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“They are like that only”:
Adivasi identities in an area of civil unrest in India

Gunjan Wadhwa

Thesis submitted for PhD examination
at the University of Sussex
October 2018
I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature ..............................................................................
Acknowledgements

The becoming of this work and research into a doctoral thesis, and beyond, has been made possible by a long list of family, friends and colleagues who made generous contributions to this study through their time, energies and ideas. Over time, these three categories have overlapped and so any distinctions made here won’t do justice to the multiple belongings and influences of the people I mention here, and of those I regretfully forget.

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And Shanno Devi (Dadi), who silently made way for this doctorate journey to begin (and end).
Summary

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
GUNJAN WADHWA
PhD IN EDUCATION

“THEY ARE LIKE THAT ONLY”: ADIVASI IDENTITIES IN AN AREA OF CIVIL UNREST IN INDIA

This thesis explores the discursive construction of the Adivasi as tribal and backward, and in opposition to ideas of the ‘modern’. It examines the multiple discourses, co-constitutive of the Adivasi as subject, within the modernising nation-state of India. In doing so, the thesis troubles the dominant discursive strains that have produced the Indian nation-state and the Indian national/citizen, and through this have positioned the Adivasi.

The colonial regime in India constructed the colonised populations as distinct from the coloniser through various discourses of differentiation. Law, history, social categories, census and surveys became the instruments of governmentality that (re)shaped colonial subjectivities and constituted the power of the colonial state. Beyond the coloniser-colonised dyad, various social categories were deployed by the colonial state to strategically divide the country internally and create multiple internal others of which the Adivasis are one particular grouping. Over time and through re-iteration, these categories of distinction were sedimented in language, normalised, and naturalised within and through discourse. The post-independence Indian state sustained and re-articulated these distinctions through its law, policy and practice. The Adivasis were constituted as Indian nationals but in need of education, development, protection and civilisation. They were produced as synonymous with backwardness, tradition and lack of modernity.

Exploring the discursive production of the Adivasi as tribal and backward in this thesis troubles the binary of traditional and modern through which a deficit view of the Adivasi is constructed. I problematise the dominant national discourse in India, its intersections with gender, and open it up for discussion and contestation. In this thesis, I engage with the following research questions:
• How have law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state discursively produced the identity of the Adivasis in India?

• How do local village community members produce and perform Adivasi identities through religion, education and gender?

• In context of protracted violence, how do the Gond community navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities and claim their rights?

Building on my practitioner work on the Right to Education (RTE) Act in areas of civil unrest in India the empirical data collection took place in a village in Vidarbha region in the state of Maharashtra over a period of seven months. It comprised policy review and analysis, eight focus groups with adults (parents, panchayat and SMC members, teachers), six focus groups with young people in 13-18 years age-groups, and 25 in-depth interviews with adult members from the village community, both Adivasi and non-Adivasi, observations and a researcher diary. The systematic reading and re-reading of data has presented me with an understanding of co-constitution of discourses and subjects, and the immanence of power in such constitution. It marks a shift to poststructuralism in my thinking and analysis and with it a questioning of development and modernisation discourses.

An initial textual analysis of legal and policy enactments of colonial and post-independence Indian state illustrates the language of differentiation and the ways it produces the Adivasis as the Other within India. Through its focus on land and work, the policy reciprocally links identity of the people with the areas they inhabit. The categories of Scheduled, Backward and Tribal, re-produced through colonial and post-colonial policy texts, demarcate the land and the people and mark these as neutral and naturally occurring conditions. Integral to this analysis is the identification of discourses of modernity and development, which carry articulations of protection, equality and inclusion. It points to assumptions of individual responsibility in becoming ‘modern’ and ‘developed’ and the use of allied binaries of ‘backward’ and ‘under-developed’ in reference to differently positioned populations in India.

By engaging with community ‘voices’ in this study, I demonstrate how the dominant discursive categories of distinction are interpreted and performed in the local village contexts. I illustrate the interpellation of the Adivasis into the dominant discourse and their deficit positioning within it. Focusing on religion, education and gender in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities, I highlight the constructed binary between tradition and modernity. However, I argue, through data, that these categories are
discursive constructs, installed to produce and regulate the Adivasis in a deficit and subordinate position.

Within the local context of protracted violence, the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the local Gond community along with their claim for citizen rights, signal agency and resistance. While discursively produced and regulated, the Adivasis navigate the context of precarity through various strategies to demand their rights. They act in ways contradictory to their dominant construction as a social group. Silence and non-participation become strategies to contest and subvert dominant discursive norms.

This study has implications for equality and social relations through its foregrounding of the particular context of the Adivasis. Its contribution to knowledge lies in encouraging a critical approach to social categories and difference. By breaking the tradition/modernity binary, this study troubles the assumptions that modernisation makes about social life and the ways in which it describes the future through law, policy and practice.
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<td>AICCCR</td>
<td>All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>APCCCR</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASA</td>
<td>Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth</td>
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<td>AWC</td>
<td>Anganwadi Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPL</td>
<td>Below Poverty Line</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly of India</td>
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<td>CAPF</td>
<td>Central Armed Police Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHC</td>
<td>Community Health Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoBRA</td>
<td>Commando Battalions for Resolute Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-REC</td>
<td>Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRPF</td>
<td>Central Reserve Police Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPEP</td>
<td>District Primary Education Project</td>
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<td>DPSP</td>
<td>Directive Principles of State Policy</td>
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<td>DSS</td>
<td>Dera Sacha Sauda</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>FRA</td>
<td>Forest Rights Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>IIPS</td>
<td>International Institute for Population Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>INR</td>
<td>Indian National Rupee</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTTE</td>
<td>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam</td>
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<tr>
<td>LWE</td>
<td>Left-Wing Extremism</td>
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<td>MCC</td>
<td>Maoist Communist Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MeitY</td>
<td>Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology</td>
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<td>MHA</td>
<td>Ministry of Home Affairs</td>
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<td>MHRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Human Resource Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNREGA</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme</td>
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<td>MoHFW</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare</td>
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<td>MoTA</td>
<td>Ministry of Tribal Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWCD</td>
<td>Ministry of Women and Child Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCBC</td>
<td>National Commission for Backward Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCPCR</td>
<td>National Commission for Protection of Child Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDA</td>
<td>National Democratic Alliance</td>
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<td>NFHS</td>
<td>National Family Health Survey</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Other Backward Class</td>
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<td>PDS</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
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<td>PESA</td>
<td>Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHC</td>
<td>Primary Health Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIC</td>
<td>Public Instruction Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLGA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army</td>
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<td>PTG</td>
<td>Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups</td>
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<td>PWG</td>
<td>People’s War Group</td>
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<td>RTE</td>
<td>Right to Education Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>School Management Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPA</td>
<td>United Progressive Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
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Glossary of Terms

Adivasi: The term loosely refers to various ‘indigenous’ communities of India. In legal terms, it coincides with the official categorisation of Scheduled Tribes and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs). Scheduled Tribes are communities defined as such by Article 342 of the Constitution on the grounds of ‘geographical isolation, backwardness in terms of technology, nature of economy and level of literacy and health, distinctive culture, language and religion and shyness of contact with other cultures and people’ (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Constitution of India, 2013; MoTA, 2013, 2014).

Anganwadi Centre (AWC): Anganwadi, translating to ‘courtyard shelter’ in English, were started under the Integrated Child Development Services scheme in India by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. These provide early childhood care and education to children in the 0-6 age groups through the Anganwadi Workers primarily in the rural areas (MWCD, 2018).

Ashram Shala: Government-run residential schools in Chhattisgarh functional under the Ashram Shala Scheme with 100% Central funding and opened for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students including those from PTGs (Chaudhary et al., 2013; MoTA, 2013, 2014).

Bal sanghas: Also referred to as bal sangathans and bal dastas are groups constituted by the Maoists to recruit young people within their ranks (Sinha, 2011, n.d.; MHA, 2013).

Block: Administrative division in India produced through sub-division of districts. Blocks are known differently in different parts of the country such as tahsil, taluka, mandal, revenue circle. Block is administered by a Block Development Officer (BDO) and covers several gram panchayats or the local administrative units at the village level. (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Constitution of India, 2013).

District: Administrative division in India created by the colonial administration and subdivided into blocks, panchayat, village, tola (hamlet) in rural areas, or municipal divisions in urban areas, with further division into Wards. The District officials include District Collector/Magistrate, Superintendent of Police and the Forest Officer, who are members of the Indian Civil Service (MHA, 2011; MeitY, 2017).
**Gram Sabha:** Gram Sabha or the village council body consists of persons registered in the electoral rolls and relates to the village (gram) administration. It is comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level. (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Constitution of India, 2013).

**Maoism:** Refers to the political, social and economic theories advocated by the Chinese leader Mao Zedong. In India, it positions itself as against the capitalist state that it explicitly attempts to destabilise through a combination of armed insurgency, mass mobilisation and strategic alliances. (Chaudhary et al., 2013; MHA, 2013).

**Naxalism:** Refers to the radical communist and Maoist movement, which emerged from the peasant uprising at Naxalbari in West Bengal. 'Naxal' is a term used to refer to various Maoist/Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) groups operating in India under different banners (Chaudhary et al., 2013; MHA, 2013).

**Other Backward Classes (OBC):** OBC includes the communities in India notified as socially and educationally backward for the purposes of positive discrimination / affirmative action policy in government employment and government education institutions (NCBC, 2018).

**Panchayats:** Refers to the local self-government structures at the village, block and district levels in India. Panchayats were constituted as part of decentralisation and institutions of local self-governance in 1992 with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and under Article 243B of the Constitution of India (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Constitution of India, 2013).

**Primary and Community Health Centre (PHC / CHC):** Health centres set up under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to provide health care in rural areas in India (MoHFW, 2018).

**Salwa Judum:** Translating from the Gondi language, Salwa Judum refers to ‘Peace March’ in English. It was a local anti-insurgency ‘force’ started by the state of Chhattisgarh in India in 2005 to fight the Maoist movement. It was declared illegal, unconstitutional and ordered to be disbanded by the Supreme Court of India in 2013 (Sundar, 2011; Sinha, 2011).
Zamindari system: Refers to the land revenue system instituted by the colonial administration in India for collection of agricultural revenue by the peasants/farmers. Different forms of zamindari system such as permanent settlement, mahalwari, ryotwari were started across India. The revenue collection took place through intermediaries who were called zamindars (Chandra, 2009).
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introducing the study

...the environment here is such that the Gond people do not understand...it takes a while (for them to understand) ...They are...older and different type of people...You should not expect them to respond. They are like that only...It will take time (for things to change). (Rajesh, 35, Male, non-Adivasi, NGO worker, Focus group with NGO staff)

Rajesh’s comments above provide a starting point for this thesis. His comments included a description of the Adivasi Gond community with which his NGO worked. His depiction of the Gond people implied a lack in the people, lack of understanding, of modernity, of change. It also implied difference, between his non-Adivasi identity and that of the Adivasis. Such depiction of the Adivasis raised question about the dominant construction of their identity in the Indian context. It pointed to an expectation of change, which for Rajesh signalled improvement and development. The comment ‘they are like that only’, also used in the title of this thesis, suggested normalisation and naturalisation of the social positioning of the Adivasis, while overlooking their particular geographical, historical and social context. It is this normalisation and naturalisation of identity that I trouble in this thesis.

I selected Rajesh’s comments to introduce this study as these linked to my initial assumptions as a research practitioner looking at the educational rights and access of the Adivasis in areas of extended conflict. My direct involvement with the issues of educational access, schooling, civil unrest and Maoist politics came about through my work with the NCPCR from 2010-2013. These three years were strategic for the implementation of Right to Education (RTE) Act in India, the ‘monitoring’ of which was done by the NCPCR. I worked as a policy and research consultant on the Bal Bandhu (Friends of Children) scheme of the Prime Minister’s Office, implemented through the NCPCR in nine areas of civil unrest for protection of children’s right to education. This work explored the lack of educational access among the Adivasis, without emphatically troubling the modernist and functionalist approach to education in India. Such work and approach emphasised the conceptualisation of education as a right, as a symbol of development, and key for the inclusion of the Adivasis into the ‘mainstream’. In doing so, it presupposed the absence of education and development among the Adivasis and
constructed them in opposition to ideas of the ‘modern’, thereby installing a binary between modernity and tradition.

During my practitioner work, I undertook monthly field visits in areas of unrest and predominantly inhabited by the Adivasi communities to document community demands for education, schools and healthcare and work with the local field volunteers called Bal Bandhus. In Delhi, I wrote reports for the government based on these field visits, combining quantitative and qualitative data from the field. However, these reports focused on the deficit of education, of participation and agency among the Adivasis, as implied through Rajesh’s comments above. In the context of the Adivasis, I assumed that education, especially formal education, was the panacea for all their constructed deficits. Having spent 18 years of my life in formal education in India, I strongly associated (‘modern’) education with notions of change and success, much like Rajesh.

Termination of the Bal Bandhu project by the Indian government left me with an urge to ‘record’ the community voices and their demands for education through systematic research. I started my PhD at the Centre for International Education in 2014, building on my practitioner work at the NCPCR and keeping my thematic interest in education and civil unrest intact. With an initial interest in the Right to Education in areas of civil unrest in India, I considered education through modern and liberal underpinnings and in relation to the notion of the individual as active, agentive, stable, and rational. From 2015 to 2016, I spent seven months in the field for empirical data collection in a village in Vidarbha, Maharashtra. My work with the NCPCR provided me with good networks and allowed access to the field site. My practitioner as well as PhD research work helped build associations and friendships in the field that ensue to this day.

The systematic reading and re-reading of data shifted the original research concerns and questions away from the deficits towards the deconstruction of development and its imperatives and binaries to insert greater agency and rationality with the Adivasis. The reading and re-reading of data presented me with an understanding of co-constitution of discourses and individual subjects, the immanence of power in such constitution, and with it a questioning of development and modernisation discourses. It pointed to something more going on to explain the marginalisation and backwardness of the Adivasis, as implied through Shilpa’s comments below:

There is no Congress or BJP (two main political parties) reaching this village, no government, only Naxals…There is no…Indian flag. Black or red flags are
seen as the Naxals come and unfurl these flags. But then they (Naxals) also go elsewhere and salute the tricolour (the Indian national flag). They (Naxals) shoot and kill at one place, and then eat party at another place with the Police. (Shilpa, 35, Adivasi, Interview)

Identifying as an Adivasi woman from the Gond community, Shilpa began her interview with me by pointing to the absence of government in her village and the presence of the Naxals/Maoists. She elaborated the context of protracted violence between the Indian State and the Maoists and ensuing context of fear for the Adivasis. The absence of the Indian State, signified through inactivity of the major national political parties and invisibility of its symbols such as the Indian flag, raised questions about ‘being’ an Indian citizen/national for Shilpa. At the same time, the presence of the Naxals/Maoists symbolised the particular context of her village and the complexity of being an Indian and an Adivasi simultaneously. To add to this, Shilpa illuminated the context of precarity by pointing to the blurring lines of identity between the assumed pro-State and anti-State agents, i.e. the Police and the Maoists respectively. The binary opposition constructed between Indian and Adivasi identities and the two power groups, State and Maoists, in her village raised questions of multiple intersecting identities, ‘beings’ and belongings for Shilpa, within her context of uncertainty.

My understanding and analysis of data such as above led me to suggest poststructural conceptualisation of identity, enriched by postcolonial and feminist theorisations, with respect to the particular historical context of the Adivasis. These theorisations offered space for decentring and destabilising the subject and theorise identities as discursively-produced, multiple, intersecting, fluid, fractured and contingent. Poststructural perspectives, informed through postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks, allowed me to examine the multiple regulatory frameworks deployed to produce Adivasi identities, and the navigation of these by research participants. These perspectives posed the following research questions to engage with in and through this study:

- How have law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state discursively produced the identity of the Adivasis in India?
- How do local village community members produce and perform Adivasi identities through religion, education and gender?
- In context of protracted violence, how do the Gond community navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities and claim their rights?
The aim of this study shifted from the exploration of educational access among the Adivasis in an area of civil unrest to tracing the production of Adivasi identities historically and, in doing so, troubling and undoing their normalised and naturalised deficit positioning. It led me to explore the performance of Adivasi identities and their interpellation into a dominant/normative discourse which is indicated in Rajesh’s and Shilpa’s comments above. By focusing specifically on land, work, religion, education and gender in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities, I highlight and problematise the constructed binary between tradition and modernity. This focus allows me to remain context-specific while illuminating the new discursive formations as well as illustrating their construction. Moving between the national and the local, I include the law, policy and practice of the Indian State and the village-community context of the Adivasis to represent a space that signals agency and resistance of the Gond community.

In more general terms, this study reflects my transitions to poststructuralism theoretically, and to identities conceptually. Contextually, it builds on my work and research in India and provides further intellectual grounding in carrying out localised and context-specific/sensitive research. In so doing, this study implicates my positionality, as researcher, Indian citizen, woman, government consultant, NGO worker, PhD student, in the narratives being produced through this research. My multiple intersecting identities, of being an insider and an outsider at times, allowed me to focus on my research concerns of understanding community interactions, ‘voices’, and demands for an emergent feminist, poststructural and postcolonial study.

While this Section, 1.1, introduced the key research concerns and shifts of this study, I elaborate the binary oppositions and the dominant discourses of distinction, signalled above, in Section 1.2 as part of this study’s rationale. As an extension to this, Section 1.3 provides a note on the troubled terms and categories that I have used in this study and the reasons behind those choices. Section 1.4 introduces the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Study rationale

Education has been one of the key foci of the international development agenda and intertwined with notions of progress, social change, and prosperity (UNESCO, 2016). More specifically, in context of the Global South, the development discourse continues to assume greater significance. With respect to education, there is an emphasis on
quality education, equitable access and opportunities, and inclusion of marginalised groups in and through education (UNESCO, 2009, 2016). In addition to this, strong linkages have been made between education and other social and economic indicators such as maternal and child health, environmental sustainability, gender parity, labour market skills etc. (UNESCO, 2009, 2016).

Education can equip people with knowledge, skills and values that help improve social outcomes and change social norms (UNESCO, 2016, p. 67)

As evident in the above extract from the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, the ideas of improvement and change are bound with education and integral to the development discourse. These perspectives assume a forward, linear and unidirectional movement to progress, complemented by the ‘knowledge, skills and values’ imparted through education. In this regard, the international development agencies such as the UN have been critiqued for perpetuating neo-colonial relations and neo-liberal values, emphasising formation of modernising states and citizens (Dunne et al., 2017). For instance, in the above extract, the focus is on the knowledge and skills of individuals that can further lead to improvement and change. Such an instrumentalist perspective is informed by notions of modernity that produce an essentialising view of the subject as rational.

Additionally, such a conceptualisation within international development discourse has produced the binary of developing and developed countries, or the Global South and North, where ‘the Global South remains the poor relation in need of remedial intervention/ attention’ (Dunne et al., 2017, p. 35). In the context of this study, such a conceptualisation of education, with modern and liberal underpinnings, raise question about the discursive production of the Adivasis and their social positioning in the modernising/developing Indian State. I re-visit this discussion on modernity, development, and their use of allied binaries in Chapter 3.

In the context of India, as in other emergent postcolonial contexts, the influence of international development agencies is implicit in the shift to rights-based approaches (Balagopalan, 2008; Juneja, 2010; Reddy and Sinha, 2010), as I will discuss in Chapter 2. India’s low/poor rankings on international development indices guided the enactment of various rights-based legislation, the right to education being one of them. Intrinsic to the rights-based discourse in India are the articulations of protection, inclusion and equality of marginalised or differently positioned groups, as I will explore in Chapters 2 and 3. In this sense, education can be viewed as a modern institution, signifying ideas
of advancement and change. This view of education raises questions about its utilisation as a regulatory construct, in postcolonial contexts such as India, to produce, administer and regulate groups such as the Adivasis by the colonial and post-independence Indian State.

Within the postcolonial Indian context, the modern institution of education also raises questions for the production of gender relations. The work-school binary produced through the development discourse has implications for the construction of particular kinds of work, such as those done by the Adivasis, and more specifically by the Adivasi women, as traditional. I will explore this binary in Chapters 5 and 6. This binary gets reflected in the gendered access to schools by young women in India. In 2011, the population in 0-18 age-groups in India was 230.5 million with 193 million children enrolled in schools (Sinha, 2014). While the national average of school dropouts was 42.39 per cent, for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) children it was 57.58 per cent (Sinha, 2014). Even within this, ST girls fared worse than ST boys, with higher dropout rates at upper primary level (MHRD, 2018). In terms of school attendance, girl children belonging to Scheduled Tribes had the lowest net attendance and gross attendance ratio at the secondary school level (NFHS-4, 2015-16). Further, the proportion of women who had never attended school was highest, at 44 per cent, for women belonging to Scheduled Tribes (Parasuraman et al., 2009). These statistical trends indicated the double disadvantage faced by Adivasi women.

According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development’s Educational Statistics Report 2018, ‘engagement of children in domestic/economic activities’ and ‘lack of interest in education contributes to high dropout’ (p. v). Such a view reiterates the work-school binary prevalent in the development discourse and produces questions about its implications for the Adivasis. In context of the Adivasis, it is usually the young women who are engaged in domestic as well as economic activity and unable to attend school (Sedwal and Kamat, 2008; Reddy and Sinha, 2010; Sinha, 2014). I will explore these tensions in Chapter 6 by focusing on religion, education and gender in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities.

Building on my practitioner work on the Right to Education (RTE) Act in areas of civil unrest in India, the other linkage I explore in this thesis is of education and conflict/civil unrest. In the international development agenda, armed conflict has been considered as one of the main barriers to the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goals (UNESCO, 2011). According to the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2011),
conflict-affected developing countries are heavily concentrated in the lower reaches of the league tables for the Education for All goals’ (p. 14). While the Indian State does not recognise facing ‘armed conflict’, it admits to the incidence of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) or Maoist insurgency in 10 out of 29 states in the country (Sinha, 2011; Chaudhary et al., 2013; MHA, 2013). The occupation of and attack on educational institutions by both the State and Maoist forces have been reported, along with the ‘recruitment’ of children in bal sanghas and bal dastas, and as informers and child soldiers (NCPCR, 2010, 2012; Chaudhary et al., 2013; MHA, 2013; Sinha, n.d.). The context of protracted violence and precarity has been entwined with issues of educational access and provisioning, especially through the emphasis placed on education in areas of armed conflict by international development agencies:

Education is seldom a primary cause of conflict. Yet it is often an underlying element in the political dynamic pushing countries towards violence. Intra-state armed conflict is often associated with grievances and perceived injustices linked to identity, faith, ethnicity and region. (UNESCO, 2011, p. 16)

In the Indian context, the areas affected by civil unrest are predominantly inhabited by the Adivasi communities, have Human Development Index rankings below that of the national average, high poverty rates and low literacy rates (Sinha, 2011; Yagnamurthy, 2013). In this sense, the reciprocal linking of education and conflict, as also implicit in the above extract, becomes relevant. In the context of this study, I question and move beyond the binary understanding of education as a perpetrator and victim of conflict. In Chapters 6 and 7, I articulate the installation of education as a regulatory construct in relation to Adivasi identities and its demand by the Adivasis to indicate a move away from tradition, as well as its utilisation as a symbol of inclusion.

An exploration of the discursive construction of Adivasi identity allows the unpacking of multiple discourses co-constitutive of the Adivasi as subject. It revisits the comments of Rajesh and Shilpa at the beginning of this chapter, to trouble the dominant discursive strains that have produced the Indian nation-state and the Indian national/citizen, and through it have positioned the Adivasi. The production and performance of Adivasi identities in local village community context ‘have resulted in a new set of discursive formations, which require careful documentation and analysis’ (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011, p. 8). This thesis examines such formations and explores the complexities of being Indian and Adivasi, along with the navigation of these identities.

The aim of this thesis is to question the conceptual and binary oppositions briefly discussed in this section by engaging with community ‘voices’ and foregrounding of the
particular context of the Adivasis. Integral to this questioning is the troubling of development and modernisation discourses. I argue against the homogenising and essentialising understandings of the land, work, way of life of the Adivasis, through data, and instead suggest a poststructural conceptualisation of identity as multiple, contingent and context-specific. While discursively produced and regulated, I highlight the navigation by the Adivasis of the context of precarity through utilisation of various strategies in order to demand their rights. The conceptual framework in this thesis, informed by and enriched through postcolonial and feminist theorisation of data, provides space for the coexistence of multiple subjectivities, as also implied through the terminological choices made in this thesis.

1.3 Troubled Terms

Recent research has troubled the use of the term Adivasi and its (non-)linkages with the categories of tribe, indigene, aborigine as well as the subaltern (Spivak, 1999; Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011; Banerjee, 2015, 2016). The categorisations of tribe, indigene, aborigine and subaltern presuppose the existence of the people, living in hills or forests or remote geographical locations, thereby ascribing authenticity or originality as well as ‘voice’ to their being/existence (Spivak, 1999; Banerjee, 2016). Deployed as evaluative judgments and evolutionary classifications by the colonial regime, the categories of tribe, indigene and aborigine produce certain groups of people as denoting a ‘stage’ of society, isolated, a-historical, pre-political and in opposition to the ‘modern’ (Sundar, 1997; Béteille, 1998; Mamdani, 2012; Banerjee, 2016).

Extending Spivak’s (1999) argument ‘can the subaltern speak?’ Banerjee (2015) suggests that the subaltern has been an invented category, ‘an undetermined figure, defined by nothing else but their subalternity vis-à-vis the elite and the dominant’ (p. 40). Critiquing the Subaltern Studies collective, both Banerjee (2015) and Skaria (1998) point out the engagement of the collective with power, through questions of dominance and hegemony of the colonial rulers and insurgency and resistance of the subaltern against them. This critique raises questions about the anti-colonial and insurgent dimensions of the Adivasis, the need to go beyond the binaries and bring out the ‘embodiment of multiple identities and plural affiliations that were contingent, impermanent and changeable’ (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011, p. 61).

In the context of this research, I use the term Adivasi to refer to the research participants of this study. It was the term used by the participants for self-identification.
I argue, in the course of this study, that although used in pre-independence India, the term Adivasi has been re-deployed and re-signified to subvert the categorisation of ‘tribe’ (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). It works to contest the negative associations of colonial distinctions while bringing out the distinctiveness and marginalisation of the people (Banerjee, 2006). Loosely translated as first/earlier (adi) inhabitants (vasi) in English, it illustrates the relationality, fluidity and contingency of the category.

By using the term Adivasi in this study, I reiterate its usage by the research participants. It points to histories of State neglect and inactivity as well as its rendering of Adivasis as subject and objects of conflict and policy, without voice or expression (Spivak, 1999; Banerjee, 2016). The term Adivasi then is context-sensitive as it foregrounds particular features of the Indian setting. It allows for the exploration of co-constitution of subjects and discourses, through examination of State policy and practice that reciprocally link identities of the people with land and work/livelihood. It offers critical space to study the production of the modernising Indian nation-state. In Chapter 7, I use the term Adivasi interchangeably while referring to the Gond community/people, again to reflect their usage of the term for self-identification.

I use the term Adivasi not as a neutral or naturally occurring condition, or divested of its politics, materiality and constructed-ness. Here I draw on Butler (1993, 1995) to claim the production of the Adivasi as subject and explore its connections with ‘tribe’, not to do away with the subject or the categorisation, but to resignify it, leave it open for contestation and question conditions of its emergence. I am also aware of the rejection of the term Adivasi in the North-Eastern parts of India where particular groups identify themselves through their ‘tribes’ and consider Adivasi as a Sanskritised or Hinduised nomenclature (Padel and Das, 2010). It reinforces the contestation, relationality and contingency of the category.

Additionally, instead of the Indian State’s description of Left-Wing Extremism, Maoist insurgency and Naxalism, I use Maoist movement to indicate fluidity and changing character of the Maoist politics in India. I use Maoist to refer to the members of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and its allied organisations, rather than Naxals. This is due to a personal dislike of the word Naxal, as it carries negative associations, especially to connote anti-State violence and terror. The research participants, however, used the term Naxal or andar-wale (insiders) and in some places in the thesis the terms have been used interchangeably for analysis. To refer to the conflict between the Indian State and the Maoists, I have used the terminologies of civil unrest and
conflict. However, it is important to note that the Indian State does not recognise facing armed conflict (Sinha, n.d.).

The categorisation of the Indian State also requires clarification. While understanding the distinctions of nation, state and government (Anderson, 1983; Rose and Miller, 2010; Dunne et al., 2017), I use Indian State to refer to the ‘institutions and systems through which control and administration of a given territory is secured’ (Dunne et al., 2017, p. 32). I also use it to refer to the post-independence governments in India, in contrast to the classification of colonial state used to depict the systems of administration during the colonial rule or British Raj.

This study was initially conceptualised to explore children’s educational access in areas of civil unrest in India. It defined and conceptualised the category of child in accordance with the UNCRC’s as well as the NCPCR’s definition of children as those in the 0-18 age-group (Wadhwa et al., 2010; NCPCR, 2011, 2013). As this study involved research work with young people in the 15-18 age groups, they had to be categorised as children in order to fulfil the ethical considerations of this research. However, as the study developed, its conceptual focus shifted from children to young people, owing to the patronising description of children in most literature as vulnerable, un-knowing, and signifying lack of reason and agency. Such description sits uncomfortably within this study and so I have adopted the terminology of young people. Notwithstanding, it is only an analytical categorisation and in no way refer to the group as internally homogenous or undifferentiated. This description applies similarly to the categorisation of adults, which I have used to refer to people over 18 years of age; and to the categories of woman and man, while understanding the essentialising and homogenising implications of such usage.

1.4 Thesis structure

This introductory chapter, Chapter 1, provides an overview of the thesis and outlines the rationale for this research. I set out the research questions and in broad terms describe the theoretical and analytical developments through this study. I also include a section on the ways I have used certain terms throughout the thesis which is significant given the focus of this research. Chapter 2 provides a contextual overview of the study, describing the formation of the Indian nation-state historically, the colonial separation of Europe from India, post-independence debates on ‘modern’ state-formation as well as its implications for land relations. Extending this discussion, the chapter explains the
historical context of the Adivasis and of the Maoist movement, along with the response of the Indian State to both. This chapter also details the education planning in India, the Right to Education, and its implementation in the conflict context of the Adivasis and the Maoist movement.

Chapter 3 traces the key concepts used in the theoretical and analytical framing of this study. It provides a critical review of the literature, informed by poststructural, postcolonial and feminist theorisation of concepts used in the analysis of data. The chapter starts with an exploration of the concept of identity and its historical formation through discourse and relations of power. This relates directly to the discursive (re)production of Adivasi identity through the law, policy and practice of the Indian State. I then explore the notion of modernity, troubling its purported emergence in Europe, and its link to the formation of modern nation-states. This provides the framework to understand the historical, social and political background of the Indian nation-state as modernising, sovereign, socialist, democratic, and secular republic, structured by ideas of decentralisation and participation. The discussion then turns back to identity to highlight the formation of national identities and its intersections with other axes of identity-formation such as gender and religion. The focus then shifts from the national/state level to the local village context of the Adivasis with an exploration of notions of agency and resistance and offers a poststructural conceptualisation of these concepts. This literature review provides the framework for the analysis of the research questions, which may be summarised as questions about the discursive production, performance and navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the local village community in claiming their citizen rights in context of protracted conflict and violence.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology of the study. It discusses the methodological approach, the research design, participants, ethics, research methods and the data analysis process. In this chapter, I reflect on my time in the field context, my positionality as a researcher and research ethics. I illustrate my use of particular methods and the ways my relations with the participants influenced the quality of my data. In addition, I describe the theoretical and methodological shifts through the research as well as the implications for the analysis.

The main analytical sections of the thesis are set out in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 examines the dominant discursive strains deployed by the colonial state for the internal division of India, with specific reference to the land and work of the Adivasis. It illustrates how the discursive categories of Scheduled, Backward and Tribal were
enacted by the colonial regime and rearticulated and sustained by the Indian state. Through the textual analysis of policy, the chapter shows how the language of differentiation has effects of producing the Adivasis as the Other and in opposition to ideas of the ‘modern’ in the dominant national discourse in India.

Chapter 6 shifts the analysis from the national to the local and engages with local community ‘voices’. It demonstrates how the dominant discursive categories of distinction, examined in Chapter 5, are interpreted and performed in the local village context. In so doing, this chapter draws attention to the capillary way that the power of the discourses of differentiation described at the state level penetrate to the local community levels. Focusing on religion, education and gender as matrices of subject-formation, the chapter illustrates the interpellation of the Adivasis into the dominant discourse and their deficit positioning within it. It highlights the constructed binary between tradition and modernity in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities. The chapter exposes the regulatory frameworks deployed to other the Adivasi in their local village-community context.

Chapter 7 turns specifically to the ‘voices’ and ‘silences’ of the Adivasi Gond community to explore the ways they navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities within the context of protracted violence. Using notions of agency and resistance the analysis focuses on the Gond community’s claims to citizen rights and for community development. The chapter pointedly illustrates the ways that the Adivasis navigate the context of precarity through various strategies and act in ways contradictory to the dominant constructions. It contrasts dominant perspectives of Adivasis as silent, shy and non-participatory by analysing their selective participation and engagement with local structures of governance they consider safe and beneficial for community development.

Chapter 8 provides the concluding overview of the research. It draws together the main points of the analytical discussions presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 relating back to the main research questions. This leads to a section that outlines the contribution to knowledge offered by the study. This is followed by reflections on the research process, a consideration of its limitations and finally some suggestions for further research.
2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I trace the geographical and historical context of India. In doing so, I provide an overview of the context of this research within which particular identities of nation, religion, ethnicity and gender have been produced. The discussion in this chapter is organised into four sections. In the first section, I examine the geographical and historical context of India, the separation of India from Europe/West through the colonial rule, the internal division of the country and its links to the analytical sections of this study. The British Raj has been integral to the identity-productions of nation, religion, ethnicity, gender and is emphasised in the first section. This is the context for the formation of ‘modern’ Indian nation-state as a sovereign, democratic, republic, and its subsequent development as socialist and secular within the Indian Constitution. The second section elaborates the historical context of the Adivasis of India. This section links back to the discussion in the first section on the internal division of India during colonial rule. The third section provides a brief history of the Maoist or Naxalite movement in India, referred to as the civil unrest, its relevance in areas of the Adivasis, as well as the response of the Indian State to the unrest. After discussing the macro-level, through national and historical debates around the land and the people, I shift the focus to the education planning and provisioning in the country in the fourth section. I explore the rights-based discourse, with specific focus on the Right to Education, and its implementation/provisioning in the areas of civil unrest/conflict which are predominantly inhabited by the Adivasis.

This chapter provides a historical account of the research context of this study which is integral to understand the processes of identity-formation of the Adivasis in India. It examines the history of the Maoist movement, the contestation of land through institution of hierarchical social relations, and its significance for the construction of the Adivasis. In addition, it explores the modernisation and development discourse, within which education has come to occupy a central position. As such, this chapter provides a contextual framework for the theoretical and analytical claims of this study and makes explicit the links to the research questions.
2.2 Geographical and historical context

Located in the Northern Hemisphere, India covers an area of 3.3 million sq. km. It measures about 3,214 km from north to south and 2,933 km from east to west, with a land frontier of 15,200 km and coastline of about 7,516 km. Being the 7th largest country in the world, India has a distinct geographical identity as it is separated from mainland Asia by the Himalayas and surrounded by Bay of Bengal in the east, Arabian Sea in the west and Indian Ocean in the south (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2017).

India shares its borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan to the north-west; China, Bhutan and Nepal to the north; Myanmar to the east; and Bangladesh to the east of West Bengal. To the south, Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow channel of sea (MeitY, 2017). As such, India occupies a substantial chunk of the South Asian (or Indian) subcontinent and holds immense significance geo-strategically.

India is divided into 29 states and 7 union territories as administrative divisions, which are further divided into districts and sub-districts, depending on the urban and rural classification of the area. In the rural areas, the districts are hierarchically divided into Taluks, Blocks, Gram Panchayat and village. In urban areas, the division comprises Municipal Corporation, Municipality and City Council, with further division into Wards. As per the 2011 Census, there were 640 districts, 5,924 sub-districts and over 638,619 villages in India (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011). The District officials include District Collector, Superintendent of Police and the Forest Officer, all of whom are members of the Indian Civil Service.

With a population of over 1.2 billion, India is the second most populous country in the world, after China (MeitY, 2017). There are 623.7 million males and 586.4 million females, with a population growth rate of 1.64% and sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males (MHA, 2011). The literacy rate in the country stands at 74.04%, 82.14% for males, which is above the national average, and 65.46% for females, which is below the national average (MHA, 2011).

In terms of religion, Hindus constitute the majority numerically in the country with 80.5%, Muslims at 13.4%, followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and others who are classified under ‘other religions and persuasions, including unclassified sect’ (MHA, 2011; MeitY, 2017). The last category is sub-divided into Tribal religion, Nature
religion, Animist, Sarna, among others, which are mostly associated with the Adivasis and/or Scheduled Tribes in India (MHA, 2011).

Regionally, while the numerically dominant religions are spread across the country, the spread of ‘other religions and persuasions’ is confined mostly to the rural areas or villages, inhabited by the Adivasis and the Scheduled Tribes\(^1\) (MHA, 2011). This hierarchical subdivision of the country in geographical terms through religion forms an important link to the analytical sections of this study. I will trace and trouble the linking of the Adivasi identity with particular geographical locations by engaging with Research Question 1 in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, I will explore the construction of religious practices of the Adivasis as animism, through Research Question 2.

Historically, India traces its civilisation 4000 years back to the Indus Valley Civilisation of 2500 BC in the western part of South Asia, where the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, now in Pakistan, have been found (Chandra, 2009; MeitY, 2017). The writing of the Vedas signified the Vedic civilisation and subsequently witnessed the rule by many different rulers, dynasties and empires, between 8\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) century A.D., that often competed for more land and territory (Chandra, 2009; MeitY, 2017). The late medieval and early modern Indian history, between 10\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) century, has mostly been associated with the Mughal Empire that united the country under one rule, until the rule of the British who governed India for 200 years (Chandra, 2009; MeitY, 2017).

The British Raj or colonial rule is significant to understand the formation of the Indian nation-state and production of the Adivasi identity. As I will argue and elaborate in Chapter 3, the colonial rule in India took shape through the hierarchical separation of Europe, more specifically Britain, from the orientalised India. Evaluative categories such as West and Occident as opposed to East and Orient were used to signify difference and civilisational superiority of the former over the latter (Said, 2003; Bhambra, 2007).

The British coloniser was marked as distinct and superior from the colonised in India, through geography, religion, language, education and so on (Said, 2003). The colonisers utilised these signifiers to construct and amplify difference in order to legitimise their rule over the Orient and constitute its own authority (Mamdani, 2001, 2012). Beyond the coloniser-colonised dyad, various social categories and signifiers of geography, religion, caste and ethnicity were deployed by the colonial authority/state to

\(^1\) Refer to Glossary and Chapter 1, Section 1.3 for clarification on Adivasi and Scheduled Tribe
divide India internally and create multiple internal others (Bhabha, 1990b, 2004). The constitution of multiple internal others forms another important link to the analysis chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The nation-state of India, as it stands today, was formed out of the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947. While the year marked the end of the British rule, it was marred by large-scale communal riots between Hindus/Sikhs and Muslims. Although Hindus and Muslims had fought and clashed before the British rule, there were stable periods of co-existence and people did not classify one another strictly from a religious lens (Pandey, 1990; Chandra, 2009). Different religions, religious belief and practices intermingled across the Indian subcontinent and people followed a mixture of multi-religious practices (Pandey, 1990; Chandra, 2009). The identification of invading groups, for instance the Mughal rulers, by Indian historians took place in ethnic rather than religious terms (Peers & Gooptu, 2012). For these reasons, the categorisation of Indians along the lines of religion and caste was difficult. However, this categorisation was significant for the consolidation of British rule in India (O’Hanlon, 2012).

The ‘revolt’ of 1857, where Hindus and Muslims together fought against the British, led to the British policy of divide and rule (Mamdani, 2012). Laws involving proportional political representation, social categories along religious, caste and ethnic lines, census and surveys were introduced to constitute the power of the colonial state (Jones, 1990; Sundar, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2012). These legal and social categories became instruments of governmentality as well as technologies of the self that re-shaped (colonial) subjectivities (Foucault, 1978), compelled self-identification of people along these lines and internally divided the country. These categories had implications for the production and reification of gender relations in India and articulation of Adivasi identity, as I will explore in Chapters 3 and 6.

For instance, measures such as separate and reserved electorates for Muslims solidified and essentialised Hindu/Muslim identities and produced groups such as the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha (Chandra, 2009). The two-nation theory, which advocated that Hindus and Muslims had different interests and were two different nations, was accepted by these groups. In 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding partition of the country and formation of a separate state of Pakistan after independence (Chandra, 2009). This demand and the ultimate partition of India signalled a trajectory from coexisting multiple identities into the binaries
deployed under the British rule, of which the Hindu/Muslim and India/Pakistan separation was one such binary. As such, the colonial separation/othering of India from Europe was co-produced through the division of India and creation of multiple external and internal others.

2.2.1 The Indian Nation-State

A Constituent Assembly (CA) was formed to act as the legislature and a sovereign constitution-making body (Chandra, 2009). In September 1946 an interim cabinet was formed by the Congress party, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. On the midnight of 14-15 August 1947 when India gained independence, Nehru declared in the Constituent Assembly:

…at the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history…when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. (Chandra, 2009, p. 330)

As implied through Nehru’s speech, India emerged as a nation out of its separation from Pakistan, finding its ‘utterance’. The Indian Constitution was significant in delivering this utterance of the nation-state. It declared India to be sovereign, democratic, republic, with the people of India marked as the sovereign (Preamble, Constitution of India, 2013). The Constitution was given a federal character by the CA. It meant that the states in India had law-making powers and the spheres of action/legislation were demarcated through the three Lists.

However, as an extension of the colonial system of governance and administration set up in India, the Centre remained more powerful due to certain provisions where it could override state laws (Chandra, 2009). The Constitution introduced a Parliamentary system of government with a bi-cameral legislature, with President as head of the State and Prime Minister as head of the government (MeitY, 2017). Regular elections, every five years, were to be held through universal adult franchise, i.e. all adult men and women citizens were given the right to vote (Chandra, 2009).

While the Indian Constitution was socialist and secular in character at the time of its drafting, through its many provisions in the Fundamental Rights (FRs) and Directive

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2 The three lists of the Indian Constitution, namely Union, State and Concurrent, are included in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution and spell out the subjects under the legislative power of the Centre and States. The Concurrent List includes subjects on which both Centre and States can make laws.

3 Article 15 states Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion; Article 25 as Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion; Article 26 as Freedom to manage religious affairs; Article 29 as Protection of interests of minorities; Article 38 as Social order for the promotion of welfare of the people.
Principles of State Policy (DPSPs), the terms socialist and secular were inserted in the preamble to the Constitution in 1976 through the 42nd Amendment Act (Constitution of India, 2013).

The FRs and DPSPs recognised the social and educational ‘backwardness’ of groups such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Article 15) which were produced as such through criteria established by the colonial state and re-instated through the Indian Constitution. The DPSPs directed the state to protect and ‘promote the interests of the weaker sections with special care’ (Article 46, Constitution of India, 2013). The social categories of religion, caste and tribe, introduced by the colonial regime, were re-articulated by the Indian State. These categories became legally inscribed identities through the Indian Constitution in post-independence India, as I will explore in Chapter 5. The Constitution of India became an important document to signify the formation of the Indian nation-state and postulate its responsibilities towards the citizens, while naming and categorising them.

I will argue in Chapter 3 that the nation-state of India was constructed and constituted through the symbols of sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic that were discursively signified with meanings attached to national life (Bhabha, 1990b, 1990c, 2004). It was within and through these symbols that the Indian nation found its ‘utterance’, as indicated by Nehru. In the next chapter, I will draw on Anderson’s (1983) idea of the nation as an imagined political community, to elaborate the inclusion and exclusion of particular groups, such as the Adivasis, in and from such imagination (Chatterjee, 1993). In Chapter 4, I will further discuss my reasons for selecting and reviewing the Indian Constitution for policy analysis and its implications for equity and inclusion of groups such as the Adivasis.

2.3 The Adivasis of India

The Hindi and Sanskrit term Adivasi translates in English to first (adi) inhabitants (vasis) (Padel & Das, 2010; Xaxa, 2014). Historically, the conception of the Adivasi links back to the Aryan theory, according to which certain groups/communities pre-existed in some areas in the Indian subcontinent when the Aryans came into those regions from neighbouring places (Chandra, 2009). Referred to as pre-Aryans, groups such as Mundas, Kols, Santhals, Gonds and many others, trace their history and

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4 Also spelled as ‘Adibasi’ in English, given the multiple articulations of the term
lineage to the first or earlier inhabitants of the land invaded by the Aryans and use Adivasi for self-identification (Sundar, 1997; Chandra, 2009; Peers & Gooptu, 2012).

However, the intermingling of groups, of pre-Aryans, Indo-Aryans, Greeks, Turks and others in ancient Indian history has made it impossible to identify each group in its original form (Sundar, 1997; Chandra, 2009; Peers & Gooptu, 2012). For these reasons, Adivasi has been a contested term and used for self-identification by particular groups in the country.

The varna system, which was modified into the Hindu caste system in later periods, is significant in the production of the Adivasi as a grouping and links back to the Aryan ‘invasion’. The Hindi term varna translates to colour in English. As the Aryans claimed to be fairer than pre-Aryans, the pre-Aryans or Adivasis were hierarchically grouped and positioned at the margins of the varna system (Chandra, 2009; O’Hanlon, 2012).

Notwithstanding this, the varna system in Ancient India was considered to be based on a pragmatic division of labour among priests, rulers, traders/merchants and peasants (Chandra, 2009; O’Hanlon, 2012). It purportedly allowed for mobility and a person was able to change their varna according to the occupation they practised (Bayly, 1999). This produced further intermingling among groups wherein a separation and identification of origins became impossible. The power relations and hierarchies within and among groups were a consequence of the commingling and were fluid and ever-changing (Jones, 1990; Pandey, 1990; Bayly, 1999; Chandra, 2009; O’Hanlon, 2012).

The earlier usage of the term Adivasi has been traced to pre-independence India in the context of struggles for independence and autonomy from the colonial rule and its fixing of social relations along the lines of religion, caste and tribe (Sundar 1997; Shah, 2010; Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011; Mamdani, 2012). As I will examine in Chapter 5, the colonial regime imposed systems of land revenue and economy and forms of social, political and legal governance/control that restricted the mobility of people and entwined their identity with land.

The creation of zamindars or landlords and money-lenders for implementation of land revenue systems instituted hierarchical relations of power that were further secured through segregation and reification of religious, caste and ethnic identities. The categories of landlords and money-lenders were made hereditary and as belonging to the dominant Hindu castes while the peasants belonged to the lower castes and/or remained on the periphery of the caste system (Chandra, 2009). The stabilisation of
these categories disregarded the histories and fluidities of migration, miscegenation and displacement (Sundar, 1997, 2011; O’Hanlon, 2012). It was against this imposition, among other factors such as demarcation of forest and wasteland (Banerjee, 2016), that the Adivasi identity developed and strengthened.

As I will explore in Chapter 5, strong linkages have been made between Adivasi identity and social and legal categorisation of ‘tribe’ since the colonial rule. The social categorisation of ‘tribe’ was separated from caste and religion through its discursive and material links with land, forests, hills or remote/isolated geographical location, and produced as synonymous with backwardness, tradition, absence of ‘proper’ religion, and lack of modernity (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011; Banerjee, 2015, 2016).

Tribe was intertwined with mlechcha (impure) and jangli (forest dwellers / wild) and used to denote difference from caste Hindus who were depicted as suds (pure) and polytheists in the census and surveys of the colonial administration (Sundar, 1997; Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). Consequently, the Adivasi identity emerged in opposition to the Hindu caste system in some parts of India while remaining internally differentiated. I will explore and unpack these tensions in the analytical chapters.

Drawing on the African context, Mamdani (2001, 2012) illustrates the race/tribe distinction as a strategy of indirect rule by the colonial regime. He suggests that the distinction of race/tribe moved beyond the coloniser/colonised separation and enabled the internal division of countries between native (tribe) and non-native or settler (race). Similarly, in the Indian context, a caste/tribe dichotomy, like the Hindu/Muslim binary discussed in the previous section, was installed to strategically divide the country internally and create multiple internal others such as the Adivasis. In so doing, it consolidated the powers of the colonial state in India. I will argue this consolidation further in the next chapter, to elaborate the links between colonial and post-independence Indian State.

Alongside religious distinctions, the caste/tribe, Tribal/Non-Tribal or native/settler separation was significant in the production of legal categories such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). This separation provides an important link to the research context of this study, as the local village community where the research took place had members of both ST (Tribal/native) and OBC (Non-Tribal/settler) communities. They embodied and
performed these legally-inskied identities, while questioning and problematising the caste/tribe distinction as I will examine in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

As such, the groups that are identified and self-identify as Adivasis have a long and complex history of subordination and marginalisation, whether as pre-Aryans in the varna system, in/outside the caste system during the colonial rule and as Scheduled Tribes in the post-independence India. At present, India has over 104 million people who are classified as Scheduled Tribes (ST), and many more who identify as Adivasi/Tribal but have not been granted the legal ST category (MHA, 2011; MoTA, 2013).

The STs comprise over 8.6% of the total population in India and are spread across the country except for Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, NCT of Delhi, and Puducherry (MHA, 2011). There are 705 individual ethnic groups in the country that have been classified/notified as STs and majority of them are concentrated in the rural areas (MHA, 2011). The reciprocal linking of Adivasi identity with geographical location, rural, hilly and forested, by the colonial and Indian State is examined in Chapter 5.

Tracing the history of the Adivasi to the colonial rule and linking it with an insurgent past to resist colonial domination, entwined with land and forest, has produced the group as rebels, wild and uncivilised (Skaria, 1998, 1999). Rycroft and Dasgupta (2011) have warned of the dangers of such representation and refer to Pandey (2006) to suggest maintenance of critical distance ‘between insurgent pasts and post-insurgent present’ (p. 60). Such distance, they argue, allows for the significance of insurgency to the ‘contemporary Adivasi renderings of selfhood’ (p. 60), and does not obscure their histories of subordination.

In a similar vein, in her study on Bastar, Sundar (1997) suggests that it is dangerous to view groups as heroic rebels or passive victims as it disregards multiple belongings, experiences and subjectivities. Troubling and undoing the binary of insurgent rebels/passive victims in relation to Adivasi identities is another important focus of this study and links to its research context. I examine and problematise this dichotomy in Chapter 7 in context of the Maoist movement in India, an introduction to which follows in the next section.
2.4 Maoist movement

Historically, the Adivasis of India have had a precarious existence geographically, economically, politically, and socially since the colonial rule, as traced in the previous section. In the context of their marginalisation from the start, resistance movements emerged in several areas against the colonial and independent Indian State (Ram, 1973; Sinha, 1989; Mehra, 2000). Of these, the Maoist movement has held particular sway, as it exists in its present form, in the areas occupied by the Adivasis and espousing the cause of Adivasi rights. This section provides a brief history of the movement as its detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this study. It also provides a significant link to the research context of this study, elaborated in Chapter 4.

Most of the areas in India that have been classified as Maoist insurgency or Left-wing Extremism (LWE) affected in State policy are also classified as Scheduled Areas (Sinha, 2011; MHA, 2013). These areas are characterised by a predominant presence of the Adivasis or the Scheduled Tribes (Sinha, 2011). These include the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh and the Vidarbha region in Maharashtra where the fieldwork for this research took place. The Adivasi Gond community is one of the predominant ethnic groups in this area, also classified as Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) (MoTA, 2013). Members of this community constituted the research participants of this study.

These areas categories as Scheduled and LWE-affected are resource-rich with precious mineral reserves (Sinha, 2011). The demarcation of particular areas and people as Scheduled and its entwinement with Left-Wing Extremism or Maoist insurgency is significant for the context of this study. I will examine this link in Chapter 5 and then again in Chapter 7 by engaging with Research Questions 1 and 3 of this study.

2.4.1 The Communist Party of India

Maoist movement, popularly known as the Naxalite movement, is a post-independence struggle that started in the late 1960s after the Communist Party of India (CPI) split into CPI (Marxist) and subsequently a break way group that formed the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) (Ram, 1973; Sinha, 1989, 2011; MHA, 2013). The Indian State uses the terms Maoist and Left-wing Extremism interchangeably in some of its policy (MHA, 2013).
The development of the Maoist movement is often traced to the colonial rule and resistance against the land revenue systems imposed by the British administrators as also discussed in the previous section (Ram, 1973; Sinha, 1989, 2011). The earlier communist groups came to be organised in the Telangana region of South India in the 1940s and mobilised a popular peasant movement in 1948, built around issues of land, agrarian distress and against feudal landlords (Ram, 1973; Sinha, 1989, 2011). Referred to as the Telangana Armed Struggle, the movement was violent and militant in character and adopted armed struggle against oppressive landlordism as its method of resistance (Ram, 1973; Sinha, 1989, 2011).

Post-independence, in the 1950s, the CPI withdrew the armed struggle from Telangana, participated in the 1952 elections, and won in Andhra Pradesh (AP). The Telangana region was merged with the state of AP. Land reforms were initiated, private property abolished and zamindari system was done away with by the government (Ram, 1973; Constitution of India, 2013).

However, the situation on the ground did not change drastically as the landlords continued to enjoy undisputed power often with covert state support (Mehra, 2000). Created and installed by the colonial state for its revenue collection, the landlords received similar protection and support from the Indian State, with little damage to their authority (Sinha, 1989, 2011). It indicated the maintenance and furtherance of power relations, instated by the colonial regime, by the independent Indian State.

The 1957 elections saw the decimation of the Communist Party in AP and led to the passing of its Amritsar Thesis in 1958 as a further strategy for electoral politics. The Amritsar Thesis proclaimed strengthening of agrarian struggles on the ground, abjuring of violence and working through ‘parliamentary democracy and constitutionalism to make a peaceful transition to socialism’ (Fic, 1963 as cited in Sinha, 2011, p. 4). In the Indian context, the Communist Party played a significant part in bringing about the inclusion of the term ‘socialist’ in the Constitution (Sinha, 1989, 2011; Constitution of India, 2013).

However, the turn away from armed struggle and entry into parliamentarian politics was critiqued by the grassroots cadre of the CPI as it had built significant momentum in certain areas through armed struggle (Sinha, 2011). These areas were predominantly inhabited by Adivasi communities and had minimal State presence (Sinha, 1989, 2011). It pointed to the wider context of marginalisation and neglect by the Indian state
in areas where the Adivasis lived (Roy, 2011). Subsequently, the first split in the CPI took place in 1964 where the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) was formed by some of the dissenting members advocating armed resistance (Ram, 1973; Sinha, 1989; Mehra, 2000).

The second split came about after the Naxalbari incident in 1967. In the Naxalbari region of West Bengal (WB) state, where the CPI (M) was active, the local landlords had enjoyed State support against the peasant Adivasi groups. In 1967, the area witnessed an uprising against the landlords mostly by the Adivasi groups (Sinha, 1989; Roy, 2011). It was guided by two of the CPI (M) leaders, Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal, who professed Mao’s idea of armed struggle through guerrilla warfare and agrarian revolution (Sinha, 1989; Roy, 2011). The armed movement/uprising was violently suppressed by the Police (Sinha, 1989; Roy, 2011). It further led to the formation of the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (APCCCR), and eventually the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-ML) (Sinha, 1989; 2011).

The leaders of these organisations propagated a Maoist line of armed struggle, i.e. carrying out a protracted people’s war along military lines to capture State power, and came to be known as Naxals (Sinha, 1989, 2011). Their movement was an extension of the Telangana Armed Struggle of 1948 that was abandoned after the adoption of the Amritsar Thesis (Sinha, 1989, 2011). The struggle mobilised the Adivasis’ ‘on issues of occupation of land that belonged legally to them’ (Sinha, 2011, p. 8). Land to the tiller became the main slogan of the movement, along with the formation a party centre to capture political power (Sinha, 1989, 2011). It reflected the inefficacy of State’s land reforms in areas of the Adivasis and represented the Maoist movement as a response to the absence of the Indian State (Roy, 2011). I will revisit this discussion in Chapter 7.

The Naxals emphasised armed struggle and non-participation in elections (Sinha, 2011). The violent suppression of their movement by the Police, and attacks by the landlords, eventually led to the goal of overthrow and annihilation of the State, and its symbols, and capture of State power (Roy, 2011). This arose as a response to State repression and its inability to negotiate with the Maoists. However, in so doing, the agrarian and peasant issues were eventually sidestepped (Sinha 1989; 2011), as I will further analyse in Chapter 7.
The call for non-participation in elections and boycott of democratic forms of governance structures by the Maoists provide important links to the research context of this study. Living in the context of protracted violence and conflict, the Gond community adopted multiple strategies to participate, resist and navigate their Adivasi identities, as I will explore in Chapter 7.

Notwithstanding this, Sinha (2011) suggests that the Naxalbari incident came to represent the shifting of focus to agrarian demands and ‘peasant based guerrilla struggle in rural areas with the specific intention of destroying the existing power structure’ (p. 10). In addition to this, the support that the Naxal movement received in AP and WB came predominantly from the subordinated and excluded Adivasi populations (Sinha 1989; 2011), which reiterated their context of marginalisation.

2.4.2 The Maoists and the Adivasis

The period after the death of Charu Majumdar in 1972 and revival of the Congress party at the Centre destabilised the Maoist movement further and led to several splits and re-alignments (Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011). The formation of the People’s War Group in Andhra Pradesh in 1976 and Maoist Communist Centre in Bihar dissolved the ideology of ‘protracted people’s war’ and endorsed immediate armed struggle as the only way forward in the Indian context (Sinha, 2011). The merger of these two groups in 2004 created the CPI (Maoist/M) (Sinha 1989; 2011).

At present, the CPI (M) is active and operates through its armed wing, People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) in regions such as Bastar in Chhattisgarh and Vidarbha in Maharashtra (Sundar 1997; Shah 2010; Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011). As discussed in Section 2.4.1, these areas are mostly inhabited by the Adivasis. The village where the fieldwork for this study took place, inhabited by the Adivasi Gond community, was declared a ‘liberated zone’ by the Maoists when the movement shifted its geographical location.

The shifting of the movement from AP and WB to forested areas such Bastar and Vidarbha signified the conducive geographical location to sustain anti-State action and survive the ongoing State and Police repression elsewhere (Mehra, 2000; Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011). Additionally, it indicated a deficit State (Sinha, 2011). The declaration of certain areas as ‘liberated zones’ signalled the absence of State in these areas in terms of provision of basic infrastructure and services such as health and education. For instance, the local health centre and government school did not function in the
village where I stayed. This neglect produced discontentment among the Adivasis and further manipulation by the local landlords and authorities (Sinha, 2011; Shah, 2013).

The resource/mineral-rich dimension of these areas invited ‘developmental’ projects of mining and deforestation with State collusion, leading to displacement of the Adivasis and their shrinking access to forests and livelihood opportunities (Sundar, 1997; Padel and Das, 2010; Shah, 2010; Roy, 2011). It is in this context that the Maoists’ pronouncements on the exploitative nature of the State and right to jal, jungle, jameen (water, forests, land) rang true (Mohanty, 2006). For instance, the Village Council meetings of the village where I stayed focused on the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and the Adivasis’ right to collect and sell the forest produce without involving intermediaries, government contractors or the Forest Department.

Sinha (2011) suggests that it was the relentless work of the local Maoist cadre and their emphasis on the dignity of the poor and social justice that produced support of the Adivasis to the Maoist movement. Unlike the colonial and Indian State’s ideology of dominance, the Maoists approached the Adivasis through the language of respect (Shah, 2013). They filled the State deficit in these areas by carrying out activities such as running of schools, mobile health clinics, taking up issues of forest produce, questioning of State forest guards and contractors on corruption, demanding better price for their produce and re-instating Adivasi control over land (Shah, 2010, 2013). In doing so, the Maoists replaced the (absent) State in these areas (Ahuja and Ganguly, 2007; Sinha, 2011; Shah, 2013).

Referring to it as the ‘intimacy of insurgency’, Shah (2013) argues that the Maoist presence, and State absence, was due to the relations of intimacy and camaraderie that the Maoists developed with the Adivasis. In the context of this study, I will demonstrate the presence of the Maoists in the local village community as a response to the demands and struggles of the Adivasis as well as due to their neglect and degradation at the hands of the Indian State.

However, the Maoists’ use of violence to ensure compliance to the movement ideology and organisation, and recruitment of young people, both men and women, in the bal sanghas, bal sangathans, and bal dastas has been problematised (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Roy, 2011; Sinha, n.d.). It has claimed to produce stronger State repression through use of Police and Para-military forces (Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011). As I will discuss in the next section and then again in Chapter 7, the State response to the
Maoist movement has been deployment of violence, classification of Maoists as ‘insurgents’ and ‘terrorists’, and legitimisation of State violence as ‘counter-insurgency’ and ‘anti-terrorism’. It is this context of violence, precarity and vulnerability of the Adivasis that I will illustrate in Chapter 7.

2.4.3 Response of the Indian State

The Maoist movement has been framed as a law and order problem by the Indian state through use of terms such as insurgency, civil unrest and Left-Wing Extremism in State policy (Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011; Sundar, 2011; MHA, 2013). The coming together of People’s War Group, which was active in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Odisha and parts of Bihar, and the Maoist Communist Centre, which was concentrated in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and eastern UP, provided for a significant part of the central, eastern and southern India to be affected by Left-Wing Extremism (MHA, 2013). This area has also come to be known as the Red Corridor (MHA, 2013).

However, Sinha (2011) argues:

The word corridor is a misnomer as there are several districts that separate the areas of naxal presence and in actuality there is no contiguity in their areas of operation. Their support in the areas where they have a presence is uneven ranging from tacit consent of the local population to fear of being crushed between police and the Maoists. (p. 2)

Notwithstanding the description of the Red Corridor, the extract above reiterates the precarious context of the local populations such as the Adivasis that navigate the (fear of) State and Maoist violence. This navigation has been exacerbated by the inclusion of CPI (M), and all of its front organisations said to be operational in 20 states in India, in the list of banned terrorist organisations under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (MHA, 2013). The movement was described as India’s biggest internal security threat by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (EPW, 2011; Sinha, 2011; Sundar, 2011; MHA, 2013). Over time, the number of police stations and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have increased in the areas where the Maoists are active (MHA, 2013), including where the fieldwork for this research took place.

In 2005, the Chhattisgarh state government formed a local anti-insurgency militia called Salwa Judum\(^5\), drawing its members from the Adivasi Gond community\(^6\) (Shah, 2010;

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5 Salwa Judum is Gondi for ‘Peace March’ (Shah, 2010; Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011)

6 Bastar region in Chhattisgarh, considered the hotbed of the Maoist movement, is predominantly inhabited by the Gond community
The local Adivasi youth from the Gond community were recruited in Salwa Judum, given arms and provided ‘counter-insurgency’ training to combat the Maoists (Shah, 2010; Roy, 2011; Sundar, 2011; Sinha, 2011). This move exemplified the internal division of the people by the State, as predominant support for the Maoist movement came from the local Adivasi groups. It split the local Adivasi communities such as the Gonds between the categories of Police informer and Maoist sympathiser. This internal division of the Adivasi Gond community is significant for the context of this research and forms an important link to the analysis, as I will explore in Chapter 7. The Supreme Court of India ruled against the formation of Salwa Judum, declared it unconstitutional and illegal (Shah, 2010; Roy, 2011; Sundar, 2011; Sinha, 2011).

Subsequently, in 2006, the LWE Division was created under the Ministry of Home Affairs in ‘to effectively address the Left-Wing Extremist insurgency in a holistic manner’ (MHA, 2013). It implied a strategic shift in the stance of the Indian State and its response towards the Maoist movement. While the Division continued to focus on the implementation of security-related schemes, a number of ‘development’ projects were included to be implemented alongside the counter-insurgency measures (MHA, 2013).

Nevertheless, the focus remained on ‘addressing the security vacuum’ (MHA, 2013). Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA) were formed in 2008 as a specialised force for jungle/forest combat under the Central Armed Police Forces. They were imparted ‘guerrilla/jungle warfare training’ for ‘dealing with extremists and insurgents’ (CRPF, Govt of India, 2008). In Chapter 7, I will examine the effects of the construction of the Maoist movement as anti-India/State on the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the Gond community.

By 2010, the Maoist movement spread to 160 districts in 10 states of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (Sinha, 2011; MHA, 2013). This was nonetheless a reduction from 180 districts in 2009 (MHA, 2013). Consequently, the emphasis on security was retained and developmental measures were seen to be incidental to the security approach (Sundar, 2011; Shah, 2013). At present, 106 districts in 10 States have been identified by the Government of India as Left-Wing Extremism affected (PIB, 2016).
The Indian State has adopted varied measures such as the 'Integrated Action Plan for Select Tribal and Backward Districts' to deal with the issue of Maoist insurgency (EPW, 2011). However, the implementation of such measures is carried out through District and Block level government officers and does not reach the supposedly intended ‘beneficiary’, i.e. the Adivasi, who are seen to be affected by the insurgency (EPW, 2011).

The emphasis on local administration and governance structures in State policy in the implementation of schemes for the Adivasis and the ineffectiveness of these structures in delivering the intended benefits connects back to the call for their boycott by the Maoists. It links to the notion of democracy, decentralisation and participation, as I will explore in Chapter 3. It raises questions about the non-participation of Adivasis in local governance structures, as I will examine in Chapter 7.

Mohanty (2006) suggests that the response of the Indian state to the Maoist movement has been misguided and has failed to recognise the character of revolutionary violence and the support it has received from the Adivasis. The predominant account frames the movement as a law and order problem, rather than one of socio-economic and/or rights issues (Mohanty, 2006; Roy, 2011).

As such, the Indian state has used counter-violence and counter-insurgency tactics that have not addressed the roots of the unrest in the gross injustices and inequalities inherent in the Indian society, particularly evident in the areas of the Adivasis. Whatever the veracity of the State’s claims, a fundamental issue about the Adivasi anger and resentment and their claims of State injustices remain. On the other hand, it can be argued that a shift in the stance of the Indian State, and its enlivening in the areas of the Adivasis is in response to the Maoist presence/activity in these areas (Roy, 2011; Sinha, 2011). I will exemplify this argument in the context of this study, more specifically in Chapter 7.

I will now shift the discussion from the national historical context of India, the Adivasis and the Maoist movement to the issue of education planning and provisioning within this context. The formation of the Indian nation-state after independence from the colonial rule, as I explored in Section 2.2, emphasised development and modernisation perspectives. Within these, education came to occupy a central position, as I will discuss in the next section. More specifically, the use of education by the colonial and
Indian State in the production of social stratification is significant to further understand the precarious social positioning of the Adivasis and their context of violence.

The next section provides a brief history of the planning for education provisioning in India since the colonial rule, the Constituent Assembly debates for making education a fundamental right, the eventual enactment of the Right to Education in 2009, and how this has impacted the Adivasis. It then discusses the ‘attacks’ on education in the State-Maoist conflict and the use of education by the State to combat conflict.

2.5 Education

2.5.1 Education planning in India

Like the utilisation of religion, caste and tribe to construct social categories of distinction, education was deployed by the colonial regime in India to produce difference and internal hierarchies. The Industrial Revolution in Britain, produced through the drain of wealth and resources from India, necessitated the (re-)shaping of colonial subjectivities. The expansion of industrial capitalism in Britain meant transforming India into a market for British goods (Chandra, 2009). The spread of ‘modern’ education enabled such a transformation. It provided an instrument of governmentality for establishing the (superiority of) colonial regime in India, as I will explore in Chapter 3.

Different strands emerged among the colonial administrators during the planning for education in India (Nurullah and Naik, 1951; Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014). These strands constructed India as civilisationally opposed to Europe, as also discussed in Section 2.2. Ultimately, in the policy decision that prevailed, India was conceived as uncivilised, unscientific but capable of change (Chandra, 2009). This change was to be effected through ‘modernity’ by following the path mapped out by Europe (Bhambra, 2007). Such a view, rooted in Enlightenment and Renaissance, justified the rule of the British over the Indian people (Bhambra, 2007; Chandra, 2009). Within this view, the oppression of the Indian women through religious and caste-based practices such as sati (widow sacrifice) became a symbol for justifying the colonial ‘civilising mission’ (Chatterjee, 1989; Mahmood, 2009a). As such, India’s construction as civilisationally inferior to Britain was produced through religion, education and gender. It provided the grounds for the introduction of modern, Western and formal education that was informed by notions of change, improvement and progress.
Guided by the imperialistic economic interests, a controlled modernisation of India was initiated by the colonial regime (Nurullah and Naik, 1951; Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014). The aim was to transform the Indian society but only to the extent of making it into a market for British goods and enable the consolidation of colonial rule. Indians were infantilised, thought of as incapable to be in administration, and in need of modern education (Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014). Additionally, like the language of the colonial rulers, Indians were to be educated in and through the English language (Chandra, 2009). Lord Macaulay, who headed the Public Instruction Committee (PIC) and was a member of the Governor-General’s Council, argued:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (as cited in Chandra, 2009, p. 126)

The PIC recommended the spread of Western education to a small and select number of Indians and the emphasis was on higher education (Chandra, 2009). The strategic focus on higher education and select Indians was attributed to the lack of resources (Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014). Those educated in this way went on to constitute the national ‘elite’ in India, thereby signifying the internal social divisions and hierarchies. Subsequently, the national elite stayed sympathetic to the British rule, given their indoctrination in Western reason (Nurullah and Naik, 1951; Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014).

As English was the language of administration, the British strategically employed educated Indians in lower administrative positions such as clerks. It created the class of persons that Macaulay mentioned in the extract above. It did not only provide cheap labour force and market for British goods, it glorified the rule of British over Indians and reified the ‘civilisational’ difference. It deepened the divisions in society as schools and colleges became expensive, which only the rich and urban could afford (Chandra, 2009). The existing systems of knowledge, learning and languages were delegitimised (Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014). This devaluation of knowledge systems had implications for the Adivasis, given their rural location and social positioning as ‘tribal’. I will examine the discursive production of Adivasi identity through education in Chapter 6.

The colonial policies for education provisioning in India, like the land revenue policies, produced the stratification of the Indian society and increased socio-economic differences. The push for ‘formal’ education in India came from the religious/Christian missionaries as well as the ‘progressive’ Indians who were leading reform movements.
within the Hindu religion (Chandra, 2009). The missionaries’ agenda was advancement of Christianity through setting up of schools, given Christianity’s strong linkages with Western education and formation of a distinct European/civilisational identity (Asad, 2003; Chandra, 2009; Mahmood, 2016). The progressive Indians, on the other hand, favoured Western education due to their critique of the Hindu religious and caste-based practices (Chandra, 2009). Chandra (2009) suggests that they acted as unwilling allies of the missionaries in the promotion of Western reason through formal education. In this sense, religion, along with capitalist interests, was significant in the planning for education in India.

Contrarily, the Indian ‘nationalists’ resisted the emphasis on Western/formal education and knowledge systems as well as on higher education of the few (Chatterjee, 1989; Chandra, 2009). The opening of education for all sections of Indian society was advocated and practised by national leaders such as Gandhi and Tagore (Chandra, 2009). However, Chatterjee (1989) suggests that in so doing, a dichotomy of material/spiritual or inner (home)/outer (world) was produced to resist the colonial system’s emphasis on ‘material’, reason and mind. This dichotomy had implications for the construction and reification of gender relations in India. It emphasised the production of a respectable Indian woman who could enter the outer (world) through education, while retaining her place in the inner (home) and maintaining India’s spiritual character as distinct from the West’s materiality (Chatterjee, 1989). I will explore the gendered dimensions of education and religion in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities in Chapter 6.

By 1886, about 10 million Indian rupees were selectively spent on education by the colonial administration, from its revenue of 470 million (Chandra, 2009). Consequently, over 90% of Indians were classified as uneducated in the census and surveys in 1911 and 1921 (Chandra, 2009; Sinha, 2014). No funds were allotted for the education of girls, as women were not employed in administrative/clerical posts till 1921 (Chandra, 2009). The linking of education with employment and economic interests of the colonial state instrumentalised education provisioning in India. This link was key in the constitution of the development discourse in India as I will explore in the next section and then again in Chapter 3.

2.5.2 Right to Education

The colonial education system and its emphasis related to the economic and social futures of India instituted formal and Western education through the English language.
It constructed Indians as socially backward, slowly changing and in need of education to progress (Chandra, 2009). Simultaneously, education was used in the production of social stratification by determining who gained access to it. Education acted as an instrument of governmentality and a technology of the self (Foucault, 1978). It worked to re-shape and inform people’s subjectivities through their embodiment of social distinctions and hierarchies.

The undermining of existent knowledge systems in favour of formal education had grave consequences for populations, such as the Adivasis, that were excluded from education provisioning (Sedwal and Kamat, 2008; Juneja, 2010; Reddy and Sinha, 2010). Over time, (formal) education was inextricably linked to the development of people and nation-states. It reciprocally constituted the development discourse that was shaped through the economic interests of growth and progress, as discussed in Section 2.5.1, of both the colonial and Indian State.

The Constituent Assembly debated the provision of free and compulsory education in India. It followed the colonial state’s justification of lack of resources and national financial constraints for education provisioning for all (Nurullah and Naik, 1951; Sinha, 2014). Like the colonial state, education was linked to specific administrative jobs in the country (Chandra, 2009). In 1951, after the independence, India’s literacy rate was 18%, with a female and male literacy rate of 9% and 27% respectively (Chandra, 2009; Drèze and Sen, 2013; Sinha, 2014).

Free and compulsory education was made a fundamental right during the drafting of the Indian Constitution (Sinha, 2014). This would have made education provisioning justiciable with the State responsible for its guarantee within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, i.e. by 1960 (Sinha, 2014). However, it was removed from the list of Fundamental Rights owing to disagreements over resources and practicality, and instead made a Directive Principle of State Policy7 under Article 458 (Constitution of India, 2013; Sinha, 2014). The colonial state’s argument of lack of resources for education was carried on by the independent Indian state.

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7 Article 37 of the Indian Constitution states that the provisions contained in this Part (Directive Principles of State Policy) shall not be enforceable by any court, but the principles therein laid down are nevertheless fundamental in the governance of the country and it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws (Constitution of India, 2013).

8 Article 45 of the Constitution states that the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years (Constitution of India, 2013).
In the first two five-year plans (1951-61) of the Planning Commission, university education received maximum attention and a jump in budget allocation expenditure while the allocation for elementary education was reduced (Sinha, 2014). Universalisation of elementary education (class 1 to 8) was eventually mentioned in the seventh five-year plan (1985-1990) (Sinha, 2014).

The shift towards the universalisation of education should be viewed in the context of international developments. While education was described as a right for every child of school going age by Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, the impetus for education increased through the Education for All (EFA) campaign in the 1990s (UNESCO, 2002). The Millennium Development Goals, 2000 had ‘universal primary education’ as one of the eight goals to be achieved by countries by 2015 (UNESCO, 2002). The centrality of education in the international development discourse influenced the national discourse in India. The development discourse, as I will argue in the next chapter, was an extension of the colonial education discourse in India and its insistence on modernisation. I will unpack this in the context of the formation of the Indian nation-state as modernising and developing in Chapter 3.

From the early 1990s till 2000, the Indian government’s programmes and schemes such as Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Project (DPEP), and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) maintained an exclusive focus on educational access or enrolment into schools (Sinha, 2014). The DPEP, 1991-92 was funded by the World Bank, European Union, Department for International Development and UNICEF (World Bank, 2004). It was eventually expanded across the country as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001. Translating to Education for All Movement in English, SSA carried on DPEP’s goal of universal enrolment/access. It built on the agenda of the global EFA campaign to bring people into formal education.

However, educational access was narrowly conceptualised and restricted to the first point of entry into school (Lewin, 2007, 2011; Juneja, 2010). The issues of attendance, quality education, curriculum, pedagogy, meaningful learning, and transition from one class to the next were not adequately addressed (Juneja, 2010; Reddy and Sinha, 2010). The Indian State’s focus on school enrolment resonated the colonial emphasis on ‘civilising’ Indians and bringing them into the formal school system.

The enactment of the RTE Act marked a shift in the conceptualisation and provisioning of education in India, from a welfarist measure to a justiciable fundamental right. Its interlinking with notions of liberty and social justice constituted its significance for historically excluded and subordinated groups such as the Adivasis. The RTE Act acknowledged the marginalisation of these groups through its multiple provisions (Sinha, 2014). These included provisions for neighbourhood schools, admission to age-appropriate class, doing away with documents such as birth certificate and residence proof, no-detention policy up to class 8, banning of corporal punishment, setting up of School Management Committees with representation from parents and local communities (Sinha, 2014). The Act mandated all private schools to provide for 25% reservation in admission to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) which included the Scheduled Tribes (Sinha, 2014). These provisions carried an implicit recognition of the systematic exclusion of the Adivasis from education provisioning in India, more specifically of the Adivasi women.

As such, while India has made significant gains in school enrolment, attaining near-universal enrolment due to the implementation of the RTE Act, the proportion of young people attending schools has been declining with the increase in age (IIPS, 2016). Young people, especially women, from Muslim, Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste groups account for 75% of all ‘out-of-school children’ in India, with a higher proportion of ST children out of school than any other social category (NSSO, 2014). While the national average of school dropouts was 42.39% in Census 2011, for the Scheduled Tribes (ST) it was 57.58% (Sinha, 2014). The proportion of women who had never attended school was highest, at 44 per cent, for women belonging to Scheduled Tribes and a similar pattern prevailed among men (Parasuraman et al., 2009).

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9 Article 21A, ‘Right to Education’ states that The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.
Moreover, school attendance has remained lower among women than men and attendance rate in rural areas has been lower than that in urban areas (IIPS, 2016). Regionally, the (rural) areas inhabited by the Adivasis have been characterised by high poverty and low literacy rates vis-à-vis the rest of India (MoTA, 2013, 2014). The data on educational access and schooling in India is indicative of the nexus of various social factors such as religion, caste, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and so on. Significantly, it illustrates the double disadvantage of the Adivasi women in terms of their access to education. I will explore this link in Chapter 6.

As discussed in section 2.4, most of the areas in India that have been classified as Left-Wing Extremism affected are areas inhabited by the Adivasis (Sinha, 2011). The low literacy rate in these areas reiterates the absence of the State as well as raises question about its link with the presence of the Maoist movement. I now discuss this link in Section 2.5.3.

2.5.3 Education and conflict

The historical exclusion of the Adivasis through colonial policies of land revenue and from State provisioning of services such as education produced resistance movements against the State (Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010; Sinha, 2011), as discussed in Section 2.4. It provides a link to the delegitimisation of their knowledge systems in favour of Western education. While certain groups in India were supportive of the colonial rule owing to their indoctrination in Western reason, the exclusion of the Adivasis from education explains partly their resistance to the state.

The gradual linking of education with personal liberty and social justice and its enactment as a fundamental right symbolised inclusion through its attainment. The RTE Act placed an onus on the Indian State to compulsorily provide education to young people in the 6-14 age group, free of cost. In this sense, education was viewed as a key good or service of development to be provided by the state to its citizens (Juneja, 2010; Reddy and Sinha, 2010; Lewin, 2011).

The RTE Act called for expansion of state-funded infrastructure such as school buildings to all possible habitations/locations in order to implement its neighbourhood school criteria (Sinha, 2014). In rural and remote geographical locations then, education and schools represented State authority. More specifically, the areas inhabited by the Adivasis had minimal State presence, as discussed in Section 2.3 and
2.4. School buildings and other infrastructure for education provisioning in these areas became symbols of state supremacy.

The State-Maoist conflict in areas of the Adivasis produced occupation of several school buildings by the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) while disrupting educational access (NCPCR, 2010, 2012b). Schools in these areas were converted into camps for the CAPF personnel to combat the Maoists (NCPCR, 2010, 2012b). It further resulted in the association of education with State domination and production of schools as instruments of State surveillance (Sinha, n.d.). It was only after the Supreme Court’s order in 2013 that school buildings were vacated by the armed forces (NCPCR, 2010, 2012b). However, as a response to school occupation, school buildings were attacked by the Maoists (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Sinha, n.d.), thereby implicating education in the civil unrest. The already precarious educational access of the Adivasi groups was exacerbated by the State’s militarist response to the Maoist movement.

According to state records, over 200 school buildings have been destroyed by LWE between 2004 and 2013 (MHA, 2013). However, studies conducted at the local level have highlighted that the Maoists do not target schools on their own or prevent teachers or students from going to school (NCPCR, 2010, 2012b; Chaudhary et al., 2013; Sinha, n.d.). If anything, substantial evidence has been found about Maoists’ involvement in schooling to ensure that teachers come to schools regularly (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Sinha, n.d.).

The Indian State’s policy, however, maintains the following position:

The Maoists wish to keep the population in their strongholds cut-off from the mainstream milieu. The schools are attacked because education promotes a spirit of enquiry among the local population and also equips children with skills for alternative sources of livelihood. These developments are looked upon by the Maoists as potential threats to their very existence and their outdated ideology (MHA, 2013).

The State policy has constructed the Maoists in opposition to formal and modern education provided through government schools, as implied in the extract above. This opposition, alongside the Maoists’ construction as anti-India, signals the context of precarity and vulnerability of the Adivasis. The provisioning of education in areas of the Adivasis has become a key site of political contestation and struggle between the Indian State and Maoists (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Sinha, n.d.). For the Adivasis, any (dis)association with formal education implies taking of sides in the conflict and risking
of life. Nonetheless, the production of education as a symbol of modernity and representing ‘alternative sources of livelihood’, implicit in the above extract, explains its high demand by marginalised groups such as the Adivasis. I will explore these demands and the significance attached to education by the Adivasis in the analytical chapters of this study.

The State response to the attack on school buildings has been through schemes and policies for residential schools (NCPCR, 2010; 2012b). The closure of day schools in many of these areas alongside construction of Ashram schools shifted students away from home and into residential facilities hundreds of kilometres away (NCPCR, 2010; 2012b). The Ashram shala scheme for the ‘upliftment’ of Adivasi communities existed since 1990-1991 (MoTA, 2013, 2014). It was however revised in 2008-2009, given the government’s counter-insurgency impetus, and the building of residential schools gained momentum (Sinha, 2014, n.d.).

The poor quality infrastructure, non-provision of uniforms and textbooks, non-use of local languages and local community teachers reinforced the alienation of Adivasis through these schools and explained their high drop-out rate (Sedwal and Kamat, 2008; Chaudhary et al., 2013). The construction of buildings far away from students’ homes, on the pretext of Maoist insurgency and without the involvement of local community, conveyed the deployment of education for internal division of communities, similar to its utilisation by the colonial state.

Sedwal and Kamat (2008) suggest that the high demand for education by the Adivasis is reflected in the enrolment rates and the income spent by the Adivasi parents on State-funded as well as private education. However, the high school drop-out and low literacy rates of the Adivasis point to a contradiction (Sedwal and Kamat, 2008; MoTA, 2013, 2014). It raises questions about the tensions between access to school in its modernisation project and demands for education by excluded and marginalised groups such as the Adivasis. I will explore these tensions in the next chapter and then again in the analysis chapters, to focus on the demands for education by the Adivasi Gond community and its link with modernity and development.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the contextual background necessary for the theoretical and analytical framing of this study. The emergence of the Indian State, its geographical and historical context was traced by looking at the pre- and post-independence
developments. The influence of the colonial rule in the construction of particular identities of nation, religion, caste, tribe and gender were signalled in this chapter. The colonial regime's entrenchment of specific forms of governance in India was unpacked through a contextual overview of the Adivasis, the Maoist movement and the education planning in the country. The context provided in this chapter helps locate the theoretical positioning of this study as elaborated in the next chapter. It provides a necessary precursor to the theorisation of identity-formation, state and citizenship, development and education, and agency and resistance in the context of violence and conflict.
3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I chart out the theoretical framing of this research by using poststructural theorisation of concepts used in the analysis of the data, informed through postcolonial and feminist literature. I start with a critical review of the literature on the key concepts of this study and explain how it links to the context of my research. The discussion in this chapter is organised in four sections. In the first section, I explore the concept of identity and its formation, historically, through relations of power and discourse. The discussion on the power of discourse to name, categorise, and produce subjects is significant for the context of this study. As discussed in the previous chapters, the aim of this study is to understand the discursive production of the Adivasi identity, through law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state; the production and performance of Adivasi identities in a local village community through religion, education and gender; and the navigation of the Indian and Adivasi identities by the Gond community in the context of protracted violence. I use the first section of this chapter to elaborate on the theoretical processes of identity-formation that I draw on later in the analysis.

In order to understand the discursive production of Adivasi identity, the understanding of the historical, social and political background of the Indian nation-state is crucial. I carry out this discussion in the second and third sections. In the second section, I explore the concept of modernity, its purported emergence in Europe, and its link to the formation of the modern nation-state. I argue that the emergence of ‘modernity’ was reciprocally linked to the capitalistic colonial rule.

The formation of India as a modernising, sovereign, socialist, democratic, and secular republic, structured by ideas of decentralisation and participation is examined in the third section. I bring out the link between its imagination as a nation and its constitutional obligations as a state, as also briefly explored in Chapter 2. The linkages with the colonial state are illustrated through a discussion on particular structures of governance sustained from the time of colonial rule. I do this by exploring the notions of welfare and development and the assumed centrality of education in the development discourse, linking it to the colonial education discourse in India.
These linkages explain how groups such as the Adivasis have been historically incorporated into or excluded from the nation-state, while they remain Indian citizens with due rights and claims to development. It examines what forms of violence and conflict are produced through such inclusion and exclusion. The link between power, discourse and identity is then invoked to explore the formation of the nation and national and gender identities. This raises questions about the framing of the Adivasis in law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian State as well as the production and performance of Adivasi identities.

The fourth section shifts the discussion from the State or national level to explore the effects of the historical processes of identity- and nation-state formation on the local context of the Adivasis. I argue for re-examining the notions of agency and resistance through poststructural understandings of the terms, enriched by postcolonial and feminist literature. This section provides an understanding of the link and tensions between the national and the local. It raises questions on how the discursive framing of the Adivasis nationally gets understood, articulated, performed, and navigated at the village-community level, in the context of violence and precarity.

Although I have demarcated the national and the local in the structuring of this and subsequent chapters, I understand that there is a reciprocal relationship between the chapters and my research questions that emerge from these. I have maintained these links between sections to signify the transitions in my thinking and a complex interwoven forward and backward movement within the text.

3.2 Identity

The formation of identity, as a historical process, through relations of power and discourse is central to my theoretical and analytical framing of this study. In this section, I draw on and elaborate the poststructural understanding of identity as plural, multiple, relational and contingent. I draw on Butler (1990) to indicate my understanding of poststructuralism:

For poststructuralists, the totalitarian and universalising language is problematic and the presumption of binary structural oppositions between signifier and signified...they want to displace it all rendering all referentiality into a potentially limitless displacement (Butler, 1990, p. 54)

As implied through the above quote, the poststructural approach and theorisation work to trouble the essentialising and totalising view of the self as unified, stable and
coherent (Hall, 1996). I use this theorisation to illustrate that identities are discursively produced, context-specific, enmeshed in power relations and materialised through opposition to an Other (Mouffe, 1993; Butler, 1995; Hall, 1996). It helps me to identify the power of discourse as dominant in the constitution of homogenising identities of subjects that are crucial for the construction of nation-state, nationalism and citizenship (Anderson, 1983; Bhabha, 1990b).

3.2.1 Power, Discourse and Identity

The conceptualisation of power, as part of knowledge and inseparable from ‘discursive exchanges’ (Dunne et al., 2005, p. 13), is significant to this study. I draw on the notion of immanence of power (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993), as operating within and through the formation and materialisation of identities. Butler (1997) suggests that we as social agents require language to bring us into being and called into subject positions. The power to name, constitute and produce the effect that it states is exercised through and within discourse or linguistic utterances (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2015). This discursive notion of power exceeds and precedes the social agents or the subjects and produces the effect that it names (Butler, 1990, 1993).

In this sense, power, knowledge and discourse are constitutive of subjects and subject positions (Foucault, 1978; Rabinow and Rose, 2003). Foucault (1978) maintains that subjectivation or the formation of subjects takes place not only through the discursive/regulatory subordination of subjects but a stabilisation of that formation and regulation. It is through the discursive power and our participation in discourses that we construct and stabilise the self/subject (Foucault, 1980). As such, there is no separation between the discursive and the subject, as one is produced through its participation in and drawing on the other. Hall (1996) elaborates that it is ‘in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs’ (p. 16).

In my analysis of the data, I build on the discursive construction of identity to illustrate that identities, whether national, religious, ethnic or gender, are discursively produced and regulated as well as context-specific (Dunne et al., 2017). Importantly, this works to highlight the significance of the Indian context in the construction of particular identities of nation, religion, gender and ethnicity. The multiple, fragile and intersecting power relations in the Indian context of the Adivasis, as discussed in Chapter 2, are constitutive of a dominant discourse in India that produces fixed identities and subject positions in case of the Adivasis.
However, I use a poststructural analysis to uncover the impermanence, fluidity and hybridity of identities ‘assumed’ by the Adivasis. Such a view enables multiple readings of the social agent as heterogeneous, ‘constituted by an ensemble of ‘subject positions’ that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences’ (Mouffe, 1993, p. 77). This understanding of identity signifies the multiple, intersecting and mutually constitutive dimensions of Adivasi identities in the Indian context.

The notion of construction assumes significance here. I use Butler’s (1993) (re)thinking of construction to understand that that which is constructed should not be understood as artificial or indispensable, and without affect. Extending this argument, Hall (1996) contends that the decentring and destabilisation of the subject ‘is not an abandonment or abolition…but a reconceptualisation’ (p. 16). The process of construction of identity is constitutive of the materiality, signification and intelligibility of that identity (Butler, 1993, 1997). This process is affective and produces feelings of belonging or disavowal with regard to identities such as nation, religion, ethnicity and gender (Ahmed, 2004). It is through the process of interpellation that the embodiment of norms that individuals are exposed to and summoned into takes place (Althusser, 1971; Butler, 1993, 2015). The repetitive performance of these norms is what stabilises and normalises identities and is affectively charged (Dunne et al., 2017).

Butler (1990) refers to this ritualised performance or the stylised repetition of discursive norms as performativity. It is the reiterative power of discourse to regulate and constrain subjects and their identity (Butler, 1993). The performativity of identity takes place in the service of institutional or regulatory regimes and normalises one’s identity as natural, original and pre-given, and one that is fixed and antagonistic or opposed to an Other (Butler, 1990, 1993; Mouffe, 1993; Hall, 1996). I use the notions of construction, interpellation, and performativity in this chapter to understand the formation of the Indian nation-state and within it the construction of different but intersecting identities. I also use these notions in my analysis, in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, to understand how the particulars of Adivasi identity are normalised and naturalised in and through law, policy and practice in India, and the way Indian and Adivasi identities are produced and navigated.

The discursive construction of identity is reciprocally informed by materiality and affect, as discussed above. It provides frameworks of intelligibility which at the same time produce a constitutive constraint (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993; Hall, 1996). As such, the discursive processes of identity-construction not only constitute the intelligible, but
also the limits of this intelligibility. These processes produce ‘points of temporary attachment to the subject positions’ (Hall, 1996, p. 19). They form the constitutive outside and thereby the abject other of the materialised and affectively produced identities (Hall, 1996). The formation of the abject other as the constitutive limit of any one particular identity is the axis of difference, distinction and hierarchy as well as the site of political antagonism (Mouffe, 1993; Hall, 1996).

In this study, I understand that any identity, whether national, religious, ethnic or gender, is formed on the basis of exclusion. As Mouffe (1993) argues, ‘there will always be a ‘constitutive outside’, an exterior to the community that is the very condition of its existence…there cannot be a ‘we' without a ‘them’ and that all forms of consensus are by necessity based on acts of exclusion’ (p. 83). This understanding of the constitutive outside links to the politics of identity and its constitution through the relations of power. It works to produce groups such as the Adivasis as an undifferentiated entity and as the Other in the nation-state of India. I use this understanding of the constitutive outside to explain the discursive othering of the Adivasis, with specific reference to education, religion, and gender in Chapter 6.

The discursive construction of the Adivasis, their production as the Other, and as the constitutive limit of the intelligible links to the notions of precarity, vulnerability and resistance (Butler, 2015, 2016). Butler (2015) suggests that precarity denotes a politically induced condition of suffering from failing social and economic support, being exposed to injury, violence, death or to maximised vulnerability without protection or redress, for some groups more than the others (pp. 33-34). It is entwined with notions of vulnerability and resistance, which are inextricably linked (Butler, 2016).

Butler et al. (2016) argue that vulnerability is part of resistance and call for a rethinking of human acts in order to reimagine modern conceptualisations of resistance and agency. They draw on Gandhi’s idea of non-violence or ahimsa and persuasion by truth or satyagraha to denote the acts of suffering or exposure to harm as forms of resistance. I use these notions in Chapter 7 to explore the strategies of resistance adopted for navigation of their Indian and Adivasi identities, by the Gond community in context of violence.

The discussion on identity-construction and embodiment of norms raises questions about the significance of institutional and regulatory regimes such as the State that co-produce this embodiment. The concepts of anatamo- and bio-politics/biopower are
important in this context. The control and power over the body, by institutions such as the State, constituted subjects, worked to segregate and hierarchise them, and distributed ‘the living in the domain of value and utility’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 144). In this sense, Foucault (1978) argues that bio-power was key in the development of capitalism, as it supported the ‘controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production’ (p. 141). This view of power explains the constitution and consolidation of the colonial rule in India through its introduction of capitalist means of production and control over land, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Bio-power worked for both individualising as well as collectivising the discipline and control over human bodies (Rabinow and Rose, 2003, 2006). For dealing with the subjects collectively, Foucault (1977, 1978) illustrated the concept of governmentality as the mechanism of disciplining the population by the government and the embodiment of those rules/law by the population. Bio-power, working through instruments governmentality, aided not only the repression or prohibition of desires, but also an incorporation of the law by the subjects (Foucault, 1977, 1978). In the Indian context, the legal and social categories of nation, religion, caste, ethnicity, gender and education became instruments of governmentality utilised by the colonial regime and sustained by the Indian State to shape subjectivities of its population. I build on the concepts of bio-power and governmentality to demonstrate the formation of the ‘modern’ nation-state, through the insertion of a nation-centric discourse, in this chapter and the analysis chapters.

In the next two sections, I discuss the formation of India as a nation-state, structured by discourses of modernity, progress and development. The history of the formation of the Indian state and its imagination as a nation helps to understand the construction of essentialising identities through relations of power and discourse. It raises question about the framing and positioning of groups such as the Adivasis in policy and practice.

### 3.3 Modernity and Nation-State

In the Indian context, as in other emergent post-colonial nations, the insertion of the nation-centric discourse carries linkages to the colonial rule and modernisation discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2. The emergence of modernity and the rise/formation of ‘modern’ nation-states is assumed to have taken place in Europe, which came to be homogenously constructed as the ‘West’ (Bhambra, 2007). However, Asad (1973, 2003) and Bhambra (2007) suggest that modernity as a civilisational
condition emerged out of the colonial encounter. For this reason, the idea of modernity and nation-state are related.

As explored in the Indian context in Chapter 2, the nation-state was produced through the colonial systems of law, policy and practice as a regulating construct to discipline and control populations (Bhambra, 2007). It worked through the insertion of homogenising identities and (re-)casting of histories in essentialist ways, which produced the nation-state as a homogeneous, coherent and unified entity (Anderson, 1983; Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). The insertion of totalising identities relied on the notion of the Other, both external and internal others, which sedimented the idea of the nation-state, national identity and nationalism (Bhabha, 1990b; Chatterjee, 1993; Said, 2003). The colonial modernisation discourse was co-constitutive of the nation-centric discourse as it enabled the insertion of binaries/others that reinforced the categorising authority of the nation-state (Asad, 1973; Mamdani, 2001, 2012). I elaborate on this link in the next sections.

### 3.3.1 The West and the Rest

As discussed in Chapter 2, modernity was produced as a civilisational condition in the Indian context during the colonial rule, a condition whose central subject became Europe (Asad, 2003; Anjum, 2018). For this reason, Asad (2003) argues, Europe was not merely constituted as a geographical territory but conflated with the idea of a (superior) civilisation. Within this constitution, the Roman Empire, Christianity, Enlightenment, and industrialisation provided universality and collectivity to Europe as a homogenous entity (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007).

The events of Enlightenment, Renaissance and Reformation, and the French and Industrial Revolutions located the origins of modernity, and of human civilisation, in Europe (Bhambra, 2007). These events were utilised to reflect a move from tradition to reason, to participatory democracy and governance, individual freedoms and liberty, and capitalism, industrialisation and secularisation (Foucault, 1977). As such, this movement was used to signify modernity. The centring of the origins of modernity in these events produced Europe as ‘distinctive’, ‘most advanced’ and as ‘opposed to tradition’ (Asad, 2003, p. 166).

Extending this ‘civilisational condition’ to include North America in the definition of modernity, the notion of the ‘West’ as distinctive and modern was produced. The conceptualisation of modernity provided both spatial (Europe/West) and temporal (17th-
18th century) aspects to its origins. Culminating in the West, the path to modernity was marked by the notions of progress and civilisation as demonstrated by Europe and North America, and to be followed by the rest to attain this ‘civilisational condition’ (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007).

In the above sense, the modernisation discourse developed through the insertion of particular labels as binaries, such as pre-modern against modern, traditional against progressive, and un/der-developed against civilised (Said, 2003; Escobar, 2012). The binaries or categories of pre-modern, traditional and un/der-developed represented slow or stalled growth, whereas modern signified progress (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007). Certain societies were strategically labelled as advanced and developed, while others such as India were marked as un/der-developed or developing and expected to emulate their path to development (Said, 2003; Escobar, 2012).

The labelling of societies as modern and traditional served a purpose. The societies that were considered different, with regard to history, modes of production, existence and livelihood, culture and/or religion, and education, were labelled as backward and traditional (Asad, 2003; Anjum, 2018). Industrialisation, marketisation and monetisation of economy signified the societies on the other end of the binary. In this sense, the system of capitalism was an integral part of modernity and the labelling was guided by capitalistic interests to find markets for industrialised goods (Anjum, 2018). As indicated in Chapter 2 in the context of education planning in India, controlled modernisation of India was initiated by the colonial regime to transform Indian society in order to produce a market for British goods.

The naming and classification of societies indicated not only the categories of developing and developed but evaluative judgments (Bhambra, 2007; Escobar, 2012). The former represented a lack while the latter signified the presence of advancement or progress and provided a sense of superiority. It, however, obscured how the modern, advanced, developed, and industrialised had come to be through the processes of colonisation.

Said (2003) argues that the categories of Orient and Occident were European inventions that ‘helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience’ (pp. 1-2). While not inherently stable, these categories were produced as distinct and through a ‘combination of the empirical and imaginative’ (Said, 2003, p. 331). The Orient was Orientalised through relations of power and
control that submitted it to be being in a perpetually inferior position (Said, 2003). Identifying Orientalism as a discourse, Said (2003) elaborates that various markers and signifiers such as geography, language, civilisation, culture, religion produced the Orient as Europe's constitutive other.

Even within the representations of the Orient as the constitutive limit of Europe's modernity, the Orient woman was depicted as the abject other (Mohanty, 1991; Mahmood, 2009a). Mohanty (1991) argues that the portrayal of the Third World woman as victimised, through her feminine gender and her geographical (and social) positioning, vis-à-vis that of the Western woman as modern reinforced the West's superiority. I draw on this production of the Orient to explain the discursive othering of the Adivasis, and within it the marginalisation of Adivasi women, in Chapter 5 and 6.

The path to modernity represented a natural progression for traditional Orientalised societies to progress to modern and industrialised (Bhambra, 2007). The presumption of such a progression pointed to linearity of movement on the path marked by Europe. It reflected singularity of modernity that came to be associated with Europe (Bhambra, 2007). It homogenised Europe or the West into undifferentiated categories of modern and developed, and the rest of the world as modernising and developing (Escobar, 2012).

The modernisation discourse reciprocally shaped the capitalistic colonial rule. As signalled in Chapter 2, the colonial state became a regulatory machine that categorised and classified. In this regard, nation-state provided a significant construct to name and label for the purposes of social and economic exploitation (Mamdani, 2012). The formation of the nation-state came to be entwined with modernity and assumed to have taken place in Europe (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007). However, it was rooted in the colonial encounter (Asad, 1973). Bhambra explains:

> The emergence of the nation-state has formed a central aspect of the theory of modernity both in terms of its transitional status located at the cusp of the move from the traditional to the modern and as a signifier of the modern political form (p. 115).

I use the above argument to explain the labelling of the Indian society as traditional and backward, not only in terms of history, modes of production, existence and livelihood, culture, religion and education, but also in political form. I emphasise that the modernisation discourse, immanent to the colonial rule, compelled the production of the nation-state of India as modernising, developing and following the path marked out
by the West. It signified a move from traditional to modern, socially and in political form. I consider the colonial and capitalist question ‘integral to the development of the nation-state’ (Bhambra, 2007, p. 116).

In the Indian context, the modernisation discourse worked through the deployment of binaries. The constructed binaries justified the colonial rule as welfarist, undertaken for larger public interests and ‘civilisation’ of the Indian society (Bhambra, 2007). India was produced as the external other against which the modernity and supremacy of Britain was constructed. It links to the discussion in the previous section on the formation of the Other, which is the constitutive outside of an identity and the axis of difference, distinction and hierarchy.

This notion of the Other was crucial in the formation of the Indian nation-state and Indian national identity, as I will revisit in Section 3.4.5. Beyond the coloniser-colonised distinction, multiple internal others were constituted in India, as indicated in Chapter 2. Religion, ethnicity, geography, language, education and gender were used as markers of identity to homogenise groups and demarcate them from each other. I draw on the concept of ‘internal other’ in my analysis to explain the production of ‘Tribe’ in India as backward, primitive and in need of protection and development, and its link with the Adivasi identity. I build on Said’s (2003) and Bhabha’s (2004) argument that defining the Other is an act of understanding oneself, the articulation of presence in terms of otherness, and Other as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite:

The ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully...when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’ (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 4).

The production of India as the external other and the simultaneous construction of multiple internal others within India produced the colonial state as the ‘original authority’ to define and rule (Mamdani, 2012). The independence of India from colonial rule separated it from the colonial state, but not entirely. While analytically I examine the policies and practices of the colonial and the Indian state separately, I argue that there are strong linkages between the two. The structures of exclusion, language of distinction and discourse of differentiation inserted by the colonial regime have been sustained in post-independence India, more specifically through the mechanisms of sovereign, socialist, democratic, secular and republic. It is in this context that I discuss the formation of the Indian nation-state in the next section, with specific reference to its constitutional responsibilities. I point out that the modernisation and development
discourse, used by the colonial state, has been rearticulated in the formation of the idea and imagination of India.

3.4 The Nation-State of India

In this section, I elaborate on the concepts of sovereign and socialist, democratic and republic, and secular that underpin the imagination of India. I argue, through the review of literature, that these concepts carry modern, liberal and Western assumptions of equality, rights and development. These assumptions place the onus on individuals to participate, improve and achieve. I explore the constitutional responsibilities of the independent Indian state and its linkages with the colonial regime. I highlight the centrality of education and religion in this discourse and in the formation of good/proper citizens. I then examine the notion of violence and conflict and its link and/or tension with the formation of the nation-state.

3.4.1 Sovereign and Socialist

The shift in the sovereign power of the ruler, from the right of death over subjects to the exercise of power over life, has been illustrated by Foucault (1978). Foucault (1978) argues that the development of capitalism produced elaborate economic processes and relations of production. These necessitated a different form of power and control over individuals. The constitution of regulatory regimes such as the modern nation-state enabled such a shift (Chatterjee, 1993, 2004). In the modern discourse, sovereign no longer was defined as the ruler but as the ruled or the governed (Chatterjee, 2004). The defence of sovereignty meant ensuring the survival or ‘the biological existence of a population’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 137). Chatterjee (2004) argues that the sovereignty of the state became an instrument of governmentality that aided the realisation of modern citizenship and the formation of homogenous nation-states.

In this sense, the juridical power exercised by the sovereign ruler and their right to kill metamorphosed into bio-power or power over life, as also discussed in section 3.2.1. It was significant to control populations for the development of capitalism, or what Foucault (1978) refers to as the ‘controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production…without at the same time making them more difficult to govern’ (pp. 140-1). The identification of the population as the sovereign, through bio-politics/power, legitimised the nation-state and its regulatory powers. In this study, I argue that the materialisation and sustenance of the nation-state are co-produced through bio-politics/power, which is invested in its formation.
Here I also find Anderson’s (1983) idea of the nation as an ‘imagined political community’, ‘imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’ (p. 15), useful. Anderson (1983) argues that the nation is imagined because most its members will never know each other; limited because of its finite if elastic boundaries; sovereign ‘because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained’; and a community because ‘regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation…the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ (p. 16). The notion of the nation and the sovereign then is deeply rooted in the ‘modern’. Like Foucault, Anderson (1983) attributes the popularity of the ‘nation’ to the ‘primacy of capitalism’ (p. 41).

The notion of sovereignty is crucial to the discourse of modernity (Bhambra, 2007). The imposition of territorial or geographical separation and its conflation with the category of a people as sovereign, organised, often arbitrarily, around shared history, modes of existence and livelihood, culture, religion, language, and/or ethnicity was integral to the project of modernity. The ‘modern’ nation, through the concept of sovereign, was provided both spatial and temporal aspects to represent it as a perceptible entity (Bhambra, 2007). The construction of the people as sovereign was co-constitutive of the idea of citizenship (Mamdani, 1996; Chatterjee, 2004). It was only the citizens of a nation who were sovereign, as opposed to the external others against whom their sovereignty and citizenship were constituted.

In the Indian context, the sovereign became ‘we the people’, which represented the governed as independent and self-determining (Chatterjee, 1993, 2004). The people were united and grouped together, bounded geographically and historically through the Constitution of India. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution states:

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this 26th day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION (Constitution of India, 2013, p. 7, original emphasis).

The sovereign in India, while formed through the struggle against capitalistic colonial exploitation, became fused with colonialism, capitalism and modernity (Chatterjee, 1993). India had already been produced as the external other, as backward, traditional,
agrarian, and un/der-developed in the dominant discourse of the ‘West’. Such discursive production placed an onus on India to become a sovereign, democratic, secular, republic. These notions represented progress, modernisation and development that India was assumed to be in need of by the colonial and later the post-independence institutions of the State (Chatterjee, 2004).

The concept of sovereign, as Bhambra (2007) argues, involved a ‘shift from divine right to collective will to true general interest’ (p. 109). In the Indian context, the addition of the word ‘socialist’ to the Indian Constitution facilitated that shift to the ‘general interest’, strengthening the notion of the sovereign. In its constitutional imagination, India was produced as sovereign and socialist, as opposed to the capitalism and materialism of the West and looking after the ‘true general interest’ of its population (Chatterjee, 1989, 1993, 2004). The inclusion of socialism reiterated the binary of material/spiritual that had implications for gender relations in India, as highlighted in Chapter 2.

The Communist Party of India played a crucial part in the inclusion of socialism to the Indian Constitution (Sinha, 1989, 2011), as also indicated in Chapter 2. It linked to the land reforms initiated by the independent Indian State, its abolition of the private property and the land revenue systems of the colonial state. In so doing, it established the authority of the State over land and placed groups such as the Adivasis in a subordinate relationship with the State, as I will analyse in Chapter 5. Sovereign and Socialist in India became discursive constructs to separate the independent Indian State from its capitalist colonial counterpart. However, like the colonial state, these notions were used as instruments of governmentality to re-shape subjectivities, reinforce an Indian national identity and a deficit Adivasi identity.

Drawing on the concepts of bio- and discursive power and governmentality discussed in section 3.2.1, I hold that the nation-state of India is discursively constituted. It is produced through the signification of meanings of ‘symbols associated with national life’ (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 3), such as sovereign and socialist. I argue in this study that it is through the power of discourse and our participation in those discourses that the nation is produced, understood or ‘imagined’ as a political community. However, as Chatterjee (2004) maintains, this (constitutional) imagination of the nation systematically excludes many of its members who are within its territorial jurisdiction and domain of politics but do not qualify as ‘proper members’ (p. 38). It raises question about the positioning of the Adivasis within the imagination of the Indian nation-state.
Moreover, the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, enshrined in the Indian Constitution, carried ‘modern’ underpinnings. On the one hand, the language of protection and discourse of development, used by the colonial state, was carried on through these notions; and on the other hand, the ‘unity and integrity’ of Indian nation was produced, discursively, as distinct from other nation-states. The Preamble to the Indian Constitution conveyed the sovereign as active, agentive and participatory, as implied in its final lines. I will discuss the implications of this construction in the next section.

### 3.4.2 Democratic and Republic

In the previous subsection, I linked the formation of the nation, as an imagined political community, to the notion of sovereign and as central to the modernisation discourse. I argued that in the Indian context, the notion of sovereign, which constitutes and binds people together as one in their imagination of the nation, developed out of the capitalistic colonial rule. In the Indian Constitution, the idea of sovereign is closely linked to the production of the Indian State as democratic and republic. These ideas have produced particular forms of governance and participation in post-independence India.

The hyphenated relationship between nation and state points to them being similar entities, as discursively constituted and mythical abstractions, yet different. Rose and Miller (2010) argue that the state has been formed, from within the nation, as an entity that ‘possessed neither the unity nor the functionality ascribed to it’ (Rose and Miller, 2010, p. 2):

> ...the state should first of all be understood as a complex and mobile resultant of the discourses and techniques of rule (Rose and Miller, 2010, p. 7).

Drawing on the above understanding of the state, as discursively constituted through techniques of rule, I acknowledge and insert the difference between nation and state. While I build on Anderson’s (1983) conceptualisation of nation as an imagined community with finite yet elastic boundaries, I understand state as the mechanisms through which these boundaries are secured and stabilised (Dunne et al., 2017). I argue in this thesis that the notions of democracy, welfare, constitutional rights and guarantees provide the techniques of rule for the ‘materialisation’ of nation into state. The state is responsibilised or governmentnalised through values of constitutionalism, rights and welfarism (Chatterjee, 2004; Rose and Miller, 2010).
Here I revisit the notion of governmentality to explain the governmentalisation of the state (Foucault, 1978; Rose and Miller, 2010). The exercise of bio-power, as discussed in sections 3.2.1 and 3.4.1, took place through the disciplining of the body, both individually and collectively as part of the population. Such supervision of the body and the population was ‘effected through…series of interventions and regulatory controls’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). It is in this context that the notion of governmentality becomes crucial:

The term governmentality sought to draw attention to a certain way of thinking and acting embodied in all those attempts to know and govern the wealth, health and happiness of populations (Rose and Miller, 2010, p. 2).

Rose and Miller (2010) point to the economics behind the controlling of populations, an attempt to govern the wealth, health and happiness. Elaborating on Foucault’s (1978) concept of bio-power, Rose and Miller (2010) signify the capitalistic intentions for advancing the notion of the state. The disciplining of the body, for economic interests, along with the embodiment of the law, rules and regulations by the people played a significant role in the constitution of the state. Foucault referred to this embodiment as governmentality and the instruments of governmentality as constitutive of the modern nation-state (Foucault, 1978; Rabinow and Rose, 2006; Bhambra, 2007; Rose and Miller, 2010).

The imagination of the nation-state of India demanded active participation of the sovereign, as implied in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. The holding of elections every five years to various levels of government provided for the participation of individuals in the discourse of democracy and the very constitution and reification of such discourse. However, it was not all individuals who were qualified to cast vote and participate. It was only those subjects constituted as the sovereign and classified as citizens who participated in the democratic processes (Mamdani, 1996; Asad, 2003).

As such, common citizenship and participation of that citizenry in democracy sedimented the idea of the Indian State as republic. It forged commonality and a sense of shared histories among citizens. It links back to the idea of nation as an imagined political community. It also links to the discussion on the Other that forms the exclusionary limits to the notion of the citizen. Indian democracy, in this sense, rested on the active participation of citizens, a group of individual subjects produced against an external other which was not accorded similar privileges. Such a conceptualisation
of citizen, as strongly linked to participation, raised questions about the limitations of these notions.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, India gained independence from the colonial rule through public participation in the freedom struggle against the British. The leaders of the freedom movement such as Gandhi emphasised non-cooperation, civil disobedience, boycott and picketing, through methods of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (struggle by truth) (Chandra, 2009). A considerable number of these movements demanded participation, resistance as well as suffering of the Indian people, more specifically of the peasantry (Chatterjee, 2004).

The Indian Constitution was given a federal character by the drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly, which was chaired by Ambedkar, another firm believer of public reasoning and equal participation (Drèze and Sen, 2013). It meant distribution of powers to legislate and execute laws between the Centre and the states. It also meant decentralisation of powers by the central government to the state and local administration to improve public engagement and participation in decision-making (Drèze and Sen, 2013). The architects of independent India saw the participation of citizens as fundamental to the governance of the country. In doing so, the drafting of the Indian Constitution was influenced by other democratic modern nation-states such as Britain and the USA (Chandra, 2009).

However, within the category of citizen in India, hierarchisation existed. It provided an understanding of the internal others who, although were historically classified as citizens with due rights and co-opted to participate in the freedom struggle, remained excluded from the functioning of the State (Mamdani, 1996; Chatterjee, 2004). It raised questions about groups such as the Adivasis which were included within the remit of the Indian State, however, their inclusion was not enacted and performed in state discourses.

In legal terms, the State was seen to make provisions for inclusion and participation of the Adivasis in governance through the Indian Constitution and the decentralisation initiatives such as Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) and the Forest Rights Act, 2006. However, these legal enactments disregarded the local contexts of the Adivasis and their histories of State absence/neglect (Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010, 2013). Instead, these Acts imposed participation through processes
of electoral politics and through bodies such as Panchayats which were appropriated by the dominant groups within the Adivasis (Baviskar, 1995; Shah, 2010).

Notwithstanding the emphasis on participation, Dunne et al. (2007) argue that the bureaucratic bottlenecks in leaving out crucial decision-making powers during decentralisation disable the local groups to exercise autonomy. Such exclusion further results in the failure of representation of communities such as the Adivasis within the local and political administration and impedes their access to resources. Their restricted access to resources contradicts the State provisioning for them in the Constitution and the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined therein. It repeats the pattern followed by the colonial state in India which strategically excluded Indians from decision-making and positions of powers yet took decisions under the pretext of their protection and welfare. In this way, as Chatterjee (2004) contends, the legitimacy of the state is secured ‘not by the participation of citizens in matters of state but by claiming to provide for the well-being of the population’ (p. 34). It also links back to the discussion on the economics behind ‘controlling’ of populations, as argued by Rose and Miller (2010).

Like the colonial state, the post-independence Indian State placed the onus on its citizens to participate in the structures of governance and exercise agency. In the context of this study, this link between governance and participation offers a new conceptualisation of relationships between groups such as the Adivasis and State and legal institutions, as will be explored in Chapter 7. It connects back to the idea of democracy, as valued by modern nation-states, and its linkages with community mobilisation and participation. In terms of educational access, Humphreys et al. (2015) have argued that a deficit view of certain communities among administrators prompts ‘a sustained state emphasis on community mobilisation and advocacy as the key strategy to increase educational enrolment’ (p. 142). I find this argument useful to explain the emphasis of the Indian State on the Adivasi participation.

The provisions enacted by the Indian State and enshrined in the Indian Constitution have resulted in ‘competing systems of authority at local and regional levels’ (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011, p. 137). The multiple relations of power, within and among communities and their relationship with the State play a critical role in the participation and non-participation of groups (Baviskar, 1995; Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010). I will exemplify this in Chapter 7. Sundar (1997) argues that these relations produce antagonism as well as alliances, as there are multiple subjectivities involved when
groups participate or resist and represent themselves as indigenous or exploited or both.

In this subsection, I problematised the notion of democracy as modernist and one that has privileged participation and agency. I located this understanding of democracy, in the Indian context, in the colonial encounter that shaped structures of governance in post-independence India. I elaborated the linkages between the colonial and the Indian State and the continuation of structures of distinction inscribed during colonial rule. I now turn to discuss the concepts of welfare and development and point to the assumed centrality of education within the development discourse.

3.4.3 Welfare, Development and Education

The advent of modernity was associated with the notion of welfarism, as discussed in the context of India during colonial rule in the previous sub-sections. The colonial rule was produced as welfarist to bring about the civilisation and protection of India. The colonial state was seen to not only govern and legislate for the maintenance of law and order, but it claimed to do so for the protection and development of the colonised (Chatterjee, 2004; Bhambra, 2007). In this sense, the modern nation-state was produced as a welfare state and marked a shift in governance.

However, the maintenance of law and order, surveillance, and provision of welfare took place within and outside Europe even before the formation of the ‘modern’ nation-state (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007; Rose and Miller, 2010). In both Indian and European context, the rulers governed through the maintenance of law and order and provision of welfare services (Asad, 2003; Chandra, 2009). The welfare state as such was not a new form of State but represented a new mode of government. Rose and Miller (2010) argue that this mode of government was produced to control the economic, social and personal lives of citizens, thereby consolidating its powers.

In the Indian context, the formation of the welfare state post-independence was an extension or lingering of the capitalistic interests of the colonial state. The provision of welfarist services of protection and development by the Indian state to its citizens reproduced the colonial categories used to define certain groups of people in India, such as the Adivasis. Simultaneously, the provision of welfare expected citizens to conform to the categories in order to be eligible for its provisioning. For instance, the Adivasis had to provide proof of marginality or certificates of residence etc. to gain admission
into educational institutions and to apply for land ownership (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). It reified the nomenclature used to describe them as a group.

Welfare state, in the above sense, became a new regulatory regime and welfarism as another technique of rule and technology of government that constituted the State (Rose and Miller, 2010). It corresponded to Foucault’s (1978) notion of bio-politics and bio-power as control over populations. Rose and Miller (2010) suggest that the instruments of governmentality and technologies of government were linked to every aspect of human life such as birthrate, family, health, etc. The insertion of human bodies into the state machineries as citizens was achieved through the welfare state. Welfarism embodied ‘a particular conception of the relation between the citizen and the public powers’ and signified a responsibilising mode of government (Rose and Miller, 2010, p. 28).

In India, the responsibilisation of state was introduced through the system of subsidiary alliance under East India (trading) Company. The allying Indian rulers were promised protection in return for a subsidy to the British. The rulers had to station the British force and British Residents in their territories who ‘advised’ on matters of internal and external affairs. However, it was the duty of the rulers to take care of their subjects, failing which the territories were annexed to British India on the pretext of ‘alleviating the plight of the people’ (Chandra, 2009, p. 85). The British policies of subsidiary alliance and annexation led to, as Chandra (2009) argues, power without responsibility for the colonial capitalists and the opposite for the Indian rulers. The responsibilisation of the state in this context was a strategy by the colonial capitalists to place a burden on countries such as India to support populations and look after their citizenry. In doing so, it constituted the authority of the colonial state as the ultimate protector of the Indian people.

However, the provision of welfare and protection was linked to the advancement of capitalism and the continuation of colonialism (Chatterjee, 2004; Bhambra, 2007). It took place through the ‘controlling of population’ and was intertwined with the dividends paid by the provision of ‘welfare’ services, such as education, to the citizens. Foucault (1978) maintains:

bio-power…centered on the body as a machine… (is) disciplining, optimisation of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility (p. 139)
It is here that the discourse of development assumes significance. The notion of welfare included the provision of goods and services, such as education, that were assumed to be essential for optimisation of capabilities as argued by Foucault (1978) above. It linked back to the discussion in Section 3.3 on modernity and nation-state. The emergence of the ‘modern’ nation-state took place through the deployment of binaries of backward and traditional as opposed to modern and developed (Bhambra, 2007). The linear and unidirectional path to attain ‘development’ was emphasised in the modernisation discourse (Escobar, 2012).

Such an understanding provided a restricted definition of development. It produced a utilitarian approach to development that instrumentalised people and viewed the body as a machine for economic gains. The instrumentalist view of development was strongly linked to the capitalist and neo-liberal thinking that development produces economic prosperity for individuals, communities and nation-states (Escobar, 2012). It shaped and informed the international discourse on development, linking human development to the expansion of human capabilities (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993) and as integral to the growth of a nation-state (Drèze and Sen, 2013). This growth was restrictively viewed in economic terms.

This conceptualisation of development problematically viewed the population, especially young people, as demographic dividend or burden, depending on their utility in the capitalist systems of production (Bhabha, 2014; Dunne et al., 2017). The insertion of living beings as educated, literate, skilled, modern, and developed in the systems of production produced the Others who were constructed as uneducated, illiterate, unskilled, traditional, and backward. This insertion was dependent on the othering and delegitimisation of certain individuals, groups, societies and/or knowledge systems (Hall, 1996; Escobar, 2012). In the context of this study, it raises questions about the discursive othering of countries such as India and groups such as the Adivasis.

In this study, I trouble this dominant view of development by drawing on Escobar’s (2012) framing of it ‘as a set of discourses and practices’ that influenced the production and treatment of particular countries such as India as underdeveloped (p. xii). Within this troubling, I draw attention to the othering and marginalisation of the Adivasis through the discourse of development, along with their interpellation into the dominant discourse. While India was produced as the Other by the colonial capitalists, the Adivasis have been similarly othered by the Indian State through utilisation of multiple
and intersecting axes such as education, religion and gender, as I will explore in Chapter 6. However, in doing so, I focus on the demands for development made by the Adivasi Gond community through education to bring forth the permeation of development discourse and to not deny their struggles for community development.

**Development and Education**

In the international development discourse, education has been emphasised as the instrument for expansion of human capabilities, realisation of human potential, and attainment of the goal of development (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993; Drèze and Sen, 2013). As one of the main indices of the Human Development Index, a nation-state’s growth and advancement has been interwoven with its education provisioning (UNESCO, 2002). It has been emphasised by international agencies such as the United Nations and through the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs and SDGs) (UNESCO, 2002, 2016), as discussed in Chapter 2.

The role of state in the creation of physical and social infrastructure and provision of education to its people has also been stressed within the discourse of development (UNESCO, 2002, 2009; Wadhwa et al., 2010; NCPCR, 2013). It links to the earlier discussion in this section on welfare and responsibilisation of state. The spread of education across many regions of the world took place through schooling and was attributed to State action and governmental initiatives, evident from the experiences of Europe, America and many parts of Asia (Drèze and Sen, 2013).

In India, as in the other emergent post-colonial contexts, education was defined as a fundamental right in legal/constitutional terms. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) enacted in 2009 guaranteed education to the 6-14 age-groups and for classes 1-8. It placed the onus on the state to provide education compulsorily and free of cost, in an age-appropriate class group. The interlinking of education with rights and development produced it into a political expression, ‘meaningful only when guaranteed by the state’ (Sinha, 2009, p. 56). It (re)instated the regime of protection and development of the colonial state, as I will examine in Chapter 6. This argument links back to the centrality of state in the welfare and development discourse. More specifically, it links to the construction of the Indian nation-state as socialist and welfarist, as discussed in this section.
As explored in the previous chapter, the national policy on education in India is related to the international agreements of the MDGs and SDGs and the pressure channelled through agencies such as the UN and the World Bank (Lewin, 2011). The international discourse on education privileged the notion of access which was narrowly defined and restricted to the first point of entry into school (Lewin, 2007, 2011). Similarly, in the Indian context, the focus was on initial enrolment of students into schools and not so much on quality of education, curriculum, pedagogy, other organisational or administrative processes and structural issues within schools (NCPCR, 2013; Sinha, 2014, n.d.).

As such, the literature on access to education in India focused largely on the supply side of education, with a discussion on State provisioning, and not so much on the nature of demands that were often at odds with the supply. Humphreys et al., (2015) have shown in the context of the Adamawa State in Nigeria that the daily, monthly and annual timetables of schools conflicted with the out-of-school routines of the students and their communities. The clash with household chores, weekly prayers, monthly festivals and annual sowing and harvesting seasons prevented students, especially girls and those from Muslim families, from attending school and gaining meaningful access to education (Humphreys et al., 2015). I illustrate this argument further in Chapter 6 by focusing on the gendered aspects of education provisioning, in relation to the production and performance of Adivasi identities.

In India, while the supply of education has become diverse with multiple service providers, the onus is on parents and students, instead of the State, to access education as opposed to what is enshrined in the RTE Act (Juneja, 2010; Siddhu, 2010). It is for the parents to appreciate the need for more than five years of education in a school, to find the next school after those five years and apply to it, and to repeat this process till the end of schooling (Juneja, 2010; Siddhu, 2010). It is both the barriers that communities face to gain enrolment to schools, along with the challenges within schools that impede educational access and constitute ‘dropouts’. I find the complex inter-relations of State and communities useful in analysing the navigation of their precarious context by the Adivasi Gond community in Chapter 7.

A restricted definition of educational access, which defines school ‘dropouts’ normatively, places the onus on communities such as the Adivasis to access education (Reddy and Sinha, 2010). It obscures the nature of demands by the communities for education (Reddy and Sinha, 2010). For these reasons, the notion of access and
‘dropout’, as deployed in the development discourse and reliant on statistical data on enrolment, needs revisiting. If access is conceptualised as an outcome of complex social and gendered processes, constantly negotiated to overcome barriers outside and within schools (Dunne et al., 2007), the notion of ‘dropout’ should consider the complexity of this interaction and negotiation.

It is in this context that I problematise the development discourse to engage with the ‘voices’ of the local village community. Shifting focus from supply to the demands and struggles for education is crucial for this research in order to bring out the othering of the Adivasis. Due to the gains associated with education in the development discourse and its consideration as an essential State-service, as discussed earlier in this section, I explore the demands for education made by the Adivasi Gond community in this study.

Other than the privileging of access in the international development discourse, the idea of education has been built around the notions of progress, improvement, achievement and hard-work (Dunne and Ananga, 2013; Dunne and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2015; UNESCO, 2016). The State institutions such as schools are assumed to play a significant role in the realisation of human potential, their progress and development. The provisioning of formal education optimises capabilities through the disciplining, regulating and punishing of the subjects (Foucault, 1978). Students are expected to work hard, improve, achieve and demonstrate progress. Again, these notions carry neo-liberal underpinnings and sustain neo-colonial relations (Dunne et al., 2017). Such a view of education revisits Foucault’s (1978) twin understanding of bio-power as disciplining of the body and regulation of the population through various institutions of the state for their insertion in the systems of production. I find this instrumentalist notion of education helpful in my analysis in Chapter 6 to explain the interpellation of Adivasis into the dominant discourse through education.

In this study, I argue that education has been historically utilised as a regulatory institution to produce particular groups in a deficit position (Dunne and Ananga, 2013; Durrani, 2008a, 2008b). It has compelled the formation of homogenising identities, thereby solidifying the idea of the nation-state (Durrani and Dunne, 2010). In the Indian context, I explore the legitimisation of certain identities which are rendered intelligible through use of constructs such as education, while certain others remain unintelligible or the abject. It connects to Bourdieu’s (1973) explanation of education as a form of social reproduction that legitimises the ‘culture’ of particular groups, contributes to its
reproduction and hegemony, and enables and preserves their control over (socio-)economic resources.

To add to this, I argue that the gradual and systematic exclusion of groups such as the Adivasis from State provisioning of services such as education and devaluation of their knowledge systems has been a form of violence (Sinha, 2005). Such exclusion intensified and reified the social stratifications discussed in the previous chapter. In the Indian context of the Adivasis, I examine the violence of exclusion and marginalisation in my analysis, through the notions of precarity and vulnerability, and how it relates to the conflict between the Indian State and the Maoists.

**Education and Conflict**

Given the predominance of education in the development discourse, strong linkages have been made between its provisioning and presence or absence of conflict in societies (UNESCO, 2011). Within conflict contexts, education is seen to have ‘two faces’, as both its perpetrator as well as victim (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2010). The exclusion of particular groups from State-services of development strengthens social stratification and inequalities and produces conflict (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Novelli and Smith, 2011). It is in this regard that education plays a crucial part in the (re)production of inequalities and perpetration of conflict (Pherali, 2013; Yagnamurthy, 2013).

In the Indian context, I argue that the exclusion of groups such as the Adivasis from State provisioning of education, as discussed in Chapter 2, produce violence and conflict in the local village community. In this study, I draw on Galtung’s (1971, 1990) notion of structural, cultural and direct violence to theorise and analyse the exclusion, marginalisation and othering of the Adivasis. However, while Galtung (1971, 1990) differentiates between the three forms of violence, structural, cultural and direct/physical, I use a poststructural understanding to view these as co-producing or co-constitutive and not mutually exclusive. For instance, the discursive framing of the Adivasi Gond community as backward and illiterate through devaluation of the Gondi language is both structural and cultural violence, as I will argue in Chapter 7. It seeks to delegitimise their knowledge and produces them as the Other in and through policy and practice. Similarly, the State provisioning of separate schools and hostels for the Adivasis as discussed in Chapter 2, many kilometres away from their villages, is both structural and physical violence. It raises questions about the presence of the Maoist in areas of the Adivasis vis-à-vis the violence meted out by the State historically.
In Chapter 2, I elaborated the victimisation of education in the context of the State-Maoist conflict and indicated its utilisation through schools as a symbolic site for political struggles (Davies, 2010; Pherali, 2013). The occupation of schools by military/armed forces and their forced closure to undermine State authority produced direct violence in areas of the Adivasis (NCPCR, 2010, 2012b; Chaudhary et al., 2013; Sinha, n.d.). At the same time, schools were not accessed by teachers and students due to the fear of violence, producing structural and cultural violence (Chaudhary et al., 2013; Sinha, n.d.). It signalled the different forms of violence and their overlap and mutual reinforcement.

There is limited literature on education and conflict in the Indian context that is perhaps related to the non-recognition of armed conflict by the Indian State (Sinha, n.d.). However, Sinha (n.d.) notes that the number of people who experienced the effects of conflict in India was a significant proportion of all war-affected populations globally. Significantly, these effects have gendered dimensions (Sundar, 1997, 2011; Shah, 2013; Sinha, n.d.). Moreover, the discursive production of the areas inhabited by the Adivasis as Left-Wing Extremism affected, while a form of structural and cultural violence, legitimised direct State-violence and surveillance through the deployment of Police and Para-military forces (Kunnath, 2006; Sundar, 2011). It produced the Maoist movement as terrorist and anti-State, thereby inducing precarity and vulnerability in areas of the Adivasis. It is in this context that I explore the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the Gond community in Chapter 7.

The concepts of community participation, agency and resistance become crucial in this regard. The navigation of the context of violence, conflict and precarity by Adivasi communities is entwined with their discursive othering through education, religion and gender, as I will explore in the following sections. It requires complex and multiple strategies to participate or remain silent in the grassroots / decentralised governance, make demands for community development, and resist the dominant narratives imposed on them. It forms an important link to the analysis of this study as it raises questions about the framing of the Adivasis in dominant policy and community discourse which obscures their context. I elaborate on the concepts of agency and resistance in Section 3.5 where I shift the discussion form the national to the local context of the Adivasis.

I now turn the discussion back to the formation and constitution of the Indian nation-state. I have so far explored the concepts of sovereign, socialist, democratic, and
republic, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution, and how these are important in the imagination of India. I have discussed the modernisation and development discourse, as reliant on education and producing social stratifications, violence and conflict. I now include religion to this discussion by examining the notion of secular in the Indian context and what it means for India, and for the Adivasis in it, to be a secular state.

3.4.4 Secular

The understanding of secular has been built on ‘some kind of separation’ of the Church and the State (Taylor, 2011, p. 34), or of religion and law (Mahmood, 2009a, 2009b, 2016). This separation assumes a distancing of the State from religion and a form of State neutrality (Bhargava, 1998; Taylor, 2011). However, as Taylor (2011) argues, the State’s neutrality, or its principled distance from religion (Bhargava, 1998), should be viewed in terms of its response to the diversity and protection of values of liberty, equality and fraternity. In this sense, secular presupposes the idea of a modern, democratic nation-state, espousing the liberal ideas of freedom and equality (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2009a, 2016).

As such, the concept of secular revisits the discussion on modernity, nation-state and colonialism in this and previous sections. Drawing on Anderson, Asad (2003) argues that ‘the modern nation as an imagined community is always mediated through constructed images’ (p. 4). In other words, the coherence and homogeneity of the nation-state are cultivated through the imageries that provide for commonality among citizens and compel the imagination of the nation as one. Secular is understood as a form of ‘transcendent mediation’ by the modern nation-state to construct its image and constitute its power (Asad, 2003, p. 5).

The association of the idea of secular with modern nation-states links its emergence to Europe or the West (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007; Asad et al., 2009). While secular traditions existed in the so-called premodern societies, such as during the Mughal rule in India, Asad (2003) argues that the State mediated local identities ‘without aiming at transcendence’ (p. 5). However, in case of the modern nation-state, the aim was to mediate and transcend different identities in order to unify them into a nation and consolidate its own power (Asad, 2003; Asad et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2011).

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the Indian context, the colonial rulers compelled the identification of Indians first and foremost in religious terms (O’Hanlon, 2012). This identification was carried out through the systems of census, ethnographic and
population surveys and the revenue systems imposed throughout the country (Sundar, 1997; Mamdani, 2012; O’Hanlon, 2012). O’Hanlon (2012) maintains that these systems of enumeration ‘enshrined distinctions between practices of different castes’ and ‘constitutional reforms were based around representation by caste and religious community’ (p. 11).

The granting of separate electorates to Hindus and Muslims through constitutional reforms made these two religious communities compete with each other for special protections by the colonial state (Chandra, 2009). The Hindu majority was pitted against the Muslim minority through the British policy/strategy of divide and rule and its installation of a regime of protection (Chandra, 2009; Mamdani, 2012).

Alongside the entrenchment of Hindu/Muslim identities, the colonial mechanisms/strategies of governmentality also entrenched the Hindu caste system and established the superiority of upper-caste Hindus. These internal divisions made the colonial state a patron of religious difference, guardian of minority interests and the original authority to define, label and classify its subjects (Mamdani, 2012; O’Hanlon, 2012; Mamdani, 2016). Inscription of religious difference provided a valuable tool for the colonial state in India to legitimise its authority.

However, the colonial state systems recognised only the religions of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs during its census surveys. Padel and Das (2010) write that the census of 1941 had only the main religious categories and the Adivasis were marked as animist and nature-worshippers. The religious and cultural practices of the Adivasis were obscured through the colonial processes of categorisation and instead classified as superstition, witchcraft, magic and shamanism (Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010). I draw on this classification in my analysis as it links back to the discussion on modernity and nation-state and how these have produced particular identities as intelligible and the others as their constitutive limit or outside, in order to secure the power of the nation-state.

Religious difference was inserted and inscribed in the Indian context also to orientalise India and separate it from the modern/Christian Britain, as explored in the previous chapter. The religious and cultural practices of Indians, including the Adivasis, were described as backward, traditional, rooted in ignorance, guided by the divine authority and as opposed to the Western reason/rationality (Chandra, 2009; Mahmood, 2009a). Here the colonial administrators found an unlikely ally in the Christian religious
missionaries (Chandra, 2009). Cultural and religious ‘reform’ was undertaken through the establishment of educational institutions and churches to bring Indians in contact with Christianity. As opposed to the ‘traditional’ practices of Indians, Christianity was associated with modernity, liberal-democratic values of equality and freedom, and represented as governed by human law (Asad, 2003; Asad et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2011).

In so doing, the British found favour among some sections of Indians who were campaigning for religious and cultural reforms within Hinduism (Chandra, 2009). Untouchability (against lower- and out-castes), sati (widow sacrifice), dominance of priests, and prohibition of widow re-marriage comprised some of the practices that necessitated reform (Chandra, 2009; Mahmood, 2009a). Through its siding with Indians and enacting of laws against these social/religious practices, the colonial state enforced its claim as the original authority to ‘constitute legitimate social identities and arenas’ (Asad, 2003, p. 200). I will examine the use and effects of the language of law of the colonial and Indian State in Chapter 5.

It is in this context that I draw certain inferences: one, the modern nation-state, produced through the colonial encounter and reliant on notions such as secular, came to be through the inscription of religious difference; two, as Asad (2003) argues, ‘what many would anachronistically call “religion” was always involved in the world of power’ (p. 200), encompassed the political and was co-constituted through it (Bhargava, 1998); and three, the political doctrine of secularism is intertwined with capitalism and colonialism, the desire to control and regulate all aspects of the populations and life of its citizens. I draw on these inferences in my analysis, as these raise question about the discursive production of (religious) identities of Adivasis in the secular nation-state of India.

It is here that I find necessary to revisit the conceptualisation of secular as the separation of state and religion. I find Mahmood’s (2009b, 2012, 2016) understanding of secular useful. Mahmood (2009b) argues that secularism is ‘not simply the doctrinal separation of church from state but also the rearticulation of religion in a manner that is commensurate with modern sensibilities and modes of governance’ (p. 65). It implies reliance on identity politics and privileging of the ‘state and the law as the ultimate adjudicator of religious difference’ (p. 67). Furthermore, this understanding of the secular indicates the primacy of the sovereign State that authorises ‘a privatised form of religious subjectivity’ (Mahmood, 2009a, p. 208).
I draw on the above argument to explain the formation of India as secular. The Indian State was formed through its struggle for independence against the British colonial rule. As discussed in Chapter 2, India was ‘separated’ from Britain on the basis of religion. Religion was deployed as a strategy to classify India as the religious other as well as secure the power and superiority of the colonial and Christian Britain.

The colonial administrators undertook ‘cultural and educational reform to civilise the local population’, as in the context of their regulation and policing of practices of widow sacrifice (*sati*) and widow re-marriage (Mahmood, 2009a, p. 207). Mahmood (2009a) argues that this ‘missionary zeal was to remake cultures and civilisations…seldom benefitted those whom it was supposed to save…(and) were the ground on which European and national battles were fought for competing visions of empire and modernity (p. 207). Similarly, Chatterjee (1989, 1994) contends that the formation of the secular had implications for the production of hierarchical social relations in India through its emphasis on minorities (see also Madan, 1987; Nandy, 1998).

It was in these conditions that secular was formed in India during its independence in 1947. The word secular in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution was added through an Amendment in 1976. However, the Right to Freedom of Religion was guaranteed as a fundamental right under Articles 25-30 during the drafting of the Indian Constitution in 1949-50, with an emphasis on the right of minorities (Constitution of India, 2013). Indian secularism, referred to as positive secularism (Bhargava, 1998), relied on the protection and promotion of rights and interests of minorities (Constitution of India, 2013). It implied the ideas of unity in diversity and of toleration towards other religious beliefs and practices. Article 25 states:

Subject to public order, morality and health…all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion…nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law. (Constitution of India, 2013, p. 16)

While Article 29 and 30 elaborate:

Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India…having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same… All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. (Constitution of India, 2013, p. 17)

These Articles should be read with Article 51 A (h) of Fundamental Duties of every citizen of India:
to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform (Constitution of India, 2013, p. 24)

Implied in the above Articles was the idea of co-existence and toleration of the distinctiveness of the interests of the minorities, subject to public order, morality and health of the country. However, like the colonial state, religion was used to create a number of internal religious others or minorities such as the Muslims and the Adivasis within the country, whose rights and interests demanded protection. Alongside, there was an insistence on developing scientific temper and spirit of inquiry and reform that marked certain religions as unscientific and in need of reform. Secular in India developed through the construction of binary between science and religion, inculcation of scientific temper in public sphere while relegating religious belief to the private.

Chatterjee (1994) argues that the popular imagination of India as a secular nation is mediated by the representations of reconstituted upper-caste Hinduism. Those who do not fit into those representations are defined as religious minorities. This has placed religious minorities in a defensive position and often produced communal riots between the majority and the minorities (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2016). Building on this argument, Asad (2003) elaborates that 'a secular state does not guarantee toleration; it puts into play different structures of ambition and fear' (p. 8).

The clause of public order in Article 25 of the Indian Constitution points to the assumption that religion has been relegated to the private sphere of individuals and has no function in their public life. Here I find Butler's (2011) articulation of the public sphere vis-à-vis religion useful:

If the entry of religion into public life is a problem, then it would seem that we are presupposing a framework in which religion has been outside public life, and we are asking about how it enters and whether it enters in a justifiable or warranted way...we have first to ask which religion has been relegated to the private sphere, and which religions, if any, circulate without question in the public sphere (Butler et al., 2011, p. 71).

Butler (2011) argues that the public sphere is itself produced through dominant religious traditions, i.e. Protestant Christianity, which are presupposed and reaffirmed as secular. These dominant religions are not only inside the public sphere but delimit the public from the private. Butler (2011) explains that 'were it not for the Protestant injunction to privatise religion, then religion—or one dominant religious tradition—underwrites the very framework within which we are operating' (p. 71). It links to Chatterjee’s (1994) argument about the secular in India mediated by an upper-caste
Hinduism which is presupposed as secular and the other religions relegated to the private sphere, marked as minority and subject to public order, morality, health as well as tolerance.

I find this understanding of secular, as co-constituted through religion, useful for my analysis. If the concept of secular is produced by certain dominant religious traditions, it is also constitutive of particular religions as modern, democratic, and liberal. Asad (2003) explains:

Historians of progress relate that in the premodern past secular life created superstitious and oppressive religion, and in the modern present secularism has produced enlightened and tolerant religion. (p. 193)

In the Indian context of the Adivasis, the idea of secular raises questions not only about their discursive production as the religious other, but also about how this identity is interpreted, performed and navigated in the local village setting. It links back to the notion of interpellation, discussed in section 3.2, and how ‘religion functions as a matrix of subject formation, an embedded framework for valuations, and a mode of belonging and embodied social practice’ (Butler, 2011, p. 72).

In the last three sections, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, I have discussed the notions of identity, modernity, and nation-state respectively. I argued for a poststructural understanding of identity as discursively produced, context-specific, enmeshed in power relations, and opposed to an Other. I explained the discourse of modernity, emerging out of the colonial encounter, as essentialising, and responsible for the insertion of binaries of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’. I then explored the formation of the ‘modern’ nation-state in Europe and the expectations/compulsions that produced for post-colonial contexts such as India to become sovereign, socialist, democratic, welfare and secular republic. I now bring the three discussions together to explain the formation of national identity, what it means for a diverse country like India, and the questions it raises for diverse groups such as the Adivasis in the context of this study.

3.4.5 Nation and Identity

I revisit the concepts of nation and identity here to explain the production of the Indian national identity. The understanding of national identity in the Indian context is key to understand the framing of Adivasis and how they fit in the nation-state of India. I argue that nation, religion, ethnicity or geography are not the only influences in identity production and that these influences intersect with gender. The exploration of gender
and identity further allows me to shift the discussion from the national to the local level of the Adivasis.

The power of discourse, to produce the effect that it names, is crucial to understand the maintenance of identities, as argued earlier in this chapter. While I discussed the discursive construction of identity in Section 3.2, here I delve deeper into the stabilisation of those identities. I reiterate the concept of performativity as the ritualised performance of social norms that normalises and naturalises those norms as stable (Butler, 1990, 1993). Butler (1990, 1993) argues that it is the performativity of language or the repetition of certain acts in discourse that create the effect of social reality and natural identity. The stylised repetition of regulatory social norms compel their internalisation through repetition and regulate and constrain subjects (Butler, 1990).

In this study, I argue that it is the performativity of language which normalises and naturalises the regulative discourses at work in the formation of the nation (Bhabha, 1990b). It is the utilisation of the dominant discourses and the processes of normalisation and naturalisation that produce a dominant national identity. Performativity of language then is significant in the narratives of the nation (Bhabha, 1990b; Mamdani, 2001; Said, 2003). I argue that a dominant national identity is forged through the deployment of various technologies of power namely discourse, biopolitics/power, and governmentality, as discussed in the previous sections. Bhabha (1990a) explains:

> The emergence of the political ‘rationality’ of the nation as a form of narrative — textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative strategems — has its own history (p. 2).

Building on the above argument, along with the previous arguments in this chapter, I contend that the Indian nation has been historically produced as a narrative, through utilisation of (textual) strategies or constructs of modern, sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic. However, drawing on Bhabha (1990a), I argue that nation exists as ‘an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity…as a symbolic force’ and as a ‘system of cultural signification’ (p. 1). It is the history of discursively constituted power relations that signify the symbols associated with national life and constitute the nation.

Renan (1882), in the lecture *What is a nation?* rejects the criteria of race, language, material interest, religious affinities, geography, and military necessity in the formation of a nation. He presupposes a past or ‘rich legacy of memories’ that people collectively
remember, and by that virtue forget, which make the nation a ‘spiritual principle’ and a ‘large-scale solidarity’ (p. 19). He argues that it is the shared common glories of the past that forge the consent to live together as one people in the future that form the nation.

Building on Renan’s (1882) argument of a shared past, I argue that it is the discursive power and the performativity of language that compels the inculcation of particular memories, idea of a particular ‘common’ past, and formation of only particular identities as national. I use this argument in my analysis to explore the post-independence Indian context further. In Chapter 5, I examine how the discursive power has produced a dominant national identity in India by constructing the Adivasis as the Other within and through the law, policy and practice of the State.

In the Indian context, while the assertion of national identity has been a form of struggle against colonial exploitation, Chatterjee (1993, 2004) suggests that the national question in the post-colonial contexts should be understood as historically fused with colonialism. The use of various technologies of power and instruments of governmentality, such as those discussed in the previous sections, produced particular structures of governance and forms of participation in India. These structures have sedimented the idea of India and the Indian national identity.

As argued in the last three sections, acknowledging the nation as discursively constructed and produced through textual and narrative strategies also brings with it its constitutive constraint. The discursive production of an intelligible nation/national also produces the unintelligible or the abject other, as a technique in the assertion of difference and distinction. The constitution of the ‘national’ as a homogeneous grouping of individuals with common national identity is constructed in opposition to external others, other nations who do not share in the same battles, suffering and history (Bhabha, 1990b). The relationship with the Other then is one of difference and exclusion (Mouffe, 1993).

As elaborated before in this chapter, I use the notion of the Other in my analysis to illustrate the internal othering of the Adivasis within the nation-state of India, structured by the ideas of modernity and development. If being an Indian national/citizen means to be modernising, sovereign, secular, democratic, participatory and educated/literate, it raises the question of the positioning of the Adivasis in the country. I examine the work of education, religion and gender in the construction of a homogenous Indian national
identity and where/how do these place the Adivasis in the dominant discourses of the State and the local village community. While I have signalled my understandings of education and religion in the processes of identity-formation, I now explore the gendering of these processes.

**Gender and Identity**

The body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations…sexuality is to produce sex as an artificial concept which extends and disguises power relations responsible for its genesis (Foucault, 1978 as cited in Butler, 1990, pp. 124–5)

Implied in the above quote is the description of sex as a normative ideal, constituted within discourse and through relations of power (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1990). Foucault (1978) argues that sex made it possible to order, group and hierarchise bodies or living beings ‘on basis of artificial unity…and enabled to use this fictitious unity as a causal principle’ (p. 154).

As such, a woman’s body is ordered ‘wholly in terms of functions of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitations through the effects of that very function’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 153). In Chapter 6, I illustrate this argument further by exploring the gendering of work done by the Adivasis and its specific effects on the positioning of the Adivasi women.

Moreover, I have used the above understanding of sex and gender, as constituted within discourse and through power, to explain other historical constructions such as nation/nationality, religion, tribe/ethnicity in this chapter that provide artificial unity in order to group and order living beings for social, economic, political and ideological purposes.

In commonsense understanding, gender is referred to as different from and as the social construction of sex (Butler, 1993). However, as Butler (1990, 1993) argues, there is no direct access to sex other than its construction through gender. It implies that sex, like gender, is constructed and has come to be subsumed within gender:

> Gender is a repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (Butler, 1990, p. 45).

Implied in the above quote is the attribution of the construction of gender to the notion of performativity. It is here that language/discourse becomes key in the production of
(gender) identities. The power to name or a linguistic utterance brings about phenomena into being (Butler, 2015). Performativity, then, is linguistic and works through primary inscriptions and interpellations that produces subjects as gendered beings. For Butler (2015), gender is received and not inscribed on the body. It is through the slow inculcation of gender norms and their enactment or repeated performance, in language, that gender is embodied and (re)produced. It is this understanding of language and discourse as well as performativity and interpellation that I have used in this chapter to explain the formation of identities. However, I have argued that these processes of identity-formation and articulation are gendered.

The social regulation of sex and gender takes place through the institutional and regulatory regimes such as heterosexuality that not only produce but maintain and stabilise these constructions. In the context of this study, I argue that the nation-state is one such institutional and regulatory regime constructed to secure and stabilise national and other identities.

Furthermore, the regulation of gender identities produces essentialised, homogenised, and binary or opposing identities of woman and man. However, like the other identities, gender identities are multiple, relational, fractured, contingent, and enmeshed in power relations that are contextual and dynamic. The Other, or what one is not, plays a significant role in the reification of gender identity and in viewing sex and gender as natural, original, biological or pre-given.

Using a poststructuralist analysis of identity, informed by the above concepts, I problematise the construction of the Adivasis, highlighting the work of gender as a regulatory construct. I argue that every identity, like gender, is an embodied performance, a constant becoming, a doing, and ‘a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred’ (Butler, 1990, p. 22).

This exploration of the discursive production, regulation and performance of identities works to contest the homogeneity associated with the social categories of identity. It highlights the intersections of national, religious, ethnic and gender identities (Dunne et al., 2017). Through this exploration, the analysis in this study highlights the power and politics of the exclusionary limits of identity within the specific post-colonial Indian context. The othering of the Adivasis as the abject, the constitutive limit on which the identity of the ‘modern’ Indian nation-state is built, illustrate the performative categories of construction that are in no way natural, original or pre-given.
A poststructuralist analysis of identity allows me to explore the silences, absences and tensions, both in policy and practice, for the Adivasis. It provides a better understanding of the context of precarity in which they live and enables a relook at the concepts of agency and participation, as briefly discussed in Section 3.4. The notions of agency and resistance, examined through a poststructural lens, raise questions about the construction of the Adivasis nationally and how it gets performed and navigated locally in the context of protracted violence.

3.5 From Nation to Nationals: Agency and Resistance

As discussed in Section 3.4, there has been an over-privileging of agency and participation in ‘modern’ nation-states, structured by the ideas of democracy and decentralisation. It links back to the discussion on modernity and emergence of nation-states in Europe, in Section 3.3, and what it meant for post-colonial contexts such as India. Enlightenment, or the age of reason provided for a new conceptualisation of the subject, as rational and agentive (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007; Mahmood, 2009a). It constructed the individuals as sovereign, self-owning/knowing agents, acting through reason and governed by the rule of law (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2009b).

Within this modernisation discourse, strong linkages were made between agency and resistance. Asad (2003) argues that the idea of resistance presupposes the category of agency. It places the onus on individuals to act and be agentive. It enables the active participation of people in the discourses of the State and ensures the sustenance of those discourses (Asad, 2003). For instance, the participation of citizens in democratic processes such as elections facilitate State-formation and survival. Even their resistance to the government is encouraged through participation in elections, which keeps the institutions of State intact. The boycott of parliamentary democracy and elections by groups such as the Communist Party of India (Maoist), as discussed in Chapter 2, is significant to this understanding of resistance.

In this study, I argue that such a conceptualisation of participation, entwined with ideas of agency and resistance, is located in the Western, liberal and neo-liberal discourses of development. It works through the systematic insertion of living beings in production processes, as argued by Foucault (1978), and for the advancement of modernising and capitalistic interests (Asad, 2003). Moreover, I argue that the concern and claim for resistance are intensely individualising as they place the onus on individuals to ‘act’. Such a notion absolves the State of its responsibilities and disregards the struggles
and histories of mis-governance of certain groups and communities such as the Adivasis. In the Indian context, I maintain that a modern and liberal understanding of agency and resistance is not adequate to understand the context of the Adivasis, especially for those groups living in violence, conflict and uncertainty. The concepts of agency and resistance require revisiting in such a context (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011).

Here I find the articulation of discursive agency useful (Butler, 2015), in order to analyse the particular context of this study. Youdell (2006) explains that discursive agency ‘moves past an understanding of intent and agency that is the property of a rational self-knowing subject’ (p. 39). The slow inculcation of discursive and regulatory norms, through performativity, produces us and informs our lived modes of embodiment, in what Butler refers to as the process of interpellation (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2015). However, while these norms structure our responses, ‘those modes of embodiment can be ways of contesting those norms, even breaking with the norm’ (Butler, 2015, p. 29). As such, it is within the performance of norms, such as gender, that there is always possibility for agency:

It is within gender performativity that there is a form of inadvertent agency...one certainly not outside culture, power and discourse but that emerged from within its terms, its enforceable deviations (Butler, 2015, p. 32)

Such a conceptualisation of agency points to the weakness and instability of norms that are embodied and reproduced over time. It is within and through the embodiment of these norms that agency and resistance take place. Butler (1993, 2015) argues that it is through interpellation that subversion, contestation and resignification of norms takes place. The repetition of dominant discursive norms enables the reworking of abjection into agency (Butler, 1993). While discourse exceeds and precedes us and constitutes us as subjects, we are agentive within and through discourse (Butler, 2015).

I build on these notions of discursive agency and resignification in my analysis to examine the precarious context of the Adivasis and explore their (non-)participation in discourses of the State and the local village community. The concepts of discursive agency and resignification also link to Foucault’s (1977, 1978) conceptualisation of resistance as the taking up of alternative discourses by the marginalised groups to fragment an established discourse linked to marginalisation or using an established discourse selectively to resist their marginalisation and othering.
To elaborate further on agency, I refer to Asad (2003) to draw the link between agency and pain. Asad (2003) points to the troubling and constructed binary of an agent, ‘representing and asserting’, vis-à-vis a victim, ‘the passive object of chance or cruelty’ (p. 79):

When we say that someone is suffering, we commonly suppose that he or she is not an agent. To suffer is...to be in a passive state—to be an object, not a subject...Yet one can think of pain not merely as a passive state but as itself agentive (Asad, 2003, p. 79)

I draw on the above understanding of suffering, pain and silence as agentive (Mahmood, 2012), as an act in itself, to resist the imposition of dominant power structures, norms and discourses in the context of the Adivasis in India. This understanding also links to Butler et al.’s (2016) questioning of the constructed opposition between vulnerability and resistance. Arguing that vulnerability is part of resistance and/or a condition for it, Butler et al. (2016) imply that the modern conceptualisations of resistance and agency necessitate protection of vulnerable groups and strengthening of State’s power. They stress the need to rethink human acts and think of vulnerability and resistance in non-oppositional terms. I use this understanding in Chapter 7 to explore the strategies of resistance adopted for navigation of their Indian and Adivasi identities by the Gond community.

The understanding of resistance has a bearing on the Adivasi identity and their self-identification (Guha, 1983; Skaria, 1999), especially in context of the Maoist insurgency. The conflation of Adivasi history and insurgency produced the Adivasis as rebels or insurgents, as I will explore in Chapter 7. For this reason, a poststructuralist conceptualisation of agency and resistance accounts for multiple configurations of power in communities, contests homogenising explanations of acts such as silence and (non-)participation and allows for heterogeneity within groups. It enables foregrounding of the particular context of the Adivasis in this study and explains their silence(s) in participation in everyday life in the backdrop of violence and precarity.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I critically reviewed the literature on the key concepts and theoretical framework used in the analysis of the data. I explored the concept of identity, central to the analysis of this study, and its formation and reification, historically, through relations of power and discourse. Using a poststructural theorisation of identity, as produced discursively and affectively, I elaborated on the notions of subjectivation, interpellation,
bio-power, governmentality and performativity to explain the processes of subject-formation. I argued that the construction of identity not only constitutes the intelligible, but also the limits of this intelligibility, the abject other. This discussion raised question about the discursive (re)production of identity of the Adivasis through law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state.

I carried out a discussion on modernity, its assumed emergence in Europe, its link with colonialism, and with the idea of the nation-state. The constitution of the ‘modern’ nation-state, as a regulating construct, was reciprocally linked to the capitalistic colonial rule. I elaborated that the modernisation discourse worked through the insertion of particular labels as binaries, which were not only classifications but value judgments, imbued with hierarchy and produced through relations of power. This discussion built on the notion of the Other to explain the production of India as the external other against which the modernity of the British colonial rule was constructed.

I then examined the historical, social and political background of the formation of the Indian nation-state through the notions of sovereign, socialist, democratic, republic, welfarist, and secular. I argued that the independence of India from the colonial rule compelled its formation as a modern, or modernising, country, emulating the path marked out by the ‘West’. I elaborated on the linkages between the colonial and the Indian State and how these have produced particular structures of governance and ideas of decentralisation and participation. I examined the centrality of education in the modernisation and development discourse, and its relationship with violence and conflict in the Indian context. I combined the three discussions on identity, modernity and Indian nation-state to explain the formation of national and gender identities. It raised question about the production and performance of Adivasi identities, as enshrined in the national policy discourses, locally.

In the last section, I shifted the discussion from the national to the local context of the Adivasis to examine the notions of agency and resistance through poststructural, postcolonial and feminist lens. If the dominant national discourse in India was structured by particular ideas of modernisation, development, democracy and participation, it raised question about the navigation of the Indian and Adivasi identities of the Gond community to claim their rights for community development, in the context of violence and precarity.
While I signalled my understanding of the poststructural, postcolonial and feminist literature in this chapter, I elaborate on this understanding in the next chapter and its bearing on my methodological stance. In Chapter 4, I maintain the link between my theoretical and analytical framing of this study with my research approach through an exploration of my shifting research concerns.
Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide the methodological stance of this study which is an exploration of the discursive production, performance and navigation of Adivasi identities in India. My focus in this study is on how social experience is created and given meaning, and so the methods that I choose are predominantly ethnographic and qualitative. The empirical focus of this study is on community ‘voices’, understanding the perspectives of a local village community in India which is not internally homogenous and undifferentiated. For this reason, I extend the discussion in the previous chapter on the formation of identities and subjectivities through relations of power in this chapter. In so doing, I bring out the interconnections between my theoretical framing of the study and my methodological approach.

This study is informed by constructionist conceptualisations and an interpretivist paradigm through which I explored the meanings, experiences and understandings of the research participants in their local community context characterised by civil unrest. The links between my research approach and the substantive issues being explored framed the spaces in which my research concerns continue to have dialogue and contestation.

Initially conceptualised as a critical inquiry, the research design and data collection methods were defined accordingly. My initial study design was shaped by an understanding of reality as structured, dependent on power relations in society, independent of people’s construction of it and determined by their social position. However, my experience in the development of this study, from design to fieldwork to data analysis and writing-up, accompanied by further reading and theoretical engagement has informed a transition from critical theory to poststructuralism. I reflect on this transition in this chapter as my own shifting, and fragmentary standpoints have influenced the construction of this text and crucially the links between my theoretical, methodological and substantive positions.

To focus on the above dimensions of this study, I have divided this chapter into five sections. In section 4.2, I present and elaborate the research questions framing this study. This is followed by section 4.3 in which I present my approach to the research through discussion of the poststructural, postcolonial and feminist theoretical
framework and then I highlight its link with my methodology. In section 4.4, I turn to discuss the specific methods used for data collection and the ways these have structured this study. Researcher positionality and reflexivity on the processes and interactions in the conduct of the research are addressed in section 4.5. This leads to the concluding section of the chapter in which both research ethics and limitations of this study are considered.

4.2 Research Questions

As indicated in Chapter 1, this research began with an initial interest in the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in areas of civil unrest. More specifically, the research concerns centred around the exploration of education provisioning/supply in an area of civil unrest, barriers faced by local communities in accessing education, civil unrest and its links with education, and community efforts/practices to ensure educational access.

As in my previous research and practitioner work experience, I noted that the ‘voices’ of the local communities, especially young people, had rarely been sought or heard. Their views had not been adequately recorded and represented particularly with respect to their demands for education as development and as a right, within policy planning, or related to implementation. It was in this context of relative silence of the local communities, especially marginalised and subordinated groups such as the Adivasis, that this research took shape.

However, as I will elaborate in the course of this chapter, the time spent in the field context and my reflections on it and systematic (re-)reading of data shifted the original research questions, while keeping the thematic interest in local community voices, education and conflict intact. Re-positioning my research concerns, this study aimed to focus on the ways in which the identity of the Adivasis in India is discursively produced, performed, and navigated in the context of extended conflict and violence.

Importantly, the significance of education in framing and reproduction of identity is explored, along with its intersections with other axes of identity-formation such as religion and gender. The core work of this study is its exploration of the meanings, significance, and relevance that the local village community, living in and affected by civil unrest, attach to their multiple forms of belonging. This also works to bring out the capillary ways in which the national/state discourse penetrates to the local community
levels. For these reasons, the study aims to engage with the following research questions (RQs):

- How have law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state discursively produced the identity of the Adivasis in India?
- How do local village community members produce and perform Adivasi identities through religion, education and gender?
- In context of protracted violence, how do the Gond community navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities and claim their rights?

The aim of this research is to understand, in contexts of civil unrest, how people are produced by and in turn produce discourses that construct their identities. Research question 1 (RQ1) explores the policy and practice of the State in India since the colonial rule and the ways it produced certain social groups as ‘backward’ through claiming and repeating notions of social and economic deficit. This provides the space for a discursive/textual analysis of the policies, to trace and unpack the production and normalisation of a ‘backward’ identity. Chapter 5 engages with RQ1 in greater length and focuses on the textual analysis of policies of the Indian state since colonial rule.

RQ2 moves into greater specificity with the case of a local village community in India. The study focuses on empirical work that took place in a village in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. It moves beyond the policy texts to engage with the local community responses to explore their interpretation, (re-)production and performance of Adivasi identity through the matrices of religion, education and gender. It explores what other discursive formations are produced through this performance and the links/tensions between the national and the local. RQ2 is addressed in Chapter 6 that analyses excerpts from fieldwork data and the village interactions within and between the Adivasi and non-Adivasi community members, along with my observations and experiences of living in the village community.

RQ3 foregrounds the way that the Gond community, who are listed as a Scheduled Tribe and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG) in India, navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities within the local context of civil unrest. With a link back to issues of governance, law and policy raised in RQ1, the work of the state is critically explored with specific reference to its changing engagement with Adivasi communities/citizens over time. The response of the Indian State’s institutions to the Maoist movement/civil unrest and the demands of the Adivasi Gond community for community development
and education are analysed. The navigation of identity and the conflict is engaged with in Chapter 7. The three research questions, while reciprocally linked, are dealt with separately in the next three chapters. Each analytical chapter provides additional illumination for the three research questions. For this reason, the links between the chapters and the RQs are maintained throughout the thesis.

4.3 Research approach

Given the research questions guiding this study, which highlight the voices, meanings and experiences of the research participants, I have used a qualitative approach to the research (Della Porta and Keating, 2008). Since the focus of this study was on social processes and community interactions, the research was designed to make space for an iterative and interactive social process (Dunne et al., 2005). As such, it becomes important to define the ‘nature of the social’ (Dunne et al., 2005), i.e. the ontological and epistemological location of the research.

In a Positivist tradition, the nature of the social is described as fixed, independent of, external to, separate from, and pre-existing the researcher (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The aim of research then, within this tradition, is to ‘excavate’ the objective truth about the social world (Kvale, 1996). In the initial research design, I approached social reality as structured externally and dependent on power relations in society. I understood this ‘reality’ as stable and fixed, irrespective of how people constructed their version of it. In doing so, I separated ontology from epistemology and asserted that what a person ‘knows’ is largely determined by their social position, and ‘facts’ are the result of power relations and ideologies (Gray, 2013).

However, such an approach to social reality differentiated between ‘truth’ and people’s understandings/construct of the same and produced analytical blockages. There appeared to be an implicit deficit in my exploration of the fixed analysis offered by others and how far people were from the truth. Rajesh’s comments at the beginning of Chapter 1 provide a useful case in point here:

…the environment here is such that the Gond people do not understand…it takes a while (for them to understand) …They are…older and different type of people…You should not expect them to respond. They are like that only…It will take time (for things to change). (Rajesh, 35, Male, non-Adivasi, NGO worker, Focus group with NGO staff)

A positivist approach to Rajesh’s understanding of the Adivasi Gond people, as older, different, not responding, and slowly changing, considered such understanding as truth
rather than as an effect of the dominant discursive and power relations in India. In using such an approach, I assumed the Adivasis to be inherently slow and shy. In the particular context of the Adivasis, such an approach re-produced their deficit, as implied in Rajesh’s comments, without troubling the relations of domination which produced these understandings of truth.

Guided by my data, I began to understand the co-constitution of discourse and subjects, and the immanence of power in such constitution. This informed a transition from positivism to poststructuralism. I took the view that social reality is not separate or independent from human subjectivity, which is constantly changing, multiple and fractured. With specific reference to my focus in this study on social identities, it became important to highlight my view of identity as multiple, contingent, dynamic, fractured and shifting (Mouffe, 1993; Hall, 1996), in ways that are framed by an ontological assumption of multiple and contingent ‘realities’. This poststructural positioning drew me to foreground the context of my research and to highlight its salience to the social realities of the participants and in broader terms to frame it as a case study.

The focus of this study shifted to understand the discursive production of identity of the Adivasis, its performance and re-production at the local village-community level, as well as the way it is navigated and contested as consistent with an understanding of the social as constantly fluid and shifting. The foregrounding of the geographical, historical and social context of my research and of the research participants as well as of my theoretical focus on identities led me to frame this research as a case study (Gomm et al., 2000). This foregrounding shaped the research as a bounded case, geographically, historically, socially and theoretically, of a particular village community in India and its identity-construction.

The linkages between ontology and epistemology further provided the space for dialogue and contestation in this research. Dunne et al. (2005) define epistemology as referring to ‘the nature of our claims to know things about ourselves and the world and to how we justify those claims’ (p. 14). In accordance with this definition, the claims to know/observe things objectively, neutrally and from a distance, sit within the natural science and the Positivist tradition described above. The separation of the researcher from the researched and claims of objectivity and value-neutrality are intrinsic to this epistemological positioning.
By contrast, constructionism is illustrative of the socially constructed nature of the world instead of an emphasis on it being fixed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The entwinement of the researcher with the research context signifies constant production and reproduction of meanings of the social world, which are changing and shifting, and co-construction of knowledge with the research participants (Dunne et al., 2005). Opting for this epistemological positioning, I took on a feminist, poststructural and postcolonial approach to understand and deconstruct the (re)production of particular identities and their othering.

I have adopted a feminist, poststructural and postcolonial epistemology for answering the research questions of this study. Each of these three requires different explanations yet can be read and brought together due to similarities in their viewing of the ‘nature of social’ and categorical separation from Positivism. For the feminist epistemology, the centrality of the context in understanding the meaning of the social world and social interactions is emphasised (Mouffe, 1993; Butler, 1995). There is a rejection of objectivity, value-neutrality, and distance between the researcher and the research context (Dunne et al., 2005). The importance of language and discourse, as carrying implicit theories and assumptions, is brought to the fore (Butler, 1990, 1997). For this reason, feminist research ignores any assumed boundaries between theory and practice, recognises the gendered nature of research, and emphasises the context of the researcher and researched as crucial to investing and signifying of the social world with meanings (Dunne et al., 2005). Within this epistemological positioning, there is also a fundamental issue of equality that links the methodological to the substantive and theoretical aspects of research, as I elaborate further in this section.

A poststructural understanding of the social world is anti-essentialist and de-totalising. It argues for the troubling of essentialised identities as the necessary condition for understanding social relations (Mouffe, 1993; Hall, 1996; Dunne et al., 2017). Similar to the feminist understanding, it advocates the significance of context in the formation of identities that are relational, multiple, dynamic and contingent. The focus on multiplicity, relationality and ‘dynamic’ within this understanding is significant as it is opposed to the structural accounts that ‘fix’ social differences and see them as constant and oppressive (Foucault, 1977, 1978). Mouffe (1993) suggests that ‘a single individual can be the bearer of this multiplicity and be dominant in one relation while subordinated in another’ (p. 77). Such a view challenges the fixity and pre-given nature of the social world and instead focuses on the plural and discursively constituted nature of identity, entangled with power relations. In addition, poststructuralism suggests that ‘the
condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the
determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside''
(Mouffe, 1993, p. 2).

The understanding of the constitutive outside or the Other is crucial to the framing of
this study as informed by postcolonial epistemology (Bhabha, 1990c, 2004). Bhambra
(2007) suggests that the ‘post’ of postcolonialism ‘must be understood not simply in
temporal terms but also as a marker of a conceptual move going beyond existing
theoretical understandings of the world...to challenge dominant narratives and
reconfigure them to provide more adequate categories of analysis’ (p. 15). This links
back to the feminist and poststructural emphasis on equality and context, reading
historically subordinated groups such as the Adivasis through knowledge frameworks
that are not theirs and the potential to reproduce deficit. Providing more adequate
categories of analysis in such a context then links to the empirical focus of this study on
community interactions.

My aim in this study is to understand the subjective and contextual knowledge (Della
Porta and Keating, 2008). Again, the significance of context and historical conditions of
‘becoming’ are central to this framework that produce certain identities as the Other
(Bhabha, 1990c). The Other, formed through language and discourse, cast aside and
marginalised, yet ever-present, shapes the theoretical and analytical framework of this
study. The reading of the Indian context, the effects of colonial history and knowledge
systems in the (re)production of particular identities and othering of groups such as the
Adivasis, is thereby approached through feminist, poststructural, and postcolonial
epistemology.

4.3.1 Research Context

The foregrounding of the context, historical conditions, views and interactions of
research participants of this study enabled its conceptualisation as an ethnographic
case study (Gomm et al., 2000). As discussed in the previous sections, the study
emerged from my practitioner work and research experience and its underlying
assumptions. This was followed by my ethnographic immersion in the field and
familiarisation with the daily rhythms of the local village community.

Geographically or spatially, the study became the case of a village in a Scheduled Area
in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra state. Bordering the forested Bastar region of
Chhattisgarh, the village had been declared a ‘liberated zone’ by the Maoists in the
1980s, but their presence and influence in the area had shifted over time, as indicated in Chapter 2 (Sinha, 1989, 2011).

On the other hand, the Indian State had categorised this area as Scheduled (MoTA, 2017), based on certain criteria which I will explore in the next chapter. The State presence had increased in the area albeit only for security purposes, with an increased Police deployment, Police Stations and CAPF camps (MHA, 2013). However, the local government school and health centres remained closed or did not function during my stay in the village.

Most of the village inhabitants were from the Adivasi Gond community, recognised as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) and a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PTG) by the Indian government\(^\text{10}\). The main occupation of the Adivasi community was collection of forest produce for sale and subsistence, working as seasonal and daily wage labour in agriculture, in local shops and in irregular employment opportunities created through government welfare schemes such as construction of roads. Land and labour provided significant exploration points to understand the local village community interactions.

In my observations of living in the village, most of the household, forestry and agricultural labour was undertaken by the Adivasi women, alongside the daily wage labour they did with men. This had implications for the Adivasi women’s mobility or movement in the area and their educational access, as I will explore in Chapters 6 and 7. An exploration of gender relations in the local village community eventually became a research concern of this study.

The main language spoken in the village was Gondi, but the community members, especially the youth, also interacted in Marathi and Hindi. The village was divided into tolas or hamlets, and the adjoining tola in the village had people from groups whose family occupations historically had been of lohar (ironsmith), kumhar (potter), and trader. In legal terms, they were classified as Other Backward Classes (OBC) by the Indian government on the basis of their historically ‘main’ family occupations which implied social and educational backwardness (MHA, 2011). The non-Adivasi spoke Marathi, which was spoken mixed with Hindi. These groups self-identified as non-Adivasi or Non-Tribal (NT) and Hindu, belonging to lower castes in the caste system.

\(^{10}\) 75 groups in 17 states and one union territory (UT) in the country have so far been identified and categorised in policy as PTGs. However, not all these groups have been accorded the legal status of Scheduled Tribe (MoTA, 2013). See Glossary and Chapter 1, Section 1.3 for clarification.
Religious, caste and ethnic distinctions among the local community members provided other important axes of consideration to understand village interactions.

Some of the non-Adivasi men ran small shops and businesses in and around the village and worked as contractors on the government schemes and projects. The non-Adivasis also owned small landholdings, worked in agriculture and employed the Adivasis as daily wage labour. Some non-Adivasi women worked as part-time domestic help in neighbouring areas and in agriculture which was a seasonal activity, while contributing to the household work.

The social relations in the village were centred on issues of land ownership and labour positions, as discussed in Chapter 2. While the non-Adivasis owned small shares of agricultural land in the area, the Adivasis were employed as daily wage agricultural labour. On the other hand, the right to collect and sell forest produce was granted only to the Adivasis by the government while the non-Adivasis did not have access to the same. The divisions around land and forest were reminiscent of the colonial classifications, as I will examine in the next chapter.

The geographical and historical context of the region, also elaborated in Chapter 2, had implications for the production of hierarchical social relations in the local village community. Understanding and documenting these social relations and community interactions by exposing the multiple regulatory discourses which (re)produced Adivasi identity became the empirical focus of this study.

The village was in a Scheduled Area, predominantly inhabited by the ST communities, and classified as an LWE-affected area. It was ‘hard to reach’ by any means of travel, except by foot or bicycle, due to dense forests and no road. There was no public transport in the 7-10 km forest range of the village, and State-run buses and private ‘taxis’\(^\text{11}\) plied after crossing that range, where the main road started. The village was over 50 km away from the Block Headquarters, over 100 km from the District Headquarters. The naming and classification of the area again effected gender relations in the village, as I will explore in the analytical chapters.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the geographical terrain of the area and the relative absence of State therein pointed to possible reasons for the presence of the Maoists. On the way to the village, red and black flags, along with banners and posters calling

\(^{11}\) Mini jeeps or trucks carrying people over their allowed capacity
for curfews and boycott of local elections, were displayed which symbolised the presence of the Maoists and their anti-State action.

The NGO through which I gained access to the local village community worked on issues of educational access and implementation of the RTE Act. It focused on organising and mobilising local communities for formal education provided through state and working with local administration at block and district levels to respond to community demands for education. The NGO staff formed a key stakeholder group of this study, as I will elaborate in the next section, along with the local community members.

As such, there were multiple and competing regulatory discourses, with the State or official narrative of security and the Maoist narrative of an anti-State movement focusing on Adivasi rights as well as armed struggle being the dominant ones. The narrative of the NGO emphasised educational access by viewing the lack of formal school education as a deficit in the local community. Foregrounding these dominant discourses systematically and displacing these by opening up their in-between spaces became the research focus of this study.

Given this focus, this research became a case study in theoretical terms, other than a geographical case of the village, of recording and documenting local-level community interactions. The access to rich contextual information and data through ethnographic fieldwork, policy review, observations, focus groups, interviews and researcher diary, provided insights into historical and discursive processes of identity-formation of the Adivasis and its performance and reproduction over time. The interpellation of this identity produced new discursive formations that have been theorised and analysed in this study.

Alongside the production and performance of Adivasi identity, the fieldwork data provided an understanding of the navigation of identity through the (non-)participation of the local community at different levels of governance and in the context of extended conflict. It was in this context that the study sought to establish the uniqueness of the Indian State and how under community pressure, and a strategic one at that, there were opportunities to correct the system, even in areas of civil unrest.

This case study brings to fore community ‘voices’ through an exploration of multiple discourses which produce, regulate, re-produce and subvert the Adivasi identity and its performance in a local village community living in context of conflict. Alongside this, the
study makes a case of the relative importance of Maoist politics as well as possibilities of State response and follow up.

In so doing, this research is conceptualised as an ethnographic case study. It is not an ethnography in the traditional sense but a geographical, theoretical and ethnographic case of identity construction of an Adivasi community in an area of unrest. It illuminates the multiple discourses of land, work, religion, education, gender and conflict deployed by colonial and Indian state and how these discourses interact and intersect. My presence and immersion in the field and my reading of the data also co-produced these discourses and identities.

The study foregrounds these discourses through data to show that people and place are not separate from/outside the discourse but are entwined/within, produced in and through it. For this reason, given the theoretical and substantive focus of this study and its links with the empirical and methodological, the study is organised around the dominant discursive strains and concepts which provokes a re-thinking of their normative understandings. I clarify this reasoning in the following sections.

4.4 Research Design and Data Collection

As discussed in the previous section, I approached this research as iterative, interactive and recursive social process (Holy, 1984). The research design was inductive and relied on my observations of and interactions with people, constructing of data with them, de-constructing it myself during analysis, and re-constructing it into text while writing up (Dunne et al., 2005). There was, however, no neat or clear separation of these phases, and the inductive research design enabled a constant back and forth in this research.

A multiple-method case-study research design helped answer the research questions discussed in section 4.2. The initial data-collection involved reading and reviewing of policy documents on children’s right to education and educational access in areas of civil unrest with a focus on India. As indicated earlier, this policy review was guided my practitioner work at NCPCR. The rationale for the choice of policy texts included in this study is specified in section 4.4.3.

As the research focus and questions shifted, a number of other policy and legislative documents were examined during different phases of data collection, analysis and writing-up to contextualise the interactions and experiences of research participants.
This approach linked to the empirical focus of this study on understanding community responses and interactions.

The fieldwork, to enable interactions with research participants and understand their experiences of living in a context of civil unrest, took place in three phases between September 2015 and July 2016 for seven months. The first phase involved a review of existing literature and policy documents along with ‘settling in’, familiarisation and observation of the village through volunteer work with an NGO, attending local-level community meetings and village gatherings.

As indicated in Chapter 1, I collaborated with this particular NGO for data collection during my work/research experience with the NCPCR from 2010-2013. The NGO was selected as it was well-established in the area and added another layer of ethical protection in the research to navigate the context of civil unrest. The knowledge of the NGO and relevant contacts therein enabled easy access to the field site and ensured personal safety and security as well as that of the research participants.

However, in doing so, the conversations with the NGO staff and senior office-bearers shaped and informed the initial research design and the choice of texts for initial policy review. Due to my collaboration and interaction with the NGO staff over the years, my reliance on them for fieldwork access, and the NGO being my first point of entry to the field, the NGO staff were included as research participants in this study.

The second phase of the fieldwork involved living in the field site for a longer period to enable immersion in village life. It worked as a form of ethnographic familiarisation to understand the rhythms of life in the village and the associated/specific issues (Watson, 1999). Living in the village for a longer time was significant in terms of building trust with the local community members, gaining access to village-level community meetings, social gatherings and group interactions independent of the NGO. It involved an effort as well as enabled to 'see' things from the community's perspectives and linked to the research concerns of a naturalistic inquiry into community interactions and voice (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). On this basis, various research participants were approached as well as approached me to participate in this study.

Different groups, involved differently in village activities and social processes, participated in the focus group discussions and semi-structured in-depth interviews. These included adult members (parents and youths) from both Adivasi and non-Adivasi
communities, Panchayat and Gram Sabha members, SMC members, teachers and NGO staff. I elaborate on the ‘selection’ of research participants in section 4.4.2.

Separate focus groups were held with young people in the age groups of 13-18 years to navigate age-related power relations and intergenerational differences in the community (Punch, 2002). The third and final phase comprised in-depth interviews, both one-off and follow-up/sequential, with adults from the abovementioned groups. This phase enabled an exploration of silences, tensions and absences which marked some of the focus group discussions (see Appendix 7).

A researcher diary was maintained throughout the research process until the writing-up phase which enabled dialogue and contestation in this research and linked back to the research approach being iterative and interactive (see Appendix 7). My engagement with the fieldwork data through researcher diary brought to fore the contradictions and complexities of the research context, my initial research approach and design. This engagement influenced the shifting of research concerns and questions as well as the data collection and analysis process (Dunne et al., 2005; Pryor, 2010). A detailed research design is presented in tabular form below in Table 4.1.

A combination of field site, use of multiple methods and plurality of research participants offered rich insights into the village interactions and power relations in place that had to be navigated and negotiated by the Adivasis. For instance, the navigation of Panchayat, Village Council and NGO which acted as local gatekeepers exposed me to the regulatory frameworks at work in the village. As these governance structures were more proximate than schools in the area, a shift in research focus and questions became necessary and linked to the efforts to understand the community.

This combination and shift connected my theoretical, methodological and substantive positions in this study (Holy, 1984; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). Again, the division of fieldwork in phases and timeframes suggests linearity in the way the research ‘progressed’. However, this was done for the purposes of writing and providing clarity to readers, whereas in actuality there was a constant movement, both ‘backwards’ and ‘forwards’, in all the phases.
Table 4.1 Research Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Review of exiting literature, policy and legislative documents</td>
<td>Sept-Nov 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familiarisation and observation in field site through volunteer work with NGO; attending community meetings and village gatherings</td>
<td>Nov-Dec 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>8 Focus groups with adults (parents, Panchayat and Gram Sabha members, SMC members, teachers) with 6 participants in each</td>
<td>Jan-Mar 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Focus groups with young people (13-18 years) with 6 participants in each</td>
<td>Apr-May 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>25 in-depth interviews with adults</td>
<td>June-July 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.1 Site Selection

The field site or the area and location where the fieldwork took place was selected primarily owing to the ease of access and my knowledge of the local gatekeepers. The NGO I had collaborated with in the past for data collection with the NCPCR had been running an education-based project in the area since 2014. However, the particular village selected for fieldwork was not covered under the project. It was chosen for that reason in order to balance the influence of the NGO staff on the research. Still, the NGO had good knowledge of the local contacts and gatekeepers to enable access to the village and ensure my safety.

The main criteria for the selection of the village were the size of the village, nature of Maoist activity and familiarity of language. Bordering the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh state that is the epicentre of Maoist activity, it was a small village, around 50 households, whose inhabitants spoke Hindi well. For these reasons, my choice of this particular village allowed me to collect data in an area where the ‘insurgency’ was proximate and ongoing, and in a language with which I was familiar. My previous but brief work experience with the NCPCR in the field site area contributed significantly towards my ethnographic familiarisation of the wider research setting and context (Urry, 1984).
As discussed in section 4.3.1, the village was divided into *tolas* or hamlets, and my stay and research focus was predominantly in and on the *tola* where most of the inhabitants were from the Adivasi Gond community. However, to observe the dynamics of village interactions and power relations (Tonkin, 1984; De Neve, 2001), I interacted with both Adivasi and non-Adivasi community members in the adjoining *tolas* in the village. As the community members worked in forestry-related work, agriculture, daily wage labour and ran shops/businesses during day time, our group discussions and interviews took place after work. Significantly, I interacted mostly with the young people in the village in the 15-30 age groups due to my positioning in the village community as I will elaborate in the next sections.

As indicated previously in this chapter, the NGO was my first point of entry into the field site. I was introduced by the senior-level office bearers of the organisation to the field staff who in turn introduced me to the NGO volunteers and other members in the local village community. In so doing, I used a snowball method which relied on my utilisation of existing social networks to identify and include research participants (Bloor et al., 2001).

An information sheet with details of the research was shared with the senior NGO staff (see Appendix 3). Having access to the senior NGO staff placed me in a position of power with regard to the NGO volunteers and the local community. To navigate this, I took on volunteer work with the NGO and worked alongside the local-level NGO staff, attending community meetings and village gatherings. This also opened my networks beyond the NGO for the recruitment of research participants. However, a convenient start time for the fieldwork was agreed upon with the local NGO staff as they were to host me for the initial ‘settling in’ period.

The reliance on NGO, on one hand, ensured ease of access and safety, whereas on the other hand delayed the start of fieldwork till December. The festivals of Dussehra and Diwali, which are observed in October and November, had the local staff and community preoccupied with arrangements of the celebrations. The local NGO staff suggested that I start the fieldwork in December, which in turn meant my inability to observe the (non-)celebration of these two key ‘Hindu’ festivals by the Adivasis. This did alert me to pay particular attention to the context, lifestyle and daily rhythms of the research participants and put aside my assumptions and demands. Consequently, I explored the issue of religion with the research participants, having missed the celebration of religious festivals.
My entry into the field site through the NGO also enabled an understanding of the local power relations between the NGO and the local village community, the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis, and the research participants and myself. Due to my emphasis on the research context, the timing and place of focus groups and interviews were also decided by the research participants. In so doing, the field site and the particular context of the research participants determined the research process and my ‘choice’ of methods and participants (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997).

4.4.2 Research Participants

Identification and recruitment of research participants were accomplished through a snowball method (Bloor et al., 2001), as indicated earlier in this section. The method was first employed with the NGO to identify and recruit the field staff in this research. Participants such as Rajesh, Raja and Raina, who were in key positions in the NGO programme and belonged to both non-Adivasi/OBC and Adivasi communities, became significant stakeholders of this research with their interview excerpts used for data analysis.

Most of the field-level workers of the NGO were from the Adivasi Gond community and thereby enabled my access to the village. The snowball method helped navigate the power relations in the village as it gave control of the research setting to the participants (Bloor et al., 2001). Youth participants such as Abhay, Naman, Sanam, Som, Sana, Shilpa and Smita were from the Adivasi Gond community and often assisted the NGO with their local community work. I have shared their interview extracts in this study.

However, as Bloor et al. (2001) argue, the use of ‘intermediaries’ in snowball method to recruit participants acts as ‘an unwanted `screening device’ selecting out certain members of the group from participation’ (p. 32). For these reasons, I took on volunteer work with the NGO to expand my networks in the village, lived in the village community for a longer period, and used multiple ethnographic methods to understand community interactions.

The NGO staff introduced me to the community gatekeepers such as the Panchayat members who further enabled my stay in the village. This also enabled inclusion of participants such as Nand who was a Sarpanch and holding of FGDs with other community members through attending Panchayat meetings. After the initial
introduction and familiarisation, which was enabled by the NGO and the Panchayat, I took it upon myself to build trust with the local community.

My stay in the village and participation in everyday community life put the community members at ease with my presence in the village. They invited me for group discussions which formalised into focus groups and approached me for our in-depth interviews. This significantly shifted the power dynamics implicit in the conducting of research, more specifically in ethnographic research (Watson, 1999; De Neve, 2001).

In the Indian context, the deficit production of the Adivasi identity has been attributed to ethnographic surveys, and research carried out since colonial times (Asad, 1973; Sundar, 1997; Banerjee, 2015, 2016). The foregrounding of the historical, social and geographical context of the Adivasis and their depiction as purely ethnographic subjects, with little associated power and agency, became a key focus of this study and its framing as a case-study. The use of snowball method for including research participants from different community groups helped re-appropriate the ethnographic methods of research, wherein the local community members approached and invited me for discussions and interviews.

Other than the senior and field level NGO staff, the research participants mostly included village inhabitants, both Adivasi and non-Adivasi. Within these groups, it was mostly the young women in higher education or women whose daughters were in formal education who approached me for discussion and interview. This explained the inclusion of young female Adivasi participants such as Neh, Pari, Reema, Karishma and Kamna as well as of their mothers such as Alpa bai, Ara bai, Saroja bai, Sushma bai, Shanti bai, Neera bai and Mira bai. To add to this, female teachers from the Adivasi community such as Babita and Smita also interacted with me and participated in this study through focus groups and interviews. I have foregrounded their excerpts in the analysis chapters of this study.

Occasionally, young Adivasi men such as Nam and Sag who had been in formal education and/or wanted to resume higher education interacted with me and participated in this research. I also interacted with non-Adivasi men such as Balram and Manish, both of whose children were in higher education. As such, most of my research participants were Adivasi women. This was due to my own positioning as a young female researcher, enrolled in higher education and researching on education in
the village, along with the perception of the research participants of myself as I will explore in section 4.5.

I also visited other villages in the area and interacted with people there. Focus group discussions were held with around 50 participants and in-depth interviews with 25 individuals in the 18-70 age-group. Occupationally, the research participants were forestry, agricultural and daily wage labourers, domestic help, local shop and business owners, NGO workers, and school teachers and helpers. Again, the immersion in village life, ethnographic familiarisation with the context and related concerns of the local community provided the logic for the inclusion of these research participants.

Focus group discussions were also held with around 30 young people in the village in the 15-18 age-group (Punch, 2002). They were in and out of schools and higher education, working in agriculture, forestry and domestic work with their parents, employed as NGO volunteers, and engaged in vocational training and skill development programmes.

While the study included only a few research participants, and in so doing excluded other significant perspectives, my gaze involved the whole of the village (Tonkin, 1984; Gomm et al., 2000). I observed village gatherings and interactions and my reading and interpretation of the same influenced the quality of my data. As indicated in section 4.3, I approached this research through the foregrounding of multiple regulatory discourses which were illustrated in the data excerpts highlighted in this study. My time in the field context, use of particular methods and relations with the participants had implications for data collection and analysis, as I explore in sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.4.

4.4.3 Methods

My choice of methods comprised reviews of various official literature, legal and policy documents, observations from living in the village, focus group discussions, semi-structured one-to-one in-depth interviews, and researcher diary. A combination of these methods enabled a better understanding of experiences and perspectives of the research participants, provided thicker descriptions and answers for the research questions, and helped overcome the limitations of each of the methods. Most of the methods adopted also helped foreground the ‘voices’ of the research participants and their understandings of events happening around them, more specifically their relationships with the State, the Maoists and with others in the village community.
I began data collection by reviewing legal and policy frameworks for young people in the 6-18 age groups in India. This review was guided by my practitioner work at NCPCR where I worked on the implementation of the RTE Act in areas of civil unrest and undertook similar policy and programmatic reviews. Similar to site and participant selection, as discussed in previous subsections, I relied on a snowball method for selection of legal and policy texts by utilising my existing research experience at NCPCR. As such, my initial primary focus was on the ways in which education was integrated into structures and processes especially in areas of civil unrest. This linked to the initial research concern of exploring educational access in the context of protracted violence and conflict.

The Indian Constitution and its various provisions guaranteeing education as a fundamental right and directive principle of state policy, along with the Constituent Assembly debates during India’s independence, provided a starting point for this review. It enabled historicising the discussion around education in India, as I will further explore in Chapter 5. Simultaneously, the legal and policy documents of the Ministries of Human Resource Development, Home Affairs and Tribal Affairs contextualised education provisioning in India in areas inhabited by the Adivasis in context of conflict. This policy focus on geographical, historical and social context of the research participants also linked to the conceptualisation of this research as a case-study, as discussed in Section 4.3.

However, this exploration exposed the discursive framing of the Adivasis historically and the ways in which they were accommodated and described in legal and policy frameworks. It signalled linkages with land ownership and work contributions of the Adivasis, which also became significant research concerns towards understanding Adivasi identities and the Maoist movement. This exploration provided a link back to the Indian Constitution and its various ‘Schedules’ which delineated the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes, also examined in Chapter 5.

As such, the focus of the study began to shift during and after fieldwork. It was informed and enriched by the community ‘voices’ and my extended stay in the village. With this, the choice of policy and legislative framework for review also shifted. It became about exploring more deeply the discursive framing of identity of the research participants and multiple intersecting discourses which (co-)produced Adivasi identities. This shifting focus drew my attention to the ways that this group (Adivasis) of Indian
citizens was described and demarcated for their difference and ‘special’ character in the policy and community contexts.

A textual review of the legal and policy frameworks provided initial thematic prompts to the fieldwork questions, focus group discussions and interviews. Initially, it was a normative and functionalist reading of the policy texts. This reading and review involved acceptance of policy language at face level without probing or pointing out the work of power and discourse in historical sedimentation of meanings.

The initial thematic prompts, informed by modern and liberal underpinnings of my practitioner work, centred around the issues of education and conflict, governance, decentralisation and participation, and community demands and struggles for development. The policy review was combined with observations and interactions in the field regarding the functioning of structures and institutions analysed in the document review, village dynamics and power relations (Tonkin, 1984; De Neve, 2001).

A researcher diary was maintained throughout the fieldwork for field notes and observations (Holy, 1984; Urry, 1984). It enabled constant reflection and engagement with the data, alongside a continual conversation with myself about what had happened during the fieldwork (Thomas, 2013). The shift from modernist and functionalist reading of data, to its troubling through poststructuralism came about through a combination of multiple methods which provided multiple, contradictory and contingent meanings of language and discourse.

As I set out to understand the village interactions and power relations among groups, it was important for me to be aware of my power as a researcher and select methods that balanced the power relations between the research participants and myself. After my first month in the village, I realised that group discussion was the preferred form of interaction, gathering / sitting in groups of 5-8, and holding discussions on matters of concern for the local community members.

The knowledge of my presence and research in the village made the participants gradually ‘invite’ me to join their discussions. In doing so, the participants helped set the research agenda and shift the focus of the study. For instance, my participation in the Village Council meeting in December, discussed in Chapter 7, after an invite from the village elders informed my thematic focus on structures of decentralised governance in the village and their selective utilisation by the Adivasis for demanding
citizen rights. The key concern of this meeting was the implementation of the Forest Rights Act and selling of bamboo without the involvement of intermediaries or the Forest Department.

Prior to this meeting, I had observed the Adivasis not participating in NGO and Panchayat meetings during my initial stay in the village. My participation and observation in the Village Council meeting contextualised the (non-)participation of the Adivasis. It illuminated the historical contestation of land in areas of the Adivasis. For this reason, land and work became central concerns of this study and led to the inclusion of policy texts which focused on the same for documentary review. Constant reflection and engagement with this data, through researcher diary, also provoked a re-thinking of my modernist, liberal and functionalist understanding of concepts such as participation and a structuring of this study around those key themes and concepts.

As such, the research focus was shaped by my practitioner work and research experience, nature of interactions among the research participants and subsequently my reading and interpretations of these interactions. Focus group discussions (FGDs), as a method for data collection, helped reduce my power and control in the research setting (Bloor et al., 2001). Their use in real-life settings such as Panchayat meetings and village gatherings enabled the participants to articulate their views in a relaxed and familiar setting and often among equals (Wilkinson, 1999; Madriz, 2000). The use of FGDs as a contextual and collectivistic method was well-suited to my research aims and objective of documenting community interactions. It provided an interactive social context in which meaning-making and multiple subjectivities of research participants could be observed and accessed by me. FGDs enabled the foregrounding of my research context and voices of the research participants and helped constitute group interactions and meaning-making processes as my primary data.

The few organised FGDs took place in a safe space such as the school activity room and community hall, viewed as comfortable by adults and young people. Permission for holding these was sought from the concerned authorities. I shared information sheets about the research verbally with the research participants and sought their informed verbal consent (Bloor et al., 2001; Cornwall, 2003). Given the context of this study, as discussed in Chapter 2, the research participants were wary of reading and signing written documents. The context of violence and uncertainty meant keeping the participants and myself safe. Handing out information sheets and requesting signed consent forms meant risking safety and asking participants to formally ‘take sides’ in
the ongoing insurgency. The issue of informed verbal consent was also raised while obtaining ethical clearance for this research from the University of Sussex Ethical Committee (see Appendix 2), in accordance with the ASA (2011) and BERA (2011) research ethics guidelines.

Again, for safety and familiarity reason, most of the FGDs took place in real-life settings, after informing participants and obtaining consent. Organised group discussions in artificial settings were mostly avoided to ensure the comfort, convenience and safety of participants. However, my presence and participation in these discussions as a village outsider did influence the group composition, dynamics and responses which I had to engage with and navigate most of the time.

Semi-structured topic guides were used for the FGDs with both adults and young people (see Appendices 4 and 6). The silences, absences and tensions in the focus groups with regard to some topics such as civil unrest were explored in my observations and fieldnotes (see Appendix 7). These provided prompts for in-depth one-to-one interviews.

The FGDs led to the identification of ‘key informants’ with whom semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. The FGDs not only informed and sharpened the topic guide and prompts for the interview (see Appendix 5), they helped shift and clarify the focus of the study. The choice of focus groups as a method for data collection fits well with the inductive, iterative, interactive, and recursive dimensions of this study. The primacy of participant voices led me to alter the way the research was initially shaped, re-write the research questions, and change the direction of investigation (Wilkinson, 1999; Pryor, 2010). This re-structuring of the research allowed me to focus more deeply on the group interactions and processes. It was in line with Bloor et al.’s (2001) observation that shifting of research focus is not a defect of the focus group method but a faithful reflection of subject matter.

Like focus groups, the interviews captured a multitude of participants’ views and voices. I used interviews to explore more deeply the conceptions of social knowledge and meanings articulated during the FGDs (Kvale, 1996). I took on the traveller metaphor, as described by Kvale (1996, 2006), to be able to ‘see’ things from the perspectives of the local community members and balance my power in defining the research agenda. In this effort, I approached the interviews as less controlled and structured by the researcher, and more interactional and participant-driven (Dunne et
For this reason, the interviews were semi-structured, in-depth, and often sequential. Not having a structured list of interview questions, I used certain prompts and topic guides that were shaped by the responses and silences of the FGDs.

The one-to-one interviews helped provide and understand deeper meanings of the key themes and issues discussed during focus groups. The interviews were conversational and expansive rather than reductive, bringing out the contradictions and complexities of given explanations (Skinner, 2012). Such an approach enabled me to reflect on the meanings/interpretations of responses provided during the FGDs and allowed me to discuss topics which could not be covered therein. For instance, the description of the Adivasis in some of the FGDs as ‘older and different’ kind of people and the lines of difference between the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis were explored more deeply in the interviews. This exploration provided religion, education and gender as three main lines of difference identified by the local community members as significant in the articulation of Adivasi identity.

During interviews, as in the other phases of data collection, I constantly reflected on my power as a researcher working with a historically disadvantaged and subordinated group and my involvement in co- construction of knowledge and meaning-making occasions with them (Skinner, 2012). In so doing, I also reflected on my depiction of the local village community and (re-)production of their internal differences through data collection and analysis processes. To navigate this, I approached the interview material to give ownership to the ‘voices’ of the community members who were actively engaged in the production of knowledge with me (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Skinner, 2012). This navigation and foregrounding again raised questions of power relations, which are central to this study, and of my positioning and implication in the interview process.

The theoretical and analytical framing of this study allowed me to understand the inextricability of the researcher from the researched. I understood and employed the interviews as a technology of the self (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002), where my identity as the researcher became as important as the identity of the research participants in the production of knowledge/text. I drew on Dunne et al.’s (2005) definition of the interview as ‘a situated practice in which power/knowledge flows through discursive exchanges in cultural and historical contexts’ (p, 38). I explore these issues further in the following sections.
4.4.4 Data Analysis

The process of data collection, analysis, and writing up were conceived as distinct and divided into different phases in the initial research design. However, the three stages overlapped during the fieldwork and after my return from the field. Dunne et al., (2005) refer to this overlap as the triple mimesis to suggest ‘how being in the field, constructing a data set and reporting of research are all mutually implicated…bound by our identity as a researcher and the narratives that we produce and that produce these identities’ (p. 6). Building on this explanation, I approached the data analysis process as inextricable from my positioning and identity as a researcher.

As discussed in the previous subsection, a textual review of the legal and policy texts provided initial thematic prompts for data collection and analysis. The analysis of these texts was informed by my positioning as a research practitioner at NCPCR and a modernist and functionalist conceptualisation of education underlying this work (NCPCR, 2011, 2013). I approached the policy analysis by drawing on my understanding of education as a right and symbol of development and modernity, thereby accepting the policy discourse at face level and as a given. Based on this textual analysis and research experience, I used the themes of education, development, conflict, governance, decentralisation and participation to guide the fieldwork.

During fieldwork, I maintained a researcher diary in which I took extensive notes of my observations and my everyday life in the field (see Appendix 7). It was here that shifts in the slow process of data analysis began alongside data collection. The researcher diary provided space for transforming my observations and interpretations of the daily life into text. It simultaneously enabled reflection, dialogue, and engagement with the data (Thomas, 2013). I began to visualise my data as text, through these observations and interactions with the research participants.

Given my familiarity with the context of the research, I decided against the use of voice recording devices. I understood that my research participants would feel an imposition and be uncomfortable being recorded. Some of them clarified this during the FGDs and interviews and requested me to not use any recording devices. This provided further information about the context of uncertainty, fear and mistrust in which the Adivasis lived and navigated everyday life and helped focus my explorations further on community relations.
During my first two months of stay in the field, I took notes while interacting with participants during FGDs. However, I realised the discomfort of the participants, through their silences and tensions, if I entered their discussions with a pen and notepad. As most of the focus groups were not organised by me but joined through invitations, I decided to participate in the discussions with the participants and take notes immediately after a focus group or interview. This involved listening attentively, remembering the verbatim quotes, and re-constructing them into text later.

The idea of listening to participants and taking notes later contributed to my descriptions and analysis of the data as well as a shift in my conceptual and thematic focus. Without a recording device, I relied on my memory and interpretation of events, thereby implicating myself more in the research and exposing myself to understand the co-construction of people and discourses. I used the researcher diary for this purpose, for taking notes of the focus groups and interviews, and writing my observations and interpretations of these events. The field and my presence and experiences within it became significant in the data analysis process (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Watson, 1999). As I began to understand further the inseparability of researcher from researched, I took up an exploration of silences and tensions which existed for the research participants, more so in my presence as a village outsider.

I transcribed the focus groups and interviews after finishing a few of these every month or two months. This helped to preserve the important details and context of the exchange and informed the subsequent focus groups and interviews in the field. The conversion of observations, interpretations, focus group discussions and interview conversations into text and transcriptions acted as the next stage of analysis, following policy review. I used three structuring layers for storing my data and transcriptions, under the initial research questions, research participants, and theoretical constructs or main themes provided through initial policy analysis. I shared a ‘bulletin’ from each transcription every month with my research supervisor, which significantly enabled critical reflection and engagement with the data (see Appendix 7).

The textual review and analysis of policy texts provided the main themes and theoretical constructs and shaped the initial research questions prior to fieldwork (Dunne et al., 2005; Pryor, 2010). However, as discussed in the previous subsection, these texts were analysed normatively, using a liberal, modernist and functionalist understanding of education and development. Over time, with my extended stay in the village, ethnographic familiarisation and immersion in local community life, the initial
research focus on educational access and barriers, conflict, and community efforts for education became inadequate in capturing the multitude of community perspectives.

For instance, the continual non-participation of Adivasis in forums such as Panchayat and NGO meetings, where the focus was on education, surprised me, as did their taking up of dominant categories of distinction to describe themselves. Instead of reading these as acts of resistance, I viewed the subordination and marginalisation of Adivasis as constant and fixed. This view was based on my understanding of reality as structured, stable and independent of people’s construction. I simultaneously focused my attention on the Adivasis’ specific modes of political participation in the village, such as the Village Council meetings where the discussion centred on land and forest rights.

In this process, the initial research questions and themes began to shift and change, and more research participants began to be included in the research (Pryor, 2010). My intentions to understand the educational access of the village community eventually drew my attention to the silences, absences and tensions that existed for the Adivasis in policy and community contexts and to understand their discursive marginalisation therein. At the same time, their mobilisation around issues of forest rights made land and work/labour important entry points for data analysis.

The need to come up with more adequate categories of analysis (Bhabha, 1990c, 2004; Bhambra, 2007), as discussed in section 4.3, provided a link to poststructural, postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks for reading data. It gave rise to new themes and concepts as well as research questions (Pryor, 2010), which corresponded better with community responses on identity, power, land and work, religion, education and gender, and State, violence and conflict. These themes were discussed again with the participants during both focus group discussions and interviews, shifted more and prompted a re-examination (Dunne et al., 2005). These shifts were simultaneously referred to in my document analysis, observations, and researcher diary.

As pointed out earlier, the data collected was examined using ‘descriptive or illuminative analysis, adopting the assumptions of interpretivism’ (Thomas, 2013, p. 198). The legal and policy texts were analysed descriptively and accepted as such to provide initial thematic categories for structuring and storing data. I employed constant comparative method to read the data repeatedly, comparing its contents and coming up with new understandings (Thomas, 2013). I coded the transcribed texts by hand after systematically reading it several times.
Consequently, themes and categories emerged and changed through my reading and re-reading of the data and my implicit theorisation of the same. These categories were captured and mapped using theme mapping manually (Thomas, 2013). This process was iterative and interactive, accommodated my shifting gaze in the research setting and produced new sets of research questions (Pryor, 2010). These questions centred on the discursive production, performance and navigation of Adivasi identities.

My analysis of data was guided by my ontological, epistemological and theoretical positioning and its links with the substantives and methodology. It was framed by the literature review, the specificities of the Indian context and the local village community context of the Adivasis. The analysis of the focus group and interview data was shaped by my choice of methods and the definitions I adopted to employ these in my research.

The descriptive/illuminative and thematic analysis was followed by the interpretative and theory-driven analysis. As indicated earlier, the reading and re-reading of data pointed me towards the co-constitution of discourses and subjects and their inseparability. It provoked a re-thinking of the normative and common-sense understandings of concepts used in this study. I deployed poststructural theorisation of concepts for data analysis, informed through postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks. These emphasised the entwinement of social reality and human subjectivity, along with defining identity as multiple, contingent, dynamic, fractured and shifting (Mouffe, 1993; Hall, 1996). Alongside this, I highlighted the significance of language and discourse as carrying implicit theories and the inextricability of theory and practice (Butler, 1990, 1997; Bhabha, 2004; Dunne et al., 2005). With this theoretical focus, providing more adequate categories to read data, or opening up existing ones to account for multiplicities, became significant for analysis.

As an inductive approach, it allowed me to focus on participant voices and their embodied and implicit theorisations while pointing out the dominance of particular discourses, based on constructionism. However, this was not a linear process, and involved constant back and forth in the different phases of analysis, where my multiple readings of the text as well as navigation of my multiple identities produced multiple versions of identity of the research participants. It fitted well with the dialogic and recursive aspects of the research. The use of multiple methods, constant engagement with data, and reflexivity about researcher identity and positionality helped overcome some of the limitations of the research design. I discuss these issues in sections 4.5 and 4.6.
4.5 Researcher positionality and reflexivity

N: Are you a Hindu?
Me: I am born in a Hindu family, yes
N: And you are Wadhwa, it makes you a Punjabi. Are they (family) from Punjab?
Me: They are, from Punjab in Pakistan. They migrated to India during the Partition
N: Then you would know the Dera Sacha Sauda sect. They come here and set up camps for us. My entire family goes there for days. Gond people also come, the sect does a lot of social service and it is their way of bringing people in the mainstream.
(Neera Bai, 29, Female, cook in neighbourhood school, non-Adivasi, Interview)

I have discussed Neera Bai’s comments above in Chapter 6 to elaborate the significance of religion for local community members to articulate their forms of belonging. However, Neera Bai’s identification of myself through religion and community (Punjabi) made me reflect on my positionality as a researcher in the village. It linked to the implicated dimensions of the research through the identity and positionality of the researcher. As I was actively involved in the meaning-making and construction of knowledge with the research participants, my relations with the participants and their understanding of my identity influenced the quality of my data.

In our interview, Neera Bai identified herself as a practising Hindu and belonging to an OBC community. Her questioning of my religious and community belonging signified her interest in finding out as much about me as I was interested to find out about the local community, and in doing so, establishing commonality and/or the difference between us. She mentioned the Dera Sacha Sauda (DSS) religious sect on my identification as a Hindu and a Punjabi. The DSS is a religious sect in India based in the Haryana and Punjab regions and founded by a person from Balochistan, now in Pakistan. It advocates religious learning and reform through social welfare activities. It preaches abstinence from meat and alcohol. Neera Bai recognised the DSS as a social reform organisation and thereby pointed to her understanding of my positioning in the research setting. She identified me, as a Punjabi Hindu, similar to her religious belonging yet different in my non-OBC and non-Adivasi identity. Additionally, she linked my stay in the village with social service and social reform, thereby signalling my elevated positioning in the village and the implied power dynamics.

The discursive production of Adivasi identity and its performance and navigation became the main focus of this study. In line with this focus, researcher identity, positionality, and reflexivity became key in order to bring out how the researcher, or I,
was implicated in the production of this text and construction of a particular narrative. I drew on Dunne et al.’s (2005) argument:

...that research derives from social interaction of the researcher with the researched. The nature of social world and of power relations is therefore unavoidably implicated. Reflexivity involves, then, a consciousness of the centrality of the researcher and of their position in social research (p. 5).

My theoretical and methodological stance allowed me to understand the entwinement of the researcher with the researched and the research context. As an Indian national/citizen, I was researching in insider setting and was familiar with the research context due to prior practitioner work experiences. However, during my previous visits and stays in the area, I was a consultant to the Indian government researching on educational access, whereas the current research positioned me as a doctoral candidate exploring education among other research concerns. So, I was an ‘outsider’, living in New Delhi, studying in the UK, a Punjabi Hindu and a non-Adivasi and non-OBC.

The underlying assumptions of my practitioner work were informed by liberal, modernist, and development perspectives, while those of the doctoral research eventually shifted to poststructuralism. During my work with the government and initially in the doctoral research, I was guided by the liberal and modern notions of rights. I viewed formal education, imparted only through school, as a basic right of children till 18 years of age and a critical element for the production of the modern citizen and modernising country. For this reason, exploring educational access became central to the initial research design. It linked to Neera Bai’s understanding of my positioning in the village as a social reformer as well as the inclusion of research participants who were associated with formal and higher education in one way or another.

Informed by the postcolonial condition of India and its important questioning of the structures and process set out in the colonial era, my perspective on education and knowledge began to shift. This shift produced questions about the conditions that constituted formal education as desirable and the implicit disregard for other knowledge systems (Sriprakash, 2013). The international agencies applied blanket, universal logics that counted every child out of formal school as child labour that echo in the dominant international development discourse on child rights (Balagopalan, 2003, 2008), without contextualising these claims. This provocation of my modernist
development assumption has led to questioning of the explicit welfarist and emancipatory interests which are inconsistent with my interests in this research.

In line with the poststructuralist stance, I tried to move beyond the binary of insider and outsider and viewed my positionality in this research as constantly shifting and changing. I entered the field site by negotiating access through an NGO working on issues of education. For the first two months, I worked as a volunteer for the NGO, doing small data entry jobs for them, and making field visits with the NGO staff. This facilitated my access to the village, familiarity with research participants who started to identify and feel comfortable around me, and a better understanding of the research context. At the same time, my research participants thought of me as NGO staff and/or an education-specific researcher, and it would have influenced their initial interactions with me.

Although I could not understand or speak the Gondi language, my fluency in Hindi and understanding of Marathi allowed me to work without a research assistant. By working alone in this way, I was able to distance myself from the NGO and position myself as an independent researcher. The research participants felt more at ease when I was unaccompanied, and it helped balance the power relations in our exchanges. As the interviews involved discussion on sensitive topics, such as those relating to the Maoist movement, my familiarity with the language and ability to interact without an assistant personalised our discussions. The research participants often taught me words and phrases in Gondi and helped improve my knowledge of Marathi. These less formal exchanges added to the familiarity which also came about through my stay in the village. It softened any power inequalities between me and the research participants.

My gender, age, education and dress significantly influenced the ‘selection’ of research participants, or their approach to me, and my interactions with them. I identified myself as Indian, unmarried, educated, and a woman. I wore a salwar kameez, as did most of my research participants who were young, unmarried, Adivasi women shifting in and out of formal education. My sense was that they regarded me like an older friend or sister and they appeared to be comfortable talking about personal and sensitive issues.

However, at different times, in particular situations, with different groups of participants, I was viewed and responded to in more distant and formal ways. For instance, the assembly point for the buying and chewing of tobacco by young Adivasi woman participants was shared with me only after four months of my stay in the village. This
surprised me, given my sense that they regarded me as a friend but signalled my ‘social reformer’ positioning in the village. My shifting identities, as NGO volunteer, friend, sister, ex-government employee, and/or education researcher depended on and in turn, were shaped by my interactions and relations with my research participants.

As I worked with participants who had the knowledge of a specific social context and related to me differently at different times, my reflexivity about my positionality became crucial. I was aware that I might be (re)organising my own experience of a given reality as a researcher (Sriprakash and Mukhopadhyay, 2015). I made an effort to work with my research participants as collaborators, sharing my interpretations, notes and transcriptions. I asked for clarifications on the phone, even after the field work had ended and during the data analysis and writing-up. The approach to research collaboration worked against my isolation as an individual knowledge producer (Dunne et al., 2005).

I asked questions about the level of researcher participation in the research setting and in the situations being observed. My ontological and epistemological stance provided the basis for me to ‘immerse myself in the situation to be studied, to empathise…and to see things from their (participants’) perspective’ (Della Porta and Keating, 2008, p. 31). However, this raised the ‘issue of representation’ (Dunne et al., 2005, p. 131). If the nature of social research is embodied, and there are multiple realities, then I as the researcher needed to constantly reflect on the voices being recorded and documented, shed light on in writing, and on the realities represented therein.

I drew on Scheper-Hughes’ explanation of a ‘politically and morally engaged companheira’ and how that produces enriched understandings of the community and expansion of theoretical horizons (Scheperr-Hughes, 1995, p. 410). For instance, my own age, marital and student status was of interest to some of my young female participants. They asked me how I managed to live with the pressure of getting married, as a then 28-year old Indian woman, and continue with my studies. The topics of love, relationship, and constructed oppositions between job/career/education and marriage were explored in our FGDs and interviews. Sharing my personal experiences of negotiating with my family to defer marriage and continue in education ensured proximity and brought out our shared histories and lived experiences of growing up in India.
However, as Scheper-Hughes (1995) suggests, my responses in the research setting were a combination of self-reflexivity and demands of research participants:

> Seeing, listening, touching, recording can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of solidarity. Above all, they are the work of recognition. Not to look, not to touch, not to record can be the hostile act, an act of indifference and of turning away. (Scheper-Hughes, 1995, p. 418)

Inspired by this, I positioned myself as a ‘responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who “took sides” and made judgments’ (Scheper-Hughes, 1995, p. 419). This positioning conflicted with the ‘ethic of the detached observer’ (Starn et al., 1994, p. 21), in line with the theoretical framing of this research. However, as Starn et al. (1994) argue, ‘activism can be a valuable angle of observation and interpretation in the flow of fieldwork’ (1994, p. 21). My theoretical and methodological framing of the study and the links between the approach and the substantives helped frame the spaces in which the development of my research continues to have dialogue and limitations.

### 4.6 Ethics and Limitations

Ethical considerations guided and informed the shaping and carrying out of this research. All the ethical considerations during the initial research design were reviewed and approved by the University of Sussex Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (C-REC). These were followed in accordance with the guidelines on research ethics produced by international bodies and relevant to the context and focus of this research (ASA, 2011; BERA, 2011)

As discussed in Chapter 1 and in the previous section, my practitioner work experience and the underlying assumptions of that work guided the choice of topic of research, the initial research questions, and the area of fieldwork. It helped me gain access to the area, and I could negotiate this access further through an NGO that I had worked with during the practitioner work with the government. However, I had to embrace different identities that blurred and crossed over during this navigation.

I started out as a researcher with the Indian government, then worked with the NGO, then a student and a researcher again from a foreign university. While the history of my experience with communities in the region was checkered, on the one hand, this enabled me to understand the context and to empathise with the participants, however on the other, it might have raised questions for the participants about my positionality.
While I tried to be independent in the conduct of research, my initial association with the NGO to gain access to the field influenced how the participants identified me. It was an ethical dilemma, whether to enter the field site as a government school teacher-volunteer or through an NGO. To navigate this choice, a thorough knowledge of the context was important (Morrow, 2013). As my research participants had a history of State absence, exploitation and marginalisation, and were wary of State ‘agents’, I relied on the NGO to ensure my movement in the area. In so doing, I was careful of the prejudices/biases/agendas that were introduced into my research.

Other than the ethical issue of how I presented myself to the local village community, there were also issues of personal safety. Appearing to be a State agent in the village, given the context of extended conflict, would have meant ‘taking sides’ with the State and endangering my safety and that of the community members who associated with me. Relying on the NGO which was not strongly linked to the State or the Maoists by the village community ensured access and safety.

Even though I decided against the use of a research assistant, I was dependent on the local NGO staff for my commute to other villages for certain interviews and during certain days of curfews in the area for personal safety. For this reason, the role of the local NGO was explored in detail for the purpose of this study (BERA, 2011). The nature and purpose of research, aims, expectations and agendas, and other such issues were discussed with the NGO and clarified at the outset through the sharing of and exchange over information sheet. My prior knowledge of the local contacts of the NGO ensured that there were no disagreements. Additionally, it added another layer of ethical protection to the research and ensured the safety of the researcher and the participants.

The foregrounding of the context and ‘voices’ of the research participants dictated the ‘choice’ of methods, ‘selection’ of participants, time, place and setting of the FGDs and interviews, and the mode for recording of data. The participants took power in their hands by deciding the time and place of FGDs and interviews and inviting me to join them. They took me along to meet local government officials and representatives, school teachers, and students and informed my ‘selection’ of other respondents. The methodological and ethical issues were discussed in detail in the ethical review on the use of methods to avoid harm to participants.
Issues of informed consent were meticulously dealt with because this research involved work with a local village community that can be categorised as ‘low literacy’ and ‘research naïve’ in some of the research ethics guidelines (ASA, 2011; BERA, 2011). For this purpose, ‘alternatives’ such as verbal consent were used. While the University guidelines privileged written information sheets and signed consent forms, I was unable to use either with the participants. I anticipated that the participants might have a serious objection to signing consent forms, mostly due to fears of displacement by State and non-State actors, or simply as a power dynamic where consent forms could represent the researcher as a bureaucratic, office-bearing, powerful agent of the State. For this reason, informed verbal consent was secured and regarded as sufficient in this study.

To achieve this, I sent out information sheets to the NGO who contacted the local gatekeepers and informed them of my research. I then discussed my research in detail with the gatekeepers and with the other participants in the village. Time was taken with the research participants to explain clearly the principle of informed consent, with an assurance of confidentiality (Dunne et al., 2005). The participants were also given time to consider the information provided to them before their consent was sought. Even then, I informed them that they could withdraw consent and participation from the study at any time until I returned to the UK and began writing-up. Clarifications about the research agenda were sought by some of the participants, but none of them left the research in the course of the study.

For focus groups with young people (15-18 years), informed consent was sought directly from them as well as from the parents/guardians/gatekeepers. As indicated in Chapter 1, the young people were categorised as ‘children’ due to the ethical considerations of this research. However, in line with the theoretical and analytical focus of this study, the conceptual focus shifted from ‘children’ to ‘young people’. They were treated as active social actors, as individuals in their own right, in following all ethical protocols (Morrow and Richards, 1996). However, only FGDs were held with the young people as in-depth interviews explored sensitive issues of civil unrest and insurgency that might have compromised their safety.

Given the context of research, confidentiality of all participants was ensured through anonymisation of participant details and information. All the data collected was anonymised from the beginning, along with the name of the village(s) being studied, to prevent identification. I recorded the FGDs and interviews through notes and provided
pseudonyms for the participants there and in the transcripts. I stored all the information in my password protected laptop, and it was regularly backed up through password protected hard and pen drives. The researcher diary and field notes were only available to me and placed in a locked drawer at all times. Once typed, these were also transferred to the laptop and backed up. All the data collected was to be available only to me, the researcher, unless a serious risk or threat of harm was shared, in which case the duty to disclose would have been followed by carefully considering the available safeguards.

I kept in mind the duty to breach confidentiality, in case of disclosure/revelation of risk of harm by the participants, and this was to be discussed with the concerned participant first. However, such a situation did not arise. In terms of the safety and security of the participants and the researcher, the local NGO staff along with the research supervisor were made aware of the interview schedules, contact details, and other logistical arrangements. In case of any unplanned or inadvertent situation, the local NGO was to be contacted.

4.6.1 Research Limitation

The limitations and challenges for the research arose in multiple ways. I was researching in India in a setting that was in between the ‘insider’ and the ‘outsider’ settings for me. Being an Indian national/citizen, and as a woman, many interactions and events which might have seemed ‘odd’ to an outsider were normalised and naturalised for me. For instance, the work contributions of the Adivasi women in the village were normalised for me and taken for granted with respect to their mobility in the local community. The effects of the gendering of work and space/place in the village on the production of Adivasi identity were explored more deeply during the data analysis and writing-up process. It was only in hindsight that I could examine and analyse such incidents after systematic re-reading of data. However, certain events might still have escaped notice.

To add to this, as discussed in section 4.5, I was identified by the research participants as a Punjabi Hindu living in the UK and Delhi, non-Adivasi and non-OBC. While such a positioning produced hierarchical power relations between the research participants and myself, it gave me an ‘outsider’ perspective of the local village community and enabled the troubling of the dominant discursive categories in the community context. For instance, the denigration of the agricultural and religious practices of the Adivasis in the policy and community was more ‘visible’ to me as a village outsider. This
troubling formed an important link to the analysis chapters of this study, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The social relations in the research setting during the FGDs brought to the fore a limitation of the focus group method (Madriz, 2000). The hierarchical relationships in the village were manifested during these discussions and it produced silences of individuals from particular groups/communities. These power relations were to do with the normal working of the village community such as between the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis, male and female participants, and intergenerational differences. However, the silences and hierarchies became important observations to understand the othering of the Adivasi.

Living in the midst of the community, my power as researcher became significant in creating, reinforcing and/or (re)producing the existing divisions and identities. Standard hierarchies in India put the Adivasis in a position of deficit in the policy and community context. I sometimes found myself repeating and reinstating the ‘marginal’ positions and the demeaning representations that produced precisely the forms of inequality that were of concern in the first place. For these reasons, I drew on the concept of ‘ethical reflexivity’ (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2006). I found that a critical awareness and articulation of my involvement in research and of my ethical and political beliefs were useful (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2006). I built on Foucault's argument below:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad…I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger (as cited in Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. 61)

The dangers of being partisan in local politics, getting ‘caught-up’ in the conflict, and taking sides were ever-present for me during this research. Recording both perspectives of for and against the State and the Maoists, I faced the danger of being unable to see the tensions and absences for the local community, in the battle between the two power groups. My ignorance of the Gondi language, the time period spent on the field, and the choice of a small scale present other limitations of this study.

Lastly, in understanding how the Adivasis were produced as the Other in the village, I encountered the danger of further categorising the participants and re-producing some of the existing categories in the field. Relying on my limited language skills, I translated and transcribed the fieldwork data from Hindi to English, often struggling to find the ‘correct’ translations of Hindi words in English which did not exist (Bhargava, 1998).
Working in two different languages, while producing research limitations, signalled the dangers of reading the Adivasis through knowledge frameworks that were not theirs and the potential to re-produce the deficit. It linked back to the theoretical framing of this research through poststructural, postcolonial and feminist lens and the empirical focus of this study on community ‘voices’. My familiarity with Hindi and Marathi, with the research context from prior research, and proximity with research participants enabled in-depth understandings of their lives and experiences.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methodological stance adopted in this study and its influence and relevance to the research design, data collection and analysis. I explored how I as the researcher was implicated in the meaning-making and production of knowledge with the research participants. With the focus of the study on an understanding of the discursive production and performance of Adivasi identity, in a context of violence and precarity, my concerns were with the production of knowledge in a double sense. This was as the object and subjects of my research and in doing and a writing doctoral thesis.

By elaborating my research concerns of a naturalistic inquiry into community interactions and voice, I examined how my readings and re-readings of the data/text discursively produced particular versions of identity for my research participants. I reflected on my transition from positivist/modernist to feminist, poststructural and postcolonial theorisation of data and the research approach adopted.

For me, the transition came through the realisation of ways that modernity traps data and analysis in pre-determined ways that emanate from a modernist imposition of structures and categories. This sometimes led me to repeat rather than trouble the ways that the Adivasis were constructed and positioned in the local and global social hierarchies that could only further entrench the privileging of western, colonial, scientistic and objective knowledge frameworks. The questioning and undoing of these frameworks provided a significant link to the next chapters which form the main analytical sections of the thesis.

I then discussed the research design in detail, site selection, research participants, methods for data collection, and data analysis. I maintained the inextricability of the researcher from the researched, due to the dialogic, iterative, inductive, and recursive nature of the research approach adopted by me. Consequently, I discussed my
positionality and reflexivity as a researcher and how it was influenced by and in turn influenced the research context, research design, and data collection and analysis. Last, I explored the ethical concerns, intertwined with the limitations of this study, the articulation of which linked back to the substantiation of the theoretical and methodological positioning of this research and through it the production of new knowledge.
Chapter 5 – (Re)Producing the Adivasi as identity

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the discursive production of identity of the Adivasis in India historically. I analyse this historical construction by tracing its connection to the pronouncements of the colonial rule, the British Raj, and the reproduction of those enactments by the Indian State. This chapter engages with Research Question 1 by examining the law, policy and practice of the colonial and the Indian state with regard to the Scheduling/demarcation of land, people and work. This chapter constitutes the analytical section of the thesis and has a reciprocal relationship with the other analysis chapters. Chapter 6 builds on the dominant discourses examined in this chapter and explores the performance of Adivasi identities by a local village community through religion, education and gender. Chapter 7 engages with the context of violence and explores the navigation of the Gond community of their Indian and Adivasi identities to claim their rights.

This chapter builds on Chapters 2 and 3 to examine the dominant discursive strains deployed for the internal division of India with specific reference to the land and work of the Adivasis. I illustrate how these discursive categories were enacted by the colonial regime and articulated and sustained by the Indian state. Through the textual analysis of policy, the chapter shows how the language of differentiation has effects of producing the Adivasis as the Other in the dominant national discourse in India. Integral to this analysis is the identification of discourses of modernity and development, which carry articulations of protection, equality and inclusion. It points to assumptions of individual responsibility, action and participation in becoming ‘modern’ and ‘developed’ and the use of allied binaries of ‘backward’ and ‘under-developed’.

The analysis in this chapter is organised in three sections. In the first section, I analyse the land revenue policy of the colonial regime that installed hierarchical social relations through land and agriculture. In doing so, it instituted the colonial administration as ‘State’ in India. In the second section, I examine the legal enactments of the colonial and the Indian State to illuminate the significance of the language of law. I analyse the hierarchies produced through the Scheduling or demarcation of land and its entwinement with the identity of the people living in those areas. I draw on the notion of bio-politics/power and governmentality (Foucault, 1978) to explain the organisation and
binding together of populations in particular ways to constitute the power of the state. The third section analyses how the physical demarcation over time produced social isolation and entrapment of the Adivasis and constituted a way of life that is assumed as unique to them. I exemplify this entrapment through policy excerpts as well as community ‘voices’ to signal my point of entry into Chapter 6.

This chapter is about locating the research participants of this study. It analyses how the Adivasis have been positioned historically, in spatial/geographical terms, in the policy as well as community context that will be elaborated in Chapter 6. It also works to signify and highlight the contestation of space of the Adivasis that will be analysed in Chapter 7. I have chosen land and geographical location for the first level of analysis as some of the earliest policy enactments, both colonial and current, are around the territory. It is this entwinement of identity of the people with the land that is explored in this chapter.

5.2 Land and Social Relations

Land and geographical location were significant in the separation of the ‘Orient’ from Europe, as discussed in Chapter 2. Asad (2003) suggests that the idea of Europe as ‘West’ worked through the conception of a geographical ‘outside’ that presupposed the idea of a space, ‘coherent and subvertible for locating the West’ (p. 14). In the Indian context, the colonial separation of the Indian subcontinent from Europe produced a binary between the geographical East and the West, as explored in Chapters 2 and 3. This binary was not only produced in and through geographical terms but was also a hierarchical distinction. It produced unequal power relations between the East and the West.

Concurrently, the ownership of land in ‘Orient’ India and bringing more territory under its control was profitable for the East India Company both economically and for its formation as an administrating authority (Chandra, 2009). As Said (2003) suggests, it was for the institution of power and control that the Orient was Orientalised and submitted into being the Orient. Prior to the colonial rule, the various rulers in India had always collected revenue through land and agricultural produce (Chandra, 2009). The collection was done through intermediaries such as zamindars and revenue farmers who collected a portion of agricultural produce for the rulers but did not necessarily own any land. The revenue was kept flexible and depended on the produce of the peasants (Chandra, 2009).
The colonial ‘administration’, however, altered this arrangement. From the very first conflict with the rulers in Bengal in 1757, the East India Company acquired the right of free trade in Bengal, Bihar and Odisha as well as the zamindari, right to collect land revenue, of 24 districts in Calcutta (Chandra, 2009):

The Permanent Settlement was introduced in Bengal and Bihar in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis. It had two special features. First, the zamindars and revenue collectors were converted into so many landlords…Their right of ownership (of land) was made hereditary and transferable…The use of pasture and forests lands, irrigation canals, fisheries, and homestead plots and protection against enhancement of rent were some of the rights which were sacrificed. (Chandra, 2009, p. 103)

Implied in the above extract on the Permanent Settlement system is an emphasis on land and agriculture. The revenue from agricultural produce collected by the East India Company ‘administrators’ provided money for trade and profits of the Company. In addition, these revenues enabled the British expansion in India, through the maintenance of armies, and provided for the cost of administration (Chandra, 2009; O’Hanlon, 2012). For this purpose, it was necessary to fix agriculture as a permanent activity, the land revenue at a permanent amount as well as the responsibility for its collection.

The land revenue systems such as Permanent Settlement worked through the tying of people intimately to land. The ‘sedentarisation of agriculture’, argues O’Hanlon (2012, p. 107), aimed to bring into being ‘peaceable communities of settled and productive cultivators who would be easy to police and to tax’ (p. 109). It ensured the installation of the colonial regime in India through its policing and taxation functions. It aided the transformation of the East India Company from a group of traders to administrators and eventually into the colonial state.

The land revenue systems of the colonial regime constituted the instruments of governmentality to control and discipline the populations in India. Sundar (1997) elaborates that the sedentarisation of agriculture was assumed to be built on the ‘Victorian’ notion of the honest toiler, permanent cultivator and wage labourer. It worked through the privileging of agriculture as a settled activity and cultivator as a settled being. It re-shaped subjectivities of the people by placing emphasis on a settled life, to be achieved through agriculture, and by participation in the ‘formal’ economy of the State through its systems of taxation. However, in actuality, permanent settlement meant more and easier collection of revenue for the colonial rulers (Sundar, 1997; Chandra, 2009; O’Hanlon, 2012).
The emphasis on agriculture as permanent settlement not only meant tying people to the land, as evident in the above extract. It also meant bringing more land, and/or the populations, under agriculture, formal economy and State control (Chandra, 2009; O’Hanlon, 2012). The forests and pasture land used for other subsistence activities were to be brought under agriculture or prevented from any other use. It marked a shift in the local economies of the people who practised different occupations at different times. For those living in the forests, pastoralists and/or practising shared-cropping, non-use of land and/or bringing it under agriculture meant a reduction of their mobility and bargaining power as labourers, loss of non-agrarian economic opportunities and increased pressure on their land (O’Hanlon, 2012; Banerjee, 2016).

The organisation and distribution of the populations in India by the colonial State links to the anatamo- and bio-politics that Foucault (1978) refers to as bio-power. It enabled the constitution of subjects, ‘acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchisation’ and distributed ‘the living in the domain of value and utility’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 144). The hierarchical social relations between the coloniser and colonised produced the boundaries of land, such as for agriculture, and the bounding of people in particular ways.

The bounding of people was carried out through the ‘creation’ or insertion of permanent intermediaries of landlords. As discussed previously in this section, the zamindars and revenue farmers were primarily collectors of revenue, which was flexible, from the cultivators and did not necessarily own land. The colonial regime, however ‘converted’ the collectors into land-owners and installed them as ‘agents’ of the State by making their right of ownership ‘hereditary and transferable’ (Chandra, 2009, p. 103). In this sense, the rights of only certain groups, of zamindars, were recognised and not of the peasants, cultivators and those who held land as commonly, jointly and communally ‘owned’ (Sundar, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2012).

Implicit in this selective recognition of rights was an emphasis on individual ownership of land, as opposed to viewing land as common or communal property and jointly owned. The increased emphasis on individualisation and personal ownership of land enabled the colonial State to hold individuals responsible for revenue collection. It produced boundaries around land and social relations that continue to be contested and fought over in independent India, as discussed in Chapter 2 and further analysed in Chapter 7.
To bring the hilly, pasture and forested land, which was inaccessible, under settled agriculture, policies were designed to encourage migration of ‘outsiders’ to settle as landlords through free grants of land and remissions in land revenue (Sundar, 1997). It produced a distinction of ‘settlers’, who acted as landlords, and those already settled in or ‘indigenous’ to these inaccessible areas. In this sense, land was not only used to separate the coloniser from the colonised, it was also used to internally divide India and reify the social relations produced through those divisions. As explored in Chapter 2, the Maoist movement in India is a post-independence struggle against landlordism and for recognition of land rights. However, its causes can be traced to the systems of land revenue, structures of governance and social relations installed by the colonial regime in India.

The introduction of land revenue policies such as the Permanent Settlement system produced a strict separation between the landed, commercial and land-less groups (O’Hanlon, 2012). These boundaries around land produced social relations in terms of caste hierarchies in the country. As discussed in Chapter 2, Bayly (1999) suggests that the varna system in India, while ancient in form and origin, had fluid dimensions and allowed mobility of people from one Varna to another. As people practised a number of different occupations, they could belong to multiple varnas simultaneously.

However, the varna system was made rigid by the strategies of the colonial regime such as land revenue policies, population surveys and the Census (Sudar, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2012; Banerjee, 2016). People were identified and compelled to self-identify in terms of caste, the differences of which were codified through policy and law (Bayly, 1999; Banerjee, 2016). It consolidated the power of the scribal, ritual and commercial ‘elites’ such as the landlords who were given and claimed superior social status (O’Hanlon, 2012). The ‘elites’ enjoyed petty favours and privileges, such as recognition of their land ownership rights, from the colonial state and in turn sustained the internal division of the country (Chandra, 2009).

The move from joint and common to individual ownership of land, through the installation of landlords, was profitable for the colonial administration in economic terms as it meant more and permanent land revenue for its expansion. In addition, the shift to individual ownership of land was beneficial in social, political and ideological terms. It constituted a significant dimension of the colonial regime’s control around space and social relations and consolidated its power to ‘define and rule’ (Mamdani, 2012).
The transformation of the East India Company, from a group of traders to administrators and eventually into the State, was brought into effect through control over land and institution of hierarchical social relations of power. The colonial State was constituted as a regulating construct, as discussed in Chapter 3. It was crucial in the production of the Adivasis and of the Adivasi identity as indigenous and tied to land and forests, as analysed in the next section. It overlooked the fluid histories of movement, migration and displacement and instead reified identities of ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous’, or what (Mamdani, 2001) refers to as the political and legally inscribed identities of ‘settler’ and ‘native’ in the African context.

The post-independence Indian State emerged through the modern and liberal values of sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. These values were enshrined in the Indian Constitution and carried linkages to the colonial rule. The idea of the State, as a regulating construct, was kept alive through the Indian Constitution in the post-independence India:

...no law providing for – the acquisition by the State of any estate...or the taking over of the management of any property by the State for a limited period either in the public interest or in order to secure the proper management of the property...shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or takes away or abridges any of the rights conferred by article 14 or 19:

...the expression “estate” shall have the same meaning as that expression or its local equivalent has in the existing law relating to land tenures in force in that area and shall also include - ...any land held under ryotwari settlement; any land held or let for purposes of agriculture...including waste land, forest land, land for pastures...and other structures occupied by cultivators of land, agricultural labourers and village artisans (Article 31A, Constitution of India, 2013, pp. 18-19)

Article 31A, quoted in the extract above, was inserted in the Indian Constitution by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, with retrospective effect. It gave effect to the land reforms initiated by the independent Indian State to alter the agrarian relations instituted by the colonial State, as indicated in Chapter 2. The permanent settlement and zamindari systems were abolished, along with the right to private property; ceiling on land holdings imposed; various tenancy acts passed to protect the rights of tenants to land; and forced labour was abolished (Sinha, 1989; Sundar, 1997; Mehra, 2000; Shah, 2010). It linked to the subsequent insertion of the term ‘socialist’ to the Indian Constitution, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

However, by eliminating the intermediaries or landlords and zamindars, the land reforms of the Indian State brought tenants and cultivators in direct contact with the
State. In doing so, the independent Indian State (re)instated itself as the regulating authority to control economic and social relations. Implied in the above extracts is the power of the State to acquire or take over any property for its 'proper management'. This power was not to be deemed inconsistent with Article 14, Right to Equality, or Article 19, Right to Freedom. While guaranteeing certain fundamental rights to equality and freedom, the Indian State constituted its own powers by establishing the limits of those rights. Concomitantly, it marked the cultivators, agricultural labourers and village artisans as ‘occupiers’ of land that was rendered as State’s property. All such ‘occupied’ land, including the common land of forests, pastures, mines, rivers, fisheries etc. was placed under the control of the State for its management and maintenance. By eliminating the intermediaries, the State was instituted as the biggest landlord which controlled the organisation and distribution of land.

In addition, Ninth Schedule was incorporated in the Constitution through the First Amendment Act, 1951. It included all the land reforms, tenancy, and tenure abolition acts that were being enacted by the Indian State to eliminate the power and control of the zamindars. The Schedule prevented judicial scrutiny and review of the Acts and Regulations by the courts through Article 31B:

…none of the Acts and Regulations specified in the Ninth Schedule…shall be deemed to be void, or ever to have become void…notwithstanding any judgment, decree or order of any court or tribunal to the contrary, each of the said Acts and Regulations shall, subject to the power of any competent Legislature to repeal or amend it, continue in force. (Article 31B, Constitution of India, 2013, p. 19)

While the land reforms strengthened the powers of the State, the abolition of private property, zamindari system and the imposition of land ceiling did not drastically affect the powers of the landlords (Sinha 1989; Mehra, 2000; Shah, 2010, 2013). Convoluted bureaucratic systems for applying for land rights were put in place (Sinha, 1989; 2011). These benefitted the existing land owners since the colonial land records of ownership favoured them, and they possessed or managed to produce the required paperwork (Sinha, 1989; Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010). In any case, these systems recognised individual applications for land ownership and the joint/common/communal ownership of land continued to be negated (Ramnath, 2008, 2015). The application for acquiring land, through the bureaucratic processes, compelled participation in State discourses that re-instated the power and control of the State over land and people (Chemmencheri, 2015).
More recently, the Forest Rights Act and Land Acquisition Act enacted by the successive Indian governments have built on and pushed for the rights-based discourse in the country. Nonetheless, the right to common ownership of land continues to be diluted, along with other significant customary rights of the peasant; while privileging State authority as landlord/owner of the common land and individual application for land and forest rights (Ramnath, 2008, 2015).

I now turn the analysis to examine the language of law and the production of legally inscribed identities (Mamdani, 2001; Asad et al., 2009). I explore the production of certain areas/land as Scheduled and its entwinement with the legally inscribed identity of the Scheduled Tribe. I examine the legislative and policy pronouncements of the colonial and the Indian state to illustrate the physical separation and demarcation of land and people. I analyse these enactments through the concepts of discursive power, bio-power, and governmentality (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1990, 1993; Mamdani, 2001, 2012). I draw on the conceptualisation of space as socially constructed and constituted through social relations of power (Massey, 1994).

5.3 Land, Identities and Governmentality

5.3.1 Land as Scheduled

The quest for land and control over more territory in India led to the introduction of land revenue systems such as Permanent Settlement. These systems were accompanied by other strategies such as the creation of new economic and social groupings of landlords who were encouraged to ‘settle’ in hilly and forested areas (Führer-Haimendorf, 1982; Sundar, 1997; Chandra, 2009). It enabled the bringing of land and people under agriculture and State control. The prevention of the use of land for any other purposes, other than cultivation, provided a labour force for agriculture and the forested land for other economic activities of the State.

The Scheduled Districts Act XVI, 1874 was one of the first legal enactments that addressed the ‘issue’ of remote, inaccessible and forested areas in India:

This Act extends in the first instance to the whole of British India other than the territories mentioned in the first schedule (here to) annexed...In this Act the term "Scheduled Districts" means the territories mentioned in the first schedule hereto annexed...it shall also include any other territory to which the Secretary of State for India, by resolution in Council, may declare the provisions of the thirty-third of Victoria, Chapter III, Section 1, to be applicable. (The Scheduled Districts Act 1874, Citation 135088, n.d., emphasis added)
The territories mentioned in the First Schedule of the Act comprised the hilly and forested regions in the country (see Appendix 1). As implied in the above extract, these regions were demarcated from the rest of the country as Scheduled, due to their inclusion in a particular Schedule of the Act. The demarcation, however, took place through the legal language of the State. While the hilly, forest and pasture land had already been delineated in the land revenue policies, their Scheduling was brought into effect through the legal discourse. It signified the power of language and discourse to bring into being, to name, constitute and produce the effect that it states (Butler, 1997).

The utilisation of the legal discourse for bringing about the internal division of India pointed to not only the power of language to produce identities, but also to the power of language of law. Foucault’s (1978) explanation of bio-power, as incorporation of law, becomes significant here. The production of bodies as subjects and inseparable from the law that produces and signifies them is an instance of bio-power and subjectivation (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993). Mamdani (2001, 2012) elaborates that the techniques of law work as instruments of governmentality, working to re-make and re-shape subjectivities. These techniques and instruments not only acknowledge difference but are a way of shaping and ‘sometimes even creating difference’ (Mamdani, 2012, p. 43). In the Indian context, especially after the struggle for independence in 1857, the focus of the colonial power was to define colonial subjectivity through legal discourses, as implicit in the above excerpt.

By enacting legal pronouncements for the internal division of India, the colonial State not only created and named that difference among various areas, it defined itself as the ‘authentic’ authority for the creator of that difference. As implied in the above extract, the Scheduled Districts Act could include any other territory in India if the Secretary of State declared so. The law installed the colonial administration as the State in India:

The Local Government, with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council…extend to any of the Scheduled Districts, or to any part of any such district, any enactment which is in force in any part of British India at the date of such extension. (Section 5 - Power to extend enactments to Scheduled Districts, The Scheduled Districts Act 1874, Citation 135088, n.d.)

Evident in the above extract is the authority of the Governor-General, an officer installed by the colonial regime in India. The constitution of the colonial State in India took place through the language of law. Mahmood (2009b) suggests that the language of law privileges the State as the creator as well as adjudicator of difference. This language re-asserts the hegemony of the State and law through the participation of
subjects in its discourses. It links to Foucault’s (1978) notion of discursive power where discourse produces subjects and is co-constituted through their participation in it. Mamdani (2001) writes:

There is a language particular to the modern state, including its colonial version. That is the language of law. Legal distinctions are different from all others in that they are enforced by the state, and then are in turn reproduced by institutions that structure citizen participation within the state (pp. 653–654).

In the above sense, the use of legal language constituted the colonial power as the ‘authentic’ authority to name, categorise as well as adjudicate difference through law. It worked to (re)shape the subjectivities of the people. In addition, the use of the language of law constituted the colonial administration as a ‘modern’ state by creating legally inscribed differences. The use of legal language by the colonial State reiterated the co-constitution of the modernisation discourse through the colonial encounter.

The regions categorised as Scheduled Districts in legal terms comprised hilly and forested areas in India. These areas were to be brought under agriculture, as analysed in the previous section, or prevented from use for other purposes. Scheduled implied deficit, or lack of agriculture and settled life. It reflected the hierarchical difference, compared to other areas in the country that were under cultivation. O’Hanlon (2012) elaborates that ‘the major processes of colonial ‘modernity’ for India lay in sedentarisation, the growth of a new agrarian social order in which caste hierarchies seemed more rigid and more widely applied’ (p. 133). It linked back to the concepts of bio-power and governmentality (Foucault, 1977, 1978), and signified the controlling, organising, and disciplining of populations for their value and utility.

The Indian Constitution (re)produced the following Articles and Schedules to deal with the ‘Scheduled Districts’ of the colonial rule:

The provisions of the Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas…in any State (Article 244, Constitution of India, 2013, p. 111)

The Governor of each State having Scheduled Areas…make a report to the President regarding the administration of the Scheduled Areas in that State and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions to the State as to the administration of the said areas. (Fifth Schedule, Article 244 (1), Constitution of India, 2013, p. 206)

The post-independence Indian State reaffirmed the Scheduling of certain areas legally through the Indian Constitution. Most of the regions categorised as Scheduled were
those demarcated by the colonial state (Constitution of India, 2013). It vested power in the Governor to make reports for the administration of Scheduled Areas and extended the executive power of the Union to these areas, like the Scheduled Districts Act of the colonial regime. In addition, the Governor could, by public notification, direct that any particular Act of Parliament would not apply to a Scheduled Area, and make regulations for ‘peace and good government’ of any area declared as Scheduled (Part B, Fifth Schedule, Constitution of India, 2013). In doing so, the language and provisions of law of the colonial State were sustained and articulated by the Indian State.

Like the colonial enactments, the following criteria were provided in the Indian Constitution for the Scheduling:

> In this Constitution, the expression ‘Scheduled Areas’ means such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas. (Part C, Fifth Schedule Constitution of India, 2013, p. 208)

The silence on the criteria and meaning of Scheduled gave unfettered powers to the State executive/President to demarcate any area and declare it as Scheduled. It reinstated the State as the custodian of land and territory by legitimising the authority of the executive (Roy, 2012). It reverberated the mechanism installed by the colonial State to identify and separate areas arbitrarily through the Secretary of State and Governor-General in Council. The separation instituted by the colonial State was sustained and reiterated through the language of law of the Indian State.

5.3.2 Scheduled as Backward

The Montague-Chelmsford Report, 1918, addressed the question of the administration of backward areas. It considered that political reforms contemplated for India could not be applied in the same way to the primitive people. The report suggested demarcation of areas of such peoples and these areas’ exclusion from the normal laws of the provinces. Consequently, the Government of India Act, 1919, was enacted to implement the report’s recommendations (Bhengra et al., 1999, p. 7, emphasis added).

The terms highlighted in the above extract were drawn from the Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1918 and the Government of India Act, 1919 (Bhengra et al., 1999; Pathak, 2005; Banerjee, 2016). Implied through these terms are the physical and hierarchical demarcation of certain areas and their ‘exclusion from the normal laws’. The deployment of terms such as backward and primitive acted as evaluative judgments for the remote, hilly, and forested areas (Bhengra et al., 1999). They represented a lack or absence. Most of these areas had been marked as ‘Scheduled’ through a previous
enactment. Scheduled came to be associated with ‘backward areas’ and ‘primitive people’ and reified through the legal discourses of the colonial State.

The deployment of categories such as Scheduled, backward, primitive, demarcated and excluded from the normal signified the discourse of modernity and nation-state, discussed in Chapter 3. This discourse developed through the insertion of particular labels as binaries that did not just imply difference but were imbued with value and hierarchy (Bhambra, 2007). In the context of remote, hilly and forested areas in India, the categories used marked them as opposed to modern, developed and civilised, that is, as backward, primitive and not normal.

The demarcation of land was intertwined with the identity of the people inhabiting the demarcated areas. If the land was Scheduled, backward and excluded from the normal administration, the people were marked as primitive, as implied in the above extract. The physical separation of land became a strategy to name and categorise people in that land. It overlooked their histories of movement, migration and displacement. It instated rigid and hierarchical social relations of power and control. It pointed to what Massey (1994) calls ‘double articulation’:

> if places are conceptualised in this way, and if their definition is amplified to take account of the construction of the subjects within them, which are part and parcel of what it is to talk about place, then the identity of place is a double articulation (p. 8).

The entwinement of the identity of land and people acted as an instrument of governmentality and a technique of indirect rule (Mamdani, 2001, 2012), as I will also analyse in the next sub-section. The demarcation of some areas, and people, in India as Scheduled served a crucial economic purpose for the colonial State. It expanded control of the colonial administration to inaccessible parts of the country. The rights to use forest and pasture land for animal rearing/grazing and other subsistence activities were restricted (Sundar, 1997). Forests were ‘reserved’ and placed under the control of the State, and the Indian Forest Department was set up to institutionalise this control (Bhengra et al., 1999).

Sundar (1997) argues that this separation, demarcation and reservation produced tensions between the right of people to livelihood and the notion of State property. It produced the people as subjects of the colonial State, dependent on the cooperation of the Forest Department to obtain title deeds for land (Chemmencheri, 2015; Ramnath, 2015). It consolidated the powers of the colonial State and marked people as
encroachers in the forests (Sundar, 1997; Bhengra et al., 1999). It also linked to the discussion in Section 5.2 wherein the land reforms of the Indian State marked the cultivators, agricultural labourers and village artisans as occupying land that was to be placed under State control.

The Indian Constitution did not articulate a criterion for the Scheduled Areas, except for a declaration by the President to that effect. However, post-independence commissions constituted on the question of Scheduled Areas, provided the following criteria:

... preponderance of \textit{tribal} population; compactness and reasonable size of the area; \textit{under-developed} nature of the area; and marked disparity in \textit{economic} standard of the people. These criteria are not spelt out in the Constitution of India but have become well established (MoTA, 2017, emphasis added).

The criteria of the Indian State resonated that of the colonial State, as established by the Montague-Chelmsford Report and followed by the Government of India Acts. While the colonial enactments strategically conflated Scheduled with backward and excluded areas, the post-independence policy defined these as small, under-developed and disparate in economic terms. Implied in the above criteria was the discourse of development and modernisation, as discussed in Chapter 3. These discourses were constituted through the utilisation of labels such as under-developed, as opposed to developed. The labels signified lack of ‘modernity’ in context of the Scheduled Areas.

The emphasis on size symbolised the association of Scheduled Areas with compact areas of villages. This, in turn, produced the village as backward and under-developed and more likely to be marked as Scheduled than a town or city. It linked to the hierarchical division of India into urban and rural areas, as outlined in Chapter 2, and within it the confinement of marginalised groups such as the Adivasis to the rural areas, as I will explore in the next sub-section. In a letter to Gandhi, Nehru, independent India’s first Prime Minister and an advocate of industrialisation and modernisation (Padel & Das, 2010), wrote:

A village…is backward intellectually and culturally…I do not think it is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country…\textsuperscript{12} (Padel & Das, 2010, p. 25)

The above excerpt reflected the conceptualisation of the village in India during the time of independence and its positioning as backward. It signalled the rearticulation of the

colonial divisions in India and the emphasis on modernisation through ‘technical advancement’. Further, by emphasising the ‘marked disparity in economic standard of the people’ in the criteria for Scheduled Areas, the Indian State replaced the colonial regime. It placed importance on urbanisation, industrialisation and monetisation of economies. In this sense, the local village economies, reliant on forests and pasture lands were marked as under-developed and categorised as distinct from, unequal and subordinate to the other areas.

The above criteria of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2017) entwined the identity of the land with the people, like the colonial enactments. While people living in the Scheduled Areas were labelled as ‘primitive’ prior to independence from the colonial rule, the Indian state re-classified them as ‘tribal’. I analyse this entwinement in the next sub-section.

5.3.3 Backward as Tribal

The Montague-Chelmsford Report, discussed in Section 5.3.2, provided constitutional ‘reforms’ for decentralisation of governance in India. It was another tactic to hierarchically divide the country internally into provinces and districts, while retaining actual powers with the State executive, the Governor-General and Secretary of State (Chandra, 2009). The Report addressed the question of the division of administrative subjects/issues into ‘reserved’ and ‘transferred’ for the whole country (Chandra, 2009). It however considered that the constitutional ‘reforms’ intended for India could not be applied to certain areas:

…political reforms contemplated for India could not be applied in the same way to the primitive people (Bhengra et al., 1999, p. 7, emphasis added).

The Report defined these areas as those with a concentration of populations with ‘tribal’ characteristics (Bhengra et al., 1999; Pathak, 2005; Bajpai, 2011). While the Scheduled Districts Act deployed Scheduled as a category to name the areas, the subsequent policies and enactments conflated Scheduled with backward as well as marked people as ‘primitive’ and ‘tribal’. It linked to Massey’s (1994) notion of ‘double articulation’, the construction of subjects as inextricable from the conceptualisation of places.

The Government of India Acts which formed the basis of the Indian Constitution were consequently enacted to implement the constitutional ‘reforms’ in the country (Chandra, 2009). The terminologies of distinction were codified in law and produced a boundary
around the land and people. It was a crucial strategy to administer populations by internally dividing the country. It was a significant instance of bio-power/politics and governmentality (Foucault, 1977, 1978).

The Simon Commission Report suggested the naming of ‘backward areas’, mentioned in the earlier Acts, as ‘Excluded Areas’ (Bhengra et al., 1999; Pathak, 2005; Bajpai, 2011). The Government of India Act reorganised the ‘backward areas’ into ‘excluded’ and ‘partially excluded’ areas through their further demarcation/Scheduling. Other territories in the country could be added to these Schedules at the discretion of the State executive:

The Governor-General-in Council was empowered to declare any tract as **backward**, excluded from the provincial legislation and administered directly by the executive on the grounds of ‘**primitive people**’ and ‘**absence of material on which to found political institution**’ (Pathak, 2005, p. 183, emphasis added).

The terms highlighted in the above extract were used in the constitutional reforms reports and Government of India Acts (Bhengra et al., 1999; Pathak, 2005; Bajpai, 2011). The colonial enactments gave the executive and the Governor-General-in-Council the power to name any area as Scheduled, or designate it as ‘backward’, and exclude it from the ‘normal’ provincial legislation, jurisdiction and administration (Pathak, 2005; Bhaumik, 2009; Bajpai, 2011). It reiterated the colonial government as the ‘authentic authority’ to define and re-define the territories within India (Mamdani, 2012). It also linked to the power of the executive (Governor and President) in independent India, sustained and articulated through the Indian Constitution.

In addition to this, the above criteria reciprocally linked the identity of the land, as backward, with the people, as primitive and tribal (Bhengra et al., 1999; Bajpai, 2011). Scheduled and Backward Areas were associated with the Tribal population as mutually constitutive. The criteria placed both land and people in a hierarchical and regulatory governance regime, to be ‘administered directly by the executive’ (Pathak, 2005, p. 183). It identified them in opposition to the places and peoples that were ‘modern’, ‘developed’ and ‘advanced’. It produced a negative view of the people and positioned them in a deficit way in and through the dominant discourse of modernisation and development.

The category of ‘Backward Tribe’ was a colonial device first used through the Census of 1931 to identify people living in the Scheduled and Backward areas (Sundar, 1997).
It worked as an instrument of governmentality to shape colonial subjectivities through the (self-) identification of people as Backward and Tribal. As suggested in Chapter 2, ‘tribe’ was deployed only in the Indian and African contexts of the colonial rule and carried evolutionary classifications (Sundar, 1997; Mamdani, 2012). The category used geography, rather than history, to define the ‘tribe’ while ignoring the fluid histories of migrations (Mamdani, 2012).

Mamdani (2012) argues that the ‘single characteristic of origin disregarded all subsequent developments including residence’ to define ‘tribe’ through techniques of law, census and history (p. 46). The groups identified as ‘tribes’, by virtue of their geographical location, were assumed to be backward and primitive and undergoing a process of change (Sundar, 1997; Béteille, 1998). This change was implied to be linear, unidirectional, progressive and on the path to modernity (Bhambra, 2007), as elaborated in Chapter 3.

An abnormality was produced around the areas and the people living there, with a categorical separation from the rest of India that was under ‘normal’ provincial administration. This abnormality signified a lack. As implied in the above extract, it signified ‘absence of material on which to found political institution’. It legitimised the colonial intervention to form and institutionalise political institutions and identities in India, while de-legitimising the existing ones which were fluid (Mamdani, 1996, 2001).

The categories of Scheduled, Backward, Excluded and Tribe were significant in the production of difference in the colonial discourse in India. These categories were utilised to refer to the forested and hilly areas and mark people as ‘primitive’ and ‘tribal’. These terms did not simply demarcate the areas and separate the people geographically to administer the country. They divided the country internally and produced rigid social difference and hierarchy among the areas and various groups of people who were grouped together, strategically, through the imposition of geographical location. It produced a boundary around land while entrapping people within it and entwining their identity with it through law. Mamdani (2001) elaborates:

If the law recognises you as member of an ethnicity, and state institutions treat you as member of that particular ethnicity, then you become an ethnic being legally…You understand your relationship to the state, and your relationship to other legally defined groups through the mediation of the law and of the state, as a consequence of your legally inscribed identity (p. 663).
The colonial discourse in India produced the ‘tribe’ as a legally inscribed ethnic identity, re-signified and re-appropriated by the people as Adivasi (Rycroft & Dasgupta, 2011). The ‘tribe’ was produced as the constitutive other, constituting the limits of intelligibility of the ‘modern’ (Banerjee, 2016). The ‘tribe’ was the abject other, othered in the policy and legal discourse through categories of Scheduled, Backward, Primitive, and Excluded. It was constituted through the axis of difference, distinction and hierarchy, as discussed in Chapter 3, in the processes of identity-formation. The language of differentiation and distinction produced the Adivasis discursively as the internal other in discourses of the colonial regime in India. It not only divided India internally into different hierarchical social groups and reified that difference, it consolidated the powers of the State to define and rule.

The Indian Constitution re-adjusted the colonial categorisation of ‘Backward Tribe’:

Nothing…shall prevent the State from making any **special** provision for the **advancement** of any socially and educationally **backward** classes of citizens or for the…Scheduled Tribes (Article 15(4), Constitution of India, 2013, p. 11, emphasis added)

The State shall **promote** with **special care** the educational and economic interests of the **weaker** sections of the people, and, in particular, of the…Scheduled Tribes, and shall **protect** them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. (Article 46, Constitution of India, 2013, p. 23, emphasis added)

The category of ‘Backward Tribe’, deployed by the colonial regime through its Census, was retained and reinstated by the Indian State as Scheduled Tribe (ST). Implicit in the above extracts is the conflation of Tribe with ‘backward classes of citizens’ and ‘weaker sections of the people’. Tribe in independent India continued to signify backwardness and weakness, as constituted against the modernising nation-state of India. The Scheduled Tribes were positioned as weak, educationally and economically, and in need of advancement and protection. Such classification reflected the discourse of modernity and development that worked through the use of categories and allied labels as binaries.

The conceptualisation of ‘Tribe’ by the independent Indian State, as implied in the above extracts, nodded to the boundaries and markings produced by the colonial State. It reciprocally linked Tribe with Scheduled and Backward. Due to the absence of a specific criterion during the drafting of the Constitution, geographical location continued to remain the sole identifier of the Scheduled Tribes. Those living in the
areas classified as Scheduled were identified as Scheduled Tribes, but not entirely. Various Committees formed after independence established the following criteria for ‘identification’ of Scheduled Tribes:

Indications of **primitive** traits, **distinctive** culture, geographical **isolation**, **shyness** of contact with the community at large, and **backwardness**.

This criterion is not spelt out in the Constitution but has become well established. It subsumes the definitions contained in 1931 Census, the reports of first Backward Classes Commission 1955, the Advisory Committee (Kalelkar), Revision of SC/ST lists (Lokur Committee), 1965 and the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 (Chanda Committee), 1969. (MoTA, 2017, emphasis added)

The discursive separation of the Scheduled Tribes, produced by the colonial regime, was taken up in similar ways by the Indian State. The terms highlighted in the above extracts were those used by the colonial regime to name and describe ‘tribe’ in India. The Indian State adhered to the similar geographical demarcation of the Scheduled Areas and social separation of the Scheduled Tribes from the rest of the country. Like the colonial separation of the Orient from the Occident which placed the Occident/coloniser in a superior position, the discursive separation of the Scheduled Areas and Tribes placed them in hierarchical opposition to the others in the country.

While retaining the categorisation of Tribe and inscribing it legally through the Constitution, the Indian state accepted it as naturally occurring and original, rather than discursively produced. The above criteria of ‘primitive traits, distinctive culture, isolation, shyness of contact’ were taken as natural characteristics of people identified as ST. The State viewed the outcomes of people’s identity-construction as origins and as predispositions to be or act in particular ways (Butler, 1990). In doing so, the Indian state separated the ‘Tribe’ from its discursive construction and normalised and naturalised the category within its legal discourses.

Other than the discursive production of the Scheduled Tribe as a legally inscribed identity, the above extracts signified a continuation of the regime of protection (Mamdani, 2012). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the colonial State in India constituted itself through the ‘benign language of protection’ (Mamdani, 2012, p. 8). Mamdani (2012) suggests that it was a strategic change from its policy of non-interference to one of protection and civilisation. Similarly, Mahmood (2009a) explains that the colonial empire built itself through the adoption of ‘missionary zeal to remake
cultures and civilisations’ (p. 207). It undertook cultural and educational reforms to educate and civilise the local populations.

The Indian State re-instituted this regime through the language of protection, highlighted in the above extracts. The Indian Constitution called on the State to make special provisions for advancement, protection and promotion of educational and economic interests of the STs, with special care. It placed the STs in a deficit position in the legal discourse of the country, while constituting them as citizens and subjects dependent on the protection of the State. The language of protection, inclusion and equality was intrinsic to the discourses of modernisation and development (Escobar, 2012), as emphasised in Chapter 3.

The discursive production of the Adivasi identity as Scheduled, Backward, Primitive and Tribal as well as the positioning of this identity as natural and original draw attention to Munda’s cautionary comments in the Constituent Assembly of India:

I rise to speak on behalf of...the original people of India who have variously been known as backward tribes, primitive tribes, criminal tribes and everything else...Living as we do in the jungles, we know what it means to support this Resolution...As a jungli, as an Adibasi, I am not expected to understand the legal intricacies of the Resolution...We do not ask for any special protection. We want to be treated like every other Indian. (Parliament of India, 1946)

I regret there has been too much talk in this House in terms of parties and minorities...I do not consider my people a minority. We have already heard on the floor of the House this morning that the Depressed Classes also consider themselves as Adibasis, the original inhabitants of this country. (Parliament of India, 1946)

Jaipal Munda, who represented the Bihar region in the Constituent Assembly and identified himself as Adivasi, pointed to the production of the ‘original people of India’ as ‘Tribe’ and as ‘jungli’, living in the jungles. In his speech to the Assembly, as implied in the above extract, he re-signified the label of ‘Tribe’ and ‘jungli’ as ‘Adibasi’, to mean the ‘first inhabitant’ of a place. This, he clarified, was in comparison to the others who had come in later to settle in India, the Aryans and the Indo-Aryans, in regions where the Adivasis had already been living (Parliament of India, 1946). It pointed to the construction of the Adivasis as the Other or the constitutive limit, required for the intelligibility of superiority of others (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993; Rabinow & Rose, 2003).
In the above extract, Munda referred to the expectation produced through the labelling of the Adivasis as jungli, meaning forest-dweller and implying lack of civilisation (Skaria, 1998), and not able to understand because of it. Implicit in the extract was a questioning of the language of separation and demarcation. Munda problematised the criterion of geographical location, of jungles, to demarcate people and mark them as jungli. This language and criteria, as Munda implied, represented the reading of people’s discursively-produced identity as a natural predisposition to be/act that way (Butler, 1990).

Further, he added that there were many in the country who identified themselves as ‘Adibasi’, such as those categorised by the colonial State as ‘Depressed Classes’. This collective identification made the distinction of only some groups, based on geography, problematic. Implied through this statement was Munda’s critique of identity politics of the Indian State and signalling of solidarity across different groups. It symbolised Butler’s (2015, 2016) idea of collective assemblies as not giving a collective identity but calling for relations of support and alliances among minorities or populations deemed disposable and precarious.

Munda, in the above excerpt, contested the label of minority and the need for special protection. Instead, he demanded equal treatment of the Adivasis, ‘to be treated like every other Indian’. It pointed to Asad’s (2003) and Mahmood’s (2016) conceptualisation of a minority as formed through relations of power and to constitute State control. Asad (2003) elaborates:

…minorities are no different from majorities, also a historically constituted group. The fact that they are usually smaller in number is an accidental feature. Minorities may be numerically much larger than the body of equal citizens from whom they are excluded. In the British empire, vast numbers of colonial subjects were ruled by democratic state of citizens far smaller in number through a variety of constitutional devices – which rendered them legally and ideologically minorities. Because minorities are defined as minorities only in hierarchical structures of power (p. 175).

I have discussed the implications of the above quote in the historical tracing of the Adivasi identity in this section. The discursive construction of particular areas and people in India as Scheduled, Backward and Tribal produced a boundary around them and instituted hierarchical social relations of power. This separation, demarcation and exclusion were constituted through policy, law and forms of governance installed by the colonial regime and sustained by the Indian state. The State reciprocally linked the identity of the land and people, making them mutually constitutive. I now analyse how
the physical demarcation of land over time produced social isolation and entrapment of the people and constituted a way of life that is assumed as unique to them.

5.4 Deficit as a way of Life?

In this section, I focus on the ‘way of life’ constituted through the demarcation of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes and its description in the official state discourse. I link it back to the contestation of land, analysed in section 5.2, and the institution of State control over land for taxation and policing of populations.

The legal categorisation of Scheduled Tribe in independent India produced a form of identity-politics and demand for inclusion by various groups in different states within it (Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010; Rycroft & Dasgupta, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 2, the legal status of ST provided specific constitutional safeguards through fundamental rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. In addition, it granted representation in the Parliament and State legislatures through ‘reservation’ of seats.

Several committees were formed by successive Indian governments to examine the criteria for identification and inclusion of groups as Scheduled Tribes. Other than the legal categorisation of ST, policy categorisations were created. These included the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTG), previously named as Primitive Tribal Groups by the Indian government (MoTA, 2017). However, not all these groups were accorded the legal status of Scheduled Tribe, while categorised in policy as ‘Tribal’. The Gond community of the Vidarbha region (Deogaonkar, 2007), in the state of Maharashtra, was designated as a PTG by the Indian government, other than being categorised as ST.

While making a case for the inclusion of two PTG communities, Abujh Maria and Hill Korwa ‘tribes’, in the list of Scheduled Tribes, a Parliamentary Committee provided the following reasoning:

According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, there are certain groups among Scheduled Tribes which have been declining or have stagnant population, low level of literacy, pre-agricultural level of technology and are economically backward. These groups are one of the most vulnerable sections of our society as they are few in numbers, have not attained any significant level of social and economic development and generally inhabit remote localities having poor infrastructure and administrative support. Priorities are, therefore, required to be accorded for their protection and development, and checking the declining trend of their population (MoTA, 2013, p. 13, emphasis added).
The extract above reverberated the deficit and lack stated in the previous colonial and Indian policy texts of the State. It highlighted the significance of location, development, and growth of population by pointing out the absence of criteria in certain Particularly Vulnerable Tribal groups. The construction of the PVTGs and their inclusion in the ST list was carried out by marking and identifying them through the signifiers of declining or stagnant population, low literacy, economic backwardness, vulnerability and remote locality. It illustrated the binaries used for the consolidation of State powers.

The emphasis on the rate of growth of population in the above extract strongly linked to Foucault’s (1977, 1978) articulation of anatamo- and bio-politics/power, discussed in Chapter 3. The constitution of the modernising Indian nation-state as a sovereign democratic republic legitimised the control of the State over its citizens. Such control and power over population worked through individualising and collectivising discipline (Foucault, 1978). The organisation, distribution and bounding together of populations in particular ways, as evident in the above extract, also suggested the capitalistic intentions of the State for advancing and constituting its own powers (Rose & Miller, 2010).

Another indicator alluded to in the Parliamentary Committee’s remarks was ‘pre-agricultural level of technology’. As analysed in Section 5.2, the land revenue policies of the colonial State, such as Permanent Settlement, placed emphasis on agriculture as a settled activity and the cultivator as a settled being. The sedentarisation of agriculture brought into effect settled and productive groups who provided more land revenue and were easy to control, discipline and police (Sundar, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2012). In this sense, agriculture and the setting up of a ‘new’ agrarian social order constituted colonial ‘modernity’ in India, albeit for the benefit of the colonial State (Sundar, 1997; O’Hanlon, 2012). It instituted the idea of settled and permanent cultivator as hard-working, wage labourer and regular revenue/tax payer.

The pre-agricultural level of technology, in the above extract, signified the work and way of life of certain groups that comprised activities other than agriculture. However, referring to it as ‘pre-agricultural’ denoted a forward movement, towards settlement and agriculture, in the work and life of the people. If agriculture represented a settled activity, the work people did ‘prior’ to settling down as cultivators symbolised the use of pre-agricultural technology. Similarly, if the shift to settled agriculture signified modernity, then practising another non-settled occupation, such as forestry-related work, indicated pre-modern way of life. The description in the above extract reflected
the expectation of unidirectional progress and linearity of movement that is central to the modernisation discourse. It also linked back to the conceptualisation of ‘tribe’ as a particular stage in the ‘evolution’ of society from pre-modern to modern.

The above description of work and way of life of people was reiterated in one of the focus groups discussions:

The parents here have only ever gone to the forests; they have never been to school themselves. That is the main problem in our villages. The people here belong to another time and age...Sometimes they even burn the forests for farming (Nand, 40, Male, Adivasi, Sarpanch, Focus Group with Panchayat members).

Nand’s description of the Adivasi parents in the village involved describing their occupation of going to forests and collecting forest produce. However, he described this work as deficit, as the ‘only’ work that the Adivasis knew and had been doing. Like in the policy description, there was no emphasis on what people actually did in the forests. The sheer association of people with forests produced a way of life that was unique and in some way deficit. The interlinking of the identity of land and people connected to Shah’s (2010) notion of eco-incarceration. The discursive production of the Adivasis constituted their work as that tied to the land and forests, which they inhabited. It entrapped them in a particular form of living (Shah, 2010) and made them into people who have ‘only ever gone to the forests’.

Implied in the above excerpt is the discourse of modernity. The going to the forests was placed in opposition to going to school. Nand described the Adivasi parents as ‘never been to school’ and viewed it as the ‘main problem’ of the village. While the forestry-work denoted deficit, schooling signified modernity, the lack of which was problematic for Nand. It recalled the language and criteria of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Parliamentary Standing Committee. Nand, who identified himself as an Adivasi, spoke to me in the official capacity of the Sarpanch (head of Panchayat). The incorporation and performance of the dominant official discourse by Nand was illustrative of the notion of governmentality.

The signification and marking of the Adivasis was conveyed by Nand with reference to ‘time and age’. The association of their work with forests made the people ‘belong to another time and age’. It re-iterated the Primitive, Backward, and pre-agricultural criteria of the colonial and Indian state. The Adivasis were assumed to be static or
slowly changing, primitive and under-developed, and framed as pre-modern in their way of living and mode of existence.

The reference to the burning of forests for farming, made by Nand, was crucial in the discursive othering of the Adivasis. It pointed to the practice of jhum or shifting agriculture undertaken by the ‘nomadic’ communities in India. In jhum, a piece of land is harvested for a few years, abandoned and then burnt to restore its fertility; while the community moves to cultivate another land and/or practices another occupation in the meantime. If the new land is covered with forests, it is cleared by burning it instead of the felling of the trees (Sundar, 1997).

In the above excerpt, jhum was referred to by Nand in the context of time and age. Shifting agriculture, considered as pre-agricultural and pre-modern by Nand, further signified the Adivasis as backward and primitive. It denoted a ‘traditional’ way of life, in contrast to the modern agricultural practice and technology of cultivating land and clearing forests, which can be associated with schooling. It linked back to the colonial notion of agriculture as a settled activity, in order to exercise control over ‘sedentary’ people (Sundar, 1997; Mamdani, 2012; O’Hanlon, 2012).

However, jhum was described differently in another interview:

Jhum is a scientific thing that people do here. It restores fertility of the soil, without having to use fertilizers, and is better and quicker way of clearing an old patch of land than felling trees manually. This is one good thing that Adivasis do. (Rajesh, 35, Male, non-Adivasi, NGO worker, Interview).

Rajesh explained jhum to me while we were travelling to a neighbouring village. Pointing to some recently burnt patches of forest land, he mentioned that he thought jhum was a good practice of the Adivasis. He associated jhum with science, as a quicker and better solution to the clearing of land and restoration of fertility. It was ‘good’ as it made agriculture more productive and scientific. Unlike Nand who associated jhum with tradition and backward-ness, Rajesh implied science and modernity. The correlation of jhum with productive agriculture and science carried positive value for Rajesh. It signified the importance of modernisation discourse in the context of the Adivasis. The same practice was constructed differently, through the lens of modernity, by an Adivasi and non-Adivasi person, both male, in their official capacities of Sarpanch and NGO staff.
However, it was the same practice of *jhum* that was deployed to other the Adivasis and construct them as different. While Nand othered the Adivasis for still practising the ‘old’ technique of *jhum*, Rajesh thought of it as ‘one good thing’ done by the Adivasis. In both cases, the practice produced a deficit way of life around the Adivasis. It symbolised the reiteration and sedimentation of certain categories of distinction in the dominant discourse to describe the Adivasis. It was indicative of the entrapment of the Adivasis and their confinement within and through discourse. It pointed to what Massey (1994) explains as ‘differentiated mobility’ in terms of power in social relations:

> For it does seem that mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power. It is not simply a question of unequal distribution, that some people move more than others, and that some have more control than others. It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people. Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak. (Massey, 1994, p. 150)

The discursive production of the Adivasis as Scheduled, Backward and Tribal was constitutive of their ‘differential mobility’ that exacerbated their already deficit social positioning. It constructed a way of life around them, tied to the land and forests. It produced a boundary that reified their positioning and restricted their ‘mobility’, regardless of the work they did or the area they inhabited. The ‘differential mobility’ of the Adivasis produced them as the constitutive other, through which the power and control of the modernising Indian State were instituted. This discursive othering had gendered implications, as I will explore in the next chapter by engaging further with the local community context, an introduction to which I provided through the two excerpts analysed in this section.

### 5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed how the law, policy and practice of the colonial and the Indian state discursively produced the identity of the Adivasis in India. I illuminated the dominant discursive strains central to the construction of the Adivasi identity and imposition of hierarchical difference. In doing so, I built on the concept of discursive power, to bring subjects into being and produce the stated effect through linguistic utterances (Foucault, 1976, 1977, 1978; Butler, 1993).

I examined the land revenue policy of the colonial regime to illustrate the hierarchical social relations instated through the same. I traced the contestation of land through these policies that sought to bring more area under sedentary agriculture and tie more people to land for revenue-collection and State control. Through the installation of
landlords and individual/private ownership of land, the colonial regime marked an important shift in the fluid social relations that pre-existed the colonial rule in India.

I then analysed the legal pronouncements of the colonial and the Indian state to signify the language of law and its use as an instrument of governmentality to (re-)shape subjectivities. I examined the separation and demarcation of land as Scheduled and its association with Backward and Tribal. The Scheduled Areas, in turn, produced the people in it as Scheduled Tribes, as Primitive, Backward and Tribal. I analysed this intertwining of identity, of land and people, through Foucault’s (1978) concept of bio-power and Massey’s (1994) notion of double articulation. I emphasised the centrality of modernisation and development discourse, in the context of the Adivasis, through the articulations of equality, justice and protection.

I explored how the policy and legal enactments of the colonial and the Indian state produced a boundary around the land and constituted the Adivasis as tied to it. Over time and through reiteration, the categories of distinction were sedimented, normalised and naturalised in language. It further produced a way of life assumed to be unique to the Adivasis and their work as deficit. The physical separation of land produced social isolation of the people, which came to be regarded as an original condition and as naturally-occurring. I examined this exclusion through legislative, policy, focus group and interview extracts to signal my focus and analysis in the next chapter.

This chapter highlighted the discursive confinement, marginalisation and othering of the Adivasis by focusing on the categorisations instituted through land and work. It was illustrative of the language of differentiation deployed by the State to recognise and create hierarchical distinctions between groups. This chapter has reciprocal links with the next two analysis chapters. Chapter 6 builds on the dominant discursive strains, highlighted in this chapter, to analyse how these are produced and performed by local village community members through religion, education and gender. It examines the interpellation of the Adivasis into the dominant discourse and their deficit positioning within it. Chapter 7 analyses the navigation of the Indian and Adivasi identities of the Gond community. It engages with the context of violence that links back to the analysis in this chapter, the contestation of land produced through the demarcation of land and institution of relations of power.
6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I build on the discursive production of the Adivasi identity to analyse its production and performance by a local village community in India. This chapter engages with Research Question 2 by emphasising the local village context and community ‘voices’. It demonstrates how the dominant discursive categories of distinction, indicated in the previous chapter, are (re)produced, (re)interpreted and performed in the local village context as well as the other discursive formations which emerge through this performance. By drawing on the fieldwork data from focus groups, interviews, observations and field notes, I illustrate the interpellation of the local community, Adivasi and non-Adivasi, into the dominant national discourse.

The previous chapter examined the discursive production of identity of the Adivasis, by analysing policy and legislative enactments of the colonial and the Indian State, through the concepts of discursive power, bio-power and governmentality. In this chapter, I extend those concepts for the analysis of data excerpts. I include the notion of interpellation to signify the embodiment of norms that individuals are exposed to and summoned into (Althusser, 1971; Butler, 1990, 1993, 2015). In addition to these, I build on the notion of performativity (Butler, 1990), to symbolise the stylised repetition of norms, of the primary inscriptions and interpellations that produce the subjects as Adivasis and into a deficit positioning.

I focus on religion, education and gender, as regulatory constructs and matrices of subject-formation, to highlight the performance of regulatory norms that produce the Adivasis discursively. I use these three discursive categories due to their ‘identification’ by the local community as significant in the othering of the Adivasis. More specifically, the focus on these three categories helps to highlight the constructed binary between tradition and modernity. However, I argue, through data, that these categories are discursive constructs, installed to produce and regulate the Adivasis into deficit position. In doing so, I signal the (selective) utilisation of these constructs by the Adivasis to resignify and resist their othering.

The discussion in this chapter is organised into three sections. In the first section, I analyse religion and trouble its construction as ‘animism’ and ‘tradition’ in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities. The second section explores the notion of education
and the ways it implies the ideas of change and improvement for the Adivasis in the local community. I analyse the interpellation of the local community into the dominant development/education discourse. I then problematise the regime of protection installed by the Indian State to ‘develop’ the Adivasis and its bearing on their community life. In the third section, I combine the discussion in the previous chapter with this chapter to explore the construction of gender as a regulatory regime and the ways that it further entraps the Adivasis in the local village community.

This chapter has reciprocal links with the other analytical chapters of this study, Chapter 5 and 7. While Chapter 5 was about locating the Adivasis historically and positioning them in and through the dominant national/State discourses, this chapter examines the local context of the village community and its linkages/tensions with the national discourse. As an extension of these two chapters, Chapter 7 explores the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the Gond community and their claim for rights in the context of violence. I have focused on the Adivasis in my text in the three analysis chapters to highlight the specific aspects of their framing/othering in India. While Chapter 5 engages with the demarcation of the land and work of the Adivasis, Chapter 6 explores the social implications of that demarcation through religion, education and gender, and Chapter 7 examines the modes of political participation of the Adivasi Gond community in particular.

6.2. Religion

6.2.1 Animism as Religion?

For us (Adivasis) it is the farms, the forests and the animals that work for us which are important and sacred. It is about survival every day (Sushma Bai, 70, Adivasi, Grandmother and forestry/agricultural worker, Interview)

The Adivasis attach a lot of importance to nature and their animals (Ara Bai, 45, non-Adivasi, mother and domestic worker, Interview)

Implied in the above extract is the self-identification of Sushma Bai as an Adivasi and the Adivasis’ reverence of farms, forests and animals. As a daily labourer who worked in forests and agriculture, Sushma Bai emphasised the importance of nature in her everyday life. This was reiterated by Ara Bai, who identified herself as non-Adivasi and as a domestic worker and pointed to the importance attached to nature by the Adivasis.

My reading of the above extracts through poststructural, postcolonial and feminist theorisations, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, pointed out the work of power and
discourse in the historical sedimentation of identities in the Indian context. The identification of Sushma Bai and Ara Bai as Adivasi and non-Adivasi respectively symbolised their summoning into as well as attachment to their ‘subject positions’ (Butler, 1990, 1993; Hall, 1996). It signified the construction of their identity in and through discourse which tied them to particular land and labour positions, as analysed in Chapter 5. This ‘identification’ or ‘assumption’ of Adivasi and non-Adivasi positions produced the affective materialisation of these identities (Butler, 1993), as both Sushma Bai and Ara Bai were self-constituting their identities while simultaneously being produced as Adivasi and non-Adivasi discursively.

The difference in Sushma Bai’s and Ara Bai’s work signified what they attached importance to and how their works had come to be so. The discursive production of the Adivasis as forest-dwellers produced a way of life around them, as discussed in Chapter 5. Their discursive confinement produced a boundary around what they could and could not do, entrapped them in a way of life restricted to forestry and agricultural work and as attaching importance to nature and animals.

This discursive confinement and entrapment were re-iterated through the following excerpt:

The festivals and celebrations of the Gond people coincide with the significant occasions in their everyday community life. The events of bamboo felling and tendu patta (tendu leaf) collection have been marked with village gatherings and festivities. Young people in distant residential schools return to the village during particular events of sowing and harvesting in the farms which have been celebrated in the last 4-5 months. These practices are not that different from the Hindu festivals and celebrations. (Researcher Diary, April 2016)

From my observations of living in the village, as implied in the above extract, land and work were crucial in the identification of the Adivasis and their distinction from the non-Adivasis. As indicated in Chapter 3, animism and nature-worship were significant colonial categorisations to identify particular groups as ‘Tribal’ in India (Padel and Das, 2010). These categories constructed the Adivasis as people living in harmony with nature and worshipping its different elements (Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010). The identification of Adivasis through instruments of governmentality such as census and population surveys reified the category of ‘animism’ to describe their cultural and religious practices. It worked as a technique of indirect rule to re-shape subjectivities of the people (Mamdani, 2001, 2012), as exemplified through Sushma Bai’s and Ara Bai’s comments.
However, a poststructural theorisation and analysis of the above extract points to a reading of data which is different from the normative and functionalist acceptance of distinction and hierarchy between the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis. It enables a questioning of the categories of animism and nature-worship which pointed to the ‘distinctive culture’ criterion of the Indian State deployed for the identification of Scheduled Tribes in the country, as analysed in the previous chapter. A poststructural analysis of the above excerpts signalled the forcible materialisation of Adivasi identity over time as animist through regulatory discursive practices (Butler, 1993). Such an analysis illustrated that what came to be termed as animist religion and distinctive culture in the dominant policy and community discourse was historically produced and shaped by the everyday occurrences in the mode of existence and livelihood of the people.

Proximity to nature and close contact with land in terms of forestry and agriculture decided the major events of celebration and provided a cause for local village gatherings. Festivals revolved around the change of seasons, sowing of seeds, harvest of crops, ripening of fruits, collection and sale of produce, as is the case with a majority of Hindu festivals in India (Sundar, 1997), and as implied in the above extract from the researcher diary. However, the same practices were constructed differently in the context of the Adivasis.

The inhabiting of particular geographical areas by the Adivasis, as explored in Chapter 5, and entwinement of their identity with land and forests shaped animism and nature-worshipping as their religion and distinctive culture (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1982; Bhengra et al., 1999; Deogaonkar, 2007; Padel and Das, 2010). The classification of ‘animism’ co-constituted the claim that the Adivasis live in proximity to land and worship nature and animals. Such a claim was illustrative of the ‘eco-incarceration’ of Adivasis, suggested by Shah (2010) in context of the Adivasi Munda community in the state of Jharkhand. The notion of eco-incarceration illuminated how the Adivasis had been tied to the land, confined to live in harmony with nature, and their mobility in the outside world restricted.

However, it was the reliance on nature for everyday existence that made it sacrosanct, as evident in Sushma Bai’s comment in the beginning of this section. Her daily survival depended on forestry and farm work. It was the practical daily needs of survival that made her ‘attach a lot of importance to nature’. The Adivasis such as Sushma bai were not naturally ‘animists’ because they were nature and animal worshippers. They had
come to be so through discursive reiterations, colonial categorisations, and entwinement of their identity with land and forests.

Notwithstanding this, there were contradictions in the construction of the Adivasi identity as animist and nature-worshipper:

During the Ganpati celebrations, I caught a few of the Gond boys. They got hold of a rat, killed it and were roasting it to eat it. They were obviously drunk; imagine young school-going boys. I told them never to do something like that again. They say that they worship animals, but I have seen them eat anything and everything.

One of our Gond workers found a snake in his house. It was his fault. In my farms in the village we have peacocks that eat snakes. But here they even hunt and kill the peacocks and perhaps eat them.

In my community we eat animals too, but only goat and chicken, and this is consumed after offering their sacrifice to the Goddess Kali. (Som, 35, Male, non-Adivasi, NGO worker, Interview)

Som’s comments implied killing of animals by the Adivasis and so a contradiction in their construction as ‘animist’. The incident of the Adivasi Gond boys killing a rat during the Hindu festival of Ganpati celebrations signified something wrong and immoral for Som. Interestingly, in the popular Hindu mythology, a mouse is the vehicle or carrier of Lord Ganesha who is celebrated during the Ganpati festival. The killing of a rat in this sense pointed to an abnormality for Som. It represented an inconsistency in the view that the Adivasis worshipped animals.

Additionally, the reference to drinking of the Gonds by Som reflected a value-judgment of the morality of the young Gond people, which required correction according to him. While alcohol-consumption was common in the village, its consumption by the Adivasis was constructed differently, as immoral or amoral, as will also be discussed in the next sections. In this particular context, the drinking of the young Gond people was reprimanded by Som and considered to be inappropriate.

Som’s second comment about the killing of peacocks by a Gond staff member of the NGO symbolised similar contradictions. Som used this difference to contest the framing of the Adivasis as nature and animal worshippers as well as to constitute the superiority of his community. He identified himself as belonging to the Other Backward Class (OBC) community of Banjaras or ‘nomads’ but not as a Hindu. However, in doing so, he articulated the distinction and hierarchy between his and the Gond community. The killing of peacock, the symbolic national bird of India, placed the Gonds
hierarchically below his community for Som. The eating of particular animals, through sacrifice to particular Goddesses, constituted a significant difference for Som. While both the Banjaras and the Gonds ate animals, the practice of Som’s community resembled some of the Hindu cultural and religious practices more and so were better placed by him, compared to those of the Adivasis/Gonds.

Som’s unease about the hunting, killing and eating of anything and everything by the Adivasis, despite their construction in dominant discourse as animist, is indicative of the discursive confinement of the Adivasis as living harmoniously with nature. It refers back to the notion of eco-incarceration. Shah (2010) elaborates that the ‘forests and fields are seen as part of a continuous landscape [for the Mundas in Jharkhand], both cut and protected over time…so their relationship with the environment is too sophisticated or adversarial for a simplistic reading of them as worshipping nature or living in harmony with it’ (p. 117). This complex relationship of the Adivasis with the environment was further illustrated in the following extracts:

The peacocks destroy our crops in the farms, so sometimes we have to kill them. (Sana, 36, Male, Adivasi, NGO helper, Interview)

The Gond community is depicted as nature-friendly and animal-loving in the community interactions and in some of my interviews and focus groups with the non-Adivasis. However, in the interviews with Som and Sana a contradiction emerged which pointed to the Adivasis killing animals and eating everything. (Researcher Diary, June 2016)

The way of life produced around the Adivasis and presumed natural to them was contested in Sana’s comments about the killing of peacocks to protect crops in the farms. It linked back to Sushma Bai’s comments earlier in this section about ensuring everyday survival. Both Sushma Bai and Sana drew on the established/dominant discourse that produced the Adivasis as animist and nature-worshipping. However, in doing so, they fragmented the existing discourse by foregrounding their context and everyday survival needs. The rearticulation and repetition of the dominant discourse around land and work, which produced the Adivasis as animist, signified its contestation. It pointed to the resignification of the dominant discursive norms that produced and regulated the Adivasis in a deficit position.

The excerpt from the researcher diary reiterated the contradiction in the construction of the Adivasi identity as animist. It linked to the poststructural view of identity discussed in Chapter 3, as multiple, fractured, contingent and context-specific. Such an understanding and theorisation of identity, as implicit in the above excerpt, enabled a
questioning of the essentialising view of the self as unified and stable. It pointed to the power of discourse in the production of homogenising identities.

6.2.2 Religion as Tradition?

The Gond houses in the village have an open space where the kul devta (clan deity) resides. It is usually a small empty space in front or backyard of the house with a stone or some mud in it. The parents and grandparents take children to this space before they leave for school in the morning. These visits seem to happen for every ‘big occasion’. And this was also done before an important event or celebration in the village. There is no folding of hands or kneeling for ‘worship’. There is brief prayer and chanting.

During the chicken pox ‘season’, the visits and incantations were longer. The parents said that the kul devta was angry and had to be propitiated before the affected child could go out of the house again. It is not very different from the practice of non-Adivasi or Hindu households, where usually a different deity is appeased during chicken pox, with more pomp and show. (Researcher Diary, January 2016)

The excerpt from the researcher diary above signified the religious space and practice of some of the Gond households that I visited and stayed in. The open, yet slightly enclosed, space in the house was the place of prayer and worship before significant events in the everyday life of the people. Compared to the ‘popular’ Hindu religious practices of some of the non-Adivasi groups, there were no ‘temples’ outside of the house for idol worship in case of the Gonds.

During my first stay in the village from November 2015 to January 2016, there were many cases of chicken pox in the village and neighbouring areas. The occurrence of chicken pox was associated with the clan deities, which were then appeased through longer rituals, incantation and prayer. The non-Adivasi Hindu households had a similar practice, but they (idol) worshipped a different deity/goddess, revered by the popular Hindu religion. In the case of the Adivasis, however, the practice was constructed differently:

The Gonds do not go to doctors or community health centres, perform ‘jhaad phoonk’ (exorcism/incantation) on children through babas when they fall sick, and childbirth takes place at home through midwives instead of institutional deliveries.

A young boy who fell sick in the hostel was thought to be possessed by a spirit. He walked back home from his hostel every night. His parents and the community tied him at home to perform ‘jhaad phoonk’. This is their usual practice to appease the spirits, especially when children get possessed by the Devi Mata (deity) and get something like chicken pox. (Sanam, 25, Male, Adivasi youth, Interview)
There is no State provisioning of health services in the village and surrounding areas. The primary and community health centres are closed, and the closest medical help is available only at the block level, which is over 50 km away. During chicken pox season, some parents preferred to go to the private health centres as State support was absent and inadequate and parents felt that it was also ineffective. (Researcher Diary, December 2015)

The practice of incantation and propitiation/appeasement of the clan deity during sickness was constructed in opposition to the visit to doctors by Sanam. This opposition linked back to the discussion in Chapter 3 on modernity and science and their purported distinction from tradition and religion. A poststructural theorisation of power and discourse, informed by postcolonial and feminist frameworks, helped unpack and trouble the binary of tradition/modernity and its selective utilisation in the framing of Adivasis as traditional. Such a theorisation differed from the functionalist view of language which accepts the tradition/modernity binary as a given.

As an Adivasi, Sanam was understanding yet critical of the practice that he referred to as ‘jhaad phoonk’. In the English language, *jhaad phoonk* loosely translates to ‘dusting and blowing off’ of the evil spirits that possess the body or exorcism. The practice, according to Sanam, was performed by the *babas* or the local practitioners of exorcism in the village. I met one of the practitioners, an old man, during his practice sessions. He was performing *jhaad phoonk* on a young Gond girl who had a high fever and was suffering from diarrhoea, according to the *baba*.

This practice, however, was contrasted with the more scientific practice of going to the doctor by Sanam. The science/religion binary, articulated in the Indian Constitution and discussed in Chapter 3, was implied by Sanam in the extract above. The formation of the secular state in India was part of the modernisation process, reliant on Western, liberal and individualised conceptualisation of the person, required for the constitution of a modern democratic nation-state (Madan, 1987; Chatterjee, 1994; Nandy, 1998). It necessitated the removal of religion, assumed to signify ‘tradition’, from public life and emphasised ‘modern’ scientific principles (Nandy, 1998).

Sanam’s comments echoed this constructed binary between tradition and modernity by reference to the reliance on Babas and midwives, instead of doctors and health centres. The description of childbirth at home, instead of institutional deliveries, also represented the public/private divide, discussed in Chapter 3. Public was the domain of scientific temper while religion was to be consigned to the private.
Sanam’s comments, however, ignored the absence of the State in his area, as reflected through my observations in the researcher diary. There were no medical facilities, community or primary health centres (C/PHC) in the village and the neighbouring area. The responsibility of the State in this context, to provide health care through CHC/PHC as mandated by policy, was overlooked by Sanam. The onus instead was placed on the Adivasis to go to doctors for check-ups and institutional deliveries, even if this was done in a private set-up. Such an emphasis linked back to the modernist and individualised conception of the people as rational and agentive, while absolving the State of its constitutional responsibilities. It disregarded the history of State neglect and absence of State provisioning in the areas of the Adivasis.

Sanam’s comments and my reflections in the researcher diary pointed to the instances of governmentality and interpellation of the Adivasis into their dominant discursive positioning. It indicated the power of discourse which exceeds and precedes individuals, brings us into being, but without which we cannot ‘speak’ (Butler, 1997). Sanam, identifying himself as an Adivasi, embodied and (re)produced the regulatory and discursive norms that had produced the Adivasi identity as Scheduled, Backward, and Tribal. A preference for doctors in the above extracts, even if in the private sector, over the babas signalled the permeation of the dominant discourse which produced a binary understanding of tradition and modernity.

Sanam and Karishma further explained:

…there is this conflict between the older and the younger generations among the Gonds. The younger ones celebrate Hindu festivals of Holi, Diwali, Ganpati and other pujas which are not Gond practices. This is all to do with the Hindi television serials, movies and songs, which are hugely popular in the area. The older people do not appreciate this and want us to stick to the Gond practices, which means not celebrating these festivals (Sanam, 25, Male, Adivasi youth, Interview)

Diwali and Dussehra are fun festivals. I get to dance a lot during Ganpati and Laxmi puja also. We (Adivasis) are not in the Hindu dharma but we celebrate all the festivals together (Karishma, 18, Female, Adivasi youth, Interview)

Implicit in the above extract is the intergenerational difference on religious practices of the Adivasis. Age was used by Sanam to signify difference within the Adivasi community, and it indicated the multiple and differing subjectivities of the Adivasis. The celebration of the popular Hindu festivals of Holi and Diwali were protested by the older Adivasis. Sanam attributed the celebration of these festivals to the Hindi media and film industry. These influences, according to him, were resisted by the older Adivasis who
did not like these festivals celebrated in the village. By contrast, Karishma indicated the enjoyment of the (Hindu) festivals, while clarifying that the Adivasis were not Hindus and were outside the Hindu faith.

For Sanam and Karishma, the intergenerational difference applied to the conceptualisation of the Adivasi religious practices as not Hindu. It linked back to the discussion in Chapter 3 on poststructural and postcolonial theorisation of identity and its materialisation through recognition of otherness (Mouffe, 1993; Hall 1996). The Adivasis were called into being through absence or invisibility that constituted their identity as not Hindu and produced the ‘impossibility of claiming an origin for the Self’ (Bhabha, 2004, p. 66). This negation of originality, of being Hindu, was articulated by Sanam and Karishma through claims that they were outside the Hindu dharma.

The marking of the festivals as Hindu by Sanam, and its opposition by the older Gonds for that reason denied the influence and mutual exchange between the practices of different groups. Fürer-Haimendorf (1982) writes about the Sanskritisation and Hinduisation of the Gond culture and religion, and the imitation of the mainstream Marathi culture by the younger generations of Gonds through their celebration of Hindu festivals. However, such exclusivist and essentialising approach to religion regards Hindu and Adivasi religion as markedly different and as stable and homogenous. Sundar (1997) argues that such an approach is ‘not adequate to capture the nature of mutual appropriation and the resultant contradictions that co-exist in popular religion’ (p. 63).

The notions of Sanskritisation and Hinduisation did not adequately capture what was going on in the local village community as some Gond participants such as Sanam and Karishma claimed to be ‘not Hindu’. In my observations of living in the village, this claim was attributed to the identification of the Adivasis as belonging to a distinctive cultural group in the official policy discourse of the Indian State, and/or the attempts by the non-Adivasis to co-opt them into upper-caste versions of Hinduism, such as through the celebration of various festivals, pujas and fasting rituals. In this sense, religion was a site of resistance for the older Gonds and a way to subvert the dominant discourse, ‘by presenting it with an anxious absence’, invisibility and ambivalence’ (Bhabha, 1990c; 2004, p. 67). The rejection of Hindu religious practices and (non-) celebration of festivals such as Dussehra was important in the articulation of Adivasi identity through absence:
Just before my field visit in November, some of the Gond groups and associations protested the celebration of the Dussehra festival. I was later explained how important Ravana was to the Gond culture and had been a revered figure for a long time. No Ravana dahan (burning) took place in the village, as is the practice under popular Hindu celebration of the festival in some parts of North India, some days before Diwali. (Researcher Diary, December 2015)

The protest of Dussehra by some of the Gond associations marked the resistance of these groups towards the popular celebration of the festival, which involved burning the effigy of Ravana, and in turn the popular Hindu religious practices. This protest linked to the description of the Adivasis by Sanam and Karishma as not Hindu and as outside the Hindu religion. It connected back to the theorisation of power, discourse and identity in Chapter 3 and the frameworks of intelligibility that produce a constitutive constraint or the Other (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993; Hall, 1996). As such, the Adivasi religion was produced as the limit of intelligibility of the Hindu religion. However, the Adivasi identity, which was signified through the lack of Hindu religion, was rearticulated by the Gonds through their rejection of Dussehra celebration. At the same time, this rejection was used by the non-Adivasis to maintain the distinctions in the local community and (re-)assert their superiority:

A clash (between Adivasi and non-Adivasi group) exists because they (Gonds) are outside the Hindu religion and we (non-Adivasis) have to develop them for this reason. They have practices which the others don’t. Things would have been easier if they (Gonds) decided to be a part of the Hindu society (Rajesh, 35, Male, NGO worker, non-Adivasi, Interview)

Rajesh’s comments demarcated the Adivasis as outside the Hindu religion and in need of development. The comments connected back to the poststructural, postcolonial and feminist understanding of secular and its constitutive link with modernity, as delineated in Chapter 3 (Bhargava, 1998; Asad, 2003; Asad et al., 2009; Butler et al., 2011; Mahmood, 2016). The signification of particular religions as modern and developed, while of the others as traditional and in need of development indicated the co-constitution of secular in India through religion. It produced the Hindu religion as modern, democratic and liberal, while othering the Adivasis as pre-modern and keeping

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13 Dussehra is celebrated to mark the victory of good over evil, by burning effigies of Ravana, his son Meghnath and brother Kumbhakarn, when Lord Rama killed the demon Ravana and rescued his wife Sita from captivity. Dussehra is followed by Diwali, the dominant Hindu festival of lights, which marks the arrival of Lord Rama with his brother Laxman and wife Sita back to Ayodhya after the end of their exile.

the distinction between the two alive. It linked to Chatterjee’s (1994) argument about the secular representation of India as mediated by specific versions of Hinduism which are presupposed as modern.

Rajesh’s comments above reiterate the formation of the Adivasis as the abject other, the constitutive limit/outsie of the materialised Hindu identity. The use of ‘they’, to denote the Adivasis, and ‘we’, for the non-Adivasis as well as the NGO, by Rajesh is symbolic of the positioning of the Adivasis as Other in the local community discourse. Religion in this context provided an axis of difference, distinction and hierarchy as well as the site of antagonism (Mouffe, 1993). It made the Adivasis as the exterior to the Hindu community, the very condition of its existence. As Mouffe (1993) argues, ‘there cannot be a ‘we’ without a ‘them’ and that all forms of consensus are by necessity based on acts of exclusion’ (p. 83). However, as analysed earlier in this section, religion was also deployed as a site of resistance by the Adivasis to contest and subvert the dominant discourse by (re-)articulating their identity through absence or as not-Hindu.

Neera Bai pointed to a contradiction in the discursive othering of the Adivasis through religion:

N: Are you a Hindu?
Me: I am born in a Hindu family, yes
N: And you are Wadhwa, it makes you a Punjabi. Are they (family) from Punjab?
Me: They are, from Punjab in Pakistan. They migrated to India during the Partition
N: Then you would know the Dera Sacha Sauda sect. They come here and set up camps for us. My entire family goes there for days. Gond people also come, the sect does a lot of social service and it is their way of bringing people in the mainstream.
(Neera Bai, 29, non-Adivasi, cook in neighbourhood school, Interview)

Neera Bai identified herself as a practising Hindu and belonging to an OBC community. She mentioned the Dera Sacha Sauda (DSS) religious sect on my identification as a Hindu and a Punjabi. Neera Bai’s recognition of the DSS as a reformist organisation alluded to my positioning in the research setting. I have elaborated on this in Chapter 4.

Neera Bai’s comments implied the existence of multiple internal others in the village, other than the Gonds or the Adivasis. As a non-Adivasi, but as an OBC, Neera Bai used the dominant and normative discourse to refer to herself and her family as outside the mainstream. Visiting the social service camps of the religious group was a way to
enter the mainstream for Neera Bai. It denoted the need for development for those practising other religions and/or categorised as Other Backward Classes. It represented the power of religion ‘as a matrix of subject formation, an embedded framework for valuations, and a mode of belonging and embodied social practice’ (Butler et al., 2011, p. 72).

The setting up of camps by organisations such as the DSS in particular areas and their conceptualisation of the people living there reflected the colonial understanding of India. Religion was deployed as a marker of identity to separate India from the coloniser, the Orient from the Occident, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Religious difference was instated and inscribed to internally divide the country and consolidate the colonial rule. In addition, the religious practices of Indians were classified as backward, traditional, and in need of development, reform and civilisation.

The excerpts analysed in this section resonate similar discourses utilised strategically in the consolidation of powers of the colonial regime. These discourses legitimised the existence of the State and its welfare and protection agenda, while marking people as ‘traditional’ and outside of the ‘modern’ mainstream. The practice of specific religions, labelled as not Hindu, reinforced the discursive framing of the Adivasis as Scheduled, Backward, Tribal and Traditional. Their interpellation into this discursive framing was signified through the re-enactment of the normative categories used to name, segregate and exclude them. In this regard, education, or its lack, provided another matrix of subject-formation as well as exclusion. If the practice of an improper or non-Hindu religion marked people as traditional, education, or the path leading to it, signified modernity and development, a way to bring people out of backwardness and included into the ‘mainstream’, as I will explore in the next section.

6.3 Education

6.3.1 Ideas of time and change

The parents here have only ever gone to the forests, they have never been to school themselves…The people here belong to another time and age, they are pichde, purane, older kind of people, but they are slowly changing (Nand, 40, Male, Adivasi, Sarpanch, Focus Group with Panchayat members)

We should not be saying this but the environment here is such that the Gond people do not understand at once…it takes a while (for them to understand) …They are another generation, older and different type of people…You should not expect them to respond. They are like that only… It will take time (for things
Nand’s comments above, as also discussed in the previous chapter, reiterated the normative binary of forests and schools. As explored in the previous chapter, the work done by the Adivasis, whether in forests or farms, was represented as pre-agricultural and pre-modern. In the extract above, it was contrasted with going to school, which signified modernity. Nand pointed to the time and age of the people and the intergenerational difference between the parents and the young people in the village. He used the Hindi term ‘pichde’ to describe the people, which would translate in English as ‘backward’. Nand, however, used it alongside the word ‘purane’ to mean ‘old’. It suggested the significance of time in the description of the Adivasis and reinforced the ‘pre-modern’ criterion of the Indian State.

The intergenerational difference alluded to by Nand was done by pointing to the work of the parents, as opposed to the going to school by young people. In this sense, schools and education signified ‘change’ or the ‘slowly changing’ description of the people. It linked back to the discussion on modernity, development and education in Chapter 3. The ‘formation’ of ‘modernity’ took place through the deployment of labels of traditional and backward vis-à-vis modern and developed and the construction of a binary between these labels (Bhambra, 2007). The modernisation discourse indicated linear, unidirectional movement or change to attain development. This notion of change, as growth and progress and integral to the discourses of development and modernisation (Balagopalan, 2003, 2008), was resonated in Nand’s comments above.

Rajesh, similarly, implied the lack of understanding on the part of the people, in his comments above. He too associated his depiction of the Adivasis with time and described the people as ‘another generation, older and different’. The emphasis on time and old-ness of the people was used to denote difference and distinguish them from others. The notion of change was highlighted also by Rajesh, like Nand, and pointed to a slow movement of the people that suggested improvement. It connected to the conceptualisation of ‘tribe’ discussed in Chapter 2.

Rajesh’s other comment that ‘you should not expect them to respond’ reiterated the Indian government’s criteria of ‘shyness of contact with the community at large’. It reinstated the dominant discursive production of the Adivasis as shy, silent and non-agentive. At the same time, the comment ‘they are like that only’ viewed people’s silence as a natural characteristic. As analysed in the previous chapter, it symbolised
the outcomes of people’s identity-construction as origins and as predispositions to be or act in particular ways (Butler, 1990). It signified the normalisation and naturalisation of the discursive categorisations deployed to other groups such as the Adivasis in normative discourse. I now analyse further the performance of the regulative discursive categories, through the concepts of interpellation and performativity.

6.3.2 Performativity, Interpellation and Improvement

The Gond people sometimes do not understand. They spend money on alcohol and tobacco but not even 10 rupees for their children’s uniform, shoes or books. They should spend this money on education. (Raja, 35, NGO worker, non-Adivasi, Interview)

Raja’s comments above link back to Rajesh’s conception of the Adivasis as lacking in understanding. He elaborates this lack of understanding through the Adivasis’ expenditure on alcohol and tobacco, as compared to their expenditure on education. The moralising tone in Raja’s excerpt is illustrated through his insistence on education, and its constructed in opposition to alcohol and tobacco in the context of the Adivasis. As analysed in Section 6.2, the consumption of alcohol and tobacco was commonplace in the village. However, it was used to construct a deficit view of the Adivasis. This deficit view was implied in Nam’s comments below:

I am trying to improve myself as much as I can. We (young Gonds) are backward because we get distracted easily. We fall in love; we consume alcohol, and chew tobacco. I am trying not to (drink, smoke, fall in love).

If Ambedkar could work for 18 hours in a day, why can’t we? I do not want two months of summer holidays as I will lose touch with studies. I have started fasting once a week now so I can focus more…I want to be in Section A with Science and not in Arts because there are not many jobs after doing Arts. But even if I do Arts, I feel like I can do anything when I study. (Nam, 15, Male, Adivasi, Focus Group with young people in 15-18 age-groups)

The notion of improvement, implicit in Nam’s comments, revisits the discussion on time and change in section 6.3.1. Nam drew on the dominant discourse to describe the young Gond people in the village as ‘backward’. He used the issues of alcohol and tobacco consumption to mark the Adivasis as ‘distracted’ as well as the concerns about ‘falling in love’. It echoed the moralising effects of Raja’s comments, analysed earlier in this sub-section. Alcohol, tobacco and failing in love consolidated the construction of the Adivasis as ‘backward’ for Nam. As a young Adivasi, Nam embodied and participated in the regulatory discourse that had placed the Adivasis in a deficit
position. It linked to Hall’s (1996) idea that both the dominant and the dominated groups are complicit in the circulation of discourse, if not on equal terms.

For Nam, education provided the way out of the deficit and for improvement and change. Implied in his comments is an insistence on ‘hard work’ and pursuing particular kinds of education. His identification of Ambedkar, who was a Dalit or Scheduled Caste and Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution, reflected his association of ‘good’ and ‘proper’ education to progress and change. Nam’s preference of Science over the Arts subjects represented the dominance of the modernisation discourse in India and the association of scientific subjects with better job prospects. However, the importance accorded to education by Nam was manifested in his comment ‘I feel like I can do anything when I study’. It signified a demand for education, as also suggested in the excerpts below:

…it is a backward area because it is Tribal; it has a Tribal population, so it is backward and illiterate. Anyone can make fools out of us (Adivasis). (Abhay, 23, Male, Adivasi youth, Interview)

I never studied or went to school. I am angootha chaap, just like my mother and her mother. There were no schools back then, so we could not study. It was difficult back then as we (women) had to work at home and in forests. (Shanti Bai, 40, Female, Adivasi, Cook in the neighbourhood school)

The extracts above linked back to the discussion in Chapter 5 on the construction of particular areas as Scheduled, Backward and Tribal through the legal and policy discourse. Abhay’s comment reflected the conflation of ‘backward’ area with ‘Tribal’ population. The backward-ness of the area was attributed to the presence of the people classified as Tribal. The demarcation of Abhay’s area as Scheduled through law and policy, as well as the categorisation of the Gond people as Scheduled Tribe had a bearing on his understanding of the place and the people. His comment, like the policy excerpts, reduced the discursive categories of identity-construction to natural or original conditions.

Abhay’s comment also signified his interpelation, as an Adivasi youth, into the dominant discourse that positioned the Adivasis as Backward and Tribal. It represented the embodiment of discursive norms that work to order, regulate and discipline subjects (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993). Abhay drew on the normative language to refer to the place and the people. In addition, he alluded to the link between (il)literacy and vulnerability of the Adivasi people. As discussed in Chapter 3, the discourse of development worked through the notion of expansion of human capabilities (Nussbaum
and Sen, 1993). Within this discourse, education was assumed to play a significant part for ‘optimisation of capabilities’ of human bodies (Balagopalan, 2003, 2008). In this sense, the lack of education indicated incapability, as pointed to by Abhay in the comment ‘anyone can make fools out of us’.

Shanti Bai’s self-identification as an _angootha chaap_, or someone who could not read and write, reiterated the link between illiteracy and incapability, as mentioned by Abhay. Shanti Bai identified herself as a Gond and spoke in Gondi, Marathi and Hindi. However, her self-representation as _angootha chaap_ was illustrative of Butler’s (1990) notion of performativity discussed in Chapter 3. The repetition of certain acts in and through discourse produced the effect of a ‘natural’ Adivasi identity that was linked to illiteracy. This ritualised performance compelled the embodiment of categories such as _angootha chaap_.

Shanti Bai’s identification as _angootha chaap_ also indicated the undermining of oral traditions in the dominant national and community discourse, such as that symbolised by the Gondi language which did not have written script. It pointed to the delegitimisation of Shanti Bai’s language and undermining of her knowledge system, in favour of formal education through schooling and written languages. It signalled the regulative discourses of the Indian State which emphasised a modernist and functionalist definition of literacy, as a person, seven years or above, able to read and write in any language with understanding (MHA, 2011). For Shanti Bai then, going to school signified the transition from speaking to learning to read and write as well as a form of government approval. It pointed to the process of subjectivation and attribution to people a status of full social citizenship by the Indian State through its utilisation of regulatory constructs such as education, which was historically used for similar purposes by the colonial State (Chemmencheri, 2015).

Shanti Bai’s comments above illustrated the gendered access to education, which will be analysed in the next section, 6.4. It indicated the work done by women, within and outside the home, and the ways it conflicted with formal education and the modernist notion of going to school. By making the inconsistency between work and school explicit, Shanti Bai placed the onus on herself for being unable to study, and instead for working at home and forests. The binary between ‘traditional’ work and ‘modern’ education was reinserted through her comments.
Both Abhay’s and Shanti Bai’s comments above also reinstated the language of the Indian Constitution on the STs and of the Parliamentary Committee on the identification of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, as analysed in the previous chapter:

The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the...Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. (Article 46, Constitution of India, 2013, p. 23)

...there are certain groups among Scheduled Tribes which have...low level of literacy...have not attained any significant level of social and economic development and generally inhabit remote localities... Priorities are, therefore, required to be accorded for their protection and development... (MoTA, 2013, p. 13)

The extracts above signified the constructed vulnerability of the Adivasis, produced through the lack of literacy, and their need for protection and development. Such conceptualisation of people implied the strengthening of paternalistic power, as argued by Butler et al. (2016). The above extracts conveyed the language of protection of the Indian state in order to ‘develop’ the Adivasis and ‘promote with special care’ their educational interests. It linked to the discussion in Chapter 3 on the regime of protection instituted by the colonial State in India through the notions of social justice, equality, and liberty (Mamdani, 2012). The colonial rule in India was justified as welfarist to bring about civilisation and protection of India, while constructing Indians as lacking in education and development. I now shift the analysis to examine the effects of the regime of protection of the Indian State in relation to the performance of Adivasi identities with specific reference to education.

6.3.3 Regimes of protection

Nothing...shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the...Scheduled Tribes (Article 15(4), Constitution of India, 2013, p. 11)

Gonds are not able to understand the importance of things like education, because low cut-offs (in marks/scores to enter higher education) exist for them to pass entry-level exams; in competitive exams they get more number of attempts (to clear the exam) than the others; so even if they study the bare minimum they will pass. Every basic level entry position in government employment in the area is reserved for them and preferential treatment is given to them in jobs and education. We (non-Adivasis) have nothing. (Balram, 40, Male, non-Adivasi, shopkeeper, Interview)

Implied in the first extract from the Indian Constitution is the language of protection and development of the Indian State. The successive Indian governments have put in place
and sustained the system of affirmative action or positive discrimination for the Scheduled Tribes. It has given shape to the ‘special provision’ clause of the Indian Constitution. Seats are reserved in educational institutions and government employment for the groups classified as STs. Such reservation also exists in the Parliament and State legislatures, as discussed in Chapter 5. The reservations, according to the initial draft of the Constitution, were stipulated for a specific time after independence, to address/redress the history of State absence and inequalities in the Indian society inherited from the colonial rule (Constitution of India, 2013; Chandra, 2009). However, subsequent Indian governments have extended the reservation policy and included more groups under its remit. The policy plays a significant part in the electoral democracy of India and shapes the vote-bank / identity-politics (Béteille, 1998; Shah, 2010; Ambagudia, 2011).

The affirmative action and reservation policy of the Indian State, to ‘protect the STs from social injustice’ and ‘advance their educational and economic interests’ was implied by Balram in the deficit construction of the Adivasi Gond community. He used the policy to mark the Gonds as not hard-workers and doing the ‘bare minimum’ to get by in education and employment. He resonated the earlier comments about the Adivasis’ lack of understanding, specifically with regard to education. As a shopkeeper, Balram mentioned in our interview that all the local shops in the neighbouring areas were owned or run by the non-Adivasis, while the Adivasis worked either as daily wage labourers or in forestry and agriculture. However, this distinction between Adivasis and non-Adivasis, produced through their work, was normalised by Balram and not stated as odd or ab-normal. It was a way to claim superiority and placed Balram’s non-Adivasi community in an elevated position and in opposition to the Adivasis.

The use of ‘they’ for the Gonds and ‘we’ for the non-Adivasis in Balram’s comments implied the othering of the Adivasis in the local village community. It produced the two groups as internally homogeneous and undifferentiated. The Gonds were the unintelligible, the abject and constitutive other, against which the superiority of the non-Adivasis was constructed. Balram’s comment that ‘we have nothing’ was echoed by the other non-Adivasis in the village:

We do not have anything for our children, no scholarship, no jobs, nothing; they also have to study and work; but we end up paying a lot. We do not get free gas cylinders, and do not have Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards. We can get these cards made as some of us fulfil the criteria but then we feel ashamed to get these cards, to say that we are BPL. (Neera Bai, 29, non-Adivasi, cook in neighbourhood school, Interview)
The previous UPA government used to give doles to people, so they were eating for free. But the current NDA government has stopped doing so. It is teaching people to fish, so they can feed themselves, instead of giving free fish. (Angad, 45, Male, shopkeeper, non-Adivasi, Interview)

Neera Bai’s comment reiterated Balram’s concerns. The preferential treatment of the Adivasis in State policy, in education and jobs, was disfavoured by Neera Bai, who identified herself as an OBC. While eligible for free State provisioning of certain goods and services, Neera Bai mentioned that she had to obtain a BPL card for the same. However, the BPL card, which identified economically weaker sections and included the Adivasi households, was a matter of shame according to Neera Bai. It pointed to the negative associations of the government’s policy of protection of the Adivasis and its enactment at the village level. It was used to further construct the Adivasis negatively, while it internally divided the community and produced a number of internal others such as the OBCs and the STs.

Similar sentiments were conveyed by Angad who made a statement on the policies of the two recent Central governments in India. Implicit in his comments was a critique of the previous Congress/United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government which was assumed to have several schemes and policies for the Adivasis; and an appreciation of the current BJP/National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government’s reduction of the budget for expenditure on welfare schemes.

Angad’s comments further convey the deficit view of the Adivasis, produced through the regime of welfare, protection and development that internally divided the community. Both the groups, identified as Adivasi and non-Adivasis, inhabited the same space. However, the language and provisioning of the State for them differed significantly. These differences and distinctions, produced discursively, were kept alive, embodied and enacted over time. The comments above indicated permeation of hierarchies sustained and reiterated from the colonial regime. These hierarchies were drawn on by the non-Adivasis to claim superior status by casting out the Adivasis through language.

However, the government’s policy of protection was clarified by Saroja Bai:

There is not much external support for us. Some from the NGO but from the government (laughs), nothing. That kind of thinking does not exist here, that the government has to help us. We (Adivasis) do not get help even for our ration cards or daily employment, for our basic survival needs. I voted for this government thinking it would do better than the last one. They (government) are
Contradicting the preceding comments, Saroja Bai explained the lack of State support from successive governments. Implicit in her comments was the absence of (good) governance in the area and State’s neglect of even the ‘basic survival needs’ such as ration card, to procure free and subsidised food grains, and daily employment, mandated by law through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA). Education, then, was ‘extra responsibility’ for the State to take on, when it was unable to meet the basic requirements.

Implied through Saroja Bai’s comments is a contradiction of the negative construction of the Adivasis. The State’s regime of protection produced a deficit view of the Adivasis, in need of and as beneficiaries of State protection. It hierarchically positioned them in the local village context. However, it overlooked the history of State neglect in the area which existed for both the Adivasis and non-Adivasis. Like the non-Adivasis, the Adivasis, as Saroja Bai insisted, had no State support. The language of protection and development of the State then was a strategy, similar to the colonial regime, to internally divide the village community, constitute its powers, and legitimise its ‘welfarist’ agenda.

Having analysed the discursive formations produced and performed through religion and education in the local village community context of the Adivasis, I now shift the analysis to include gender as another regulatory regime. I argue, through data, that in the discursive production as well as the performance of Adivasi identities, gender is a significant construct that (re-)produces the Adivasis and (re-)positions them in deficit. I revisit the discussion in this and previous chapter to indicate the ways gender is subsumed in each of the dominant discursive strains that produce Adivasi identities. I analyse the aspects of land and work, religion and morality, and schooling and education to illustrate the gendered construction of each in the local context of the Adivasis.

6.4 Gender

The use of sex and gender as normative ideals, constituted within discourse and through relations of power, was elaborated in Chapter 3. These normative/discursive ideals work to order, group and hierarchise bodies or living beings ‘on basis of artificial unity…to use this fictitious unity as a causal principle’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 154). I use
this notion of sex and gender, as constituted within discourse and through power, to explain the production and performance of Adivasi identities by the local village community and mark the Adivasis as distinct.

6.4.1 Land, work and mobility

We (young women) do most of the work, collecting firewood from the forest, cooking, cleaning, washing, animal grazing, working in farms, everything. Sometimes brothers and fathers help too, but we do everything. They (men) go out to work in the farms. (Focus group with young Adivasi women in 15-18 age-groups)

Women work alongside men in the farms, doing the same work but they get paid 70 (Indian) Rupees (INR) a day, or at the maximum 100 INR, while men receive 150-200 INR. It is strange but maybe because women can work less than men or cannot do more laborious work, so they get paid less. (Alpa Bai, 30, Adivasi, Interview)

Women do everything in the everyday community life, most of the work in the village and in the households is carried out by them. The skewed ‘division of labour’ between men and women in the village, not so visible to me initially, started becoming visible when young Adivasi women described their work contributions in interviews and FGDs as encompassing “everything”. It reminds me of my practitioner work five years ago in these areas and thinking of Adivasi women as the ‘backbone’ of village economies in India. (Researcher Diary, April 2016)

Implicit in the above excerpts was the identification of women’s work contributions in the local village community as comprising “everything”, whether it was the work in forests, in farms, or within the household. At the same time, it was particular kinds of work and labour, such as collection of firewood for cooking and other household work that was attributed to women. Locke (1999) suggests that the work done by Adivasi women, such as collection work, ‘combines well with childcare, domestic duties and regular low-status employment for small domestic chores, and can be pursued when well-paid agricultural work is unavailable for women’ (p. 249). In this context, while women did most of the work in the village, an artificial separation of men’s and women’s work excluded the Adivasi women from relatively better-paid employment.

As such, the above excerpts implied the normalisation and naturalisation of Adivasi women’s work contributions in the village and the construction of this work as less-laborious and less-paid. The demarcation between women’s and men’s work in the village and the construction of their work as distinct worked to stabilise the dominant gender norms. It linked back to the discussion in Chapter 3 on the social regulation of gender through regulatory constructs such as work and labour which not only produce
but maintain these constructions, as well as produce the essentialised and opposing identities of woman and man.

The work done by men, on the other hand, was not clearly described in the first comment, and it involved going ‘out’ to work in farms. In this sense, a private/public distinction was produced with regard to the work done by the Adivasis and ‘women’s work’ was confined to the ‘private’. As analysed in the previous chapter, the Adivasis were restricted through work and way of life that were assumed to be unique to them (Shah, 2010). Within this confinement, the Adivasi women were further entrapped in the private and hierarchically placed in a subordinate position through a deficit construction of their work and labour.

Alpa Bai’s comments and the extract from the researcher diary above reiterated the normalisation and naturalisation of gender norms. While Alpa Bai pointed out that women worked alongside men and did the same work, she emphasised the “strange” or disparate construction of the ‘same work’. Working alongside men and doing the same work is assumed to signify ease of movement and mobility for women as well as gender equality. However, the hierarchical positioning of women in terms of difference in payments signified their entrenchment within a given division of labour (Agarwal, 1999), and in a socially instituted and regulated gender regime, with their work subject to depictions such as “less laborious” and “backbone” of the economy.

The entwinement of identity of the Adivasi women with particular kinds of work and labour as well as with the ‘private’ was further elaborated in the excerpts below:

It is risky to do this kind of work (household surveys and village meetings with NGO) alone. We need a companion. There are only three women in the entire programme (NGO project) – one is a core team member, the other two are young volunteers. There were 5-6 young women before, but they left… Women are not supposed to go out and do this kind of work (going door to door, working odd hours, travelling). Family, society, neighbours ask questions as a lot of fieldwork and roaming around is involved; women themselves do not like it plus their families do not approve. Then there is the fear of men, those kind of men, they drink and do bad things. (Raina, 27, Female, NGO worker, Interview)

Only men go to the chicken-market (komdi bazar) and to some of these shops you want to go to. They do bad things there, drink, chew tobacco. We (women) cannot go there and you should not either. (Neera Bai, 29, non-Adivasi, cook in neighbourhood school, Interview)

In the village and neighbouring area, I only go to certain shops and places, during daytime, which are not solely frequented by men. The young Adivasi female research participants advise me not to risk it by visiting particular shops
and to send a male research participant when I need to buy something from these places. (Researcher Diary, January 2016)

The restricted movement and mobility of women and their confinement within the private was indicated in the above comments. As an NGO worker, Raina described her work as risky owing to its public characterisation. She requested for a companion during her field visits to different villages, except her own where she said she knew people and could rely on her knowledge of local contacts and area. The separation of the work done by men and women and its association with public and private respectively made Raina’s work risky. This state of precarity and uncertainty about people’s blurring identities was exacerbated by the context of protracted violence and conflict, more so for the Adivasi women and affected their movement in the area. I will discuss this context of precarity further in Chapter 7.

Raina’s comments also pointed to the stabilisation of regulatory gender norms as well as their (re)production and embodiment. Her comment ‘women are not supposed to go out and do this kind of work’ reflected the maintenance of these norms. Additionally, she signalled the policing of these norms by ‘family, society and neighbours’. The production, embodiment and performance of the gender norms were evident in the comment ‘women themselves do not like it’. My interactions with the female Adivasi research participants influenced my movement in the area and signalled a regulatory gender regime at work, as indicated in the researcher diary extract.

The negative construction of the Adivasis through alcohol and tobacco consumption, also analysed in Section 6.2 and 6.3, was reiterated in Raina’s and Neera Bai’s comments as well as through the researcher diary excerpt. While for Raina it was the distinction produced through work, for Neera Bai and me it was the distinction of public/private, or the places that women could and could not go to. The construction of the Adivasi men as drinking alcohol and chewing tobacco, in particular public places, produced restrictions for women, ‘risks’ and fear of ‘bad things’. It connected back to Massey’s (1994) notion of ‘differentiated mobility’ discussed in the previous chapter:

For it does seem that mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power…Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak (Massey, 1994, p. 150).

The Adivasis were discursively confined through work and a way of life which was negatively associated with alcohol and tobacco consumption. However, it was a gendered confinement, as it restricted the mobility of Adivasi women more compared to
Adivasi men. The constructed binary of public/private linked to Massey’s (1994) conceptualisation of space and place, as the reciprocal and co-constitutive link between space and gender was symbolised in the above extracts. Access to certain spaces/places was intertwined with particular constructions of gender relations, which were spatially constituted, through the division of public and private spaces. This gendering of spaces had implications for the construction and maintenance of power relations through social control over identity (Massey, 1994). In context of the Adivasis, the discursive confinement of women to the ‘private’ implied spatial as well as social control over identity and their subordinate social positioning in relation to men.

However, the public/private separation did not remain uncontested:

In one of the streets leading to the village, there is a small shop selling stationery goods. During the daytime when I walk past it, there is often small groups of young women from the village. They show me the pens and pencils they have to buy for school work or for some event/project in the village. Only recently, after five months in the village, two of my research participants who I also met at the shop mentioned that it was an ‘assembly point’ for the young Adivasi women to buy gudaku (tobacco). It is 5 INR per box and they contribute the money to buy one box every week and share it. They show me the box and teach me how to use it, on the toothbrush in the morning so no one can find out. But they tell me not to do it, it is a ‘bad thing’ they say (Researcher Diary, April 2016).

The contestation of the gendering of the public and private spaces/places is implied in the above extract from the researcher diary. As analysed earlier in this section, only men could go to certain shops in the village and do ‘bad things’ such as drink alcohol and chew tobacco. These shops were at the main street/road in the village. However, the stationery shop was comparatively smaller and located inside one of the streets. It was less visible compared to the shops that men frequented, disguised to provide stationery goods, and so provided a safe public space for assembly to the young Adivasi women. It linked to the idea of ‘collective assemblies’ and signified relations of support and alliances among those who are deemed disposable and precarious (Butler, 2015, 2016).

The utilisation of the stationery shop by the young women to buy tobacco exemplified the resignification of their othering/abjection, their discursive confinement to the private, and the association of public and of ‘bad things’ with men. The young Adivasi women selectively and strategically used the public/private dichotomy, by selecting a place in-between this binary, to resist and resignify their discursive marginalisation. In this sense, their discursive vulnerability was linked to and a form of resistance. It was
mobilised to produce resistance through their exposure to harm and to power (Butler et al., 2016). Additionally, the invisibility of the shop was used to contest and subvert the dominance of heterosexist and patriarchal gender norms in the area.

As an extension to the above discussion, I now include religion to my analysis to illustrate its regulatory and moralising effects on gender relations in context of the production and performance of Adivasi identities.

### 6.4.2 Religion, morality and gender

Kranti Bai would be in her 80s. She walks with a stick but still goes to the forest to bring firewood for her house. She wears a loincloth, draped around like a patana (saree) but does not wear a blouse. Some other elderly women dress similarly. She walks bare feet, like most other elders in the village...

(Researcher Diary, November 2016)

Things were bad till some years ago, people used to roam around just like that (without clothes), even women. Things are slightly better now, not that women are still fully dressed. You should not be surprised if you see their upper body uncovered. (Abhay, 23, Male, Adivasi youth, Interview)

The dress that the Adivasi women wore in the village was a significant marker in the production and performance of Adivasi identities, as I will analyse in this sub-section. Like Kranti Bai, some elderly women in the village wore a loincloth draped around the body, covering it till the knees. Abhay explained that this was how the Adivasi women in the village dressed historically. The loincloth, loosely draped, partially covered the upper body, as observed in the extract above from the researcher diary. By contrast, men left their upper bodies uncovered, draped a loincloth in a similar way, or wore a vest with the loincloth. However, my particular observation of Kranti Bai as not wearing a blouse as well as walking bare feet points to its peculiarity for me.

For Abhay, the lack of clothes carried negative associations, specifically in the case of women. However, covering of the body, especially the upper body in case of women, signified change and betterment. Clothes and the way the Adivasi women dressed provided another discursive strain through which the Adivasis were positioned negatively. In my observations, the way Adivasi women from different age-groups dressed followed a linear and ‘evolutionary’ trajectory. Women in their 40s and 50s wore a ‘proper’ saree, tied like a patana which was the ‘mainstream’ Maharashtrian way of dressing for women in the state. This saree was till the ankles and was accompanied by a blouse underneath, unlike the dress of the elderly women. The
younger women in the area mostly wore salwar kameez with a *dupatta* / scarf.\textsuperscript{15} This ‘change’ in the way of dressing was explained by Raina:

> There are strict codes for women here. You can see it in the way older and younger women dress. I think it is all the Hindu influence. The Hindi TV serials and movies have popularised their (Hindu) way of dressing. (Raina, 27, Adivasi woman, NGO worker, Interview)

For Raina, it was the ‘Hindu influence’ that constituted the change in dress of the Adivasi women. This way of dressing, as explicated by Raina, was being made popular by the Hindi media as the proper or fashionable way of dressing. In this sense, the popular Hindu religion defined the dress code for Adivasi women, which Raina described as ‘strict’. By implication, it marked the women dressed ‘differently’ as the Other, the exclusionary limit against which the existence and superiority of the Hindu community were asserted. Sundar (1997) argues that the ‘more ‘civilised’ the Adivasis get in their own eyes’, the more they follow the practices of the caste-Hindus (p. 251). The way/change of dress illustrated the embodiment and enactment of gender norms by the Adivasis and their interpellation into the dominant regulative discourse.

Raina’s comments also refer back to the discussion in Chapter 3 on religion and its reciprocal link with the constitution of the public sphere (Butler et al., 2011). The way women could dress in public was determined by the Hindu religion, according to Raina, as the public itself was constituted through religion. The moralising effects of religion, through its regulation of the public, on gender relations were further explained in the following extracts:

> Having salwar kameez as school and college uniform is better. Women wear salwar kameez and men wear pants-shirt. Once a week when the uniform is washed, we (women) can wear whatever we like. We still go wearing salwar kameez. We do not wear jeans. We can wear jeans if we wanted to but if we do anyone can say anything and then we feel uncomfortable. Women in cities wear jeans because no one says anything there, but we come from small villages where wearing jeans is not acceptable. (Kamna, 20, female, Adivasi, college student, Interview)

> We certainly cannot wear jeans after marriage. People would say that she is looking for another man for an affair. After marriage it all depends on the kind of husband you get, and if he allows you to wear particular clothes but only at home. Outside is different. There are other people involved then. There are too

\textsuperscript{15} The dress of salwar kameez with dupatta is mainly found in the north of India and is now a ‘mainstream’ way dressing up for everyday lives for women in that region. It comes from the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent and sometimes thought of as the “Islamic dress” or something that the Muslim men and women used to wear. But increasingly it is being associated with the Hindu women in the country (Guha, 2004).
many labels here, if we do not get married at a particular age or do not wear proper clothes. (Mira Bai, 38, Adivasi, daily wage worker and mother, Interview)

The above comments signified the construction of gender as a regulatory regime in the village. It worked through norms such as those of dress to secure heteronormativity. Kamna’s preference of dress, as suggested in her comment above, was guided by this heteronormativity assumed within the gender regime. She felt uncomfortable wearing jeans due to the concern that ‘anyone can say anything’. For this reason, she had normalised the ‘choice’ of salwar kameez as uniform. This concern was resonated by Mira Bai in her comment ‘there are too many labels here’. She associated the wearing of jeans after marriage to a lack of morality, through her statement ‘people would say that looking for another man for an affair’. It indicated regulation of women and ‘policing of gender as a way of securing heterosexuality’ (Butler, 1990, p. xii). It further linked to the dichotomy of material/spiritual or inner (home) / outer (world) produced during the Indian nationalists’ resistance to the colonial rule’s emphasis on the material (Chatterjee, 1989), as discussed in Chapter 2.

For Kamna, the way women could dress in cities vis-à-vis small villages implied a binary between the two. Kamna associated cities with a ‘modern’ way of life, where no one said anything to women who wore jeans, while constructing the way of life in the village as ‘traditional’, where wearing jeans was ‘not acceptable’. Jeans in this sense became a symbol of modernity, applied selectively to further produce the Adivasis as ‘traditional’. For Mira Bai, the binary was echoed in the construction of the private as different from the public or the outside. The dress of women, in this sense, was regulated by the husband in the private, whereas the ‘there were other people involved’ in the regulation/policing of gender in the outside.

Gender was deployed as a regulatory construct to reassert patriarchal structures and reinforce discursive norms that produced the Adivasis as ‘pre-modern’. The dress of the elderly women was assumed to signify tradition or lack of modernity. The dress of the younger women was determined through ‘mainstream’ Hindu and Maharashtrian ways, which were considered ‘proper’ and ‘modernising’. However, the wearing of jeans, associated with modernity, was used to convey immorality and regulated/policed.

Like the agricultural practice of jhum discussed in the previous chapter, the dress of jeans was selectively deployed to place the Adivasis in a deficit position. It worked to control/silence the sexuality of young Adivasi women and acted as a social control on
identity (Massey, 1994; Crossouard et al., 2017). This social control on women’s identities had implications for education in the area. I now combine the two discussions in this section, on work and mobility, and religion and morality, to analyse the gendering of education in the local community context of the Adivasis.

6.4.3 Gender and Education

I studied till class 7 and then had to leave. It was an early morning school when most of the work needed to be done. How could I have gone? We were two sisters and three brothers. The brothers studied till class 10 but all of us (sisters) had to dropout to work. But see, both my son and daughter are studying now. They both go to school. I never ask them to work. (Alpa Bai, 30, Adivasi, Parent, Interview)

Alpa Bai’s comments reiterate Shanti Bai’s earlier comments analysed in Section 6.3.2. Going to school for young women conflicted with the work that they did, within and outside the home. As the work done by women in the village comprised household work as well as collection and other work in the forest, the morning school clashed with Alpa Bai’s daily routine. The comments pointed to the disregard of village life and daily routines in the setting of school timetables, as also illustrated by Dunne and Ananga (2013) in the context of school ‘dropouts’ in Ghana. It produced a binary between work and education for the Adivasi women in the village, as evident in Alpa Bai’s second comment. While she had to ‘dropout’ of school due to work, she insisted on her children’s schooling instead of work.

Alpa Bai’s comments also point to the gendered access to education in the local community context. While it was relatively easier for her three brothers to continue their education till class 10, Alpa Bai and her sisters had to ‘dropout’ of school. The articulation of women’s work in the village, as ‘everything’ within and outside the household, as analysed earlier in this section, put more pressure on women to work and pushed them out of school (Reddy and Sinha, 2010). The notion of ‘dropout’ in this sense required revisiting, as argued in Chapter 3, to include the complexity of the social processes that were gendered and constantly negotiated (Dunne et al., 2007).

The gendered access to education was also pointed out by Sag:

My elder sister dropped out after class 5 to help our father after our mother died; and some years later my brother and I dropped out too because the ashram school we were in was not good. Now we are going to re-join school with the help of the NGO...my sister was married and could not finish her school. (Sag, 15, Focus group with young Adivasi men in 15-18 age-groups)
Sag’s comments echoed the work/education binary, instated more specifically in the context of the Adivasi women. While young men such as Sag and his brother were able to negotiate access to education even after ‘dropping out’, through the NGO, Sag’s sister was unable to do the same. Access to education for young Adivasi women was restricted due to age and concerns of marriage. It linked back to the earlier discussion on morality in this section. There were too many labels, as indicated by Mira Bai, if women did not marry at a particular age. The restricted access to education for young Adivasi women was also pointed out by Pari and Reema:

There was never any transport to go to school, so I used to take the privately-run cars when those were available. Then one day my father accompanied me, and we could not find anything (to go to school). He got worried and asked me not to go from then on. (Pari, 16, Focus group with young Adivasi women in 15-18 years age-groups)

There are only Arts subjects that we can opt for in our area, no Science subjects. We live in a small village that is why our options are limited. We can study Science, I wanted to study Science, I was good at it, but I would have had to travel a long distance to go to the Block for those options. It is risky to go alone, and parents do not allow you to cover a long distance if you are young. Now I am studying Political Science, I do not like it or understand it but it was the only option I had. (Reema, 19, Adivasi, college student, Interview)

The comments above illustrated the effects of ‘differentiated mobility’ of women in the area on their educational access. The restricted mobility of women, compared to men, in the village influenced how they could go to school and what subjects they could study. While Pari’s travel to school was impeded due to the lack of public transport and her father’s concerns about sending her to school alone, Reema’s ‘choice’ of subjects in school was determined by the distance to school. The risk, mentioned earlier by Raina in the carrying out of her NGO work, was restated by Reema in going alone to school. The control over the mobility of women was exercised by men, such as fathers, or other family members, as implicit in the above excerpts. It pointed to the ‘naturalised and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power’ (Butler, 1990, p. 46).

The notion of (a)morality, associated with the Adivasis, had a bearing on young women’s access to schools and education:

Some Gond practices such as the Ghotul, dormitories where young people go to stay, are not good. They develop relations with each other, have babies, and are then forced to marry each other. Young women (under-18) from my school have been married like this. Some of us (teachers) tried to stop these marriages but the parents do not agree. They can keep coming to school after marriage;
two young women from my class who got married are still coming in class 12. But one got pregnant, so she has stopped coming to school now (Babita, 29, Adivasi, Teacher in local government day school, Interview)

Implied in Babita's comments is the utilisation of the discourse of morality deployed to construct the Adivasis as immoral. The construction of love affairs in this and previous sections, as bad, morally wrong and distraction, was reinstated through Babita's comments. Babita was a school teacher and identified herself as an Adivasi. However, she was critical of the intermingling of the young people through the practice of Ghotul, a common practice among some Adivasi communities in India, comparable to 'camping' in the West. It involved young people staying together for some days and festivities of singing and dancing, mostly local Gondi songs and customs (Sundar, 1997; Padel and Das, 2010; Shah, 2010).

As a school teacher, Babita de-valued this local tradition or custom in the village as it involved developing relations between young Adivasi men and women. Sundar (1997) suggests that the Adivasi women had considerable ease of movement and worked with men in farms and forests, something not visible among the other groups in the country. However, their mobility and relative equality, compared to the other social groups, was deployed to construct them as amoral (Sundar, 1997). Otherwise constructed as symbols of modernity, ease of movement and equality with men were selectively used for the deficit production of the Adivasis.

Babita's comments signified the constructed binary between marriage and education as well as the deficit construction of in-school pregnancy, as also exemplified by Salvi (2014) in the context of Mozambique. The marriage of young Adivasi women was viewed unfavourably by Babita, who had tried to stop some of these marriages so that the young women could keep coming to school. It implied the negative construction of marriage and assumed obstruction of education. However, Babita clarified that the married women could 'keep coming to school'. It was the pregnancy of the young women that impeded educational access and prevented them from continuing schooling (Salvi, 2014), according to Babita. The conceptualisation of 'dropout' of the young Adivasi women from school, one of the highest in the country, had to include the above aspects of work and mobility, religion and morality, as well as marriage and pregnancy.

The analysis in the above section represented the gendering of work, mobility, religion and education in the local village community context of the Adivasis. Gender, while
subsumed within each of the discursive strains deployed to negatively construct the Adivasis, worked as a regulatory regime to confine women within the discursive entrapment of the Adivasis. The implications of the constructed tradition/modernity binary were accentuated in the context of Adivasi women and acted as a form of control on their identities. It connected to the discussion in Chapter 3, on ‘ordering of a woman’s body in terms of its utility, keeping it in constant agitations through the effects of that very function’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 153). Within the Adivasis, the Adivasi woman was produced as the abject other, as the constitutive limit of that identity.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed the production and performance of Adivasi identities by a local village community in India. I engaged with Research Question 2 of this study to illustrate the ways in which the dominant discursive categories, analysed in the previous chapter and signifying hierarchy and difference, were (re)produced and enacted in the local village context of the Adivasis. Through the regulatory constructs of religion, education and gender, I emphasised the interpellation of the Adivasis within the dominant discourse that placed them in a deficit position. I highlighted the othering of the Adivasis, within the presence of multiple internal others in the village. In addition, I examined the binary produced between tradition and modernity, which placed the Adivasis as traditional, pre-modern, and slowly changing. However, I troubled this binary, through data excerpts, to indicate its construction and its utilisation in the discourse selectively to control and regulate the Adivasis. This chapter builds on the analysis of the previous chapter and provides the framework for the next analytical chapter. It draws focus to the regulative discursive regime and the complex context of precarity in which the Adivasis live. The next chapter then explores the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the Gond community in the context of protracted violence.
Chapter 7 – Navigating Indian and Adivasi identities

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities by the Adivasi Gond community, in the context of protracted violence. This chapter builds on the analysis of the last two chapters and engages with Research Question 3. While Chapter 5 traced the discursive production of identity of the Adivasis by the colonial and Indian state, Chapter 6 explored the production and performance of the Adivasi identities in the local village-community context, through the lens of religion, education and gender. Drawing on the analysis of the last two chapters, this chapter examines the context of violence and precarity, in which the Adivasis live, and their strategies to navigate the discursively constituted identities and claim their rights.

I draw on Galtung’s (1971, 1990) notion of structural, cultural and direct violence to theorise and analyse the context of the Gond community. However, as indicated in Chapter 3, while Galtung differentiates between the three forms of violence, structural, cultural and direct, I use a poststructural understanding of violence to view these as co-constitutive and not mutually exclusive. I illustrate this overlap and mutual reinforcement throughout the chapter. Additionally, I use Butler’s (2015) explanation of precarity as a ‘politically induced condition of suffering’ (p. 33) to illustrate the tense and erratic relations among the Gond community, the Maoists/Naxals and the Indian State. In doing so, I refer back to Chapter 2 to argue that the history of State absence and its meting out of various forms of violence in the areas of the Adivasis has strong linkages with the presence of the Maoists.

I analyse the silence and (non-)participation of the Gond community in the structures of governance and link it back to their discursive construction as silent, shy and non-participatory in Chapter 5. I refer back to Chapter 3 to draw attention to the idea of India, characterised by the notions of sovereignty, socialism, democracy, decentralisation and participation. However, I argue for a poststructural conceptualisation of silence, as a strategy to navigate the precarious context of fear, violence, mistrust and unaccountability. Through my analysis of the data, I suggest that the silence of the Adivasis is active and agentic, their refusal and resistance to participate is in order to protect themselves and ensure their safety and survival given the uncertainties of the context. As such, I locate the agency and resistance of the Adivasis within their silence, suffering and vulnerability.
The discussion in this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explores the everydayness and normalcy of violence and the ways in which it gets naturalised and infiltrates into the daily life of people. The incidents of State and Maoist violence along with the responses of the people to the same are analysed to elaborate the context of violence. The second section explores the context of precarity by examining the blurring of lines between the State and the Maoists and examines the tense and erratic relations among them and the Gond community. The third section analyses the strategies of resistance of the Gond people as a response to the tensions. Their silence and dissociation from both the power groups is seen as a deficit by the others in the area and used to re-label the Adivasis as shy, silent and non-participating. The last section then explores the selective/strategic participation of the Adivasis for their community development and to gain access to rights and resources, through navigating and siding with different groups working in the area.

7.2 Normalcy of violence

The States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are considered LWE affected...A number of Left Wing Extremist outfits have been operating in certain remote and poorly connected pockets of the country for a few decades now...This has resulted in a spiralling cycle of violence in some parts of India. The poor and the marginalised sections like the tribals are bearing the brunt of this violence. (MHA, 2013)

The above extract from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, describes the Maoist movement in the country as insurgency and Left-Wing Extremism (MHA, 2013). The naming of nine states as LWE-affected reiterated the discursive power of the Indian State to demarcate and differentiate particular areas of the country. It linked to the discussion in Chapter 3 on the power of discourse to install regulatory regimes such as the State, bring subjects into being and produce the stated effect (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1993, 1997). The naming of the Maoist movement as Left-Wing Extremism was constitutive of its materiality and (un)intelligibility as well as the consolidation of the powers of the Indian state, as will be analysed further in this section. It built on the colonial legacy of ‘define and rule’ that produced the colonial State as the authentic authority to define and produce difference (Mamdani, 2012).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the nine states associated with LWE, as also implied in the above extract, are characterised by a predominant presence of the Adivasi communities and of areas marked as Scheduled (Sinha, 2011). The discursive
association of extremism and violence with the remote and Scheduled areas of the country inhabited by the Adivasis reinforced their separation from the rest of the country. It marked these areas as LWE-affected and reiterated the geographical criteria of isolation and remote location deployed for their demarcation, as analysed in Chapter 5. The naming of the areas as extremism affected, along with their demarcation as remote and poor was an incident of structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1971, 1990; Pherali, 2013). It legitimised direct violence, as will be examined further in this section, by building-in symbolic violence through the association of particular areas, people and their ways of life with extremism.

The discursive association of extremism with the areas inhabited by the Adivasis produced a narrative that provided a common-sense explanation of the violence between the Maoists and the Indian State, as implicit in the above extract. It explained violence as an outcome of the characteristics of the people and the area that they inhabit and linked back to their construction as backward, primitive and socially isolated. It again intertwined their identity with the place as well as with extremism. It normalised and naturalised violence through its association with particular areas in the country.

Such a narrative, while encumbered with notions of individual responsibility, did not acknowledge the absence of governance and made the Adivasis responsible for as well as ‘victims’ of the ‘spiralling cycle of violence’. At the same time, it provided the following explanation of conflict:

In areas under Maoist domination, the absence of governance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy since the delivery systems are extinguished through killings and intimidation. This is the first step in the strategy of the Maoists to seek to control the countryside. (MHA, 2013)

Implicit in the above extract is the disregard of the histories of State neglect of areas inhabited by the Adivasis, as discussed in Chapter 2. While on the one hand the association of violence with these areas indirectly made the Adivasis responsible for the violence; it overlooked the absence of governance by referring to it as a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’. It pointed to Sinha’s (n.d.) notion of deficit State and abdication of State’s responsibility by blaming the Maoists for extinguishing delivery systems. Such a description of violence provided a case for increased State penetration and consolidation of its powers:
The CPI (Maoist) philosophy of armed insurgency to overthrow the Government is unacceptable under the Indian constitution and the founding principles of the Indian State... The Central Government closely monitors the situation and supplements... efforts in several ways. These include providing Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA); sanction of India Reserve (IR) battalions, setting up of Counter Insurgency and Anti Terrorism (CIAT) schools; modernisation and upgradation of the State Police and their Intelligence apparatus... etc. The underlying philosophy is to enhance the capacity of the State Governments to tackle the Maoist menace in a concerted manner. (MHA, 2013)

Implied in the extract above are many connected points. It conveyed the labelling of the Maoist movement, or the Communist Party of India (CPI-Maoist), as anti-India. The CPI(M)'s 'philosophy of armed insurgency' or violence was marked as opposed to the idea of India and 'the founding principles of the Indian State'. The Indian Constitution was invoked to build a case against the Maoists. In this sense, the use of violence by the Maoists was used as a ground to label them as an anti-India, terrorist organisation and included in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (MHA, 2013). The Indian and Maoist identities were constructed in opposition to each other, delegitimising the latter as unlawful. The constructed binary between the two made their co-existence unsustainable, as will be analysed further in this chapter.

At the same time, the infiltration of the Indian State through armed police forces and para-military battalions in particular areas was evident in the above extract. The State infiltration was labelled as counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism measures to combat the violence of the Maoists and 'tackle the Maoist menace'. While the violence of the Maoists was symbolised as anti-State and terrorist, the violence of the State through its deployment of armed forces was justified and represented as 'capacity building' of the states.

The depiction of State-violence in the above sense signified the normalisation of violence in the areas of the Adivasis and further marked as LWE-affected. Its description as pro-State, and as opposed to the anti-State violence of the Maoists, pointed to its deployment as a symbol of sovereignty (Foucault, 1984a, 1984b). It linked back to the discussion in Chapter 3 on the construction of the nation-state through processes of signification, the signification of meanings of 'symbols associated with national life' (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 3). The formation of the Indian nation-state through the notion of the sovereign or 'we the people' represented the governed as independent and self-determining. In this sense, the above extract legitimised constant state penetration and surveillance through armed forces, para-military and police in the
name and protection of the sovereign, as well as against those constructed as anti-
India.

However, Smita’s comments below pointed to the contradiction in justifying State
violence:

My village was called *chota* Kashmir (mini Kashmir) because of all the terror. There used to be a heavy Naxal presence here in the 1990s. They would hold meetings and rallies at night, asked people to participate, and sometimes took children with them to join their cadres. Then the Police and Para-military would come to look for them and terrorise people, that is why *chota* Kashmir (Smita, 28, female, Adivasi, Teacher, Interview)

The excerpt above reiterated the delineation of the modes of State penetration into community life as a response to the ‘Naxal presence’. The classification of the Maoist movement as Left-Wing Extremism by the Indian State associated the violence with terror, as pointed out by Smita. Smita explained the labelling of her village as *chota* Kashmir, attributing it to ‘all the terror’. Kashmir is usually associated with militancy, terrorism and counter-terror operations of the State in the popular imagination. However, Yagnamurthy (2013) highlights that the violence between the Indian State and the Maoists has caused more casualties than the ‘militancy’ in Kashmir and ‘insurgency’ in the North-East of India.

By likening her village to Kashmir, Smita indicated how State-violence was being legitimised in the name of counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism. However, she used ‘terror’ to denote the actions of the Police and Para-military. While the Indian State named the Maoists as a terrorist organisation and used the term ‘terror’ for anti-State violence, Smita used it to describe the State-violence. It connected to Asad et al.’s (2009) argument on the differing conceptions of violence in order to secure the violence of the State, as purportedly done in the name of democracy and sovereignty. Smita’s comments above pointed to this contradiction in the stabilisation of State-violence and association of Maoist-violence with terror.

The association of terror with Police and Para-military forces produced violence as an accepted norm in the village. It was institutionalised and legitimised by being linked to the agents of the Indian State. It linked to Galtung’s (1990) conceptualisation of the direct-structural-cultural violence triangle, through which violent structures are
institutionalised, violent cultures internalised, and direct violence becomes repetitive and ritualistic.

In contrast to this association, Smita mentioned the Naxals as a group that would ‘hold meetings and rallies’ and ‘asked people to participate’. Shah (2013) refers to this proximity of Maoists to Adivasis as the ‘intimacy of insurgency’, vis-à-vis the absence of the Indian State. Shah (2010, 2013) argues that the Maoists worked through the language of respect and dignity, as opposed to the language of domination of the Indian State. In the context of Smita’s comments, it also reflected the decentralised ways of working of the Maoists in contrast to the centralised and bureaucratic functioning of the Indian State.

The normalisation of violence in the area was resonated in the extracts below:

There is a constant reminder that this is a conflict-affected area. Some places in the forest display red and white banners and posters of the curfew to be imposed by the Maoists for a week in December to commemorate Martyrs’ Day. No transport will be allowed to run for a week. Going around will be difficult during this time, especially for me as an ‘outsider’. The neighbours say that they are used to it as it is a regular occurrence, that the Maoists do not harm people of the village, but it is only when they know who you are. (Researcher Diary, December 2015)

Implicit in the above extract from the researcher diary is the particularity of context of the Adivasi Gond community. It reiterated the association of the area with conflict and curfews, specifically for ‘outsiders’ such as myself. Curfews were held regularly by the Maoists and restricted the mobility of the inhabitants of the area. The restriction on public transport, already minimal in its presence, signified undermining of State authority (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Chaudhary et al., 2013; Pherali, 2013; Sinha, n.d.). In this sense, the Maoists had consolidated their positioning and authority as another power group in the area. The tacit acceptance of the Maoist-authority was conveyed by my neighbours in their reference to the curfew as a ‘regular occurrence’. It symbolised its normalcy and everydayness of control and regulation of the people living in the area. It also pointed to the significance of being an ‘insider’, as being easily identified to prevent harm. This will be discussed in the next section on ‘blurring identities’.
The above extract from the researcher diary was substantiated by the interview excerpts below:

I had to go to the hospital once in the middle of the curfew. As there was no other transport, I went with my brother on his motorcycle. We reached a checkpoint where they (Maoists) had caught someone’s van and were burning it. But as they knew us and our village, they let us go. They would have burned the motorcycle and hit us if they did not know us. (Shelly, 26, Female, Adivasi, Interview)

The atmosphere here is always tense. Sometimes there is a curfew for 15 days at a stretch. Then new police stations come up if the curfew extends for too long. The Police and the Maoists hit anybody who looks new or suspicious. We (NGO staff) are new, and we are outsiders, so we face the risk of being beaten up. But there is enough support for us in the village, so we are safe (Raja, 35, Male, NGO worker, non-Adivasi, Interview)

The imposition of curfews and restriction of people’s mobility was implied in the above comments. Additionally, the absence of State in terms of public transport was pointed to by Shelly. In contrast to the State-absence, the authority of the Maoists was indicated through the presence of ‘checkpoints’. It reiterated the constant surveillance of the village inhabitants by the Maoists and the fear of violence. The issue of identification was raised by both Shelly and Raja and the importance of being known or identified by the Maoists as well as the Police.

Implied in Raja’s comments was the reiteration of State penetration through police stations. While the State was absent in terms of other services such as transportation, it was present militarily as a response to the Maoists. It linked to the notion of ‘security first, development later’, an approach adopted by governments in some areas of conflict (Novelli and Smith, 2011, p. 25). Shelly’s and Raja’s comments above illustrated the constitution of the Maoists and the Police/Para-military as two power groups in the area and the consolidation of their powers through violence in response to each other.

However, Raja’s comments also pointed to the penetration of the NGO in the everyday community life. In contrast to the Police and the Maoists who were associated with violence, Raja emphasised support for the NGO in the village community that ensured the safety of the NGO staff. The featuring of the NGO as an in-between, in the Police-Maoist binary, represented the space occupied by it and its role as an important service-provider for the Adivasi community (Sinha, n.d.), as will be analysed in the following sections.
Notwithstanding, the extracts analysed in this section pointed to the context of violence and fear. They drew attention to the tensions between the Indian State, represented by the Police and Para-military, and the Maoists. The context of the Adivasi Gond community, as analysed above, linked to Butler’s (2015, 2016) notion of precarity as a politically induced condition of suffering and vulnerability. It signified the exposure to injury, violence, death or to maximised vulnerability without protection or redress, for some groups, such as the Adivasis, more than the others (Butler, 2015, 2016). Implicit also in the above excerpts is the blurring lines of identification and the navigation of this context of precarity. I now turn the analysis to explore this blurring of identities in the context of violence and fear.

7.3 Blurring identities

The majority of the civilians killed (in Maoist insurgency) are tribals, often branded as ‘Police informers’ before being brutally tortured and killed…the tribal and the economically underprivileged sections, whose cause the Maoists claim to espouse, have been the biggest victims of the so called ‘protracted peoples war’ of the CPI (Maoist) against the Indian state. (MHA, 2013)

The extract above resonated the incidence of brutal violence, mentioning ‘tribals’ as the ‘biggest victims’ of the insurgency. The construction of the Adivasis as Tribal by the Indian State gets reiterated in the extract. Their production as ‘victims’ of the Maoist violence, and not State violence, linked back to the construction of the Adivasis as non-agentive, shy and silent through State policy and practice, as discussed in Chapter 5. It (re-)produced the notion of the Adivasis as ‘caught in the middle’ of conflict as innocent civilians (Chaudhary et al., 2013). Simultaneously, it disregarded the histories of State absence and neglect as well as State-violence in the areas of the Adivasis (Sundar, 1997; Shah, 2010, 2013).

Implied in the above extract is the ‘branding’ of the Adivasis as ‘Police informers’ before being killed by the Maoists. As mentioned in the previous section, the issue of identification or being identified by the Police and the Maoists was significant in the context of the Adivasis. The context of violence produced a context of precarity exacerbated by the blurring of lines of individual identification. This blurring raised questions of identity for the Adivasis:

R: The Police shot two Maoists yesterday in an encounter (shows pictures of two dead bodies on the road)
Me: But can they be people from the village? How can you be sure they are Maoists?
R: This is usually the trend. The Police shoot people in an encounter killing, says it was the Maoists, the local media publishes it and the people believe it. Nobody for sure knows who killed and who died. (Rajesh, 35, Male, NGO worker, non-Adivasi, Interview)

Rajesh’s comments above reiterated the blurring lines of individual identification and the possibility of having more than one identity and affiliation. For Rajesh, the Police were killing people assumed to be Maoists in Police encounters, and there was no way to ascertain the identities of those being killed. These killings were substantiated by the media and legitimised the State-violence to ‘combat’ the insurgency (Mohanty, 2006; Rajagopalan, 2007; MHA, 2013). The labelling or branding of people as informers, claimed in the government policy extracts, was being carried out by the State itself to legitimise its way of functioning.

The blurring of lines raised questions of identity for the Adivasis as Maoists or Maoist sympathisers, or State agents or Police informers, and of having more than one identity. The State policy identified ‘tribals’ marked as ‘Police informers’ as the victims of the violence, whereas Rajesh questioned that claim. Such identification or branding of people as siding with one or the other camp pointed to the tension between the State and the Maoists. The ambiguous position of the Adivasis was worsened by the possibility of them siding with either of these two sides:

In the focus group discussion today with youths from the Gond community, there were silences around the topic of insurgency. Some of them looked at each other and did not talk on the topic…In the one-to-one interviews later they were different and talked about the conflict at length. The reason was that no one wanted to come across as an informer, whether of the Police or the Naxals. So, it is an everyday discussion and negotiation, of choosing or not choosing sides. (Research Diary, March 2016)

The precarious context of the Gond community was indicated through the excerpt from researcher diary. Their silence in a public forum, such as the focus group, was a response to the blurring lines of identification and the possibility of being identified as an informer. While it echoed the government policy extract of the Adivasis being branded as Police informers, the Adivasis faced the risk of being labelled as a Maoist informer by the Police. This double agent position added further uncertainty to the everyday life of the Gond community. It illustrated Adivasi identities as multiple, contingent and fractured (Mouffe, 1993; Hall, 1996). However, it also produced the danger of association especially for the Adivasis who were constructed as silent, shy and non-participatory through the State policy and practice.
The difference in responses of the participants, between focus group and interview, conveyed mistrust among the people. The silence around the insurgency in focus group discussions reflected the uncertainty of the Gond people to associate with either the State or the Maoists publicly and a loss of trust. Pherali (2013) argues that in the context of Nepal’s People’s War, school teachers faced the risk of being labelled as spies by both the Maoists and the security forces. This reinforced the State’s failure to protect government institutions and produced loss of trust in governance in teachers and parents (Kagawa, 2005; Davies, 2010; Pherali, 2013). The above excerpt then also implied the significance of good governance and accountability, more so in the context of the Adivasi Gond community (UNESCO, 2009). The inability of people to speak openly, or their lack of ‘voice’ in public, signified their vulnerability and implied unaccountable governance (UNESCO, 2017). The issue of (un-)accountability will be discussed further in this section.

At the same time, one of my companions from the village, who was a Gond and accompanied me for this particular focus group with youths later identified a Maoist sympathiser and an old Maoist commander who had surrendered to the Police participating in the focus group and as reason for the silence around this topic. However, my presence and positioning as a village outsider could have also been the reason behind the silences. Nonetheless, the general issue of mistrust and uncertainty remained.

The precarity of context, blurring identities and the Police/Maoist binary was re-instated through the following excerpts:

N: They roam around all the time in plain clothes.
Me: Who are they?
N: They who live in the forests, the inside-people (*andar-waale log* used to refer to the Maoists)
Me: How do you know it is them?
N: We (Adivasis) know. They come to our Thursday market, but the Police cannot do anything against them as it cannot really identify them or go deep inside the forests where they live. (Naman, 25, Male, Adivasi, Interview)

During our walk in the Thursday market, Nam and Sag could identify and differentiate between Maoists and Police by referring to their clothes, while pointing out their otherwise similar ways of authoritative functioning. Nam conveyed his preference for the Police, also his choice of career, as the Police were kinder compared to the Maoists who wore black/dark clothes and caused fear in Nam’s village during their visits to collect food and ration. (Researcher Diary, April 2016)
The ‘knowing’ or identification of the Maoists by Naman, Nam and Sag, as distinct from the others in the village, indicated the likelihood of being labelled in the particular context of the Adivasis. For Naman, the certainty of knowing who the Maoists were, as opposed to the Police’s inability to identify them, reflected the obscurity of identity of the people living in this particular context. Similarly, the identification of the Maoists and Police by Nam and Sag based on clothes, while indicating their comparable ways of working in the village, pointed to the fluidity and contingency of people’s multiple identities.

The certainty of differentiation between the Police and Maoists varied with the research participants and was dependent on the participant identity, as reflected in the extracts above. Additionally, this identification and differentiation was dependent on and shaped by multiple subjectivities, such as Nam’s preference for Police as a socially recognised career option compared to Maoists who operated unlawfully and through fear.

The impossibility of identification of the Maoists by the Police was further explained by Naman:

The newly recruited Police officers from our area and community were sent outside the state for their first posting. But now the new recruits are being trained and retained here because they know the jungles well. They can go inside easily, gain access and fight the Naxals. (Naman, 25, Male, Adivasi, Interview)

The excerpt above pointed to the creation of internal divisions within the Adivasi community as some of its members were viewed as Maoists or Maoist sympathisers, while the others were recruited as Police to identify and fight them. These divisions provided a possible explanation for the loss of trust among the Gond community and their disavowal of public speaking/participation. It denoted the pitting of people against each other and a strategy for increased State intervention and surveillance. It also linked to the ambiguity of identities among the local community members, between the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis:

My family has lived here for as long as I can remember. Ours was a kumhar (potter) family which made pots for the people but now we all do daily wage labour. But my family has been categorised as OBC here, not ST. (Sona Bai, 45, Female, non-Adivasi, Interview)
The distinction between Adivasi and non-Adivasi does not hold together for some research participants, especially those categorised as OBC. They explain to me the artificiality of this separation and question the government’s criteria for giving preference to the Adivasis over non-Adivasis, when both groups are equally dispossessed they feel. Munda made similar speeches in the Constituent Assembly, forewarning such an outcome. (Research Diary, June 2016)

The comments above exemplified the problematic separation of caste and tribe, Adivasi and non-Adivasi, in the local community context. Emphasising her geographical location and place of residence, Sona Bai pointed out the contradiction in her family’s categorisation as OBC, instead of ST. Her comments were reflective of the work of power and discourse and historical sedimentation of identities produced through this work, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.

The extracts above signalled the distinctions produced in the local community through the legal and social categorisations. Groups inhabiting the same space and living next door to each other were distinguished by the Indian State based on the discursive lines produced historically by the colonial regime. Sona Bai’s family, like the Adivasi Gond families, was differentiated on the basis of their main occupation, i.e. pottery. The kumhars/potters were categorised as a caste, educationally and socially backward, and accorded the legal status of OBC (Sundar, 1997). However, this categorisation was distinct from the ST status that used additional criteria of geographical isolation, primitive traits and distinctive culture, in addition to the general backwardness, as discussed in section 4.3.1 in Chapter 4.

This differentiation of OBC and ST was troubled by Sona Bai and in the researcher diary extract above. It was indicative of the internal divisions within the local community and a possible lack of trust between those compelled to ‘assume’ Adivasi and the non-Adivasi identities. In her research in Bastar in India, Sundar (1997) elaborates that the lohars or iron-smiths were ‘Gond families making iron implements’ (p. 15), only differentiated through their occupation and language. For this reason, Sundar (1997) argues that caste and tribe were not two distinct entities ‘but historically enmeshed in the service of royal hegemony’ (p. 16).

In the context of this study, the distinctions, while troubled, were drawn on to reassert difference and other the Adivasis, and at the same time produced multiple internal others including the non-Adivasis and/or OBCs. The extract from the researcher diary above pointed to Munda’s speeches in the Constituent Assembly, also discussed in
Chapter 5, and his questioning of the colonial and Indian State’s criteria to create multiple minority groups in India.

Like the comments above, similar troubling of binaries was suggested by Shilpa:

There is no Congress or BJP (two main national political parties) reaching this village...No campaigning takes place during elections. There is no hoisting of the Indian flag. Black or red flags are seen as the Naxals come and unfurl these flags. But then they also go elsewhere and salute the tricolour (the Indian national flag). They (Naxals) shoot and kill at one place, and then eat party at another place with the Police. They (Naxals) are not fighting for a cause anymore. (Shilpa, 35, Female, Adivasi, Interview)

Shilpa’s comments above, also introduced in Chapter 1, contested the Police-Maoist binary. She signified the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities in the context of violence and precarity. The Maoists were marked as unlawful, terrorist, anti-India and their ‘philosophy’ as against the ‘founding principles of the Indian State’ (MHA, 2013). For the Gond community, any association with the Maoists meant negation of their Indian identity that was produced as stable and fixed through the nationalist discourses of the Indian State, as explored in Chapter 3. At the same time, Shilpa pointed to the absence of the Indian State, the major national political parties, and election campaigns in the village. It signified the notion of deficit State (Sinha, n.d.).

For Shilpa, the Maoists were more present, visible and proximal in the village through symbols such as the red and black flags that were unfurled instead of the Indian national flag (Shah, 2010, 2013). There was no election campaigning which denied the semblance of being part of the larger Indian polity. This exclusion and disconnect from the rest of India created a sense of difference between her village and the rest of the country for Shilpa. The complexity of ‘being’ an Indian in such a context was echoed by Shilpa as an Adivasi. It linked to the exploration of identity in Chapter 3 as discursively produced, context-specific, enmeshed in power relations, contingent and antagonistic or opposed to an other (Mouffe, 1993; Butler, 1995; Dunne et al., 2017).

Implicit in Shilpa’s comments was the questioning of the binary between the Police and the Maoists. For Shilpa, the conflict between the Indian State and the Maoists had made the context of the Gond community precarious, constructing a distinction between the two power groups. However, Shilpa contested the Maoists’ claims of fighting for the cause of the Adivasis and against State/Police injustice by alluding to their fraternising with the Police and ‘saluting the tricolour’. This blurring of lines
between the two groups made Shilpa mistrust the intentions of the Maoists and question their being as in opposition to the Police. It implied multiple intersecting identities of the Maoists, instead of their straitjacket description as ‘anti-India’ by the Indian State.

A similar line of argument was suggested by Manish:

Politicians are involved, with the Naxals, because both are getting money out of the conflict. Police men who come to our shop tell us that they can finish them (Naxals) in two days, like LTTE in Sri Lanka, but they do not get permission from the top...When I worked as a government contractor, I had to pay bribes to both (government and Naxals) to operate in the area.

I once saw a large stockpile of arms in what looked like a Naxal camp but there was some Police present there...How can the Naxals get so much arms and ammunition without the Police knowing and being a party to it. No one wants this conflict to end. (Manish, 43, Male, non-Adivasi, Shop owner, Interview)

The blurring of lines between the State and the Maoists was reasserted by Manish. The involvement of the politicians with the Maoists was indicated through their refusal to use force against the Maoists to ‘finish them’. The comparison of the Maoists to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, which was also named a militant and terrorist organisation, suggested the magnitude of the conflict for Manish, similar to the Sri Lankan civil war.

The issue of corruption was mentioned by Manish, in his former job as a government contractor. The paying of bribes to both the government officials and the Maoists implied similarities in the working of two groups, and their working together. The State-Maoist nexus in the Indian context has been illustrated by Sinha (2011) and Chaudhary et al. (2013). Sinha (2011, n.d.) argues that in order to sustain and perpetuate themselves, the Maoists ‘extort’ money from the government officials, politicians and corporates in return for their safety and protection. This nexus secures the hegemonic position of both the power groups and stabilises corruption within government and Maoist ranks (Sinha, 2011; Chaudhary et al., 2013).

For Manish, the blurring of lines between the Police and Maoists had reciprocal links with the profitability and prolonging of conflict. He pointed to the collusion of both in securing arms and ammunition and the impossibility of Maoist survival without State involvement. Manish’s mistrust of both the Indian State and the Maoists reinforced the context of precarity where he could not trust or differentiate between the two sides and
so refused to associate with either. Additionally, it signified the dynamic and fluid identities of the Police and government representatives / State-agents in the area.

The collusion of the State and the Maoists, as observed by Manish, translated into a lack of accountability for Smita:

Naxals retain their power through fear, guns, weapons, but where does this come from? From State funds. Naxals take money from the government contractors, use their transport (trucks) to ferry their weapons at nights, kill them if the money is not given...This is halting development, construction of roads and mobile towers. The money keeps shifting between them and the government officials. There is no accountability. (Smita, 28, female, Adivasi, Teacher, Interview)

Smita echoed Manish’s comments with regard to the connivance of the Indian State and the Maoists and corruption within both groups. The blurring of boundaries between the agents of the Indian State and the Maoists and their collusion halted the development of the area for Smita. To add to this, it made both the groups unaccountable to the people. Both power groups were viewed to be operating through fear and violence, and the blurring between them produced a context of precarity. Such a context further produced mistrust among people, their dissociation from the Indian State and the Maoists and lack of accountability.

As discussed in Chapter 3, within the modernisation and development discourse, the ‘active’ involvement and participation of people has been emphasised for good and accountable governance (UNESCO, 2009, 2017). However, as the lines between the State-agents and Maoists were not clearly drawn and an association with either produced the risk of being ‘branded’ and killed, active participation of people remained problematic. It implied that those in power, both in the government and within the Maoist cadres, remained unaccountable to the people.

The government is there but not quite. The government schemes are there everywhere but we (Adivasis) are not aware of these schemes. There is no accountability for anything because we are uneducated and do not question... (Abhay, 23, Male, Adivasi, Interview)

Like in the previous extracts, Abhay questioned the presence of the government as well as accountability in his area. As an Adivasi Gond, Abhay blamed the unaccountability of government in the area on the people, their lack of education and inability to question. As explored in Chapter 3, the national and international
development discourse carried notions of individual responsibility and made people responsible for the conflict, or the absence of it (UNESCO, 2009, 2011, 2017). Abhay used this discourse to reinstate the positioning of the Adivasis as uneducated and non-participatory/questioning. As in the development and modernisation discourse discussed in Chapter 3, education was linked to people’s questioning of government and their participation. These characteristics were held responsible for the lack of awareness of government schemes in the area and absence of accountability. However, it raised the pertinent issue of the absence of the Indian State, good governance and accountability in the area. It placed the Adivasis in a context of precarity and left them questioning their Indian and Adivasi identities. In such a context, different strategies were adopted to navigate the precarity of everyday life, as I will analyse in the next section.

7.4 Strategies of resistance

My community understands things and even makes demands wherever they can. But we (Adivasis) want nothing to do with the Police as we fear a clash with the Naxals...The government’s response to all this has been to depute more and more Police and Para-military, and the Naxal response is killing them...Both sides kill whoever acts too smart or talks too much... (Sanam, 30, Female, Adivasi, Interview)

In the last 4-5 months, I have made multiple, shifting observations about the Gond people which have ranged from following the NGO’s view of them as shy, silent and non-participating to observing their participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Staying in the village for a relatively longer period and including new questions to the research is opening up the discussion on conflict and people’s silence. (Researcher Diary, April 2016)

Implicit in the above comments was the reiteration of the precarious context of the Gond community. The dangers of publicly participating and taking sides as well as the blurring lines of identification, as analysed in the previous section, were reverberated in the above excerpts. For Sanam, an overt association with either Police or Naxals, or an appearance to be on the side of a particular group, implied ‘acting too smart’ and ‘talking too much’. It was risky and life-threatening. It represented the failure of the Indian State to foster trust in its institutions, echoed the absence of governance and accountability, and explained the non-participation of the Gond community. It pointed to an ‘overdeveloped military strategy and underdeveloped strategy for human security’ (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p. 476). The increased securitisation and deployment of more Police and Para-military in the area caused the Maoists to attack
those symbols of the State, which then responded in a similar vein. Participation and making demands were perilous in such a context and required strategic navigation.

The excerpt from the researcher diary reiterated Sanam’s depiction of the precarious context. It produced ‘multiple and shifting observations’ of the Gond community which were contingent to their context. By staying in the village for an extended period and reflecting on my shifting observations in and through the researcher diary, new questions around violence and conflict were included to the research (see Appendix 7). This enabled an exploration of the silences, tensions and absences marked in the focus group discussions and taking these up in in-depth interviews, such as the one with Sanam. The multiple, shifting and contradictory observations also provided a shift to poststructural theorisation of data to understand the multiple forms of strategies of resistance and navigation of the Gond community.

A poststructural theoretical framework enabled me to point out the contestation in Sanam’s comments of the claim that the Adivasis did not understand, participate and make demands. For Sanam, it was the particular context of her community that prevented them from participating publicly while navigating their identities. Sanam mentioned the Adivasis as understanding of the situation and making demands, as long as their actions and participation did not involve a confrontation with the Maoists or the State. This understanding of the context illustrated the Gond community as active, agentive and resistant of dominant power groups, instead of their dominant construction as shy, silent and non-participatory as analysed previously in Chapter 5. It indicated their awareness of the convoluted context that had to be navigated cautiously. Sanam’s comments attributed agency to her Adivasi Gond community, while pointing out the absence of the Indian State in her area.

As examined in Chapter 3, within the modernisation discourse, the concept of resistance is linked to agency and participation (Asad, 2003; Butler et al., 2016). It places onus on individuals to ‘act’ and so is located in the liberal and neo-liberal discourses of development (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). By taking up a poststructural theorisation in the context of this study, I argue that the liberal and modernist concern and claim for resistance are intensely individualising and decontextualised. By placing onus on individuals, such a notion absolves the State of its ‘responsibilities’ and disregards the struggles and histories of mis-governance of certain communities such as the Adivasis.
Using poststructural theorisations, Sanam's comments above linked to the notion of discursive agency discussed in Chapter 3, which moves beyond the 'understanding of intent and agency that is the property of a rational self-knowing subject' (Youdell, 2006, p. 39). Going beyond liberal, humanist, normative and functionalist understandings of agency, a poststructural view located agency within people's lived modes of embodiment. It was in and through the embodiment of regulatory norms that possibilities for agency, for subversion and contestation of norms existed (Butler, 2015). In the context of protracted violence and precarity, the non-participation or refusal of the Gond community to publicly take sides signified their vulnerability and, within it, their agency and resistance. It was a strategy to navigate the 'act too smart' or 'know too much' context of the Adivasis:

"You should not go to the Police Headquarters to meet the Superintendent of Police for an interview. Entering that compound would mean taking a side and the others would think that you know too much. (Naman, 25, Male, Adivasi, Interview)"

Naman's comments above resonated Sanam's concerns about 'acting too smart'. As an Adivasi from the Gond community, Naman suggested that I avoid going inside the Police Headquarters in the area as it implied taking a side publicly and 'knowing too much'. Consequently, I did not interview Police officials for this study as my own strategy to navigate the context and ensure the safety of research participants and myself. Such an act, of not taking sides, explained further the silences, absences and tensions that existed for the Gond community. However, it was also a way to re-inscribe the deficit positioning of the Adivasis:

"The Adivasis are dying either way, from both the sides. They are caught in the middle. They are suffering and scared of both sides, the Naxals and the State. (Sanam, 30, female, Adivasi, Interview)"

Sanam's comments above reinstated the dominant representation of the Adivasis as 'caught in the middle' and victims of the violence, postulated by the government policies (NCPCR, 2010, 2012; Chaudhary et al., 2013; MHA, 2013). The loss of their lives, usually referred to as collateral damage of the conflict, was mentioned by Sanam (Sinha, 2011, n.d.). However, Sanam re-emphasised the context of fear in which the Gond community lived and survived, and the threat of violence from both the Indian State and the Maoists. In this sense, Sanam's comments contested the dominant
policy discourse of ‘the poor and the marginalised sections like the tribals…bearing the brunt of this violence’ (MHA, 2013).

According to Sanam, the Adivasis were suffering, scared and dying and so were actively involved in the insurgency. Her comments linked to Asad’s (2003) conceptualisation of suffering, pain and silence as agentive, as an act or action in itself, to resist the imposition of dominant power structures, norms and discourses, as discussed in Section 3.5 in Chapter 3. It invoked the concept of vulnerability, as socially produced and effect of power relations, and locating vulnerability within resistance (Butler, 2016), as also discussed in Chapter 3. Sanam’s comments questioned the binary of active/passive or agent/victim that rendered the Adivasis as subject and objects in the conflict without expression and did not recognise their histories of existence:

My people here are not aware and do not question. How do we activate them? They let things be for as long as their daily lives go on and are not disturbed. (Naman, 25, Male, Adivasi, Interview)

…the environment here is such that the people do not understand at once…they do not talk or participate but they listen and try to understand. You should not expect them to respond. It will take time. But they get irritated when we say the same things repeatedly. (Rajesh, Male, NGO worker, non-Adivasi, 35, Focus group with NGO workers)

The comments of both Naman and Rajesh were reminiscent of the construction of the Adivasis as shy, silent and socially isolated, as analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. As an Adivasi, Naman drew on the dominant discourse that made the Gond community refer to themselves in a deficit way. It echoed the individualising and decontextualised claims of resistance that held individuals responsible and in need of ‘activation’. However, Naman’s comments acknowledged the uncertainty of existence of the Gond community. The depiction of the Adivasis as apathetic, as long as their lives went on and were ‘not disturbed’ connected back to the discussion in this section on agency and resistance. It illustrated the absence of the Indian State and its continued exclusion of the Adivasis from the structures of governance. It implied the structural, cultural and direct violence of the Indian State that were co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing.

Rajesh’s comments, also analysed in Chapter 6, revisit the discursive construction of the Adivasis as silent, shy, and indifferent. Rajesh reiterated the expectation of the others in the area that the Adivasis do not talk or respond and disregarded their
precarious context. However, Rajesh’s comments also provided a contradiction as they offered an acknowledgement of people’s agency and their self-exclusion. The view that people ‘listen and try to understand’ yet choose to remain silent or ‘get irritated when we say the same things repeatedly’ signalled resistance on the part of the Adivasis and deployment of silence as a strategy to navigate their identities.

However, as Pherali (2013) suggests, rejection of dominant cultures by marginalised groups should not be viewed as resistance as it risks (re)producing their exclusion, ‘reduces their chance of mobility and reinforces social divisions’ (p. 55). Notwithstanding this, referring to Jungkunz’s (2012) work on silence, Salvi (2014) argues that the silence which resists and refuses the dominant position is mostly invisible and goes ‘unnoticed in order to be successful’ (p. 183).

In this particular context of the local village, silence remained a significant strategy for the Gond community to navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities. It provoked a re-thinking of resistance, through poststructural theorisation of the concept, and opening it up to encapsulate multiple forms of navigation and resistance utilised by the people. For the Gond community, resistance to the dominant discourse, which produced a deficit view of the Adivasis, was not simply through rejecting or opposing it. The Gond people drew on the dominant official and community discourses which constructed them as silent, utilised these to protect themselves from violence and confrontation with Police and Maoists and navigate their everyday life. A poststructural theoretical framework enabled contextualising the Gond community’s multiple strategies of resistance, paying attention to the spaces in-between the active/passive or agent/victim binary, and foregrounding these in and through the analysis of data.

To add to this, the move or transition from silence, listening and understanding to responding, participating and questioning denoted the linearity of movement assumed in the modernisation discourse (Salvi, 2014). Rajesh’s comments that ‘you should not expect them to respond’ and ‘it will take time’ reflected that linearity. The issue of time and change, analysed in the previous chapter, was reiterated through these comments. It linked back to Abhay’s comments in the previous section on the linking of education to accountability and people’s ‘voice’.

Abhay attributed the lack of accountability in the area to the lack of education among the Adivasis and their inability to question. It pointed to the assumed centrality of
education in the claims for people’s ‘voice’ and agency (UNESCO, 2017). The next section then analyses this link between education and participation of the Gond community, within and outside the structures of governance, to claim their rights and make demands for community development.

7.5 Governance, Participation and Development

The Government’s approach is to deal with Left Wing Extremism in a holistic manner, in the areas of security, development, ensuring rights and entitlements of local communities, improvement in governance and public perception management...an integrated approach aimed at the relatively more affected areas would deliver results (MHA, 2013)

The above extract from the Left-Wing Extremism Division of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, implies an emphasis on security, development, rights, governance and public perception to deal with LWE. It linked to the ‘security first, development later’ approach of the Indian State that constructed the conflict with the Maoists first and foremost as a law and order problem (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Sinha, 2011; MHA, 2013). Such an approach ignored the concerns of structural inequalities in the areas of the Adivasis.

The above extract also signified the intervention of the Indian State as a response to the ‘Naxal challenge’ (Sinha, 2011). It illustrated the State intervention as a strategy to deal with Left Wing Extremism and not as a response to the demands of the people. The emphasis on development, rights of local communities and governance conveyed a strategy to win the hearts and minds of people, or public perception management, instead of addressing the histories of State neglect and mis-governance (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Nevertheless, it offered an acknowledgement of the absence of the Indian State, as was reverberated in interview excerpts:

There was no law and order enforcement in this area. It was the Naxals' rule of law that prevailed here. Everything from development to sticks and guns was theirs. Indian State and its law and order could not reach where they would. (Smita, 28, Female, Adivasi, Teacher, Interview)

They (Maoists) are also our people only, aren't they? They live inside (the forests). They have stopped alcohol consumption in the areas where they operate. The villages are now alcohol-free. It is a good development, something that the government took years to do. (Sanam, 30, Female, Adivasi, Interview)

The absence of the Indian State and lack of regulation or ‘law and order enforcement' was implied in the comments of both Smita and Sanam. It reminded of the inactivity of the Indian State as well as its demarcation and social isolation of the people. While the
Indian State had hierarchically categorised the Adivasis as Scheduled, Tribal and Backward, it was absent in the areas inhabited by them until the Maoist intervention. It was in this context that the Maoists and their ‘rule of law’ found a mention in Smita’s comments. While the Indian State had classified LWE as a law and order problem, Smita argued that there had never been law and order enforcement by the Indian State in the area.

The Maoists’ influence in areas where the Indian State and its machinery could not reach signalled a deficit relationship between the State and the Gond community, who viewed the Maoists as more present and proximate (Sinha, 2011; Shah, 2013). For Smita, the Maoists were associated with both development as well as ‘sticks and guns’, instead of the State. It linked to the developmental activities carried out by the Maoists in the area, along with their use of violence to ensure compliance to the movement, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Mehra, 2000; Ahuja and Ganguly, 2007; Shah, 2013; Sinha, 2011).

The involvement of the Maoists, as opposed to the State inactivity, in the area made Sanam view them as ‘our people’. As examined in the previous chapter, alcohol consumption by the Adivasis was looked down on by the others in the village community. It was used to construct them as ‘backward’ and re-inscribe their deficit positioning. Re-iterating the negative association of alcohol with the Gond community, Sanam referred to its prohibition by the Maoists as a ‘good development’. For Sanam, the ban on alcohol by the Maoists was a significant regulation and law and order enforcement that signalled development. However, for her, it was the Maoists who were able to enforce this regulation before the government. They were present as inside-people, or ‘our people’, in response to the demands for community development. In this sense, the Maoists were viewed to be operating within and as a force internal to the demands of the Adivasis, instead of an external influence as constructed by the Indian State:

…the Maoists do not want root causes like underdevelopment to be addressed in a meaningful manner since they resort to targeting school buildings, roads, railways…They wish to keep the population…marginalised to perpetuate their outdated ideology. Consequently, the process of development has been set back by decades in many parts of the country under LWE influence. (MHA, 2013)

The above extract from the Ministry of Home Affairs indicated its emphasis on development and the association of under-development with the Maoists. It linked
development to the notion of progress, as a moving forward (Escobar, 2010)2), as
discussed previously in Chapter 3. In contrast to this notion, the areas under ‘LWE
influence’ were constructed as developmentally backward owing to the presence of the
Maoists and their destruction of key infrastructure such as school buildings, roads and
railways that represented development. The extract above attributed the
marginalisation of the Adivasis to the Maoists and their ‘outdated ideology’.

The above view of development linked back to the discussion in Chapter 3. It produced
a restricted definition of development, as reliant on the growth or expansion of human
potential and capabilities through the means of education and infrastructure such as
schools and roads (Escobar, 2012). On the one hand, such a view of development
instrumentalised people, and on the other, it overlooked their particular demands for
development (Escobar, 2012). While Smita and Sanam indicated the Maoists’
understanding of community demands, the Indian State linked the Maoists, and the
areas inhabited by the Adivasis, with under-development. The effects of this linking on
the Adivasis’ demands for development were articulated through the below excerpts:

They (Maoists) used to fight for our (Adivasi) rights with the Police and military,
took action, put up big banners, took out rallies and marches, and one member
from each household had to participate. This gave voice to our demands and
brought attention to our area...But no one wants to come to the village now due
to the burning of roads and killing of contractors...No factories or industries are
coming to our area. What good are the Naxals doing for development? (Sag,
16, Adivasi, Focus Group with male participants in 15-18 age-groups)

The state of development of the area is dismal. There are no roads or vehicular
access to the village, no drainage system, children fall sick often and no
medical aid or health centres. Community, especially young people make
eloquent demands, but say that both State and Maoists maintain their power by
keeping the area underdeveloped. (Researcher Diary, November 2015)

The comments above resonated the Indian State’s view of (under-)development, as
analysed previously in this section. The association of the Maoists with the destruction
of infrastructure such as roads and killing of contractors signified impeding of
development. As an Adivasi youth, Sag articulated his view of development through the
mention of factories and industries. It connected to the probing of the modernisation
discourse in Chapter 3 that worked through the privileging of industrialisation,
marketisation and monetisation of economies (Asad, 2003; Bhambra, 2007; Anjum,
2018). Similarly, my initial observations of living in the area reiterated the dominant
view of development, articulated through absence of facilities, such as roads, drains,
and health centres, which I viewed significant having lived in the city of Delhi.
The comments above were illustrative of the ‘public perception management’ approach of the Indian State (MHA, 2013). Terming it a holistic or integrated approach to ‘deal with’ or tackle LWE, the Indian State used the strategy of development to combat the Maoists, along with increased securitisation. The international and national development discourse was deployed by the Indian State to infiltrate the local context of the Adivasis. Such a discourse defined progress in terms of construction of roads, mobile towers for cellular phone networks and opening of factories and industries (MHA, 2013). It viewed the Maoists as obstructing development while the State as a provider of the goods and services of development.

However, Sag’s depiction of the Maoists as fighting for the rights of the Adivasis, against the injustices of Indian State, and giving voice to Adivasi demands signified their paradoxical positioning among the Gond community. For Sag, the Maoists found acceptance among the community for giving voice to their demands and bringing to ‘attention to our area’. It indicated the Gond community as navigating and ‘appearing’ to be on side with the group offering the most benefits, i.e. giving voice to their demands, fighting for their rights, bringing attention to their area, and ensuring community development. It reinforced the history of neglect of the Adivasis and their areas by the Indian State.

At the same time, the relevance of the Maoists among the young people such as Sag could not be sustained for the purposes of development, as the official policy discourse constructed them in opposition to State and development. For the local community then, both the State and the Maoists represented two power groups in the area which had to be strategically aligned with to fulfill demands for community development, as well as navigated to prevent violence and confrontation.

The strategic use of groups and forums by the Gond community to claim their rights and community development was rearticulated in the below excerpt:

I attended the gram sabha (village council) meeting today. It was a meeting of the village council where all the eligible voters/adult members of the village participated. Usually, these meetings could only be attended by members of the council and no ‘outsiders’ could participate. I was invited to only attend by the ‘senior’ and ‘elder’ members.

The discussion was on the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. There was careful planning by the council members – 11
samitis/committees for felling of bamboo, guarding of forests, collection of produce, selling, disbursement of funds and so on. Most of the committee members were women, who were present in the meeting, but most of the talking was done by men. The meeting went on for two hours. The consensus of the meeting was not to approach any government contractor, middleman or the Forest Department through which to sell the bamboo. It was to be done independently through the council to procure a good market price. (Researcher Diary, December 2015)

The above incident signified the democratic participation of the Gond community and the use of decentralised structures of governance to claim their rights and community development. The implementation of the FRA, 2006 by the Indian government has been contested by some of the Adivasi groups and civil society (Ramnath, 2015). Chemmencheri (2015) argues that the FRA makes the Adivasis into subjects of the Indian State through the act of ‘granting’ them land titles, or ‘a status of full social citizenship’ (p. 445). In order to become ‘complete citizens’, the Adivasis have to participate in the process of interpellation by making ‘claims’ for land and forest rights through local village councils (Chemmencheri, 2015, p. 441). Notwithstanding this, the above excerpt was indicative of the discursive agency of the Gond community. While discursively produced and regulated, the Adivasis ‘acted’ in ways contradictory to their construction by participating in forums they considered safe and productive.

The above extract also illustrated what has been termed as Adivasi ‘model’ of democracy and conflict resolution, as it involves the participation of all adult members of the community, instead of appointed/elected few, and privileges consensus over decision-making (Sundar, 1997; Padel and Das, 2010; Shah, 2010). It also reflected the decentralisation of governance structures to ensure community participation. However, implied in the above extract is the dominant positioning of the Adivasi men who did most of the public speaking. The gendered participation of the Gond community connected to Crossouard’s and Dunne’s (2015) argument that the privileging of consensus produces possibilities for reproduction of relations of domination. Similarly, Pherali (2013) contends that decentralisation can ‘perpetuate existing power relations’ than transform them (p. 64). Nevertheless, the point of strategic and selective utilisation of forums by the Adivasis for collective/community participation remained.

The above extract indicated meticulous planning of the Gond community for the felling and sale of bamboo. Bamboo, classified as a ‘forest produce’ until recently, was placed under the control of the Forest Department through the colonial-era legislation of Indian Forest Act, 1927 (Bhengra et al., 1999; The Indian Express, 2017). Viewed as timber, it
was mostly auctioned in markets through the Forest Department. However, the Forest Rights Act, 2006 classified bamboo as ‘non-timber forest produce’, granting Adivasi communities the right to fell, collect and sell it through the village councils. The above extract then reiterated the contestation of land and forests and power relations between the Adivasis and the Indian State, as explored in Chapters 2 and 5. It further signified tensions with the Forest Department, created by the colonial state in India and sustained by Indian State:

At the start of the *gram sabha* meeting one of the youth helpers announced that the Forest Officer (from the Block administration) had called on the village council office landline, ‘summoning’ one of the council members to Block headquarters for some paperwork. The youth was asked by the member to call the Officer back and tell him about the village council meeting which could not be missed. The Forest Officer later came to the meeting to get the papers signed and reprimanded the members for not coming to the office. He was told by two (male) council members to give a proper notice on letterhead for calling them for any urgent work. (Researcher Diary, December 2015)

The above excerpt, describing the same village council meeting analysed earlier in this section, symbolised the tense and erratic relations between the Gond community and Forest Department. It exemplified the re-claiming of power, along with the ownership over land and resources, and re-configuration of the dominant power relations in the area by the Adivasis. In the context of some Adivasi communities in India, Fürer-Haimendorf (1982) argues that such ‘self-confidence’, to bargain and negotiate with the State authorities, was gained at the time of the ‘Naxalite insurgency’ (p. 193). Nonetheless, the extract above demonstrated the participation of the Gond community in the spaces they considered safe and beneficial to claim their rights. Simultaneously, it symbolised the resignification of their othering into agency (Butler, 1993), through the appropriation of the dominant discourse. The extract above also raised questions about the implementation of Acts such as PESA, 1996 and FRA, 2006 in the areas of the Adivasis and its links with the Maoist movement:

The Left Wing Extremism affected States have been asked to effectively implement the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) on priority, which categorically assigns rights over minor forest produce to the Gram Sabhas. (MHA, 2013)

Legal enactments concerning decentralisation and community rights were a response of the Indian State to combat the LWE, as indicated in the above policy excerpt. The effective implementation of these Acts at the local community level and its use by the Adivasis pointed to the demands for law enforcement and community development as well as the significance of the Maoist movement in activating the State.
Other than law enforcement, roads and industries, and forest rights, demands for education were made for community development:

Just because we (Adivasis) did not go to school, does not mean that our children won’t either. There were no schools back then, no development. But our children are intelligent, and they have to become more intelligent, so we need schools... (Focus group with Adivasi women after village council meeting)

Today’s world is such that education has become necessary, it is a must...There is competition and you need education to survive in this competitive world of today. If you are not educated, what can you do? Nothing. You are left behind. It is more important for us (Adivasis) to walk alongside others, to feel equal... (Alpa Bai, 30, Female, Adivasi, Interview)

The demands for education were strongly linked to community development by the Adivasis, as implied in the above excerpts. The linking of schools to development reiterated the policy excerpt of the Ministry of Home Affairs that associated destruction of school buildings by the Maoists to underdevelopment (MHA, 2013). The lack of education was viewed as a deficit by the Gond community and used to re-instate their hierarchical positioning as un-intelligent. Education, and schools, were demanded to make children ‘more intelligent’. The extracts above resonated the national and international discourses of development where education occupied a central position, as also discussed in Chapter 3 (NCPCR, 2010, 2012, 2013). The extracts signalled the pervasion of the modernisation and development discourse at the local community level, linked back to the naming of the Adivasis as backward, tribal and traditional, and the construction of education as a symbol of modernity and inclusion.

The notion of education as a must for development was drawn on by Alpa Bai. The use of the words that denoted ‘competition’ and ‘survival’ by Alpa Bai reflected the notion of progress associated with education in modernisation and development discourse, as explored in Chapter 3. It signified education as an instrument for bringing change in people’s lives. It was deployed as a symbol of modernity by Alpa Bai to indicate a move away from being ‘left behind’, and possibly tradition, religion, rural location that produced the Adivasis as lagging in development.

However, education was not only used as a symbol of modernity but also as a symbol of inclusion for the Gond community. For Alpa Bai, education was about keeping up with the demands of the world where the construction of the Adivasis as lacking in education consolidated their social exclusion and isolation. Education provided an opportunity to equalise this difference. It was also a symbol of State provision and action, a gesture of inclusion even in an unequal field, as examined in Chapter 3.
If the Maoists and the *gram sabhas* were viewed as significant in law enforcement and forest rights, the NGO was a key service provider with respect to education:

The community here is nice but clever. We are only allowed to work if they think we are solving their purpose but not beyond that. They do not trust us beyond that. But this means that they understand the importance of education. That is why they are letting us work. (Rajesh, 35, Male, NGO worker, non-Adivasi, Interview)

The government cannot do this work, they do not take this much risk. They are doing some work, but the quality of that work is not good, as compared to what the NGO is doing. The government functionaries do not want to take risk...If the NGO were not here, work would have still happened but not like the way we (Adivasis) want it to work; something better is happening now for the community, something that we wanted to happen. (Sanam, 30, Female, Adivasi, Interview)

Rajesh’s comments above differed from his earlier comments analysed in this and previous chapter. His earlier comments described the Adivasis as not understanding, not responding in meetings, and taking time to change. However, his comments above depicted the Gond community as ‘nice but clever’ and understanding the ‘importance of education’. It signified agency of the Adivasis as ‘allowing’ the NGO to work with respect to education. However, it also implied lack of trust by the community in the NGO, like in other groups and service-providers. It conveyed a strategic use of the NGO by the Gond community towards ‘solving their purpose’.

The selective participation of the Gond community, participating when and where they could and in forums they considered safe, represented them as clever. It suggested their strategic use of groups and service-providers for community development. However, it signified histories of State absence and neglect as well as disinterested and unaccountable government. It linked to Sanam’s comments about risk-taking to work in this particular context and something that the government representatives were unable to do. The mistrust of the government by Sanam and a preference for the NGO instead indicated high demands for community development, rights and resources that had been denied to the Adivasis historically.

In making demands for law and order enforcement, security, industries, land and forest rights, and education the Adivasis re-emphasised State inactivity and its non-response. In this context, the Adivasis’ efforts for community development propelled them towards other organisations, i.e. the Maoists and the NGO, and thereby having to choose sides. If anything, the State silence and inactivity with regard to the Adivasis’ demands
explained the Maoist movement as a consequence of those demands and their struggles for community development.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the navigation of the Indian and Adivasi identities of the Gond community in the context of protracted violence. The chapter examined the context of violence and drew on Galtung’s (1971, 1990) notion of structural, cultural and direct violence to elaborate the inequalities and exclusion that exist for the Gond community historically. The chapter foregrounded the context of fear, violence and uncertainty and explored the everyday navigation of the Adivasis as well as their ways of (non-) participation and resistance.

I argued that the naming of the areas inhabited by the Adivasis as Left-Wing Extremism-affected in government policy produced connotations of terror and acted as a form of cultural and structural violence. It legitimised direct violence of the Indian State and its increased penetration through the Police and Para-military. While the naming of the area made people responsible for the conflict, it justified the State interference through violence, making violence normal, acceptable and an everyday aspect of the life of the Gond community. It involved taking sides, with either the Police or the Maoists, and/or having to navigate this context of precarity strategically. The blurring of identities between the Maoists and State-agents as well as the tense and erratic relations among them and the Gond community signified the complexities of being an Indian and an Adivasi simultaneously.

In such a context of precarity, silence was deployed as a strategy by the Adivasis to resist and navigate identities. It was an agentive silence to resist dominant discourses and power structures. I argued that the blurring identities of the State and the Maoists, as well as the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis, produced mistrust and lack of accountability for the people. It made silence a viable response to the peculiar context of the people. It repudiated the government policy discourse which represented the Adivasis as ‘caught in the middle’ and as passive victims of the insurgency. However, this silence was used to re-label and re-assert the Gond community as shy and non-participatory and revisited their discursive construction as ‘backward’, as analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. It placed them in a position of deficit and marginalisation and became central to their dominant construction as a group without voice and agency.
The final section of this chapter examined the modes of social and political participation of the Gond community to claim their rights. It explored their strategic use of different groups that reflected the histories of State neglect, inactivity and silence on the demands of community development and explained the Maoist movement as a consequence of those demands and struggles. The goods and services of development, such as land and forest rights and education, which the Adivasis had been historically excluded from were demanded, whether through the Maoists, the NGOs, or the State in the form of village-level decentralised governance structures.
Chapter 8 – Conclusions

8.1 Concluding Overview

I want to continue working and studying, become something, take care of my parents and brother and then get married. My mother’s father came home with a rishta (match), but I did not like him. He works in a factory. It is not a stable job. What if he is removed? If I don’t continue to work in the farm and forest, and study, how will he take care of me? Girls here, we want to study Science and want to be doctors, but we will still be doing other work... Some of us want to join the Police or even the others (Maoists)... But we want semi-English or English (medium of instruction) education for our class 11 and 12... Our parents might be a different and older generation, but they give us the strength to work and study. (Neh, 19, female, Adivasi, Focus group with girls in 18-21 years age groups)

I start this concluding chapter with Neh’s comments as they summarise the multiple discourses co-constitutive of the Adivasi as subject that I have discussed in this thesis. At the same time, Neh’s words signify the silences, absences and tensions within discourses and the ways these shape and re-shape subject identities. The linking of the Adivasi identity with particular land and labour positions them as Scheduled, Backward, Tribal and in deficit within the dominant modernising national discourse. While Neh betrays a normative gender dynamic, her comments offer a counter to the modernising logic of paid employment by pointing to the ‘stability’ associated with work in farm and forests and the instability of a ‘modern’ factory job. Neh’s comments illustrate the inadequacy of the development and modernisation discourses in her context and more broadly in the assumptions that frame the subject as stable, unified and rational. Rather her comments acknowledge the coexistence of multiple subjectivities and trouble the binaries that haunt modernising, development discourses. It is this discursive production and linking of Adivasi identity with particular land and work that was addressed in Chapter 5 by engaging with Research Question 1 and problematising the dominant national discourse in India.

Identifying herself as an Adivasi woman, Neh highlights the gendered aspects of education and its need to accommodate the work contribution of Adivasi women in the village. For her, the demands of girls to study science and be doctors were not inconsistent with their other work in the village. This exposed the binaries installed through the modernist conceptualisation of certain types of work and their constructed incompatibility with ‘traditional’ works, such as those done by the Adivasi women.
Chapter 6 in this thesis, while engaging with Research Question 2, exemplified the gendered dimensions of production and performance of Adivasi identities through religion and education.

Interestingly in this context marked by conflict, Neh’s comments also dissolve the opposition instated between the Police and the Maoists. For a young Adivasi such as Neh, both represented a power group in the area, working in different ways to regulate the Adivasis, but their political and social distinctions appeared to be insignificant to her. Joining either of these groups meant gaining access to power in order to navigate the context of precarity. However, her reference to the Maoists as others did signify the complexity of joining/supporting the Maoists, given their construction as oppositional to the Indian State. The uncertainties around the holders of power in the region produced the conditions of greater precarity in which there was a significant danger in choosing sides as they did not operate distinctly locally. It is these uncertainties that were foregrounded in Chapter 7 which engaged with Research Question 3 and explored the navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities in context of violence.

And finally, Neh’s comments above point to the interpellation of the Adivasis into the dominant discourse and a reciting of their deficit positioning within it. By reiterating the distinction of ‘older’ and ‘different’, Neh illustrates how these discursive categories are interpreted and performed in the local village context. However, while embodying the discursive norms that produce and regulate the Adivasis, Neh subverts and contests these norms through her association of strength with the parents constructed as ‘different and older generation’. Similarly, her demands for English or semi-English as a medium of instruction in school is both a form of subjectivation and of agency, resistance and resignification. The interpellation of the Adivasis into the dominant discourse as well as the resignification of dominant discursive norms were cross-cutting issues that were addressed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Neh’s comments sum up the main themes and arguments of this study. I further engage with and elaborate these in the next section, 8.2, the research findings. Section 8.3 articulates the study’s contribution to knowledge by foregrounding the context of the Adivasis and signalling the production, performance and navigation of their multiple identities. In doing so, it troubles the binary of traditional and modern that constructs a deficit view of the Adivasi, problematises the dominant national discourse in India and opens it up for discussion and contestation. It argues for the accommodation of identities of groups such as the Adivasis, living in contexts of postcoloniality and
protracted violence, by allowing poststructural theorisation of the subject, of agency and resistance. Section 8.4 discusses the policy implications of this study, while 8.5 identifies some research gaps and scope for further research. Section 8.6 summarises my personal reflections of this study.

8.2 Research Findings

This thesis reports on an exploration of the discursive construction of the Adivasi within the law, policy and practice and its implications for the social dynamics, positioning in local community settings and educational access. It examined the multiple discourses of differentiation, co-constitutive of the Adivasi as subject, located within the modernising nation-state of India. The aim was to question the dominant discursive and regulatory strains that have produced the Indian nation-state and the Indian national/citizen, and within this have positioned the Adivasi as Other. The study encompassed an analytical review of policy at the macro-level as well as local engagements with community members to elaborate the production, performance and navigation of Indian and Adivasi identities. The main lines of exploration of this research are articulated in the following research questions:

- How have law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state discursively produced the identity of the Adivasis in India?
- How do local village community members produce and perform Adivasi identities through religion, education and gender?
- In context of protracted violence, how do the Gond community navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities and claim their rights?

In the next three sub-sections, I articulate the research findings around each question.

8.2.1 (Re)Producing the Adivasi as Identity

How have law, policy and practice of the colonial and Indian state discursively produced the identity of the Adivasis in India?

To engage with this research question, I carried out a textual analysis of legal and policy enactments of colonial and Indian State in Chapter 5, which illustrated a particular construction of the Adivasi. More specifically, I argued that the discursive ‘categories’ enacted by the colonial regime for the internal division of India were sustained and re-articulated by the ‘independent’ Indian State. Multiple internal others
were created to strategically divide the country. This language of differentiation discursively produced the Adivasis as Other in the dominant national discourse in India.

The land revenue policy of the colonial regime installed hierarchical social relations through land and agriculture, as I examined in Chapter 5. Land and geography had remained significant in the colonial separation of the Orient, or the Indian subcontinent, from Europe. It produced a binary between the geographical East and West both in geographical terms as well as in a hierarchical social order. These sets of distinctions also operated within India in which the waste/forest land inhabited by the Adivasis and their agricultural practices were differentiated and denigrated in comparison to settled agriculture that was privileged within colonial law and policy (O’Hanlon, 2012; Banerjee, 2016).

The land revenue systems of the colonial regime worked through the tying of people intimately to land and bringing more land under settled agriculture for increased revenue collection. As I argued in Chapter 5, these systems constituted the instruments of governmentality to organise, control and discipline the populations in India which were linked to the anatamo- and bio-politics that Foucault (1977, 1978) refers to as bio-power. By doing so, these systems instituted the colonial administration as the ‘state’ in India with legitimate policing and taxation functions.

The implementation of land revenue policies took place through the creation and insertion of permanent intermediaries of landlords, with their rights to land made hereditary and transferable. Importantly this implied individual ownership of land, as opposed to viewing land as common or communal property and jointly owned. This demarcation of land produced boundaries that continue to be contested and fought over in independent India. As suggested above and in greater length in Chapter 5, these geographical distinctions were accompanied by social distinctions. Despite the fluid histories of movement, migration and displacement in India, the colonial systems and practices were crucial in the production and othering of the Adivasis and of the Adivasi identity as indigenous and tied to the land and forests.

The post-independence Indian State, while abolishing land revenue systems and the institution of landlords, placed itself as the biggest landlord in control of the organisation and distribution of land through provisions of the Indian Constitution. As I discussed in Chapter 5, this pattern of ownership and authority has continued with the
recent introduction by the Indian State of ‘progressive’ rights-based legislation such as the Forest Rights Act.

The language of law was significant in the production of the Adivasi identity, as I illustrated in Chapter 5. The Indian State retained the legal classifications of colonial times. Over time, strong linkages were made through law and policy between ‘scheduled’ and ‘backward’ areas and administration of ‘primitive’ and ‘tribal’ people inhabiting these areas. Both the colonial and Indian State reciprocally linked the identity of the land with the people. The legal categories were deployed to mark land and people as backward, primitive and not normal, and as opposed to the notions of modern, developed and civilised. It became a strategy to name and categorise and install rigid hierarchical social relations of power and control.

It is this land and subject connection that was elaborated and addressed in Chapter 5 by engaging with Research Question 1. I illustrated the multiple discourses of differentiation that constituted the Adivasis as subjects, produced the Adivasi identity as deficit and put in place geographical and social hierarchies. The naming and reification of differences reverberated the colonial categories of difference, sustained and rearticulated by the Indian State. The social and legal category of Scheduled Tribe was deployed as an instrument of governmentality to re-shape the subjectivity of the people in terms of their self-identification, re-signified as Adivasi over time, and constituted the power of the State.

The inclusion of some of the fieldwork-data extracts in Chapter 5 allowed me to introduce the local village-community context of the Adivasis. It helped enter the discussion in Chapter 6 on religion, education and gender by drawing from and building on community ‘voices’ and its reciprocal links with the policy discourse in India. The discursive ‘categories’ enacted by the colonial regime and articulated and sustained by the Indian state produced Adivasi identities of Scheduled, Backward, Tribal and pre-modern. These identities were re-produced, performed and subverted in the local community context of the Adivasis, as I elaborate by engaging with the next two research questions.

8.2.2 Performing Adivasi identities: Religion, Education, Gender

How do local village community members produce and perform Adivasi identities through religion, education and gender?
In Chapter 6, I engaged with community ‘voices’ to illustrate the ways of interpretation, (re-)production and performance of Adivasi identities in their local village community. I examined this identity production and performance though discursive and regulatory constructs of religion, education and gender. These three constructs were identified by community members as significant means to understand and articulate their forms of belonging and processes of identity-construction. Using fieldwork data, I examined the binary between tradition and modernity and the ways this discursive difference produces the Adivasis as Other and in a deficit position.

Religion was a key term of distinction used by Adivasi and non-Adivasi research participants as I argued in Chapter 6. The Adivasis were named as animist and in opposition to the popular Hindu religious practices. With this naming came the accumulation of references that (re-)created them as Other, worshipping nature, associated with the land and forests and as backward and traditional. This naming reiterated the ‘distinctive culture’ criteria of the colonial and Indian State to identify the Scheduled Tribes. It produced the Adivasis as different, living harmoniously with nature and worshipping its different elements. However, I argued in Chapter 6 that it was the discursive confinement of the Adivasis and entwinement of their identity with land and work that produced them as animist in terms of religion.

The Adivasis drew on and participated in the discourse that produced and othered them. It connected to the concept of performativity or the ritualised performance of social norms that create the effect of social reality and a natural identity (Butler, 1990). For the young people in the village, religion and more specifically Hindu religion became a symbol of inclusion and modernity. It was illustrative of the interpellation of the Adivasis into the dominant discourse (Butler, 1990; Youdell, 2006), as they embodied the discursive norms that produced and regulated them.

The discussion on religion in Chapter 6 revisited the formation of the Indian nation-state as secular and its constitutive link with modernity. It indicated the co-constitution of secular in India through particular versions of the dominant Hindu religion, which relegated other religions to the margins and named them as ‘traditional’. Education in this context provided a way out of tradition and backwardness and towards modernity and development.

In the local community context of the Adivasis, education was utilised to signify change as I illustrated in Chapter 6 through fieldwork data. This change was to be achieved
through hard work and studying of Science, through the English language. The self-
identification of some of the Adivasi research participants as illiterate was indicative of
the normalisation and naturalisation of discursive social norms. It reflected the
delegitimisation of certain knowledge systems in favour of formal education.

The deficit positioning of the Adivasis created through devaluation of their work, religion
and education constructed them in need of State protection and development in the
policy and community context. It installed a ‘regime of protection’ (Mamdani, 2012),
implemented through the affirmative action and reservation policy of the Indian State.
The language of protection and development was appropriated by the local community
to reinstate the Adivasis as lazy and not working hard to enter higher education and
government employment. Education provided an axis of difference in the local
community and was used to assert the superior positioning of the non-Adivasis. Its
selective use to marginally position the Adivasis illustrated how the local village
community was co-constituted through and within the discourses it produced. This was
indicative of the capillary ways in which the power of the national discourse pervaded
the local community context of the Adivasis.

However, I argued in Chapter 6 that the Indian State’s policy of protection created
multiple internal others, of which the Adivasis were one such grouping. Engaging with
community voices, I demonstrated how both Adivasis and non-Adivasis experienced
lack of State support in the village. The language of protection and development was
only a strategy, like the colonial regime, to internally divide the village community,
constitute the powers of the State, and legitimise its welfarist agenda.

In the concluding section of Chapter 6, I drew attention to the gendered implications of
production and performance of Adivasi identities. The Adivasis were produced as an
internal other in the national and local contexts through land, work, religion and
education. However, even within this othering, gender remained a significant axis in the
construction of difference and hierarchy. The work done by Adivasis in the village was
segregated in the community between men’s work and women’s work, with the latter
relegated to the private and subjected to depictions such as ‘household work’ and ‘less
laborious work’. While the Adivasis were entrapped through work and entwinement of
their identities with land, it was a gendered entrapment which restricted the mobility of
Adivasi women more. This confinement was produced and accentuated by the
gendering of spaces and places that had implications for social and gender relations in
the community context.
Women’s access to the public sphere was regulated by strict codes of morality which were further governed by the Hindu religion. The dress of the older Adivasi women was used to signify lack of morality and provided another discursive strain to position the Adivasis marginally. It implied regulation and policing of gender through (Hindu) religion, which pervaded the public sphere, and its moralising effects on gender relations.

The modern notions of education, deployed in the local community context of the Adivasis, installed a binary between work and schooling as raised by some research participants in Chapter 6. Since most of the work, classified as traditional, was carried out by Adivasi women in the village, it placed them in opposition to ideas of the ‘modern’. This opposition produced gendered access to education in the local community as it was Adivasi women who ‘dropped out’ of school vis-à-vis the Adivasi men. Within the discursive marginalisation and othering of the Adivasis, as I argued in Chapter 6 through data excerpts, it was the Adivasi women who were doubly disadvantaged.

Land, work, religion, education and gender were all sedimented in the construction of the Adivasis as Other, lower in social order and responsible and deserving of their social, economic and educational position, as demonstrated in Chapter 6. This led to suggest the context of precarity, exacerbated by extended conflict and violence, and its navigation by the Adivasis, as addressed in the next and last research question.

8.2.3 Navigating Indian and Adivasi identities

In context of protracted violence, how do the Gond community navigate their Indian and Adivasi identities and claim their rights?

In Chapter 7, I engaged with Research Question 3 to address the normalcy of violence and the ways in which it infiltrates the everyday life of the Adivasi Gond community and gets naturalised. I illustrated how the marginal positioning of the Adivasis in policy and local community is exacerbated by the context of violence and uncertainty and impacts their participation in local governance structures. The exploration of participation of the Adivasis required undoing the modern and liberal understandings of agency and resistance and reconceptualising these notions through poststructural, postcolonial and feminist lens. It then allowed space for highlighting the demands made by the Adivasis to claim their rights and for community development.
The discursive association of violence and extremism with the areas inhabited by the Adivasis through policy of the Indian State revisited the discussion in Research Question 1 on interlinking of people’s identity with place. It made people responsible for the violence and normalised and naturalised it within their local community. Simultaneously, it justified State-violence in the area under the guise of anti-terror/Maoist operations. By contrast, some of the research participants described the violence of the State as ‘terror’, while associating Maoists with ‘law and order’. The lines of identification between State-agents and Maoists were blurred as research participants pointed to their multiple identities and belongings. To navigate this precarious context and lack of accountability, the Adivasis adopted multiple strategies of resistance.

Silence and non-participation were re-appropriated by the Adivasi Gond community and re-signified as agency and resistance. It linked to the thinking together of vulnerability, resistance and (discursive) agency (Butler, 2015, 2016). The refusal of the Adivasis to take sides publicly, with the Police and the Maoists given their blurred identities, was a strategy to navigate the complexities of being an Indian and an Adivasi simultaneously, as argued in Chapter 7. In this precarious context, the silence of the Adivasis signified a constructive and agentive act.

The conceptualisation of suffering, usually assumed to be passive and non-agentive, in the conflict was contested by some of the research participants in Chapter 7. Suffering was re-deployed and re-signified as an act of resistance against the imposition of dominant norms and power structures (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2012). While the silence and suffering of the Adivasis were used to reinstate their discursive construction as shy and non-participatory in the community, some research participants acknowledged and attributed agency to these acts.

While discursively produced and regulated, the Adivasis performed and navigated their identities in ways contradictory to their dominant construction by participating in forums they considered safe and productive. Given their history of State neglect and mis-governance, they strategically sided with groups to claim their rights and community development. In so doing, they made claims to power and made efforts to re-configure dominant power relations, demanded rights for land and forest ownership, law enforcement, roads and factories. Within these claims, strong demands were made by some research participants for education. It linked back to the discussions in Research Questions 1 and 2. It signalled the inactivity of the Indian State in meeting community
demands for development and explained the Maoist movement as a consequence of the struggles and resistances of the Adivasis.

The production, performance and navigation of Adivasi identities were illustrated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 by engaging with the three research questions of this study. I exposed the new discursive formations which emerged in the context of the Adivasis and emphasised their linkages with the dominant national discourse. I highlighted the resignification of the dominant discursive norms and categories and shifting of regulatory frameworks by the Adivasis. In doing so, I troubled the constructed and reified binaries installed in relation to Adivasi identities. This troubling and breaking of binaries links to my contribution to knowledge in this study, as articulated in the next section.

### 8.3 Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge on the discursive production of ‘tribe’ and ‘indigenous’ in the South Asian context, and more specifically of Adivasi in India. It explores multiple discourses that co-constitute the Adivasi as subject, link Adivasi identities with land, work, geographical location, religion, education, gender and produce a way of life around them. The exploration of multiple discourses is a new insight that troubles the discursive categories of Scheduled, Backward and Tribal historically, examines their interlinking, and their legal classification as naturally occurring conditions. Alongside, the study employs poststructural conceptualisations of identity to decentre and destabilise modern understandings of subject and instead views identities as plural, shifting and context-specific. Informed by and enriched through postcolonial and feminist literature, the study provides space for the exploration of performance and navigation of Adivasi identities and its tensions with Indian identity.

#### 8.3.1 Breaking binaries: Tradition/Modernity

This thesis contributes to the troubling and undoing of the tradition-modernity binary installed through the colonial and Indian State, especially in the local community context of the Adivasis. As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the emergence of modernity and modern nation-states took place through colonisation and deployment of opposing binaries in the colonies. It separated the colonised from the coloniser, the Orient from the Occident, and the non-West from the West, with the former always positioned below the latter in the hierarchy and constructed as civilisationally inferior.
Through reiteration, these categories were reified and homogenised within language, normalised and naturalised within and through discourse. The identification of the power of discourse to name, categorise and bring subjects into being has been significant in the context of this study.

Beyond the separation of coloniser and colonised, various instruments of governmentality internally divided India to produce multiple internal others such as the Adivasis. This othering was sustained by the Indian State to re-construct the Adivasis as Scheduled, Backward, Tribal, in need of protection, development and education. The first contribution of this study then is the tracing of this discursive othering and marginalisation of the Adivasis in and through law, policy and practice of colonial and Indian State. This historical tracing was done in Chapter 5 to respond to Research Question 1.

By carrying out a textual analysis of policy in Chapter 5, which was developed through the analysis of fieldwork data, this study unpicks the tradition-modernity binary instituted to regulate the Adivasis and opens up the spaces in-between the two constructs. In doing so, it repositions the Adivasis as living and functioning beyond the imposition of this dichotomy, reworking their abjection into agency, resistance and legitimacy, and rendering themselves intelligible.

The systematic undoing of the opposition between tradition and modernity in this thesis involves a questioning of development and modernisation discourses. This is a cross-cutting issue addressed throughout the thesis. The study argues against the modernist understanding of man as rational and knowing subject as constituted by the Enlightenment discourse and informing the development and modernisation perspectives (Asad, 2003; Youdell, 2006; Mahmood, 2016). The emphasis on ‘man’ is to highlight the gendered dynamics of these perspectives and the implications these have for the local village community contexts such as that of the Adivasis, as demonstrated in this thesis. Moving between the national and the local throughout, this study highlights the reciprocal links between the macro and micro contexts and the implications of these linkages for the local.

By focusing specifically on religion, education and gender in relation to production and performance of Adivasi identities, this thesis foregrounds the local community context of the Adivasis and its interaction with the national. The use of religion, education and gender further emphasise and untangle the tradition-modernity binary. This study
invokes the intersection of nation and religion by discussing the formation of Indian nation-state as a modernising, sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic. I argued in Chapters 2 and 3 that the nation-state of India is discursively constituted through signification of meanings of 'symbols associated with national life' (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 3), and how this discursive constitution is gendered.

While India was discursively produced as secular, the secularity of the Indian nation-state was constituted through the dominant Hindu religion. The abjection of the Adivasis in relation to religion emanated from this understanding of India as predominantly Hindu and simultaneously secular. It produced tensions between the Indian and Adivasi identities. The deployment of modern notions of education in the community context of Adivasis produced similar tensions between Indian and Adivasi identities. In Chapter 6, this study argues that while the Adivasi was constituted as an Indian national/citizen, this constitution elaborated their need for development, protection and civilisation exacerbated through lack of education. It produced Adivasi identities as synonymous with backwardness, tradition and lack of modernity.

In addition to examining the utilisation of religion and education as discursive and regulatory constructs in the context of the Adivasis, this study brings to fore the gendered intersections of religion and education in response to Research Question 2. The discussion on the intersection of religion, education and gender, carried out in Chapter 6, is another contribution of this study. It integrates the poststructural with the postcolonial and feminist scholarship to highlight, undo and move beyond the tradition-modernity binary. The combination of these three theoretical standpoints enabled me to reconceptualise the modern, liberal and Western understandings of concepts used in this study and my initial assumptions of the Adivasis outlined in Chapter 1. It further allowed me to focus on the silences, absences and tensions in the navigation of Adivasi identities, as I articulate in Section 8.3.2.

### 8.3.2 Breaking binaries: State/Maoist

This thesis contributes to existing knowledge and literature on the positioning of the Adivasis / indigenous communities in contexts of conflicts, more specifically the State-Maoist conflict in India. In some of the literature, perused for this study, there has been a tendency to position Adivasis either as ‘caught in the middle’ of the crossfire between Indian State and Maoists (Sinha, 2011; Chaudhary et al., 2013), or as insurgents fighting against colonial and Indian State (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011). This study
moves beyond this positioning, either as silent, shy and non-participatory or as rebels, to rethink the Adivasi and consider multiple subjectivities (Banerjee, 2016). However, it is significant to note here that the silent/rebel and the State/Maoist binary is also a form and extension of the tradition/modernity binary and so is thought together with its undoing in Section 8.3.1.

In order to move beyond the State-Maoist binary, this study first explores the context of violence instituted by the Indian State in areas inhabited by the Adivasis in response to Research Question 3. I draw on Galtung’s (1971, 1990) notions of structural and cultural violence to explain their linkages with direct violence. Through poststructural analysis of data, this thesis contributes conceptually by emphasising the overlap and mutual reinforcement of different forms of violence in Chapter 7.

Engaging with the responses of research participants, this study demonstrates the absence of State in areas of the Adivasis and its presence through Police and Para-military in Chapter 7. The production of the Adivasis as objects of counter-insurgency was instituted by the Indian State in and through its policy. This thesis highlights and questions this production of the Adivasis and instead argues that such production co-constitutes the powers of the modern democratic State and legitimises its project of protection and emancipation (Asad, 2003; Mahmood, 2009a, 2016). At the same time, this thesis contributes to acknowledge the presence of the Maoists in the local village community of the Adivasis as a response to the demands and struggles of people and the absence of the Indian State. In doing so, it also recognises the positioning of the Maoists and the State-forces as two main power groups in the area.

Attending to the blurring lines of identification between the Maoists and the State-agents such as Police is another contribution of this thesis. The State policy categorised the Maoists in opposition to the Indian State and its idea of modernity and development. This categorisation (re-)inserted the tradition/modernity binary in the context of the Adivasis. However, this study points to the shifting identities of Police and Maoists themselves, as they are both seen to operate indistinctly locally. This blurring of identities substantiates and strengthens the claims of precarity and vulnerability made throughout in this thesis.

This study further contributes to knowledge by drawing attention to the convoluted navigation of identities by Adivasis through strategies of resistance. I argue in this thesis that the Adivasis strategically side with different groups, remain silent, and (non-)
participate in (un)safe forums, given their precarious context. I emphasise the significance of in-between spaces and groups such as the NGOs and gram sabha which provide a relatively safe space for the Adivasis to participate, negotiate and demand/claim their rights for community development. Within these claims and demands, the thesis highlights the centrality of education as a symbol of inclusion, modernity, development and way out of tradition for the Adivasis, to link the discussion in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The reconceptualisation of agency and resistance in the context of the Adivasis is another contribution of this study. Deploying a poststructural understanding of agency and resistance, this thesis argues that the silence, suffering and non-participation of the Adivasis is active and agentive to resist the imposition of dominant power structures and discursive norms. This study combines such understanding of agency with its feminist and postcolonial (re)thinking to signify the strategies for navigation of identities as sites of struggle. For the Adivasis, the ‘taking up’ of multiple discourses to fragment their dominant discursive production and/or the selective/strategic use of the dominant discourse are ways to rework and resignify their marginalisation and othering into agency and resistance.

8.4 Policy implications

This thesis has carried out a systematic analysis of law, policy and practice that relate to and frame the identity of the Adivasis in India. The insights it offers then has implications for development and/or refinement of policy. The existing policy criteria of the Indian government to identify and include groups into the legal categorisation of Scheduled Tribe and its linking with Scheduled Areas requires re-visiting and further consideration. The use of discursive categories such as Tribal, Backward, Primitive, Pre-Agricultural, Distinctive, Isolated, Shy and so on in policy have adverse effects with respect to the social positioning of Adivasis in India, as argued in this study. A possible way to subvert these effects would be to engage with local communities, attend to their multiple reasons for self-identification as Adivasi or Tribe, and include these in context-specific policy formulations. Facilitating such inclusion would involve paying attention to the varying and gendered intersections of religion, caste and class with ethnicity or ‘tribe’ in the internally differentiated Indian context. Having one legal and policy criterion that fixes, essentialises and instrumentalises the Adivasi in the existing way would then be counterproductive.
This thesis maintains that the functionalist and modernist approach adopted in law and policy to depict Adivasi identities re-instates the tradition/modernity binary. It institutes an oppositional relationship between work done by the Adivasis and education. In this study, I have illustrated how this dichotomous relationship between work and education is doubly disadvantageous for the Adivasi women and places them at odds with going to school. Attending to the everyday life and fluidity of routines of young Adivasi women and allowing a combination of context-sensitive work and schooling could make education more inclusive for the young Adivasi people. An exclusive focus on skills and vocational training for ‘modern’ jobs, as is the case presently in the local village community, devalues the existing knowledge systems of both young and old Adivasis. Incorporating these in current education, skill and vocational training, such as the use of Gondi language alongside English, Hindi and Marathi, could be another strategy for inclusion.

Re-thinking the association of insurgency with and naming of areas inhabited by the Adivasis as Left-Wing Extremism affected in policy could have implications for participation and engagement of Adivasis with structures of local governance. The binary installed between the Indian State and the Maoists, and the legal classification of Maoists as terrorists, exacerbates the context of precarity and vulnerability of the Adivasis, as demonstrated in this study. Efforts to dissolve this binary in and through law, policy and practice of the State would ease some of the tensions between the Indian and Adivasi identities.

More broadly, this study encourages a critical approach to social categories, reinforced and reified through policy, which invoke modern notions of the subject. It questions the assumptions that modernisation and development discourses make about social life and the depiction of future in these discourses specifically through policy. In doing so, this thesis emphasises the need for contextualising policy and attending to processes of identity-construction that are often entangled with relations of power.

8.5 Further research

This study, while exploring the production, performance and navigation of Adivasi identities in an area of civil unrest of India, opens up space for further research. While I focused on the village community context of the Adivasis, further investigation could explore the spaces and institutions of school/classroom, panchayat or gram sabha, forests and forest-rights legislation as well as the family in relation to Adivasi identities.
Within these spaces and places, I would be interested to raise questions about the new discursive categories that emerge and are enacted, embodied and/or resisted by the Adivasis, more specifically the young people. Such exploration would involve extended ethnographic research through observations, in-depth interviews and group discussions to consider one or more of the abovementioned spaces and the social relations these produce and challenge.

Another area of research that I am interested to suggest here, linked to the first suggestion, is examining in detail the intersections of age, religion, gender, caste and class in the context of the Adivasis, especially with regard to education and technology/digital age in India. These intersections were highlighted in this thesis, albeit briefly, and further research could accentuate these connections, more specifically with regard to age relations. I found the interlinking of education, gender and religion, in relation to the intergenerational differences among the Adivasis, of specific interest. This is an area that remains under-researched and requires further analysis and elaboration through new context-specific conceptual frameworks.

8.6 Reflections

This thesis has explored the discursive production of Adivasi identity in context of civil unrest in India. In doing so, it has aimed to examine and trouble the multiple discourses that have co-constituted the Adivasi within the modern nation-state of India. As I discussed in Chapter 1, this research started with an initial interest in the Right to Education and its significance for Adivasi communities, especially in areas of civil unrest. Through the course of this study, my assumptions about the centrality of education within development discourse were challenged. While recording community demands for education and development in my practitioner work, I overlooked the particular contexts which shaped and informed these demands. I took the social and discursively instituted categories such as Tribe as inherently deficit, but politically formed, and regarded education as way out of the deficit.

Staying in and navigating the field along with the research participants and engaging with their ‘voices’ enabled a better understanding of the context that we were in and of the strategies that were being adopted. Further re-reading of the data opened up spaces and possibilities for me to view the research participants beyond the insurgent/victim binary. It helped me consider the ways in which the local village community and more specifically the Adivasi Gond community re-produced, re-enacted
and re-signified regulatory and dominant discursive norms. In so doing, they took up existing discourses and produced new ones to construct and navigate their multiple identities and belongings.

While theoretically this study marks a shift for me from modern and liberal standpoints to poststructuralism, postcolonialism and feminism, this shift has also had bearings on my methodological positioning. It continues to enable a questioning of dominant discourses in my thinking and highlights a more reflexive and critical position. This constant ‘becoming’, rather than ‘being’, has also been made possible due to research engagements within and outside the academic community, in addition to the many interactions in the field. My own embodiment of this research continues to take place through the navigation of my multiple identities, lived realities, and belongings, alongside the research participants of this study and the academic community. Shilpa’s comments at the beginning of Chapter 1 and Neh’s comments at the beginning of this chapter have argued for the coexistence of multiple subjectivities, whether of being Indian and Adivasi or being able to work, study and (not) be married simultaneously. Through this doctoral thesis, and now beyond it, my embodiment of these arguments continues.


Sedwal, M., Kamat, S. (2008). *Education and social equity: with a special focus on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in elementary education.* CREATE Pathways to Access


Sinha, S. (n.d.). *Children’s Access to Education in Areas of Civil Unrest: Case of “Bal Bandhu Scheme”*


Appendix 1

The Scheduled Districts Act XVI, 1874

(Some Sections)

PREAMBLE

An Act to ascertain the enactments in force in various parts of British India, and for other purposes.

WHEREAS various parts of British India have never been brought within, or have from time to time been removed from, the operation of the general Acts and Regulations and the jurisdiction of the ordinary Courts of Judicature;

And whereas doubts have arisen in some cases as to which Acts or Regulations are in force in such parts, and in other cases as to what are the boundaries of such parts;

And whereas among such parts are the territories specified in the first schedule hereto annexed, and it is expedient to provide readier means than now exist for ascertaining the enactments in force in such territories and the boundaries thereof, and for administering the law therein;

And whereas it is expedient to declare that certain Acts are in force in a tract of land lying between the Railway Station at Satnand the eastern boundary of the Jabalpur Division;-  

It is hereby enacted as follows:-

Section 1 - Short title

This Act may be called "The Scheduled Districts Act, 1874" Local extent.-This Act extends in the first instance to the whole of British India other than the territories mentioned in the first schedule (here to) annexed, and it shall come into force in each of the Scheduled District on the issue of a notification under Section 3 relating to such District.

Interpretation clause.-

In this Act the term "Scheduled Districts" means the territories mentioned in the first schedule hereto annexed; and, from the date fixed in the resolution next hereinafter mentioned, it shall also include any other territory to which the Secretary of State for India, by resolution in Council, may declare the provisions of the thirty-third of Victoria, Chapter III, Section 1, to be applicable.

1. The following tracts are specified and constituted scheduled tracts under the scheduled district act XIV of 1874.

a) Assam, Ajmer- Mewar, Coorg, and the Andaman Island.

b) Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Chittagong hill tracts in Bengal.
c) the Santhal parganas, Chhotanagpur Division and Angul Mahal;

d) Aden, Sindh, Panchmahal and estate of Mewasi chiefs in West Khandesh in Bombay;

e) Chanda Zamindaris, Chhattisgarh Zamindaris and Chindwara Jagirdari in the Central Provinces;

f) Fourteen mahals in panjam, nine mahals in Visakhapatnam, some area in Godavari district and Laccadives including Minicoy islands in Madras.

g) Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Gazikhan, Lahul and spirti in punjab.

h) Jliansi Division, Kumaon and Gharwal, Tarai Pargnas, four areas in Mirzapur district, Family domains of Maharaja of Benaras and Jaunser-Bawar in Dehradun district in the United Provinces; and

i) The pargana of Manipur in the Central India Agency,

2. The enactment’s mentioned in the second schedule here to annexed shall be repealed,

3. The Local Government, with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council, may, from time to time, by notification in the Gazette of India and also in the Local Gazette (if any)

a.) declare what enactments are actually in force in any of the Scheduled Districts, of any part of any such District, b) declare of any enactment’s that it is not actually in force of the said Districts or in any part of any such District, c.) correct any mistake of fact is any notification issued under this section
Appendix 2

ETHICAL APPROVAL

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*NB: If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

**Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:**

**Amendments to protocol**

* Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

**Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects**

* Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

**Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events**

* Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.
INFORMATION SHEET

Title of research project:
Children’s Access to Education in Areas of Civil Unrest in India

What is the research about?
As part of my PhD studies, I am carrying out a research on children’s access to education in an area affected by civil unrest. The aim of this research is to understand, in contexts of civil unrest, the meanings attached to education provisioning and quality by the local communities, including children and youths, and document their voices. In more specific terms this includes education provisioning/ supply; barriers to educational access; civil unrest and its relationship to educational provisioning/ supply; and practices to ensure children’s access to education. The objective of this research is to establish in contexts of civil unrest the links to and between demand and supply of education.

About the researcher:
My name is Gunjan and I am studying for a PhD at the Centre for International Education (CIE) at the University of Sussex. I have previously worked with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on the Bal Bandhu (Friends of Children) scheme in areas of civil unrest and I am passionate about children’s access to education as a fundamental right and equity in access to education.

What will my participation involve?
There are three sides to your participation in this project –

(i) Focus groups
With prior permissions, I will be holding separate focus groups with adults and children and discussing issues pertaining to children’s access to education in your area. This will include discussion on educational opportunities available to children in your area, quality of educational provisioning and quality of education being provided, barriers children face to access schools, and efforts made by the community (strategies and practices) to ensure children’s access to education. A discussion will also be held on the role of local-level bodies. Discussions on these issues will also be held with children after gaining consent from parents. Each group will have 6-7 persons.

(ii) Interviews
After focus groups, I will be interviewing some adults individually and discussing specific issues around children’s educational access in your area. These interviews will be more of a conversation/interaction and will be held at a place agreed upon by both the research participant and researcher. No interviews will be held with children.
(iii) Observations

With prior permissions, I will be observing some aspects of your daily life such as panchayat meetings, village gatherings, and school management committee meetings but you will be informed of my presence in advance of this happening.

When will the research take place?
The research will take place between September 2015 and June 2016.

How will the research take place?
I will be recording focus group discussions and interviews on a Dictaphone after seeking permission from you and other participants. These recordings will then be transcribed and will only be available to me. I might also be taking some notes during the focus groups, interviews, and observations.

What will happen to the information I provide?
With your prior permission, I will be using this information to answer my research questions for my PhD thesis, and possibly for other publications. However, in each case, your confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured.

Will information about me kept confidential?
All research data, together with any personal information collected during the research process will be securely and anonymously stored to prevent identification of any research participants.

Can I change my mind about my participation?
Yes, you can withdraw your participation and your data at any given point of time. You are free to withdraw consent until such a time that this is no longer practical, which should be before August 2016 when the data analysis begins. If you wish to withdraw please contact me on ______

Who has approved this research?
This research has been approved by my two research supervisors and the module convener at the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex as well as the University Research Ethics Committee.

Who can I contact for further information?
I am happy to answer any questions / queries about this research, however small. However, if you wish to speak to someone else, please contact {local NGO contact person} or my research supervisor.

Researcher contact details:  Supervisor contact details:  Local
contact:  Gunjan Wadhwa  Prof. Mairead Dunne  (Omitted)
University of Sussex  University of Sussex
Centre for International Education  Centre for International Education
Essex House 130, Brighton, UK  Essex House 100, Brighton, UK
BN1 9QQ  BN1 9QQ
TOPIC GUIDE: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (ADULTS)

1. Discussion on specific aspects of local community and area
2. For how long have you lived in this area?
3. What is different in the areas you live in from the rest of the country?
4. What is the profile (social, economic, occupational, educational) of people living in these areas?
5. What were the educational opportunities available to you?
6. What are the educational opportunities available to your children at present?
7. How has this provision changed over time?
8. Are schools accessible?
9. Are children going to school?
10. If not, why?
11. If yes, what are the efforts made by you as parents / community members / local office bearers to access educational provisions for your children?
12. What are the barriers that you faced / are facing in accessing local government / governance structures?
13. What are the barriers that children face in accessing schools?
14. What are the issues that children encounter in schools?
15. What strategies / practices do you adopt to navigate the everyday life in the village?
16. What strategies / practices do you propose?
17. Anything else that you would like to discuss / talk about?
Appendix 5

TOPIC GUIDE: INTERVIEWS (ADULTS)

1. Discussion on the personal profile (social, economic, occupational, educational)
2. Discussion on everyday life/routines
3. What is the status of education in this area – availability of physical, social, human infrastructure?
4. Compliances in accordance with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009?
5. What were the educational opportunities available to you?
6. What are the educational opportunities available to your children at present?
7. How has this provision changed over time?
8. Are local institutions better placed to respond to the demands of the community?
9. How accessible are local institutions such as panchayats, SMCs, block office?
10. Do your children go to school?
11. If not, why?
12. If yes, what are the efforts made by the local community to access educational provisions for children?
13. Have you or the community made demands / petitions to the local administration about children’s education? Have these been responded to?
14. What are the barriers that you face in terms of access to government institutions/resources?
15. What are the barriers that children face in accessing schools?
16. What are the issues that children encounter in schools till they finish at least elementary (class 1-8) education?
17. What is the role of mandatory institutions such as gram panchayats (local bodies), gram sabhas, School Management Committees, and community-based groups such as youth, women’s groups, local community-based organisations and other civil society/NGOs if any in the area?
18. Any other issues you would like to discuss / talk about?
TOPIC GUIDE: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (YOUNG PEOPLE)

1. Discussion on daily routines / activities
2. Discussion on community life
3. What are the educational opportunities available to you?
4. What is your idea of a school?
5. Have you ever been to school?
6. If not, why? Would you like to join school now?
7. If yes, why did you stop going to school?
8. What were the barriers that you faced in going to school?
9. What were the issues that you encountered in school?
10. What did you do to overcome those issues / barriers?
11. Would you like to go back to school?
12. What would you like to change about your school?
13. Anything else that you would like to discuss / talk about?
Fieldnotes Excerpts
(Fieldwork update for February and March 2016)

Plan for Feb-March as shared in the last update:

- Three more Focus Groups planned with adults from 15th Feb to March. I am organising these, unlike the previous ones which I was invited to attend, as I feel the local community is more used to/bored of my presence now:
  (i) Local school teachers
  (ii) Local level NGO volunteers along with local self-help group members
  (iii) Sarpanchs (heads of panchayats/local bodies) of adjoining villages

Personal Reflections

- After my fourth month here, I can begin to feel that the novelty is wearing off, for both the researcher and the researched. People around still look at me curiously, talk and ask questions, but the frequency of our chats has decreased. It is the same for me perhaps, since at times I feel bored and other times there is information overload. There are other hardships too – while there was no hot water during winters and a makeshift toilet outside, the weather is unbearably hot now with all kinds of small and big reptilian insects.
- However, I still feel that it was important to stay for long in the village in context of my research – there are so many dynamics which are only now becoming apparent, for instance the key lines of difference between the two local communities, Adivasi and non-Adivasi, tobacco buying and chewing among young women, conflict within the teaching community and their in-charges, tensions between the local NGO workers.
- After our last discussion, I incorporated more questions on the nature of conflict in the area, factors that produced and fuelled the conflict, role of the Naxals/Maoists and their ideology, reasons for waning of the movement, and how (if at all) has the movement changed (benefitted or disadvantaged) things for the community.
- Earlier, I was only asking about the nature of conflict and its impact on children’s access to education and policy formulation and implementation in the area regarding education. But this shift has opened up interesting and surprising discussions for me.
- However, even now the responses regarding conflict and Maoists remain limited, especially during the focus groups. Not many of my participants wish to talk openly about the Naxals in these group discussions – they all admit to their area being a ‘risky’ or ‘dangerous’ one, but the word Naxal is never mentioned by them. Naxals are referred to as ‘they’, ‘them’, and ‘andar-waale’ (or inside/jungle/forest...
ones), and even this is done in hushed tones. Voices are lowered when I ask conflict related questions in FGs.

- This is not the case during my personal one-to-one conversations with many of the same participants. They are more forthcoming and frank to me alone.
- For now, I am not going to include the personal chats in my update since I want to explore these issues more during my in-depth interviews.

Focus Group Updates

1. Local Teachers from my and neighbouring villages – Two female, four male teachers of the ashram shala which was over 10 kms away from my village but young people from near and far studied here (I organised this FG)

- I had spent some time with these teachers individually, to understand if I should have one FG for either male and female teachers or separate ones. As I had mentioned in my previous updates, both the groups were comfortable in each other’s presence and shared a good rapport. Still, male teachers were more vocal than female ones (who wanted them to start the discussion) and ended up dominating the discussion.

Governance and Decentralisation

- Asked me not to record but to take notes instead – fear of being ‘heard’ they said
- Didn’t feel included in the decision-making of the school processes and activities and so had stopped taking initiatives. Admitted to avoiding discussion on pertinent issues such installation of lights, hot water, mosquitoes and spread of malaria with the school admin because they are yelled at by the in-charge when they do.
- Some of the young people I spoke to mentioned this conflict between teachers too since there were no textbooks, no hot water in harsh winter, no lights inside and outside toilets, and no mosquito protection, so education as victim and perpetrator of conflict.

Access to Education

- Onus was placed on the Adivasi parents – I was repeatedly told that parents are not interested to send children to school and instead take them along to the fields especially during the harvest time when they can use ‘extra hands’.

- Development and Role of State: Government, they felt, won’t go from door-to-door and follow up on these children who don’t come to school regularly – it is not the govt’s job; the parents should be more responsible. But as teachers they said they were doing their bit by making personal visits to absentee students’ homes and motivating parents to send their children back to school (they didn’t think that they
were part of the govt – felt excluded from key processes and as mere recipients of govt training which was not enough for their classrooms)

- **Barriers:**
  - Young people, especially girls, needed for house work – at home and in fields during sowing and harvesting of crops.
  - Money was a deciding factor – since schools were far away, children had to spend money traveling or sometimes on uniforms or books, and parents couldn't afford such expenses.
  - Disconnect between students and teachers – three teachers in this group were Adivasi but they agreed that majority of the teachers in govt schools are non-Adivasi and don't understand the language, culture and customs of the Adivasi children. Marathi was the language of instruction whereas Gondi was the language that the Adivasi children understood and spoke at home, producing further alienation of children in schools.
  - How were these barriers related to the civil unrest in their village? – they said that if I was in Delhi, I wouldn't encounter all these barriers (some such basic ones as unavailability of textbooks, uniforms, school shoes, electricity, hot water, and mosquito sprays), but it was here because of sustained marginalisation and exclusion that they had to face these barriers. But they couldn't say for sure if the unrest was good or bad for them and their area.
  - **Efforts** they were making – personal visits to follow up with parents whose children weren't regular to school (interestingly this started after an NGO training); prepare lists of children with socio-economic profile to track them; one male teacher who rarely spoke during the discussion, opened up towards the end and admitted to wanting to start an NGO for children's rights but was scared being in this 'risky area', since there were many like the 'andar-waale' (Naxals) 'who pull your leg if you try to act smart or do something good'.

- **Gender**
  - Both the teachers, young Adivasi women, said they had to be 'extra careful living in this area since they were unmarried and there were many who called them names (including school admin) if they didn't dress appropriately or were out of line'. So, it was better to be low-key and not attract too much attention if you had to be safe in this area. I was the given the same advice.
  - The female teachers I observed were reinforcing these norms, that girls had to act in a particular way, in the village. I observed that the young women in the village dressed and behaved like their female teachers, wearing *salwar kameez* always, since they were 'not allowed' to wear jeans and t-shirt, whereas the boys remained carefree wearing jeans, t-shirts, or shorts. Their walks, their demeanour while getting food during community gatherings and
while eating was starkly different from the young men – embodied and performative.

- Both the female teachers had strong religious beliefs and observed fasting rituals which were emulated by the other young female participants, and sometimes even the males. These they mentioned were the popular ‘Hindu’ religious customs and rituals.

2. **Local level NGO volunteers** along with young people from the village community – six male members, two female members (I organised this FG)

- There were only three female volunteers in this group, out of which two were present for the discussion (to be explored in in-depth interviews)
- Talked about their role and functions in the village – regular visit to schools in the area; interactions with SMC members, teachers, headmasters; holding regular community meetings and encouraging parents / panchayats to write petitions to the block and district administration; visiting the block and district admin office with the community members in larger groups to exert pressure on the officers (they delivered petitions in person and ensured some response, otherwise they said the petitions were thrown away if they sent by post).
- Systematic files and registers were maintained – each volunteer carried a register with particular details of children in his/her village, age, profile, school going or out of school, attendance etc. I wondered if the govt had such details of these children or if they could include this data in their planning (some volunteers shared that their local block officers had requested them to carry out the survey of children and share the data with the govt – a case of State not being able to do its job or do it well and collaboration with the civil society groups). The NGO was happy to share the data and meet officers regularly to be a part of the planning process – but the response of the admin depended from officer to officer, some were forthcoming to collaborate while others were closed to the idea.
- File of each petition sent by the community was also maintained, along with responses received, and in case where no response was received within a set period, follow-ups were made by including the previously sent letters, and by slowly moving from village to block to district level to gain response – very bureaucratic yet systematic way of dealing with the State I felt (from a deficit State, making it an active / functional State). State was absent in the area I observed and perhaps that absence was filled by others such as Maoists and NGOs
- However, larger onus placed on the community by the NGO. The NGO volunteers were from the Adivasi community, but they felt that the community members were disinterested in education and didn't participate in the NGO meetings. The Adivasis had to be told what to do, but they weren't very trusting of NGOs beyond a point.
- I also observed that the NGO workers didn’t trust the community members, especially those NGO workers who were non-Adivasis. They referred to the Adivasis as ‘nice but clever’, allowing the NGO to work as
long as it was solving the purpose of the community but not beyond that. This mistrust was all-pervasive and, like you said last time, maybe has to do with the fear I encounter everywhere and the absence of the State.

- The clash was, between Adivasis and non-Adivasis, was again mentioned, this time in terms of language (Gondi and Marathi) and religion (Hindu and Adivasi). The young Adivasi staff of the NGO mentioned that the village elders sometimes object to the Hindu festivals being celebrated in the village by the younger generations, as it involves ignoring Adivasi practices and customs.
- One of the non-Adivasi NGO workers reiterated the religious conflict between the Adivasis and the non-Adivasis and attributed it to the resistance of the Adivasi community towards embracing Hindu religious practices. I want to understand this ‘conflict’ more in my in-depth interviews.

3. **Sarpanchs** (heads of panchayats/local bodies) of adjoining villages – three female and three male sarpanchs of adjoining villages (I organised this FG)

- The Sarpanchs shared that they were not being trained adequately by the local govt and state administration. They were usually called for a day long training where a district or state official made a power point presentation without knowing or asking issues faced by them in the villages. This they found frustrating. Also, access to funds was an issue since the *gram sevak* (village helper) who was a district administration person was the one with control of the funds and often dictated terms for using the money, especially if the Sarpanch was new and a first-timer. Many leakages in funds were found by the panchayats where the *gram sevaks* were misusing their authority. However, the Sarpanch was the final signatory on the release of funds and could say no to this officer, but many feared due to the power relations.
- By contrast they said that the NGOs were training them regularly and working with them on their roles and duties. This made them feel more confident of their position.
- The Sarpanchs mentioned holding community meetings with the teachers and cooks and school helpers but reiterated the non-participation of the Adivasi parents. However, the Sarpanchs felt excluded from the state administration and planning. They were not included in the consultation processes when key decisions were taken about their villages by the district and block administration. The govt officers, even those at the lower levels, didn’t attend the planning meetings of the panchayats.
- This was evident from the planning for schools – every Sarpanch said that the distance to school was a barrier and young people had to walk over 5 kms one way every day to reach school, as not every family could afford a bicycle and there was no reliable public transport. This was particularly disabling for young women.
- Notwithstanding this, the Sarpanchs said that the community ‘listened’ to them simply because they knew that education was beneficial for their
children, and the culture of sending children to school, although not originally present, is slowly coming in due to these efforts.

- The exclusion of the teachers, Sarpanchs, and the community from policy planning and implementation resonated the structural and cultural violence that Galtung talks of, producing fear, mistrust, and conflict of different kinds.
- The Sarpanchs said they don’t give up easy as they know that the govt doesn’t ‘listen’ at one go and it takes some 10-20 tries before it finally responds. They emphasised the need for collective organisation to activate the State, as it was the State which could provide development and education.