a pilgrimage space. Anand Sastry, a middle-aged Brahmin, is a well-known journalist in the region, and lives close to the Godavari riverside, a few hundred metres from the Bhadrachalam Temple. His family had come and settled on the lane in front of the temple in 1927. As he narrated, the family had moved from Vallabharaopalem village of Ponnur mandal in Guntur, where they supposedly owned around 6000 acres of land. However, there was a recurrent water problem and they were finding cultivation unviable. Ostensibly, they sold their land and planned to shift to a place where there is water. Apparently, Lord Rama had appeared in his grandmothers' dream, and the family decided to shift to Bhadrachalam. His grandmother opened a Brahmin hotel, Sree Rama Vilas near the temple and it was operational till her death in 1970. Sastry's father had been an employee of the Indian Tobacco Leaf Division in Kunnavaram, which later transformed into the Indian Tobacco Company Private Limited and then to ITC.

Sastry, in his typical unequivocal style, laments about the lost glory of Bhadrachalam town. According to him, the temple town was at its peak in the 1950s and 1960s. However, with the political interferences in terms of changes in land regulations and laws, the town started to 'lose its glory'. It was no longer a destination for non-tribals to come and settle down. In his opinion, the Government of India in extending colonial regulations and acts had failed to see the changes at the ground level and erred in not incorporating the needs of the non-tribals who were brought to this area by the British government for developing the region. Sastry further pointed out that, at the time of independence, there were two legislative representatives for the region, especially since Bhadrachalam was a multi-member constituency. Later, however, there was only one assembly seat, and it was reserved for the STs. This development, according to him, was very detrimental to the fate of the non-tribals who had settled down in the region, and especially so for those in and around the temple who had come basically to serve Lord Rama. The Bhadrachalam parliamentary constituency was, for Sastry, the longest and widest constituency in the country and extended from Paderu in Vishakhapatnam district to Wazeedu in east Godavari, with assembly segments cutting across districts. Clearly,

by indicating the scale of the constituency, he was trying to foreground the political importance of Bhadrachalam as the nerve centre of the politics of the region (unmindful here, of course, of the state and its consequent bifurcation).

To be sure, with the enactment of the Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Act 1961, the constituencies were bifurcated and one declared as reserved.³⁶ Bhadrachalam was never quite bifurcated per se; and, in the 1962 Assembly elections, it was notified as a general constituency, and one Muhammed Tahaseel of the CPI was re-elected as the MLA (having been the representative since 1955). However, from the subsequent assembly elections starting from 1967, the seat was reserved for the STs and it continues to be so.³⁷ Presently, according to Sastry, the injustice meted out to the region has to be seen at multiple levels. Primarily, as he states, the ST benefits in the region is largely cornered by the Lambada people, and this has put the indigenous tribals like Koyas and Konda Reddis at a disadvantage. Secondly, the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and the subsequent district re-organization in Telangana had split the region in two states and across three districts basically. As we have already seen in our earlier chapters: Wazeedu and Venkatapuram is now under Jayashankar-Bhupalpally district, and Cherla, Dummugudem and Bhadrachalam Town area are under Bhadradi-Kothagudem district of Telangana state. Alternately, Chintur, V R Puram, Kunnavaram and Bhadrachalam rural has gone to Andhra Pradesh and is now under East Godavari District.

In the undivided Andhra Pradesh, there was a single Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) with Bhadrachalam as the headquarters. This special purpose organization handled the tribal concerns of the region. However, subsequent to the bifurcation of the region, the people in the northern part of the region who are attached to the new district (Jayashankar-Bhupalpally) have to travel nearly 130 kms to reach the district headquarters at Bhupalpally. Those in the southern part of the region that forms part of the East Godavari district need to go to Kakinada, which is nearly 200 kms away, while the remaining portions of the division have to go to Kothagudem which is about

³⁶ See <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/Have-you-heard-of-2-being-elected-from-one-seat-flashback/article16638802.ece> (Last accessed on 25 April 2018).

³⁷ Information gleaned from the various statistical reports of the assembly elections available at the Election Commission of India website.

40-100 kms away. Till recently, the District Collector was also heading the ITDA, and he sits in the district headquarters. In effect, what has happened is the complete reversal of the administrative reforms that came to be over the years as part of the spaces of governance in the region. As Sastry maintained, the earlier configuration of the administrative boundaries and office locations had helped the Koyas to access the governmental authorities easily. It had given the 'Bhadrachalam Koyas', as claimed, a single set of administrative nodes.³⁸ However, as Sastry alleged, the reorganization of the region as obtaining in the Telangana state into two districts had been done to eliminate the possibility of Bhadrachalam as the district headquarters. In the normal course, it would have been the headquarters since the infrastructure to set up the new administration was already available. This sort of manoeuvring, for Sastry, is the greatest injustice done to the area under the pressure of the non-tribals in the Kothagudem region. As perceived, it had deprived the Bhadrachalam town of the centrality it deserved. Sastry is very clear that Bhupalpally (or, for that matter, many other new district headquarters) do not have even a quarter of facilities that is available in Bhadrachalam. This de-scaling of the importance of the town, as formulated by Sastry, will further accelerate the process of de-population of the town by the non-tribals. Already, as he points out (and further corroborated by our own field observations), the younger generations are moving out of the region due to land market restrictions and the overall lack of development and opportunities in the area.

Moreover, the economy of the town is largely temple-based, which for Sastry further meant that the non-tribals as a whole were not very keen to create disturbances in the area against the biases and injustices meted. Besides, as claimed, they had largely come in search of business and land, and their roots were elsewhere, which again meant that nothing tangible could be achieved through mobilisation or agitation. The Koyas and Konda-Reddis for their part, it is claimed, live in the hills and interior places and seem largely indifferent to the situation of the non-tribals.

³⁸ According to a former official of the Tribal Research Council and Training Institute (as part of the undivided Andhra Pradesh), the Koyas can be subdivided into three spatial divisions as obtaining in the state – singularly across Warangal, Bhadrachalam, and East Godavari. Incidentally, the Godavari River and Sabari River that gives contours to our region separate these three cultural geographies of the Koyas.

To be sure, there is a sizeable Dalit population in the area. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) also operates in the area. In what follows, we will look at the region from the perspective of a Dalit lawyer who married a tribal woman and has been a witness and participant of some of the key developments in the area as a student leader and a social activist. Advocate Srinivas is a former Additional Public Prosecutor and Bar Association President based in Bhadrachalam. A cheerful and helpful person, aged nearly 60 years, he often accommodates researchers in his house. He makes it a point to give time for conversations about the region and its people, although he is often in the midst of a busy schedule involving clients and generally helping others. He had come to the region in 1975, when his father was posted as a teacher in Dummugudem. He is a Madiga married to a Koya teacher. Indeed, until some 10-15 years back, marriages between the SCs and the tribal people were rare; however, Srinivas's father-in-law was a Congress leader from Kunnavaram and he was a progressive man. For nearly 40 years, his father-in-law had represented Kunnavaram block in local bodies.

By and large, for Srinivas, the region is dominated by Rajus in Venkatapuram and Wazeedu; Kammas in Cherla, Bhadrachalam, Kunnavaram and V R Puram; and, interestingly, by Muslims in Chintur. The Muslims from the east Godavari belt had supposedly migrated to this region in the 1970s with the help of two Congress leaders Shahjahan and Maqbool. Like most other field informants, Advocate Srinivas talked specifically about the Muslim conversion of tribals in the Dummugudem region. As claimed, his father had been the principal of the school where the first conversion took place in 1976. Supposedly, at the Kothapalli school in Dummugudem, a newly appointed Hindi teacher, 'a handsome charismatic man', had converted two students. The event created a stir, and a local RSS activist complained to the authorities to conduct an investigation. The incident was even reported in a Telugu newspaper with the headline 'Another Meenakshipuram', a reference to Islamic conversion at that time in Tamil Nadu.³⁹ The Hindi teacher was dismissed from the service after the enquiry. According

³⁹ The Meenakshipuram incident refers to the Islamic conversion of around 200 Dalit families on 19 February 1981 in Meenakshipuram village near Tenkasi in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. It became a national issue and led to anti-conversion laws being introduced in Tamil Nadu and other states. In fact, after the conversion, its residents renamed the village as Rahmat Nagar. It also led to the formation of Hindu Munnani in Tamil Nadu.

to Srinivas, one of the converted students is Papparao, who in due course had become a village revenue officer, and the other is Sonde Ramesh, a committed Muslim and tribal leader.

With regard to his own trajectory, Srinivas disclosed that he had been a former Radical Students Union member, and had gone on to complete his law degree from Osmania University. This past notwithstanding, he is a vehement critic of the Communist party in the region. As he emphasized: “CPI (M) is a betrayal party and is not for the poor people”. Indeed, upon being quizzed about the failure of the radical left in reorganising the land distribution pattern in the region which is skewed in favour of the non-tribals, he was quite candid in his response, maintaining that the Maoist agenda cannot be reduced to sectarian measures like land reforms and that its agenda is to capture power once and for all. In this light, it must be noted that in the region there is a constant effort to resist the radical left politics. One of the individuals who have been resisting is Venkatesh, a 40-year-old pan chewing Brahmin and local functionary of the BJP. His father is an employee of one of the private guest houses in the temple town. They hail from the Srikakulam-Odisha border. In fact, Venkatesh who was born in the division is a repository of information regarding various families in the region. It seems pertinent to reveal his information regarding the Koyas of the region. Venkatesh is emphatic that the Koyas, who are largely seen in the division especially on the northern side, had come to the Bhadrachalam region from present-day Chhattisgarh as farm labourers. As surmised, since they had to travel long distances to reach the farm, the non-tribal landlords provided them shelter in the peripheries of the villages. In fact, Ranga Raju, who resides in Venkatapuram village and is a descendant of the ‘inferior proprietor’ of the Venkatapuram estate (and, consequently, referred to as ‘zamindar babu’ in the area), further corroborated this order of narration about the Koyas.

Against this extended backdrop of different imaginations of the region, our dissertation moves into Part II, encompassing the distinctive contours of the region’s developmental history. Quite emphatically, our discussion of certain aspects of the region’s developmental history will engage the problem of land alienation, development-induced displacement, and the specific evolution of the Bhadrachalam town. By and large, the

differential worlds of the tribals and non-tribals will be highlighted in terms of their problems and aspirations in the 'tribal region', as it were. The final part of the dissertation – that subsuming the people's history – will further showcase the fragments of life histories, including engagements with other communities, and the overall structure of demands of the people in our region.

Part II



The Contours of a Developmental History

Chapter 4

Trajectories of Development: Configurations and Circulations of Capital and Subject-Formation

Broadly, five events, as represented through the various sections that constitute this chapter, recreate the contours of a developmental history in the Bhadrachalam region. As such, in terms of our first section, our delineation opens with a colonial settlement report forged by the authorities of the region. In many ways, this report is the first systematic documentation of the region and its people regarding socio-economic structures and processes. Additionally, the report determines further the political and economic activities in the Bhadrachalam region. A set of legislations followed this colonial portrait, as broached in our second section. Indeed, the land and interest rate regulations mounted in the colonial period determine the legally feasible activities in the region, thereby fixing the developmental trajectory, as it were. The colonial determination of the region in terms of its legal and political characterisation goes hand-in-hand with the work of the Christian missionaries. As such, the third section of this chapter delves into this latter historical aspect. The last two sections engage the contours of spatial development in terms of both expansion and displacement, with the Bhadrachalam town acting as the proxy for the overall capitalist development of the region. In keeping with this detailing, our final section on the implications of the Polavaram Project is the story of capital spanning over 150 years in the region.

‘Development’, as a concept, is traceable to the idea of the perfectibility of humankind emanating from Europe, especially the French Enlightenment Encyclopaedists. With time, the idea of development was equated to a quantifiable statistic defined exclusively in economic terms. Under the neoliberal framework, specifically, the integuments of financialization and accumulation of surplus are taken to be the barometers of development; and, as such, is devoid of any explicit measure about human costs and the weight of emotions regarding the growth process. Against this background, the

postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak has sought to unpack ‘development’ as a political category, forcefully maintaining: “Development is an insertion into the circuit of capital, without developing the subject of its ethical, or even appropriate social, use. The development of the subject is apparently in the self-interest of the ‘under developed,’ but the larger pattern is in the interest of developed capital” (Spivak 2018: 121-122).¹ The production of the subject through the present ‘developmental processes’ is pre-eminently economistic and statistical. Understandably, Spivak urges us to approach development beyond its statistical cast. According to her, the only appropriate epistemological approach for understanding the present is by capturing the dimensions of subject-formation without accentuating the capitalisation process. Needless to say, the ‘subject’ of development is being produced in a world beyond the economistic paradigm, and involves the intermeshing of material realities like caste, class, and gender with the circuits of unfolding capital. At any rate, the direct accumulation and consumption of capital cannot be termed as development since the latter involves social and ethical components. Interestingly, Spivak maintains that ‘development’ as a concept is better-off without a strict conceptualisation. Additionally, while conceding the practical methodological imperatives, she urges against nursing a governing idea with reference to the history and process of development as a whole. This creative nudge drives the recovery of aspects of developmental history as rendered in the context of our study. In fact, Zygmunt Bauman’s (1989: 92) ‘gardening culture of modernity’ augments our takeaway from the contours of Spivak’s cautionary nudge. For Bauman, broadly, modern culture is a ‘garden culture’ that designs an ideal life and an ostensibly perfect human condition. The mandate of the ‘garden’, evidently, defines what is unwanted and needs to be weeded out.

In a manner of speaking, this present chapter marks a search for the subject-formation narrative provoked by Spivak (2018). Whose needs and what precise needs can we see development serving? Are there any attempts to incorporate the voices of the ‘people’ in the region with the larger flows of capital and economic growth? Furthermore, how

¹ In that sense, the failure of development is essential for the elites to continue their dominance. Furthermore, Cooper (2005) has developed the universality and particularity embedded in the concept and has sought to translate this into a critique of modernity and development across the colonized world.

does the infusion of capital reconfigure the material conditions in our region? These questions guide our chapter in its effort to formulate the production of subjects in the process of the region's development. Doubtless, the focus is on the trajectories beyond the statistics of the 'growth' and 'creation' of the region. As such, we survey the possibilities and challenges to colonial capitalism as reflected in an official document. The colonial compulsions, supposedly aimed at 'improving' a region without compromising on 'the rule of law' lays the foundation for land regulations leading to a particular form of economic exchange and social transactions. An unintended consequence of the entry of the colonial capital in the form of a missionary establishment and its implications on the social life of the region will also be addressed, while going on to probe the questions of 'whose?' or 'what?' development is being forged in the context of the various flows of capital and broad patterns of socioeconomic change.

Interestingly, the '*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*' defines 'development' (noun) as (i) the act or process of growing or causing something to grow or become larger or more advanced; (ii) the act or process of creating something over a period of time; and (iii) the state of being created or made more advanced. Our narration uses all three common meanings to recapitulate the significant events and processes that constitute the parameters of 'development' in the region, while being attentive to the ways in which particular factors of production have been organised over a period of time. Specifically, the attempt is to narrate how land, labour, and capital defined places, individuals, communities, and organizations in the Bhadrachalam region, and thus give us a window into the patterns of subject-formation across the same.

5.1 Captain Glasfurd's Profile of the Region

The search for the historical documents about the region led the researcher to the Sub-Collector Office Records Room at Bhadrachalam. It was a stuffy room, very dusty amidst torn and dilapidated files with fading ink marks, all arranged haphazardly in stacks. The disappointment turned into a glimmer of confidence when the Sub-Collector noted that he had a copy of a Settlement Report of the region. Unfortunately, he did not have the full copy of the report; some pages and chapters were missing. Nevertheless, the incomplete copy gave firm coordinates in terms of author and document name.

Subsequently, a full copy was located at the British Library in London. This colonial text is the first comprehensive documentation of the region, and a young captain, C. L. R. Glasfurd, is its author, going at it does by his name.

As accounts have it, Charles Lamont Robertson Glasfurd (17 March 1831 – 14 May 1887) was a Scott born in Almorah, India, to an Army officer serving in the Bengal Engineers. From 1860 to September 1881, he worked in the Central Provinces in various capacities and retired as a Major-General. He died in Algiers during a vacation. One of his noteworthy contributions was the Settlement Report on the Upper Godavari District authored in 1869. He was also a qualified interpreter of three Indian languages.² Glasfurd's sons were also military officers, Brigadier General Duncan John Glasfurd and Colonel Alexander Inglis Robertson Glasfurd. Interestingly, a village, 'Glassfard Petha' in Sironcha tehsil of Gadchiroli District of Maharashtra bordering Telangana, all part of the colonial Upper Godavari district, is named after him. It is a village of 900 people covering 159.57 hectares, 25 kilometres from Sironcha and 155 kilometres from Warangal in Telangana and 200 kilometres from Gadchiroli.³ It is an interior forest village; and Glasfurd had rehabilitated this village from the risk of flooding by the Pranhita River (the largest tributary of the Godavari River) when he was posted in Sironcha. This nondescript village turned up in popular memory when the great-grandchildren of Captain Glasfurd visited in 2018.⁴

The Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, J. H. Morris, appointed Deputy Commissioner Captain Glasfurd to enquire about the property relations in the Upper Godavari district. To recall, the Upper Godavari district of the Central Provinces in British India consisted of Sironcha, Nugur, Albaka, Cherla, Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli sub-divisions; and, broadly, except for Sironcha, the rest of the sub-divisions

² Details drawn from: https://www.dnw.co.uk/auction-archive/special-collections/lot.php?specialcollection_id=31&lot_uid=225803

³ See <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/gadchiroli/sironcha/glassfard-petha.html>

⁴ See https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/australian-duo-joyfully-trace-their-missing-roots-to-western-india-118121300360_1.html; also <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/accompanying-the-glasfurds-to-their-roots-in-glasfurdhapeta/articleshow/66897660.cms>; and <https://himanshubagde.wordpress.com/2019/05/28/accompanying-glasfurds-to-their-roots-at-glasfurdhapeta/>

constitute the Bhadrachalam region that we are addressing. The report, filed in 1869 (Glasfurd 1869), outlined the socio-economic status of the region when the East India Company took over the possession of the region from the Nizam. As represented, the present-day Bhadrachalam region was part of two Zamindaris – the Yelma (Velama) Zamindari (which covered Sironcha, Nugur, Albaka, and Cherla) and the Bhadrachalam Zamindari (that covered Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli); the more significant portion of the latter estate was on the left side of the river in Nizam’s territory. The Upper Godavari District supposedly generated Rs 19,104 revenue. The following table gives the details of the revenue and population as per the subdivisions of the district.

Table 5: Glasfurd’s Profile of the Region

Sub-Division	Total Area (Sq Kms)	Population	Land Revenue (Rs)
Sironcha	1204	13,250	3,656
Nugur	767	5,145	2,819
Albaka	280	811	822
Cherla	478	3,741	2,497
Bhadrachalam	2261	22,837	5,684
Rekapalli		8,896	3,626

Source: Glasfurd (1869: 2)

As should be evident, the Upper Godavari district covered nearly 5000 square kilometres with a population of 54,680 people, with little more than 10 people per square kilometre. Since 5/6th of the district is ‘ownerless wasteland’, by adjusting the land size to area occupied by settlement, the density increases to 72 people per square kilometre. It was 346 kilometres long, and not more than 37 kilometres in width; at certain places, it was as narrow as 5 kilometres. Except for the river banks, the district was largely covered with forest. As per the Settlement Report (Glasfurd 1869), there were two important

towns – Sironcha with 3000 people and Dummugudem, the headquarters of the Godavary Navigation Works, with 5000 population, mainly composed of labourers. A deputy commissioner, a medical officer, and additional superintendent of police were posted at Dummugudem. The Bhadrachalam temple town had a population of 1590 people. Except for the April festivities at Bhadrachalam temple and the January fair at Sironcha, there are no major public gatherings, and there is hardly any substantial business transactions in the region. Weekly markets, all the same, were to be seen at Sironcha and Rekhapalli.

As a whole, the region was, and is, forested, and cultivation restricted to the banks of rivers, its tributaries, and streams. However, no river was being used for irrigation. In fact, Glasfurd opined that the lack of any political importance for the region had led to the non-exploitation of the river system for irrigation. He noticed, however, 90 large and small tanks in the region; some in the forested regions where the jungle had overgrown it. Nearly 60 tanks were seen to be in a good condition and irrigated 2651 acres of land. Glasfurd also noticed the presence of megalithic monuments; incidentally, recent archaeological findings have observed such stretches in the northern fringes of Telangana state. Even as he noted these antiquarian traces, he did not find any ‘ancient ruins’ in terms of forts or religious structures or even ruined cities. Furthermore, he specifically claimed that he did not find any evidence to link the region to the Gond kingdom, although he did connect the region to the Kakatiya empire based in Warangal (explicitly by pointing to the Telugu connections north of the region, in Bastar). The Telugu inscriptions in the temple ruins of Bastar made him allude that our region could have been under the Kakatiyas. At any rate, the tanks found in the region are a mark of the latter’s rule in the region. The jungle over-running some of the tanks suggested that there was the desertion of people at some point of time in history.

Glasfurd enumerated that the population, around 1866, consisted majorly of aboriginal tribes belonging to the Gotteh and Koya groups. In fact, for Glasfurd, the Koyas were

a restless race, who frequently desert one site to settle down in another, and as the district is but a narrow strip, having the Nizam’s territories on the one hand,

and the Bustar Dependency on the other, it happens that there is little of both emigration and immigration going on at the same time (Glasfurd 1869: 23).⁵

All the same, the Gottehs and Koyas are understood to be similar in customs and language, even though (as noted) they “do not eat together or intermarry”, the Koyas even claiming that they are superior to the Gottehs (ibid.: 26). Importantly, yet, both the groups are part of the Gond family. The Koyas, in the context of their contact with the Telugu population, have started losing their customs and identity, whereas the Gottehs are aloof as far as cultural contacts are considered. Glasfurd even portrays them to be timid, inoffensive and ‘tolerably truthful’. Largely due to their restless behaviour, it is maintained that they do not practice settled agriculture. However, as noted, exceptions were found along the banks of the Sabari River, around Sironcha and Dummugudem, where the groups practiced settled agriculture (growing rice) and even generated wealth. We must note that most of the cultivating people belonged to Velama, a Shudra caste, who also owned most of the proprietary land. The Kammas, of course, are the other landowning as well as the cultivating social group in the region. There are also Brahmins and Rajus found in the region.

As noted earlier, Glasfurd reported that the district (Upper Godavari) is a dense forest with cultivation restricted to the river banks. 1,88,014 acres of land (15% of the total available land) was classified as proprietary land (or land under the control of zamindars) and 10,73,599 acres was classified as the property of the state, of which 2,57,398 acres were reserved as wasteland, and 8,06,617 acres were labelled as unreserved and available land. The Godavari and its tributaries in the region marked the sources of water for the agricultural lands. It was also further noted in the report that about 1/3rd of the available ploughs is not put to use during the Kharif season due to the lack of availability of irrigated land. Not surprisingly, therefore, Glasfurd forcefully maintained: “The great pressing want of the people of this district at present is irrigation and I don’t think it is going too far to say that it is wanted more urgently than either education, roads, or the navigation of the Godavary” (ibid.: 33). It was estimated that, with the increase of irrigation facilities, an additional 15,000 acres could be cultivated. It would be pertinent

⁵ We had in the previous chapter (Ch.4, Sect.4.2 in particular) pondered the significance of this ‘emigration’ and ‘immigration’ especially with reference to Adivasi belonging.

to recall that Bhadrachalam region got an irrigation project only in the next century – the Taliperu Medium Irrigation project in Cherla mandal, which was initiated in 1977 by the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Jagam Vengala Rao, at an estimate of Rs 20 crores and completed in 1997 at the cost of Rs 53.74 crores with a potential to irrigate 13.965 thousand hectares in the Cherla and Dummugudem mandals of the Bhadrachalam region.⁶ It was in 1990 that the right canal water was released, while earlier in 1985, the left canal had been opened. However, according to a news report, due to shoddy constructions and poor maintenance, there were breaches in Dummugudem mandal, leading to the non-availability of water for cultivation.⁷

The Bhadrachalam and Rekhapalli riverbanks were found suitable for agriculture, even as the Koyas preferred to be away from the riverbanks and cultivated in lesser fertile tracts. The Albaka region, comprising present-day Wazeedu and Venkatapuram,⁸ was rendered as rugged and hilly; hence, there was hardly any settlement in the interior regions. Only a cart track along the Godavari River line was held to exist with hardly any traffic. Glasfurd, however, saw potential in the Godavari as a highway for transport and trade, even though the river was exploitable only until Dummugudem from the south due to rock barriers.

Noticeably, in the absence of proper records of land ownership, the then government reserved such properties to itself. Some of these ‘wasteland’ were assigned to villages for grazing, firewood cultivation, and extension of agriculture activities. However, the assignment did not include land found suitable for building sites, quarries, and forests. The presence of good teak and other timber led to the assignment of two unreserved forests measuring 1062 square kilometres (1/5th of the area of the district). By and large, people outside the district used open pasturelands in the southern section of the area. Altogether still, the backwardness of the region led to many problems in providing

⁶ These details are from: [http://india-wris.nrsc.gov.in/wrpinfo/index.php?title=Taliperu\(DP\)_Medium_Irrigation_Project_JI00150](http://india-wris.nrsc.gov.in/wrpinfo/index.php?title=Taliperu(DP)_Medium_Irrigation_Project_JI00150)

⁷ See ‘*The New Indian Express*’ article titled, “Problems abound at Taliperu,” dated 28 November 2008, and accessed from http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra_pradesh/article9627.ece on 21 April 2015.

⁸ The Albaka region marked by Captain Glasfurd corresponds to the northern mandals of the region – specifically Wazeedu and Venkatapuram.

services to the people. Inevitably, many government employees resigned and left. Moreover, the district was seen as fiscally insignificant for the revenue it generated. The overall lack of significant products affected the trade possibilities. Beyond the exploitation of timber and using the Godavari River for its transport, the region was peripheral to the colonial imagination and its scheme of things in the Indian sub-continent.

5.2 Land and Interest Rate Regulations

In 1920, the agency areas in Ganjam, Vishakhapatnam, and Godavari were placed under one Agency Commissioner for their faster development. After three years, however, this experiment was abandoned due to reasons of economy. L. T. Harris, the agency commissioner, felt that thousands of square kilometres of land can be utilised for agricultural purposes and reasoned that, since the people of the agency area are “not up to the task” the plainsmen should be allowed to cultivate in these areas.⁹ Aiyappan (1948), Superintendent of Government Museum and the Secretary of the Aboriginal Tribes Welfare Enquiry Committee (2 November 1946 – 30 June 1947), has drawn from the insights and perspectives of the colonial officers’ experiences working in these areas, striving to highlight what they had to say. Supposedly, according to these officers, the tribals cannot be developed without unleashing the potentials of the economic resources of the land in the area. To this end, they expected the “direct contact with the right type of plainsmen” to teach the tribals about settled agriculture and better business through practical examples. One of the officers, it is recalled, also cited the specific example of Koyas in Nugur taluk. These Koyas were seen to be advanced than their brethren elsewhere due to their interaction with better plainsmen. Aiyappan (1948) goes on to argue for developing the Agency area by protecting the rights of the tribals and getting more plainsmen to enter the agency for “civilizing influence on the hillmen.”

Other than those already present in the region, the new plainsmen came from the Godavari and Krishna delta regions. Overall, the development of irrigation facilities had

⁹ Letter No. 683/D 23-3, dated 3 August 1923 from the Secretary to Government of Madras to the Secretary to the Government of India (Home Department). Extracted from the file – Agency Tracts in Madras; proposed administrative revisions. File no IOR/LI/PJ/6/1683, File 3812. Source: India Office Records, London.

commercialised subsistence agriculture (see Rao 1985). Understandably, the rise of the agrarian communities exerted pressure on land. All this was a consequence of the improved irrigation facilities introduced by the British in the coastal Andhra region. Indeed, following his success in the Cauvery delta, the British military-engineer Arthur Cotton supervised the Krishna-Godavari delta irrigation works in the 1840s and 1850s. Hence, the marginal farmers and landless farm labourers from these areas came to the Bhadrachalam region searching for land. Furthermore, the periodic pilgrimages to Bhadrachalam had allowed these people to experience and know about the surplus and fertile land in the region and led to “the agricultural conquest of the *podu* lands” (Thirumali 2006: 251).¹⁰

The colonial administration wanted the plainsmen to civilise the hillmen; and, hence, they encouraged the non-tribals to move into the region.¹¹ Even though ‘non-tribals’ have always been present, their assignment as the reference group for the tribals should be seen as a new development. Earlier, the tribals and settled people of the plains lived in close proximity with casual contact only (see Thirumali 2006). However, the colonial administration wanted them to ‘teach’ the tribals methods of cultivation and modern living. Along this emphasis, the colonial encouragement of the non-tribals to settle down in the tribal areas can be read as a form of settler colonialism. The objective of the native plainspeople was largely to encourage the tribals to follow the former’s way of living and cultivation. As such, the intent and role of the non-tribals would seem to be no different from the colonising Europeans in American, Australian, or African societies. After all, settler colonialism invokes the dominance of an exogenous agency, permanent movement, and migration (see Veracini 2010). The exogenous agency is here expressed through the modes of living and cultivation alien to the tribals, which obtains alongside the patterns of the non-tribal migration as well.

Without doubt, the invocation of settler-colonisers in our context runs parallel to the sociologist M. S. A. Rao’s formulation of ‘peasant colonisation’ in the tribal areas of the Godavari region (see Rao 2018). In his work on the history of migration and agricultural

¹⁰ Note, ‘*podu*’ refers to a form of shifting cultivation, whose vestiges remain to this day.

¹¹ Our previous chapter, Ch.4, especially Sect.4.2 and 4.4 had covered such instances more in detail.

practices in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh (broadly subsuming the period 1977-1980), Rao is clear that the movement of agriculturalists into the tribal area is a form of colonisation of a frontier area by peasants from the plains. He, nevertheless, uses the term 'colonisation' in a general sense, wherein it can involve internal migration and the establishment of settlements in both established villages and new frontiers (see Rao 2018: 2). All the same, Aiyappan's remark regarding more plainsmen to the Agency area needs a revisit. Why did the colonial administration need more plainsmen? Why did they not utilise the non-tribals in the region for the civilisational process? Is it because of the history of close proximity and casual contact that the groups shared? Perhaps, this historical relationship might not be conducive for the speed at which the colonial administration wanted to improve the region and the tribals at large. Moreover, the migrant plainsmen are strangers to the region and its people; thereby, they might neglect and disregard the existing social order of relations. The unfolding of the new patterns of relationship will be described later in course.

Even as the arguments for opening up the Agency area are fully deliberated, we should also look at the entanglements of land and capital in the area. Beyond Nugur taluk, the tribals mostly lost all their land to the settlers and moneylenders. The fertile land had passed into the hands of plainsmen and moneylenders. Aiyappan (1948), in fact, attributed this development to the lack of capital among the Koyas and the hesitation of other tribals to do cultivation. Paradoxically, though, this is also the reason for the prevalence of *podu* cultivation, notwithstanding the colonial efforts to sedentarize and settle them. Needless to say, shifting the mode of cultivation, as also the entry of plainsmen, inevitably led to indebtedness. Importantly, to pay off the debts, more land is brought under *podu* cultivation, which led to the damage of forests and natural resources. At any rate, the tribals usually cultivated the *podu* land at the minimum subsistence level. Hence, they were unable to produce a surplus that could be used to pay off their debts.

The gradual dispossession of tribal land in the Ganjam Agency led the colonial administration to consider measures to arrest the alienation of land. In September 1914, the Governor in Council of the Madras Presidency deputed an officer for a

comprehensive survey and documentation of this problem. As such, the prevalence of land alienation and high interest rate led to the enactment of *The Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act, 1917*.¹² The Act prohibited the transfer of immovable property to any member of the non-hill tribe. Broadly, for the Act, the hill-tribe meant any resident of the agency area. Interestingly, yet, the immovable property did not include standing crops, and led to the latter's confiscation by moneylenders, in the process furthering the indebtedness prevalent in the agency area. Even as the rate of interest was pegged at 24 percent, the ignorance of law and the lack of effective implementation led to the levy of very high interest rates and further alienation of tribal land. Alongside this, the 'Muttadari' system also deepened the crisis in the tribal landscape. 'Mutta' meant a collection of villages and formed an administrative unit, and the 'muttadar' was the person appointed to collect revenue from such territories (see Sastry and Reddy 1991: 75). They invariably worked for the Rajahs or Zamindars of the region, who were invariably the large estate owners under a given sovereign. The 'Muttas' were usually members from the Koya community appointed by the propriety owners of the region.

Moving into independent India, it was in 1959 that the state of Andhra Pradesh (as in 1956) enacted the *Andhra Pradesh (Scheduled Areas) Land Transfer Regulations 1959* (AP [SA] LTR, 1959). It came into force on 4 March 1959 and in the Telangana area, including our region, on 1 December 1963. The Act of 1959 prohibited all alienation of land by tribals in favour of non-tribals without the prior permission of the competent authority, namely, the District Collector/Agent of the Governor. Strangely, however, the Act did not completely prohibit the transfer of land between tribals and non-tribals, leading to manipulations by the non-tribals with the help of local officials. Moreover, for about 10 years, there were no working rules to implement the Act of 1959. Amidst this chaotic and messy environment, the tribal uprising in Srikakulam came to be in 1960, followed by the Naxalite activities, forcing the Andhra Pradesh government to think about land alienation in the tribal areas. Consequently, the government introduced an amendment – popularly known as Act of 1/70 (see Rao *et al.* 2006).

¹² See the Fort St. George Gazette dated 10 October 1916. Issue No 41, Part IV: 135-137 (Kerala State Central Library, Thiruvananthapuram).

After the Srikakulam peasant uprising (1967-1970), a conference of District Collectors in Hyderabad agreed to presume that all land in the Agency area belonged to tribals. As such, the conference too decided to prohibit any transfer of land between tribals and non-tribals, leading to the regulation 1 of 1970. The amendment prohibited absolutely the transfer of immovable property in the Scheduled areas in favour of non-tribals except in case of partition or devolution by succession. Furthermore, the burden of proof of the validity of the occupation of the land was placed on the non-tribals. Additionally, if a person was unable to sell land to tribals at a fair price, they may offer it to the government at a fair rate. Thus, the Regulation of 1/70 plugged the loophole in the AP (SA) LTR 1959, which allowed moneylenders and plainsmen to exploit the tribals and thereby alienate their lands. Later on, in 1978, the regulation was further strengthened by making any violation a cognizable offence punishable with 2 years' imprisonment or a Rs. 2000 fine.

Meanwhile, obviously under political pressure, the government tried to dilute the law. In 1977, the Government of Andhra Pradesh wrote to the Central Government seeking approval for an amendment to the AP (SA) LTR, 1959.¹³ The proposal was to include a new section, 3-A. The amendment, apparently, was “to carve out an exception whereby Land Transfer Regulation will apply to villages within Scheduled Areas where tribal population does not exceed 25 % as per 1971 Census.” Importantly, the justification for the amendment was the following:

- (i) Representation from non-tribals that the existing stringent provisions have taken away their primary fundamental rights to enjoy their lands to their best advantage.
- (ii) Drying up credit facilities for the non-tribals.
- (iii) Though scheduled, there are some villages where not even a single tribe exists.¹⁴

Evidently, the Government of Andhra Pradesh was aiming to retain Scheduled areas intact, while mitigating the hardships caused to non-tribals without affecting the interest of tribals in these villages. The Government of India, as represented by the Deputy Secretary of Scheduled Castes and Tribes Division of Ministry of Home Affairs

¹³ Extracts from the notes on File No BC-12015/1/77-SCT V of TD Section in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Accessed from National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁴ Ibid.

remarked that AP (SA) LTR is “a progressive piece of legislation to protect tribals from land alienation”, and further adding somewhat poignantly:

This regulation for the first time introduced the principle of presumption of land in favour of tribals. Hence, by permitting the sales of land to tribals only, the future patterns of transfer of land in favour of tribals is ensured. Therefore, the proposed amendment will be ‘a retrograde step’ given the spirit of the regulation was to augment the land resources of the tribals.¹⁵

Now, as far as the mitigation of the hardships of the non-tribals was concerned, the Government of India noted that the arguments were not convincing enough. It was reasoned that the fundamental right to property is always subject to reasonable restrictions under the provisions of Article 19; that indeed the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 1970 had considered the restrictions as reasonable and that there had been no challenge to this. With regard to the drying up of credit facilities for non-tribals, it was suggested that there should be a distinction made between ‘prohibition’ of transfer and ‘regulation’ of transfer. AP (SA) LTR had defined transfer as regulation only, since the non-tribal could sell it either to a tribal or the government. According to Government of India, there was an ineffective implementation of the Land Transfer Regulation and that the overall pattern of population had changed to the disadvantage of the tribals. Hence, as was pointed out, creating an exception for the application of the regulation to these areas would only aid in rationalising a fait accompli. Moreover, it was maintained that the proposed amendment would give further impetus to land alienation and generate further pressures for withdrawing even such protective measures as did exist.

Understandably, the non-tribal landholders kept contesting the AP (SA) LTR in the court for 16 years, even if only for the Supreme Court of India to dismiss all the petitions and uphold the regulations at different times. The continuous legal defeats re-calibrated the non-tribal strategy regarding the land regulation acts, thereby leading them to lobby for a legislative solution. On 24 January 1989, under the pressure from non-tribal landholders, the N. T. Rama Rao led Government of Andhra Pradesh resolved to repeal

¹⁵ Ibid.

the Act of 1970 and urge the Government of India to resurvey the tribal areas.¹⁶ The main opposition party, Indian National Congress, remained silent on the question, even as N. T. Rama Rao as the Chief Minister cited Bhadrachalam town as an example wherein tribal ownership was a miniscule 1%.

All the same, the non-tribals kept contesting the AP (SA) LTR. Trinadha Rao (2007), a lawyer and tribal activist, noted that in the Bhadrachalam region, 8297 non-tribals got settlement *pattas* for 29, 554.16 hectares of land during the 1970-78 survey and settlement in the agency area. The regulations, besides, prohibited transactions only after 3 February 1970, and not retrospectively. Obviously, therefore, it could not have reassigned the lands alienated before the enactment of the regulations. Furthermore, the non-tribals retained the land by legalising their claim over the tribal land (see Rao 2007: 195). In fact, as per the provisions of the Act, the non-tribals had to prove 8 years of continuous possession to make a claim, but they however manipulated the process and claimed more than 15,000 acres of government land (ibid.: 196). Moreover, the non-tribals held 52.79% of the land, even as only 39% of the cases were ruled in favour of the tribals. Indeed, among the multiple forms of tribal land alienation, such as government appropriation for developmental purposes, we will presently discuss the impact of the Lambadas attaining Scheduled Tribe status and the broader patterns of non-tribal encroachment as they obtain into the present. In fact, on a broader scale, the Lambada presence in the tribal areas of the Telangana state is a continuing source of conflict with other tribal groups, although of course the non-tribal encroachment is the major form of land alienation in terms of the sheer number and extent of land parcels involved.

It was in 1976 that the Government of Andhra Pradesh included Banjaras (Lambadas) as a Scheduled Tribe (ST). As a result, there was an influx of Banjaras from across into Andhra Pradesh, resulting in them occupying the tribal land. Furer-Haimendorf (1982) had noted that, since 1900, the Lambadas bought land in the tribal areas of Telangana.

¹⁶ Incidentally, back in 1979, the Government of Andhra Pradesh had ordered that non-tribals occupying 5 acres of wetland and 10 acres of dryland in the Scheduled area should not be evicted. However, the High Court struck down this government directive.

The absence of any legal document among the local tribals only accelerated this process. Presently, they (Lambadas) have cornered most of the welfare, educational, and employment opportunities. For instance, Lambadas own and operate all the three petrol pumps in the region. Politically and economically, they are better off compared to the Koyas, Naikpods, and Konda-Reddis in the region. Unsurprisingly, local tribals resent the socio-economic dominance of the Lambadas. One of them, a young post-graduate belonging to the Koya community, pointed out a house on the eastern side of Bhadrachalam town during a phase of fieldwork. It was a three-storied house with a huge garage and a small garden. It looked like any house in a Hyderabad residential area. He quizzed this researcher to guess if it was a tribal or non-tribal house. While the researcher pondered, he emphatically stated that the house belonged to a senior tribal politician who had held ministerial positions. Understandably, the politician was not a Koya or Konda-Reddi, but a Lambada/Banjara, who also has an even fancier house at Banjara Hills in Hyderabad. Importantly, the rivalry between the Lambadas and other tribal communities reached a flashpoint on 5 October 2017 at Adilabad. However, there was no manifest conflict in our region. All the same, with the shifting of the former MLA, Kunja Satyavathi, from CPI (M) to BJP, there is an anticipation of public confrontation in our region. She had participated in the 9 December 2019 demonstration at New Delhi for declassifying Lambadas from the ST list of Telangana. Soyam Bapu Rao, the BJP MP from Adilabad, led the New Delhi demonstration. In fact, even earlier to all these developments and directed at protecting the economically dominant Lambadas from taking over lands of the Koyas, the Bhuria Commission had even recommended the sub-classification of the tribal population (see Bhuria 2004: 136 and 188).¹⁷

Quite notably, the non-tribals also lay claim to tribal land through marriage. For instance, one of our field informants is a Tamil Brahmin in Chintur who had married a tribal woman and set up a Gandhian ashram.¹⁸ He settled down at Chintur and, since 1975,

¹⁷ The Bhuria Commission refers to the Second Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission under Article 339 of the Constitution of India appointed by the Government of India in 2002. Shri Dileep Singh Bhuria, a member of Lok Sabha, headed the 11-member Commission. More presently on the Bhuria Commission in our main text.

¹⁸ In fact, sustained interactions with this informant persuaded the researcher to relook at economic transformation as described in the opening lines of the dissertation (see Ch.1 above).

constantly intervened in the matters of the region until his death on 19 February 2020. Unlike him, many non-tribals had married tribal women to usurp land for agricultural purposes. In fact, the region is peppered with such marriages. Interestingly, certain tribal activists of the region told the researcher that the children born out of such marriages are found to be hand-in-glove with non-tribals in violating the land regulation acts. One of the younger and enthusiastic tribal activists, aged about 30 years and a primary school teacher in the region, quipped during an interaction at the tea shop close to Venkatapuram, “After all, blood is thicker than water!” Pertinently, the Bhuria Commission had recommended an amendment to the Land Transfer Regulation Act by “prohibiting transfer of land to a female member of a scheduled tribe married to a non-tribal or kept as a concubine by a non-tribal” (Bhuria 2004: 135).

At any rate, when the market mechanism is not allowed to perform its allocative function, an illegal market often arises. As such, it is necessary to evaluate the creation and assignment of property rights and their modifications by the government. The restrictions imposed by the Land Transfer Regulations triggered two processes - the formation of an ‘illegal’ land market and the existence of an ‘imperfect’ land market. The former (that is, illegal land market) involves the sale, lease, or mortgage of the land by the tribal and non-tribal landholders to non-tribals by either choice or coercion. The latter (imperfect land market) holds out for the existing non-tribal landholders. Their legal land transactions are restricted, and hence, whenever they try to sell, they get less than the ‘market price’. Additionally, the land is no longer seen as an investment for the future due to the truncated property rights wherein the right to sell is a restricted right. In fact, there are instances wherein the non-tribal farmers have left their land fallow due to the lower prices for their land. Besides, the ‘immoral’ forms of non-tribal behaviour like cheating to appropriate the land and levying high-interest rates are also the reasons for the truncated property rights regime in the region. Inevitably, the colonial and post-independent governments considered such land transactions unhelpful for the tribals.

Nevertheless, it raises a fundamental question: how do we determine the value (in terms of pricing mechanism) of the goods and services (in our case, land) in a transaction? Indeed, for the time being, let us deflect from the non-tribal immoral behaviour. The

tribals mostly perceive land as common property, and not private property. The *podu* cultivation practice as a shifting form accentuates the problem, in the sense of a non-attachment to any specific tract of land. Of course, given the sparse population density, there was enough room for the tribals to indulge in *podu* cultivation; besides, if they chose to do settled cultivation, they had enough locations to exercise their choice. A ninety-year-old Koya man informed the researcher that they (Koyas) usually cultivated five kilometres from the river to avoid the flooding of the fields. Interestingly, non-tribals mainly cultivate near the river. At the same time, as the earlier section will remind us, the non-tribals have been living for a long time in the Bhadrachalam region. There are no recorded hostilities between them, although there are underlying tensions. These local specificities animate the region and adduce to a dynamic of their own.

It is, therefore, moot to ask as to why land as a resource becomes a contested and significant issue. Is it predominantly because of the pressure on land due to the migration of agriculturalists and other non-tribals, especially from the coastal Andhra region? On the other hand, is it because of the settling down of the tribals themselves? Alternatively, could the matter have to do with the population increase? All these are vital factors, each in their own way, but the fact is that they radiate from a colonial process directed at the enclosure of lands to institute a private property regime in the region (indeed in the whole Indian sub-continent). Undoubtedly, the enclosure of land, in general, started with colonialism, with the attendant restrictions on shifting cultivation and the rooting of the tribals, all of which were the requirements of the colonial state (see, among others, Bhukya 2013). In other words, the ‘modernisation’ of the ‘tribal’ tracts required a sedentary population and the utilisation of natural resources for taxation and economic activities. Given this dual requirement, the colonial administration allowed non-tribals to settle down in the predominantly tribal areas to show them ‘ways of settled agriculture.’ One of the prominent politicians of Dummugudem, a Brahmin rice-mill owner, told the researcher that the colonial administration persuaded his ancestors to settle down in the agency area to ‘civilise’ the tribals into the ways of agriculture and ‘modern’ forms of living. One of the Indian officers posted in the region between 1923 and 1934, R. A. Gopalswami of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) even reported that the non-tribal presence benefited the Koyas in the Nugur region in multiple ways, such as

training in agriculture, provision of free medicines through dispensaries, income through wage labour etc. (see Aiyappan 1948: 57). The overall fertility of the land also accelerated further the inflow of non-tribals into the region.

Returning, then, to our primary concern: is there a market failure when the tribals and non-tribals interact? The tribal understanding of land as a common property certainly indicates their cultural approach to pricing, as defined herein with reference to the valuation of land. However, the non-tribal cultivator seeking land is quite often (we can say) a utility maximising economic actor. As such, it will not be wrong to argue that different normative conditions govern the non-tribal and tribal interaction concerning land as a resource. Under these circumstances, the market for land in our region is clearly embedded with different macrostructures influencing the pricing mechanisms. Indeed, as has been recognized in the theoretical literature, various political and social factors in the form of institutions, networks, and individual decisions come together to create the 'price' (see Beckert 2009 and 2011). As such, therefore, price formation is dependent on factors beyond simply supply and demand. It has been noticed that quite often sellers want buyers from their community so that they do not disturb the social and cultural composition of the landowners in their area. At times, the sales are through a word-of-mouth mode, and many prospective buyers do not know about the availability of the land. Furthermore, a coalition of buyers will make a collective purchase so as to offer a better price in the market, although distress sale during marriage or health-related financial emergency could lead to transactions below the market price. In the case of the Bhadrachalam region, an additional factor, namely, the institutional regulation of property rights, has also influenced the social formation of prices. The restriction on the buyers, considering that they have to be tribals, gives sellers a restricted choice. Significantly, most of the tribals are not ready to buy the land since they have the option to acquire land through government *pattas* as part of welfare measures. Furthermore, those willing to buy often drive a hard bargain due to the LTR Act, and inevitably non-tribals feel that they are not getting the expected price. Some of the non-tribals even hint at the role of tribal organizations in mediating land transactions. One of the tribal activists explicitly defended the role of the tribal organizations. This informant, a

middle-aged government official based in Dummugudem, categorically held that the tribal organizations largely ensure that the non-tribals do not cheat the tribals.

The culturally infused understandings of land from the tribal and non-tribal points of view are undoubtedly different, and can be seen along the opposing registers of a sedentary and nomadic metaphysics (our preceding Ch.4, specifically Sect.4.2, had elaborated on this axis). However, the question to be probed here as part of our developmental enumeration concerns the critical factor leading the government intervention in the land market of the tribal area. One fairly obvious answer is to protect the tribals and their way of life. If that is the case, it may yet be fair to query as to why there is an attempt to ‘mainstream’ them? The official policy of providing models of imitation through non-tribal cultivators does concretize various attempts to transform the tribals into the mainstream ‘homo economicus’. The land regulation acts are not only a restriction on non-tribals from obtaining ownership rights; it is also a restriction on the tribals, curtailing their right to exchange. After all, cheating in transactions has not led to any restriction on exchange rights in other forms of property; so why only on land, and that too tribal land? Is it because the tribal economy depends on land and hence any form of alienation is detrimental to their livelihood and way of life? This question needs to be examined on a more holistic axis. For instance, the non-tribal peasants in non-tribal areas are also dependent on land. Undoubtedly, the moneylenders, market failures, and indebtedness also adversely affect them. But however, there are no legal restrictions on their land exchanges. Under these circumstances, it seems that, by collapsing the tribal world to their embeddedness with land, there is a presumed ‘primitiveness’ and ‘an inferior position’ accorded to them among the various social groups in the society, accordingly necessitating their governmental protection from other members of the society.

Doubtless, the infantilisation of the tribals as innocent and gullible underwrites the thinking behind the LTR. The amendment of 1970 had introduced the rule of presuming that the land belonged to the tribals until and unless proved to the contrary, even as the Supreme Court had pointed out that economically advanced non-tribals in time would

take over the entire tribal land.¹⁹ Overall, the fear of manipulation and eventual destruction of the tribal landscape drives the legislation and judicial pronouncements on the land alienation regulations. At any rate, if the intent is to avoid the immoral behaviour of the economic actors, the solution cannot be banning them in economic exchange and prohibiting non-tribals from acquiring the land. This is certainly not to deny that identifying and evicting illegal non-tribal occupants from the tribal land is a process that needs to be implemented effectively. Rather, the ineffective implementation of due processes cannot be the reason to prohibit the non-tribals from acquiring land. To be sure, the illegal occupation is often a consequence of forceful takeovers of land by indebting the tribals, corrupt practices by bribing the landowner, and the manipulation of revenue records. But, instead of limiting the number of buyers, there should be an effort directed at ensuring fair price for the land by including more buyers in the market. For the tribals, by and large, an increase in the pool of buyers will fetch better prices. In fact, to revert to a technical economic language, instead of driving the economic processes into an illegal market wherein there will be no safety net for the vulnerable, a Pareto efficient solution must be sought.²⁰ The increased number of buyers in a market will raise the price of land, even as the structural inequality in the form of economically superior buyers can be contained through the medium of property registration. It is our suggestion that the government can monitor, if needed, intervene, and avoid sub-optimal pricing and sale of land. At the end of the day, the choice should be unconstrained; after all, the tribals are marked by unrestricted choices in their way of life – their penchant for the commons and shifting forms of cultivation.

Undoubtedly, formal legal provisions and the lived life of law are two distinct processes. Notwithstanding the intent of the lawmakers and the statement of objects scripted in the legal texts, the effectiveness of law depends on the implementation and orientation of the concerned bureaucrat or governmental functionary. The former President of the Bhadrachalam Bar Association, a Madiga community member, shared the problems

¹⁹ See, for instance, *P. Rami Reddy and Others versus State of Andhra Pradesh* (1988 AIR 1626, Supreme Court of India). The petitioners had unsuccessfully approached the Supreme Court after the High Court of Andhra Pradesh dismissed their challenge of the Act of 1970 by stating that the restrictions were unreasonable, unconstitutional, and violative of Article 19 (1) (f) of the Constitution of India.

²⁰ This researcher had been a student of Economics, even completing an M.A. in the subject, before turning to another Master's in Sociology (and persisting with the latter through to M.Phil. and Ph.D.).

associated with the land regulations. As he pointed out, the rich Koya landowners, most of whom are third-generation cultivators, lease their land to non-tribal cultivators from within and outside the region. They largely prefer the non-tribals outside the region for the better terms offered by them. This puts the marginal tribal and non-tribal cultivator of the region at a disadvantage, since they cannot expand their agricultural operations due to weaker bargaining power. The latter, clearly, is a manifestation of imperfect market conditions wherein they are operating in sub-optimal conditions.

On the other hand, due to the government interventions and exclusion of non-tribals, tribals without title deeds got land to cultivate. One of them from the Bhadrachalam mandal was quite happy when he got the title deed. He got the assigned land accrued to the non-tribals through their violation of the LTR act. He said that he is now free after years of wage labour in the ancestors' land, where they moved freely. In fact, quite apart from the 'freedom' he had attained through the possession of the title deed, he was looking forward to the possibility of increased income that could translate into better educational prospects for his two school-going girl children. Kishore, a middle-aged Koya faculty from Dummugudem in a Hyderabad-based university, even suggested that the hundreds of acres of land under the control of the Bhadrachalam temple and other landholdings beyond the Ceiling acts could free land for the purpose of assigning them to landless tribals. There was less hope and more despair when he made this bold suggestion.

5.3 Waterways, Missionaries, and Lace Industry

The name of Dummugudem is now known in all parts of the Empire owing to the important and beautiful lace industry which was started in order to provide occupation and means of livelihood for a class of persons who were often on the verge of poverty. In this respect, it has filled the highest expectations (*Harvest Field* 1917: 196).²¹

²¹ *Harvest Field* was a journal of the National Christian Council of India, initially for the Mysore District and later expanded for the entire South Asia and beyond. The present lines are sourced from *Harvest Field*, Vol 37 No 5 (May 1917), pp.195-196, which goes on to quote the obituary to Mrs. Sarah Cain that had appeared in *The Madras Mail* and *The Madras Diocesan Magazine*. Accessed on 17.05.2016 at: <http://findit.library.yale.edu/bookreader/BookReaderDemo/index.html?oid=11087615#page/38/mode/1up>.

The Christian missionaries have had a significant and long-lasting impact on the Indian sub-continent as a whole. During the colonial period, they were a significant factor in the way the colonised learned and imagined the world (through the medium of the missionary schools) and even entailed the promise of a new way of life (through evangelism primarily). These processes exposed the colonised to the modern forms of education, medicine, hygiene, and nutrition. In many places, the impact of the missionaries helped the colonial government provide education at cheaper costs and in calming the rebellious population. The missionaries also helped the colonised people fight for their rights; for instance, the missionaries aided the tribal movement in Chhotanagpur (see Bara 1997). The present section is not about the processes as mentioned, namely, missionary schools and evangelism; rather, it is about how Christian missionaries linked a remote frontier in colonial India with a global network of production and consumption. Tangentially, this section also discusses their role in the production of locally specific knowledge about the people and regions. For this purpose, the colonial world of a missionary and his wife, belonging to the Church Missionary Society, who worked in the Bhadrachalam region is re-constructed.

Christianity as an organised institution had a tumultuous relationship with the colonial arrangement effected through the East India Company (EIC) and later the British Crown. The EIC, in its earlier years, was quite active in promoting missionary activities in India. However, by the 1790s, they kept the missionaries away from India since they believed that interventions in the religious domain would affect trade relations and thereby cut their profits (see Latourette 1965: 337). This restriction was removed due to the lobbying of missionaries and their supporters; in fact, when the EIC's charter act had to be renewed in 1813, the evangelists rallied successfully for doing missionary work in India (ibid.). Later on, in the context of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, Queen Victoria declared the policy of religious neutrality and non-interference in 1858. The missionaries continued their work, albeit in the margins of colonial India (see Vallgarda 2016). The cash strapped education department of provincial rule often utilised the missionaries to set up schools in north India (see Bellenoit 2007).

The first set of missionaries from the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the congregation to which our protagonists belong, reached India in 1814 (Stock 1899: 10). However, CMS had a presence in Calcutta in the form of a corresponding committee, formed in 1807 by five chaplains of the EIC. In fact, at that time, due to restrictions, the only way CMS could send its representatives was in the form of chaplains to the Company (Stock 1899:81). To contextualise CMS, an important agency with influential and wealthy friends and supporters, the mission worked only in those areas where there were no other missionary enterprises; and, in case other missions started their work in that region, they often withdrew their operations (see Wetherell 1949: 357). Now, let us briefly recall Bhadrachalam region and the colonial enterprise from the earlier chapter (Ch.3) on facets of administrative history. The colonial dispensation had incorporated the Bhadrachalam region so as to utilise the Godavari River as a waterway to bring cotton from Berar to the east coast of British India. After the British took over the region from the Nizam of Hyderabad, Sir Arthur Cotton headed the project to make the Godavari a waterway. The project was known as the ‘Upper Godavary Navigation Works’. The appellation ‘Upper Godavary’ differentiated the newly annexed territory of British India and also from the Godavari District of the Madras Presidency.

The navigation work, initiated in 1853, was envisaged “to provide ‘still-water steam navigation from the sea to Berar,’ which would be, according to Sir Cotton, ‘the cheapest line of communication in the world’” (Hemingway 1915: 128). The plan was to make the Godavari navigable for 760 kilometres above the Doleshwaram Barrage for at least four or five months of the year and open out to traffic about 480 kilometres of its tributaries (ibid.: 129). It was further noted:

[A] great deal of goods and passenger traffic is also carried on the river in native sailing-boats. These are generally ‘dhonis,’ which run up to 35 tons capacity ... Going up stream they sail when the wind is favourable, and, when it is not, pole or, when possible, tow. Coming down stream they either sail or row, or drift with the current, rowing just enough to keep on steerage way (ibid.: 128).

Bamboo was largely felled and transported through the river from January and logs between December and May in timber rafts. When F. R. Hemingway, an Indian Civil Service officer, compiled his Gazetteer of the Godavari District (1915), one stern-wheel boat that operated between Rajahmundry and Polavaram was extended until Kunnavaram

so as to connect to Bhadrachalam. According to him, contractors managed the fuel and fare collection in the boats, and the district board maintained the crew, and also ensured the safety and maintenance of these boats.

To make the Godavari fully navigable, however, the engineers had to confront three barriers of rock, one of which was at Dummugudem, the others being barriers at Enchampalli and Indravati. A lock and anicut were constructed by Sir Cotton and his team at Dummugudem and Enchampalli. When the navigation work was half-constructed in October 1871, the Government of India dropped the entire project consisting of interconnected locks “on the ground that it involved an expenditure which did not give promise of any adequate return” (ibid.: 129). The project estimate was £ 292,000, but by 1863, the cost had swelled to £ 700,000. Even though the project was largely abandoned, in 1900, when Dummugudem works were affected by the floods, a sum of Rs. 1,26,800 was sanctioned for the repair. All the same, Sir Arthur Cotton’s ambitious plans to harness the Godavari introduced logging, boat service, and public works in the Bhadrachalam region. Needless to say, the exploitation of forest resources, the introduction of transport services, and public works as a whole had both intended and unintended consequences.

When the first set of British administrators led by Lieutenant Grove came in 1854-55 (at that time the area was under the Nizam), Dummugudem “was an insignificant village with half a dozen huts of ‘Kois’, the aboriginal tribe of the forest” (Subbayya 1935: no pagination).²² The presence of the outsider had made the tribals withdraw from the riverside to the interior places. Lt. Grove, “being touched by the miserable condition of the hill tribes” (ibid), requested St. Mary’s Church in Madras to send a missionary. Even though he volunteered to incur the costs, nothing materialised; he left for Kurnool after some time. Meanwhile, Lt. Haig, who had accompanied Lt Grove to Dummugudem, stayed back and continued the works.

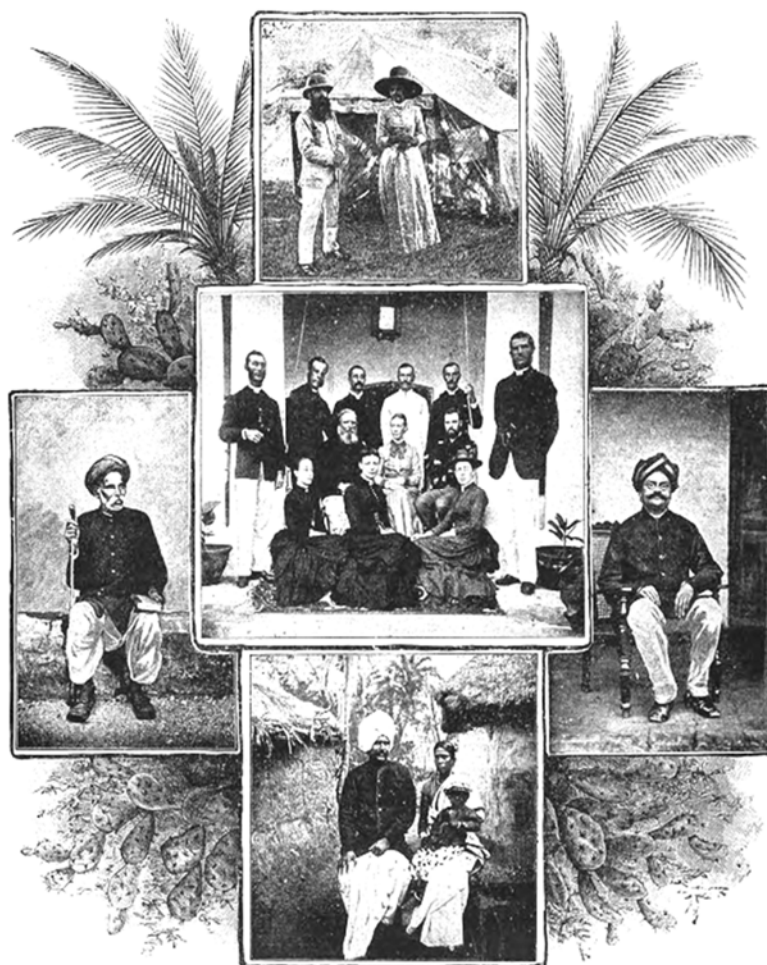
²² Extracted from the write up on the history of Dummugudem written by S. S. Subbayya, Diocesan Minister, Dornakal on 17.02.1935. The write-up is part of the records on the Christian Missionary Society at Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham. Hereafter, this will be referred to as Subbayya (1935).

Subbayya (1935) reported that Lt. Haig did not wait for any missionary to arrive, and he started prayer meetings and preaching among his co-workers. As a result, one ‘Kshatriya’ (*sic*) I. Venkatarama Raju heading the Commissariat department had converted to Christianity by the efforts primarily of Lt. Haig (see Church Missionary Society 1879: 104). He was baptised in August 1860; and, in 1863, he resigned from his job to become a full-time evangelist. Meanwhile, in 1860, Sir Arthur Cotton, then a Captain in the service of the EIC and brother-in-law of Lt. Haig, feared that with the increased mode of communication and transportation in the ‘Upper Godavary’ region, the local tribes, whom they considered to be timid, might become (as it were) Hinduised. This urgency too made them write to the CMS. Indeed, for Sir Cotton, developmentalism and spreading Christianity went hand-in-hand even during the construction of the Dowleshwaram Barrage in 1847-48; he had then requested the Brethren Mission or the Godavari Delta Mission to do the same (see Subbayya 1935: no pagination).

After the conversion of Raju, the Corresponding Committee at Madras decided to send a missionary – Rev. W. T. Edmonds, the first Koi missionary as it were, for the Dummugudem Mission is also referred to as the Koi Mission (*ibid.*). ‘Koi’ is one way of representing the local tribesmen now known as Koyas. Due to the harsh environment, however, many missionaries could not continue their work at Dummugudem; and, in fact, it is reported that Raju had to take the entire burden. He is credited with the building of a boy’s school with his own money.²³ The mission initially converted Hindus and around 80 Kois (or Koyas) by 1879. According to the assessment of the Church (The Church Missionary Atlas 1879: 104), the difficulty in converting the Kois was a challenge, and they hoped that the converted Kois could become teachers and evangelists to further their project among their brethren. Since there was no full-time missionary, on the request of Lt. Haig, Raju was ordained in 1872. It is reported by Subbayya (1935) that with the arrival of Rev. John Cain in 1871, a full-time European missionary started residency in Dummugudem as part of the CMS mission. In December 1873, while he

²³ Letter from Mrs. Cain that appeared on 07.07.1888 in *The Church of England Messenger and Ecclesiastical Gazette for the Diocese of Melbourne and Ballarat*, p.12 (see Subbayya 1935: no pagination).

took charge of the mission, the congregation was spread across ten villages and numbered about 240 people.



At the top: Rev. John and Mrs Cain of Dummagudem. In the centre is a group of CMS and CEZMS missionaries. Six standing behind from left are Mrvs. M.N.S Atkinson, J.B. Panes, H.J.Tanner, C. W.A. Clarke, E.T. Pegg and J.Stone. Second row from left: Rev. F.N. Alexander, Mrs. J.Stone and Mrs.Swan Hurrell. In front: Mrs Atkinson, Mrs. J.P.Brandon and Miss Bassoe of Zenana Mission

Left: Rev. I.V.Razu of Dummagudem Right: Rev. G. Krishnayya (ordained 1871)

Bottom: Rev. & Mrs. Vores, from Madras

Fig. 3: Telugu Mission 1881

Source: *The Church Missionary Gleaner*²⁴

²⁴ Accessed on 22 March 2014 from <http://www.talentshare.org/~mm9n/articles/Indian%20Christianity/CHAPTER%20TEN.htm> a website hosting the history of Christianity in India.

The mission converted 900 people by 1915, and the work was confined to the Kois/Koyas and Malas (Hemingway 1915: 41-42). The mission set up a dispensary and day and boarding schools separately for the boys and girls. In 1880, Rev. Cain married an Australian missionary - incidentally, the first CMS Australian missionary to work in India attached to Ellore Mission – Ms. Sarah Davies. She shifted to Dummugudem in 1882 after the marriage. However, it seems that the difficulty in converting the Kois was not easily solved. In fact, Stock (1916), in his history of CMS, reported that the bulk of the 1600 converts were Telugu Malas, and the Kois were found to be timid and suspicious towards Christianity. All the same, two noteworthy things demand our attention: one is the role played by Mr. and Mrs. Cain in confronting the 1896-97 Great Famine in the Bhadrachalam region and the second is the lace industry set up by Mrs. Cain in 1884. In addition, Rev. Cain was instrumental in generating information about the Bhadrachalam region and its people during his stay at Dummugudem. Not surprisingly, Hemingway (1915) acknowledges the help of Rev. Cain in providing information for completing his report on the Godavari district.

According to Hemingway (1915), the failure of the monsoons in 1896-98 caused more distress among the local tribals than in 1833. It is essential to state what Rev. Cain told Hemingway regarding the comparative distress among the tribals. Rev. Cain, ostensibly, recalled a conversation with an elderly man, “There were fewer of us then, and the forests had not been cut down, and there were plenty of roots” (ibid.: 140). This statement indicates several critical processes at work - such as the exploitation of forest resources in terms of bamboo and timber, the loss of natural ecology for the social groups living in the area in terms of depletion of food resources, and finally (and perhaps very significantly) the migration of tribals from the interior regions to the banks of the river. In the earlier circumstance of 1833, therefore, one can deduce that since the world of tribals was not disturbed by the colonial capital processes, they could cope with the severity of the famine. In contrast, in 1896-98, they were stranded due to the destabilisation of their world. Incidentally, the overall situation in the Madras Presidency had also been made more acute by the laissez-faire colonial policy in the grain trade (see Ghose 1982: 380).

Fig. 4: Rev. Cain's letter

Source: *The Argus*, 24 July 1897: 14 (The National Library of Australia - Trove)

In this letter, while thanking the donors, Rev. Cain makes some observations about the relief work at Dummugudem. He explicitly states that the local officials were unsympathetic towards the relief work and, in a particular instance, a local officer refused to visit the villages on the 'fear of defilement'. The higher officials were oblivious of this situation since their office was almost 250 kilometres away. The Madras Committee of the Famine Relief Fund had asked Rev. Cain for the status report of Bhadrachalam region and he wrote back to them. After the publication of Rev. Cain's letter, the government started focusing its attention on the relief works. Importantly, Cain elaborates on the difficulty of procuring grain in his letter published in the newspaper in the following manner:

A range of high hills cuts us off from the lower district, and there is so little water in the river that navigation was suspended. Thus importation of grain was almost impossible. The officials in the neighbouring states forbade expropriation of grain, and the grain merchants formed rings and ran up the price. One ring I was enabled to break, and then we began to sell the grain we had bought at a little more than cost price (As above in **Fig. 4**).

It was not only geography, but also the religious practices that seemed to make an impact during the famine. Cain thus reports in his letter that the number of deaths was comparatively less among the Christians since they took medicines, whereas others feared that if they take the medicine the gods would punish them. As such, it is further stated that: "They have been drumming night and day, offering sacrifices, etc., to appease the angry deity, and many have taken to strong liquors to keep up their courage. A native doctor says that half of the deaths here have been hastened through excessive drinking. Poor folk, they have no hope" (**Fig. 4**, as above). Hemingway (1915: 141) additionally reports that around Rs. 17,000 of charity funds were distributed during the famine in the region.

On 17 March 1917, Rev. Cain died in Madras on his way to Australia; however, Mrs. Sarah Cain continued her work until her death on 17 April 1934 at the age of 79 years in Dummugudem. The single most significant contribution of Mrs. Cain was the establishment of the lace industry at Dummugudem. More generally, it has been

suggested that during extant famines “lace making became a means by which the missionaries tried to help the poor to earn their livelihood” (Mies 1980: 27). It was in 1882 that Mrs. Cain started the lace making work at Dummugudem (ibid.: 28). She taught the craft to the girl students at the CMS boarding school, who continued the skill after marriage and also taught their children.

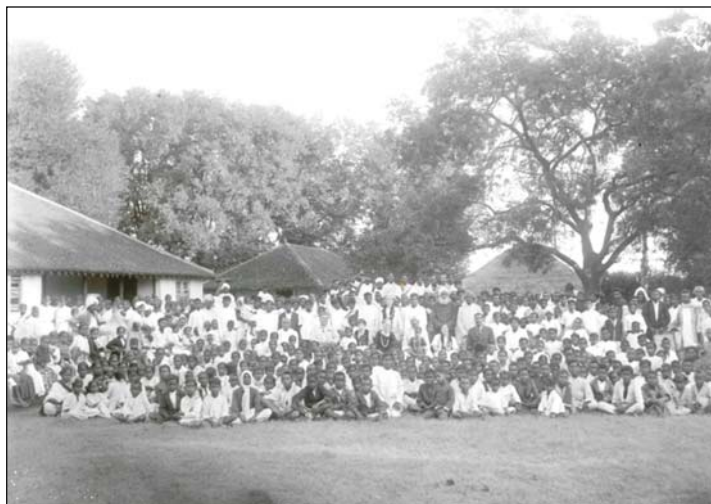


Fig. 5: Christmas Day, 1928 at Dummugudem

Source: <http://libguides.caulfieldgs.vic.edu.au/c.php?g=265843&p=1777999>

Hemingway (1915: 112), in his *Gazetteer*, informs that the lace making at Dummugudem was known even outside India for its dexterity. During the famine of 1896-97, according to Hemingway, Mrs. Cain encouraged the girls who were taught the craft to make it their livelihood. As he reports:

The industry spread among the wives of the natives, and there are now 110 workers, most of whom are Christians. Mrs. Cain pays them for their work (Rs. 70 or Rs. 80 a week are expended in wages) and sells it in India, England and Australia. The lace is not the ‘pillow lace’ made elsewhere in South India, but what is called ‘darned net work,’ which somewhat resembles Limerick lace in appearance (ibid.: 112).

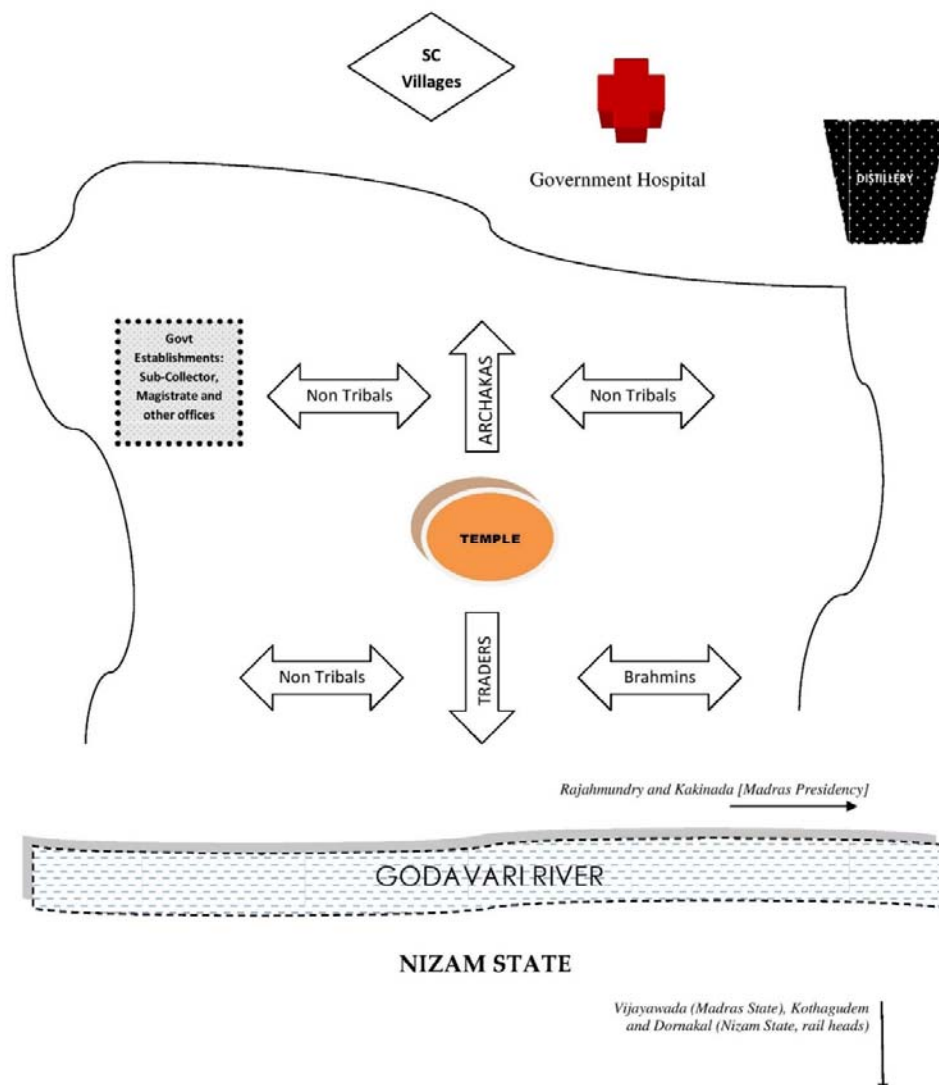
The products were sold overseas in England, Australia, New Zealand and Canada through a network of friends and well-wishers (see Mies 1980: 28).

The following newspaper article features Ms. Clare Wallen, a CMS missionary who had been working in Dummugudem along with Mrs. Cain. Ms. Wallen reports that the idea

Fig. 6: News article on Ms. Clare Wallen

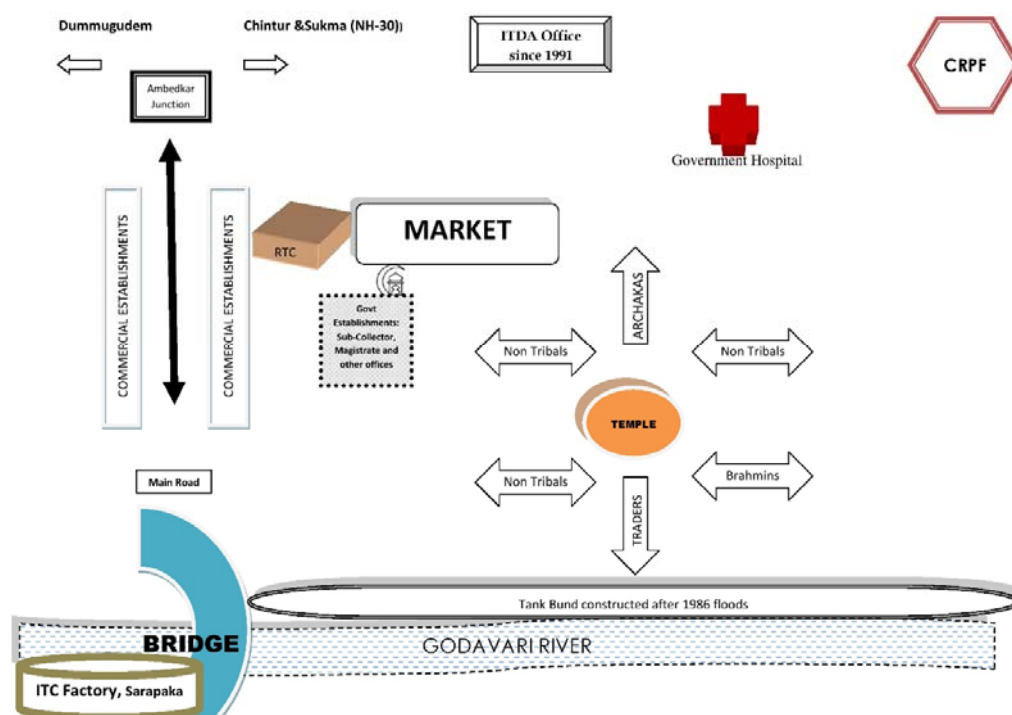
Source: *The Argus*, 23 August 1930: 8 (The National Library of Australia - Trove)

5.4 Evolution of Bhadrachalam as a Small/Tribal Town



Map 13: Bhadrachalam Town in 1947

Source: Field Informant



Map 14: Bhadrachalam Town in 2014

Source: Field Informant and Researcher

The bridge across the Godavari River takes us into the Bhadrachalam town, the hub of the region. It connects the Sarapaka Census town in the Palvanchoa mandal and the Bhadrachalam region, and National Highway-30 (connecting Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh via Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh to Sitarganj in Uttarakhand) runs through it. As we exit the Indian Tobacco Corporation (ITC) Paperboards Factory and enter the bridge, the majestic Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple on the north-eastern riverbank emerges. The narrow bridge spanning more than a kilometre humbles the traveller by giving a glimpse of the mighty Godavari and the landscape of the Agency Area. The six decades old bridge is the lifeline for the people in the Bhadrachalam region and its bordering regions of Sukma in Chhattisgarh (65 kilometres away), and Malkangiri in Odisha (80 kilometres). When we exit the bridge, the Bhadrachalam Temple is on the right side, and the main road runs straight for little more than a kilometre to a T-junction. This straight road houses the majority of the commercial establishments. At the T-

junction, named Ambedkar junction, the right side leads to the southern part of the region and Sukma in Chhattisgarh (National Highway-30), and the left side takes us to the northern part of the region, Dummugudem until Wazeedu.

After crossing the bridge, immediately on the right side, we have a park, the only open public space of the region and a walkway along the bunds (constructed after the 1986 floods) for nearly two kilometres. It is an access road to the ghats to do religious ceremonies and a jetty for river transportation. During the mornings, people come here for walking and exercise. Families, pilgrims, and tourists pepper the evenings; the researcher spent most of his evenings in this area, walking and consuming the cool breeze during his stay. Parallel to this access road is the main road towards the temple and on its way are the tourism, revenue, police, and judicial offices of the region. Most of the old families stay in this part of the road. The next by-road on the right side is the main market of the town as well as the region and located behind the Road Transport Corporation bus station. We can find all types of electronic, electrical, garment, vegetables, and fruit shops in these lanes (the general area is indicated as 'Market' in **Map 14** above). The inner lanes meander through a church and the only mosque of the region, and exit on the National Highway-30, a few hundred meters from the Ambedkar Junction (the rough location is illustrated through the icon of a mosque in **Map 14** above). That opening takes us towards the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) office and the Area Medical Hospital. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) 141 Battalion office bounds the north-eastern side of the town. The houses of retired and serving government officials and business people populate the left side of the main road from the bridge. Hotels and lodges for the pilgrims, tourists, and traders mark the left side of the road leading from the bridge to the town.

The bridge across the river is a consequence of a tragedy. On 10 April 1957, between 8 am and 9 am, two boats ferrying from the Sarapaka side to Bhadrachalam carrying pilgrims capsized and drowned 203 people. The boat accident led to a public outrage forcing the then Chief Minister N. Sanjeeva Reddy to constitute a five-member committee headed by R. B. Ramakrishna Raju, a member of the Legislative Assembly. The committee concluded that leakage in one of the boats and the midway stoppage to

collect fares had caused the accident. The report blamed the contractors for the accident, while also proposing the construction of a bridge to avoid any further accidents in the future. Two years after the boat tragedy, the state government transferred the Bhadrachalam region from East Godavari District to Khammam District for administrative convenience. It was in 1964 that the present bridge was opened for traffic. We had earlier in Ch.3, Sect. 3.4 (entitled '*Re-drawing the Boundaries: An Unending Exercise*') outlined the shifting administrative boundaries of the region.

A long-time resident of the region and a leading advocate, Balaji Rao, whom we had spoken of in the previous chapter as a member of the oldest zamindari family in the region, recalled that after 1965 there was a stream of agriculturalists from the Khammam district into the Bhadrachalam region. They leased the land basically for cultivating rice, cotton, and chillies. Broadly, earlier on, people from the East Godavari belt populated the southern side of the region since it was a geographically contiguous area. In fact, it was Balaji Rao who helped etch the spatial configurations of the Bhadrachalam town (**Maps 13** and **14** above) so as to chart its broad contours. He further offered the following historical description of the town.

In the latter part of the 17th century, the tahsildar (tax collector) of the Qutub Shahis of Hyderabad, Kancherla Gopanna (later known as Bhakta Ramadasu) reconstructed the present-day Bhadrachalam temple.²⁵ From this time onwards, the human settlement revolved around the temple. To service the temple, Ramadasu brought twelve families from Madras as 'Archakas' (temple priests) and settled them near the location (see **Map 14**). Brahmins and Shudras occupied the street radiating from the temple. Broadly, as held, there were two types of Brahmins who settled there - Karnam Brahmins to maintain village records and Vaidikis to read the Vedas. As the population increased, the surrounding agricultural land was converted into residential spaces. Incidentally, the Government Hospital constructed during the British time was built outside the villages

²⁵ Gopanna was a devoted Ram bhakti singer before his uncles got him a job with the Qutub Shahi government. His uncles helped him get appointed as a tax collector in Bhadrachalam. Taking pity on the dilapidated condition of the temple, he used his personal funds and the land revenue taxes collected to construct the present-day temple. Later on, he was jailed for 12 years for doing so without authorisation.

due to the fear of diseases spreading. In olden times, nobody could go to the hospital unaccompanied, since it was five kilometres from the temple and was in a forested area.

The road from the temple leading to the Ambedkar Junction and towards Chintur used to be the main road before the construction of the bridge. The temple archakas, other Brahmins, and the older families of the region stay here. The old and dilapidated house of the Rani of Bhadrachalam, often referred in the colonial documents like the Captain Glasfurd's report and the Gazetteers as the zamindar of the region, is in front of the temple. The first section of this temple road has tightly squeezed houses reminding one of the stereotypical Brahmin settlements near any significant religious structure. The road radiating to the left of the temple is the new access temple road connecting to the main road from the bridge. As already mentioned, it is in this segment that we have the judicial, revenue, police, and tourist department offices. The old movie theatre is located in the area, whereas the new one is on the left side of the main road. Tourist lodges, hotels, and restaurants populate this area to service the pilgrims and visitors.

It was from 1945 that buses began plying within the Bhadrachalam region. A freedom fighter, Kotala Srinivas Rao initiated the bus service. Later on, a larger bus stand was constructed in 1978 much after the formal completion of the bridge. Initially, it was near the Godavari bank and later shifted beyond the Sub-Collector's office, which was constructed in 1911 (see **Map 14** above). Boats or launches were used to travel to Kothagudem and Palvancha in Nizam territory across the river and Rajahmundry down the river in the British India territory as well as the district headquarters at Kakinada. Bhadrachalam to Rajahmundry was downstream and took 12 hours (6 am to 6 pm); and from there, Kakinada, the district headquarters, was 2 ½ hours by bus. The upstream journey took two days with a night halt at around 2 0'clock. During the summer season, there were no launches due to the lack of sufficient water for navigation.

If the residents of the Bhadrachalam region had to take a train, they had to cross the river and reach Kothagudem and from there take a train at Dornakal Junction. The Nizam's state railway serviced these two points until 1950, and later it became the South-Central division of the Indian Railways. From Dornakal, they could travel to Vijayawada and

Madras. Thus, during the colonial period, by travelling through Nizam's territory, the residents of Bhadrachalam could reach other parts of British India, and even their district headquarters. It shows the remoteness of this region in terms of connectivity to the outside world. As reported by Balaji Rao, the field informant who helped in reconstructing the town, the porous boundary had its problems. Particularly during the Razakaar movement (late 1930s and 1940s), many Hindus used to take refuge in Bhadrachalam, fearing harassment and death at the hands of Nizam's militia. Among them, Qasim Razvi was a notorious Razakaar who used to plunder Hindus and attack women by crossing the river.

Furthermore, as narrated by Balaji, the tribals came to Bhadrachalam to sell forest produce and buy essentials. They never settled down in the town area - although from around 1970, there was a noticeable increase in the tribal population - and he attributes it to education and employment opportunities. The same period saw the influx of traders into the town, and he assigned the subsuming of the region to Khammam district and the construction of the bridge as the reasons for the same. Presently, non-tribals in benami names operate most of the establishments in the main road leading from the bridge. The 'non-tribals' including people outside the Bhadrachalam region like Khammam and Rajahmundry develop the land owned by the tribals to set up business by sharing a marginal profit with the latter.

The census records of the town back the claims of our advocate informant Balaji. It is pertinent to look at certain statistical registers to understand the evolution of Bhadrachalam as a small tribal town. Broadly, it is the increasing number of the tribals and the declining number of the 'non-tribal' and non-SC population that makes the town 'tribal' in composition. The following table (**Table 6**) is quite illustrative of this inference.

Table 6: Social Composition and Population Growth of Bhadrachalam Town

Year	No of Households	Total Population	ST Population	% of ST Population to Total Population	SC Population	% of SC Population to Total Population	Others	% of Other Population to Total Population
1971	2,405	10,710	229	2.14	708	6.61	9,773	91.25
1981	4,626	21,354	892	4.17	1,738	8.14	18,724	87.68
1991	7,828	35,380	1,995	5.63	3,821	10.78	29,564	83.56

2001	9,671	42,650	4,249	9.97	5,698	13.36	32,703	76.67
2011	13,422	50,087	4,680	9.34	7,323	14.62	38,084	76.03

Source: Various Census Reports of the years mentioned

Very quickly, for our purposes, the broad numbers from the above table in comparison with the related census data yields the following:

- a) The rate of growth of population in Bhadrachalam outstrips the rate of growth in Khammam district and the state average as per the Census documents.
- b) The decadal population growth rate which peaks in 1991 with a growth rate of 67.79% is quite phenomenal, since the state and district growth rates are within 25 % range. 1970-1980 and 1980-1990 are the growth decades of the town. This growth can be explained in terms of more people settling down in the town because of increased economic activities, expansion of governmental interventions, and influx of outsiders in search of land. One explanation to the increased influx since the 1970s has been the movement of people in pursuit of land triggered by increased agricultural productivity and techniques. In addition, rules for the Act of 1970 were yet to be framed and implemented on the ground.
- c) The composition of Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) population to the total population is increasing.
- d) The rate of increase of ST population to the total population outstrips the rate of increase of SC population, thereby indicating an increasing '*tribalisation*' of the town. The tribal population increased from about 2% in 1971 to over 9% in 2011, even though the number of SC population is increasing at a steady rate from 6.6% in 1971 to 14.6% in 2011.
- e) There is a steady drop of the 'non-tribal' and non-SC population from 91% to 76%, although they still dominate the social composition of the town.

The social life in the Bhadrachalam town orchestrates mainly in the park and tank bund near the temple (see **Map 14** above). A playground attached to a private school on the way to the ITDA office is a multi-purpose space for public meetings and other gatherings. Otherwise, it is a play area for cricket enthusiasts in the area. Interestingly, the non-tribals use this space for leisure and sports more than the tribals. Harish, a civil service aspirant and son of the government doctor posted in the area belonging to the Mala

community, lamented the lack of coffee shops and popular hangouts. Unlike many others in the town, he is well travelled, having gone to all the places that his elder brother, an Indian Revenue Service officer, had been posted. Lingaiah, a Koya college student from Wazeedu, told the researcher that Kothagudem, Khammam, and Rajahmundry are the towns frequented by the youth for study and employment reasons. Some of them also go to Hyderabad and Vishakhapatnam. Needless to say, the introduction of satellite television expanded the horizons of the youth, and the lack of amenities for pleasure and shopping in the town makes them restless. They yearn to travel to places and experience what they have seen on the television and internet.

The non-tribal dominance in the commercial establishments of the town is an annoying issue for the tribal organizations. A middle-aged missionary hailing from coastal Andhra, now operating from Venkatapuram since 2006, said that some of the tribal leaders use the land regulations act to harass and extort money from the non-tribal traders and owners of commercial establishments in the town. Such activities, according to him, have ruined the reputation of tribals not only in the town, but also among the local administrators. All the same, a particularly vexatious factor that looms on the town and its people is the 'Scheduled Area' status. The presence of the non-tribals in the agency area is therefore fraught with legal and political tensions. Even though there is a provision in the Panchayat Raj Act to levy tax on the civic amenities, the administration was largely reluctant due to the fear that assesses or payees will consider it as an act of legalisation of their property, which in turn is a violation of the 1/70 Act operating in the Agency area. This is a peculiar situation for the administration in the Bhadrachalam town area, wherein 66% of the landowners are 'non-tribals'. However, since 2016, the revenue officials have been collecting house property tax, water bills, and electricity bills in the town area. The municipal administration of the newly formed Telangana state decided that citizens should pay for the civic amenities. In fact, the District Level Panchayat Officers Meeting on 19 October 2016 concretely resolved that the utility payments do not confer on the payee any specific ownership rights.²⁶

²⁶ Information gleaned from the discussion with the local revenue officials on 06.04.2018 at Bhadrachalam.

Nearly a decade back, the state government had declared Bhadrachalam as a town; later on, however, the Andhra Pradesh High Court had struck it down. Even now, the local administration is trying to notify Bhadrachalam as a town/municipality. The administration is of the firm belief that Agency Acts like 1/70 are stuck in a time warp and do not reflect the changes and aspirations of the town and its people. Incidentally, it may be recalled that at the time of independence, Bhadrachalam town had a separate assembly constituency and was classified as a 'General' seat and not a reserved ST seat. Subsequently, of course, this seat was subsumed under the ST category.

After the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014, the Bhadrachalam town is in Telangana, and the government (through G. O. No 51 of the Department of Municipal Administration and Urban Development dated 13 March 2018) via the Telangana Urban Infrastructure Development Corporation is ready to finance the needs of the urban areas over and above existing municipal financing channels. According to a Sub-Collector posted in our region, this is a measure that Bhadrachalam can take advantage of, provided it is declared an urban area. Notwithstanding the earlier setback in declaring the area a town, the local administration is pushing for it on pragmatic grounds. If the revenue department has to enforce the Land Regulations and Acts, then more than half of the establishments, hotels, shops, lodges, and houses in Bhadrachalam have to be demolished; and, obviously, it is not a pragmatic solution. Moreover, historically the town area is majority populated by non-tribals, and it only makes sense to declare it as a town. Presently, the fear of submergence of the temple and a good portion of the establishment due to the backwaters of the Polavaram project has seized the people. Will the lifeline of the town be its death? Only the future will hold out an answer.

5.5 Polavaram Project: Neoliberal Articulation of a Colonial Project

The external events, as triggered by the requirements of capital, are an omnipresent factor in the life of the Bhadrachalam region. If it was the demand for cotton that pushed the area into the hands of the British, thereby setting up certain 'modern' political institutions and practices, later across the years it is the continuation of the colonial hydrological vision that oversees and threatens the existence of the Bhadrachalam region in contemporary India. In an earlier section of this chapter, we saw how the exploitation of

the river Godavari introduced missionaries in the region. We also saw how the lace-making unit of the missionaries led to the transformation of socio-cultural practices of the tribals. Schools, dispensaries, and post offices were set up in the region, and particularly at Dummugudem. In a broad sociological sense, these developments presaged the introduction of western and ‘modern’ forms of attitudes, behaviour, and sociability. It will not be wrong to say that a new form of civilisational ethos was introduced by the exploration of the Godavari as a means of water transport. In our contemporary times, the same river is threatening the existence of the people of the Bhadrachalam region. The Polavaram project is also the source of the bifurcation of the region, splitting the cultural geography across different states.

If modernity was inaugurated by the colonial capital through an institution like the Koi mission in the 1870s (broadly, Sect.5.3 above, in this chapter) and the Scheduled Areas Act in 1874 (as recounted in Ch.3, Sect.3.5, earlier on), the dam as part of the Polavaram Project, a symbol and consequence of post-colonial capital and its associated modernity, will submerge both the modern and the traditional in the 2020s. To be sure, the vision of a large dam with canals running hundreds of kilometres to satisfy the water requirements of large cities and agricultural fields was initially visualised in the colonial Madras Presidency in 1941. The aim was to continue and enhance the agricultural productivity of the Godavari Basin area, which was the ‘rice bowl’ of the Andhra region. In fact, the commonality of the two colonially mediated events – namely, the exploration of the river for the pursuit of raw material (cotton, in particular) and the exploitation of the river for irrigation and drinking water - is that, in both the situations, the impact of these events on the region and its people are not significant for the administrators of the colonial and post-colonial dispensations. The Bhadrachalam region remains as a geography negotiated by the state and structures of capital without little to any systematic resistance.

Initially, the researcher came to the Bhadrachalam region with the plan to study the displacement caused by the Polavaram project since an estimated 200,000 people were to lose their land, homes and livelihood. The majority of the displaced belonged to the tribal communities. The researcher expected a Narmada type movement, especially

given that the region of displacement falls within the left extremism zone. To be sure, there was resistance, but not of the scale that was getting the attention of the national media; for that matter, even Hyderabad was relatively unmoved. Scholars, activists, and commentators have widely discussed and documented the issues pertaining to displacement induced by the Polavaram project especially among the tribal community. Gujja *et al.* (2006) and Umamaheshwari (2014) are two noteworthy attempts. The edited volume by Biksham Gujja and others is a compilation of more than 30 essays by bureaucrats, engineers, activists, politicians, and journalists mostly based in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The essays explore the social, legal, technical, governmental, and civil society issues concerning the viability, impact, and alternatives to the Polavaram project. Gujja *et al.* (2006) is an essential reading for anyone interested in the project, given their first-hand knowledge and engagement with the issues involved, and accordingly provides the reader a snapshot of the multiple perspectives on the history, politics, and impact of the Polavaram project. The work of the historian-journalist Umamaheshwari (2014), on the other hand, provides a kind of micro-history perspective about the project by focusing on the people and developmental issues at the ground-level. By working through her observations from 2006 to 2013, she focuses on the stories of dispossession and the problems in project implementation. The book reads as an unedited field log peppered with multiple projections from the strategic locations of the Godavari River. Nevertheless, the book breathes life into many individuals and their entanglements with the Polavaram project.

Without doubt, the Polavaram project is a neoliberal articulation of a colonial ambition. We deploy the term ‘project’ here to indicate “government’s seeking to uplift subjects by building public works projects” so as to enable socio-economic life and aid state formation (Ramesh and Raveendranathan 2020: 1). The colonial administration envisaged such projects for Cauvery, Krishna, and Godavari rivers (in the context of the Madras Presidency) for ‘development’ and ‘progress’ in order to avoid famine and increase the agricultural output through enhancing land productivity. Undeniably, there was some material progress, but the unintended consequence was a realignment of the social position of various groups. The colonial harnessing of the river Godavari by the engineers of the Madras Presidency had changed the destiny of the people dependent on

the river and its tributaries. The Dowleswaram barrage in Rajahmundry and the developments in Dummugudem in the Bhadrachalam region (see Chs.3-5, across Sects.3.3, 4.2 and 5.3 respectively) are testimony to the impact of engineering works beyond irrigational and navigational purposes.²⁷ Even today, the British engineer Sir Arthur Cotton, who pioneered these infrastructural developments, is revered in the Godavari districts for unleashing economic prosperity. It is in these colonial hydrological efforts that we can locate the genesis of constructing a dam across the river Godavari.

Against this background, in this section, the Polavaram project will be discussed briefly from the perspective of how the ‘development’ conceived by the colonial and post-independence administrations is contributing to the ‘development’ of the region and its people. The authorities in independent India, based on the Nehruvian vision of dams as temples of modern democracy, sought to tame and utilise the rivers that traversed boundaries. Given this trajectory, the Polavaram project as realised in the 21st century is a product of expanding agricultural demands, manufacturing, and city population pressures straddling various territorial jurisdictions. The ways in which these demands reconfigure the lifeworld of the Bhadrachalam region will form the basis of our ensuing discussion.

In July 1941, Diwan Bahadur L. Venkata Krishna Iyer, then chief engineer of the Irrigation Department (Madras Presidency), originally conceived the project, a multipurpose dam project across the river Godavari near Polavaram (in present-day Andhra Pradesh). A survey conducted between 1942 and 1944 led to the preparation of a report on the feasibility and scope of the project in 1951, then titled as ‘Ramapadsagar Project’ (especially since the project reservoir water was flowing through the site of the Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple at Bhadrachalam) and geared towards generating electricity and irrigating vast hectares of land. However, in April 1969, the

²⁷ See Stoddart (2010) to understand how the colonial irrigational efforts changed the politics and economics of the Coastal Andhra region during 1850 to 1920. Further background and analysis of the entanglements of irrigational infrastructure and the political economy of the Coastal Andhra region can be found in Rao (1988) and Reddy (1990). A thematic approach to colonialism and water is available in D’Souza (2006). Furthermore, Amrith (2018) is a pertinent work on the cultural history of water in the context of colonialism in Asia.

Andhra Pradesh government renamed the project as Polavaram. Various technical committees on the project specifics, reports to the Central Water Commission, and inter-state agreements had consumed a whole amount of time. Finally, after settling the inter-state agreements involving Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa regarding the submergence aspects, the Godavari Water Dispute Tribunal awarded the project in April 1980. Incidentally, in 1980, the then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister T. Anjaiah laid the foundation stone, but there was no further construction or development, since more clearances from the concerned bodies were awaited.

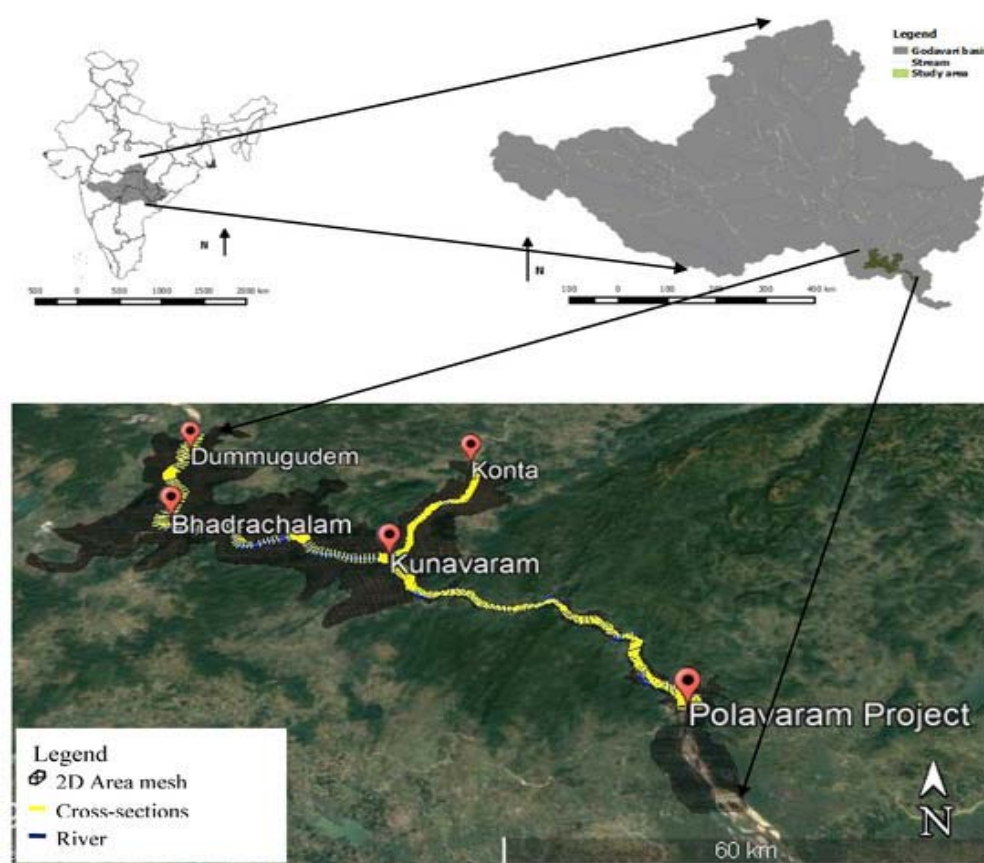
The project dragged on until 2004, when the newly elected Chief Minister Y. S. Rajashekhara Reddy revived and fast-tracked the project after a bhoomi puja at the project site. The increasing farmer suicides in the state of Andhra Pradesh had made the state administration think actively of irrigation programs, and as part of this new development plan the Polavaram Project was revived.²⁸ In fact, during his tenure, the project was renamed as Indirasagar Polavaram Project. However, in May 2014, as part of the State Reorganization Act, the Government of India declared it as a National Project (as per Section 90 of The Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014) and set up the Polavaram Project Authority to oversee the construction. Interestingly, in this repromulgation, the name Indirasagar was dropped, and the project plainly referred as Polavaram Project. Soon after the establishment of the Project Authority, the construction of the main dam started and is expected to be completed in 2022. The project, as a whole, displaces people in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.²⁹

As such, the Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose National Project on the Godavari River designed to irrigate 2.91 lakh hectares of land in the Godavari Delta, and generate 960 Mega Watt electricity. As claimed, it will also provide 23.44 thousand TMC water to the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and, in the future, transfer 80 TMC water to the Krishna River basin annually. The catchment area, as envisaged, is 307, 800 square kilometres;

²⁸ A concise summary of the political events surrounding the Project is recorded by van Hemert *et al.* (2021).

²⁹ Gujja *et al.* (2006) and Department of Irrigation, Government of Andhra Pradesh are the main sources of information. Various news reports have also bolstered these sources.

with the dam project including two canals, a left canal system running for 181 kilometres towards Vishakhapatnam and a right canal system of 179 kilometres length towards Vijayawada.³⁰ The Bhadrachalam region is in the upstream area of the Polavaram project, and Bhadrachalam town is 118 kilometres from the dam site. The farthest point is Dummugudem at 136 km and nearest point is Kunnavaram at 35 kilometers. The Polavaram dam site is 42 kilometres from Arthur Cotton Barrage. The following illustration (**Figure 7** below) shows the submergence areas along the river Godavari up to Dummugudem and Kunnavaram. From Kunnavaram to Konta in Chhattisgarh, it shows the submergence areas along river Sabari and includes our area until Chintur. The illustration also indicates the location of these areas in the Godavari Basin Area covering the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.



³⁰ Information from the Polavaram Project Authority (see www.ppa.gov.in).

Fig. 7: Polavaram Submergence Areas**Source:** Amarnath and Thatikonda (2020: 3)

The submergence of the region due to the project factored in the bifurcation of the region during the Telangana state formation. The Union Government reasoned that to make the rehabilitation and resettlement of the submerged villages administratively convenient, only one state government should be liable and have jurisdiction over the submerged areas. As a result, the mandals south of River Sabari and the submerged villages in Bhadrachalam were transferred to Andhra Pradesh except Bhadrachalam town. In total 136 villages and 211 hamlets in Bhadrachalam, Kunnavaram, Chintur, and V R Puram mandals are in the submergence zone, now located in Andhra Pradesh.³¹ According to Umamaheshwari (2014), 56,108 people will be displaced in our region, out of which 30,669 people or 55% belong to the tribal population. The total project affected population in the submergence area in Andhra Pradesh including our region is 1,88,012 persons together with 89,827 tribals. That is to say, the region comprising our study makes up 30% of the total population and 34% of the tribals affected by the Polavaram Project in Andhra Pradesh.

The government devised compensation and resettlement packages for the displaced population, officially labelled as project-affected population (PAP) and project affected families (PAF). The compensation involves payment of cash for the loss of house, livelihood, and relocation expenses. The compensation package involving monetary payment for loss of land and wages, along with resettlement allowance, have been distributed among the majority of the people in our region. The resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) involve physical relocation to a new site with basic infrastructure and avenues for employment, education, and health services. The R&R package is implemented in phases. The first phase covering 14 villages started in 2005, with the Andhra Pradesh State Policy of 2005 governing this phase (see **Appendix 1**, in the Appendices segment of our dissertation). Compared to the previous R&R packages, the 2005 policy gave wage compensation to landless people. The second phase, which

³¹ According to Census classification of the Government of India, 'villages' are revenue villages as defined by the state government and 'hamlets' are clusters of settlements that are outside the boundaries of the revenue village.

includes our region (Chintur, Kunnavaram, and VR Puram), but excluding villages in Bhadrachalam, started in 2015. The displaced families were covered under a new legislation of 2013 (see **Appendix 2**, in the Appendices segment of the dissertation). Indeed, from 1 January 2014, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, has been implemented for rehabilitating the people. Compared to the Andhra Pradesh State Policy of 2005, the new act of 2013 gives more substantial financial compensation. The third and final phase, which is yet to be started, will cover the submerged areas in Bhadrachalam. Quite discernibly, the R&R (rehabilitation and resettlement) package allows project-affected families to choose houses of their choice and design. Regarding the loss of land, besides, there is a provision to provide land for land, albeit with a ceiling of 2.5 acres. The National Scheduled Tribes Commission after a visit to the project area in 2018 had recommended that land for land compensation should be at least 2.5 acres. As of now, however, there are no changes in the land compensation package at the ground level. The process of identifying land to compensate for the loss of land is ongoing, since among those who have received the land, they have often found it unsuitable for cultivation. Pertinently, the landless are not compensated with an adequate job opportunity except a subsistence grant of Rs 50,000. Creating social infrastructure in terms of schools and hospitals in the R&R sites or colonies is largely unaddressed in the packages as envisaged (see our **Appendix 1 and 2**).

Without doubt, the rehabilitation and resettlement package, as enumerated, hides a maze of problems regarding the implementation - the problems concerning title deeds of the landholders, loss of fertile land, pressure on land due to increased population, coercion by the lower bureaucracy to hand over the land, failure to mount a sustained opposition to the Polavaram Project, and so on. The non-tribals cultivating on leased tribal land are ineligible for any compensation for the loss of land. Moreover, the tribals, especially in Chintur area bordering Chhattisgarh, who have engaged in *podu* cultivation do not have title deeds, thus excluding them from any compensation for the loss of agricultural land. The local revenue officials invariably hurry through the resettlement and rehabilitation processes. They either do not fully inform the displaced people about the packages or do not exercise due diligence in gram panchayat meetings. Often public hearings are

held with limited number of people who toe the bureaucratic line. Clearly, the major challenge in the implementation of the package is finding adequate and fertile land for cultivation, leading to the delay in the completion of the socio-economic survey for land acquisition.

The ebullient Uday, a young Koya field-guide in his mid-twenties who has completed his B. Tech., often accompanied the researcher in the region as a mediator and potential translator. He had used the available opportunities to improve his English language skills so as to prepare for jobs in a city setting. Uday looks beyond the region for a better livelihood, although he is rooted in his home, the place of birth that gives him his identity. He was invariably nostalgic when we crisscrossed the region, especially the southern parts. He often pointed out to the majestic landscape dotted with hilly and rocky outcrops and said these are ‘our land’ and that they will all soon be losing the landscape. Evidently, he was not worried about the physical loss of vast patches of pristine nature; rather, Uday’s concern was something else, namely, the loss of worship and historical traces and markings. Trees are central to the Koya worship, especially for paying homage to their ancestors. Indeed, certain sections of the vast land are identified with particular families, and they obviously stand to lose their place of worship. The impending submergence of these areas due to the construction of the multi-purpose irrigation project at Polavaram has definitely cast a shadow on the lives of the Koyas like our young field guide Uday. He was desperate to get the markings on the rock translated before it submerged. Uday and some other tribal notables like Madivi Naresh, an energetic Koya leader, believe that it is historically important and part of their native heritage and culture.

Most of the ‘project-affected population’ has received compensation from the government. However, as one of the middle-aged field informants, a tribal activist, confided, most of the money was spent on motor vehicles and other items of conspicuous consumption. There is, obviously, no sense of financial planning or saving for the future, all leading to further deprivation among the tribal communities. Another informant, a mother of two doting kids and a primary healthcare worker in the region, further alluded to a rumour among the tribal community about the possibility of more compensation

from the government, which (according to her) accentuated present bouts of spending. At any rate, as the construction of the project is unfolding downstream, most of the tribal leaders have resigned to the fact that they are expendables for the mechanisms of the state. Since the construction of the main dam is located away from our region, they felt that their resistance would not capture the attention of the government and the media.

Quite interestingly, one of them, a senior tribal leader who pioneered the independent tribal organizations in the region, accosted the researcher during the Rohith Vemula movement early in 2016. He fervently urged: how did the suicide of a student capture the imagination of the nation (and globally) whereas the Polavaram Project affecting nearly 200,000 people is unravelling little over 300 kilometres from Hyderabad? The moot question, for one and all, is whether we as a society have normalised the displacement of people for the larger good, howsoever nebulous the larger good can seem. Alternatively, are the tribals outside the imagination of the public sphere and civil society, with the media and the political leadership intent only on responding to urban middle class issues? Even among the various development-induced displacement projects, the Polavaram project is on the sidelines, a point noted by one of the early researchers on Polavaram (see Mariotti 2012). We will return to these questions after taking into account the impact of the project on our region.

As most state-directed exercises go, the Polavaram Project too has affected the people unevenly depending on their socio-economic backgrounds. Most of the non-tribals, especially on the banks of the Sabari River, were eager to accept the terms of the rehabilitation offered. These cultivators, predominately growing cotton and rice, had migrated from the East Godavari district. They were eager to move out and find new avenues, since they were restricted in utilising their land (basically in terms of selling it) due to the prevailing Land Regulation rules. The keenness to accept the package is particularly visible in Dummugudem and Bhadrachalam mandals, especially among cultivators whose children are educated and want to settle outside the region. Undeniably, the imperfect land market (as discussed earlier on, in this chapter) is a motivation that cannot be overlooked. The non-tribals, clearly, do not have the incentive to hold on to their land parcels since they feel stifled by the restrictions on their exchange

rights. Legally, they can sell it only to the tribals or the government; and, according to many non-tribals, such transactions do not yield the true value of the land. The non-realisation of the true value of the land and their inability to develop their land parcels for ventures like tourism etc. is obviously forcing the younger generation to think beyond agriculture, and move out of the region for better avenues. Among the non-tribals, besides, the Scheduled Castes are affected even more adversely. Most of them are wage labourers in the fields of the others, especially the non-tribals. Raju, a middle-aged SC farmhand in Bhadrachalam, aired his concern about opportunities in the future. He was of the opinion that Koya farmers usually did not like to employ the SC persons, and preferred caste Hindus. Moreover, with the declining numbers of non-tribal farmers and landholders, the future for such wage labour had also become even more uncertain.

By and large, the Koya farmers have mounted the most vigorous resistance to the Polavaram Project since they stand to lose the maximum. They derive their social and economic standing through cultivation, and any dent to agricultural output is therefore non-negotiable. Importantly, this sense is more visible among the marginal and mid-sized farmers who hold land parcels in the submergence zone. They stand to lose one of the most fertile lands available in the Godavari Basin area. The land-for-land compensation declared by the government has not soothed their nerves since they are uncertain about the productivity of the compensated land. Already there are complaints from the displaced people that they are being shifted to rocky lands unsuitable for cultivation. Clearly, the loss of fertile land for 'marginal' and mid-sized farmers cannot be compensated easily with an equal fertile tract of land.³² The big and affluent Koya farmers, on the other hand, were indifferent to the issue of submergence since they are left with other land parcels within the region that are fertile. Even if they have lesser area for cultivation, they can financially manage the loss of this reduced acreage. Chandraiah, a Tudum Debba activist, flagged an important concern relating to the loss of land and livelihood, especially when we look at Koyas as farmers with varying sizes of land holdings. According to him, the lack of tribal cohesion in registering a strong protest against the Polavaram Project stems from the apathy of the wealthy Koya farmers.

³² Broadly, according to Government of India, 'marginal farmer' designates those who cultivate upto 1 hectare of unirrigated land and one-half hectares of irrigated land.

They have the resources to mobilise protestors, organise agitations, and amplify their grievances to the government and the public, but seem to be largely indifferent to the prospect. Likewise, Posaiah, a Koya degree college lecturer, pointedly reminded the researcher that no amount of *Jala Deeksha* (a favourite mode of protest wherein the protestors stand in the river, half-submerged and raise placards and protest) would yield any change until and unless there is a united ground of protest and mobilisation. Many times, various tribal organizations have attempted this mode of protest, as a novel form, to attract the attention of the government and media to their grievances. The following (Fig. 8) is an illustration of one such protest conducted by the Konda Reddis of the region at Bhadrachalam.



Fig. 8: *Jala Deeksha* by the tribals in Bhadrachalam against the Polavaram Project
Source: *The Hindu*, 21 February 2014.

Moreover, the researcher has observed a considerable distance between settlements and villages, which creates logistical difficulties for gathering the people together all at once. The protest site is often the banks of Godavari at Bhadrachalam or the Ambedkar centre in the town area. The affected population stays far away from these locations, and the villages are away from the main road. Hence, travelling to the protest locations are a challenge to the resource starved protestors – in terms of lack of personal vehicles and skeletal public transport facilities in the region. Additionally, Sitakka, a proud Koya woman and mother of three young children, told the researcher that she has to cook, tend the children, as well do farm jobs; in this midst, joining a dharna is bound to be an

arduous task. There are many like her whom we encountered in the field. Some of them are engaged in MGNREGA works, and so the opportunity cost is high for such individuals. These conditions lead to a lesser number of protestors joining in, thereby affecting the optics of tribal opposition.

A covert agent of the Ministry of Home Affairs operating in the region elaborated more on the tribal disunity concerning the Polavaram Project. Primarily, as sounded out, there is a general distrust of most 'tribal leaders'. Their role in land regulation violation cases, filing of the SC/ST atrocity act, and mediation concerning various forms of disputes in the region are taken to be public knowledge and a serious matter of concern. These leaders have also supposedly cheated some of the aggrieved parties; they take money from one party and settle matters inequitably. Many tribals view these 'leaders' and 'intervenors' as opportunistic middlemen craving self-glory and money. Some of the tribal leaders also promise the people from the region with logistical support when they travel outside the region for studies, medical emergencies, and employment, but end up financially exploiting the latter. To aggravate the situation, the rivalry among the tribal leaders as reflected in the multiple splits within organizational platforms also weakens any attempt for tribal unity and cohesion. Coincidentally, the Koya tribesman who pioneered independent tribal organization in the region was expelled from the organization he helped to form because of his religion. When he was removed, he formed another organization and, along with it, he pulled out the external network of aid agencies and supporters, thereby handicapping the parent organization. We will revisit this tribesman and attendant details in the next chapter (Ch. 6, in particular) on the vortex of identities that play out in the Bhadrachalam region. Furthermore, the morally malleable tribal leaders and activists would collude with the local bureaucracy to coerce consent from the tribals at large.

Strictly, we must state that the Polavaram Project is not the focus of our research per se, although it must be acknowledged that it has opened up the multiple entanglements of land, labour, and capital embedded in the region under the shadow of the state. The project has adversely affected the landless labourers, marginal farmers, and people dependent on minor forest produce more than those with stable incomes like government

employees and farmers with larger land holdings. The lower wage earners have not been compensated in the form of an alternate livelihood. The project, besides, has also highlighted the problem of savings and consumption in the region. As confirmed by some of our field informants, a good number of the project-affected population has invested the compensation money on vehicles and other consumer goods. Umamaheshwari (2014), in fact, details the play of land ownership, exploitation of tribals, and subversion of democratic procedures triggered by the Polavaram Project. She amplifies multiple voices of desperation and exasperation owing to the displacement with no guarantees regarding their ways of life. She also narrates the indifference of bureaucrats from the local level onwards in managing the problems of the displaced population. Through her narrative, it is quite clear how the need of the State in developing a project to enhance the productivity and capital in other locations subverts the already vulnerable socio-economic relations in our region.

Interestingly, yet, the overall project foregrounds the documentary nature of the State. The Bhadrachalam region, like other tribal areas, has informal arrangements in land ownership – with tribals leasing non-tribal land and non-tribals leasing tribal land. There are also tribals who have been cultivating without any documentary proof for the land possession. The patterns of cultivation went on without any disturbance since it was the norm in the area. The informality of the economic relations in the region, in fact, became a problem during the compensation processes and associated claims. Broadly, the tribal families without title deeds, the multiple claimants to a particular land parcel, and the non-tribals in the region who have been leasing out tribal land are not covered under the R&R packages. Their inevitable displacement will change the landscape forever. It has opened up new challenges for the affected population in terms of the new location, and set up new support systems. Already many riverside farmers have either stopped cultivating or moved inland into less fertile lands; whereas there are also others who are continuing with the cultivation till the land is submerged, once and for all.

We did note earlier on in this section that, in order to ameliorate disputes regarding the rehabilitation and resettlement of the submergence zone, the region was bifurcated. Nevertheless, the backwater flooding is haunting Andhra Pradesh – Telangana relations.

In fact, on the directions of the National Green Tribunal, the Central Water Commission is studying the effects of the Full Reservoir Level at 150 feet on Bhadrachalam town. Needless to say, the demands of the irrigation of distant fields in the Godavari-Krishna Basin areas, as also the steel factory at Vishakhapatnam, and the needs of power generation has displaced the people of the Bhadrachalam region. The project-affected people do not seem to have much of a choice in this quagmire of displacement and rehabilitation. The inevitability of the project in terms of its benefits makes it difficult to stop the construction. Furthermore, the history of delayed and ineffective rehabilitation process makes the future bleak for the project-affected population especially the tribals (see Rupavath 2015, for understanding the tribal displacement in development projects). Poignantly, the State of Andhra Pradesh has pushed the narrative for the construction of the Polavaram Project as a solution for drought and agricultural productivity in the wider region. Van Hemert *et al.* (2021) is an excellent analysis of how this narrative is constructed and disseminated for the purpose of getting popular support for the project. In their work, they show how dams are presented as a timeless solution for problems of drought and poverty in the downstream of the project, even as the compensation package for the displaced population upstream of the project is dispensed as a form of innovative social policy. The Polavaram project is thus constructed by the state as a historical necessity that will benefit everyone in the upstream and downstream.

Van Hemert *et al.* (2021) also show how the state government values the irrigated land more than the tribal forested landscape by forwarding a non-negotiable narrative of the project with irrigation benefits (dams as solution to poverty) and compensation policies (pro-tribal and swapping land-for-land). To be sure, the preference for a particular landscape, and the idea of irrigated lands and resettled tribals away from the hills and forest, is indicative of the process of ‘creative destruction,’ an essential fact of capitalism (to borrow loosely from a Schumpeterian perspective). After all, “the riverine, as a landscape, has dominated economic discourse in AP; where other landscapes are not relevant for power politics” (Umamaheshwari 2014: 360).)

Some concluding remarks

The region and its people have been expendables since the march of a 'developmental modernity' first through colonialism and later the post-independent nation-state. Capital has largely swallowed the land for its needs under the guise of 'development,' by 'protecting' the people, especially the tribals, from outsiders and 'civilising' through socio-economic interaction with plains people. As this drama unfolded in the background, tragically, a group of pilgrims to the 'temple town' of Bhadrachalam died in a boat accident; thereon, the region got its fuller 'connectivity' like other regions. The statist imaginary and those of the people outside the region were more interested in the timber, river, forest produce, and the temple. The modalities of this interest and interaction orchestrated patterns of 'development' in the region. There were also unintended consequences like the Koi Mission which introduced schools, dispensaries, etc., in the region. Nevertheless, from the colonial period onwards, the records speak of the difficulties of government officials in terms of malaria, heat, and remoteness. Indeed, a palpable sense of indifference suggests that the Bhadrachalam region is peripheral in their imagination. Against this background, the pertinent question would be: can we conceive 'development' outside the flow of capital? In this context, Maoism as a political theory and practice is an option worth exploring sociologically. Moreover, the Maoist presence in our region makes it essential to evaluate the 'people's perspective' and the significance of tribals in this pre-eminently political landscape.

Our foregoing discussion on the land and interest rate regulations (Sect.5.2 above) and the Polavaram Project (Sect.5.5) indicate unresolved grievances among the people of Bhadrachalam. The slow and ineffective resolution of the Land Transfer Regulation violations by the state and its functionaries is a perennial source of tribal grievance. Furthermore, the non-issue of land *pattas* since 2014 - even though quite recently the present Telangana government has initiated the process ³³ - is largely experienced as visible neglect of the region and especially of the tribals. Undoubtedly, these administrative lapses and indifference are fodder for the Maoists in the region. We shall

³³ Observers of the state politics and commentators of the region feel that the present government initiative to issue *podu* land *pattas* is a form of political posturing. The electoral setbacks suffered by the current Telangana regime have pushed the administration to reach out to all sections of the society and the *podu* land patta program needs to be seen in this context. Some of the observers are most skeptical about the extent of the implementation of this present initiative.

be probing this in a subsequent chapter (Ch.7, in particular), which details the Maoist intervention and impact on the region. But, alongside this examination, we shall be addressing the contemporary assertion of the tribals in the region. Considering that various waves of migrants with different motives had entered the tribal area impacting the latter, the question of their religious and cultural identity looms large in these assertions, as we venture to probe across Ch.6. We move now into these specific grounds of a ‘people’s history’, as it were.

Part III



**Intermeshing the Administrative and the Developmental:
Fragments of a People's History**

Chapter 6

Vortex of Identities: New Currencies Among the Northeastern Telangana Tribals

The contours of an administrative and developmental history, as recounted in the earlier sequence of chapters, gave us dramatic glimpses of how the Bhadrachalam region had developed over a period of time. Undoubtedly, our narration had also subsumed aspects of the people's response to some of these trajectories of sociohistorical change. In this, our Part III, we strive to foreground fragments of the people's history emanating from the tribal themselves as articulated through their organizational assertions and negotiations among themselves. In fact, the current chapter navigates through the voices of the tribals themselves specifically on the question of their identity and belonging in a vortex of religious conversions. Our effort here is largely mediated through a prominent tribal voice in the region. A later fragment of our people's history, as embodied in our subsequent chapter (Ch.7), will engage the contradictory entanglements of Maoism and developmentalism in the Bhadrachalam region.

Our gatekeeper, a prominent tribal leader in the region, strives to protect the Koya identity as a distinct indigenous grouping among the many at play in the region. This leader and his supporters are most keen to keep the Koyas away from the influences of the Hindu, Christian and Islamic missionaries. As he sharply formulated this predicament: "Without knowledge we became Hindus, and with knowledge we became Christians and Muslims".¹ In many ways, he was largely expressing a wider understanding among contemporary tribal activists to fashion a distinctive identity for themselves. Indeed, as part of this thrust, tribal leaders from across India had attended meetings in New Delhi and Hyderabad in 2018. Our prominent tribal leader, Madivi Naresh, as the head of Adivasi Samkshema Parishad (ASP), attended these meetings as

¹ Statement made by Madivi Naresh during a discussion with the researcher on the sidelines of the National Seminar on the Cultural-Religion of Adivasis, 12 May 2018, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

organised by the National Adivasi-Indigenous Religion Coordination Committee (NAIRCC), an all-India platform of tribals demanding a special column on 'tribal religion' to be included in the national census. The NAIRCC originated in the demand for the Sarna Code in Jharkhand (emanating around 2015], deflecting off the slogan 'No Sarna Code, No Census'. The failure of the Jharkhand-based activists in forcing the Government of India to accept the Sarna Code meant that they had to change their strategy. They decided to create an all-India platform, NAIRCC, to pressurise the government to create a census column for 'tribal religion'. By 2015, through consultations with various tribal groups, the NAIRCC was formed with the intent to protect the distinct tribal identity and to curb the tendency to subsume the identity under the rubric of 'Hindu' (or Hinduism) during the decadal enumeration process of the government.

The NAIRCC maintains the imperative of the need for the tribals in India to represent themselves accurately in the census operations since they assert that they are not Hindus. The Coordination Committee points out that, in the 1951 census, there was an option of 'Tribe' in the religion column and that it had been removed later on, which necessarily meant that they are forced to choose a religious affiliation that is not an accurate measure of who and what they really are. Various tribal leaders also pointed out that even in the 2011 Census, the option of marking 'others' was not obtaining in the religious code, thereby forcing the tribals to choose a religious identity that is not a part of their space of identification. According to them, a separate religious code is necessary since all the tribals have distinct forms of worship, which need to be protected so that their cultural heritage can be preserved and reproduced. According to various news report, nearly 83 tribal communities from 19 states had held a silent protest on March 2019 in New Delhi to re-state their demand.

Evidently, the tribal activists claim is that their socio-cultural practices are very different from Hinduism. However, they opine that, since in the census they count themselves as Hindus, most of the tribals complacently come to consider themselves as Hindus. A strong assertion to announce themselves as different from Hinduism, and a concomitant demand for recognition of their distinct characteristics is gaining ground among the

Adivasis as a whole. Doubtless, the Bhadrachalam region and its tribal leaders are also not immune to this process. Importantly, Madivi Naresh and his ASP are leading this effort in the south-central tribal regions of Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

5.1 ‘Will the fishes empty a pond?’: Voices of the Tribals Introduced



Fig. 9: Birsa Munda Adivasi Samkshema Bhavan, Bhadrachalam
Source: Researcher

The Birsa Munda Adivasi Samkshema Bhavan (**Fig. 9** above) stands out in the Bhadrachalam-Chintur road near the Area Medical Hospital. It is a red coloured building in an open compound with a flag post. The design and colour of the building makes it distinct. In fact, the design is modelled on the pattern of the houses that were supposed to have been built for the Polavaram Project displaced people. The two-roomed Bhavan is basically a study centre - named ‘Gotul: Gondwana Study Center’ - with a library containing books on tribal history, personality development and coaching materials for various examinations. The thought behind this study centre is not only to help Koya students to learn facets of their history, but also to enable them to write competitive examinations. Madivi Naresh, a core member of Adivasi Samkshema Parishad (ASP) is the inspiration behind this Bhavan. He is a middle-aged primary health care worker

staying in Bhadrachalam, and belongs to the Koya tribe as a ‘proud member’ (as he often says) of the southern group of the Gond Adivasis in the Bhadrachalam region of southern Dandakaranya.² A former Project Officer of the ITDA gave this land to the ASP when the local police station had shifted its location.

In 2000, a government degree self-management hostel started in Bhadrachalam and it became the recruitment base for the Adivasi organizations. Madivi Naresh had joined ASP three days after the ‘*Bhooporattam*’ (Land Struggle) organised by the forum on the 11th of October, 2008. It was a massive agitation led by Sunnam Venkat for tribal land rights. Nearly 50,000 to 70,000 Koya tribals participated in this agitation, which was orchestrated in the Bhadrachalam town. After about 10 days, the tribals started occupying the land, at times symbolically placing stones to lay claim to the territory. Very soon thereafter, the struggle was withdrawn when the District Collector assured them that they will get land. In fact, Naresh confided that he joined the ASP thinking that he will get land. This promise, however, was never realized, although the 150 tribal families that had occupied the government land stayed on. The immediate impact of this agitation was that nearly 1000 acres of the Bhadrachalam Temple Land in Puroshattampatanam in Bhadrachalam that had been occupied and utilised by the non-tribals was identified and the evictions followed. The temple officially got the *patta* (land record of ownership) for it only in 2009. Naresh pointed out that the infiltration by political parties had led to confusion and conflicts among the leaders of the *Bhooporattam*, and contributed to its fizzling out.

Like many other Koyas, Madivi Naresh is very sceptical about politics and politicians, and this includes the Left revolutionaries in the area. In fact, while speaking about the Polavaram Project displacement, he vehemently opines that the Maoists are not serious about the issue and that they are only doing ‘lip service’ to the project affected people.

² A vast contiguous tribal region spread across the states of Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh comprises the ‘Dandakaranya’ zone. It is a term used by tribal activists to refer to their cultural geography transcending the administrative boundaries in modern India. The Koyas, particularly, inhabit this space which is spread across three cultural geographies - Eturnagram, Bhadrachalam, and Paderu in southern Dandakaranya – and thus predominantly spread across the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha.

He is insistent that if the Maoists are really serious about the issue, then instead of pasting posters and making statements, they could have stopped the construction of the dam that is apace. The propaganda that the Maoists are pro-people and pro-tribal is a ‘farce’, according to Naresh, as the Maoists were not part of the larger Narmada agitation. As he detailed, Medha Patkar had taken the fight to its logical end and was able to build a pan-Indian solidarity as part of the larger agitation. Naresh is clear that, in comparison to the Narmada agitation, the Maoists with their firepower and networks can do more – indeed that this is what is expected of them – but strategic considerations have weighed in their responses. Naresh candidly observes that although the tribals are part of the Godavari River and the Maoists are living along with tribals, it is the latter’s fear of losing their area of operation that is driving the Maoists to make noises about the Polavaram Project. In fact, he sums up the Maoism and Polavaram questions in the following direct and almost blunt manner:

The Maoist agenda is not a tribal one, and they are here for their own self-protection. They have come here for a purpose and they will leave one day. For them, the Polavaram Project is a minor roadblock in their overall scheme of affairs. And we do not expect them to fight for us.³

Naresh is clear that Polavaram is a real challenge for the tribals. Pointing out that while there may be many families staying together on a plot of land, it is only the *patta* holder’s family that gets the compensation money; as also that the households receiving the compensation have been unable to manage it wisely, often falling prey to the moneylenders and the businessmen. The rehabilitation site, besides, remains to be finalised.

Largely, according to Naresh, the political interference in the tribal world started with the migration of the non-tribals in the area. He maintains that the tribals never occupied the land on the river bank since it was flood-prone, and this was used as an opportunity by the non-tribals to occupy and cultivate land. Incidentally, due to the regular flooding, the river banks were quite fertile, and the non-tribals were able to often get a good harvest. Naresh is clear that this economic prosperity along with the exposure to political processes had allowed the non-tribals to have a leverage over the tribals with regards to

³ Interview with Madivi Naresh at his home in Bhadrachalam on 20 March 2018.

politics as a whole. He further maintained that the family-oriented social relations of the tribals had been broken up by the non-tribals for political purposes and that the communitarian lives of the Koyas as a whole was threatened by these processes. Apparently, as held by many other tribals that we spoke to, it is a common practice to exclude those Adivasis who are not supporters of the ruling political regime from the issue of ration cards, water cards and other social welfare schemes. Admittedly, this has further created unrest and tension among the Koyas, leading to divisions and distrust that have undermined the basis of their solidarity.

Clearly, the patterns of incorporation by the state and its agents are politically configured, with the consequence that a new axis of difference has been introduced into the tribal community along political affiliations. This supposedly has further accentuated the modes of relative deprivation and endowment suffered and received by the different tribal households. Naresh is clear that the transformation of the traditional modes of being to the modern modalities as mediated by the processes of political democracy have led to the withering away of social bonds and cohesion among the Koyas.

It is also important to be noted that marriages among the Koyas were never geographically dictated. But evidently the drawing and redrawing of state boundaries between and across the Koya/Gond cultural geography in terms of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and now Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had its impact on the world of the tribals. The different state-directed policies and welfare schemes have also unevenly placed the culturally homogenous Koyas at different levels. Thus, to illustrate, an educated Koya from Bhadrachalam may not prefer another educated Koya from Mothugudem in Odisha since the former's identity papers as issued by Telangana may or may not be accepted by the Odisha government and therefore excluded from social welfare programs. Besides, also, the facilities and infrastructure available in one state may not be available in the other state. The consequent restructuring of the patterns of kinship among the Koyas has been a further source of anxiety and insecurity among them. In fact, Naresh recalled fondly that in his childhood, if anyone had fallen sick, the larger family and neighbourhood would volunteer to help in care-giving as well as financial assistance. Such fraternal habits clearly, for Naresh, no longer obtain within the

community, thereby making many families even more vulnerable. With the tribals growing more and more individualistic, wider community and kinship ties have come to be frayed as a whole, as claimed by this prominent tribal activist with whom we had interacted quite extensively.

Importantly, as perceived, the absence of the traditional mode of protection and care-giving have opened up spaces for the missionaries. Naresh even ventures to suggest that the Church is largely enacting the role of the kin, by providing money, medicines and most importantly comradeship: “Medicines do not work if one does not have mental peace and the Church through its parish members have created a social safety net for the vulnerable. This has led to increasing conversion of the Koyas to Christianity”. Naresh also points out to the conversions to Islam that are taking place in the region, a pattern observable in the Dummugudem-Cherla region. We shall later in this section revisit the issue of Islamic conversion through the biography and politics of Sonde Ramesh, a controversial and charismatic Adivasi leader.

The admissions along this ground of religion and conversion are pretty stark: “Without knowledge we became Hindus, and with knowledge we became Christians and Muslims”. This poignant statement by Naresh, the articulate and well-travelled leader of the ASP, indicates towards a larger problem that is being confronted by the Adivasis not only in Bhadrachalam, but also in central and western India. As narrated by Naresh, till the onset of the non-tribals in the area around 50 years back, they did not have any sense of Ram, Sita or Krishna. The tribal deities like Mysamma and Poshamma are not part of the Hindu pantheon. The contention here, clearly, is that the Adivasis are not primarily Hindus since their gods and cultural practices are very different from the caste Hindus. Naresh even pointedly asserts that he disagrees with Ambedkar because the latter had accepted himself as a Hindu; and that, if not for this acceptance, the Dalits could have saved their *astitva* (identity/existence). Obviously, what Naresh is imploring here is that the Adivasis would prefer to be classified outside Hinduism and would like to be labelled under the category either as ‘no religion’ or ‘Adivasi religion’ in the Census enumerations. Indeed, this remark is a part of a larger attempt by the tribal leaders from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat who are mobilizing opinion and

support in this direction. According to many of our field informants, this move emanated from Jharkhand and is led by Aravind Oraon, as backed by a former BJP state minister.

Naresh, further, revealingly lamented that unlike the Gonds, the Koyas do not have a raja or a fort or any other symbol that could be the rallying point for anchoring their history. Understandably, the question arises as to what could serve as a point for recovering and transmitting their history, also, how do they recover their history and pass it on to the next generation? In this context, a reference often gets to be made to *Pen Pandum*, which is a Koya festival that honours the family specific ancestors. Different families celebrate it in different locations, but usually between April and May. Being a homage to the ancestors, it is in the course of this celebration that the members of the family get together, with those placed near and far away from each other making it a point to meet and experience a wider kindred. The festival, ostensibly, creates a sense of family and kinship solidarity, but it also re-ignites the roots of the family cutting across the state borders. Through the strengthening of the family ties and thereon their own history an oral history of the family and by extension the Koya community is created at micro levels. Indeed, this oral history is often not only punctuated with family anecdotes, but also with family recipes, cures etc. Naresh argues that this history-making at the level of the family is much needed to ensure the identity of Koyas.

Besides, in the context of this festival, the intimate relationship with nature is shown and shared with the younger generations of the household. In fact, the Koyas claim to have a spiritual relationship with nature; and, accordingly, Naresh even points out that the Adivasi way of life is not ‘human-centric’, but rather ‘nature-centric’. Humans are taken to be embedded in relationships and bonds, whereas nature in terms of land, water, air etc., forms an autonomous fulcrum within the Koya universe of belonging. Naresh even goes on to hold that the Polavaram displacement can and ought to be viewed in this context. As he resolutely asks: “Can a rehabilitated site recreate the same trees, boulders, water bodies and animals along with whom we had spent centuries? In their absence can we practice our culture? Without them, do we exist as Koyas?”.

Giving further testimony to the strains and stresses of the Koya world, Naresh goes on to affirm: “Our voices are controlled by both politicians and Naxalites”. He elucidates that those who raise their voices against injustice to the tribals are often recruited and carried away by the Naxalites, even as those who are ready to play power politics join the political parties. As such, having joined with Naxalism and/or the political parties, the tribals invariably carry forward the agenda of those platforms, often forgetting the needs and aspirations of the fellow tribals in the region. Succinct in his summation, Naresh is clear that Naxalism/Maoism is not a place for the common man, since it is a trap as laid out by the dominant groups.

Further renderings from within the Koya world

As already mentioned earlier, the fabric of the Koya world has often been rattled by the issue of religious conversions. This specific situation brings us to another significant aspect of the Bhadrachalam region. There are 5,557 Muslims in the Bhadrachalam division (total population being 2,89,093) as per the 2011 Census District Handbook (Khammam), with 2,592 residing in the Bhadrachalam mandal. There is a Madrasa in the Rajpeta Colony in Bhadrachalam operated by the Jamaat-e-Islami, with about 60 students mainly from the financially poor tribal families. Among the non-tribals, there are students from Bihar and Jharkhand. These students are taught Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, Telugu and English, all being trained to become Imams and open mosques in India, as claimed. The families of the students are given money, education and shelter. In the recent months, Sheikh Mehboob Hussain of Ahl-i-Hadith has been mobilising funds to open a second mosque in Bhadrachalam.⁴ It must be pointed out that the Islamic conversion of tribals is not a new phenomenon in the region. In fact, around 1985, a Muslim teacher employed in Kothapalli residential school, 20 kms from Bhadrachalam town, had taken 5 tribal students from the school to Hyderabad and converted them to Islam. This incident had shaken the area, and the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) had even intervened and re-converted all but one of the triggers. Sunnam Ramana, the State

⁴ Broadly, the Ahl-i-Hadith is an organisation based on the Hadith and the Quran. Depending on the view taken, it is considered to be the most radical or conservative among the various Islamic organizations in the country, both for its non-state centric and pan-Islamic outlook. The major patrons are the Guntur tobacco merchants in the context of Andhra Pradesh.

General Secretary of Adivasi Samkshema Parishad (ASP) even terms the Islam converted Adivasis as 'Burkha Adivasi'.

The person who was not re-converted was Sonde Ramesh (born 1971) - although upon conversion he was renamed Younis Khan, but he still retains his original name. Sonde Ramesh and his conversion is important as far as the trajectory of the tribal politics and development in the region are concerned. He has been the main voice articulating the needs and demands of the Koyas in Bhadrachalam for the last decade. He was initially a part of the Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samithi or the Tudum Debba (AHPS/TD), then became part of the Girijana Samkshema Parishad (GSP), which was renamed as the ASP in 2002, and has now re-launched Girijana Samkshema Parishad (GSP) as its convenor.

Ramesh cut his teeth in tribal politics and developmental issues during his days at the Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samithi or Tudum Debba. However, after the General Elections of 1999, when Kursum Subbarao from the Chintur mandal of Bhadrachalam region and the leader of the Tudum Debba had contested elections for the parliament from the region as an independent candidate, Ramesh had floated an organisation named Girijana Samkshema Parishad (GSP) along with the certain student activists of the Tudum Debba. GSP was a tribal organisation not affiliated to any political parties and wanted to be an organisation exclusively for the tribals and tribal welfare. The trajectory of Ramesh and the just mentioned organizations are important to understand the unfolding of 'developmental processes' in the region. At one level, evidently, Ramesh and the organizations are responding to the lack of 'development'; but, at another level, they have been instrumental in ensuring that the policies and programs meant for the tribals are implemented in the region. At the age of 33, Ramesh contested the 2004 State Assembly Elections in Andhra Pradesh from Bhadrachalam (ST Constituency, no 274) as an independent, and came third among the six candidates. He got 10,074 votes (7.49%) and lost to the CPI (M) veteran Sunnam Rajaiah (he is also the present MLA) who got 64,888 votes (48.22%) and the TDP candidate (50,303 and 37.38%). In 1999 he had started the GSP, which got to be renamed as ASP in 2002, while retaining its status as an autonomous tribal organisation non-affiliated to any political party, and has been instrumental in asserting and ensuring that the rights of the tribals are implemented

by the local government agencies in the Bhadrachalam revenue division. However, in 2004, the ASP split, and the older nomenclature of GSP was revived to establish the identity of the splinter group. The generally stated reason for the split is the clash of Ramesh's personality with other tribal leaders in the ASP, although some of the activist's privy to the developments within the ASP hinted to the conversion attempts by Ramesh to convert the tribals to Islam as the main reason for the break.

In fact, there are a few more tribal organizations working in the area other than the GSP and the ASP, such as Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Adivasi Sena Adivasi Konda Reddi Sangham and Gondwana Samkshema Parishad. They are all trying to ensure that the tribal laws are implemented in the region. These organizations except for the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram keep distance from the mainstream political parties. Recently, they have also started mobilising the tribals against the Lambadas. The Naikpod Sangham is an interesting entity in this mix, asserting as they do that the Koyas are also intruders in the region and that they, the Naikpods and the Konda Reddis in particular, are the original inhabitants of the Bhadrachalam region. A Naikpod elder, who also acts as the informal historian among them in the region, argued that Koyas originally came from Bastar and now are spread across the entire north Telangana region. Having worked for long at the Indian Tobacco Company, he is clear that the Naikpods have been residing in the area much before the entry of the Koyas. Citing the oral testimony of his own elders, he retraces that the Naikpods are in the region since 1700s. Importantly, however, the Naikpods by and large cooperate with the numerically strong Koyas in asserting the tribal rights in the region. What is more, one of the prominent Communist leaders from the region was a Konda Reddi tribesman, whom we shall identify in due course.

All the same, to return to the narratives alluding to the Koya world, let us look further into their self-representations. Ramakrishna is an acupuncture specialist from Dummugudem, who had shifted to Bhadrachalam town about 3 years back so as to widen his practice in a more central location. His grandfather had been a traditional healer, although Ramakrishna himself combines traditional and non-traditional forms of medicinal practice. He is very clear in his mind that acupuncture is an extension of the

traditional Koya healing and curing practices, adding that the pressure point activation method can be seen as the balancing of the five elements that constitutes the essence of the Koya method as well (incorporating fire, air, earth, water and sky). He points out that in the Bhadrachalam region there are no traditional healers; and that today the Koya healers can be seen only in the interior inter-state borders of Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The decline of the traditional practices is attributed to the loss of patronage by the Koya tribesman who no longer want to be associated with the traditional modes and are aspiring to be a part of the 'mainstream society.' According to Ramakrishna, his brethren want social respect from others, especially the non-tribals, and this has led to a decline of self-respect and patronage of the indigenous modes of healing and curing. He is clear that this transformation of the Koyas from a self-sufficient community to that which is aspiring or imitating the social groups in their immediate physical neighbourhood can have consequences for his people: "Earlier our people used to drink alcohol like tea, in few quantities and once or twice a day, but now they, especially the youth, drink it like water, in larger quantities and throughout the day". Equally, Madivi Naresh too had lamented on the 'undesirable' consequences of the tribal - non tribal interactions in the region, with the tribals increasingly being lured into alcoholism. In fact, there is a shift from the traditional drink, *mhowa* to beer and whisky among the tribal youth at large. Quite often, it seems that the youth, when they go out of the region for study purposes, end up drinking and getting addicted to substances, in the process neglecting their studies. As was wryly admitted, both by Ramakrishna and Naresh, they often return to the villages only to expose more of the local youth to the 'city life'.

To be sure, the increasing alcoholism among the tribal youth is, for one, seen to be a negative consequence of their interaction with the non-tribals at the local level, as well as to gain a wider social acceptance among their peers across social groups especially in modern educational settings. But importantly, alcoholism is not the only the new habit of socialization acquired by the tribal students at large; increasingly, in fact, some of them even re-orient their faith system at these educational settings. Venkat Rao, a 26-year-old Koya graduate from Osmania University, is a civil service aspirant from a village at the tri-junction of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha near the Sabari River, which is part of V R Puram mandal. He left his village for pursuing education,

and during his stay in the government-run tribal welfare school he found the call of Jesus as a panacea for his worries in a strange and alien world among people who are admittedly 'different'. Venkat, on his own admission, found solace in the calling of Jesus; and emphatically believes that anything that can help him to resolve his spiritual and material problems is good for him. Moreover, he felt that as a Christian he has more acceptance among the non-tribals (or, at least, the Christians among the latter). Venkat disclosed that it was one of the priests who had told him about the civil service examination and even helped him to attend a coaching centre in New Delhi. All the same, for a different order of representation, there is a Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan school at Palvancha, neighbouring to the Bhadrachalam region. In this institutional setting, the students are often reminded about the great Indian civilisation and their place in the history and culture of India. In fact, Koya students are explicitly made aware that they belong to the culture of the land – indeed, as part of the 'Sanathana Dharma' and that the Adivasis are no different from the others or the non-tribals in the area. Whatever differences may exist between various peoples and social groupings, as claimed, is attributed to differences in the patterns of economic empowerment and access to socio-economic goods and services of the state. Nearly 5000 Koyas have passed out from the school supposedly with this orientation. The school authorities even proudly proclaim this message: about the Koyas as a constituent component of 'Sanathana Dharma' in the Bhadrachalam region.

In this wake, we must confront the question: is the influence of the non-tribal lifeworld detrimental to the Koya world? In a preliminary survey of Dummugudem and Cherla mandals, it was revealed that the Adivasi households wherein there are government employees there was a bathroom, cooking gas facility and other amenities.⁵ Having said so, there are still villages especially in the hills which are happy in the way they are. In Venkatapuram and Wazeedu mandals, there are villages and villagers who resist the non-tribal lifeworld and the allurements of the modern mode of living. In the past, especially in the late 1980s, the ITDA at Bhadrachalam had wanted to improve the living conditions

⁵ The researcher was a consultant to a summer internship program on tribal livelihood studies in Bhadrachalam region conducted by a Hyderabad based philanthropy group who wanted to know the state of tribals in the state to devise fellowships for tribal students. The survey mentioned was a part of that internship program.

of the Hill Reddis or Konda Reddis, a primitive tribal group in the Chintur mandal. They made the Konda Reddis come down from the hilltop to the hill slope so that the tribals can access health and educational facilities offered by various governmental agencies. By relocating the habitat, the administrators thought that the travel time will be shortened in accessing the various facilities and emergency services. Incidentally, this initiative was pushed forward by Dr. Vidyasagar who was the Project Officer of the ITDA at Bhadrachalam and was firmly backed by the only Konda Reddi ever to be elected as MLA in Andhra Pradesh, Yerraiah Reddy Murla (who represented the region in the period 1978-1985 as the CPI-M representative).

Brother Moses of CAFED, Venkatapuram, specifically recalled multiple instances of interior villagers who came down from the hills when pursued by the mission for studies, only to return in a day or two. CAFED (the Caussanel Foundation for Education and Development) was registered in 2002 under the leadership of Brother Augustine. In Venkatapuram specifically, the operations had started in 2004, and presently there is a school (Little Flower Primary School, established in 2012), a self-help group for women and periodic residential bridge camps held for school dropouts. Brother Moses has been part of work since 2004, and presently is the director of the foundation. They have Spanish and German donors among others. The CAFED is a rights-based organization aiming to promote awareness among the people and is part of the SIAN (South Indian Adivasi Network) run by the mission to which Brother Moses belongs. The overall thrust of their activity is two-fold: primarily, they want the tribal people to be aware of their constitutional rights since most of them are ignorant of the same; equally too they want the tribals to go beyond their world of basic needs and ensure a minimum standard of living commensurate to the rest of the population. The latter axis of work stems from the way the tribals, especially the Koyas, seem to conduct their everyday lives. Brother Moses pointedly states that the Koyas do not plan for the future, and depend largely on the forest for all their needs. It is taken for granted that the forest and nature will take care of them, and provide for every contingency. He specifically recalled that during the weekly market, even to this day, most of the Koyas sell all their forest produce to buy the provisions that they need and hardly hold on to any surplus cash. Brother Moses goes on to hold the view that in this subsistence world the Koyas cannot really hope to have a

material life commensurate with the capabilities and resources available to them as members of the larger society. Importantly, yet, it must be conceded that the Koyas at large who have been exposed to the currents of the time have come to adjust with the trappings of the wider culture. In fact, Brother Moses pointedly stated that the Koyas who are employed in the government services have been giving dowry during marriage ceremonies (whereas, as part of their traditional arrangements, there had been no idea of dowry payments).

Indeed, the flip side of the ‘empowerment’ and/or ‘mainstreaming’ process is the transportation of the worries of the conventional world into the world of the Koyas. Today, evidently, there is anxiety and a sense of uncertainty infused by the aspirations embedded in the ‘mainstream world’, such as worries about education and jobs, the security of livelihoods, the patterns of acceptance by the non-tribals at large, as indeed the expectations of improving their standards of living and ridding the community of all feelings of inferiority with respect to their cultural roots. Indeed, as Brother Moses recalled, in their desire to be accepted, they no longer take resort to traditional modes of health, healing, and cultivation practices. Moreover, many Koya youngsters who have travelled outside the region for education purposes did confide to the researcher about their diminished feelings of worth, maintaining that they often feel like they are ‘misfits’ in a contemporary world. As they divulged, the very clothes they wear, their manner of speech, and general lack of social networks to help them explore opportunities and rescue them during troubles, all make them feel quite inferior as individuals. This larger predicament about self-worth, according to Brother Moses, is “a price of the transition” from (as he put it) “the happy, traditional and self-sustained world” to a “complex, dynamic and modern world with better educational, medical and legal facilities”. Even as one ventured the further question about whether this ‘price of transition’ is too heavy to bear for the Koyas at large, Brother Moses tritely responded in his own charming way: “The Koyas should enjoy their capabilities as citizens, and that is their natural right”.

To return, then, to the strivings of CAFED in this dense landscape of general administration and cultural mediation: as part of its rights-based intervention in the Adivasi region, the foundation under its aegis formed the Dandakaranya Jagriti Samiti in

2012. This latter forum, according to Brother Moses, is a voluntary platform aimed at bridging the trust deficit among the various tribal organizations of the region and galvanising the tribal cause at large, even as it is admitted that many of the existing organizations have hardly done anything for the welfare for the tribals. Given that the leaders of these groups are only interested in political and economic power, the new platform is posited as an alternative forum to empower the tribal cause and inculcate in them leadership roles so that they can guide the local community. Some of the notable interventions of this forum have been the following: ensuring the participation of the local tribals in projects at Venkatapuram; creating an interface between the local government officials and the local tribals through special meetings; and protecting women rights. Indeed, fundamental to the operations of the CAFED is the premise that the Koyas, the original inhabitants of the land, are disempowered due to their lack of awareness of their legal and natural rights.

6.2 Between and Among Missionaries: Koya Encounters with Religion and Identity

Madivi Naresh's powerful statement on the question of religion among the Koyas, the one that we had recalled at the beginning of the chapter, captures the dilemmas of being an Adivasi in one of the remote tribal belts of India. The Bhadrachalam region today is a vortex of Christian, Muslim and Hindu missionaries who are trying to expand and consolidate their respective religious orders. At the same time, there is an attempt to forge the 'indigenous' traditions of the Koya people, and express it as 'Animism' by tribal leaders like Naresh. Quite clearly, the boundary-making of what constitutes their religious and cultural identity has been going on since the arrival of the British missionaries in the late 19th century. The tribal politics in the Bhadrachalam region has also divided along religious lines. Consequently, the possible socio-cultural mobilities are distinct and distributed along different religious planes; and it can be posited that the destiny of the tribals is largely organically linked with their choice (and also non-choice) regarding their religious status (see also Baviskar 2005; Xaxa 2005; Robinson and Kujur 2010; Froerer 2019).

Now, even though Naresh is of the firm opinion that the Koyas of the Bhadrachalam region are not Hindus, some of his colleagues especially in the ASP do not share his opinion. In fact, a former convenor of the women's wing Mrs. Revathy, a middle-aged school teacher, explicitly states that the socio-cultural traits of the Koyas resemble that of the Hindus. She can be considered as an expert on Koya society and people as she has done a Ph.D. on the traditions and customs of the Koyas.⁶ However, significantly, she does not yet identify the Koyas as Hindus, nor does she make a case for a separate religious identity for them. In her opinion, there are close similarities in many customs and traditions with that of the mainstream Telugu society. Likewise, a Koya elder, an 80-year-old marginal farmer and resident of Venkatapuram, suggests that the cultural practices have been evolving over a period of time and are influenced by the neighbouring social groups (in this instance, the Telugu culture). However, the core elements of the Koya life world, according to this elder, are the centrality of nature and remembrance of the family elders, which (as he claims) makes their world distinct from the rest of the Hindus.

To be sure, there is an undeniable mixing and transformation of cultural practices. Venkat Rao from V R Puram, a Koya tribesman and a university student pursuing his higher education in New Delhi, admits that there are internal differences among the group. As he maintains, the riverside Koyas or Gummu Koyas (predominately doing agriculture) and the hill Koyas or Gutta Koyas (who depend on hunting for survival) are different not only in the cultural practices, but also in their language. Venkat Rao is clear that it is the cultural interaction with the others which is contributing to changing the form and content of the Koya society and its people. As such, the riverside Koyas have regular contact and interactions with the non-tribals, and as a result their language and customs are slowly converging with that of the caste Hindus. The Gummu Koyas speak both Telugu and Koi, but the Gutta Koyas only speak Koi. Of course, Venkat Rao also conceded that certain redundant practices are being dropped by the community members, and new practices are being adopted. As he remarked, some of the Koya farmers start cultivation without doing *bhoomi pooja*, a ritual invoking the blessing of the Mother

⁶ The dissertation, which elaborates on the history and culture of the Koyas, was submitted in the Department of Telugu, Osmania University in 2015.

Earth, since they know that nature alone will not determine the agricultural output. Ostensibly, they seem to place their faith in modern farming techniques, such as the use of fertilizers, checking weather reports, and so on. Importantly, as Venkat Rao too alluded, it is a common practice nowadays among the affluent Koyas to get a Brahmin to solemnise their marriages. Having said so, there have been efforts to demonstrate the linguistic similarity among Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Koya languages (see Aruna 2015). In fact, such a similarity had been first observed by Aiyappan in his report (1948), wherein he also described that there is a group within the Koyas called the Linga Koyas who worship Lord Shiva and do not eat the meat of the ox (quite unlike the other Koyas). Besides, they do not speak Koi language, but speak an accented Telugu. Indeed, in the light of these observations and perceptual assessments, the question that looms large is about whether we should be focusing on the differences between the Koya and the non-Koya social worlds or understand the correspondences between them and build our understanding of what does it mean to be Koya?

At the same time, as mentioned in our early chapter (see Ch.3, Sect.3.1), there are a considerable number of Koyas who trace their lineage to the ‘Pandavas’ of the epic poem Mahabharata, in particular to the character of Bhima. Thurston in 1909, and even more recently a Tirupati based sociologist, Murthy in 1977, have tried to ascertain this lineage. By and large, the Koyas believe that they are the continuation of the union between Bhima and a woman of the forest in Dandakaranya. In fact, Murthy (1977) even provides three different stories on the origins of the Koyas; and, in two of the stories, it is said that it was the union of Bhima and the daughter of King Nishada which started the lineage of the Koyas. Importantly, however, this ‘Hindu’ origin of Koyas is dismissed by local tribal activists like Naresh. All the same, as just stated, there are a large number of Koyas who subscribe to the legend of the union of Bhima and the forest woman. Undoubtedly, these Koyas are more aligned to Hinduism than to Christianity and Islam in the Bhadrachalam region. Not surprisingly, some of these Koyas in Dummugudem, Cherla and Venkatapuram are working with the Dharm Jagran Samiti, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) affiliate, tasked with constructing shrines and temples of Hindu deities in these localities.

Likewise, another RSS affiliate, the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) has its presence in our area of study, and has patrons both from the tribal and non-tribal communities. An Ekalavya school is operating in Cherla for the tribal children, and a Sewa Bharti office in Chintur works on health and developmental initiatives. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in the neighbouring region of Palvanha is also part of the same RSS eco-system of social and cultural intervention. The aim of all these Hindu right-wing establishments is to remind the people of the region about their cultural connectedness with the rest of the society and polity and about their inter-related history as embedded in the epic poems of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The ground of this assertion is largely anchored in a cultural cosmos of 'Sanatana Dharma', which (as claimed) is about Indian culture and civilisation as a whole and foundationally different from the academic and textual understandings of Hinduism. In many ways, this is a critical repositioning of the basis of national culture. Indeed, most of the tribal activists in the area and outside have an understanding of Hinduism as a caste-based socio-religious order with 'Brahmanism' as its core ideology.⁷ As such, they differentiate Hinduism from their way of life by pointing out, among other things, that idol worship is alien to their culture. Alternatively, the pro-Hindu tribals, most of them sympathisers and activists of the RSS and its affiliates, are categorical in defending idol worship, maintaining that with advances in human society and a departure from nature, the worship of a representation in the form of an idol becomes even more imperative. These latter activists further justify that their region as part of the Dandakaranya spatial representation is very much part of the epic poems themselves, and that consequently they are no different from those who are identified as Hindus.

Obviously, the RSS and its affiliates in the region (and elsewhere) is trying to entrench a different version of cultural and social history, wherein the caste system and 'Brahmanism' per se are largely rendered as deviations in the history and trajectory of the Sanatana Dharma. Indeed, in their framing of the socio-cultural world of the people and society of the Indian civilisation as a whole, all social groups are treated equally; and, what is more, the deviations entailed by caste and untouchability are seen as

⁷ As is generally recognized, the term 'Brahmanism' is often deployed to refer to a socio-religious order based on the Vedas and where the priestly caste, Brahmins dominate the socio-religious domain.

aberrations in the longer history, all of which have to be strongly discouraged and curtailed. Invoking this civilisational ethos of inclusion, they are trying to incorporate and integrate the tribal sections to the larger society and address their fears and concerns so that they are not alienated. Arguably, the main trigger point for their entry and systematic attention on the Bhadrachalam region started with the Islamic conversion of the tribals in 1976. In the following years, both the RSS eco-system and the religiously assertive Hindus have been opposing the attempts to convert the tribals and the economically disadvantageous Hindus in Bhadrachalam. Satish, a local VHP activist, in his late 20s and running an internet-cum-printing shop in Bhadrachalam town, seemed to bear this out. During one of our conversations on the banks of the Godavari overlooking the ITC factory at Palvantha on the opposite bank, he spoke specifically about the adverse impact of Christianity in the region. According to Satish, alongside conversions, there has also been a symbolic attack on the temple town by the Christian missionaries in the past. He particularly recalled that the first woman bishop of Asia was ordained on the banks of the Godavari in Bhadrachalam.⁸ This, according to him, was done to provoke the Hindus and also to make claims over the sacred river banks as a 'Christian' place.

Furthermore, Satish is clear that this spatial symbolism is a pattern consistent in India, wherein multiple provocations are seen in temple towns like Tirupati, for example. He even vehemently retorted about whether any Hindu priest would get ordained in Mecca or Vatican – while urging more attention on the spatial symbolism of the ordaining ceremony taking place on the river bank at Bhadrachalam. Satish is very clear that the act was meant to demonstrate to the tribals that Christianity is not an alien religion and is part and parcel of the region they inhabit. He also adds that the elevation of a women bishop had to do with the competition among the missionaries in the region for 'soul harvesting' – a Christian metonym for conversions - and to showcase that, like the Koya society, both men and women are equal in the Christian belief system. Indeed, the first female Bishop, A. Katakshamma had belonged to the 'Good Samaritan Evangelical

⁸ See the news item titled, '*First Woman Bishop of Asia Ordained in AP*' by Pushpa Iyengar, dated 30 October 1996, in the *Times of India*. VHP activists in the region carry this news item to buttress the point of how Christians are 'polluting' the holy temple town of Bhadrachalam.

Lutheran Church' (GSELC) and succeeded her husband Paul Raj as the Bishop within this church. In fact, Paul Raj had set up the first church in Bhadrachalam in 1972, and according to a news item in 1996, his congregation had almost 50,000 tribal believers in the region.⁹ The congregation also had set up various primary and residential schools, and a training institute imparting tailoring and embroidery skills for the tribal women.

Singularly, both in 2006 and in 2019, there were tensions in the temple town due to the pasting of wall posters and hanging of banners of the Christian missionaries exhorting the public about the virtues of Jesus and the Gospel.¹⁰ In fact, many long-term residents in the area pointed out that there are certain missionary groups who have been doing conversion in the name of care-giving and developmental activities. It was even alleged that a prominent engineering college in the Bhadrachalam-Dummugudem region has been conducting summer camps as a cover for conversion. As if to buttress this perception, a source in the Union Home Ministry pointed out to this researcher that some of the developmental outfits are under the radar for their conversion activities. The source explicitly indicated that 'The Gospel for Tribal Social Service Society' (GTSSS), a Christian volunteer organization registered under Society Registration Act 1350 (dated December 26, 1994), is in the forefront of such activities in the Bhadrachalam region. This Christian volunteer organization was founded by one Jacob Marineni in 1994, and is supposedly undertaking its activities with support from 'AGAPE India Association' and 'Finnish Christian Association'. Avowedly, the main activities of the organization are setting up churches, establishment of schools, orphanages and bore wells in the remote areas. It has also established a couple of day-care hostels and some churches in the Cherla-Venkatapuram region, and is expanding further.

Indeed, as one traverses the region, almost every village and hamlet of considerable population is dotted with churches. The ITDA ground in Bhadrachalam town even frequently hosts programs of various pastors round the year. The usual refrain of the Christian missionaries belonging to various denominations are that they are trying to

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See the *Eenadu* report, dated 24 May 2006. *Eenadu* is the most widely circulated Telugu newspaper in undivided Andhra Pradesh. As for the 2019 tensions, the allusion came from activists in the area.

work for the upliftment of people who are caught in a world of superstitions and backwardness. As they aver, the goal largely is to work for the spiritual, physical, mental and social well-being of all. Ostensibly, they want to build churches for spiritual awakening, schools for education, day care centres to eliminate child labour and provide child education, and health camps to provide modern medicines and improve life expectancy among a backward people.

Interestingly, Rognes (2007) in his study of the Christian Koyas of Chintur documents the difficulties faced by the new converts from the elders of the church. As this work documents, the first church in Chintur was established in 1974 and was able to attract the Koyas due to the health and healing solutions provided. Indeed, as the Church narrative unfurled, the understanding largely was that once the Koyas grasped the 'healing power of the church' they would convert to the new faith. However, Rognes states that, even after conversion, many of the newly converted refused to participate in the community rituals. The Christian Koya elders would often admonish and even threaten to excommunicate from the church such new converts. Not surprisingly, as Rognes's account recalls, many of the practicing Christian Koya elders were convinced that until and unless the converts participate in the community rituals and come to Church regularly, they cannot be considered as followers of Christ. Some of the congregations in the region even boosted their numbers of the converted so as to raise more funds for Church operations. But, of course, according to a priest operating in the area, a true believer has to come to Church regularly, without which they cease to be Christian.

All in all, the missionary space in the Bhadrachalam region is no different from other tribal regions in the country, albeit with a distinctness which has to do with the fact that the Hindu missionary organizations in the form of VKA and the RSS do not have a strong presence in the area. Unlike the normal RSS operations, the pracharak, the full-time volunteer, is quite often absent; and, even if present, is unable to cover the entire region due to the vastness and difficulty of the geography. Moreover, there are no influential patrons in the region who can provide logistical and monetary support for the local operations. Undoubtedly, the sheer multiplicity of players and the narrower range of operations are helping the diverse set of Christian missionaries to work more efficiently

in the region. Consequently, the Koyas are caught between the two worldviews offered by the Hindu and Christian missionaries. The Christian missionaries, unlike the Hindu missionaries of VKA, for instance, largely coax the tribals to leave their way of life and embrace Christianity so as to improve their life chances. The Christian missionaries constantly remind them that the faith system and socio-cultural practices followed are different from that of the caste Hindus. The Hindu missionaries, on the other hand, try to protect their way of life and highlight the commonalities in terms of socio-cultural practices with other social groups so as to integrate them into the larger society of Hindus.

In this social and cultural milieu, it is not uncommon to find members of the same family pursuing different religions in the Bhadrachalam region. In V R Puram mandal, for instance, it was observed that the younger members of the family have converted to Christianity, whereas the elders are either following the Koya system of belief and worship or that of the mainstream Hindu religious system. Most of the younger members are exposed to Christianity during their hostel stay in pursuit of education outside the agency area. The prevalent alcoholism among the elder generation and the specific lack of effective health treatment in the traditional system of healing and care giving are often used as the point of entry by the missionaries so as to estrange the young impressionable minds from their traditional moorings. One of our field informants, a student preparing for the public service examinations, shared his experience with the missionary undertaking. As he recalled, during his hostel stay in a school run by the missionaries in the northern side of the region, a priest who was also the manager of the hostel probed him during a casual chat on the side-lines of a volleyball game about the traditional system of living. The priest had, ostensibly, asked our informant about whether the Koya way of living and the multiplicity of forms of worship contributed to ameliorating their problems, implying thereby that the Koya gods have not stopped their people from alcoholism and unproductive forms of activity. Such a line of thinking, our young informant felt, was surely an attempt to lure him into a questioning of his own moorings and possibly take to the Christian faith. Indeed, the student informant even wondered whether there was any sanction for alcoholism within the Koya system of belief and worship.

The missionary encounter: enlarging the space of understanding

To be sure, the contestation between the different missionaries and the rival claims to faith have made the tribal landscape fraught with emotions and tensions. We had also in an earlier chapter - Ch.5 encountering facets of a 'developmental history' – alluded briefly to the role of Christian missionaries in the tribal areas. Accordingly, in this charged context, it will be instructive to look at what an Oxford educated missionary – a celebrated one at that - had said and attempted to embody as a matter of policy in the context of late colonial and early independent India, so as to formulate an overall perspective on the vortex of contentions as being set up by our enunciations from the field. We are referring here principally to Verrier Elwin, who was the Deputy Director of the Anthropological Survey of India, Secretary of the Scheduled Tribes Commission of the Government of India, and Adviser for Tribal Affairs of the North East Frontier Agency. Elwin was undoubtedly a very notable scholar and functionary who influenced the lives of millions of tribal people and was also an important contributor to the anthropological scholarship on tribals in India (see Furer-Haimendorf 1985).

Interestingly, Elwin had advocated for Hindu missions in the tribal areas and even lobbied with the colonial government for permission to undertake such endeavours; he had even urged the Hindus to have a central organisation so as to sensitise every one of the missionary schools and oppose the Christian missions. Elwin, through his organisation 'Bhumijan Seva Mandal' had collected signatures from about 200 tribal communities to assert that they belong to Hindu religion; many Christian schools, besides, were closed down due to his efforts.¹¹ After independence, particularly alarmed by the conversions in the tribal areas, the RSS worker and freedom fighter Ramakant Keshav Deshpande (inspired by the Gandhian Thakkar Bapa) initiated work with reference to the tribals. This led to the formation of Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) late in December 1952 at Jashpur in the then Madhya Pradesh (presently in Chhattisgarh). Nevertheless, it will also be pertinent here to recall the manuscript of Verrier Elwin that we have just mentioned so as to understand the situation of missionaries and tribals in a

¹¹ See his 'Missionaries and Aborigines', undated manuscript of Verrier Elwin, Bhulabhai Desai Paper, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi. According to Ramachandra Guha (1996), the manuscript is most probably published in 1944.

historical perspective. Elwin makes the following pointed and even somewhat disturbing observation:

At the present rate of progress within a few years the entire aboriginal population will be converted; it will be turned into a querulous, anti-national, aggressive minority community, with none of the old virtues and few of the now, which will be a thorn in the side of the future Governments of India.¹²

Indeed, in making his case against the Christian missionaries as a whole, Elwin seeks to locate the missionary zeal squarely in the European historical experience of the Holy wars of religion and the excesses of the Inquisition (including largely the antidemocratic nature of the Vatican) and strongly maintains that no free country can allow for the proselytization of its population. Elwin is also convinced that the religious traditions in India are much older than that of Catholic Europe, and repeatedly underlines the superior spiritual component of Indian society and civilization. He underscores the fact that the condition of the Indian peasant in the backward areas are no different from that of Italian and Spanish Catholic peasant; while going on to maintain that the problems of the Indian peasants will be solved only by their own government and not by the Christian missionaries who may better try to solve the problems of their own peasants in European locales. Undoubtedly, Elwin is not denying the practice of the Catholic religion in India; rather, he is against its interference in other orders of faith through a better trained and wealthy propaganda network. Strictly, he is against the trickery, bribery and pressurizing tactics of the Christian missionaries, which is largely seen to be denying the space of religious freedom in India. In a relatively unequivocal manner, Elwin is saying that “the people of this great and religious nation, then, have a right to follow their own religion and to practice it in peace and freedom without interference from outside”.¹³

Elwin was also clear that the conversion of the tribals to Christianity would destroy tribal unity – a line of argument which he held was backed by the scholarship from other parts of the world and endorsed by colonial officials like J. H. Hutton, J. P. Mills and N. E.

¹² Page 1 of ‘Missionaries and Aborigines’, undated manuscript of Verrier Elwin, Bhulabhai Desai Paper, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi.

¹³ Ibid., p.10. But, of course, as things evolved - and, particularly, so far as the integration-isolation debate between Elwin and Ghurye is concerned – the former (Elwin) would go on to revise his position and become reconciled to the State’s integration strategies, even wanting the tribals to enjoy the same choices as other citizens (see Elwin 1960; as also Guha 1996).

Parry. In this context, he specifically recalls the observation made by J. P. Mills in Census reports about how Christian Nagas refuse to obey the village chiefs and local government on the ground that the age-old customs of their tribe are evil and that thereby the tribesmen often come to despise their own race. Elwin also calls attention to the work of the British anthropologist Malinowski, who supposedly had maintained that the structure of missionary activities had led the tribals into a state of confusion and that it hardly led to the enhancing of their true morality.¹⁴ Elwin goes on to comment critically on the specific modes in which the tribals are often brought into the folds of the Church. He principally calls attention to the economic exploitation of the tribals, wherein the priests acting as money lenders serve to reduce the interest burden for those who attend the church services. Elwin is clear that psychological modes of inducement and social exploitation with the support of the imperial power through grants and official recognition of Christian missionary schools had provided an impetus to the missionary enterprise in India.¹⁵

To be sure, Elwin is here basically making an appeal to the Hindu community to realise its duty towards its fellow countrymen and the diverse population at large. He even ventures to suggest that the caste Hindus must consider tribals as Kshatriyas, and put an end to all speculations about the tribals as backward and depressed; in fact, he wants a change in the mindset, and not to blandly talk about 'uplift'. He clearly wanted the missionaries to be withdrawn from the Partially Excluded Areas and the government to step in more forthrightly. Indeed, for Elwin, the Church represents the substitution of one set of superstitions for another, and as such negates the very possibility of freedom and happiness for the human spirit. He goes on to reiterate that, after years of research and observation, he can conclude firmly that the aboriginals of the peninsular India belong to the Hindu family and should be classified as Hindus, while going on to cite W. V. Grigson's *The Aboriginal Problem in the C. P. and Berar* to further his point. Grigson (1896) had dynamically contended that it is meaningless to separate tribal and Hindu religions, since it was impossible to say when it ceases to be tribal and begins to be Hindu.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Of course, this line of argument by Elwin and his mentor Grigson, as suggested by the undated Elwin manuscript, that the ‘aboriginals’ are largely Hindus ran contrary to the prevalent opinion and assertion of the colonial administrators and missionaries. In the context of Gondwana, Chakrabarti (2019) illustrates how the theory of aboriginality was developed and used by the colonial administrators and missionaries to differentiate the aboriginals or the tribals from the Hindus or mainstream society. Chakrabarti argues that the missionaries reinforced the non-Sanskrit roots of the aboriginals and stressed on their socio-religious differences with the Brahmanical texts. It was widely believed that, since the missionary activities were successful in Africa, America and Pacific Islands, it will also be fruitful and required in the Indian context. As such, there was invariably a search to look beyond Hinduism and trace for antiquity that rejected Puranic and Hindu traditions. The discovery of ancient burial grounds in central India in 1820s had added more impetus to this quest, on the ground that these burial grounds were at odds with the mainstream Hindu religion.

At any rate, we must concede that multiple histories and events are participating in the tribal world (including that of the Koyas) and these are important in the boundary formations obtaining both within the Koya world and in other tribal worlds. This also foregrounds the idea that there is no singular form of Koya (or tribal identity) that can resonate in our contemporary times. All the same, can we see Madivi Naresh’s attempt to consolidate and preserve the ‘indigenous’ traditions of the Koyas - or even Sonde Ramesh’s effort to forge a different pathway in the form of Islamic Koyas (or ‘Burkha Adivasis’, as his critics’ label them) - as processes that will revamp the nature of the Koya world?

6.3 Towards an Overview of the Fractured Koya Assertions

The voice of the Koyas is not only mediated and amplified through the various concerns and ideologies governing the missionary undertakings, but also by socio-political modes of assertion. Indeed, in our next chapter, we shall traverse the impact of the left revolutionary politics in the region and engage with how the modality of this politics has affected the everyday life of the people across social divides. In what remains of this

present chapter, however, we will quickly address some key aspects of how the people are trying to voice themselves beyond the revolutionary and mainstream politics of the region. Particularly, we will try to capture their modes of articulation across such strident labels as ‘Hindu’ Koya, ‘indigenous’ Koya, ‘Christian Koya’, ‘Burkha’ Koya, or even ‘Maoist’ Koya and ‘leftist’ Koya.

Sunnam Ramana, a middle-aged Koya tribesman, was the state General Secretary of Adivasi Samkshema Parishad (ASP) in 2012-2014. He is a resident of Pandurangapuram village in the Bhadrachalam mandal. He and his organisation are working for the upliftment of the tribals, especially the Koyas of the region. Our interaction with him took place at Chatti in Chintur. A sharp man with a good grip over the politics of the region, Ramana was focused on conveying his control over his mobilizational efforts especially among his fellowmen. Simultaneously, he was intent on communicating his resentment of his people who had converted to Islam and Christianity. At the very outset, Ramana asserts that the tribals of the region are disillusioned with the mainstream political parties and also that the Maoists in the region are not interested in the development of the tribals. Pertinently, he notes that in the Legislative Assembly (of the undivided Andhra Pradesh), where there are about 18 Scheduled Tribe MLAs, the latter have hardly spoken for the tribals at large, being often subservient to the objectives and manoeuvrings of their respective political parties. Likewise, while conceding that the region has been under the influence of the Maoists, he questions whether this has changed the ownership patterns and land use management. For Ramana, clearly, such a state of affairs only enhances the stakes of an organisation like the ASP. According to him, his organisation has always striven to improve the livelihood chances of the tribals through a strict implementation of laws and policies. Indeed, for him, it is the non-implementation of various laws and policies meant for the tribals in the agency area that has been the main source of deprivation in the region.

Ramana is convinced that the rituals and customs of the tribals should be protected and practiced; but simultaneously, as he holds, there is a need for healthcare, education and jobs to be made available for improving the living conditions of the people. He concedes that, for the specific purpose of practicing rituals and customs, land is an important factor,

with the trees, rocks, rivers and streams that occupy its surface forming a key aspect of the universe of worship and belief among the Koyas specifically. Ramana constantly alludes to the land grabbing by the government and its officials, as indeed by non-tribals and the affluent Lambada community, which are threatening the socio-cultural space of the Koyas in the region. He discerns that the Koyas of Bhadrachalam region are fighting on multiple fronts and maintains that this fight for survival and assertion of their identity is complicated by the displacement induced by the Polavaram Project.

As one traverses the landscape – and this is borne out by Ramana, as well – there are three specific developments that have come to affect the Koya world in the last one decade or so. Firstly, there is the springing forth of *tandas* or Lambada settlements in particular. Broadly, the Lambada community is classified as ST in the undivided Andhra Pradesh, whereas in the neighbouring Karnataka and Maharashtra they are classified as SC and OBC respectively. Indeed, it has been noted that in order to get better reservation benefits, they have been moving into the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. This, inevitably, has been a bone of contention between the local tribals and the Lambadas. In fact, many activists point out that the Lambada community has cornered more than 90% of the reservation benefits in the state. Interestingly the Telangana state tribal minister is also from the Lambada community. This feeling of usurping of the tribal community by the outsider social group is a major grievance and is used to mobilize and consolidate tribal organizations in the region.

So also, the Christian and Islamic conversions are the other two developments seen to be affecting the modalities of tribal articulation across the region. Indeed, as is widely perceived, primarily due to the funding from external sources, vulnerable tribals are being lured by the missionaries. Ramana is particularly critical of the Islamic conversion, however. He and others in the ASP call them snidely as ‘Burkha’ Adivasis. It is held that, unlike the Christian tribals who do mix the traditional practices with the Christian orders of belief, the ‘Islamic’ tribals do not follow any rituals and customs of the Koya society. Ramana and his associates are particularly alarmed by the complete loss of identity among the Islamic converts. Interestingly, Ramana does not have any issues with the activities of the Hindu missionaries in the region. He points out that a sub-group

within the Koyas, the Linga Koyas, are Shaivites and they are the only ones who support the activities of Hindu outfits like the VKA and RSS. Undeniably, after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and the election of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India, there did emerge a concern about the Hinduisation of Koyas. Madivi Naresh and the group within ASP articulate this worry and fear. RSS activists, on the other hand, are encouraging the tribals to donate land to build temples in the region, especially in Dummugudem and Cherla. Not surprisingly, most of the tribals who are approached for the purpose have been the beneficiaries of various welfare activities of the RSS. Madivi Naresh and others, of course, are concerned about these developments, which for them are eroding the terms of the Koya identity. In this context, one of our younger interlocutors in the field, a college student and resident of a social welfare department hostel, mentions these activities in a rather sarcastic tone, asking pointedly: “The RSS complains that Christians are rice-bag converts, but how different are their activities in these tribal areas?”

It is important to note that the implementation of the Land Transfer Regulation Act of 1970 is the prime objective of ASP. In estimates projected by the organisation, it is conclusively held that almost 60% of the tribal land is with the non-tribals; and, what is more, that a strong lobby of advocates and revenue officials are subverting all the attempts to restore the land to the tribals. Not surprisingly, it was constantly pointed out by the tribal activists of the region that, back in 2007, the government had to issue a circular to the police department not to interfere on behalf of non-tribals in the tribal-non tribal conflictual situations.¹⁶ Indeed, it is against this background that the tribal organizations largely oppose the notification of Bhadrachalam as a temple town, since they fear that once it is so notified, there will be a relaxation of Land Transfer Regulations both in the town and in a radius of 5-8 kilometres.

Returning to the question of ‘tribal religion’ and indigeneity

To be sure, the tribals in India are on the fringes of both the government and the peoples’ imaginations. However, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic particularly, two key

¹⁶ R. O. no 695/L&O-1/07 dated 6.11.2017. Circular issued by Director General of Police, Andhra Pradesh to Chief Commissioner of Land Administration & Special Chief Secretary.

developments have unfolded in the back-end of 2020. The state of Andhra Pradesh has explicitly included ‘tribal religion’ as an option for the respondents in a household survey conducted by the government. Likewise, the east-central state of Jharkhand has passed a resolution to include ‘Sarna’ as a category for the 2021 population census operations. As the native term discloses, ‘Sarna’ refers to the nature worshippers in the Adivasi-dominated state of Jharkhand. Of course, as we had noted earlier, the Census operations had a column for ‘Sarna’ until 1951, although since then the ‘Scheduled Tribe’ category under the rubric of Hindu religion has captured all the religious practices of the tribals, including Sarna.¹⁷ Indeed, these two broad moments – prior to 1951 and post-1951 – can be used to probe further into the contemporary quest of tribals wanting to leave (or supplant) the rubric of Hindu religion. Needless to say, the larger history and politics of religious conversion and the assertion of tribal communities in contemporary India must frame the terms of this engagement. As of the present, yet, the assertive tribals want to be declassified from the official register as Hindus and re-inserted under the category of ‘Tribal religion’ as a whole. Without, doubt, this orientation of ‘leaving Hinduism’ generates another parallel question – about whether the tribal converts to Christianity and Islam will also prefer to leave these orders of faith so as to be identified within an ‘indigenous’ category of ‘tribal religion’? But, of course, as we have been emphasizing from within the space of tribal activists and their supporters in the Bhadrachalam region, there is no predominant tendency among the tribals to cast aside their present orders of faith and revert totally to an indigenous form of religiosity.

All the same, an interesting historical twist in the overall fate of the tribals is also unfolding through these rather mixed modalities of assertion. Even as the overall assertion of the tribals as ‘Adivasis’ emerged in Jharkhand (formerly the Chhotanagpur region) in the 1930s, the same region is now spearheading another mode of articulating the tribal identity as a whole. In other words: where in the 1930s, the assertion of the tribal groups as Adivasis was to differentiate themselves from the non-tribal encroachers of their land, the affirmation today seems to be to defend, retain, and reproduce their

¹⁷ Broadly, the Census operations of 1871, 1881, and 1891 represented the tribals as ‘Aboriginals’; 1901, 1911, and 1921 used the term ‘Animists’; 1931 adopted the category ‘Tribal religion’; 1941 had used the generic ‘Tribes’; and from 1951, it is ‘Scheduled Tribes’ under the rubric of Hindu religion.

distinct socio-cultural practices and ‘indigenous’ identity. Indeed, this is what underwrites the words of the NAIRCC coordinator of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and the prominent Adivasi leader, Madivi Naresh, whom we cited at the very beginning of the chapter – namely, “Without knowledge we became Hindus, and with knowledge we became Christians and Muslims” – in the process striving to account for an indigenous religious identity separate from the claims of all missionaries (whether Hindu, Christian or Muslim).

The mixed and unfolding contours of this self-assertion notwithstanding, it may be worthwhile yet to attempt an overall assessment of this mode of ‘indigenous’ articulation. Undoubtedly, the loss of cultural identity due to religious conversions and developmentalism are at the heart of Naresh’s lament. The parameters of Christian conversion had started with colonialism; and, broadly, we can say that Hinduisation was a response to the Christian evangelical activities in the late colonial period, even as Islamic conversion seems to be a post-independence matter of concern. Where ‘developmentalism’ as triggered by the entry of capitalism in the colonial period had made the tribal land a resource for agriculture and raw materials, the subsequent patterns of change meant deep-seated transformations in the modes of living and organisation of tribal societies. Indeed, a multiplicity of factors had come to strain and effect the Adivasi relationship with land. Even as both agriculturalists and moneylenders in the colonial context had appropriated the tribal land, the concomitant state apparatus often coerced tribals to do settled cultivation (even as, subsequently, the post-independent state took away land for various developmental projects). In this rather mixed setting, the flashes of ‘modern’ education, science and medicine, and cultural practices came to permeate the tribal life-world through both state and non-state actors.¹⁸ Sooner or later, there was bound to be more rooted forms of articulation about the parameters of the tribal identity across the nation.

¹⁸ We cannot also forget the Maoist insurgency in tribal zones principally, which are also imposing a way of life in the so-called ‘liberated zones’ right in the middle of the tribal-dominated regions. We cover aspects of this ground, both in the context of the Bhadrachalam region and beyond, in our next chapter.

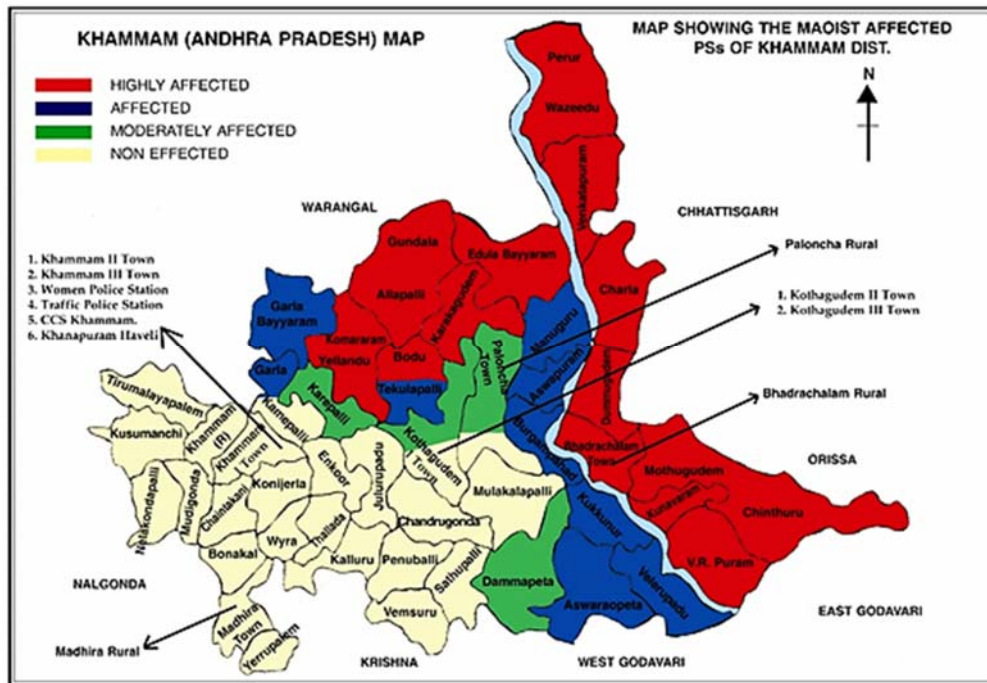
Indeed, against this larger backdrop of mutations and transformations within the tribal world – including that of our region, as recorded in the sequence of our chapters – we need to reflect overall on how the demands and aspiration for an indigenous tribal religion will affect the terms of community self-identification. Obviously, as a political modality of action, it will help them to differentiate from the other social groups clamouring for public attention and even governmental action. And yet, it may be worthwhile to ask about what really happens to those who ‘convert’ into supposedly new forms of worship and modes of living? One distinct possibility is that hereafter they will have to live under the thrall of hyphenated categories, such as ‘indigenous-Koyas’, ‘Christian-Koyas’, ‘Hindu-Koyas’, and ‘Islamic-Koyas’. It is, in fact, very doubtful whether such a possibility will help the Adivasi communities in confronting the challenges of everyday lives and the reproduction of their socio-cultural practices. Will this sharpened vortex of identities and categorisations stop the encroachment of land and nature for serving the ends of ‘developmentalism’? How will it curtail the missionaries of various hues from chipping away the followers of an indigenous scheme of identity? One reckons that there can be no clear and determinate answers to these and such other questions. The mixed ground of articulation that is our Bhadrachalam region reinforces this more contingent and uncertain order of appraisal. We move on now to mapping the contours of Maoist insurgency both in the context of Bhadrachalam region and the wider and the more perennial frontier that it represents for our imaginations of state, development and people on a historical sociological register.

Chapter 7

In the Name of People: Re-engaging Maoism, ‘Development’ and Tribals in the Bhadrachalam Region and Beyond

I will not stop cutting down trees
Though there's life in them.
I will not stop plucking out leaves,
Though they make nature beautiful.
I will not stop hacking off branches
Though they are hands of a tree.
Because –
I need a hut.

- Cherabandaraju¹



According to the Government of India, the study area is part of a ‘Left-Wing Extremism’ affected region – subsuming also Khammam, a highly affected district. As is generally known, the Government of India identifies ‘Left-Wing Extremism’ with the Naxal insurgents or Maoists or Communist rebels following the path of a radical revolutionary left politics. The latter are also labelled as revolutionaries, or Naxalites,² and Maoists by the academia and sympathisers alike. In context of our narration, these terms are used interchangeably. Indeed, the presence of the Maoists in the Bhadrachalam region provides an interesting source of history and information; it is also the focal point of an alternate axis of narration, one that is largely absent in the official records and narratives about the region. Along this latter course, we will seek to examine the question whether socioeconomic deprivations and grievances can trigger an insurgent politics like Maoism. By way of contextualization, our chapter will begin by examining the very meaning and history of Maoism in India, in the process hopefully enabling a critical lens to look at the operations of the ‘left-wing extremists’ in the Bhadrachalam region. The more significant theoretical questions about the need and trajectory of the ‘Indian Revolution’ - as a mode of self-description of the armed revolution waged by the Marxist-Leninist groups³ - will also be broached as a way of further contextualizing the developments in the Bhadrachalam region. Indeed, as a means of reinforcing our ‘perennial frontier’ construction, it is also hoped that the contours of our analysis of Maoism in a tribal region like Bhadrachalam will enable us to draw some further inferences about insurgent politics that go beyond the strict confines of our study.

The intent behind this chapter is also to give more context and depth to the mandate underlying the third part of our thesis – namely, the lineaments of a people’s history of the region. As such, we will be exploring how the very presence of insurgents (or

² According to an earlier chronicler of the Maoist movement in India - Mohanty (1971: 173) – the actual revolutionaries did not self-label themselves as Naxalites; and, besides, the opponents of the Communist armed struggle used it as a derogatory term.

³ The ‘Marxist-Leninist’ (ML) appellation, broadly, comprises Communists who had split from the Communist Party of India regarding the mode of strategy for a social revolution. The ML groups are convinced about the need for an armed struggle to serve the ends of social revolution in India, a conviction that set them apart from the more mainstream Communist parties of India. Of course, the various ML groups differ largely on the conceptualization and modalities regarding the principles and strategies of the armed struggle that they consider imperative for a social revolution.

revolutionaries) impacts the developmental trajectory of a tribal region. Contextually, our discussion will mainly focus on the activities of the ‘Marxist-Leninist’ or ML group, which is called the ‘People’s War’ (PW) since it remains the most active revolutionary group in the area. Incidentally, the PW was the most influential ML group in undivided Andhra Pradesh, although presently it is more widely known as the Communist Party of India - Maoist. The PW and its current manifestation as CPI-Maoist party follow the philosophy of ‘Marxism-Leninism-Maoism’ (MLM). Accordingly, it would also be pertinent to examine MLM as a theory and philosophy of social change and to understand its bearing on the very idea of development.

7.1 Maoism - and Maoists - in the Bhadrachalam Region

Kondapalli Seetharamaiah (KS) formed the Communist Party of India - Marxist-Leninist (People’s War) - popularly called as ‘People’s War Group’ (PW or PWG) - on 22 April 1980 in the background of a stormy involvement with the Communist Party of India and revolutionary politics as a whole. Sinha (1989) reports that, unlike other ML groups of the time, both KS and the PW asserted that social and economic conditions were favourable for a countrywide revolution; and that, hence, the people needed to be prepared for the armed struggle. Indeed, unlike other dominant Communist formations in Andhra Pradesh, the PW believed in annihilating class enemies as a viable and imperative strategy. Sinha further reports that the group decided to follow the mass line and squad action as the method of the struggle (or revolution) as a means of rectifying the mistakes made by the Naxal movement guided by the Charu Mazumdar led CPI-ML. In the 1974 Self-Critical Review, approved in 1977, the Andhra Pradesh ML groups had discarded the emphasis on the annihilation line (see Spacek 2017: 76-77).

It is pertinent to look at the background of the formation of CPI-ML (PW) – indeed, the favourable conditions that had helped its formation. According to a PW document, entitled ‘30 Years of Naxalbari’ (n.d.), the state repression following the Srikakulam movement had left only one leader to anchor the ML activists - Kondapalli

Seetharamaiah (KS).⁴ The latter coordinated with other like-minded individuals to revive ML activities in the Telangana region. The PW document even reveals that the following events helped in creating a favourable ground for triggering a revolution in Andhra Pradesh: (i) the formation of the Viplava Rachayithala Sangam (VIRASAM) or the Revolutionary Writers Association (RWA) in 1970, a result of the post-Naxalbari shift among the poets and others in the literary world oriented to facilitating a cultural resurgence favouring a peasant revolution; (ii) the formation of the Radical Students Union (RSU) on 12 October 1974 as a result of the split from the C. P. Reddy led Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU) which asserted that the students' movements should focus only on student issues; (iii) the 'Go to Village' campaign by ML groups starting from 1978, which strengthened a support base among students and youth and helping to "trigger off the historic peasant struggles of Karimnagar and Adilabad"; and (iv) the formation of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) with the poet Sri Sri as its president in March 1974, which helped in constituting fact-finding committees to aid fighting legal cases against the revolutionaries and their supporters.

The heavy repression in Karimnagar and Adilabad had made KS think about creating a guerilla zone beyond the general area of operations by making inroads into Dandakaranya (which was largely a forest region of Central India encompassing parts of present-day Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh).⁵ Explicitly, two purposes served the penetration into the forest regions: one, a kind of protection for squads that were temporarily withdrawing from state actions, and, two, the organization of the tribals, thereby extending the struggle and building the party and the revolutionary army with their help. Hence, KS decided to send squads or *dalams* to the forest regions to prepare the vanguard of the revolution. As such, seven *dalams* were formed and sent to Adilabad, Sironcha (part of Gadchiroli tahsil in Maharashtra),

⁴ The document is available at <<http://www.bannedthought.net>>. The site also contains many of the founding documents of the Maoists in India. Last accessed on 18 April 2017. The authenticity of the documents obtaining on the website is vouched for by reliable sources.

⁵ According to the Maoist party Central Committee publication *People's War* (2014: 94), Adilabad, Gadchiroli, Bastar, Koraput, Malkangiri, East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, and parts of Khammam districts comprise the Dandakaranya zone.

Eturnagaram (Warangal), Venkatapuram, Bhadrachalam, and East Godavari. Indeed, not long ago, during the Telangana Armed Struggle (1946-1951) in particular, which is often seen as the first-wave of Maoism in India (see Kennedy 2013), following setbacks, the Communist insurgents had already fled to the northern Telangana region.

We will restrict our narration to two squads that operated in our area of study, namely, the Bhadrachalam region. The two squads in the region, Venkatapuram (covering Wazeedu and Venkatapuram mandals) and Bhadrachalam (the operating area was from Cherla to Kunnavaram), started functioning from the 1980s under the leadership of Satyanarayana Reddy and N. C. Shivaji respectively. However, the PW faced a ‘political setback’ (the term used by the revolutionaries to describe failures) in Venkatapuram when Reddy left the movement due to operational difficulties. Another functionary, Chandranna (who had faced obstacles in the nearby location of Burgumpadu before shifting to Venkatapuram) replaced him. In 1983, besides, due to dissatisfaction with the party, Shivaji, a former student of the Regional Engineering College, Warangal, and the state committee member of the PW left the organization. Then, Venkateswara Rao (alias Chandranna) was made the overall commander of the area. Soon, thereafter, on 28 March 1985, the police killed him in an encounter at Veerabhadrapuram village near the Andhra Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh border.⁶

At that time, the most significant activities of the Maoists centred around fighting the exploitation of the tribals by the Forest, Revenue, and Police departments of the state. One of their major achievements was in getting the price of tendu leaves increased. Thus, according to a former secretary of the Dandakaranya Special Zone Committee (DKSZC), who became one of our field informants, the PW could raise it from 3 paise to 12 paise per bundle. This supposedly helped the PW earn goodwill among the tribals, who also started confronting the forest department and the timber contractors operating in the region. The tribals, as claimed, even succeeded in making their goats graze in the reserved forest areas. However, the intervention did not translate into active recruitments of local Koya tribals into the revolutionary cause. In fact, as disclosed by our field

⁶ These details are gathered from *Vanguard*, a publication of Central Committee of CPI (ML)-PW, April-May Issue of 1985.

informant, they largely found the ‘Bastar Koyas’ to be “more revolutionary compared to the Dorla Koyas” (the latter is a reference to the Koyas found in the Bhadrachalam region). As he affirmed, in the assessment by the PW, the Dorla or Bhadrachalam Koyas were seen to be more “civilised and settled, whereas the Bastar Koyas are more wild in nature and do collective hunting and famine raids”. All the same, as the former secretary pointedly claimed, the PW had great sympathy for the local tribals at large.

In Wazeedu, particularly, the presence of the PW helped in the mobilisation of the tribals to fight against the non-tribal ‘king’ (the appellation here stands for the local landlord). The latter had taken over the tribal land owing primarily to loan defaults, and this had made the tribal farmers become landless farm labourers. The PW took up the issue of increasing the wages in Wazeedu. The result of their intervention is unknown, but the PW was able to recruit a fiery tribal woman – Chinnakka (who was also known as Rajakka), a sniper by training. Ostensibly, she is the first tribal woman from the Dorla Koya community to join the party.⁷ Chinnakka had mobilised women against moneylenders and the forest department, but she was killed on 4 March 1989 while part of the National Park squad. It is important to note here that there is a substantial presence of women among the revolutionary cadres of the PW. According to an informant (who did not want to be identified), this is largely because tribal families prefer to send females instead of male family members during ‘forceful recruitment drives’ to ensure more male hands for livelihood activities. The Maoists, largely, are agreeable to this situation due to the ‘soft skills’ supposedly provided by the female cadre in terms of cooking and caring for the wounded or the ill. Indeed, it is estimated that nearly 25% of the revolutionary cadres constituted around 2000 comprised women fighters; and an unintended consequence of this is the high mortality among the female combatants.⁸

It must be mentioned that the PW was not the only left revolutionary group present in the area. The Chandra Pulla Reddy (CP) and T. Nagi Reddy factions of the CPI (ML)

⁷ This information is gleaned from the undated Maoist document titled *Women Martyrs of the Indian Revolution: Naxalbari to 2010*, which this researcher had got access from an undisclosed source.

⁸ Our source of information here is the documentary titled *‘Blazing Trail: A Journey of the Indian Revolution’* produced by the CPI-ML (PW), and publicly made available in 2005. The documentary is accessible at <https://archive.org/details/Blazing_Trail>.

also operated in the Bhadrachalam region. This presence of multiple revolutionary groups led to bloody turf battles among them, along with the various state agencies and the more mainstream CPI (M) party cadres for the control of the area. At any rate, the geographical specificity of the region, with narrow strips of the plain area combining with the rugged hilly terrain, also made it difficult for the PW to effectively control the area and intervene in the matters of the region. The Bhadrachalam region, besides, was envisaged as the backend of the revolution and an entry point into Bastar, largely the Dandakaranya zone of the PW and later CPI (Maoist) party. In fact, according to a former Central Committee member of the PW, following the Andhra Pradesh State Committee Resolution of 1985, squads were being withdrawn from the supposedly weaker areas, with the Bhadrachalam squad being withdrawn in 1985 and the one in Cherla around 1987.⁹ Indeed, this source also identified increased confrontations with other ML groups and the wider state repression under the N. T. Rama Rao regime as further reasons for the withdrawal of the squads from the Bhadrachalam area.

Understandably, from the late 1980s onwards, other ML groups, and especially the Janashakti faction, tried to work in the vacuum created by the PW in the area. All the same, as a former member of the PW who had worked in the Bhadrachalam area opined, the formation had largely failed to address the land issues in the region since the squads were caught in holding operations owing to the geographical complexity of the surroundings.¹⁰ However, as this latter source also disclosed, the drinking habits of the tribals were largely curbed by the PW cadres. It was conceded, nevertheless, that the CPI (M) and other competing ML groups, along with the state machinery, succeeded in creating a sense of fear among the tribals about the PW, thereby checkmating its activities in the tribal zone. Importantly, however, even though the squads were withdrawn, the PW maintained a presence in the area through squads stationed at the Andhra Pradesh - Madhya Pradesh (now Chattisgarh) border. Indeed, it is now largely taken for granted that the squads making their presence in the Bhadrachalam region have been operating out of the Bastar region, where they are deeply entrenched. In fact, in the undivided

⁹ Based on a personal interview with the confidential source, conducted on 12 June 2014 in Hyderabad.

¹⁰ Based on a personal interview with the confidential source, conducted on 16 June 2014 in Warangal.

Madhya Pradesh, a single administrative district had covered Bastar, which had also facilitated the Maoist consolidation.

As we mentioned in passing, the Janashakti group (formed out of the CP group and other factions) had a presence in the area, but focussed more on the southern side of Bhadrachalam, especially the V R Puram mandal of Khammam district and the Polavaram mandal of the East Godavari district. Alongside, the New Democracy group, which was also active in the Bhadrachalam area, believed that the non-tribals should be restricted to only 5 acres, with the rest of the land being redistributed among the tribals. By and large, though, these different ML factions believe that “feudalism exists as caste in India, and the revenue system of Britishers encouraged caste groups in the society”.¹¹ This formulation is important since some ML groups have taken up caste issues frontally and incorporated them as part of the agenda of social revolution. In fact, caste annihilation, women’s equality, and tribal rights are presently part of the revolutionary left discourse.

Even though the squads were largely withdrawn from the region, we do come to see stirrings of Maoist activities in due course (although precisely dating this occurrence seems difficult). At any rate, it can be surmised that the activities might have picked up with the increased tumult in revolutionary circles across the Telangana region. This followed the expulsion of KS in 1991, and the taking over of the PW by Ganapathy, who was the General-Secretary of CPI Maoist party till November 2018. Indeed, as our sources recall, in the 1990s specifically there was an instance of the forced eviction of Raju landowners from Satyanarayanpuram village in the Charla mandal by the PW cadres. The landowners in the Bhadrachalam region were often issued warnings if they were found to be ‘exploitative’. Thus, a non-tribal farmer from Venkatapuram mandal

¹¹ This was stated as such by a leader of the Janashakti group during a personal interview with the researcher in a confidential location. In fact, the caste question remains a bone of contention in the revolutionary literature, although increasingly in recent times there has been a sharper articulation of the question among Maoist circles. See, for instance, the revised edition of the 2017 Central Committee document of the CPI-Maoist released in January 2021, which strives to combine class struggle with social and cultural struggles against caste. It is explicitly acknowledged here that “only by making the struggle for annihilation of caste as part of the class struggle can we take oppressed masses in the right direction on the path of liberation from not only social oppression but also from the economic, political, and cultural oppression” (CPI-Maoist 2021: 78).

informed the researcher that if the wages are paid regularly and fairly, the revolutionaries would not disturb them. All the same, the farmer also pointed to instances wherein certain farmers were made to leave the area for not ‘mending their ways’ even after warnings. The following table (**Table 7**) is a brief statistical detailing of the insurgent activity in the area as presented in the police records.

Table 7: Insurgency Related Casualties in the Bhadrachalam Division (1990-2013)

Mandal	Security Forces killed by Insurgents	Civilians killed by Insurgents	Insurgents killed by the Security Forces
Bhadrachalam	-	1	-
Kunnavaram	-	3	-
Chintoor	-	14	2
V R Puram	-	1	8
Venkatapuram	-	7	12
Dummugudem	-	3	1
Charla	2	21	7
Wazeedu	1	2	1

Source: Additional Superintendent of Police (Bhadrachalam) Office.

The Maoist resurgence: some contemporary frontiers

As the unfolding contours of the Communist revolutionary politics in India would have it, it was on 21 September 2004 that the PW and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCC, which had been founded in October 1969 by Kanai Chatterjee) merged to form the Communist Party of India – Maoist. Understandably, the unification of the two main ML groups in the country made the state apparatus focus intently on them; and it was not long afterwards that the Maoists came to be labelled as the biggest threat to the internal security of the county (see Shah and Jain 2017, for a tracing along these lines). The Government of India formulated a mix of development and security-centric actions to tackle the ‘menace’, and supposedly free the ‘Maoist infested areas’. Specific centrally sponsored programs like Integrated Action Plan (2010) and Prime Minister’s Rural Development Fellowship (2011), among other initiatives, were supposed to deliver development in the Maoist areas. We shall engage with these measures after examining some facets of the ‘forced migration’ of tribals from south Chhattisgarh to Bhadrachalam and other bordering regions of undivided Andhra Pradesh. Indeed, as we shall presently

see, this latter forced migration (or, better still, ‘fleeing’) of the tribals was a consequence of the escalating conflict between the Maoists and state-backed people’s militia in Bastar particularly.

Broadly, as a strategy to tackle the Maoists, a people’s militia called the *Salwa Judum* was formed around 2006 with State support in Bastar (Chhattisgarh), north of the Bhadrachalam region.¹² The resulting stand-off led to the migration of the tribals from the conflict zone into other relatively calmer tribal belts. In fact, according to observers, the triggering reason was the recruitment drive undertaken by the CPI (Maoist) party for augmenting its forces and its guerrilla operations. Ostensibly, the recruitment drive was built on a campaign around various issues concerning the tribals in an effort to organise the latter against imperialist attacks and state repression. The left-wing extremist group mounted immense pressure on the tribals to recruit at least one member from each family; and, as a bulwark of defense, many tribals were relocated to camps supervised by members of the *Salwa Judum* and the state security forces. This was quickly followed by massive combing and other security manoeuvres, often leading to bloody engagements with the Maoists. Besides, the general scarcity conditions in Bastar aggravated the volatility of the situation. Caught in the crossfire, many Bastar tribals were forced to flee their homes.

Such a conflict-induced migration of the tribals led them to move south, towards Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, rather than the north into other regions of Chhattisgarh. Indeed, this trajectory was so because of the historical migration patterns and specific cultural factors. The language and culture of the Bastar tribals, that is, the Gotti Koyas, are more akin to what the Koyas speak in some pockets of the Bhadrachalam region. Besides, the conditions, as well as the wages, are also relatively better in Andhra Pradesh. As rough estimates would have it, more than 12,000 tribals fled Bastar due to the conflicts there, and often sought refuge in remote pockets of the inter-state borders. Accordingly, a very sizeable number of these are resident across villages in the Bhadrachalam region, with

¹² In the local Gondi language, *Salwa Judum* broadly means ‘peace march’ or even ‘purification hunt’, which in reality was a state-supported militia oriented against the Maoists principally. It was only later on in 2011 that the Supreme Court of India declared the *Salwa Judum* unconstitutional and illegal.

large concentrations in Cherla, followed by Chintoor and Bhadrachalam. Indeed, the Andhra Pradesh government and security officials often label them as ‘Gotti Koyas’ or particularly ‘Valasa Adivasi’.¹³

Needless to say, a multiplicity of challenges had to be confronted owing to the arrival of the tribals from Bastar into the Bhadrachalam region. Invariably, the ‘migrants’ started clearing the forests, and setting up their homes away from the local tribal habitations. According to Haneef of SITARA (Society for Integrated Tribal and Rural Action), a local NGO working with the displaced tribals, this is different from the earlier forms of settlements of the Gotti Koyas in particular.¹⁴ Hitherto, the latter would come to Bhadrachalam in order to access markets, health facilities, and employment in the agricultural fields; indeed, some of them used to stay back and would settle down amidst the established local tribal villages. The post-*Salwa Judum* settlement patterns indicate, however, the desire of the Gotti Koyas to maintain their identity separate from that of the local tribals. They would practice forms of shifting cultivation, even as the local Koyas perceived them to be aggressive and violent, even suspecting them to be hand in glove with the Maoists. Indeed, this is a kind of a paradox wherein they were actually fleeing because of the standoff between the administration/*Salwa Judum* and the Maoists in their home locations, but they come to be seen as ‘pro-Maoist’ in their displaced context.

It is important to note that the local administration and the security establishment is most keen to label the fleeing tribals, especially those who have refused to stay in the camps established by the Bastar authorities, as ‘pro-Maoists’ so that they can be pushed back to Bastar. Thus, a senior security official posted in the region confided that the spatial distance among the various settlements of the Gotti Koyas was particularly suspicious along the inter-state border. Indeed, very often, this sense of suspicion and nervousness on the part of the security agencies stemmed from the possibility of the network of

¹³ The category is used by the Government of Andhra Pradesh vide Circular No. 884/EGS/PM (Tribal Areas) dated 21 December 2011 (Office of the Commissioner, Rural Development).

¹⁴ SITARA had commissioned a research study on the problems of the Gotti Koyas, and submitted the same to the National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Commission for further action. This study report is the source of the observations made in this paragraph. The report that was made available to this researcher is undated.

settlements acting as secretive places of rest and recuperation among the insurgent squads during their forays along the border. Additionally, they were worried about ‘sleeper cells’ of Maoist cadres among the migrant settlements. According to the official, these concerns often forced the district and state administrations to not recognise the migrant tribals in terms of issuing ration cards and voter identity cards. The Forest department, besides, filed cases against the migrants for clearing the reserved forest sections. There were isolated reports too of clashes between the local and migrant tribals regarding common property resources. All the same, the administration, along with various NGOs, have sought to provide drinking water facilities, MGNREGA job cards, child rights, educational and health facilities for the Gotti Koyas, even as the Maoist party had declared its explicit support for Gotti Koyas (see **Fig. 10** below).



Fig. 10: CPI (Maoist) Party poster warning the Forest Department from harassing Gotti Koyas (22 June 2013)

Source: Researcher

Largely, after the Union government had declared the Maoists as the biggest internal security threat in 2012, massive security operations had begun in the Bastar region specifically. In fact, various civil society activists and even the Maoist party alleged that the State had initiated an operation code-named ‘Operation Green Hunt’ mainly to evict the tribals and make the Bastar region open to capitalist mining and other extractive

industries. Doubtless, there was no official acknowledgement for any massive operation called ‘Operation Green Hunt’. One of the security experts, whom this researcher consulted, spoke of a local operation by the Bastar police division with this code name, but insisted that this was not part of any national anti-insurgency policy by the Government of India. Scholars like Nandini Sundar (2016a), however, have forcefully argued that ‘Operation Green Hunt’ is the transformation of the *Salwa Judum* strategy for countering the Maoist rebels. All the same, as alluded to earlier, the local tribals in the Bhadrachalam region are more sympathisers rather than professional revolutionaries for the PW, even as the increased Maoist activities in the period 2012-2016 are attributed to the tribals who had fled Bastar (Chhattisgarh) during the *Salwa Judum* reign of conflict.

It is perhaps pertinent to note that, in 2001, it was estimated that almost 50 per cent of the cadre of the PW in terms of economic background belonged to the class of ‘urban petty-bourgeois’¹⁵, while 55 per cent were students in terms of ‘professional background’, as compared to the 3 per cent ‘poor’ and 7 per cent ‘peasantry’ (with the latter labels referring to the groups to which the tribals are seen to belong) [Ramana 2014: 6]. This largely indicates that, even after 30 years of ‘revolution’ in the countryside, the PW had remained an urban phenomenon, albeit spatially located in the jungles and hills of central India. Besides, the State often sees Naxalism/Maoism as the insurgency of the rural peasantry as romanticised by the revolutionaries. However, in terms of its constitution of members and objectives, the insurgency is neither strictly rural or tribal. Rather, arguably, an urban phenomenon is being transported to the rural/tribal landscape, for tactical reasons chiefly, with the countryside and the forest being represented as the preparatory ground for taking over the state apparatus (which, incidentally, is physically and symbolically located in the urban). All the same, the senior functionaries of the insurgent cause, including some of its ideologues, are convinced about the combined

¹⁵ Broadly, the ‘urban petty-bourgeois’ is held to consist of those with middle-class incomes as derived mainly from their manual or mental labour. The category, besides, is seen in radical circles to comprise three groups within it: one with surplus income above consumption (who are often taken to be very suspicious of revolution); second, those who are self-supporting (taken to be hesitant to join the revolution); and, finally, those whose incomes are drastically declining, and often find it difficult to balance income and consumption (seen to be openly supportive of revolution). Invariably, intellectuals, students, petty tradesmen, artisans, and professionals are taken to make for the petty-bourgeois class.

presence of tribals and Dalits in the revolutionary cause. Indeed, according to Varavara Rao, presently the Dalits and tribals – specifically, the Madigas and Koyas - constitute the majority of the ‘professional revolutionaries’ of the Maoist cadres.¹⁶ This is further corroborated by a CPI (Maoist) member who handles the Adivasi wing of the party, who emphatically maintained that about 70% of the revolutionary cadre comprise Adivasi youth. Moreover, another indication of the importance of tribals in the organization is seen in the appointment of Jagan (alias Haribushan, alias Yapa Narayana), a Koya tribesman, as the secretary of the Telangana State Committee of CPI (Maoist). This elevation followed the first Telangana state plenary in the Khammam-Chhattisgarh border in February 2015. Sadly, however, this leader passed away in 2021 due to the Coronavirus.

By and large, yet, from the above order of narration, it is clear that the Maoist movement has failed to get traction in the Bhadrachalam region, even as its shadowy presence must be taken note as part of a wider sociopolitical landscape. The non-tribal control of the Scheduled area and the exploitation of the tribal wage earners in an inter-state zone with forest and hill cover should have actually aided the Maoist movement and penetration. However, due to the lack of committed cadres on the ground, the rationale for a stronger mobilisation largely failed to take root and give shape to the revolutionary agenda. Additionally, the battle over territory and jurisdiction both with the structures of state authority and other rebel groups also made the terms of engagement and combat even tougher; and eventually, they have had to strategically withdraw from the area (although, in more recent times, there has been a revival of sorts). In this stalled state of affairs, the Maoist presence is largely maintained through squads operating across the border. In fact, a glance at the news reports would suggest that there has been an increase in the reporting of Maoist sightings, encounters and surrenders from the Bhadrachalam region since the formation of Telangana in June 2014 (with the kidnapping of 6 TRS party workers by the revolutionaries in November 2015 forming the centre piece of public attention). Thus, as part of the revival of the Maoist movement in the new state, nearly 40-50 Maoists are taken to be operating in the Bhadrachalam-Bastar region solely.¹⁷

¹⁶ Personal interview conducted on 14 July 2016 in Hyderabad.

¹⁷ This information was shared with the researcher by confidential sources on the ground.

7.2 Tribals in the Indian Revolution: Extending the Reflections from the Field

Where do tribals fit overall in the Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) ideological framework of revolutionary praxis?¹⁸ Indeed, we are raising this question especially in the light of recent scholarship that has highlighted the severe limitations of the class-centred approach to the study of economic deprivation and social oppression, as also the place of caste in the revolutionary praxis of the MLM politics in Andhra Pradesh as a whole. Thus, for instance, Berg (2014), in the course of examining the contours of Dalit subjectivity in Andhra Pradesh, has sharply drawn attention to the inherent limitations of an exclusively class-based approach to the study of the Dalits in the sociopolitical domain, while also pointing to the facets of MLM theory and practice as executed by the PW and other ML groups in Andhra Pradesh. Thus, citing activist-intellectuals like Balagopal and others, Berg explicitly reminds that the 1985 Karamchedu massacre - taking place as it did about 5 years after the formation of the PW - foregrounded caste as the primary axis of oppression and exploitation in Andhra Pradesh rather than feudalism and class. In the process, as Berg also emphasises, this development contributed to the formation of a distinct political discourse asserting the needs of the Dalits as a whole; and, more importantly for us, also led to an internal debate within the ML groups regarding how to tackle the question of caste. Berg, insistently, states that those who tried to articulate caste within the ML ranks were often labelled as reactionaries, and some were expelled formally from the ranks (even as some of the latter went on to lead the anti-caste movement in Andhra Pradesh).¹⁹

¹⁸ The larger ideological inheritance of this contemporary revolutionary landscape has been forcefully argued in global terms by Moufawad-Paul (2016). This latter work is recognised as theoretically fruitful and contemporary by several activists whom this researcher had consulted in the field. But our point as raised above is not quite about the theoretical pertinence of Maoism for revolutionary politics in the contemporary conjuncture. Note, accordingly, the terms of our framing as it follows in the text above.

¹⁹ For another line of argument, but bolstering more or less the same conclusion, see Srinivasulu (2017). Again, it is not as though there had been no discussion on the caste question in formal ML circles. Indeed, glimpses of the specificity attaching to caste can be had from the writings of Anuradha Ghandy (see the compilation of her writings put together by Teltumbde and Sen 2011) and Naveen Babu (1989), whose M. Phil. thesis at JNU titled *'From Varna to Jati: Transformation from Pastoral to Agrarian Social Formation'* was widely disseminated and discussed in PW circles (see Babu 2008); as also Ajith (2002) on caste and class in the context of Kerala, which has been quite formative of the Maoist understanding of caste.

Without doubt, the divorce of Dalit issues from the class framework of supposedly radical theory and practice, as also the increased invocation of Ambedkar as the rallying point from around the late 1980s, showcases the alienation of one of the most marginalised communities from the revolutionary tendencies of the countryside. Not surprisingly, therefore, the assertion of identity beyond the working-class identity ascribed to the Dalits by the ML groups had a resonance outside Andhra Pradesh, as well. George Kunnath (2012), for instance, has demonstrated the demobilisation of Dalits in the context of MLM politics in Bihar, where the MCC (Maoist Communist Centre) had held sway. Where, initially, the Dalits had joined the ML groups to fight the landlords, with the ML groups consolidating their position and non-Dalits joining the cause of the revolution, the Dalit problems came to be sidelined, and finally leading to the non-participation of the Dalits in the revolutionary movement significantly. Similar regionally centred works on the patterns of mobilisation and demobilisation along the tribal/Adivasi axis in the context specifically of the Maoist movement are, however, largely absent. What we do seem to have are proponents of a kind of ‘sandwich theory’ like that of Mukherji (2012) on the one side – largely holding that the Adivasis are caught in the crossfire between the Maoists and the state and often deprived of the state welfare schemes for them – and the celebrated author Arundhati Roy (2011) on the other side who valorise the role of the Maoists in uplifting and consolidating the lifeworlds of the Adivasis.

What do the Maoists themselves have to say about the terms of the MLM revolutionary praxis as it intersects with the tribal/Adivasi question? Importantly, Varavara Rao, a key intermediary in the contemporary revolutionary landscape in India, had in an interview published in September 2015 cited the Libyan national hero Omar Al-Mukhtar on whether the Adivasis are caught between the state and the rebels. Mukhtar, reportedly, had said, “Let them speak!” as a response to whether the people are caught between the French colonial forces and the Libyan nationalist forces.²⁰ Varavara Rao, while referring to the Libyan example, explicitly stated that the Adivasis have never themselves said that they are caught between the state and the revolution (while also going on to maintain that

²⁰ See <<http://www.azhimukham.com/news/6980/interview-with-maoist-poet-varavara-rao-aneeb>> Accessed on 30.12.2015

this idea is an handiwork of the corporate media as consumed by the middle classes generally). All the same, the question seems pertinent to be posed: if the Adivasis were to speak, what would they speak? Indeed, in the Bhadrachalam region of our study, there is an Adivasi group that had been established in the 1990s, which enables us to problematize the ‘insurgency versus development’ question in a context-specific manner. The entity in question is the Girijana Samkshema Parishad (GSP) formed by Sonde Ramesh, a Koya tribesman, from Dummugudem mandal of the Bhadrachalam revenue division. Its fractious history notwithstanding, the GSP has largely been in the forefront to ensure the implementation of various policies and programs of tribal welfare initiated by the state government and by the Integrated Tribal Development Authority (ITDA) of Bhadrachalam. Politically, the organization keeps its distance from all political parties and the revolutionaries operating in the area, although Sonde Ramesh himself had been part of the Tudum Debba (TD) or Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samithi (AHPS), a revolutionary tribal movement active in the north Telangana region (while in due course breaking away from it to form the GSP).²¹

By and large, from the perspective of a people’s history as a whole, the formation of this non-aligned independent political entity in the region is quite significant. It may be likened to a self-assertion on the part of the tribals of the region, one consistent with the terms of the ‘Let them speak!’ as alluded earlier. On its own terms, it was a clear rejection of the mode of struggle fashioned by the ML groups as a whole, as indeed a recognition of the failure of the parliamentary parties (especially the CPI-M) in articulating and representing the developmental demands and needs of the tribals. Broadly, as we had broached in the previous chapter, the GSP (and ASP) work as a kind of pressure group in the region. At times, their leaders have contested elections as independent candidates, with the electoral process seen as a mechanism to test their political clout and in due course leveraged for negotiations with the state and its functionaries. Clearly, the idea of development for the tribals operative here is different from that of the revolutionaries. The GSP and ASP, through their interventions, have ensured employment, education, and healthcare opportunities for the tribals. By and large, their relative success on this

²¹ Fragments of this history have been recounted in Ch.6 above, especially Sect.6.1.

front can be gauged from the support they have been able to command from the local population. Particularly, these groups identify and pursue various land transfer regulation violations, a strategy which stands in contrast with the efforts waged by the PW and the subsequent Maoist interventions in the area.

Indeed, since the beginning of the MLM operations, the landholding patterns regarding ownership primarily have been largely undisturbed in the region. Moreover, it can also be maintained that the revolutionaries have generally failed to address the problems caused by the Polavaram project, which will be displacing a very large number of tribals. In the early stages of their intervention, though, they had succeeded in increasing the price of tendu leaves and even stopped government officials and landlords from harassing the tribals, often instilling some confidence among the tribals and fear among their exploiters. All the same, they failed to bring any durable structural changes within the region. Significantly too, the tribals by and large favour the non-violent methods adopted by the GSP, ASP, and others over strategies geared to violence as a method of struggle. In fact, according to one of the observers of the Naxalite movement in AP over the years, the PW had explicitly designated Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam (the Bhadrachalam region had been part of this district) and Nizamabad as ‘guerilla zones’ in the 1990s.²² Nevertheless, as this source disclosed, the liberalisation of the Indian economy around the same period had undercut these efforts; in his own explicit, and yet rueful, words: “By the 2000s, the fruits of the 1991 reforms were being seen and felt on the ground”. In admitting thus, he was clearly calling attention to the fact that the people at large (including the tribals) were becoming aspirational and oriented towards securing their personal interests over the public good. Besides, as claimed, the new economic opportunities had weaned the tribals away from the seduction of revolution to more pragmatic matters of socio-economic mobility as offered by the state and its agencies. All in all, while it is true that the revolutionaries have generally failed to bring structural changes in the region, their role in creating the grounds for the rise of organic leaders like Sonde Ramesh (through his initial involvement with the Tudum Debba) needs to be noted. Undoubtedly, the PW and CPI-Maoist have been critical commentators of the

²² Based on a personal interview with a senior journalist (name undisclosed) in Hyderabad on 03 May 2013.

region in terms of its relations of production, and they cannot be ignored in any history of the region.²³

Scouring through Maoist field materials and MLM practice

One form of understanding the Maoist perspective on the region is through their own propaganda material as generated and circulated in the field. The following is a poster apparently displayed at various places in the region, one which also offers a kind of window into the Maoist framing of the ‘developmental history’ of the area. The poster, as released by the Khammam District Committee of the CPI (Maoist) party on 25 November 2014 is explicitly titled ‘*Fight Against the Occupation of Land by Landlords!! Continue the Agrarian Revolution!!*’ (Fig. 11). The poster was seen near the Charla bus stand of the Charla mandal headquarters, as also at Gollagudem village and the Jagdamba centre of the Venkatapuram mandal.

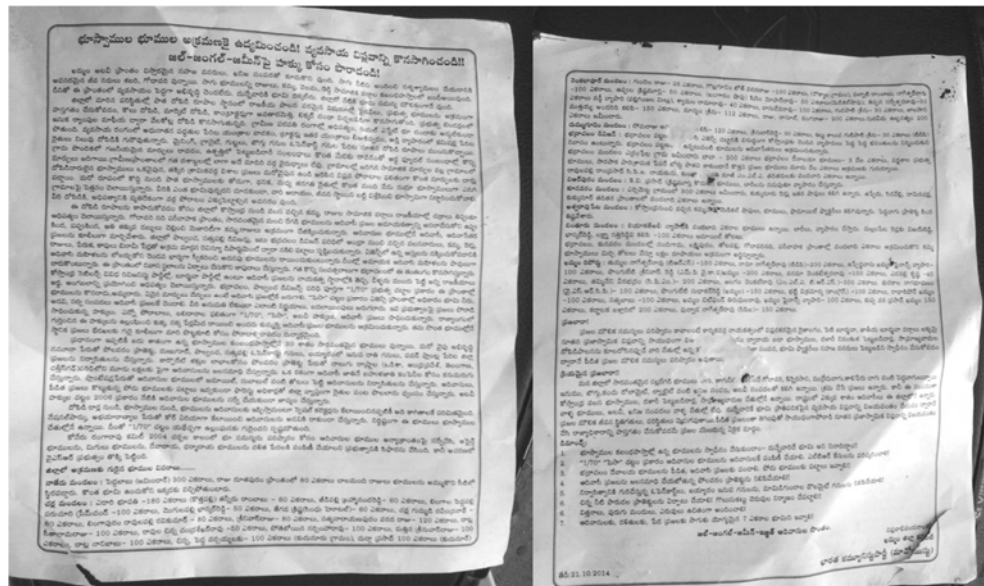


Fig. 11: 25 November 2014 CPI (Maoist) Party poster at Venkatapuram on land occupation.

Source: Researcher

²³ Sources in the field acknowledged the existence of a socio-economic report of the Bhadrachalam region compiled between the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, it is alleged that the document has been lost during one of the many relocations that are an integral part of any underground movement. One Mr. Bhattacharya, who had covered the area in the disguise of a doctor, had supposedly authored the report. Incidentally, similar field studies among revolutionary circles exist for the regions of Bastar and Odisha.

The poster recounts a brief history of the relations of production and forms of exploitation in Khammam district, while also providing a list of the 'landlords' illegally occupying the tribal land. A number of landlords, including senior politicians cutting across party lines, are so identified, and stated to be occupying thousands of acres of land in the district, including various illegal possessions of vast tracts of land in the Bhadrachalam region. The revolutionary understanding of economic relations in the tribal areas of Khammam district and the Bhadrachalam region, as forged in part of the poster, is reproduced below in English:

In the changed economic conditions, new forms of exploitation replaced old methods of exploitation like the emergence of intermediaries in politics. Occupation of government lands, tenancy and market exploitation, liquor shops, and sand mafia are the new forms of revenue for the exploiting classes. Along with the real estate mafia, they are dominating the village credit system. The four classes mentioned above dominate the mechanisation of agriculture. The leasing of tractors, money lending, granite mining, and open cast coal mining are also new sources of income. In the village structure, there are noticeable changes, and capitalist production has entered villages. Unlike the previous decades, there are new class contradictions in the villages. In the previous decades, there were struggles between property owners and the labouring classes, bringing social change. A new class of rich and middle farmers is dominating the villages. Instead of looking at how many landholdings they have, we should look at income and lifestyle and fight against these new property owners.

Kammas and Rajus occupy the fertile land in the Godavari River area. They lend money to tribals, later occupy their land, and make the tribals labourers in their land. In Palvancho, Sattanpalle, and Bhadrachalam divisions, Andhra migrants, Kammas, Rajus, Reddys, and Kapus transferred land through benami and their names manipulation of revenue records. They also married Adivasi women as the second wife and, through them, acquired land. They were using Adivasi women as pawns to settle down in the Agency Area. In Bhadrachalam, this has been the trend in recent times. Settlers are part of all political parties. They bring Adivasis in leadership roles only to do things on their back. According to the 1/70 Act, non-tribals should not buy or sell land in Bhadrachalam and Palvancho. According to PESA Act, land, water, and air belong to tribals. Therefore, without the consent of Adivasis, no decision or developmental activity should take place. 1/70, PESA, and Forest Acts are the result of people's struggle. Despite all these acts and rights, Kammas and Reddys have occupied land and turned Adivasis into labourers. Now, these Adivasis are fighting for their survival.

Landlords, comprising 5% of the population, control 30% of fertile land. In addition, people are displaced in the district in the name of developmental activities like Polavaram, Sattanpale, Manuguru power project, and Bayyrum project. The Polavaram dam is constructed for corporate interest, and three lakh Adivasis in the four states – Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh - are facing jalsamadhi.

Adivasis are wiped out for multi-national companies. Podu land pattas were denied, and in fact, forest officials are destroying podu lands. According to the Forest Act of 2006, Adivasi lands are to be surveyed, but forest officials are delaying the process of implementation. Special collectors appointed to return the land to the Adivasis are not working. In the name of sanctuaries and national parks, Adivasis are kept away from their land. With this, the 1/70 Act has been breached. After the land survey, the Koneru Ranga Rao Committee of 2004 suggested that assigned land, surplus land, and Devasam land be distributed to Dalits and poor peasants. However, YSR Government had rejected that recommendation.

Indeed, as the way forward, the poster goes on to say:

Suppose we have to solve the fundamental issues under the leadership of industrial labour, revolutionary peasant, petty bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie. In that case, we should unite and wage a democratic armed revolution. This revolution will uproot big landlords, dictatorial middlemen, capitalists, and imperialists. Then land and natural resources controlled by them will come to people; thereby, fundamental problems will be resolved. Khammam has natural resources, fertile land, and people to work; unfortunately, migrant coastal Andhra landlords, capitalists, and imperialists control it. It also has the highest number of Adivasis but does not control land, forest, and minerals. Based on the land to the tiller, if the agrarian revolution can be made successful, there will be a change in the fundamental state of affairs of Adivasis.

Undoubtedly, the above rendition of some of the contents of the poster is a bracing commentary on the society and economy of the tribal region as a whole. But unfortunately, such a stinging diagnosis has not led to any particular action or change at the ground level, except for some instances of ‘violent’ reaction to the socio-economic arrangements like the eviction of a Raju dominated village in Cherla. At any rate, pinpointing the place and significance of the ‘tribal’ within the MLM framework is a challenging prospect in both theoretical and revolutionary terms. One plausible context for thematizing the nature of the Maoist engagement with the tribal question is the critical response to a special number of the *Economic and Political Weekly* on Maoism in India, where Azad (evidently, a spokesperson of the CPI-Maoist party) absorbingly engages the question of tribe and caste (see Azad 2006). As he maintains: “A class-approach to the caste question demands an end to upper-caste oppression, brahminical ideology, and the abolition of the pernicious caste system, including ‘untouchability’. Nevertheless, ‘identity politics’ only emphasises caste and acts to ossify caste divisions further” (Azad 2006: 4383). Azad is categorical that identity politics can only further divide the masses, and that only class politics will unite the toiling masses across social and cultural divides.

It seems to us significant that the revolutionary discourse has not given in completely to the lures of identity politics, and have been resistant to conceding to claims about the uniqueness of tribals as a social grouping distinct from the toiling masses. Indeed, the effort and concern voiced among the more reflective Maoist practitioners to subsume the tribals within a class framework of politics and protest is even more laudable considering that the broad contours of Dalit politics in India have consciously striven to articulate a line independent from the strains of revolutionary Marxism. Not surprisingly, therefore, according to the official line of the CPI Maoist party, all the government schemes and programs initiated and implemented “were aimed at preserving the economic, political, and cultural interests of the Indian ruling classes and imperialists” (Myna 2014: 92). Accordingly, since the problems of the poor are still unresolved, the radical conviction is that land is crucial for confronting the problems of poverty, illness, and illiteracy among the poor (including Dalits and tribals). Thus the contemporary currency of the idea of a ‘New Democratic Revolution’ (NDR, a term used by Maoists to describe their convictions about revolution in the present times), which is itself subsumptive of such slogans underwriting the present campaigns for ‘Land to the tiller’, ‘Rights of *Jal-Jungle-Zameen* to Adivasis and oppressed masses’ and ‘*Izzat aur Adhikar Chahiye*’.

Across broad swathes of the Dandakaranya region, where supposedly Maoists run a parallel government, ‘Revolutionary People’s Committee’ (RPC) or *Krantikari Janatana Sarkar* have been constituted to govern the tribal areas with a special emphasis on matters of livelihood, education and health. Indeed, the Maoist experiment with an alternate vision of emancipation can be seen in the context of this expansive region, where RPCs were also meant to serve as village-level organizations that can occupy forest lands, lands of landlords, big contractors, and anti-people tribal elders. Often, by means of such land occupation, Maoists have sought to augment the productive capacities of the people by invoking their powers of change. Thus, Myna (2014) even goes on to extol the dimensions of this Maoist program in Dandakaranya as an alternative to the “semi-colonial, semi-feudal system and the imperialism dictated by globalisation”, and adding:

Any development should help in developing step by step the productive capacity of the people, help in unleashing their creativity, utilizing the resources, building up capabilities in all spheres by giving them the confidence that they can build their future

with their own hands and that they are living on their own efforts even while fighting for their liberation from the exploiters there. This would be possible only when they have control over their lives. Led by the party, the Adivasi peasantry in Dandakaranya are carrying on the PW against the imperialists and the Indian ruling classes with enormous sacrifices with the aim of building liberated areas for the victory of NDR (Myna 2014: 95-96).

Undoubtedly, the category of 'Adivasi' is part of the larger scheme pursued by the Maoists, who are trying to "creatively apply MLM theory in the concrete conditions of India" (as frequently referred in their various internal documents). Consequently, although we cannot see any specific or targeted programs to consolidate or uplift the Adivasis per se, for the Maoists largely the latter are taken to be part of the larger agrarian struggle, with the Adivasi identity subsumed under the category of the rural peasantry. Besides, it must be noted that the forest regions and their people initially served as a guerilla base and a rearguard for the ultimate goal of taking over the State. All the same, in the context of the extended Dandakaranya zone subsuming parts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, where the sway of the Maoists is quite acknowledged, we do have claims (in their publications largely) about implementing their agenda of governance. Maoist publications, invariably, speak of conscientizing the Adivasis into the larger agenda of the agrarian struggle for land redistribution and socio-cultural change.

Be that as it may – and, strictly, with reference to the Bhadrachalam region, which borders the south of the extended Dandakaranya zone - we have not been witness to any explicit Maoist programme as just mentioned above. As a matter of fact, the first step of occupying lands and controlling the territory has not happened in the region, notwithstanding the fact that, following Mao's tactics in China, KS had explicitly sent various squads to prepare the grounds for the revolution. Besides, today, Bhadrachalam serves as a transitional base largely subject to the waxing and waning of territorial and political control across the Dandakaranya zone. As such, the writ of the Maoists, while visible across the Bhadrachalam area, does not quite hold sway.

Of course, the noted Marxist scholar Jairus Banaji has forcefully cautioned against subsuming the Adivasi cause under the larger Maoist agenda. As he has noted in an interview published some years ago, which still has some resonances to this day:

The idea that the tribals and the CPI (Maoist) share the same objective is ludicrous! What the tribals have been fighting against is decades of oppression by moneylenders, traders, contractors, and officials of the forest department - in short, a long history of dispossession that has reduced them to a subhuman existence and exposed them to repeated violence... The tribal aim is not to overthrow the Indian state but to succeed in securing unhindered access to resources that belong to them, but which the state has been denying them. The tribal struggle is for the right to life, to livelihood and dignity, including freedom from violence and from the racism that much of India exudes towards them. The massive alienation of tribal land that has gone on even after Independence was something the government could have stopped if it had the will to do so. Today the huge mineral resources of the tribal areas are up for grabs as state governments compete to attract investment from mining and steel giants. But whatever the CPI (Maoist) might think, the vast majority of the tribals in India have no conception of 'capturing state power,' since the state itself is such an abstraction except in terms of harassment by forest officials, neglect by state governments, and violence from the police and paramilitary (Banaji 2010).²⁴

Arguably, therefore, MLM practitioners seem to be pursuing a political movement which has little to do with the Adivasis and the tribal aspirations as a whole. While it might seem somewhat extreme to suggest so, the efforts of the Maoists, especially in the Bhadrachalam region and even across the Dandakaranya zone, seems to come across as a roving form of rebellious activity (something that Mao himself, in his own time, had treated with disdain). Largely, by characterising the Indian economy and society as 'semi-colonial and semi-feudal', the historical specificities of the tribal areas and the Adivasi question are denied any systematic recognition in the Maoist frame of analysis and the call for revolution underwriting it.²⁵ Doubtless, the incorporation of the tribal

²⁴ See <<http://platypus1917.org/2010/08/06/the-maoist-insurgency-in-india-end-of-the-road-for-indian-stalinism/>>. Accessed on 5 January 2017.

²⁵ In a seminal study of the Naxalite movement itself and its 'distinct ideology', the sociologist Rabindra Ray (1988) has sought to historicise precisely this characterisation of the Indian economy and society. As he tellingly observes: "The central concept of the Naxalite metaphysic was the characterisation of the Indian economy as 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial'. ... The characterisation has been directly lifted from Mao Tse-tung's characterisation of the Chinese economy prior to the success of the Chinese revolution. Indeed, part of the reason for employing identical terminology was to give weight to the contention that 'China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's path is our path'. But in the argument for a strategic identity, a shift in the nature of the denotation of the formula has taken place. Whereas in the Chinese case, the formula 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial' is directly aimed at expressing a manifest state of affairs with landlords and imperial powers in collaboration and contest, in the Naxalite case, the formula has become metaphorical or, perhaps, ideational, claiming to penetrate a reality to its underlying truth when the manifest seems to contradict it" (Ray 1988: 176).

areas and their inhabitants into the modern administrative structure of rule was mediated by the patterns of British rule in India. Indeed, as alluded broadly in Part I of our study subsuming key elements of the administrative history of the Bhadrachalam region, the incorporation of tribal India into British India and later independent India had followed a different logic compared to the rest of the landmass that constituted the sub-continent. The key point, all the same, is that various British administrative legislations and regulations led to the freezing of the patterns of tribal migration; even as, later on, the nationalist movement and various tribal assertions sought to foreground ‘tribals’ as the original inhabitants of the land. Moreover, as we did emphasize, the historical reality is invariably different and more complicated (and specifically so in the Bhadrachalam region, wherein both the tribals and non-tribals have been ‘migrants’, so to say, over long periods of time). Inevitably, the question of who is the original inhabitant is bound to be a mixed and over-determined one? More pointedly, in fact, in a perennial frontier as it were, how can one understand land alienation problems in a zone of administrative intervention and developmental contact?

Recently, yet, some claims have been forwarded about the presence of a *Janatana Sarkar* in the Bhadrachalam region (see Rao 2017), broadly on the lines operating in the Dandakaranya zone of the revolution and supposedly delivering an alternate model of development for the Adivasis as it relates to education, health and land reforms. However, this researcher was unable to gather any corroborative evidence about the same in the region; security personnel too vehemently denied the existence of such an arrangement in the region.

7.3 ‘Developmentalism’ as State’s Counter-Insurgency Response

Understandably, at the national level, the Government of India has sought to keep a close watch on the Naxalite/Maoist activities from their inception and various points of escalation.²⁶ Thus, a report on the causes of the agrarian tensions as commissioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1969 (in the context of the Naxalbari movement of 1967-68 and the Srikakulam movement of 1967-69) identified two major causes that sustained

²⁶ Note, the information that follows about the various official reports filed and governmental committees constituted is from Huda (1998).

militancy in rural areas: one, the demand of the farm labourers for increased wages, and, two, the demand of the poor peasants for the redistribution of surplus lands. Pertinently, another committee in its report (1982) arrived at a similar understanding of the unrest in the countryside. It seems that the situation in terms of addressing the grievances of the people had not changed in the various decades. In fact, in 1982, two years after the formation of the Communist Party of India - Marxist-Leninist (People's War), a team headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh was deputed to look into the extremist activities in Andhra Pradesh particularly. The central team in its report pointed to: (i) the continued exploitation of the people, particularly the alienation of tribal lands; (ii) lack of basic amenities, such as drinking water and healthcare facilities; and (iii) the harassment and exploitation of the tribals leading to their alienation, which has been taken specific advantage of by the extremist forces. Indeed, official consideration by the Government of India did not stop with the 1982 report; for, once again, a central team was tasked in 1988, this time to examine the situation specifically in the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh. Thus, in the *Report of the Central Team on Left Wing Extremism in Andhra Pradesh* (1988), the primary causes of tribal discontent were identified as (i) poor economic status; (ii) inadequacy of basic amenities; and (iii) exploitation in land and forest use.

Without doubt, grievances and deprivations are an inescapable reality of any modern society. The patterns of social stratification and socio-political structure that oversee the production and distribution of governance and resources make these grievances and deprivations sharper and more acute. In fact, it is the logic of the state and capital which determines the inclusion and exclusion of communities and geographies in the governance structures as a whole. It is certainly not surprising that, in an interim analysis of the Maoists, G. K. Pillai (2010), former Union Home Secretary, had to candidly concede about the missing structures of governance and administration at the local level. Citing the example of a cluster of villages in the Malkangiri area of Odisha, he bluntly observes that no official from the administration had visited 141 villages since 1969. Presently, this area is a hotbed of MLM activity where the state faces a credible challenge in establishing itself. Pillai pointedly goes on to bolster a long-held bureaucratic understanding of the genesis of the Maoist movement in India, highlighting in particular

the neglect of administrations in attending to the socio-economic deprivations and grievances of the common people.

Likewise, a report by an expert group on the development challenges in the extremist areas had suggested that the developmental imbalances have aggravated the existing discontent among the marginalised sections of the society (see Government of India, 2008: 29). The developmental practices imposed on local communities, besides, are insensitive to their needs and aspirations; and, what is more, the beneficiaries are often the dominant sections, with the local communities being reduced to a sub-human existence. The report is thus emphatic in its diagnosis: “There is no denying that what goes in the name of ‘Naxalism’ is to a large extent a product of collective failure to assure to different segments of society their basic entitlements under the Constitution and other protective legislation” (ibid.: 83). In this light, understandably, it was recommended that every citizen’s legal rights and entitlements be ensured to make them feel like an integral part of the country.

Is the insurgent politics of Maoism the pathway out of deprivation and neglect? The contemporary historian Ramachandra Guha (2007), in his analysis of the Maoist movement, opines that the presence of the Maoists in the Adivasi areas has been attracted by the geographical remoteness of their habitations, even as the wider patterns of governmental neglect of these locations has aggravated the problems of development. Guha is categorical that “the principal aim of the Maoists is not the social or economic advancement of the Adivasis, but the capture of power in Delhi through a process of armed struggle”; and, as such: “In this larger endeavour, the tribals are a stepping stone - or, as some would say, merely cannon” (ibid.: 3309). Needless to say, the various reports of the Government of India have failed to understand the question of why the pursuit of MLM principles coalesces with the deprivation problems of specific social spaces and groups. In other words: when do grievances lead to a situation of stand-off and/or conflictual environment? Even more specifically, how does latent conflict translate into manifest conflict? Indeed, various theories of revolution, civil war, and ethnic conflicts give us diverse perspectives on the question. Nevertheless, it is the spatial mapping of the Maoists that gives us a critical window into the specificities of the

localities and communities that are particularly sustaining Maoism. Hopefully, this framing will help us to narrow down the factors and dimensions involved in MLM politics.

By and large, specific historical and organizational reasons can determine the presence of the Maoists in an area, like the creation of base areas and the possibility of retreat during state actions. Undoubtedly, this is a crucial factor overseeing the presence of the Maoists in our region.²⁷ Equally too, this entry into new areas is contingent on the acceptance of the people. Thus Tyagi (2016 & 2018) has sought to highlight the shortcoming of studies that visualize the Maoist presence primarily through the prism of violence. She is emphatic that this prism cannot capture much the Maoist presence in popular mobilisations and interactions with the people. In fact, Tyagi is quite categorical:

In 2012, of the total 1222 Maoist related incidents, 85 per cent of the events did not result in any casualty; that is, they would not, in most studies, fall under the category of violent events, such as killings or injury to police or civilians and be excluded from the analysis. This demonstrates that a significantly larger number of Maoist events in 2012 were non-violent, confirming our first prediction that *non-violent incidents constitute a majority of the insurgent activities* (Tyagi 2016: 129, emphasis in original).

Interestingly, she even notes that the insurgent violence was lowest in the strong areas of the Maoists. Thus, if we were to go back to **Table 7** given above in this very chapter – as sourced from the Additional Superintendent of Police (Bhadrachalam) Office, and incorporating the ‘Insurgency Related Causalities in the Bhadrachalam Division (1990-2013)’ - we will not see any ‘significant’ trend in terms of the violence waged by the insurgents. All the same, the insurgents in the region often make their presence through the filing of their posters and propaganda materials, even with attempts at planting explosives, kidnapping, and coercing money from contractors, and so on.

Tyagi even points to the value of the clandestine underground organiser of the Maoist party in structuring the revolutionary movement. Indeed, these discrete operations

²⁷ Indeed, any effort to explain the probability of the Maoist presence in an area without looking at their internal history is certainly a limitation. Not surprisingly, Ghatak and Eynde (2017) have emphatically stated that the key variable here is the Adivasi’s looming forest cover and presence, which can serve as a tactical dimension in the protracted people’s war. Indeed, considering that forest cover and Adivasis go hand in hand in terms of spatial presence, this order of work questions the recent emergent literature that teases the relationship between economic underdevelopment and Maoism in India.

geared to awakening the revolutionary zeal on the part of the Maoist organiser in a given setting is quite important. The Srikakulam movement, in fact, testifies to such a role by the clandestine operative in translating the very mode of confrontation and negotiation. Thus, in 1959, Vempatapu Satyanarayana, a non-tribal Communist leader affiliated to the CPI (M), mobilised tribals in Srikakulam under the aegis of the Girijan Sangham, which largely operated from within the limits of the law. Subsequently, thereafter, with the murder of two tribals by the money-lenders in October 1967, and largely under the guidance of Charu Mazumdar, the more strident and violent Naxalbari line came to be adopted by the Communist revolutionaries in October 1968. In fact, within a year, they claimed control over 300 villages covering 700-800 square kilometres (see Kennedy 2013: 61). Evidently, the success of the mobilisation depends on the socio-economic conditions of the given geography and the local political economy and state action. But the role of the underground organiser in structuring the revolutionary movement cannot be underestimated. Likewise, another instance is the mobilisation of the Santhals in West Bengal (across the late 1960s and 1970s), where the Naxalite organisers explicitly invoked the principles of Lenin and Mao to train and guide ‘spontaneous revolts’ into organised armed actions (see Duyker 1987: 99). Indeed, it is important to know what the Maoists, through their mobilisers, offer the aggrieved sections of the society; or, even more forcefully, why should such aggrieved align with the interests of the Maoists?

Venugopal (2013), in the course of tracing the history of Maoism in the undivided Andhra Pradesh, has explicitly identified two reasons for the public support to MLM politics: one, neglect and exploitation by the Revenue and Forest departments, and, two, the local elites exploitation of the tribals and peasants. In fact, as per the testimony of a revolutionary from the Bhadrachalam region, the initial set of tribal Maoists were mostly victims of harrassment by the government officials. While this may be the immediate and contingent factors that could underwrite a mobilisation, they still do not explain the currency of the Maoist umbrella for the purpose. Partly as a response to this problematic, the political scientist Neera Chandhoke has sought to provide an analytical perspective on the issues at play by framing Maoism chiefly as a response to ‘a three-fold failure’ (see Chandhoke 2015: esp. 90). She calls attention to the problems of ‘redistribution’, ‘recognition’ and ‘voice’, which in their intertwining are each held to represent the triple

failure of the state and society and go on to create favourable conditions for an insurgent politics of Maoism. Broadly, for Chandhoke, where ‘redistribution’ marks a sense of failure on the part of the central and local state in administering justice to territorially concentrated communities like the Adivasis particularly in Central India, ‘recognition’ is understood as the failure of communities to represent themselves in the decision-making processes that concern them. Again, by ‘voice’, she is urging us to address the failure of civil society organizations, particularly the Dalit movement, to make the redressal of injustices in their communities their prime concern. Thus, applying the terms of this assessment and framework to the Bhadrachalam region, we can see specific deficits both on the registers of ‘redistribution’ and ‘recognition’. Indeed, various recent legislative enactments such as the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 2006 (PESA) and the Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) exist only on paper in the region. Often, in contravention of these ameliorative legislations, the administrators arbitrarily decide on various developmental projects and take the help of village heads in getting the signatures of the people (when the law actually necessitates the actual holding of gram panchayat meetings to elicit consent). Many tribal youth and activists even allege that their elders collude with the local authorities to enhance their own self-esteem and for pecuniary benefits. Besides, with particular reference to the FRA, and even after the formation of the Telangana state in 2014, no specific land rights have been assigned due to bureaucratic delays. So also, as we have seen, various tribal organizations point out that there has been a progressive decline in the transfer of ownership of *patta* lands with the flow of tribals from Chhattisgarh (who were often fleeing Operation Green Hunt and the *Salwa Judum*). Understandably, the tribal organizations mediate the redistribution of government welfare schemes in the region, by both informing their constituents about various schemes and helping them to navigate the procedures at the local offices of government (whether relating to forests, revenue and tribal welfare). Such mediation has often contributed to nepotism and the inequitable distribution of welfare resources at the ground level.

The developmental situation in the context of our region is of course more complicated than what the framework implicating Chandhoke would allow. In fact, as we did acknowledge in the course of Ch.5 encompassing key aspects of the developmental

history of the region, the re-location of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) to Bhadrachalam town and the interventions of certain pro-active Project Officers did yield tangible benefits to the tribal population. The corresponding employment and educational opportunities have been seized by various tribals with both hands (see Rao 2013, for a positive recounting of the transformations wrought in the region). By and large, as we have also seen, the tribal youth generally has become career-oriented, with many clearly aspiring to have a stable income and lifestyle emulating their peers from Khammam and Hyderabad. Moreover, those who are employed outside the region actively encourage their kith and kin to follow their footsteps. In fact, we noted a tribal faculty from the region, working in a leading university in Hyderabad, act as an active mentor and guide for many prospective students. He often alerts them to various government job notifications, and also financially helps them to attend entrance coaching centers in the city. Of course, the various tribal platforms and NGOs spread across the region have also been instrumental in increasing the levels of awareness about tribal rights and ways of ensuring it through democratic and deliberative processes.

7.4 Renewed Discourse on ‘Developmentalism’: Further Governmental Mediations

The Government of India, in its official policy to deal with the Maoist movement - what it terms the ‘Naxal problem’ – explicitly states the following:

The Naxalites operate in a vacuum created by the absence of administrative and political institutions, espouse the local demands and take advantage of the disenchantment prevalent among the exploited segments of the population and seek to offer an alternative system of governance which promises emancipation of these segments from the clutches of ‘exploiter’ classes through the barrel of a gun.²⁸

Broadly, the framework of this understanding has led to a four-pronged strategy to combat Maoism, incorporating ‘security-related intervention’, ‘development-related intervention’, ‘ensuring rights and entitlements of the forest dwellers’, and ‘better public

²⁸ ‘Introduction’ in the *Status Paper on the Naxal Problem* tabled in Parliament by the Union Home Minister on 13 March 2006. See https://www.satp.org/satporctp/countries/india/document/papers/06mar13_naxal%20problem%20.htm >. Last accessed on 15 December 2018.

perception management’.²⁹ But, even prior to these formulations, in the context of Andhra Pradesh specifically, the government had implemented two specific measures: first, amendment to the Land Transfer Regulation, known as 1/70 Act, prohibiting the sale of tribal land to non-tribals, and, second, setting up a robust policing mechanism to tackle the socio-political unrest termed ‘insurgency’. Indeed, in the context of the latter, at the state level precisely, two organizations were formed - the ‘Special Intelligence Bureau’, an anti-Naxal intelligence unit of the state police in 1985 and ‘Greyhounds’, a crack police special operations task force for anti-Naxal operations in 1989. The Government of Andhra Pradesh even banned CPI–ML (PW) in May 1991, and its six front organizations like the Radical Students Union and Radical Youth League. The Greyhounds and Special Intelligence Bureau unleashed an all-out total attack on the various armed ML groups, finally pushing them beyond the Andhra Pradesh borders by the 2000s. It was a full period of questionable police methods like encounter deaths, torturous interrogations, and gross violations of all notions about human rights. This period also saw bloody attacks by the revolutionaries on all state symbols, leading to differences between the pro-Maoist supporters and the party regarding the methods of the revolution. During this time too, big landlords were forced to move out of their homes from Karimnagar, Adilabad, Khammam, Warangal, and Vishakapatnam. Indeed, there was a constant threat to the landlords in the Bhadrachalam region as well, with a large-scale eviction happening in the 1990s of a Raju dominated village in the Cherla mandal.

Amidst the violence and counter-violence, there were two attempts to initiate a dialogue between the revolutionaries and the Government of Andhra Pradesh. In fact, the Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), a voluntary association formed in 1997 by a group of activists headed by a former bureaucrat, R. S. Sankaran, liaised between the government and the revolutionaries. On the 10 of May 2002, the PW declared a unilateral ceasefire, even as the efforts to bring both the sides to the deliberating table were unsuccessful. Subsequently, following the pre-poll promise of the Congress party, the new Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y. S. R. Reddy, had talks with the revolutionaries

²⁹ Lok Sabha unstarred question no. 828 answered by the Minister of Home Affairs, Government of India on 01 March 2016. Source: Parliament of India website.

from 15 October to 18 October 2004. The CPI–ML (PW) and CPI–ML (Janashakti) representatives participated in the meetings; however, there was no resolution, and the talks failed. During the short time of the talks, the PW and Janashakti leaders were overground and conducted mass rallies and meetings. Following the collapse of the talks, however, massive repression by the state followed, wherein the PW faced major setbacks and was almost annihilated in the Telangana region. Later, yet, it was revealed that in September 2004, CPI–ML (PW) had merged with MCC to form the CPI–Maoist party. Experts opine that the merger could have been the reason for the failure to have a second round of talks, since the MCC was not happy with the proposition of talks and the possibility of leaving armed struggle for a more parliamentary mode of deliberation.

During the short duration of the October talks, Maoists had explicitly demanded a commission to inquire into the failure of land reforms (Balagopal 2007); and, even though the formal deliberations had collapsed, the AP government did constitute an eight-member Land Committee under the chairmanship of Koneru Ranga Rao, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Municipal Administration & Urban Development, on 23 December 2004. The Committee was mandated to examine the overall implementation of the government land distribution programmes and suggest measures for their effective implementation. Its formal report was submitted on 17 November 2006; and, on its part, the Government accepted 90 recommendations, rejected 12, and reserved 2 for further discussions. The Committee centrally observed that nearly 48% of the tribal lands were with the non-tribals, and that more than 50% of the cases regarding the Land Transfer Regulation act violations were ruled in favour of the non-tribals. Against this background, several specific recommendations were made by the Committee, such as the reopening of cases wherein rulings were favourable to the non-tribals regarding land transfer regulations, expediting all the cases, directing the police to not interfere on behalf of the non-tribals in land disputes, to accept oral submissions by the tribals regarding ownership of land, and setting up of legal cells in the ITDA administered jurisdictions. Specifically, with regard to the Bhadrachalam region, it was observed that nearly 25,000 acres of government land are in the possession of the non-tribals. This included the encroachment of the Bhadrachalam temple land, with reference to which the Committee concluded that, once the land is reappropriated by the Endowments Department, it should

be assigned to the tribals. The pressure on the villages in proximity to the Bhadrachalam town was also highlighted – the inference being that due to the space limitations and increased activities, the non-tribals largely were encroaching on the village land.

In this light, it is important to ask what constitutes ‘development’ largely for the structures of government, whether at the level of the state or the centre? In the near past, especially when the CCC was mediating between the PW and the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the motivating factor was the belief that a successful implementation of land reforms can stop political violence. The subsequent Ranga Rao committee recommendations in the state and the stricter implementation of the 1/70 Act are the prime indicators of this line of thought among the bureaucrats and civil society activists. In fact, the CCC in Andhra Pradesh and the Planning Commission committee at the level of the Central government often consisted of such people, especially retired bureaucrats who had stemmed the flows of political violence during their periods of service. Against this backdrop, one will have to examine the more recent initiatives such as the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) program and the Prime Minister’s Rural Development Fellowship (PMRDF) along with other infrastructural projects initiated by the Government of India in the respective states ‘infected by the Maoists’ (as official documents would have it). Significantly, these ameliorist developmental initiatives are not complemented by interventions in land management and ownership issues, which is the principal question in the tribal areas.

The IAP, announced in the Union Budget for 2010-11, was a fully funded Central scheme, initially targetting 33 Left-wing districts, including the Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh (and contiguously the Bhadrachalam region too).³⁰ Clearly, at the national level, the Government of India was striving to counter the left-wing extremism simultaneously on four planks – police action, developmental activities, effective good governance, and psychological campaign.³¹ The IAP and PMRDF programs were a part of this overall multi-pronged strategy, with the Planning Commission overseeing the

³⁰ Ministry of Home Affairs note titled *Integrated Action Plan to Develop Tribal and Backward Districts in LWE areas*, dated 10 January 2012. Source: Press Information Bureau.

³¹ Information gleaned from key security officials and *Pratividrohi* - a journal of the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School of the Indian Army.

project as a whole; and a committee consisting of the District Collector, Superintendent of Police, and District Forest Officer implementing it at the local level. In Khammam, the Project Officer of ITDA was also incorporated into the committee. The IAP was directed at developing public infrastructure and services like electrification, school buildings, drinking water facilities, village roads, and Anganwadi buildings.

In the Bhadrachalam region, under the plan, 538 works were sanctioned with a total estimated cost of Rs 56.24 crores under nine sectors - 202 works under additional infrastructure to educational institutions; 90 under Anganwadi centres; 29 works under electrification; 72 works directed at health sub-centres, veterinary dispensaries, and additional amenities; 24 works under minor irrigation; 21 works under roads; 48 works under livelihood activities; 50 works under information and communication technology Infrastructure (DTH) to PTG tribal remote and inaccessible habitations; and 2 works under solar lighting and the works.³² These works are executed by the departments such as Panchayati Raj, tribal welfare, power distribution, medicine and health, irrigation and command area development, sericulture, renewable energy and so on. Indeed, across these sanctioned works, nearly 524 have been completed according to the records made available.

In our interactions with the officials involved in executing the IAP in the Bhadrachalam region, we were privy to their complaints about getting clearances from the forest department to undertake the sanctioned works. The forest officials are allegedly not cooperating by often maintaining that the areas chosen for the works are part of the reserve forests, thus leading to protracted negotiations and delays of execution. Furthermore, the officials stated that the tribal people demanded high compensation for their land in the region. Besides, according to the district officials, the differences between the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Home Affairs over the implementation of IAP is also affecting its performance. Thus, the Ministry of Rural Development believes that the IAP funds should be channelised through local bodies like Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats to include the local people in the development process so that there will be

³² Information gathered from the ITDA Bhadrachalam office.

more impact in achieving the desired goals of the IAP. However, the Home Ministry is of the view that the implementation of the IAP must remain with the district administration. These administrative and jurisdictional squabbles notwithstanding, the specific propaganda by the Maoist groups alleging the development works by the Government as a conspiracy to facilitate the corporates and multinational companies (MNCs) exploiting the tribal lands and the mineral resources of the agency area have also resonated with the locals, especially the younger tribals. Besides, as with most government schemes, there are objections raised about the siphoning of public funds by the political representatives, officials and contractors, equally affecting the implementation of the IAP. Allegedly, there are also instances of contractors paying levies to the Maoists for carrying out public works (construction of roads, buildings etc.) in the affected areas. In fact, according to the local police officials, back in 2012, the Dummugudem police had arrested an official of a private contracting company along with five others with a huge load of cash meant to be handed over to a Maoist squad in the area.

All the same, generally across our region, although the local tribals are positive about some of the developmental works, particularly with electrification, solar lighting, and the setting up Anganwadi centres in the agency areas, they are however clear that projects aiming to provide employment and livelihood including safe drinking water and health care facilities would be much more beneficial for them. The tribals singularly blame the administration for allowing the contractors to employ ‘non-locals’, instead of the local tribals, in the various works undertaken under the IAP. Additionally, the tribal representatives and leaders accuse the administration of not consulting the local people by holding Gram Sabhas before implementing the IAP works. In fact, one of their demands is to channelise the funds sanctioned under various development projects through the local bodies such as Gram Panchayats for a more effective implementation of the works.

To be sure, the region has witnessed a considerable decline in Maoist activities and recruitments, which is further endorsed by security officials in the area. Yet, this success in controlling the spread of insurgent activity is attributed mainly to the local police

personnel, who (as claimed) have successfully managed to push the Maoists to the contiguous Chhattisgarh area from the Bhadrachalam region. It must be noted that only better communication and road networks can facilitate the development initiated under the IAP. In contrast, the interior areas close to the Chhattisgarh border continue to remain inaccessible. As such, one might say that the resurgence of 'developmentalism' have not had a direct bearing on the declining Maoist activities and recruitments in the region, since the recent initiatives are yet to reach the interior villages contiguous to the Chhattisgarh border.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 8

Forging Lands, Peoples and Places: The Perennial Frontier of Bhadrachalam

A good traveller has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving. [Lao Tzu]

Quite discernibly, our study – ‘*State, Development and People in Northeastern Telangana: Historical Sociology of a Perennial Frontier*’ – has traversed multiple grounds so as to both highlight and understand the content and form of the Bhadrachalam region. More abstractly, our study has sought to engage the interplay of state, people, and development at the margins through certain claims on space, geography, and territory. In our context, ‘understanding’, in the classical German sense of *verständnis*, stands for comprehension, insight, and apprehension (see Schwandt 2007: 303), with historical sociology as an orientation directing the mechanics of understanding. As such, the narrativization of multiple events covering specific aspects of the administrative, developmental, and people’s history animated the foregoing pages. In this our final chapter, as a way of concluding our study, we will recall the important arguments and suggestions asserted by the sequence of our chapters. Theoretically too, an effort is made to conceptualize the dimensions of a ‘geography of the social’ – as both impinging on and deriving from the contours of our study – and in the process lay the basis for a sharper understanding of the historical sociology on offer about the Bhadrachalam region as a ‘perennial frontier’.

8.1 Staging a Perennial Frontier: A Recapitulation

At the very outset, in the context of Chapter 1, entitled *Historical Sociology of a Region and People: Wading Through Critical Events*, we sought to offer a conceptual clarification of some key terms configuring our study such as frontier, region, historical sociology, and critical events, so as to concretize a dialogue between two intersecting

lines of thought, namely, the historical and the geographical. The idea of the ‘frontier’ as an analytical category helped in identifying and characterizing the constitution of a region in the periphery of the colonial and post-independence nation-state. As we rendered it, the region under study – namely, the Bhadrachalam region – comes through as an internal frontier throughout history, with all its implications for the creation of its people, the tribals particularly. Such a framing clearly enabled a sharper narrativization of the historical processes of both mainstreaming and protectionism on display in the context of a predominantly ‘tribal’ region.

More frontally, the resources of historical sociology helped in foregrounding the region as a liminal space enabling the construction of the administrative territory as a Fifth Schedule area. In fact, our critical recuperation of the grounds for a place-centered sociology served to further bolster the historical sociological perspective being brought to bear on the region, in the process helping to both locate and re-engage with the various events implicating the region. To reiterate, our discussion of the concepts of frontier, critical events, and historical sociology marks an attempt to bring together the historical and geographical imaginations for forging a new vantage point on the Bhadrachalam region. Indeed, as the enactment of our chapters wading through critical aspects of the administrative, developmental and people’s histories on offer has tried to suggest, there is a certain geography of the social implicating the region as a whole through its colonial and post-colonial transitions.

This last point has a particular methodological resonance, and we shall come to dwell on this in the section to follow. For the moment, we shall continue with a critical summation of the sequence of our chapters. Our Chapter 2 - *Compositional Toolkit: Methods and Sources* - explicated the modalities of our research, detailing the parameters that went into its actual framing and compilation of materials and placing in perspective the process of choice, navigation, and data gathering in the context of the ‘field’. The specific details of the fieldwork, the orders of archival retrieval, and related methodological issues of framing and composition were further summed up in this preliminary chapter.

Over the course of the next five chapters - the orders of narration being divided into three substantive parts, each straddling tangled histories - we sought to detail the crucial aspects of the historical sociology of the Bhadrachalam region. The first part, *Towards an Administrative History*, defined the region under discussion in terms of its geography through Chapter 3 primarily, entitled *Defining and Ruling a Territory: Moving into Bhadrachalam Region*. Initially, the chapter clarified the meaning and extent of Bhadrachalam region by way of a broad socio-economic outline, while also thematizing the process of its incorporation into an administrative structure as mediated by British colonialism. In fact, the first three sections of the chapter bounded the region in definite geographical, historical, economic, and political coordinates so as to constitute a historically legitimate space for critical discussion and analysis. Following this, we went on to track the external events and histories that led to the region's administrative incorporation under various regimes since the colonial intervention. In particular, we sought to capture and augment the notion of a 'perennial frontier' as an administratively expendable territory, while laying the basis for engaging with the Scheduled status of the region.

As such, the final section of Chapter 3 was a comparative historical unpacking of the Scheduled label attaching to the region. The historical analysis of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, as a kind of geography of exception at the intersection of law and governmentality, accordingly centred on *The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874*. This particular act is foundational at two levels: for one, it created a new socio-legal space in the administrative history of the Indian sub-continent; and, secondly, it created the social category of indigenous natives. These geographies of exception, as it were, was continued and consolidated in the post-colonial period, thereby giving permanence to the colonial socio-legal spaces and the associated social groups. To be sure, the Act is the anchor for territorial politics and resource claims on the part of the tribals in contemporary India.

Navigating through various colonial documents concerning the territorial basis of ruling that carved out separate administrative enclaves for tribals, Chapter 3 accordingly foregrounded contingency and the need for the rule of law as the reasons for scheduling

the Bhadrachalam region. Particularly, two colonial documents – George Russell’s report of 1832 and The Ganjam and Vizagapatnam Act of 1839 - helped in contextualising *The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874*. The effort overall was to present a narrative of the ‘tribal regions’ and ‘tribals’ beyond the dominant order of explanation (namely, ‘primitivism’ as a ruling ideology to understand the governance of tribal areas). In fact, an important consequence of our analysis is the demand that it places on other tribal regions to revisit the terms of their incorporation into the Act of 1874 and subsequent colonial and post-colonial legal provisions.

Chapter 4, entitled *A Mosaic of Contentious Mobilities and Identities: Hovering Around Bhadrachalam*, thickens and complicates the terms of the administrative history being instituted of the region as a whole. As will be recalled, we proceeded by engaging the colonial representation of the people of the region. These colonial renderings inevitably gave an identity to the people, which often set the terms for the later years’ perception of the region and its people. In these settings, the retrieval of two events during the colonial period portrayed the relations of ruling and identity formation that mediated the British presence and their policies. Thus, one section deliberated on the official response to facets of tribal migration from the region, while another sought to capture some key aspects of the non-tribal presence in the region and their assertion in the unfolding provincial politics of the times. The contested claims of the Bhadrachalam region as a tribal landscape emerged in the context of this exploration, while also serving to contextualize the claims and uncertainties of the ‘non-tribals’ living in the region.

Having largely traversed the contours of the administrative processes mediating the region and the patterns of its settlement and their underlying politics, our study moved into the second part of its narrative staging, what was rendered as *The Contours of a Developmental History*, marked out by a single extended chapter subsuming various details and episodes from both its colonial past and post-colonial present. Accordingly, several critical events structured this narrativization in the course of Chapter 5, entitled *Trajectories of Development: Configurations and Circulations of Capital and Subject-Formation*. Starting with a colonial profile of the socio-economic constitution of the region, we sought to retrieve how the flow of capital reconfigured the social and

economic relations as they obtained. A brief examination of a colonial missionary establishment, the Koi Mission of the Church Missionary Society, highlighted the impact of modernisation and evangelisation on the developmental trajectory of the region. Likewise, the discussion on land and interest rate regulations as moored in colonial anxieties about tribal regions set the developmental tone of the chapter. In these settings, the urbanisation of the region is traced to the only urban centre of the region - Bhadrachalam town. As an urban space, it is a small town slowly graduating into a tribal town in terms of population composition. Understandably, therefore, contestations about the 'rightful claim' over the town underwrite this emergence. The chapter further works its way through the recent internal developments in the region, undoubtedly triggered by external actors, by focusing on the developmental history implicated by the disturbances, reconfigurations, and reconciliation effected by the Polavaram Project.

A key aspect of the developmental contours of the region had to do with tracing the flow of capital as mediated by the legal apparatus; and, as such, we sought to engage with the question of the 'propertisation' of the tribal land. Evidently, as our Chapter 5 documented, the legal restrictions on land acquisitions and sales have created multiple anomalies in the region. Undoubtedly, the classification of the region as a scheduled region, as discussed in the administrative history subsuming Part I of our study, provided the backdrop for the framing of the legal restrictions. As such, therefore, the colonial legal approach to the 'tribal region' grounded the legal and economic arrangements as framed and institutionalised for operational purposes. Indeed, as maintained in the course of Chapter 5, the gap between the rulers and ruled in their understanding of the region led to the emergence of imperfections in the land market and the growth of a 'shadow economy' placing constraints on the possible pathways of development.

Intermeshing the Administrative and Developmental: Fragments of a People's History, the third part of the dissertation, sought to concretize the interwoven matrix of state, development, and people as thematized in the previous chapters. As such, the integuments of a people's history sought to present itself through two chapters documenting aspects of a contemporary history, in the shape primarily of Chapter 6, entitled *Vortex of Identities: New Currencies Among the Northeastern Telangana Tribals*

and Chapter 7, entitled *In the Name of People: Re-engaging Maoism, 'Development' and Tribals in the Bhadrachalam Region and Beyond*. Thus, Chapter 6 picked necessarily on the theme of tribal politics and religion, chiefly working from the oral testimony of the tribals in the region. In particular, we were privy to Koya voices lamenting the impact of missionaries in the region and the subsequent divisions and fissures in the tribal world. Importantly, the anchoring point for multiple claims among the tribals have to do with the legal embedding of the region as a 'tribal' area. Indeed, as our chapter documented, this question of identification comes to a head in the context of contestations over the issue of the classification of tribal religion in particular as part of the Census enumeration exercise. Of course, this is a larger space of the indigenization of tribal politics and assertion in contemporary India, but it also finds distinct echoes in the Bhadrachalam region. Clearly, as our chapter enumerates, the demand for the classification of 'Tribal Religion' as a distinct and separate category of religious affiliation marks an effort on the part of the tribals to disentangle themselves from the vortex of 'missionary' influences – where 'missionaries' include Hindu, Christian, and Islamic ones – even though it is articulated as a process of 'leaving Hinduism' primarily. The tribal question, as posed by this specific indigenizing move, is still maturing and will need further critical discussion in the future.

Alternatively, Chapter 7, as entitled, is an effort to come to terms with another layer of the region's contemporaneity, working its way through facets of the left-extremist insurgent history as it bears on the Bhadrachalam region. While this radical history does not seem entrenched in the area, it is still an important presence marking out a passageway into the high ground of Maoist politics in the adjoining regions of Bastar in Chhattisgarh and beyond. Indeed, the Bhadrachalam region has remained a perennial frontier, not quite only for the state and its unfolding administrative structures, but also for the forms of radical politics striving to overthrow the state. As such, we may see Maoism as a competing utopia operating in the region, with its own structure of complexities as instantiated by the fact of the tribals as a whole being caught in the cross-fire between the state and the insurgents. The chapter has also tried to capture the state initiatives at development that have emerged in recent times in areas affected by Maoist insurgency (of course, as documented across the Bhadrachalam region).

As the foregoing recapitulation should make clear, our study has been, at one level, a political sociology of development and, at another level, a work adducing to the place of geography in the constitution of the social. Of course, we drew on the framework of historical sociology to foreground the intersection of space, law and colonialism in the context of comprehending a region. As a socio-legal space, the region's path has been set in its status as a Fifth Schedule area, a determination anchored in the dynamics of colonial intervention. Adjacently, as a political space orchestrating demands and aspirations within and outside the matrix of the state, the region is a fertile ground for capturing the possibilities and limits of tribal politics in the country. So also, as a developmental space, the Bhadrachalam region has been a part of the capitalist flows emanating from the urgencies of the colonial period. The trajectories of this development have not obviously reached the people at large in terms of increased incomes and sustained patterns of livelihood. Perhaps the region's determination as a 'perennial frontier' may have something to do with its uneven historical trajectory. All the same, there is also a certain geography of the social to be accounted for in conceptual terms if we have to be augmenting the resources of historical sociology for a grasp of the Bhadrachalam region and its multiple histories as represented.

8.2 The 'Geography' of the Social: Some Methodological Focal Points

Broadly, as the phrase underscores, the 'geography' of the social implicates the role of geographical features in the process of the transformation of the natural landscape by social groups, ranging from an individual to a State. In many ways, the geographical factor bears on the social as a physical condition placing a constraint on the possibilities of change in a given location or place. Of course, technology and other forms of scientific innovations can transcend the geographical constraints that can bear on the process of social transformation. But any mapping of the unfolding dynamics of a location or physical space requires the mediation of history, both as a framework of knowledge and as a substantive process of change. As our study has sought to demonstrate, the framework of historical sociology as a disciplinary perspective and orientation can provide insights into the 'geography' of the social by historicizing and mapping the inter-relationships among people, objects, processes, events, and institutions

embedded and interacting in a given location. It is precisely such a geography of the social that we have sought to emblemize for the Bhadrachalam region as a whole. Given that space is always a historically contingent phenomenon, the historical sociology of the Bhadrachalam region on offer has had to come to terms with the ways in which the spatial impinges on the social in the context of the region. It is precisely this intersecting of the spatial and the social that our three histories – administrative, developmental and people’s history – have sought to stage as an unfolding framework of historical enunciation. In this light, surely, we need to be saying more about our characterisation of the Bhadrachalam region as a ‘perennial frontier’. We will certainly do so in the section to follow. For the moment, it is conceptually imperative to clarify the grounds of a geography of the social and outline its bearings for our recourse to the resources of historical sociology as a framework of socio-spatial mapping.

Surely, as part of the administrative history of the region, the specific cartographic placement of the region under different forms of governmental jurisdiction is a consequence of its singular geography. A narrow strip of land abutting a mighty river on the south and hilly forested areas to the north did not incentivise the administrators to engage with the region and its people concerning the latter’s demands and aspirations. Furthermore, this marginal territory constituted the frontier of the Central Provinces in terms of geography and language, before being transferred to the Madras Presidency, wherein it became part of the northern agency area assumed as the land of wild and barbarous tribes. Doubtless, the geography of the region played a crucial role by limiting the flow of the non-tribals into the region, at least until the transport facilities had developed. As a wild countryside, only the riverbanks were exploited for agriculture and this led to the settlement of villages. Most of the tribals, however, stayed in the interior parts of the region, away from the settled villages.

As such, our discussion of the Scheduled status of the region unequivocally underlined the geographical dimensions of the location. Indeed, unlike other ‘tribal regions,’ the Bhadrachalam region was not suited for colonial exploration and settlement that had led to the establishment specifically of hill stations; neither was the area resource-rich like the Wayanad region in Kerala. Hence, the Bhadrachalam region was included in the

Scheduled Districts Act of 1857 and later re-classified as a partially excluded area, leading to its subsumption under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India in the aftermath of Independence. The state-rendition of this geography in these terms had led to the classification of the region as tribal, despite the historical presence of the non-tribals as a settler-form of habitation. Of course, while tracing the flows of migration into the region, it was evident that the mighty Godavari River made it difficult and challenging for people south of the river to access the region except during the summer season. Until the construction of the bridge in the 1950s, the movement of people into and from the region was predominantly east-oriented, seeking out the East Godavari plain belt due to the contiguous land area. Notwithstanding the remoteness of the region in terms of its accessibility, the rich riverbank areas and sparse population density drove the migrants into the region. Our non-tribal narratives (especially in the context of Ch.4, Section 4.4 in particular) highlighted aspects of this movement. Quite discernibly, as we saw thereon, some of them came as part of the temple service; others for servicing the temple town, and some others reached the region for agricultural and other vocational pursuits.

This remoteness had attracted the Left insurgents/Maoists too to the region in due course, as it was envisaged to be the vanguard of the Communist revolution. Nevertheless, as we saw (across Ch.7 primarily) the geographical features of the terrain in terms of the narrow strip of the plain area and the rugged hilly expanse made it difficult for them to consolidate in the region. All the same, they maintain their presence, especially since the region marks an entry into their stronghold in Chhattisgarh. Indeed, against this insurgent backdrop, the region is a buffer zone or a frontier for the revolutionary takeover of the Indian state.

Clearly, then, if we are to extend the implications of our historical sociology of the Bhadrachalam region as forged, we can see that the contours of our narration overlap with the domains of historical geography, especially one focused on the elaboration of

the natural landscape.¹ As such, we may define landscape as “a human inscription or shaping of land, a platform or setting of human action, or an aesthetic way of seeing” (Domosh 2020: 117). Undoubtedly, the landscape is both an object and a representation, coming into being “only at the moment of its apprehension by the external observer” (Dora 2020: 122). It is not surprising, therefore, that historical geography traces its origin to “reading landscape as history embedded in the land” (ibid.: 124), in the process viewing the production of landscape as a result of specific socio-economic forces. Indeed, as a recent compilation has gone on to affirm: “Historical geographies are made; they are not innate. Historical geography is, and always has been, practically constituted in and through the analysis of different objects” (Withers *et al.* 2020: xliii). It is primarily in this spirit that our study sought to capture the legal and administrative process that converted a hinterland into a tribal land, while also attending to the socio-economic transformations that reoriented not only the way the people at large related to land but also how they related among themselves.

Without doubt, at a foundational level, the complexity of the human and natural worlds in terms of geographical knowledge and social anthropological perspectives are quite charged and interwoven. Thus, Stuart Elden and Eduardo Mendieta (2011) have actively sought, in the context of Kant, to highlight the complex interconnections between geography, history, and anthropology. As they render it, Kant exemplified the significance of geography in empirically grounding knowledge, even construing physical geography and anthropology as grounding the process of his own thought.² Broadly, for Kant, geography (as compilation of facts about the physical description of the earth’s surface and the phenomena on it) is about ‘external sense’, and anthropology (as the relation of the human to the world) is about ‘inner sense’, while going on to constitute them as basic modes of knowing, even rendering them as preliminary for any further

¹ Importantly, some scholars like Carl Sauer (1925) consider landscape as the basic unit and key concept of the discipline of geography, even going on to maintain that “cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group” (Sauer 1925: 343).

² More pointedly, although Kant labelled his geographical thinking as physical geography, Elden and Mendieta (2011) consciously remind us that Kant covers all aspects of geography including human geography. Elsewhere, Elden also has noted that Kant delved into geography so as to make travel accounts into a legitimate object of academic study, as well as to make young students citizens of the world (see Elden 2011: 2).

study of the contemporary condition of the earth. Kant often lectured and deliberated on geography and anthropology because it helped create (on his terms) *Weltkenntnis*, the world knowledge ultimately leading to a moral and practical life (Elden 2011: 6).

Of course, as Elden and Mendieta (2011) further disclose, the Kantian division of inner knowledge (or pure reason) and outer knowledge (or empirically grounded reason) translates into a separation between spatial knowledge (largely the domain of geography) and temporal knowledge (the object of history per se). Pertinently, even as this latter order of separation is retraceable to Descartes, Elden and Mendieta maintain that Kant marks a distinct departure in that he places geographical knowledge as an equally viable framework to understand the world. In other words, Kant is seen as striving to bridge geography and history, where even as geography provided the grounds for history, history strives to come to term with the entailments of a given geography (see also Church 2011: 23).

Further reflections of space and place

Even as these foundational resources have formed the basis of our staging – through the sequence of the chapters on offer - the substantive geographical considerations as invoked by our study as a whole also have something to do with the critical geographer David Harvey's formulation. Basically, for the latter, it is a spatial consciousness or geographical imagination that “enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him, and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them” (Harvey 2005: 212). In fact, juxtaposing the sociologist C. W. Mills popular construct of the ‘sociological imagination’ with that of his own (namely, a ‘geographical imagination’), Harvey assiduously reminds us that the former, with its emphasis on history and time, can often work to the detriment of space, place, region, territory, and environment; that, indeed, it is imperative to bring both the sociological and the geographical imagination into a critical dialogue with each other. Interestingly, even as Harvey laments the lack of spatial consciousness in the advocacy of the sociological imagination, the geography of the social that he strives to foreground can be traced to the classical sociologists Durkheim and importantly Simmel. In fact, for

Simmel, space is indispensable to social life, without which forms of social life can never obtain and would even cease to exist (see Fuller and Low 2017: 472). Pointedly, Simmel sought to examine the precise ways in which spatial forms and social interactions produced meanings, although he did discern that under conditions of modern life the elements of social organization come to be increasingly detached from space and spatiality as such comes to be rendered less significant (see Urry 2001: 5).

It is perhaps imperative to recall that, until the 1970s, space was largely neglected as it was conflated with territory, and it was only with the works of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey that it was resurrected as critical tool of analysis (see Urry 2001, as also Fuller and Low 2017). The contours of a Marxist and post-Marxist critique of sociology of space and place, especially in the contexts of urban and rural sociology, as recovered through Castells (1989) and Massey (1994 and 1995) served to further reinforce the centrality of space especially as an integral factor in the processes of capitalist production. Furthermore, as Urry (2001: 8-9) specifically reminds, Harvey's formulation of time-space compression in the capitalist process (as an extension of the Marxian annihilation of space by time) have made the critical scholarship more sensitive to place as indeed urging a sharper differentiation between places.

Significantly, in an assessment of 'place' in sociology, Gieryn (2000) cogently maintains that place should not be a mere setting or a backdrop; rather, it should be approached as an agential force effecting the contours of social life. He pointedly identifies three features of a place – namely, geographical location, material forms, and investment with meaning and value – maintaining that the interplay of these features with social practices and structures constitute the sociology of a place. To be sure, the significance of place lies in locating differences and instituting hierarchies, in the context of which “fundamental social classifications take on imposing and constraining force as they are built into everyday material lives” (Gieryn 2000: 473). As such, the sociology of places can consist in “extend[ing] or deny[ing] life-chances to groups” (ibid: 474). Giving due attention to the dynamics of space, therefore, implicates a sense of place as an artifact that can be interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined (see also Soja 1996).

In a masterly work *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, the philosopher Jeff Malpas (2018) has asserted the centrality of place in human experience as the frame to understand the very structure and possibility of all experience. Ranging through a host of literary and philosophical figures, he infers that not only the identity of people is tied to place, but also determines the possibility of the appearance of ‘things’ – whether objects, self, and others. Accordingly, the world is seen to present itself in and through place; and thus, as rendered, “it is in place, and in relation to our own being-in-place, the world begins” (Malpas 2018: 12). He particularly reinserts the centrality of place – considering that it is often denied and obscured in the world of modernity - by staging it as a theoretical and methodological category. Place thus is approached as a constellation comprising of spatiality and temporality, subjectivity and objectivity, self and other; even constantly reiterating that place as a structure cannot separate these elements from the relations that connect them (ibid.: 166). More significantly for our purposes, Malpas argues that ‘placelessness’ or loss of place is an experience of loss of distinctiveness of the place, even going on to maintain that it can be triggered by the “convergence of things and activities that were once separate, through the connecting of spaces and places that were once apart” (Malpas 2018: 204).

Indeed, against this backdrop of theorizing about space and place, it may seem somewhat contradictory to assert, as our study does, about the importance of implicating the geography of the social. Likewise, one is aware of the argument underlying a lot of the scholarship on contemporary globalization, where it is constantly emphasized that given the neoliberal anchoring of the processes of socio-economic transformation today, most spatial and geographical differences have been ironed out (see Harvey 2006, among others, for the lines of this argumentation). But, as our historical sociology of a region forces home, there is a sense in which the geographical element in the constitution of the social still holds supreme. Quite emphatically, we have sought to give character and form to a region and its people who are marginal in the State’s perspective as elaborated in the histories that have formed the basis of our narration. In doing so, accordingly, we have approached the Bhadrachalam region as a relational field in which the unfolding structures of activity have redefined the space-time register of the place (without

necessarily rendering the latter as an absolute order of fixed coordinates within which the activities and events unfolded).

Of course, as we recounted in our opening chapter on the conceptual grounds of the study, historical sociology is a way of fusing the analytical style of sociology and the narrative style of history (see Abbott 2001). As such, in formulating our approach to the Bhadrachalam area through the lens of historical sociology, we sought to gather together and mediate between the various meanings attributed to the region by different stakeholders, ranging from statist authorities to local notables, development functionaries and ordinary people. Our methodological focal point of bringing sociology and geography into critical dialogues also meant coming to terms with the various representations of the region as a physical landscape and as a landscape of belief and belonging with its own histories of marginalization and dispossession. In fact, in a manner of speaking, we can say that our attempt at combining a historically sensitive geography and a geographically contextualised history effectively situates the region in a broader framework of description and comparison, and in the process pushes the very ground of historical sociology (see also Friedman 2003). To be sure, historical sociology as a disciplinary framework internal to sociology is always given over to destabilizing and recontextualizing concepts and theories about social practices and forms of life. But, considering that most social forms come laced together with spatial connotations and are embedded in meanings of space and place, a recourse to the critical resources of historical geography is imperative for revitalizing our historical sociological practices. Accordingly, as the practice-oriented social theorist and philosopher Theodore Schatzki (2002) has reminded us, social life is invariably rooted in a site where it takes place, and it is a mesh of orders and practices which composes this site. As such, therefore, any geography of the social must also translate into a 're-siting' of the social as a way of mapping afresh any dynamics of social life and social transformation.

8.3 The Frontier as a Perennial Entity: Crossing the Borders

As the dictionary meaning of the word 'perennial' discloses, it is often rendered adjectivally to refer to something that lasts for a long (and even infinite) time; and, as such, designates something enduring or continually recurring. On the face of it, then, if

an object is labelled as unchanging entity, can we attribute a history to it? Obviously, the answer depends on the part or element of the entity assigned the unchanging status. In our instance, as represented through the sequence of our chapters, the very qualification of the Bhadrachalam region as a ‘frontier’ is the element that permeates the temporal variations on offer through the blending of our three histories. As such, our study sought to traverse this geographically specific frontier on several registers – administrative, socio-cultural, economic and political. The perennial across these registers represents certain ‘sediments of time’ as manifested in the form of shifting legal, administrative, cultural, economic, and political dispositions. Clearly, the invocation of the perennial in these terms is foundationally different from the overtures of ‘perennial philosophy’ *a la* Coomaraswamy (2007) which premises itself on a single unitary and ultimate reality transcending time.

Needless to say, on our register, the ‘perennial’ is a heuristic device to explain the continuity of particular features, even as the processes of their constitution can vary over time. Thus, we can see two sets of perennial features in our region of study: one having to do with its administrative location and the second relates to the recurrent marginalisation of the needs and demands of the people in the region. Surely, the latter contingency is connected to the first, namely, the administration’s approach to the region. All the same, in setting it apart as we have, our effort is to accentuate the never-ending process of administrative categorisation and the continually recurring marginalisation of the people in the region. Undeniably, the logic of re-drawing the administrative location of the region under various regimes of power varied from the colonial to the post-colonial period; and yet, all through these statist grafting’s, the region remained on the fringes of the administrative structures of mapping and rule. In fact, even after the formation of the Telangana state, in the course of the reordering of its administrative districts, the demands of the region were largely side-stepped and ignored (our Ch.3, Sect.3.4 in particular, recounted this process of redrawing in some detail). Besides, the colonial construction of the tribal population with its inherent vocabulary of sedentarisation and the fixing of populations seems to permeate most aspects of the contemporary life of the region. Indeed, as the work of the anthropologist-historian Ann Laura Stoler (2016) has constantly reminded us, all efforts to wish away the past in the present is an impossible

task since there is a tenacious presence of colonial and imperial dispositions all through processes of change and historical transitions.

Undoubtedly, the British exploration of the region as a waterway and subsequent colonisation led to the entry of ‘outsider’ elements into the region, including the foreign missionaries and local people from other enclaves. The colonial attempt to exploit the water resource of the region and in due course other resources like timber transformed the lives of the people of the region. Our Ch.3, Sect.3.3 in particular, recalls the specific order of reasons making for the entry of the British into the Bhadrachalam region, even as our subsequent chapters encompassing moments in the developmental and people’s history sharpened our sense of the transformations. Pointedly, as discussed in our developmental history across Ch.5 (and, specifically, Sect.5.3), the presence of colonial capital led to the aggravation of famine in the region and oversaw the movement of the tribals from the interior parts to the areas closer to the Godavari River. Indeed, the dynamics of the sedentarisation process - broadly, Ch.4, Sect.4.2 in particular - as triggered by the colonial state led to the slow and steady decline of the tribal culture and livelihoods; and presently, as we saw across Ch.6, these historical processes have led to a mixed and messy field of assertions about the indigenous tribal identity.

Likewise, the contours of our discussion of the Polavaram Project further amplified the fact that this major hydrological restructuring is a continuation of the colonial attempt to tame and utilize the Godavari River for ostensible benefits that go beyond the confines of the region. Indeed, the wide expanse of the Godavari River continues to serve as a medium to articulate the political project of the state and its functionaries. Accordingly, in the colonial scheme of things, the river was primarily the means to access the cotton fields in the upstream area; whereas, in the postcolonial period, the river is the solution for the irrigation needs and drinking requirements of people beyond the region’s confines. Undoubtedly, a development-induced displacement and the loss of livelihoods and ecology are the visible consequences of this project (our Ch.5, particularly Sect.5.5, bears on these concerns). Notwithstanding the warnings and cautions issued by activists and other stakeholders about the general loss of habitat, which is the source of livelihood

and cultural practices, the rehabilitation packages do not adequately address these concerns.

Further ruminations of the frontier

For a ‘stranger’ to the region, like this researcher, an existential sort of question begs engagement: do we really need the ‘modern’ facilities and way of life to claim progress and more significantly a sense of fulfilment? Indeed, as part of the romanticism underlying our existential question, one is privy to the understanding that the bountiful nature and the seasonal swings of rain and sun are an effective antidote to the tribulations experienced with modern urban living. Interestingly, yet, even as the outsider gaze can always run the risk of being patronising of the other, it is also a source for viewing the region as a kind of frontier. Indeed, the very anxiety about the presence or absence of ‘modernity’ as construed by the patronising stranger also can come across as a sort of frontier (for, after all, it is the line that separates the known from the unknown, as indeed the wild and the untamed from the settled and domesticated). More pointedly, as our discussion in Ch.3 (Sect.3.5 in particular) disclosed, it is often the incomprehensibility of the outsiders that structures the binary of known/unknown and of wild/settled about a region and its people.³ However, we must venture to ask: can the idea of frontier exist beyond this frame of anxiety? To be sure, as urged in our opening Ch.1, the idea of frontier can be a heuristic device to understand the spatial structuring of the region and the relational arrangements between living beings and social arrangements at a place. Needless to say, our study has used the concept of frontier to frame the messy entanglements of history, politics, and economics that envelope a region and its people.

Simultaneously though, the local aspirations and needs generated from the region invoke another sense of the frontier beyond the ‘outsider gaze’. Arguably, here a kind of internal gaze generates this notion of frontier. Thus, for instance, the demand for ‘tribal religion’ challenging the terms of state categorisation (as encountered across Ch.6) can be

³ See also Guha (1997), which reads this anxiety back into Empire and its history. Indeed, our thoughts here were originally framed quite independently of this Guha essay, although it must be conceded that there is a different historiographical problem that the latter delivers into. All in all, the affective space underlying most exercises of representation – whether purely scholarly-academic or administrative-political – can be a serious ground of study.

construed as a register for the local aspirations and needs directed at crossing the limits and thresholds set by the state. The demand, interestingly, is located at the interface between the accepted state practice of classifying the social groups and the assertion of the same social groups to be classified in ‘new ways,’ which is the more rightful way as they assert. The shifting contours of these demands, as staged both by state actors and non-state ones, clearly implies that many frontiers have become the centre of both state and non-state activities over time and become somewhat ‘mainstreamed’ (see Slotkin 2000 and Brown 2012, for a discussion of the American experience along this axis). However, in the context of our frontier, the Bhadrachalam region is still not part of the ‘mainstream society’ where one can expect a quality of life in terms of the availability of goods and services on par with other similarly populated regions. As parts of our historical staging have demonstrated, most of the medical and educational facilities are restricted to the Bhadrachalam town. Likewise, the spaces for leisure and entertainment compared to a neighbouring non-agency area like Kothagudem are generally lacking. In these terms, the relative ‘backwardness’ of the Bhadrachalam region is a singular feature that seems to tag on forever. As we saw, the people in the region as a whole are seeking medical, educational, leisure, and entertainment activities as elsewhere, and often lament the ‘remoteness’ and ‘lack of development’ in their region.

In many ways, then, the Bhadrachalam region represents an enigmatic situation in that, on the one side, we have clear instances of land alienation amidst multiple tribal organizations and Communist revolutionaries, and, on the other side, we have the absence of a cohesive and systematic opposition to the development-induced displacement even though it threatens the existence of the region. Most of the population, even though alarmed by the escalating situation, is not vociferous in their stance towards the construction of the Polavaram dam. The admixture of competing interests and political agendas – as reflected in the desire to both mainstream and protect the tribal universe - is a perennial dilemma for the policymakers and the citizenry at large. All the same, as our study has tried to disclose, various historical forces have mediated the region from the point of view of the tribals in particular. Thus, as we saw, the British colonial interests sought to arrest the southward movement of the Koyas from the Bastar region (see Ch.4, Sect.4.2 in particular), while also actively influencing the strategies and

orientations of the non-tribals from outside the region (these relevant details are mapped across Ch.5 [specifically Sect.5.2], as also Ch.4 [Sect.4.4]). Thus, a combination of historical mediations oversaw the sedentarisation of the Koyas largely in the region; even as, in the course of the contemporary period, it has translated into the folds of their assertion as an indigenous social grouping positioned distinctly apart from the preponderant Hindu, Christian, and Muslim universes of belief and belonging (as mapped across Ch.6)

Of course, this reforging of lands, peoples and places needs also to be read alongside the spatial compression of the region triggered by the increased economic activities. Clearly, as we sought to detail in Ch.5 (across Sect.5.3, mainly), the lace-making industry set up by the missionaries, indeed induced by the colonial engineers stationed at Dummugudem, pushed the region into some degree of prominence. In fact, as we saw, it was the missionary presence primarily that enabled the region to get relief from overseas during the famine. Likewise, as part of the Central Provinces and later Madras Presidency, the developments in British India did not escape the region; our discussion of the Excluded Areas Association in Ch.4 (Sect.4.3, in particular) was indeed part of such a demonstration. Unquestionably, the movement of non-tribals from other regions had changed the complexion of the Bhadrachalam region. The infrastructural development, like the bridge construction in the late 1950s, clearly accelerated the flow of the non-tribals as well as increased the tribal movement outside the region, even changing the morphology of Bhadrachalam town, with the main road connecting the bridge replacing the temple as the centre of mobility and economic activities (again, across Ch. 4, Sect. 4.4 in particular).

But, having admitted so, we must recognize that the spatial compression did not quite alleviate the status of the region as a frontier. Even today, it is an expendable territory for the governmental structures, in that often in the name of administrative convenience the Bhadrachalam region has been split, spliced, and stitched to various jurisdictions and the spatial reordering of districts. In fact, our discussion of the unending exercise of re-drawing district boundaries (in the context of Ch.3, Sect.3.4 primarily) spills over into the very present. The recent 2022 Republic Day announcement of the Government of

Andhra Pradesh regarding the creation and reorganisation of its districts points sharply, all over again, at the state apathy towards the tribals as a whole.⁴ Indeed, after the formation of Telangana state, the Chintur mandal as assigned to Andhra Pradesh became part of East Godavari district, even as it now slotted to be part of newly named Alluri Sitaramaraju district with its headquarters at Paderu, almost 250 kilometres away. Does this mean that the spatial compression triggered by capital is compromised by the administrative logic of jurisdiction and rule? For sure, the administrative logic is guided by the dominant political interests and the competitive claims of various pressure groups; even as, in this charged scenario, the claims of the tribals themselves are often overlooked since they comprise only a segment of a complex electoral arithmetic with its own games of one-upmanship and political chicanery. Undoubtedly, the spatial compression as spoken about both in the critical literature and in the flow of our region's history is a rendering from the perspective of State and Capital, and hardly condenses the interests of the People at large. The Bhadrachalam region remains a frontier in the uneven and fraught development trajectories unfolding since the processes of colonial incorporation.

Beyond utopias, statist and insurgent

Doubtless, our study marks a suggestive point of entry into the ongoing dynamics of the Bhadrachalam region. Indeed, several aspects of the religion and politics in the region need deeper examination. The present contours of 'Leaving Hinduism' as articulated in the region does represent an important threshold in the contours of tribal politics in India, with the region being privy to the widening currents of indigeneity sweeping through tribal assertions as a whole. All the same, it may be imperative to juxtapose the developmental challenge, as it bears on the lives of ordinary Koyas and Konda Reddis, with the possibilities opened up by the neoliberal economic transformation. For one, it has been claimed by various functionaries, both at the level of the state and independent development consultants, that the information technology mediated channels of communication along with the possibilities of marketing minor forest produce and other artefacts through the online medium can usher qualitative changes in the region. While

⁴ Of the many news reports covering this development, the following is quite explicit and a timely reminder about the perennial sources of tribal anxiety: <<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra-pradesh/2022/jan/27/tribals-raise-voices-against-new-districts-fear-exploitation-of-forest-411823.html>>.

this seems somewhat out of context, we can still be asking the question: how are those given to skilling themselves to latch on precisely to the opportunities available in the market economy? In fact, the many young tribals whom this researcher opened up to invariably lamented their lack of employability and skills for manoeuvring the digital world and its ecosystem of start-ups and business models. Evidently, too, the question also obtains primarily about who will initiate the ‘skilling’ and the modalities of doing so in a crammed and wobbly employment and education scenario afflicting the country as a whole.

Furthermore, given that the Polavaram project will make the overall region agriculturally less attractive, the question looms large about whether the non-tribals will stay on in the area, as indeed whether the tribals will find anchors for their ancestors and associate forms of worship? Without doubt, the changing landscape due to the backwater flooding of the region adversely affects both the tribals and non-tribals. Will the non-tribals who moved out of the region due to the project return and reclaim the ‘new’ riverbank areas? In fact, some of the non-tribals had confided that they would do so and reclaim the land, if they can arrive at a consensus with the local tribal population. All the same, in the current scenario, it is an open question whether the trickle of non-tribal families, especially the younger generations, actively seeking opportunities elsewhere can lead to an overall reduction in their presence within the region. Most of the younger generation, across this segment, are convinced that until the region is ‘developed’ in terms of social infrastructure like schooling, medical, and leisure facilities commensurate with other neighbouring regions, they would do not want to come back.

In this vortex of change and uncertainty, will the Communist utopia for the tribals gain the upper hand in the region to reset them back to their ‘earlier mode of living’ devoid of ‘capitalist’ trappings? Our chapter on Maoism in the region (Ch.7) clearly suggested that most of the tribals in the area have sought to keep away from the revolutionary politics. An underdeveloped revolutionary consciousness and the general availability of spaces to negotiate welfare goods and services from the State have largely dampened the prospects of the Maoists in the region. Nevertheless, the fact that the Maoists are present in the region does act as an important factor in devising State policies and programs, as for

instance the Integrated Action Plan or even the MGNREGA oriented towards delivering micro-developmental benefits. Moreover, as we saw in Ch.5 (Sect.5.2, in particular), the larger structure of amendments brought to the land alienation act is also a kind of response to the spread of the revolutionary activities in the tribal areas of undivided Andhra Pradesh. At any rate, the question of Maoism remains a political problem, being largely oriented as a political solution for the developmental problems of widening inequality and mass deprivation.

In sum, then, rather than being a solution or a prospect, the Bhadrachalam region of our study remains a ‘frontier’ raising a host of questions for any historical sociology of state, development and people. Of course, such a summation does not in any way claim to exhaust the question of the politics of social transformations in general; rather, our dissertation has attempted to address key elements of the question in order to determine its implications. We certainly realize, as the compelling sociologist and social theorist, Zygmunt Bauman, has very effectively stated, that “all societies produce strangers; but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way” (Bauman 1997: 17). Evidently, in the course of our narration on offer, we have tried to document this process for a region as a whole, with the ‘perennial frontier’ serving as the name of the place where the opposites flow into one another and demands a historicization of both the present and the past. If a new social compact between the state and its people is truly to emerge in the future, then the very notion of constitutional order will have to change profoundly.

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APPENDICES 1 and 2

Rehabilitation and Resettlement, as envisaged, under Polavaram Project

Appendix 1: Benefits for Project Affected Families as per Andhra Pradesh State Policy 2005

Prescribed item/ Issue	Andhra Pradesh State Policy - 2005
House site	Rural: 202 Square Metres Urban: 75 Square Metres
Transportation charges	Rs. 5000/-
Financial Assistance for cattle shed	Rs. 15000/-
Financial Assistance for construction of work shed/shops	Rs. 25000/-
House construction grant for BPL/APL families	Rs.53000/- (50000+3000)
Additional Financial Assistance to BPL families	Assistance under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) Scheme as applicable
Allotment of land against land acquired	2.5 Hectare (Ha) of dry Land 1.25 Ha of wet land
Financial assistance for 1 Ha waste/degraded land for land development	Rs. 10000/-
Financial assistance for 1 Ha wet land for agriculture production	Rs. 5000/-
P.A.F (land less) – (Minimum Agricultural) Min. Agl. Wages	750 days
P.A.F (marginal farmers) – Min. Agl. Wages	500 days
P.A.F (Small farmers) – Min. Agl. Wages	375 days
Agriculture labour – Min.Agl. Wages	625 days
Subsistence allowance to displaced families – Min. Agl. Wages	240 days
Vulnerable persons (Annuity policy)	Rs. 500/- monthly pension
R & R Benefits for project affected families of Scheduled Tribes	
Govt. shall acquire land in the project benefited area in lieu of acquired land restricting to the extent.	2.5 Ha dry or 1.25 Ha wet land or to the extent of land acquired whichever is lower.
Additional financial assistance for loss of their customary rights/ usage of forest produce. Each non tribal PAF each non tribal PAF who is a member of a registered Fishermen co-operative society/ fishing license holders in the affected zone and who lost fishing rights and	500 days minimum agriculture wages

livelihood shall be additional financial assistance equivalent to 500 days minimum agriculture wages for loss of fishing rights.	
Tribal PAFs resettled outside the district or outside tribal area will get higher R&R benefits in monetary terms.	25 %.
The Tribal families residing in the project affected areas having fishing rights in the river/ pond / dam shall be given.	Fishing rights in the reservoir.
The non-tribal families in the project affected areas having fishing rights in the river/ pond / dam who is a member of registered fishermen co-operative society/ fishing license holders shall be given fishing rights in the reservoir area project Affected areas having fishing rights in the river/ pond/ dam shall be given.	
Tribal Development Plan – Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP)	In Case of project involving land acquisition on behalf of a requiring body which involves involuntary displacement of two hundred or more Scheduled Tribal families, a Tribal Development Plan shall be prepared, in such form as may be prescribed, laying down the detailed procedure for settling land rights due but not settled and restoring titles of tribal on alienated land by undertaking a special drive together with land acquisition. The plan shall also contain programme for development of alternate fuel, fodder and non-timber forest produce (NTFP) resources on non-forest lands within period of five years sufficient to meet requirements of tribal communities who are denied access to forests.
Skill Development Training	Proposed training programme for development of entrepreneurship, technical & professional skills for self-employment.
CONSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS TO SCHEDULED TRIBE (ST) Project Affected Persons (PAPs) AT THE RE-SETTELEMENT CENTRE:	The PAPs shall enjoy all the constitutional benefits at new settlement also to which they were entitled to at the village that was acquire for the project.

Draft Scheme / Plan for R&R in Scheduled Areas	The Consultation with the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level in the Scheduled Areas under Schedule V of the Constitution shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas), Act, 1996(40 of 1996). In cases of involuntary displacement of two hundred or more Scheduled Tribes families from their land and houses in Scheduled Areas, the concerned Tribal Advisory Councils may also be consulted.

Source: Annexure II of Part (d) of Unstarred Question no 2750, Rajya Sabha, 4 August 2014 (as responded to by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation)

Appendix 2: Compensation Under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013

Sl. No	Elements of Rehabilitation and Resettlement Entitlements	Entitlements / Provisions
1	Housing units in case of displacement.	1) House is lost in rural areas, a constructed house shall be provided as per the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) specifications. If a house is lost in urban areas, a constructed house shall be provided, which will be not less than 50 Square Metres in plinth area. 2) Any such family in urban areas which opts not to take the house offered shall get a one-time financial assistance for house construction, which shall not be less than one lakh fifty thousand rupees. Any affected family in rural areas so prefers, the equivalent cost of the house may be offered in lieu of the constructed house.
2	Land for Land	In every project those persons losing land and belonging to the scheduled castes or the scheduled tribes will be provided land equivalent to land acquired or two and a one-half acre, whichever is lower.

3	Offer for Developed Land	Land is acquired for urbanization purpose, twenty per cent of the developed land will be reserved and offered to land owning project affected families, in proportion to the area of their land acquired and at a price equal to the cost of acquisition and the cost of development.
4	Choice of annuity or Employment	(a) Where jobs are created through the project, after providing suitable training and skill development in the required field, make provision for employment at a rate not lower than the minimum wages provided for in any other law for the time being in force, to at least one member per affected family in the project or arrange for a job in such other project as may be required, or (b) Onetime payment of five lakh rupees per affected family, or (c) Annuity policies that shall pay not less than two thousand rupees per month per family for twenty years, with appropriate indexation to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers.
5	Subsistence grant for displaced families for a period of one year	Three thousand rupees per month for a period of one year from the date of award. SC's and STs displaced from Scheduled Areas shall receive an amount equivalent to fifty thousand rupees.
6	Transportation cost for displaced families.	One-time financial assistance of fifty thousand rupees as transportation cost for shifting of the family, building materials, belongings and cattle.
7	Cattle shed/ petty shops cost	Petty shop shall get one-time financial assistance of such amount as the appropriate Government may, by notification, specify subject to a minimum of twenty-five thousand rupees for construction of cattle shed or petty shop as the case may be.
8	One time grant to artisan, small traders and certain others	Each affected family of an artisan, small trader or self-employed person or an affected family which owned non-agricultural land or commercial, industrial or institutional structure in the affected area, and which has been involuntarily displaced from the affected area due to land acquisition, shall get one-time financial assistance of such amount as the appropriate government may, by notification, specify subject to a minimum of twenty-five thousand rupees.
9	Fishing rights	The affected families may be allowed fishing rights in the reservoirs.
10	One time Resettlement Allowance	Each affected family shall be given a onetime Resettlement Allowance of fifty thousand rupees only.

11	Stamp duty and registration fee	1) The stamp duty and other fees payable for registration of the land or house allotted to the affected families shall be borne by the Requiring Body. 2) The land for house allotted to the affected families shall be free from all encumbrances. 3) The land or house allotted may be in the joint names of wife and husband of the affected family.

Source: Annexure II of Part (d) of Unstarred Question no 2750, Rajya Sabha, 4 August 2014 (as responded to by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation)

Tax Raj: Koyas, migration and adivasi frontiers in the central provinces

Rakesh M. Krishnan

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This article examines an incident of tax-avoidance migration by the adivasis in the Central Provinces during the colonial period. Using this incident, the article reflects on two interrelated questions: the colonial attitude towards adivasis and adivasi engagement with the colonial state. The reflection on these questions centres on the notion of belonging. By exploring 'belonging' as a concept on the register of sedentary-nomadic metaphysics, the article offers insights into the idea of being adivasi. Ultimately, by navigating the ontological and historical-political grounds, this article attempts to recover a history from the colonial period that is often seen to be marginal, both in terms of the social group involved and the nature of the event. Whether it would yield a non-violent history of adivasis or not is a question that is left open for further debate and discussion.

Keywords: migration, Adivasis, belonging, Bhadrachalam, Koyas

While one can show that our anti-colonial and postcolonial politics have always depended on precisely this image of the final, uncompromisable political agent—the Adivasi—our historical and political discourses have always failed to explain the adivasi's particular kind of politicization and have ended up identifying, with great unease but curiosity, the adivasi's perpetual insurgent state as a peculiarly 'tribal' state of being.¹

What would be the history of social groups identified as the adivasis? A history of rebellions? A history of displacement? A history of cultural and social uniqueness? A history of outliers to capital accumulation? Or, were the adivasis also thinking, negotiating, and non-violent subjects who responded and adapted to their socio-economic and political conditions beyond a 'perpetual state of insurgency'?

¹ Banerjee, 'Culture/Politics', p. 100.

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> Deconstructing Tribal Geographies in Central India

by **Rakesh M. Krishnan**, University of Hyderabad, India

In this essay, I argue that historical sociology is vital to strengthening the sociological understanding of tribal communities. Presently, the anthropological literature on tribal communities informing sociological analysis lacks both contextualization and a historical dimension. Hence, a comparative historical recontextualization of categories of analysis can clarify the messy entanglements of the tribal world. I argue that the “frontier” as a category can capture these messy entanglements, the limits of state power and people’s aspirations. Here frontier means both the edge of settlements beyond which the unknown exists and what is unknown about a particular subject or their activities. Frontier as a concept critically evaluates the interface between different cultures of social order and social engineering.

> Colonial geographies

The notions of difference and hierarchy dictated colonial policies regarding tribal communities – social groups living in hilly central India, a region of rivers, dense forests, and rich mineral resources. Colonial expansion standardized the term “tribe”; colonial rulers borrowed it from the African usage. They classified these groups as “primitive,” “wild,” and “barbaric,” given their animist religious practices, and distinguished them from settled Hindu caste peasant communities. Difficulty in governing these “wild tracts,” sites of revolts and rebellions from the early nineteenth century, led the colonial authorities to pass the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874. The colonial law created distinct geographies, wherein the colonial state placed and controlled the tribal communities as outside the civilized society. Within these administrative/geographic enclaves, colonial administrators and missionaries embarked on a “civilizing mission” to mainstream the tribal communities. The subordinated position of tribal communities in the colonial scheme of governance ruptured the precolonial understanding of tribal communities as people and places outside the direct control of the state.

The colonial laws encroached on tribal communities’ natural resources and land, producing tension in tribal areas. Tribal communities were the first social group to resist British colonialism, since predatory capitalism, land

encroachment, sedentarization, and taxation systems disturbed their way of life. Colonial administrative scholars and anthropologists, through ethnographic surveys, documentation, and reports, aided the project of instituting differences and hierarchies. Post-independence state policies and anthropological studies continued to refer to them as people(s) embedded within wildness, needing to be confined to territories outside civilized cultures.

> Tribal communities and the nation-building project

In the late colonial and early post-independence years, anthropologists debated the location of tribal communities within the nation-building project. Approaches ranged from the idea of a world of “noble savages” to assimilation with Hindu society. Though these perspectives charted different strategies, they continued rather than displaced the colonial understandings of difference and hierarchy in conceptualizing tribal communities. With the aid of anthropologists who studied tribes, the state uncritically accepted colonial categories, seeing tribal communities as preliterate groups in constant need of aid from the nation-state. Even nationalist social sciences, including anthropology, did not consider the historical changes in the forces of production and people’s aspirations within these geographies. Nor did they interrogate the historicity and relevance of colonial differences and hierarchies in a postcolonial society. Hence, the tribal communities continued to be perceived as subordinate social groups, on the first stage of the evolutionary cycle, static, and resistant to change. Two strategies dictated subsequent policies – protection and distinction from Hindu peasant communities, and simultaneous capitalist development of tribal areas. The state and social sciences pursued the “development” of the tribal communities on a territorial basis in the form of tribal sub-plan areas and an integrated tribal development agency. Educational, medical, and other infrastructural initiatives delivered “modernity” even as the tribal communities in the earmarked geographies enjoyed legal privileges and protection of socio-cultural rights.

Development initiated by the nationalist government did not reverse the encroachment by capital and non-tribals

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A 'Southern' Perspective: Historical Sociology and Sociology in India

Rakesh M. Krishnan¹ 

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Abstract

This paper traces the history of sociology in India to colonial anthropology and Indology. I argue that the compulsions of post-colonial society have also made specific demands on the discursive terrain of sociology. Fundamental to the pursuit of sociological knowledge in India, I believe, was a core debate about its mode of discursive practice – specifically, a debate between particularistic and universalistic orientations. From this point of view, I re-read the history of sociology in India. In doing so, I argue that close attention to the history of sociology helps us see the extent to which foundational western approaches to historical and comparative sociology have affected the historical development of sociology in India. Ironically, this has meant that the degree of historical self-awareness in Indian sociology has been limited. Hence, I discuss the grounds for the weak historical self-awareness in terms of historical sociology in India. I conclude by discussing how a strengthened tradition of historical sociology can be a tool to revitalize the discipline.

Keywords India · Social anthropology · Historical & comparative sociology · History of sociology

Not long ago, Raewyn Connell proposed Southern Theory (2007) to highlight that a specific viewpoint, the Global North, underpinned the theories and methodologies in sociology. Furthermore, she demonstrated alternatives to the Northern perspectives and analyses by discussing thinkers from the global periphery or, as she termed, the Global South. She led the call for including epistemic and cultural diversities in theorizing and designing the history of the discipline. Other sociologists like Patel (2009), Bhambra (2007), and Santos (2018) forwarded this significant intervention.

Even as these approaches and interventions to include hitherto neglected thinkers and theories are unfolding, this paper wants to exhaust the possibilities embedded

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STATE, DEVELOPMENT AND PEOPLE IN NORTHEASTERN TELANGANA: HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF A PERENNIAL FRONTIER

by Rakesh M. Krishnan



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