

Hanuman's Army: Adivasi and Hindutva in Gujarat

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 2004

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Scholars writing on the rise of Hindutva, particularly in Gujarat state, have attributed its success to its ability to serve middle and upper caste and class interests. In recent state and *Lok Sabha* elections, though, Hindutva, through the Bharatiya Janata Party, has also made significant inroads outside of this elite, particularly in Adivasi (Aboriginal) communities. This electoral support has emerged alongside Adivasi participation in anti-minority violence in the Dangs District in 1999 and the 2002 post-Godhra carnage.

This thesis seeks to understand these developments and in doing so rejects predominant explanations which rely on a paternalistic false-consciousness approach that strips the Adivasi of independent political agency. It shows that the economic development of Adivasi communities has led to stratification and the emergence of an Adivasi elite. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital is used to show that the psychological rewards that Hindutva is able to offer this elite have material consequences and thus this hegemony can serve the interests of these elements of Adivasi society.

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Acronyms

ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
BJS	Bharatiya Jan Sangh
CNI	Church of North India
HJM	Hindu Jagran Manch
ILO	International Labour Organization
INC	Indian National Congress
ITDP	Integrated Tribal Development Program
KHAM	Kshatriya, Hindu, Adivasi, Muslim
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TSP	Tribal Sub Plan
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad

Glossary

<i>Adivasi (also Abibasi)</i>	Literally original inhabitant, aboriginal
<i>Babri Masjid</i>	The mosque at Ayodhya constructed in the 1500s that was destroyed by Hindutva mobs in 1992. The site of the mosque is alleged to be <i>Ram</i> 's birthplace and its construction is said to have required the demolition of a Hindu temple (<i>Ram Mandir</i>).
<i>Bandh</i>	Protest in the form of a general strike, typically lasting one day, in which shops are closed and cities generally come to a standstill
<i>Bharat Mata</i>	Mother India
<i>Bharatiya Jan Sangh</i>	Political party representing Hindutva from 1951-1980
<i>Bhauband</i>	<i>Bhil</i> nobility
<i>Bhil</i>	An Adivasi people of central India (including Gujarat)
<i>Bhil Seva Mandal</i>	Congress organization for working with <i>Bhil</i> communities
<i>Brahmin</i>	Uppermost caste in the Hindu caste hierarchy
<i>Crore</i>	Ten million
<i>Dalit</i>	Untouchable
<i>Deeksha</i>	Religious initiation
<i>Ganga Mata</i>	Goddess of the river Ganges
<i>Gavit</i>	Villager
<i>Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha</i>	A caste federation of the <i>Kshatriya</i> in Gujarat
<i>Hanuman</i>	Hindu monkey deity
<i>Harijan</i>	Untouchables (coined by Gandhi, translates as children of God)
<i>Harijan Sevak Sangh</i>	Congress organization for work among untouchables.
<i>Hindu Rashtra</i>	Hindu Nation
<i>Hindutva</i>	Conservative Hindu nationalist ideology

<i>Hindutvawadi</i>	A proponent of Hindutva
<i>Indian National Congress</i>	Leader of the Indian independence movement and one of the leading political parties in India
<i>Jana</i>	Tribe
<i>Jangli</i>	Wild
<i>Jati</i>	Caste group
<i>Kar Sevak</i>	Volunteers for a religious cause, in this case temple construction at Ayodhya
<i>Kshatriya</i>	Warrior caste in the Hindu <i>varna</i> system
<i>Kumb Mela</i>	A mass hindu pilgrimage
<i>Lakh</i>	One-hundred-thousand
<i>Lathi</i>	Stick or cane used for crowd control by the Indian police
<i>Lok Sabha</i>	Indian parliament (lower house)
<i>Mandir</i>	Temple
<i>Manusmrti</i>	Ancient Hindu law book
<i>Mughals</i>	Islamic dynasty that ruled the subcontinent. Emerged in the 16 th century and reached the height of its dominance around 1700
<i>Panchayat</i>	Local governing council
<i>Patidar</i>	A middle caste in the <i>varna</i> system.
<i>Raj</i>	Kingdom/ruler, here referring to the British
<i>Ram/Rama</i>	An incarnation of the god <i>Vishnu</i> and the central figure of the <i>Ramayana</i> epic
<i>Ramayana</i>	One of two ancient Hindu epics
<i>Ramjanmabhoomi</i>	Movement to build a temple to <i>Ram</i> at the site of the destroyed mosque at Ayodhya (purported to be the birthplace of Ram)
<i>Sadhu</i>	Holy man
<i>Sangh Parivar or Sangh</i>	Family of Hindutva (RSS) organizations
<i>Scheduled castes and</i>	Members of lower or untouchable castes that are recognized by

<i>tribes</i>	the Indian constitution for the purposes of reservations in education, public office, and the civil service
<i>Shahukar</i>	Moneylender
<i>Shankaracharyas</i>	Title of the heads of Hindu monasteries in the <i>Advainta</i> tradition
<i>Taluka</i>	An Indian administrative unit. Each district contains a number of talukas
<i>Vania</i>	Merchants, traders or moneylender. Also an upper caste
<i>Vanvasi</i>	Forest people (Hindutva term for Adivasi)
<i>Vanyajati</i>	Forest peoples (Hindutva term)
<i>Varna</i>	Vedic social ranking (fourfold classification based on birth and traditional occupation)
<i>Vidhan Sabha</i>	Gujarat State Assembly
<i>Yatra</i>	Pilgrimage or religious procession

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In December 1998, the relatively little-known and largely poor Adivasi region of the Dangs, in the Gujarat state of India, hit the international headlines: a Hindu rally held to coincide with Christmas celebrations had led to ten days of violence against Adivasi (Aboriginal) Christians. Under the watch of state authorities, places of worship and Christian-owned shops were destroyed and Christians themselves were physically attacked by angry mobs of non-Christian Adivasi.¹ In 2002, during the infamous statewide carnage of Muslims by Hindutva mobs, similar, but much more violent events took place in other Adivasi regions, particularly Panchmahals and Vadodara. This time Adivasi rioters responded to Hindutva's call to cleanse their villages of "cow eaters" by taking part in the murder and rape of their Muslim neighbours.² This was widely seen as the climax of a long process in which the forces of Hindutva in Gujarat had sought to entrench themselves by creating fear of Christian and Muslim threats to Hinduism in the poor Adivasi areas which span the eastern fringes of the state.

These events are symptoms of a deeper process of social, economic, religious and cultural contestation in this region, a contestation through which an aggressive form of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) is seeking to entrench itself in Gujarat, including in its so-called "tribal" or "Adivasi" regions, hitherto assumed to be immune to Hindutva. As in the tribal areas of other states such as Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, Hindutva's activities among the Adivasi have been directed largely at consolidating a community of "Hindu"

¹"India, Politics by Other Means: Attacks against Christians in India," (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

²Dionne Bunsha, "Rural Trauma," *Frontline* 2002.

Adivasi and fostering hate and demonizing non-Hindu “others,” chiefly Christian Adivasi. By this strategy the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the primary party representing Hindutva, has made significant electoral progress, replacing the Indian National Congress as the party of choice in many tribal constituencies. This process of Hindutva’s intervention in the Adivasi regions of Gujarat is the subject of my thesis.

Hindutva, India’s manifestation of the new right which in recent years has been gaining a foothold in liberal democracies around the world, is a socially and fiscally conservative movement which calls for *Hindu Rashtra*, a Hindu nation-state. In its most extreme versions, it envisages a state in which laws and education are strictly Hindu and incorporate traditions such as the *varna* system (a simplified or, in their parlance, “purified” version of the Caste System) which justifies the socio-economic stratification of Indians along hereditary lines. It seeks to address the perceived injustice of “discrimination” against Hindus in the form of special treatment for minorities such as Muslims and Christians who are seen as alien and inferior.

The ideology of Hindutva is generally traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, following the First World War, and the thinking of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an anti-colonial revolutionary who called for the creation of a Hindu nation state. In 1925, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar established the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), a militant volunteer organization based on these ideas that to this day is the foundational organization of a wide family of Hindutva groups known as the *Sangh Parivar* (see Appendix A for a partial list of *Sangh Parivar* organizations).³

³For a detailed account of the emergence of Hindu Nationalism see Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)* (New Delhi: Viking, 1996) or Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

Hindutva then is not a new development in South Asian society; what is new, however, is the recent political and electoral success of its political party, the BJP. Though a distinct current in society and politics, political parties of Hindutva had never been particularly successful until the late 1980s when the BJP won an unprecedented 84 seats out of 543 in the *Lok Sabha*, India's lower house. By 1989 it was the third largest party and in 1996 it won the most seats of any party in the *Lok Sabha*. Though in 1996 the BJP was unable to secure coalition partners to secure office, by 1998 this was no longer an obstacle and the BJP stayed in office until 2004. While the Indian National Congress returned to office in 2004 and increased its share of seats in 2009, the BJP is still by far the second largest party on the *Lok Sabha* with 18.8 percent of the popular vote (116 seats) as compared to the Indian National Congress's 28.6 percent (206 seats). Hindutva remains one of the most important political forces in the country.

Initially, many analysts believed that Hindutva, antithetical to India's inherited culture of "secularism" (largely denoting, in the Indian context, the ability of different religions to live peaceably side by side), would be confined to the Hindi heartland (India's north-central, more devout region) and to members of the high or "twice born" castes (Brahmin, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya* castes) who stood to benefit from a strict adherence to Hindutva ideology.⁴ What is particularly puzzling, however, is how the BJP has secured support among India's most marginalized citizens - the lower castes, and classes, including the Tribals or Adivasi. Much of this success has been a result of the BJP's close relationship to Hindutva's various social movements, all part of the *Sangh Parivar*, which have co-opted these marginalized groups through the strategic use of

⁴For an account of this perspective see Russell Hocking, "The Potential for BJP Expansion: Ideology, Politics, and Regional Appeal – the Lessons of Jarkhand," *South Asia* 17(1994).

violence, conflict and “othering,” and by offering both psychological and material rewards to carefully selected individuals and groups among these marginalized communities.

The BJP’s firm grasp on state politics in Gujarat has meant that, more than in other states of India, Hindutva’s attempts to entrench itself in Gujarat’s Adivasi regions has the imprimatur of the state government. The atrocities of 1998 and 2002 were extreme manifestations of the more general government-endorsed stigmatization and exclusion of Christians and Muslims. I intend to examine the BJP’s activities in Adivasi Gujarat in order to contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon by asking: how do the contemporary happenings in Adivasi Gujarat shed light on an important aspect of the emergence of Hindutva in India, namely its fate amongst India’s marginalized peoples, in particular the Adivasi? More broadly, this thesis contributes to an understanding of how far-right conservative movements can find support amongst the very members of society that they most oppress. Events in the Tribal Belt of Gujarat are an interesting case study in that the Adivasi are among the most vehemently marginalized by Hindutva and yet sections among them seem to have rallied to the Hindutva cause and in some cases become violently anti-Christian and anti-Muslim.

As this thesis aims to determine how Hindutva, and the BJP in particular, has been able to co-opt groups that do not stand to benefit from their policies, it must assume that such conservative movements and parties benefit some parts of society and not others. As such, determining precisely who benefits and who loses is essential before proceeding. As alluded to above, this paper accepts the widely held view that it is those

at the bottom of the social and economic ladder, in India the lowest classes and castes, who are affected most negatively by these policies.

Thomas Blom Hansen writes that to understand how the BJP has emerged as such a powerful political force, one must recognize its appeal to the large and expanding middle class.⁵ Radhika Desai concurs and further explores the caste dimension of this process by providing a thorough account of how the BJP, especially in Gujarat, has been aided in its ascendance by a new cohesiveness between India's upper classes and castes, hitherto India's ruling strata, and its rising middle classes and castes, and by its success in winning over this large, unified social and electoral block.⁶ Hindutva's appeal to this group lies in its adherence to neoliberal policies and a strict Hindu code which, to a large degree, the middle and upper castes and classes have a vested interest in maintaining.

For the same reasons that Hindutva is good for the middle and upper castes and classes it has negative repercussions for lower caste and class Indians (including the Adivasi) who are doubly marginalized by both the *varna* system and neoliberal governance. Teltumbde shows the connection between Hindutva and neoliberalism: these ideologies, he argues, share an adherence to complete and absolute social Darwinism which ignores the weak, poor and powerless.⁷ Desai has also pointed out how "the economic and social costs of this form of political economy [neoliberalism] have been borne by the lowest strata in each country."⁸ It is these very groups that rely on the

⁵Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7.

⁶Radhika Desai, *Slouching Towards Ayodhya: Three Essays* (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002), esp. 120-21.

⁷Anand Teltumbde, "Hindutva, Dalits and the Neoliberal Order," in *Hindutva and Dalits: Perspectives for Understanding Communal Praxis*, ed. Anand Teltumbde (Kolkata: Samya, 2005), 53.

⁸*Ibid.*, 34.

social programs (in India minimal but under threat nonetheless) which are being cut by neoliberalism. Moreover, the *varna* system provides a justification (and Hindutva's proponents would argue a scientific one at that)⁹ for the economic marginalization of, and even outright violence towards, India's downtrodden. As the Indian National Human Rights Commission found in its *Report on Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes*:

It is this age-old caste relationship in Hindu Society which is getting disturbed by forces of pressure both from above and below.... The frequency and intensity of violence is an offshoot of desperate attempts by the upper caste groups to protect their entrenched status against the process of disengagement and upward mobility among lower castes resulting from affirmative state policy.¹⁰

The mobilization of Adivasi by Hindutva is a frightening development in Gujarati politics. If even the poorest, most oppressed groups can succumb to this politics of hatred, what possible opposition could now emerge? The KHAM alliance of the 1980s (consisting of a coalition of the numerous *Kshatriyas* – largely poor and lower middle class middle caste groups nominally considered *Kshatriyas* by those who wanted their social and political support¹¹, Harijans or untouchables, Muslims and Adivasi) that provided some hope for Gujarat's weaker sections, is now a distant memory as these very groups murder each other at the behest of the *Sangh Parivar*. To counter such a force, it is necessary to first understand it, and to determine how it has entrenched itself in Gujarat.

⁹Ghanshyam Shah, "Caste, Hindutva and Hideousness," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 15 (2002): 1392.

¹⁰"Report on Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes: Policy and Performance", (New Delhi: National Human Rights Commission, 2004), 1.

¹¹For more on the *Kshatriya* in Gujarat see Ghansyam Shah, *Caste Associations and Political Process in Gujarat: a study of Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975).

Existing explanations of Hindutva's success in Adivasi Gujarat strip the Adivasi of political agency and present them as innocent forest dwellers (bringing to mind Rousseau's notion of the noble savages) who have been tricked into carrying out the dirty work of the BJP. In viewing the matter in this way, one denies that some, at least, among the Adivasi have an interest in Hindutva, and one ignores the real material and societal inadequacies that have led Gujarat's downtrodden to turn to a politics of hatred. Much of the published analysis to date romanticizes the Adivasi by ignoring the fact that as these communities enter the capitalist system, the same rules of economic stratification apply to them as well. Accepting the ideology of the BJP can be seen to further the interests of some, particularly elite, Adivasi. This thesis examines the rewards that the Adivasi stand to gain from their participation in this politics. It shows that what appear to be psychological rewards such as inclusion and positive identity are actually fundamentally material.

Figure 1: Map of Gujarat State by District¹²

¹² Taken from State of Gujarat website: <http://www.gujaratindia.com/state-profile/district-profiles-detail.htm>

Methodology

This thesis uses a Marxian Political Economy approach to provide a more complete understanding of Adivasi mobilization in Gujarat than has been provided by other more “cultural” studies. By this I mean that politics, economics and culture are deeply intertwined and their interrelations are worthy of study. In an attempt to understand these relationships, this thesis focuses on the points of contact and overlap between these three usually separated realms by situating contemporary happenings within a wider socio-economic history. As such this work lies at the intersection of a number of disciplines: political science, history, sociology, and anthropology. I have drawn heavily from secondary sources from each of these disciplines. While many Marxist attempts at postulating relationships between these realms have been considered “economic determinist”, the strength of Marxian approaches lies in the fact that they at least attempt to problematise these relationships.

In preparing this thesis, I was able to spend four months in Gujarat under the auspices of Bhasha Research and Publication Centre and Bhasha Adivasi Academy. While the political climate in Gujarat precluded formal interviews with politicians and RSS activists, this thesis has nonetheless benefited greatly from my interaction with a wide range of Gujaratis.¹³ Many activists, scholars, and ordinary Adivasi, Hindus and Muslims shared their thoughts, beliefs and experiences, allowing me a much better perspective on developments in Gujarat than I could have attained from textual sources alone. Indeed, they enriched my reading of the textual material at my disposal.

¹³ The most prominent example of the effect of the political climate and the sensitivity of my topic was the refusal on the grounds of safety, of two separate NGO’s to allow me to accompany them to the Kumbh Mehla (a major Hindu gathering) in the Dangs which will be discussed later in the thesis. For this reason I have relied on secondary accounts of the event.

During my time in Gujarat, I was able to access a wide variety of primary and secondary sources that were unavailable in Canada. This included census reports, unpublished documents from the Centre for Social Studies Surat (CSSS), reports on communalism from a number of non-governmental organizations, and finally, a large collection of newspaper articles pertaining to communalism generally, and Adivasi violence in particular. While in India I also made use of the resources of a number of research centres and libraries, especially the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, the Bhasha Adivasi Academy, the Prashant Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace, and the Centre for Social Studies, Surat. More important than any of this, though, was the time I was able to spend in the Adivasi village of Tejgadh which provided me with a glimpse, albeit a tiny one, into the lives of Gujarat's Adivasi and the political climate on the ground.

With the exception of the work of a small number of particularly dedicated scholars, the lack of research into the Adivasi of Gujarat, and in particular their economic development is reflected in the limited data available. Census data, for example, tells very little about the conditions of Adivasi life and therefore cannot be used for comparative work on multiple districts. The findings of the Centre for Social Studies Surat on socioeconomic indicators in Adivasi districts demonstrate socioeconomic trends in Adivasi Gujarat that had long been overlooked by scholars, but further research is required to fully understand contemporary Adivasi society. The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies electoral poll data, which is generally an excellent resource, does not have a large enough Adivasi sample to be useful here, so to trace voting patterns I

relied on Elections India results for majority Adivasi districts – a less accurate source in that non-Adivasi live in these districts as well.

Where data is unavailable, I have used on descriptive data from primary and secondary sources rather than on statistical indicators. For example, regarding the stratification of Adivasi society, the Indian census does not provide the data to establish a quantitative account of stratification. As such, in many places this thesis suggests alternative understandings and identifies areas where further investigation is required, rather than providing concrete answers.

The reader will observe that this thesis is lacking an Adivasi voice. Given the approach here of addressing the political will and agency of the Adivasi, this is of course problematic. Unfortunately, short of conducting comprehensive interviews on the ground in Gujarat, the Adivasi perspective is not available at this time. As will be shown, unlike in the case of the untouchables, no pan-Indian, or even pan-Gujarati organization has emerged to represent Adivasi interests broadly,¹⁴ Adivasi politicians who have been elected in Adivasi constituencies have tended to represent their own class interests, rather than advocating for the Adivasi, and a community of Adivasi academics has not emerged. As such, this thesis has unfortunately had to rely on non-Adivasi accounts.

Structure

The body of the thesis starts in Chapter Two with a literature review outlining existing explanations of the relationship between Hindutva and subaltern groups such as the Adivasi and untouchables. It shows that there are important questions which this

¹⁴ Ghanshyam Shah has noted this void but also writes of the recent emergence of a “sense of ‘oneness’ as Adivasis, cutting across not only tribes and economic strata in Gujarat, but also outside Gujarat as Indian Adivasis.” Ghanshyam Shah, "Unrest among the Adivasis and Their Struggles," in *The Other Gujarat*, ed. Takashi Shinoda (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2002), 96-97,

literature begs and that existing accounts have fallen short of a complete understanding of what is taking place. The chapter then goes on to look at relevant accounts of ideology which are helpful in explicating theoretically the question of the thesis, starting with Marx, through to Gramsci, Therborn, and finally, to shed light on what a Hindutva hegemony offers the Adivasi, to Bourdieu. It concludes that Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital," when combined with Marxist accounts of ideology and hegemony, goes furthest in illuminating the political and cultural dynamics in question.

Chapters Three and Four present a history of the Adivasi, their origins and their historical relationship with the wider society to provide the background against which contemporary questions can be posed and their answers sought. Chapter Three focuses on the origins of Adivasi communities and their interactions with Hindu society and colonial India, while Chapter Four addresses more recent events and patterns from independence to the present day. These accounts challenge orientalist notions of the unchanging nature of Adivasi society and show, in particular, how contemporary Adivasi society has been, due to the accelerated pace of change under capitalism (in colonial and independent India) in ever greater flux. Particular attention is paid to the new patterns of stratification which the penetration of capitalism is producing in Gujarat, one of India's most developed states.

After this material history of the Adivasi, Chapter Five then provides an account of the extent to which the Adivasi have come to support Hindutva. This shows that incidents of violence, far from sporadic outbursts, are part of a more systemic process whereby the Adivasi are becoming followers of Hindutva – both by taking part in communal violence and increasingly by voting for the BJP. The chapter is divided into

two parts: the first narrates Adivasi participation in anti-Christian violence in the Dangs and anti-Muslim violence in the Panchmahals and Vadodara, and the second follows the BJP's electoral rise in the region from 1980 to 2007, and examines the strategies used by the BJP to expand its support base.

Chapter Six brings these accounts together by demonstrating how socio-economic changes within the Adivasi community itself are closely related to Hindutva's success. Here, Bourdieu's expanded notion of capital is applied to the case of the Adivasi's interactions with Hindutva. It demonstrates how the Adivasi's support for Hindutva is not merely psychological or cultural; rather these rewards represent social, cultural, and symbolic capital which has a real material basis. The Adivasi can reasonably expect to benefit materially for having participated in Hindutva.

The BJP's recent success in Adivasi Gujarat is complex and part of deeper, systemic socio-economic changes. This thesis cannot provide a complete understanding but seeks to present a more accurate portrayal of the context in which these events have taken place. Out of this one can begin to see alternate explanations and reject the simplistic and offensive accounts which rely on a paternalistic and outdated picture of a passive Adivasi – a noble savage – carrying out the work of the BJP in the tradition of *Hanuman*'s army of monkeys and their service to Lord Ram.

Chapter 2: The Mental and the Material Elements of Hegemony

This chapter is concerned with the general question of why poor, exploited communities at times support socially and fiscally conservative political movements. How is ideology used to establish hegemony over those most oppressed by it? In our case, why would Hindutva be attractive, or even acceptable, to the oppressed Adivasi who are not, by many accounts, including some of their own, understood to be Hindu, and who, even when they are, are consigned to its margins at the bottom of the Hindu hierarchy. What could such an ideology possibly have to offer the Adivasi? A combination of critical theories of ideology, Gramsci's notion of hegemony, and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital can be used to shed light on this apparent paradox.

Before proceeding with this critical account, we must first outline the relationship between Hindutva and the Adivasi as it is generally understood and review the explanations that have already been put forward. We also look at explanations of Hindutva's relationship with other similar groups and show how these have fallen short of a complete understanding. The second half of the chapter will then establish a theoretical framework which can be used to answer the questions which existing explanations beg. Critical Marxist understandings of ideology, particularly Gramsci's concept of hegemony with its focus on "consensual" elements, take us a long way to answering these questions. However, even these theories have their limitations, particularly a too-strict separation of the "mental" and "material". I will argue that Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital allows us to overcome this problem.

As the party of Hindutva, an ideology which favours upper caste dominance, the BJP's core support is among middle and upper caste/class Indians. Many writers have explored this: for example, Thomas Blom Hansen writes about how, to understand the BJP's emergence as such a powerful political force, one must recognize its appeal to India's large and expanding middle class that is "anxious to consolidate their status and gain recognition from their surroundings."¹⁵ He writes:

The xenophobic discourses of Hindu nationalism developed in the heart of the large and expanding middle class, which political common sense today holds to be the very prerequisite for creation of stable democracies in the post-colonial world. It was in these mainly urban environments...that the Hindu nationalist movement found its most receptive audiences.¹⁶

Hindutva's appeal to these groups lies in its neo-liberal policies and tacit acceptance of the caste system which India's elite have a vested interest in maintaining.

Elaborating this analysis further, and applying it to the case of Gujarat, Radhika Desai argues that the relatively advanced state of capitalist development has contributed critically to Hindutva's success there. While the details of her account are not relevant here, she demonstrates that one result of capitalist development in India has been the enrichment of substantial sections of the predominantly middle-caste agrarian propertied classes and that Hindutva has advanced in many parts of India by uniting them with the middle and upper-caste professional and industrial propertied groups in a single, pan-Indian ruling bloc which is also the social basis of Hindutva. These groups support Hindutva, then, because it attempts to preserve "the caste subordination and expectation of deference which the capitalism of India's countryside still relies on to achieve the

¹⁵ Hansen, *The Saffron Wave : Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

desired levels of super-exploitation [that] were fast disappearing.”¹⁷ Hindutva in Gujarat is thus able to unite these groups into a single political force whereas in other Indian states the political expression of the corresponding ruling bloc often takes the form of a political alliance between the party of Hindutva based among the upper castes/classes and regional parties based among the middle castes/classes.

While the elite nature of Hindutva is uncontroversial, how Hindutva manages to entrench itself amongst the poorer sections of Indian society is inadequately understood. What has been written to date has not tended to include a thorough analysis of the socio-economic conditions that have led to the present situation. The analysis of the BJP’s incursions into the Adivasi communities of Eastern and Southern Gujarat undertaken in this thesis can contribute to an understanding of this process.

Conventional Explanations

Three main positions have emerged to explain the apparent paradox of Adivasi support for Hindutva in Gujarat. First is the perspective of those who reject the notion of the Adivasi as a distinct people and assert that the Adivasi are actually Hindus who have somehow strayed from their “true religion.”¹⁸ This perspective then attempts to naturalize the ideas and actions of Hindutva activists among the Adivasi who ostensibly want to join with their Hindu brethren and “cleanse [their] village of cow eaters,”¹⁹ i.e. to expel the Christians and Muslims who are “dividing” their society. It is important to note that while this is the view of the *Sangh Parivar*, it is not exclusive to Hindutva and

¹⁷Desai, *Slouching Towards Ayodhya: Three Essays*, 16.

¹⁸For an example of this view see K.S. Arya, Shyam Khosla, N.K. Trikha, B.L. Gupta, "True Story of the Dangs: A Field Study " (Delhi: Panchnad Research Institute, 1999).

¹⁹Bunsha, "Rural Trauma."

cannot be dismissed as outrageous. As we will see in the next chapter, many legitimate scholars are of the opinion that the Adivasi are actually Hindus.²⁰

The second approach, which does see the Adivasi as distinct and separate from Hindu society, tends to downplay or deny the role of the Adivasi in the violence and more generally in the activities of Hindutva in Adivasi areas. This is less a scholarly approach than a mode of popular understanding. For example, one human rights activist I spoke with reported that in the post-Godhra riots non-Adivasi had committed the violent acts while the Adivasi themselves were simply looting for subsistence items such as sacks of sugar.²¹ It is quite likely that the media do exaggerate the role of the Adivasi in the violence, and in conditions of chaos it is difficult to ascertain who in particular was responsible for what. Nonetheless, reports on the 1999 and 2002 violence compiled by NGOs show that to a greater or less extent the Adivasi did play a role in both Hindutva's activities and in the violence, as they did, for example in the violence, looting and destruction of Muslim property in 2002.²² Likewise, in the Dangs District, while the physical violence was much less severe, the Adivasi did participate and here their hatred was directed towards their fellow Adivasi who had converted to Christianity. It is only by admitting this unfortunate reality that we can begin to investigate and understand the real issues behind the violence.

The denial of the Adivasi role in the violence is actually closely related to the third and most prevalent position which relies on a paternalistic attitude towards the

²⁰ See for example A. M. Shah, "The Tribes - So-Called - of Gujarat: In the Perspective of Time," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 2 (2003): 95.

²¹ Taken from conversation with Father Cedric Prakash of Prashant, Ahmedabad, Dec. 16, 2005.

²² See for example Javed Anand and Teesta Setalvad, eds. *Maaro! Kaapo! Baalo* (Delhi: People's Union for Democratic Rights, 2002). And "Genocide Gujarat," *Communalism Combat* 8 (77-78), no. 77-78 (2002).

Adivasi, one that strips them of any independent political agency. In what we may call the ‘external influence’ explanation, Adivasi are viewed in terms very similar to those set down by nineteenth century British ethnographers - as a simple people unable to understand politics and easily provoked by alcohol and rumours. In his account of the 2002 violence Lancy Lobo writes that “the adivasis were incited by outsiders. It is said that liquor was freely distributed among the adivasis and in an inebriated and receptive state of mind they were warned of an impending attack by Muslims to avenge the attack on their fellow religionists.”²³ Or as Indukumar Jani, social scientist, human rights activist and president of Janpath (a conglomerate of around 200 Gujarati NGOs) put it “you politically empower them, provide them country liquor and allow them to loot. The tiger tasted blood and went on a rampage.”²⁴ While it is certainly also the case that there were instances of RSS activists distributing free alcohol in Adivasi communities and spreading rumours about Muslims harming Tribals, to suggest that this alone mobilized the Adivasi cannot account for all Adivasi political participation in Hindutva activities, violent or otherwise; on the contrary, it obfuscates the deeper, structural conditions that led the Adivasi to behave in this way.

Hindutva and the Subalternists

What these accounts all share is a negation of the autonomy and independent agency of the Adivasi: the first by viewing the Adivasi as Hindu and thus naturalizing their actions, the second simply by negating the action, and the third by presenting the Adivasi as pawns who the BJP had taken advantage of. This has been a feature of much

²³ Lancy Lobo, "Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 48 (2002): 4846.

²⁴ Indukumar Jani as quoted in Darshan Desai, "Tribal Pursuit," *Outlook India* 2002, 38-39.

literature on Adivasi and other downtrodden communities in India since at least colonial times. It was against similar flaws in traditional Indian historiography that the subaltern studies group emerged in the late 1970s. Led by Ranajit Guha, the Subalternists sought to rectify such elite bias by focusing on the autonomy of India's subalterns. Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, for example, saw tribal revolts as occurring independently of the wider elite-based Nationalist struggle led by men like Gandhi and Nehru.²⁵ This thesis shares with (especially early) Subaltern Studies an emphasis on restoring agency to the subaltern groups such as the Adivasi and as such is highly influenced by the work of this group. However, in emphasizing the autonomy of the subaltern as more than a passive participant in history, the subalternists have created a dichotomy of elite and subaltern that is not reflected in reality.

While the Subalternists have not written on the case of Adivasi support for Hindutva, given the school's significance to Indian historiography and its relation to the project at hand, I would be remiss to not at least touch on its relevance to our case. In Subaltern Studies we see the opposite of the external influence argument outlined above in that this approach asserts the complete autonomy of subaltern communities vis-à-vis dominant groups. The relevance as well as the weakness of this approach is evident in David Hardiman's work in *Subaltern Studies V* on the Tribals of the Panchmahals.²⁶

In his "Bhils and Shahukars of Eastern Gujarat," Hardiman examines the relationship between the *Bhil* Tribals and the *Shahukar* moneylenders. Specifically, he looks at the 1899 famine and the subsequent revolt of the *Bhils*. Hardiman argues that it

²⁵ Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford, 1983).

²⁶ David Hardiman, "The Bhils and Shahukars of Eastern Gujarat," in *Subaltern Studies V*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987) 44-46.

was not starvation that led to the revolt, but moral outrage. He does not see the *Shahakurs* as having an ideological hegemony over the *Bhils*, rather “the relationship between the *Bhils* and the *Shahakurs* was formed out of a particular history which brought the egalitarian society of the *Bhils* into a close relationship with the hierarchical society of the *Shahukars* without changing in a fundamental manner the material organization of either”²⁷ So the *Bhils* did not accept the values of the dominant class but rather explained the relationship of domination through their own autonomous belief systems wherein the *Shahukars* were accorded occult powers.²⁸ In the 1899 famine then, when the *Bhils* revolted and looted the *Shahukar*’s storerooms it was not because they were starving (for they had not yet reached such dire straits) or because of the exploitative relationship itself, but rather because by not opening their stores of grain to the *Bhils*, the *Shahukars* were violating the *Bhil*’s moral code.

Hardiman goes to great lengths to establish that the *Bhil* understanding of the relationship was different from that of the *Shahukars* (often relying on a straightforward use of the colonial accounts the Subalternists originally set out to discredit)²⁹ and while he is right to show that the subalterns do not necessarily accept a dominant ideology *prima facie*, as K Balagopal argues in his review of the article, the two ideological conceptions cannot be seen as completely distinct either:

every unequal relation, every relation of domination, is a relation of tension. The very fact that it comes into being and reproduces itself implies the generation and internalization on both sides of a certain

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁹ It is such readings which, Sumit Sarkar notes, place Subaltern Studies outside the realm of the postmodern: “The claim (or ascription) of being post modern is largely spurious, in whichever sense we may want to deploy that ambiguous and self-consciously polysemic term. Texts are still being read here in a flat and obvious manner.” Sumit Sarkar, “The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies,” in *Writing Social History*, ed. Sumit Sarkar (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 103.

common morality that legitimizes the domination, while at the same time conceding something to the oppressed in the form of a line of demarcation beyond which the domination is regarded as 'excessive' and is condemned... even if we concede Hardiman's contention that the Bhils and Shahukar of Western Gujarat constituted 'two systems of social organization and morality interacting and coming into occasional conflict with each other,' rather than two social classes within a single social organization, the concluding tag that neither exercised 'moral hegemony' is more a presumption than an inference. On the contrary, a relation of domination cannot reproduce itself except under the umbrella of a hegemonic ideology, including a hegemonic morality.³⁰

It is this sharp dichotomy between subaltern and elite that makes the subaltern studies approach so untenable both in our case and more generally. If such an absolute division between the two categories at one time existed, and I doubt it ever has, this is certainly no longer the case in rural Gujarat. As in the other accounts outlined above, the Subalternist approach also views the Adivasi as a unified, undifferentiated whole and does not allow for internal differentiation or social mobility – both phenomena that we will see are widespread amongst the Adivasi. As Singh et al. put it "by trying to abstract the 'subaltern' from the 'elite,' one cannot really explore the ways in which these two levels interact."³¹

A subalternist account of the case in question here, then, would likely present the motivation behind the actions of the Adivasi as internal to their own communities, that is, an Adivasi moral code. This argument of course would not be new: the BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council) have always attributed the Adivasi's actions as a response to Christians dividing the Adivasi in the Dangs or Muslim moneylenders exploiting the Adivasi in the eastern Tribal Belt. Both of these factors

³⁰ K. Balagopal, "Drought and Tada in Adilabad," *Economic and Political Weekly* 24, no. 47 (1989): 2589.

³¹ Singh et al. "Subaltern Studies II: A review Article," review of Subaltern Studies II by Ranajit Guha. *Social Scientist* 12 (10) (October 1984) 19.

have been addressed in accounts of Adivasi violence: Satyakam Joshi, writing on the Dangs takes this approach by depicting the violence as a response to the Church's disruption of Adivasi solidarity.³² In doing so, Joshi seems to attribute the blame for the violence to the Christian Church and the victims themselves. Ganesh Devy on the other hand, in his commentary on the violence in the Vadodara district counters the Hindutva position by noting that while there were Muslim moneylenders who exploited the Adivasi, the Hindu moneylenders did the same. To the extent that anger at moneylenders can be seen as a factor, he argues, it is only insofar as they used the crisis as an opportunity to eliminate their Muslim competitors.³³ Any analysis which seeks to isolate the Adivasi actions and motivations from the wider context, as the subaltern studies approach would by definition do, cannot begin to understand such a complex situation.

The Subaltern Studies approach is also unable to recognize emancipatory activities. While the spiritual and indigenous understanding and contestation of the exploitation might have served the *Bhil* in its own way to limit if not contest exploitation, we also know that many Adivasi have had recourse to other more transformative perspectives, whether secular or religious (such as the Christian). As Balagopal notes, the suggestion that a scientific rational approach, or a solidarity movement within the subaltern community, may lead to a less intense exploitation would be seen by the Subalternists as condescending "elitism."³⁴

³² Joshi describes the violence in the Dangs as the "Hindu reaction" to the activities of Christian missionaries. Satyakam Joshi, "Tribals, Missionaries and Sadhus: Understanding Violence in the Dangs," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 37 (1999): 2671.

³³ Ganesh Devy, "Tribal Voice and Violence," *Seminar*, no. 513 (2002).

³⁴ Balagopal, "Drought and Tada in Adilabad," 2590.

Another example of this tendency can be seen in Hardiman's argument that the *Bhil-Shahukar* relationship is symbiotic in that the *Shahukars* fulfill a function that the Adivasi cannot take on themselves.³⁵ In this line of reasoning, the notion of the *Bhil*'s thriftlessness would be affirmed as a part of their indigenous way of life, not subject to a critique based on a fuller understanding of the limitations imposed on *Bhil* social and economic activity, limitations which may come to be contested in certain contexts. Such a celebration of the "indigenous way of life" would also have to turn a blind eye to many aspects of Adivasi life, such as the struggle of many among them to avail themselves of modern education and its benefits. Subaltern Studies would likely see any suggestion that education could help them to break free of exploitation as a western-elitist position which devalues the traditional *Bhil* way of life. It is hard to tell which is the more elitist view: one which insists on subjecting a given people to a fixed (and materially deprived) way of life or one which recognizes the potential for transformation within it. It is difficult to see any prospect for improvement in the material existence of the subalterns using this approach.

This rejection of the modern, which is particularly strong in later Subaltern Studies, not only leads to a romanticized and inaccurate portrayal of subaltern reality but, as former Subalternist Sumit Sarkar notes, is similar to the neo-traditionalist literature of writers like Ashis Nandy³⁶ and Partha Chatterjee. Sarkar uses an example from Partha Chatterjee's book *The Nation and its Fragments* where Chatterjee admits that despite the Indian peasant communities' extreme inegalitarianism, they can be applauded for the

³⁵ Hardiman, "The Bhils and Shahukars of Eastern Gujarat." 25.

³⁶ See for example Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy : Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford, 1983).

“unity... nevertheless established by recognizing the rights of subsistence of the population, albeit a differentiated right entailing differential duties and privileges.”³⁷ As Sarkar notes, this position follows the logic of Hindutva’s defense of the caste system,³⁸ and one can see how it could serve deeply conservative purposes.

Dalits and Hindutva

The Adivasi are not the only downtrodden peoples to be drawn into the Hindutva fold, some *Dalits* (untouchables) have also been supporting Hindutva during violence and at the polls. Unlike the Adivasi, the *Dalits* have largely been considered Hindu since at least the early twentieth century when electoral politics became a factor in India, but nonetheless Hindutva is an ideology at least as hostile to and inappropriate for them as it is for the Adivasi. While the RSS is officially opposed to untouchability and casteism, in practice it has instead ignored the issues, presumably more so to avoid the potential fragmentation that condoning or actively eradicating it would cause than for any higher moral purpose. Blom Hansen notes that despite a professed objection to the practice, the RSS (and in turn the BJP) succumb to the prejudices, anxieties and stereotypes of the caste system in their interactions with the lower castes and untouchables. Given this parallel between the Adivasi and untouchable cases, it is interesting to examine the literature on Hindutva’s activities among the untouchables as well. While the scholarly work on the *Dalit* case rests on a more comprehensive theoretical understanding than can be found in the aforementioned accounts of the Adivasi-Hindutva relationship, in the end it is prone to the same shortfalls.

³⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 133.

³⁸ Sarkar, "The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies," 99.

Kama Kellie Maclean's account of the *Sangh Parivar*'s success in winning the support of sections of the *Dalit* community is representative of much of this literature.³⁹ Maclean draws upon a variety of individual studies and identifies three broad sets of strategies – violent, religious and symbolic – that are used by the *Sangh Parivar* and particularly the BJP to entrench themselves in *Dalit* communities.

Maclean uses the work of psychologist Sudhir Kakar to show how violence can be used as a tool of the Parivar to spread its ideology to subordinate groups by creating a sense of cohesion within a community. In a similar vein, Harbans Mukhia writes of the 1992 violence that “as a crucial strategic intervention, the lower caste Hindus were mobilized on a larger scale than the others for waging communal riots of December 1992 and January 1993. The confidence placed in them had transformed them from lower castes to full fledged Hindus.”⁴⁰ The *Dalits* are given a choice between being part of an “assertive, aggressive, self-proclaimed majority of angry Hindus and a defensive, stigmatized and hunted minority.”⁴¹ Given this choice, Maclean argues, some *Dalits* choose to be counted as and act as Hindus, perhaps because here at least personal security seems assured. However, there are few other rewards for identifying as Hindu. As Amrita Basu's study of a scheduled caste community in Uttar Pradesh fighting alongside the higher-caste Hindus shows, while they receive a sense of acceptance, this does not affect the unequal “material status quo.”⁴²

³⁹ Kama Kellie Maclean, "Embracing the Untouchables: The BJP and Scheduled Caste Votes," *Asian Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (1999).

⁴⁰ Harbans Mukhia, "Communal Violence and Transmutation of Identities," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 23 (1995): 1367.

⁴¹ Maclean, "Embracing the Untouchables: The BJP and Scheduled Caste Votes," 491.

⁴² Tapan Basu, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, Tracts for the Times (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993), 75.

The *Sangh Parivar*'s religious strategy hardly offers *Dalits* more. Its conservative interpretation of Hinduism – evidenced, for example, by frequent references to the *Manusmṛti*, which relegates *Dalits* to the bottom of the caste hierarchy in no uncertain terms – poses special problems. Clearly a strict adherence to the *Manusmṛti* cannot be acceptable to the *Dalits*, but to abandon its principles would alienate many of Hindutva's most ardent fundamentalist supporters. Maclean outlines the religious tactics the BJP uses to incorporate *Dalits* in a limited way into Hindu religious practices.

One of the most prominent approaches has been to simply invent new gods or goddesses. By introducing *Bharat Mata* - once simply a nationalist slogan - as a beautiful goddess and *Ganga Mata*, a deification of the Ganges River, the *Hindutvawadis*⁴³ are able to incorporate the *Dalits* into Hindu worship without upsetting any precedent of tradition and ritual hierarchy associated with established deities. These figures have also played a prominent role in the *Ekatmata Yatra*, an orchestrated political event ostensibly aimed at bringing low caste Hindu and Adivasis (back) into the Hindu fold. These *yatras* generally feature fiberglass *Bharat* and *Ganga Matas* in the back of trucks, traveling throughout India to be worshiped by Indians of all *varnas* (although the focus is on the poor and vulnerable). A similar process, which we will later examine in more detail, can be seen in the Dangs where Adivasi are encouraged to worship the low-ranking monkey-god *Hanuman*.

The final strategy presented by Maclean is the symbolic. Here, rather than address the issue of untouchability, the *Sangh Parivar* appropriates symbols of the *Dalit* struggle, particularly the revered *Dalit* leader Ambedkar, who initially fought the caste

⁴³ Proponents of Hindutva.

system and later abandoned Hindutva altogether by converting to Buddhism. Ambedkar would seem to be the most illogical figure to be associated with Hindutva; however as Maclean notes, “it is a complex process of selection, repression and interpretation of information that makes such a symbol acceptable to all concerned.”⁴⁴ To reach the illiterate *Dalit* masses, though, it can often be as simple as including an image of Ambedkar on BJP leaflets.⁴⁵ Thomas Blom Hansen also writes on the RSS and VHP’s attempt at appropriating Ambedkar in order to draw the *Dalits* to Hindutva. VHP leaders praise Ambedkar for keeping *Dalits* from converting to Islam or Christianity, and advocating Buddhism, a religion “from the soil of Hindustan,” instead.⁴⁶

Maclean’s analysis is insightful, and as we will see in subsequent chapters many of her findings apply to Adivasi in Gujarat. However, she stops short of a full understanding of the situation by not exploring the material element of these strategies. As in all of the preceding approaches, there is no discussion of what Hindutva has to offer the untouchables; the focus remains on the psychological. Understanding the rise of Hindutva requires an analysis which examines both the material and psychological factors in tandem. It is in the Marxist – historical materialist – conception of ideology and Gramsci’s associated notion of hegemony that we find the basis for a comprehensive and illuminating account.

⁴⁴ Maclean, "Embracing the Untouchables: The Bjp and Scheduled Caste Votes," 500.

⁴⁵ Ibid.: 501.

⁴⁶ VHP President Ashok Singhal as quoted in Hansen, *The Saffron Wave : Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, 227.

Ideology

Ideology, and its acceptance as legitimate by the subordinate elements in a society is an important aspect of the stability of any form of class society or any hegemony, and, while we have referred to Hindutva as an ideology in passing, it is now necessary to elaborate on what we mean by that term. In particular, we need to ask what role ideology plays in creating and maintaining hegemony among subaltern groups.

Marx and Engels gave ideology its modern meaning when they used it to explain social relations of domination. However, Marx did not provide a clear definition of the concept and was often ambiguous and contradictory on the topic.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, key elements of the Marxian conception can be identified. First, Marx located ideas and ideology in the superstructure which is determined, more or less directly, by the economic base and of course, reflexively reinforces it. Second, for Marx ideas and ideology are connected to classes and the ideology of the dominant classes is the dominant ideology and serves the interests of the ruling classes by concealing the contradictions and injustices of the mode of production.

Marx rejected Hegel's idealism and saw ideas as rooted in material reality. But he also sought to distance himself from the abstractness of Feurbachian materialists. For him, conceptual tensions are resolved in practice, a process which Larrain describes as involving "men's conscious and sensuous activity whereby they produce their material existence and the social relations within which they live, thus transforming nature, society and themselves."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Jorge Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, Contemporary Social Theory (London: Macmillan, 1983), 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 20.

This brings us to the next fundamental element of Marx's understanding of ideology: its connection to class. There is a clear sense in Marx's writing, particularly in *The German Ideology* (co-authored with Engels) that the ruling ideas of a society are those of its dominant class.

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.⁴⁹

As the ruling classes control the means of material production they also control the means of intellectual production. This is not to suggest that dominated classes do not have ideas of their own, just that their ideas, ideas which are conscious of their condition and interests, are usually are not the dominant ideas of society and a significant part of the ideas that they hold do not serve their interests but rather, like the ideas of the dominant classes, express the dominant material relationship in which they live but over which they have no control. Thus the dominant ideology usually expresses the interests of the dominant classes but in universal form, so as to pose as the general interest of society at large, including the dominated.

⁴⁹ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 172..

Ideology and Hegemony

Lenin's notion of hegemony represents a decisive positive shift in Marxist theory of ideology, and it is upon this that Gramsci builds his theory of hegemony. Gramsci brought ideology to the centre of Marxism and gave it a concrete and central role in society by presenting it not just as a system of ideas, but as "lived, habitual social practice"⁵⁰ which was central to his concept of hegemony.

Before examining Gramsci's ideas it is first necessary to understand the context in which they were written. As a member of the Italian Communist Party, Gramsci spent many years working towards a socialist revolution in Italy but in 1926 the Fascist regime of Mussolini imprisoned him in Turin where he was to stay until just before his death in 1937. Despite the vigilant eye of the prison censor and the overwhelming physical pain caused by his lifelong ill health, he devoted his time to study and reflection, the fruit of which were *The Prison Notebooks*, which were smuggled to Russia after his death.

Gramsci, writing after the success of Lenin's revolution in Russia, throughout this work is trying to understand how a socialist revolution can be realized in democratic, western countries; why was revolution possible in Russia but not in Italy? In doing so, he provides a remarkable account of how a ruling class, in his case the bourgeoisie, is able to entrench itself and maintain dominance.

The term hegemony was not coined by Gramsci, it was used extensively by the Russian labour movement prior to the October Revolution to represent the need for an alliance between the working and other classes in Russia. Indeed in Gramsci's earlier writings he continues to use the term to refer to compromise and leadership among the

⁵⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology : An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 115.

various exploited classes.⁵¹ However in his notebooks, Gramsci extends the concept to represent the strategies used by any dominant force to win consent from those it subjugates. The basis of Gramsci's theory is his observation that coercion is not the primary means by which the dominant class (and its political manifestation, the state) ensures the subjugation of the dominated classes. Coercion, or direct force, can still be used when necessary, but for the most part the rulers rely on the consent garnered from the operation of its ideology to all levels of society. Gwyn Williams provides a useful description of this phenomenon:

By 'hegemony' Gramsci seems to mean a socio-political situation, in his terminology a 'moment,' in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant; in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation.⁵²

As a result of certain inconsistencies in Gramsci's work,⁵³ there is considerable scholarly debate concerning whether he intended the term hegemony to refer to both consent and coercion, or just the consensual elements of domination. What we can say for certain, though, is that coercion remained an essential element of class domination. As Judith Whitehead has pointed out, Gramsci's interest was in the connectivity of force and consent and he saw hegemony as a "shifting constellation of power."⁵⁴ For the purpose of consistency, this thesis will follow the work of Abercrombie et al. who

⁵¹ Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review*, no. 100 (1976): 15-20.

⁵² Gwyn A. Williams, "The Concept of 'Egemonia' in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21, no. 4 (1960): 587.

⁵³ Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," 7.

⁵⁴ Judith Whitehead, "Submerged and Submerging Voices," *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 3 (2007), 401.

interpret hegemony as referring to both the consensual and coercive elements of dominance.⁵⁵

Gramsci locates this consent within civil society; that is, in organizations distinct from the state such as the media, social movements, religious organizations, etc. The role of these institutions, he writes, can be likened to the trench systems of modern warfare:

in war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defense which is still effective.⁵⁶

In Russia, where there had been little or no civil society in place, the state had succumbed to revolution relatively easily. In the West however, the hegemonic power was entrenched in every element of society, or as Terry Eagleton puts it, permeated life "from nursery to funeral parlor."⁵⁷ Here we see how "common sense" becomes the most formidable obstacle to any mobilization for social change.

As mentioned above, Gramsci's depiction of civil society and state as separate structures within society and his division of consent and coercion between them is not entirely consistent. In some instances he suggests that the state can serve both coercive and ideological functions. Specifically, the parliamentary system in western democracies garners consent by instilling the illusion of self-government in its subjects.⁵⁸ Indeed Anderson discerns three different formulations of the relationship between the state and

⁵⁵ Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London ; Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1980), 12.

⁵⁶ Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, [1st ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 235.

⁵⁷ Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, 144.

⁵⁸ Gramsci, Hoare, and Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 245-48.

civil society in Gramsci's notebooks.⁵⁹ Anderson suggests that Gramsci's difficulty in defining this connection may have been partly a result of the political conditions in which he was writing: Fascist Italy of the 1920s. Certainly at this time, the lines between civil society and the state would have become hazy, for any oppositional forces would have been silenced and at the same time the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force was extended to "commando operations" within civil society.⁶⁰ Such a blurring of the boundaries between state and civil society took place, similarly, in Gujarat during the 2002 carnage: civil society could only take violent action with the tacit approval of the state. The situation in Gujarat is even further complicated by the incredible power of the *Sangh Parivar* which, while part of civil society, can be seen as at times having a strong influence over the state apparatus as well.⁶¹

Under hegemony, then, man's understanding of the world around him is based on the dominant hegemonic framework which permeates every aspect of his life. It thus becomes difficult for any new revolutionary ideas to emerge, particularly if they are in contrast with "orthodox convictions... conforming socially to the general interests of the ruling classes."⁶² The survival of revolutionary ideas is further limited by the tendency of a hegemonic order to appropriate such ideas through reformism. Gramsci notes that the interests of dominated groups are taken into account but only insofar as they do not jeopardize the economic basis of a hegemony:

⁵⁹ Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," 12.

⁶⁰ Ibid.: 32.

⁶¹ See for example the following article which refers to the VHP warning the BJP not to stray from Hindutva. "VHP Won't Allow BJP to Budge from Hindutva," *The Hindu*, December 26, 2002 2002, 1.

⁶² Gramsci, Hoare, and Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 340.

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed - in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity.⁶³

In the state of Gujarat where state-sanctioned violence has become the norm, coercion does play a role in the maintenance of hegemony. Muslims, Christians and secular-minded Hindus are coerced into silence. Indeed, several activists with whom I met in Gujarat have been personally threatened for voicing their opposition to communalism.⁶⁴ However, just because violence is so prominent does not mean that the consensual elements are unimportant, and indeed it is this consent that is of particular interest in the case of the Adivasi.

Despite these obstacles, Gramsci's conceptualization does allow for counter-hegemonic forces. As we have already established, this is the central concern of Gramsci's work. Gramsci realizes that power cannot be seized from the dominant classes by force alone; force will only be the final step. Just as the dominant class establishes itself through ideology, the proletariat must as well. So a counter-hegemonic force (in Gramsci's case the new revolutionary party) must first establish ideological leadership, requiring the ruling class to use physical force to maintain dominance:

If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer 'leading' but only dominant, exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously.

⁶³ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁴ Father Cedric Prakash and Dr. Ganesh Devy.

But if hegemony is, as we have already seen, so entrenched, then how is a counter-ideology to emerge at all? Gramsci answers this in his conception of the organic intellectual.

Intellectuals are an integral element of Gramsci's theory of hegemony and he presents two types: organic and traditional. Traditional intellectuals are those who are generally thought to be independent of individual classes – clergy, academics, etc. but in reality tend to be conservative and thus serve the interests of the ruling classes. More important for our purposes are the organic intellectuals. Gramsci writes that every fundamental social class “creates with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political field.”⁶⁵ In other words, organic intellectuals serve to take the practical experiences and understandings of a social group, and bring it together into a cohesive class consciousness. As Eagleton writes

the category of organic intellectuals thus spans not only ideologues and philosophers but political activists, industrial technicians, political economists, legal specialists and so on. Such a figure is less a contemplative thinker, in the old idealist style of the intelligentsia, than an organizer, constructor, ‘permanent persuader’, who actively participates in social life and helps bring to theoretical articulation those positive political currents already contained within it.... The organic intellectual thus provides the link or pivot between philosophy and the people.... His or her goal is to construct out of the common consciousness a ‘cultural-social’ unity in which otherwise heterogeneous individual wills are welded together in the basis of a common conception of the world.⁶⁶

Both dominant and dominated groups develop organic intellectuals, and Gramsci believed that a proletariat class consciousness could serve to establish a counter-

⁶⁵ Gramsci, Hoare, and Nowell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 5.

⁶⁶ Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, 119.

hegemony which would eventually replace bourgeois hegemony by creating a new historical bloc.⁶⁷

Beyond Ideology?

A focus of this thesis is to move away from explanations of Adivasi behavior which emphasize false consciousness and ignore other possible motivations. As such, it is useful here to examine some of the theoretical work that has questioned the trend in Marxism to emphasize the role of a dominant ideology, or more precisely, the belief among the ruled in the rulers right to rule. Specifically, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, as well as Goran Therborn raise some interesting questions and clarifications.

In *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, Abercrombie et al. have gone so far as to argue that ideology actually plays a minor role in the securing of consent for domination. Gramsci's rejection of economic determinism, they say, represents a shift in Marxism towards an unwarranted emphasis on the superstructure, or what they call the dominant ideology thesis.⁶⁸ Abercrombie et al. find that throughout history subaltern groups have not been sold on the ideologies of their ruling groups. In early capitalism for example, they contend that the systems for spreading ideology were weak, whereas in late capitalism the lack of a coherent dominant ideology and class render a dominant ideology ineffective. Instead they revert the focus to the economic means of consent-building. They suggest that through reformism, capitalism has "produced real, tangible benefits for the working class, with the result that, for many, it no longer appears necessary that

⁶⁷ For a more comprehensive account of the role of intellectuals in Gramsci's theory see Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism : "Social Democrats" And the British Labour Party* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1994), Chapter 1.

⁶⁸ Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*.

existing institutions, including capitalism, should be destroyed.”⁶⁹ Abercrombie et al. also point to Marx’s formulation of the “dull compulsion of the economic as a key factor in eliciting consent.”⁷⁰

The dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjugation of the labourer to the capitalist. Direct force, outside economic conditions, is of course still used, but only exceptionally. In the ordinary run of things, the labourer can be left to the ‘natural laws of production’ i.e., to his dependence on capital, a dependence springing from, and guaranteed in perpetuity by, the conditions of production themselves.⁷¹

While it is important to not lose sight of the economic element of consent and hegemony, Therborn - while also seeking to dispel the false consciousness myth - clarifies that ideology in general is not irrelevant, though the one particular definition of ideology attacked by Abercrombie et al. is. Therborn takes us a step beyond Gramsci by rejecting a force/consent dichotomy and presenting a schema of how ideology actually operates by outlining six specific effects of ideological domination – accommodation, sense of inevitability, sense of representation, deference, fear, and resignation:

Any existing hegemony would thus involve, in varying combinations, the sense of representation, accommodation, deference and resignation. A strategy for hegemony would primarily involve linking the interperated revolutionary class to the strategic organization through a sense of representation. But with regard to subaltern classes, this might include a kind of deference to the central revolutionary class, as well as accommodation with allied classes and, perhaps, their resignation at the possibility of other solutions. To the extent that the strategy aims at neutralizing sectors of the ruling class otherwise than by force and fear, it would concentrate on bringing about resignation (with regard to the practical possibility of maintaining the present order) and a sense of inevitability, while holding out the possibility of accommodation.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 163.

⁷¹ Karl Marx and Ben Fowkes, *Capital : A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 899.

⁷² Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: NLB, 1980), 99.

What we can draw from these accounts is the need to view hegemony not just in terms of a dichotomy of brute force and consent based on acceptance of a dominant ideology. Rather, hegemony must be seen to encompass all of the strategies used by a dominant class to secure its position. Abercrombie et al. attempt to remove ideology from the equation and instead focus strictly on the material elements of consent-building in a way that oversimplifies the workings of domination. I intend to show that many individual instances of consent-building actually transcend these categories. In her analysis, Desai notes that “the psychological reward of being useful to the dominant propertied groups [by participating in communal violence for example] goes some way to alleviating the sense of economic injustice”.⁷³ In this “psychological reward” we can see the convergence of these two elements, specifically Therborn’s “sense of representation” mechanism. At some level, the Adivasi or untouchables accepts the dominant ideology and upper class/caste rule because to a certain extent they feel a sense of belonging to the dominant group which therefore represents their interests.

This still is only part of the picture, for this psychological reward cannot be separated from the material benefits, expected or actual, that the Adivasi can at least hope to redeem from their participation. In a context where status and access to material resources are so connected, an advance in one can realistically be expected to effect an advance in the other. Thus, explanations for Adivasi behaviour which point to the psychological rewards of participating in Hindutva are not inaccurate; rather they stop short of a full understanding by failing to analyze what precisely this psychological reward involves and not recognizing its material basis.

⁷³ Desai, *Slouching Towards Ayodhya : Three Essays*, 36.

It is through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and in particular his expanded notion of capital, that we can best examine this connection between status, or psychological reward and the material, and therefore better understand how hegemony is operating and what the particular ideology of Hindutva has to offer the Adivasi. Bourdieu sees all action as interested and takes a much broader approach towards the idea of capital than is generally accepted. For him, capital refers to all forms of power, power being “the capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others”.⁷⁴ For Bourdieu, “society is structured by the differential distribution of capital”⁷⁵ and while individuals seek to maximize this power or capital, their class habitus prevents them from seeing their true possibilities.⁷⁶

It is in his early and influential work *Reproduction* that Bourdieu first starts to expand upon the idea of capital; here, a variety of forms are mentioned including cultural, linguistic, scholastic, and social. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, his work continued to incorporate a variety of forms of capital. It was not until 1983 in his essay “The Forms of Capital” that Bourdieu presented a systematic and concise account of capital. While economic capital remains “at the root of all other types of capital... in the last analysis,”⁷⁷ he is critical of accounts that rely strictly on the economic understanding of capital. In “The Forms of Capital” he describes his revised notion of capital:

Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to

⁷⁴ Craig J. Calhoun, Edward LiPuma, and Moishe Postone, "Introduction," in *Bourdieu : Critical Perspectives*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 252.

persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible....

It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory.⁷⁸

Bourdieu divides capital into three fundamental categories: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital.⁷⁹ He also introduces the notion of symbolic capital, a term he uses to describe any form of capital which is misrecognized, or as Bourdieu describes it “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate.”⁸⁰

Economic capital, the root of all other forms, warrants very little discussion here except to note that it is the most efficient form in that it can be passed on to offspring with little effort and can be converted into symbolic capital (cultural and social) more easily than the reverse. If, however, all power were held in the form of economic capital the unjust and arbitrary distribution of power and wealth would be exposed. As Calhoun et al. explain, “symbolic capital functions to mask the economic domination of the dominant class and socially legitimate hierarchy by essentializing and naturalizing social position.”⁸¹ In this way, power is misrecognized as legitimate. Symbolic capital then, takes the form of prestige and leads to power being recognized and deferred to.

Bourdieu’s concepts of social and cultural capital are closely related to symbolic capital, for they almost always manifest themselves in symbolic form. On cultural capital

⁷⁸ Ibid., 241-42.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 243. David Swartz, in his account of Bourdieu’s sociology, lists symbolic capital as a fourth category however I see it as more useful to view symbolic capital as distinct from the other forms.

⁸⁰ ———, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 17.

⁸¹ Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone, “Introduction,” 5.

he writes that “because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition.”⁸² On social capital he writes that “it goes without saying that social capital is so totally governed by the logic of knowledge and acknowledgement that it always functions as symbolic capital.”⁸³

Cultural Capital⁸⁴

Bourdieu developed his notion of cultural capital while trying to understand the unequal scholastic achievement of students in the French public education system. In his studies, Bourdieu finds that academic success can be attributed not to the natural ability or aptitude of the students, but rather to the cultural capital inherited from their families. For Bourdieu, “ability or talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital”.⁸⁵

Into the category of cultural capital Bourdieu places all cultural traits and knowledge that, like economic capital, can act as sources of power: this includes accent, aesthetic tastes, educational qualifications, etc. This capital, while generally embodied and thus permanently tied to the individual who invested the resources – time and otherwise – to acquire it, can be passed on from generation to generation and thus serve to maintain class distinctions. For it is the dominant groups which have the resources to facilitate the extended cultural indoctrination of their offspring. This indoctrination

⁸² Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 245.

⁸³ Ibid., 257.

⁸⁴ At times Bourdieu refers to cultural capital instead as informational capital. See for example Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32(1987): 3-4.

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 244.

requires an investment of time by parents or other family or hired professionals to “sensitize the child to cultural distinctions.”⁸⁶

Social Capital

For Bourdieu, the relationships one has with others can also be sources of power: “Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”.⁸⁷ Individuals can draw on the collective capital of the group as a source of power. Membership in a group, be it a family, tribe then is

the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relations, such as those of neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights).⁸⁸

When viewed in this light, exclusion and inclusion in various groups becomes much more significant and material than the ideology-based psychological reward of acceptance. Admission into a group can be a source of enormous social capital and therefore highly material.

The focus of Bourdieu’s work is shedding light on the workings of the class system, specifically to explain how it is maintained. In this thesis, following the work of

⁸⁶ David Swartz, *Culture & Power : The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 76.

⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 119.

⁸⁸ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 249-50.

Matt James on the materiality of recognition in Canada,⁸⁹ I turn this around to demonstrate how members of subaltern communities, specifically the Adivasi, attempt to use symbolic capital to improve their position in society. For the Adivasi, as we shall see, being seen as Hindu is perhaps emotionally satisfying, but more importantly it potentially provides them with access to a symbolic capital that cannot be ignored in explaining the actions of the Adivasi of Gujarat.

It is clear that the forces of Hindutva have established a hegemony in Gujarat – opposition has been stifled, civil society has been co-opted, and even the most disenfranchised, including some of the Adivasi, have been incorporated into a politics of hatred. On the surface the ideology of Hindutva appears to have nothing to offer the Adivasi, or any subalterns for that matter. However, closer analysis based on the critical approaches outlined above will show that it is this symbolic capital – both ideological and material – that Hindutva offers to the Adivasi to garner consent for its hegemony. Thus in Chapter Six, Bourdieu’s concepts will be elaborated upon and applied to the case of communal politics and violence in Adivasi Gujarat.

⁸⁹ Matt James, *Misrecognized Materialists : Social Movements in Canadian Constitutional Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

Chapter 3: The Adivasi: Origins to Independence

In order to understand the role of the Adivasi in relation to Hindutva it is important, first of all, to have an accurate account of their role and place in Indian society and political economy. The purpose of this chapter and the next, therefore, is to present a more sophisticated account of the Adivasi than is offered by dominant and popular accounts which tend to romanticize them as primitive, simple, static, homogenous, and untouched by modern civilization. These accounts, occasional disavowals notwithstanding, are not dissimilar from ideas of the “noble” (and occasionally ignoble) “savage.” In this thesis I establish, in contrast to such notions and on the basis of more critical scholarship, that the Adivasi have in fact been affected and restructured internally by the social, political and cultural processes of the wider society in which they hold determinate places and niches that have evolved historically with the rest of that society.

This chapter will present a historical account of the Adivasi (particularly in Gujarat) in terms of their origins and how they have actually been understood and situated in various historical stages down to the end of colonialism on the subcontinent. For, while erroneous, the ideas mentioned above have, at various historical junctures, had a certain political efficacy. Beginning with a discussion of indigeneity the chapter will then move on to ancient and pre-colonial history and finally explore the profound impact that colonialism had on Adivasi communities. The chapter will endeavour to show how the more nuanced portrayal of the Adivasi that I propose – as a stratified society not independent of the surrounding mainstream Hindu society – is more accurate. In the next chapter we will see that trends set in motion centuries ago have continued on in

independent India to create a deeply stratified Adivasi society, a development which sheds light on contemporary events and political allegiances.

It is important to note that the histories presented in this chapter are highly contested on both communal and secular grounds: scholars are not in agreement on the origins of those communities which are now referred to as Adivasi, or on the process through which caste society spread throughout the subcontinent. As we will see, the very notion of indigenous peoples in India is not universally accepted. In this chapter, therefore, rather than accept one position or another, I have attempted to present an account of the debate itself and the politicization of these issues. I do argue, however, that the term Adivasi is useful insofar as it describes a group of communities with a shared political history of marginalization and struggle.

To Be Adivasi

Defining what it means to be Adivasi or Tribal is not a straightforward task, for while individuals and groups are routinely identified as Adivasi for legal and administrative purposes, there is no agreed-upon definition of precisely what makes an individual or group Adivasi (original inhabitant) or Tribal. While tribes have long been recognized and provided for in colonial and later Indian laws, as Andre Béteille has noted, “the concern was always with identifying, rather than defining tribes, and scientific or theoretical considerations were never allowed to displace administrative or political ones.”⁹⁰ One response to this situation has been to characterize “tribe” as a residual categorization following Virginius Xaxa: despite differences of language and region, Indian society is generally remarkably similar in terms of societal characteristics

⁹⁰ André Béteille, "The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 27, no. 2 (1986): 299.

(mainly the caste system); those groups which do not share these traits have been categorized as “Tribals.”⁹¹ Thus the 427 communities recognized by the Indian state as “tribes” are distinguished more by their shared differences from mainstream Hindu society than by their commonalities with each other. Indeed as Ghanshyam Shah notes, “each of these groups and their sub-divisions differ from each other in their customs, manners, social institutions, religious beliefs and practices, and economic and political organization.”⁹²

This is not to say, however, that there has been no basis whatsoever for labeling certain communities tribal: geographic isolation, simple technology, conditions of living, animistic religious beliefs, language, physical features etc. have all been used at one time or another. Nonetheless, no formal or consistent criteria have ever been established and the Indian Constitution provides no definition other than to say that the President may specify the communities which for the purposes of the constitution will be deemed to be scheduled tribes.⁹³

Prior to the arrival of the British, there was no widespread generic term used to describe those communities which remained outside caste Hindu Society. Writing on Gujarat, AM Shah notes that before colonialism the “Tribals” of Gujarat were referred to by their specific names: *Bhil*, *Naikda*, *Kokna*, etc.⁹⁴ The general classification of “tribal” was only required, Xaxa argues, as the British attempted to categorize the diverse

⁹¹ Virginius Xaxa, "Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26 March 2005(2005): 1363.

⁹² Ghanshyam Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals" in *Determinants of Social Status in India*, ed. S. C. Malik (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1986), 149.

⁹³ "Constitution of India," Article 342.

⁹⁴ Shah, "The Tribes - So-Called - of Gujarat: In the Perspective of Time," 95.

population of India for administrative expediency.⁹⁵ Yet the classification was not entirely arbitrary; the groups that came to be referred to as Tribals had long been considered outside mainstream Hindu society. Such communities were referred to as *Janas* (tribes) as opposed to the *Jatis* (caste groups) that were characteristic of the caste system of social organization.

In his study of the Dangs, Ajay Skaria describes the relationship between the “wild” (“jangli”) and the settled peasants. While recognizing that a distinction predated British rule, Skaria argues that Jangli only came to have negative connotations with colonialism.⁹⁶ While colonialism undoubtedly led to significant changes in attitudes towards the Adivasi, many scholars have argued that the negativism is not just a colonial construct. In many of the ancient Hindu texts, such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Adivasi are referred to as *Rakshasa* (demons), *Vanara* (monkeys), *Jambuvan* (boor men), etc.⁹⁷ Bara goes one step further by suggesting that pre-colonial depictions of Adivasi portrayed them as even more barbaric than the nineteenth century racial concepts.⁹⁸ While Skaria may be painting a too pleasant portrait of the pre-colonial reality, the portrayal of the Adivasi was not entirely negative either. Sontheimer explains how early references to the Adivasi could be both positive and negative:

Tribals are mentioned from the earliest times in [Hindu] texts and they stand in relationship to the social and ritual order of the plains if only with an antithetical function as the necessary evil. As such they are referred to

⁹⁵ Xaxa, "Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India," 1363.

⁹⁶ Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories: Forests, Frontiers, and Wildness in Western India*, Studies in Social Ecology and Environmental History (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), ix.

⁹⁷ C.R. Bijoy, "The Adivasis of India - a History of Discrimination, Conflict, and Resistance," (People's Union for Civil Liberties, 2003). By including these references I am not suggesting that they are factual, nonetheless they do provide us with a sense of the attitudes that the wider Hindu society took towards the Tribals at the time these texts were recorded.

⁹⁸ J Bara, "Tribe- Beast or Man: Case for a New Concept Of "Tribe"," *Social Action* 52, no. 2 (2002): 125.

as robbers and even demons. At the same time we find seemingly paradoxical reference to their honesty, gratitude and innocence.⁹⁹

These contradictory references testify to a very complex relationship of interaction and incorporation between the civilizations of the plains and the Adivasi. It is to this relationship that we will now turn.

Early Interactions

The history of India as it is known today has long and erroneously been traced back to the so-called Aryan invasion, or the arrival and settlement on the subcontinent of what was termed an Aryan race in the early second millennium BC. These Aryans were thought to have violently replaced pre-existing, possibly indigenous populations. This theory which, until recent decades was widely accepted, can be traced back to Max Mueller who, while translating the *Rigveda* in the mid 1800s developed the idea that an Aryan clan with a homeland in Central Asia had migrated out, with one branch gradually making its way to Europe and another to present-day Iran, and then later on to India.¹⁰⁰ These invading Aryans were thought to have conquered the existing population of the subcontinent. Through this process, the institution of caste was thought to have emerged, with the Aryans forming the higher castes, particularly the *Brahmans* and *Kshatriyas*, and the conquered forming the lower castes, untouchables and Tribals.

Mueller's Aryan invasion theory, however, has now been largely discredited.

Archeological evidence suggests that the Indus Valley Civilization, ruins of which were discovered in the 1920s, predates the *Vedic* Sanskrit period and was not destroyed by the

⁹⁹ Günther-Dietz Sontheimer et al., *Essays on Religion, Literature, and Law* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in association with Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2004), 409.

¹⁰⁰ See F. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 7th ed. (London.: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873); ———, *Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryas* (Patna: Eastern Book House, 1985); F. Max Müller and Kallidaikurichi Aiyah Aiyar Nilakanta Sastri, *India: What Can It Teach Us?* (Calcutta, New York.: Longmans, Green, 1934).

invading Aryans, but rather suffered a gradual decline that can be attributed to other non-violent factors such as environmental changes.¹⁰¹ Mueller's theory was based on the false premise that language and race were interchangeable and that speakers of a language shared a common origin. As Thapar notes,

The notion of an Aryan race identified on the basis of an Aryan language has now been discarded. Language and race are distinctly different categories. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to discard the term 'Aryan' as well, using only Indo-Aryan to identify the language, or else staying strictly within the definition of arya from Sanskrit texts where it is a linguistic and social qualifier, without the overlay of nineteenth century theories. The reconstruction of the societies of the period would draw substantially on archaeological data. How and when the Aryan language entered India and the process of its adoption and adaptation requires to be investigated as a process in social history and not as providing identities which we today can label as indigenous or alien for purposes of narrow nationalism.¹⁰²

Savarkar, to whom the ideology of Hindutva can be traced, adopted the colonial conceptions of Indian history which were rooted in orientalism, racism, ethnology and anthropometry. He saw the "Aryans" as exogenous to India and believed they had arrived on the subcontinent from across the Indus River and spread across the subcontinent establishing colonies and civilizing the aboriginal tribal communities they encountered.¹⁰³

In the typical *Sangh Parivar* fashion of picking and choosing from accepted science and history, and despite the evidence to the contrary, proponents of Hindutva have taken Mueller's concept of the Aryan race and adapted it to meet their own political needs. In a departure from Savarkar which dates back to Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar,

¹⁰¹ Romila Thapar, "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics," *Social Scientist* 24, no. 1/3 (1996): 13.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰³ Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, 87. As noted by Bhatt, it is revealing that Savarkar equated the boundaries of the Indo-Aryan civilization with the boundaries of the territory colonized by the British.

the second *Sarcanghchalak* (leader) of the RSS, Hindutva sees the origin of the Aryan race (and essentially all human civilization) as present-day India. *Hindutvawadis* have gone so far as to argue, against all scholarly evidence, that the Indus Valley civilization was Vedic.¹⁰⁴ This allows for an uninterrupted Hindu (Brahmin) history of the subcontinent in which all non-Hindu inhabitants can be viewed as foreigners.¹⁰⁵ This view of course precludes the existence of any other indigenous group, such is the Adivasi and explains Hindutva's insistence on use of the term *Vanvasi* (forest people) rather than Adivasi (original people).

The origins of the various peoples of the subcontinent is highly contested; nonetheless, there is some consensus that the history of the subcontinent is characterized by the interaction of plainspeople and "tribal" forest and hill dwellers (Adivasi societies). Some have argued that as Vedic civilization spread it incorporated the indigenous populations of the subcontinent. As the famous Indian Historian DD Kosambi has put it, "the entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused into a general society. This phenomenon, which lies at the foundations of the most striking Indian feature, namely caste, is also the great basic fact of ancient Indian history."¹⁰⁶

N.K. Bose described this process over a half century ago in his seminal work *The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption*.¹⁰⁷ Bose explained how tribal communities were absorbed into the wider society through symbiotic though unequal relationships. While

¹⁰⁴ For evidence to the contrary see R. S. Sharma *The Advent of the Aryans in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999) and Romila Thapar "Hindutva and History," *Frontline*, 23 October 2000.

¹⁰⁵ ———, "Secularism, History, and Contemporary Politics in India," in *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, ed. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 198.

¹⁰⁶ D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay,: Popular Book Depot, 1956), 25.

¹⁰⁷ NK Bose, "The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption," *Science and Culture* 7(1941): 188-94.

both communities benefited, the newly attached group was often, but not necessarily, admitted on the condition that it was relegated to the lowest position in the social hierarchy. Bose believed that Hindu society had been structured based on this process as newly admitted groups were encouraged to maintain hereditary monopolies over their occupations. Bose's formulation has been criticized for exaggerating the symbiotic nature of the process. B.K. Roy Burman for example, has argued that these relationships were often highly exploitative.¹⁰⁸ Srinivas has explained this process through his concept of sanskritization, an instrument of social change through which individual *jatis*, after having become wealthy or politically powerful, moved up within the caste system.

It is important to note that when speaking of caste historically it cannot be viewed as being as formal and widely uniform an institution as it is today. The more recent work of Susan Bayly shows that while it has been a part of life on the subcontinent for centuries, caste as we know it today is a relatively recent phenomenon shaped by political and social developments since the early eighteenth century. Indeed, it was under British rule that the contemporary norms and conventions of caste were formalized.¹⁰⁹

Not all tribes were incorporated into wider societies, though, and in some cases communities were pushed out of their territory or were displaced by more prosperous or better organized neighbors and forced to resettle in less desirable locations.¹¹⁰ It is these

¹⁰⁸ BK Roy Burman, "Transformation of Tribes and Analogous Social Formations," *Economic and Political Weekly* 18, no. 27 (1983): n. 26.

¹⁰⁹ Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, The New Cambridge History of India Iv, 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁰ Béteille, "The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India," 315.

groups which either resisted absorption or lived out of its reaches which make up the Adivasi population of India today.¹¹¹

Even those groups which remained outside Hindu society, however, were never completely isolated from it. Writing on the Adivasi of Gujarat (although he refers to them as Tribals), A.M. Shah notes that there was considerable economic exchange between the Adivasi of the hills (and the hills he notes, weren't very large hills anyway) and the peasants of the plains. He also points to the existence of forts, temples and monasteries throughout Adivasi areas.¹¹² Bêteille gives a more nuanced account of the religious or spiritual contacts between the two groups, a phenomenon that is particularly interesting given our purposes here:

When a tribe stood on the threshold of closer economic interaction with Hindu society, it would normally not be a complete stranger to the beliefs and values of the society on whose threshold it stood. Hindu saints and ascetics have from time immemorial gone into the remotest hill and forest areas in the pursuit of their religious vocation.... Sometimes the forest retreat of a saint or an ascetic became a famous centre of pilgrimage, ensuring a regular flow of traffic through the tribal area surrounding it. This traffic might influence the religious life of the tribal people even when they remained largely outside the organization of economic activities based on caste. There is evidence of deep-rooted and widespread Hindu beliefs and practices throughout the tribal areas in the interior of India.¹¹³

Many forest communities and even powerful tribal kingdoms continued to exist into relatively recent times. As Bayly and others have shown, the hill and forest communities which we now consider Adivasi often had complex mutually advantageous relationships

¹¹¹ Suranjit Kumar Saha, "Historical Premises of India's Tribal Problem," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 16, no. 3 (1986): 282.

¹¹² A.M. Shah, "The Tribes - So-Called - of Gujarat: In the Perspective of Time."

¹¹³ Bêteille, "The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India," 315-16. See also G. S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes*, 2d ed. (Bombay,: Popular Book Depot, 1959).

with neighboring dynasties, particularly post-Mughal lordships.¹¹⁴ K.S. Singh notes that some of the changes to Adivasi society brought on by British colonialism – which will be addressed later in this chapter – actually have their roots in processes that predate the arrival of the British. The Mughals encouraged settlement in jungle areas and forest trade routes became more important.¹¹⁵ Thus we can see that those peoples today referred to as Tribals or Adivasi have neither been incorporated into the wider Hindu Society, nor remained entirely outside it.

Scholars, dating back to the colonial anthropologists, have tended to apply an inappropriate, western framework of indigenous and non-indigenous to the Indian context. In the North American and Australian cases, where a set date of contact and conquest is so obvious, such a dichotomy may be tenable, but in India, as we have seen, the history is much more complex. Nonetheless, as the term indigenous has been used to describe the “Tribals” of India, and indeed the word used here to describe these peoples —“Adivasi”— translates as “original inhabitant,” it is necessary to examine the term and its relevance.

India’s Tribes as Indigenous Peoples

In many contexts, the Indian one included, the term “tribe,” originally a descriptor for a certain form of social organization, has become synonymous with “indigenous,” a connection which only further complicates the matter. In the Indian case, we see that indigeneity is not necessarily the most relevant or important factor. Regardless of when these communities settled in their present regions, or who was there first, the groups

¹¹⁴ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, 44.

¹¹⁵ K. S. Singh, "Colonial Transformation of Tribal Society in Middle India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 13, no. 30 (1978): 1225.

which we now term “Adivasi” share a common history of exclusion from mainstream Hindu society and, at least relatively recently, of exploitation and displacement.

While the term “Adivasi” has long been used to describe India’s Tribals, it became contentious only as it began to be associated with rights and privileges for the indigenous communities.¹¹⁶ Starting in 1957, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and later the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (1982) began to recognize the rights of such groups.¹¹⁷ While the initial ILO convention was meant for the protection and integration of indigenous populations (a policy very much in line with Indian policy), by 1985 the global attitude had shifted and a less paternalistic approach that recognized and protected indigenous identities emerged.¹¹⁸ Xaxa notes three elements that are central to the new international conceptualization of the indigenous:

First, the indigenous are those people who have lived in the country to which they belong before colonization or conquest by people from outside the country or the geographic region. Secondly, they have become marginalized as an aftermath of conquest and colonization by people from outside the region. Thirdly, such people govern their life more in terms of their own social, economic and cultural institutions than the laws applicable to the society or country at large.¹¹⁹

The significance of the concept of indigeneity and the rights and privileges it entails became strikingly clear when the World Bank, in determining whether to continue funding the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam project based its decision, in part, on whether or not the *Bhil* Adivasi who would be displaced by the project were indigenous.

¹¹⁶ Virginius Xaxa, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 51 (1999): 3590.

¹¹⁷ International Labour Organization, "Convention 107."

¹¹⁸ ———, "Convention 169."

¹¹⁹ Xaxa, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India," 3591.

Their review found that the *Bhil* were indeed indigenous and therefore that the project would harm tribal communities and so World Bank funding for the project was withdrawn.¹²⁰ The displacement of entire communities, it would seem, was only problematic if these communities were “indigenous.” The Nationalists and post-independence governments – to whom we will return later in this chapter and in the next – concerned as they were with national integration, deliberately avoided the use of the term “Adivasi.” They were hesitant to ascribe a status that could supercede the newly established nation state.¹²¹

The prominent anthropologist G.S. Ghurye was more than just cautious and in 1943 published his book *The Aborigines – So called – and Their Future* in which he argues that the Adivasi are “imperfectly integrated classes of Hindu society and that they are in reality backward Hindus.”¹²² He suggested that the solution to their disadvantaged position lay in “strengthening the ties of the tribals with the other backward classes through their integration,”¹²³ i.e. class consciousness. Ghurye’s arguments were later used by the Christian Missionaries Activities Enquiry Committee, or the Niyogi committee, which was highly critical of Christian activities in Madhya Pradesh and reiterated the view that the Adivasi were Hindus.¹²⁴ This has of course also become the view of the Hindu Nationalists who refer to the Adivasi as *Vanvasi* (people of the forest)

¹²⁰ The review finds that “In drafting the terms and conditions of the 1985 credit and loan agreements, the Bank failed to take adequate account of the fact that a large proportion of those at risk from the development of the Sardar Sarovar Project are tribal people. This meant that insufficient account was taken of the principles enshrined in the Bank’s 1982 Operational Manual Statement outlining its policies regarding tribal peoples.” B Morse and T Berger, *Sardar Sarovar: Report of the Independent Review* (Ottawa: Resource Futures International, 1992), 349

¹²¹ Skaria, *Hybrid Histories : Forests, Frontiers, and Wildness in Western India*, 280.

¹²² Xaxa, "Politics of Language, Religion and Identity: Tribes in India," 1364.

¹²³ G. S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes*, x.

¹²⁴ MB Niyogi, "Christian Missionaries Activities Enquiry Committee," (Nagpur: Madhya Pradesh Government, 1956). This report was used to justify anti-conversion laws.

or *Vanyajati* (forest communities), for a claim of tribal indigeneity, as we have seen above, would threaten Hindutva's claim of Hindu autochthony on the subcontinent.

The Indian case is of course inherently more complicated than that of the Americas or Australia where conquest occurred relatively recently, for even if we could determine which groups inhabited the subcontinent first, how far back should we go? Do one thousand years of habitation constitute indigeneity? Two thousand?¹²⁵ Traditionally, the arrival of the Aryans was used as the cut off point,¹²⁶ however, as we have already discussed, the very notion of any kind of Aryan invasion or even race for that matter has now been largely discredited and there are some groups now designated as tribes who settled in their present locales relatively recently. Indeed Tribal histories themselves speak of the migration of their ancestors throughout history and some Adivasi groups have dominated others.¹²⁷ Moreover, groups speaking Dravidian languages perhaps also predate many other communities but, lacking a history of marginalization, have never been categorized as indigenous.¹²⁸

It is problematic then to assert that most, if any, of the groups referred to as tribal or Adivasi are autochthonous to the regions they now inhabit. In his examination of indigeneity, Xaxa determines that while autochthony cannot be technically established, these groups do remain outside of caste Hindu society and more importantly they have developed a connection to certain geographic territories. These groups, he writes, are

¹²⁵ In making this comparison, I do not wish to belittle the challenges and controversy surrounding indigeneity, and in particular the ascription of status to Aboriginal peoples in other continents. Many individuals and communities have engaged in intense struggles to attain recognition of their indigeneity and related rights. The case of the Métis in Canada is illustrative of these challenges. Nonetheless from a practical perspective, indigeneity in the Indian context is much more difficult to define.

¹²⁶ Xaxa, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India," 3591.

¹²⁷ Shyama Charan Dube, *Tribal Heritage of India* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1977), 2.

¹²⁸ Xaxa, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India," 3591.

being “dispossessed of their control over land, forest, water, minerals and other resources in their territory and are increasingly subjected to inhuman misery, injustice and exploitation.”¹²⁹ While these myriad groups each have their own history, traditions and origins, and are at vastly different levels of development and hinduization, they share this common history of exploitation and oppression.¹³⁰

Insofar as a common Adivasi identity can bring these diverse groups together in a struggle against the injustice being perpetrated against them, this approach may be a valuable political project.¹³¹ What this positive identity runs the risk of perpetuating, however, is an essentialist image of the Adivasi as the noble savage. Baviskar, for example, writes of the anti-dam activism in the Narmada Valley where non-Adivasi activists “stage-manage” the protests, invoking stereotypical Adivasi symbols. Western and urban Indian elite society is more sympathetic to the image of mother earth’s children (the Adivasi) being ripped from her breast, than they are to the sad struggle of a poor family fighting against the loss of its land and livestock.¹³²

Akhil Gupta has argued that these essentialist representations, while problematic, are a strategic necessity to a population that has no other course of action.¹³³ The Adivasi are forced to present themselves and their arguments in a way that will find resonance in dominant western world views and preoccupations. The merit or risk of such an

¹²⁹ Ibid., 3594.

¹³⁰ A history which the Adivasi share with ‘Aboriginal’ peoples around the world.

¹³¹ I experienced this first hand during my fieldwork while observing the activities of the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre.

¹³² Amita Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, Studies in Social Ecology and Environmental History (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 213.

¹³³ Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 28.

approach is not to be debated here, but while it may be a potentially worthwhile (although still problematic) tool for Adivasi activists, such essentialisms cannot be used for the scholarly explanation of social phenomenon. Such an approach leads to inaccurate and simplistic depictions of reality such as those put forward by Lancy Lobo to explain Adivasi support for the BJP.

As Béteille, Roy-Burman and others have argued, indigeneity or common social structure are not the defining issues; what is pertinent is that the groups we now refer to as Adivasi have historically been, to a greater or lesser extent, outside of Hindu civilization.¹³⁴ While in many cases they have undoubtedly been highly influenced by Hindu society, and have even adopted some Hindu traditions, Adivasi have distinctive religious practices, different subsistence patterns and social structures, and remain outside the caste system. This thesis cautiously follows these theorists' work, mindful of the danger of over-generalizing. Accepting the tribe as a social category in India, independent of caste is not to suggest that tribes constitute a homogenous population or an even marginally cohesive socio-political entity.

Despite its questionable connotations of indigeneity, in this thesis I have chosen to use the term Adivasi rather than Tribal. I do this without validating the argument that the Adivasi are the original inhabitants of present-day India for as Shashank Kela has shown, the term has historical relevance independent of indigeneity:

New patterns of immigration and settlement in the colonial period produced radical dislocations in traditional adivasi societies. They brought a flood of settlers –moneylenders, landlords, state functionaries, liquor dealers, shopkeepers, traders, farming castes –face to face with tribal societies with very different patterns of resource use and social

¹³⁴ See for example Béteille, "The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India," 316. Also Burman, "Transformation of Tribes and Analogous Social Formations."

organization. The result – inevitably – was a steady process of expropriation through chicanery and force. Impoverishment bred revolts and protest movements, in the crucible of which an Adivasi identity was forged. It was in contrast to this class of non-Adivasi settlers that the term Adivasi was coined: it corresponds therefore to an empirical and verifiable social reality.¹³⁵

The term “Adivasi” then describes a group of peoples who share a common history of marginalization and exploitation, and as a self-identifier has been a source of pride, positive identity and solidarity. It can be seen as an outcome of struggle, its real referent being politics and economy, not race.

Adivasi and Colonialism

As we have seen in the preceding sections, the Adivasi were never entirely incorporated by the various forces that emerged on the subcontinent preceding the arrival of the British. While the Adivasi communities of Gujarat’s hills did interact, either through conflict or peace, with the various plains powers, they were never altogether subdued and existed in a “delicate balance between aggression and harmony” with Hindu society.¹³⁶ This is not to suggest a state of anarchy prior to the arrival of the British; rather, as Bayly shows, post-Mughul rulers vested some of these groups with “qualified sovereignty (girasi), often with the tacit right to raid adjacent populations of sedentary revenue-paying ‘peasants.’”¹³⁷

It was not until the arrival of the British that the Adivasi were more fully incorporated. Through this process, and as a result of British policies, Adivasi society underwent rapid and extensive change. The primary effects of this period on the Adivasi

¹³⁵ Shashank Kela, "Adivasi and Peasant: Reflections on Indian Social History " *Journal of Peasant Studies* 33, no. 3 (2006): 510.

¹³⁶ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, 45.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

were threefold: first, the breakdown of the communal mode of production which characterized Adivasi society and the subsequent incorporation of the Adivasi into the market system; second, the end of the relative isolation of the Adivasi; and third, in apparent contradiction to the first two, the crystallization and formalization of the distinction between Adivasi and Hindu. These changes, and those which followed independence, have led to the current socio-economic reality in Adivasi Gujarat, a context in which a politics of hatred and communalism has been able to take root.

While present-day Gujarat was the first area of India to encounter the East India Company (in 1608), it wasn't until the early nineteenth century that the company came to control the region. It is not necessary to go into the details of the various treaties that the British made with the declining *Peshwas* and various *Rajput* rulers, but by 1818 almost all of Gujarat was under their direct or indirect control.¹³⁸ While there were various periodic rebellions on the part of the Adivasi, as Hardiman notes, the Dangi *Bhils* were the most difficult for the British to control. Indeed it wasn't until the 1830s that the British finally conquered the Dangs, and, even so, rebellions erupted periodically over the following century.¹³⁹

The effects of colonialism on the Adivasi were somewhat contradictory: for ideologically and administratively the British were accentuating and formalizing a distinction between the Adivasi and Hindu society while at the same time hastening their integration into the wider economic system of production – a process out of which the modern Adivasi identity, which we spoke of above, emerged. David Hardiman locates

¹³⁸ For a more detailed account of this period see Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat : Plurality, Hindutva, and Beyond* (New Delhi ; New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 61-66.

¹³⁹ David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi : Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 69.

the origins of this contradiction within the “dual and often contradictory mentalities” of the British.¹⁴⁰ Hardiman equates colonial activities in India with the colonization of the Scottish Highlands in the eighteenth century. The British, he argues, saw it as their mission to civilize that which was wild:

As in the Scottish Highlands, the British in India viewed wildness as a political affront to their power and civilization, and they set about a long and violent process of eradication of the wild. This involved first, conquest through arms, then the settlement of the ‘wild’ people in agricultural villages.¹⁴¹

At the same time however, Hardiman writes, this gave rise, both in Britain and India, to a sense of nostalgia for a utopian past where the Adivasi or Scottish clansmen were valorized for being at one with nature: a view epitomized by the anthropologist Verrier Elwin, to whom we shall return.

While Hardiman has brought to our attention an interesting facet of the colonial ideology, to understand this period we must not lose sight of the economic motivations behind the colonial system. In the Dangs, for example, any ideological and civilizing considerations were secondary to the British government’s urgent need for access to the area’s plentiful supply of teak required by the British Navy. The principal aim of the British was to establish a stable government in Adivasi territories that would allow for tremendous resource extraction. Moreover, the Nationalist accusation that the classification of Indians into Tribal and caste Hindu was an effort to “divide and rule” cannot be overlooked.

¹⁴⁰ ———, "Review: Adivasis, on Their Own Terms," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 28/29 (2000): 2520.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

In order to allow for the productive settlement of the plains regions, especially in Khandesh but also the Eastern Mahals of Gujarat, the British had to eliminate the constant threat posed by the forest chiefs with their tradition of raids. The Khandesh Gazetteer of 1880 voices the frustration of the colonial officials: “The roads were impassable, and in the very heart of the province villages were daily plundered, and cattle and people carried off or murdered. So utterly unsafe did the husbandmen feel that they refused seed or tillage advances.”¹⁴²

The Adivasi had never been easily pacified and the British experience was no different. Where outright military action proved unsuccessful, Amita Baviskar has noted, the British turned to pacification.¹⁴³ Towards this new tactic, the Bombay Presidency¹⁴⁴ divided Adivasi regions into a number of agencies, each with its own administrator and a “*Bhil Corps*” (troops recruited from the local *Bhil* population to assist in the work of the agency):

The duties of the agents were heavy and varied. Gangs still in revolt had to be reduced and order kept, offenders punished or committed for trial, disputes settled and complaints redressed, and pensions paid and people led to settle for steady work. As far as possible, registers of the different tribes were kept; the chiefs won by rewards and pensions, their hereditary claims to guard the passes were carefully respected, and tillage was fostered by grants of land, seed and cattle.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Khandesh gazetteer, 1880, p. 257. Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River : Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, 58.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹⁴⁴ The Bombay presidency dates back to the 18th Century and was a province of British India which encompassed much of present day Maharashtra, Gujarat, the Konkan, Desh and Khandesh regions, and even parts of Pakistan. Even after Independence present day Maharashtra and Gujarat constituted a single Bombay state. Only after a prolonged struggle among the states’ Marathi-speaking peoples for a separate state were Gujarat and Maharashtra separated on May 1, 1960.

¹⁴⁵ Khandesh Gazetteer 1880: 258, as quoted in Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River : Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, 59.

While the settlement and pacification of the Adivasi was never complete or uniform, during the colonial period the socioeconomic makeup of these regions underwent fundamental changes; the overarching one being the shift away from a communal mode of production.¹⁴⁶ This reference to a communal mode of production should not be interpreted as romanticism: Adivasi society was not egalitarian but rather was stratified along lines of prestige, purity, habits, and so on.¹⁴⁷ Communal mode of production, in this context, refers to a system of slash-and-burn shifting cultivation and hunting and gathering, with no private land ownership but rather communal control of land and collective labour.¹⁴⁸ This shifting agriculture was viewed by the British as a “primitive and unenumerative form of agriculture”¹⁴⁹ and was in many cases forbidden. The settlement of the Adivasi allowed not only for the commercial exploitation of the forests, but also for a shift to a commercial cash economy which facilitated land revenue and other levies.¹⁵⁰ One colonial official commented that “They [the Adivasi] destroy Rs 50 worth of timber in order to produce nagli (millet) worth Rs 5 which pays in revenue of only a few annas to government.”¹⁵¹ Thus the Adivasi’s traditional land-use system was seen as incompatible with the colonial administration’s purposes: not only could they not be taxed, but valuable timber, necessary for the ship-building industry, was being

¹⁴⁶ K.S. Singh, "Colonial Transformation of Tribal Society in Middle India," 1227.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ David Hardiman, "Power in the Forests: The Dangs, 1820-1940," in *Subaltern Studies* 8, ed. David Hardiman David Arnold (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 108.

¹⁵⁰ K. Suresh Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 1st ed. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985), 13.; Ramachandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil, "State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India," *Past & Present*, no. 123 (1989): 152.

¹⁵¹ LR Ashburner, Commissioner, Northern Division, 3 August 1876. BA, RD. 1876, vol. 12, comp. 1431. As quoted in Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi : Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, 68.

wasted.¹⁵² By keeping the Adivasi on set parcels of land, the colonial administration could both protect the forest for its own purposes and better tax the Adivasi.

It was only after 1860 that systematic attempts were first made to settle the Adivasi of Gujarat. The villages were mapped into plots and each cultivator had to pay tax on his holdings, but due to the abundance of plots the Adivasi still tended to switch plots every year and upon ominous events such as deaths. Hardiman notes, however, that gradually vacant plots were inhabited by non-Adivasi, either land speculators and moneylenders, or new settlers. Moreover, *Patidar* peasants were encouraged to settle in rural areas and as they did this, Adivasi were either pushed further into the jungle or became agricultural labourers.¹⁵³ This represented the privatization of land which had previously been considered communal and the new settlers even charged the villagers grazing fees.¹⁵⁴ By the late 1880s, with very little unoccupied land remaining, the majority of Adivasi were forced into settled agriculture.¹⁵⁵

Along with the government's push for settled agriculture came a shift in the crops being harvested. K.S. Singh writes of cases of coerced cash-cropping in western India, the result of which was the eviction of Adivasi from their land.¹⁵⁶ As staple food crops declined, production of cash crops such as cotton and tobacco increased.¹⁵⁷ Here too, the

¹⁵² Incidentally, it was primarily through the timber trade in the early and mid 1800s that the Dangi Adivasi were incorporated into the regional economy. See Skaria, *Hybrid Histories : Forests, Frontiers, and Wildness in Western India*, 180.

¹⁵³ Ghanshyam Shah, "Caste Sentiments, Class Formation and Dominance in Gujarat," 71.

¹⁵⁴ Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi : Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, 71.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁵⁶ Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River : Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, 73.

Adivasi became increasingly connected to the wider economic system thus exposing them to the vagaries of international markets.

The introduction of the market system of course entailed greater ties to the wider economy. While as we have seen these areas had never been entirely isolated, the construction of roads and railways required for administration and trade brought the Adivasi into much more contact with the outside world than ever before. District headquarters became centres of trade and grew rapidly while small towns sprung up where weekly markets had once been held. These settlements became “centralized points of control and collection” through which regional surplus was extracted (often in a very exploitative manner) and also the site of cultural exchange between Adivasi and non-Adivasi.¹⁵⁸

The British encouraged merchants to settle in Adivasi areas to facilitate the commercialization of the economy by supplying loans to the *Bhils*.¹⁵⁹ Singh writes of the outsiders that were drawn to the Adivasi areas as the market spread: “creatures of the colonial system [they] performed a variety of functions as a middle man in administrative matters, as a moneylender, as a trader who controlled production of foodgrain through the system of advance credit, and as a landgrabber.”¹⁶⁰ Indeed the Adivasi often found themselves perpetually in debt to these *Vania* (trader-moneylenders) – a condition that has largely continued to the present day.¹⁶¹

As noted above, Adivasi society had not been egalitarian for a long time, if ever; indeed, as Hardimann writes of the Dangs, “there was considerable social stratification in

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 76.

¹⁵⁹ Hardiman, "Power in the Forests: The Dangs, 1820-1940," 108.

¹⁶⁰ Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 13.

¹⁶¹ Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River : Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, 62.

the pre-colonial period. There were ruling *Bhil* chiefs, their relatives – known as *Bhaubands*, ordinary *Bhils*, and subordinate peasants, known as *gavits*, or ‘villagers’¹⁶². However, with the introduction of the market system and surplus extraction, this stratification was of course accentuated. Laws were enacted to prevent land alienation by forbidding the sale of land by an Adivasi to a non-Adivasi, but as Singh reports, this led to the emergence of a rich stratum of Adivasi land-buyers.¹⁶³ Thus we see that the colonial administration laid the groundwork for the more intense stratification that can be seen today in Adivasi society.

The growing presence of the British with their determination to civilize and extract resources from Adivasi regions of India, had a profound impact on the Adivasi. More than ever before, the Adivasi were brought into contact, and indeed were incorporated into the broader socio-economic system. Traditional Adivasi modes of subsistence were attacked and in many cases abandoned. Adivasi were stripped of their land and resources; roads and railways infiltrated previously inaccessible regions; centres of trade and administration were established, and non-Adivasi settlement increased exponentially. Dr. J.H. Hutton, an anthropologist who was a long-time member of the Indian Civil Service and was appointed Census Commissioner in 1929, described the impact of colonialism on the Adivasi as follows:

Far from being of immediate benefit to the primitive tribes the establishment of British rule in India did most of them much more harm than good. It may be said that the early days of British Administration did very great detriment to the economic position of tribes through ignorance and neglect of their rights and customs. Many changes have been caused

¹⁶² Hardiman, "Power in the Forests: The Dangs, 1820-1940," 94. See also Jan Breman, *Of Peasants, Migrants, and Paupers : Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 175.

¹⁶³ Singh, "Colonial Transformation of Tribal Society in Middle India," 1227.

incidentally by the penetration of the tribal country, the opening up of communications, the protection of forests and the establishment of schools, to say nothing of the openings given in this way to Christian Missions. Many of the results of these changes have caused acute discomfort to the tribes.¹⁶⁴

The Nationalist anthropologist GS Ghurye elaborated on Hutton's remarks by stating that "the acuteness of discomfort was very often so great that it led to apathy, indifference, moral deterioration and even a decline in population"¹⁶⁵

Isolation and Protection

While on the one hand the British were rapidly breaking down the societal divisions between the Adivasi and the wider society, they were also responsible for sharpening the ideological and legal demarcation of who was Adivasi and who was Hindu, a distinction that had not previously been so clearly made. In many cases, early British ethnographers had used the terms "tribe" and "caste" interchangeably, but by the late 1800s and early 1900s, whether for political or intellectual reasons, there was a concerted effort to differentiate between the two. The Indian census machinery was first used to this end in 1901 when it attempted to set a criterion by designating as Tribals those peoples who practiced animism as opposed to Hinduism (a definition which some deem untenable given the amorphous and heterogeneous nature of Hinduism, especially at that time).¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in CB Tripathi, "Approaches to Tribal Development and Experience - General Policies, Administrative Approach and Personnel Policies and Their Implementation - an All India Review," *Man in India* 68, no. 4 (1988): 336.

¹⁶⁵ Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes*, 151.

¹⁶⁶ See for example G. S. Ghurye of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics., *The Aborigines--"So Called"--and Their Future* (Poona: Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics., 1943), microform.

From the 1931 census onwards, British India began “scheduling” the “tribes” more systematically. The Government of India Act of 1935 and the subsequent list of Backward Tribes made special provisions for the Tribals, or rather for those communities that the colonial government saw as tribes.¹⁶⁷ It is here that the contradictory nature of the impacts of colonialism on the Adivasi emerges strongly. Along with the rapid integration of the Adivasi came an ideological policy of isolation and protectionism which some say had its roots in British disillusionment with industrialization. The Adivasi as “noble savages” were reminiscent of a more innocent, simple, lifestyle. This perspective is shown in the following passage from the most notable of the era’s ecological romanticists, the missionary-cum-anthropologist Verrier Elwin:

The life of a true aboriginal is simple and happy, enriched by natural pleasures. For all their poverty, their days are spent in the beauty of the hills. A woman carrying a load to the hill-top pauses a moment to see the scene below her. It is the ‘sweet forest’, the ‘forest of joy and sandal’ in which they live.¹⁶⁸

Archana Prasad associates the British anthropologist’s approach towards the Adivasi with the ecological romanticism of writers such as Wordsworth, Ruskin and Carpenter.¹⁶⁹ For such ecological romanticists, Hindu society represented a threat to the Adivasi way of life, in light of which they advocated a protectionist and paternalistic approach towards the Adivasi to shelter these “simple” peoples’ lifestyle from the Hindu mainstream. Of course it is worth noting that such policies had certain advantages for the

¹⁶⁷ Xaxa, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India."

¹⁶⁸ Verrier Elwin, *The Aborigines*, Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs No. 14 (London ; New York: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1944), xiv.as quoted in Prasad and Three Essays Press., *Against Ecological Romanticism : Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*. Prasad gives an account of how this ecological romanticism has been used by contemporary political movements in India.

¹⁶⁹ Archana Prasad and Three Essays Press., *Against Ecological Romanticism : Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, 1st ed., Readings (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003), xiv.

colonial administration as well: first, the guise of protectionism allowed the British much more secure control over the natural resources that were often found in Adivasi areas; and second, keeping the Indian populace segmented mitigated against widespread popular uprising.¹⁷⁰ Thus Hutton's comments above denouncing colonialism's effect on the Adivasi must be seen as the words of an administrator advocating for firm British control over Adivasi areas through the exclusion of these regions from constitutional reform.¹⁷¹

Here we see the emergence of two very distinctive ideological approaches to the Adivasi, approaches that structure debates on Adivasi issues to this day. First was that of the Indian Civil Service and the mainly British anthropologists that were behind the scheduling of the Tribes; this camp argued that the Tribals had a distinctive identity and emphasized the extent to which they had remained isolated from mainstream Hindu society and the reasons why they should be kept that way. On the other side were the nationalist anthropologists who, in line with their larger political project, argued that tribes were very much a part of Hindu society and who dismissed the entire notion of "tribals" as a colonial construct. The nationalists saw anthropologists who affirmed the "tribal" status as tools of the British colonial system, and they considered the notion of a distinction between the Adivasi and Hindus to be the British tactic of divide and rule.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Guha points out that the British, especially the missionaries, also hoped to find in the Tribals, a people uncontaminated by Hindu teachings and thus more open to the Gospel: "Three missionaries testified before a British Parliamentary committee in 1836: "so far as our experience goes, we find that many of the most ignorant and uncultivated heathen tribes receive the Gospel more readily than the inhabitants of India" (Select Committee 1836, 528)." Sumit Guha, "Lower Strata, Older Races, and Aboriginal Peoples: Racial Anthropology and Mythical History Past and Present," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, No. 2 (May, 1998), 427.

¹⁷¹ Colonial administrators/anthropologists even pushed for British to maintain a presence in Adivasi regions, under the British High Commission, after Indian independence as the British had a "moral responsibility for the protection of the Tribals." See Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 114.

¹⁷² Jaganath Pathy has argued that the concessions and special rights for the tribals were largely in response to sporadic guerilla movements in tribal regions. Jaganath Pathy, *Tribal Peasantry Dynamics of Development* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1984), 165-66.

This position was of course not particular to India; the very discipline of anthropology emerged to meet the needs of colonial regimes around the world and the line between anthropologist and colonial administrator was blurred at best.¹⁷³

This debate reached its climax leading up to the enactment of the Government of India Act 1935 which devolved considerable autonomy to the Indian people, mainly through directly elected provincial governments made up of Indian ministers. However, certain areas with Tribal majority populations were excluded and left under the direct rule of the British administrators.¹⁷⁴ The Nationalists saw this as both an insult to their ability to govern themselves and also as “another attempt to divide the people of India into different groups, with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment, to obstruct the growth of uniform democratic institutions in the country.”¹⁷⁵

Adivasi and the Nationalists

Throughout the Nationalist struggle, Gandhi focused on only a small number of issues, one of which was the plight of the untouchables, whom he affectionately (or euphemistically) called *Harijans*, or children of God. Indeed he expressed little interest in Adivasi issues until the early 1940s. For Gandhi the *Harijans* were a much more pressing concern; his justification was that not only were there more of them (about twice as many), but also that they had been the victims of the injustice of untouchability. In reality it may have been that he was more concerned about the reform of upper caste

¹⁷³ For more on these criticisms of Anthropology see ———, "Imperialism, Anthropology and the Third World," *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 14 (1981). For a nationalist anthropologist account see Ghurye and Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics., *The Aborigines--"So Called"--and Their Future*.

¹⁷⁴ Nandini Sundar, *Subalterns and Sovereigns : An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854-1996* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 183.

¹⁷⁵ Quote from the Indian National Congress session at Faizpur, 1936 taken from Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 112.

Hindus than he was about any downtrodden peoples.¹⁷⁶ It was the work of Gandhi's long-time friend and collaborator Amritlal Thakkar, or Thakkar Bapa, which characterized nationalist action on the Adivasi front and it was only through his persistence that the Adivasi were brought into nationalist discussions at all.¹⁷⁷

Thakkar Bapa first became interested in the plight of the Adivasi in 1914 when, as a member of the Servants of India Society, he traveled to the Panchmahals to organize famine relief. This experience sparked a life-long passion for the Adivasi cause. Another famine hit the Panchmahals in 1922 and he returned, this time founding the *Bhil Seva Mandal*. Gandhi understood Thakkar's concerns but insisted that the Congress's emphasis should be on the *Harijans*:

Our ancestors have sinned grievously by putting Harijans virtually out of the pale of Hindu society. It is our sacred duty to give them once again an honoured place amongst ourselves. The work is nothing less than that of reforming the current Hindu religion. No, Thakkar, while you and I live, that must be our primary duty.¹⁷⁸

Gandhi evidently had great faith in Thakkar Bapa and even convinced him to take on the role of Secretary of the *Harijan Sevak Sangh*, the Congress's organization for the upliftment of the *Harijan*. Given his passion for the Adivasi, Thakkar Bapa was of course reluctant, but Gandhi assured him he could still work for the Adivasi cause as well:

There is no limit to your greed. By all means satisfy it to the top of your bent. Your secretaryship surely is no hindrance.... You can give as much of your time as you like to Adivasis while discharging your duty as

¹⁷⁶ In my discussions with Wilfred Da Costa of the Indian Social Action Forum, he suggested that Gandhi was only interested in the Adivasi in British India and not in the princely states. This is evidenced, D'Costa notes, by Gandhi's silence on the Motilal Tejawat-led Bhil uprising at Pal-Dadvav (1921-22) in which thousands of Adivasi were said to be massacred by the Mewar Bhil Corps under the command of Major HG Sutton. Not only did this tragedy take place in a princely state but also Tejawat's movement, which called for liberty and complete independence, may have gone too far for Gandhi's conservative ideology. This could be an interesting subject for further research. Discussions with Willy Da Costa, January, 2005

¹⁷⁷ Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 174.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 175. (No date provided for quote).

Secretary of the Sangh. You do not want to tell me that you want to resign even after that latitude.... But the irreligion of untouchability is today being sanctioned as religion. That is not so in the case of Adivasis. I do not mind therefore your dedicating yourself to the service of the Adivasis, but it must not be at the cost of the Harijans.¹⁷⁹

Despite Thakkar Bapa, the Adivasi did not feature in any Congress resolutions and in 1941 when Gandhi initially drew up his 13-point reconstruction program they were absent. According to K.S. Singh it was only as an afterthought, reportedly at Thakkar Bapa's insistence, that tribal welfare was later added as a 14th item.¹⁸⁰

Thakkar Bapa's *Bhil Seva Mandal* was the first of many Adivasi welfare organizations to be established. The intent was to "promote the welfare of the *Bhils* through education imparted from a network of residential schools (ashrams), and to provide debt relief, eradication of drinking habits, and inculcate cleanliness and purity in life."¹⁸¹ A plethora of such organizations were established throughout India based on Gandhi's reconstruction program. Through their activities, he was presented as the father of the nation, and Adivasi were brought into the nationalist movement. Many of these groups remain in operation in Adivasi Gujarat today, such as *Bhil Seva Mandal*, *Swaraj Ashram*, *Adivasi Sewa Sangh*, *Pachhatvarg Sewa mandal*, *Sanali Ashram*, *Rani Paraj Sewa Sabha* and *Vedchhi Ashram*.¹⁸²

While these organizations were purportedly non-political and non-proselytizing, they were the nationalists' response to the missionaries, and as we can see in their programs they emphasized living a clean, pure, Hindu life free of meat-eating and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 177.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 182.

¹⁸² Priyavadan M Patel, "Politics and Mobilization of Lower Classes: Part 1," *Third Millenium* 8, no. 4 (2005): 11 (of pdf copy).

drinking. Tripathi notes that the norms and values these programs imposed were often in conflict with the traditional life of the Adivasi; for example, almost all institutions were strictly vegetarian.¹⁸³ Moreover, with the approach of independence these organizations, so closely tied to the Indian National Congress, could not but be political. It is through these organizations that the Congress party was able to entrench itself so firmly in the Adivasi areas where it held a virtual monopoly until very recently.

While Thakkar recognized that reservations and safeguards against exploitation might be necessary, like all Nationalists he was adamantly opposed to any isolation of the Adivasi and through his programs and in his writings he advocated a policy of assimilation. In 1941, Thakkar spoke out against the isolationist approach in his R.R.

Kale Memorial Lecture at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics:

To keep these people confined to and isolated in their inaccessible hills and jungles was like keeping them in glass cases of a museum for the curiosity of purely academic persons.... The aborigines should form part of the civilized communities of our country, not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this religion or that, but to share with the advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general, social and political life of the country. Separation and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and they strike at the root of national solidarity.¹⁸⁴

Given what we know of Verrier Elwin, the isolationist missionary-cum-anthropologist, he would seem an unlikely partner for Thakkar Bapa. However they shared one viewpoint and by the 1940s were working together to stop missionary work amongst the Adivasi. Elwin and Thakkar believed that Christian missionaries were exploiting the Adivasi by offering inducements for conversion, dividing the Adivasi

¹⁸³ Tripathi, "Approaches to Tribal Development and Experience - General Policies, Administrative Approach and Personnel Policies and Their Implementation - an All India Review," 338.

¹⁸⁴ Singh, *Tribal Society in India : An Anthro-Historical Perspective*, 187-88.

community and psychologically abusing them by “alienating them from their own culture.”¹⁸⁵ They accused the missionaries of being “anti-nationalist and racial as they carried on the programmes of the imperial government and used their membership of the white race to assert their cultural superiority and effect conversions.”¹⁸⁶ The following 1944 passage from the anti-missionary campaign, of which Elwin was a vocal member, sounds frighteningly similar to contemporary remarks from the *Sangh Parivar*:

Missionaries should be withdrawn from Partially Excluded areas; we insist that all education in these areas should be taken over by the Government. We demand that the Government should do twice as much as the missionaries have hitherto achieved. We have no interest in keeping these people backward. If they are to take their place as *Kshatriyas* in the Hindu social system then they must be trained in the arts of liberal thinking and educated to courage and the traditions of honour.¹⁸⁷

Elwin also called on Hindu organizations to accept the major Adivasi tribes as *Kshatriyas*.¹⁸⁸

This of course does not sound like the Elwin who had so vociferously fought for the isolation of the Adivasi, who had once gone so far as to call for protected National Parks for the Adivasi, but as Elwin himself admitted in 1944, his opinions on the Adivasi had changed dramatically: “When I first settled in Aboriginal company thirteen years ago, I was under the impression that Hillmen were not Hindus. Eight years of hard study and research have convinced me that I was wrong.... Aboriginals of peninsular India... should be classed as Hindus in the census.”¹⁸⁹ It is not clear why he changed his stance

¹⁸⁵ Prasad and Three Essays Press., *Against Ecological Romanticism : Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, 89.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Verrier Elwin, ‘Missionaries and Aboriginals’, p.7 typescript in Bhulabhai Desai papers, NMML, Correspondence with Verrier Elwin, 12 October 1944, quoted in Ibid., 91.

¹⁸⁸ Elwin, 1944, as quoted in Ibid., xvi.

¹⁸⁹ As quoted in Ibid., 73.

so dramatically; in his biography of Elwin, Ramachandra Guha argues that Elwin was forced to choose between two evils, the Christian priests and the Congress-minded Hindus, and that he “he was keenly aware of Congress’s rising influence with the coming of Indian Independence.”¹⁹⁰ Prasad, however, adds that Elwin’s ecological romanticism was unable to deal with the modernist challenge posed by both the missionaries and the Gandhian organizations, “the space for a primitivist position was gradually getting eroded.... Elwin was forced to align with the Gandhian forces who in turn started linking themselves with Hindu Nationalists.”¹⁹¹ For Elwin, siding with the Nationalists was a pragmatic choice which he saw as the best way to protect the Adivasi interests. Elwin’s foresight served him well for he went on to have tremendous influence on independent India’s Tribal policy. In 1954, he became an Indian citizen and was appointed by Nehru as Anthropological Adviser to the Government of India.¹⁹² Elwin even drafted Nehru’s Tribal *panchsila* (five principles of Tribal policy which we will discuss later in this chapter).¹⁹³

For the Nationalists the Adivasi were Hindus, backward Hindus perhaps, but Hindus nonetheless. This was the ideological foundation of the Gandhian Adivasi welfare program leading up to independence and beyond. Contemporary debates concerning the Adivasi are not new: it is in the early work of the Indian National Congress that we first see the identity of the Adivasi being used towards political ends,

¹⁹⁰ Ramachandra Guha, *Savaging the Civilized : Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 168.

¹⁹¹ Prasad and Three Essays Press., *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, 92.

¹⁹² Govinda Chandra Rath, "Nehru and Elwin on Tribal Development: Contrasting Perspectives," in *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*, ed. Govinda Chandra Rath (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006), 65.

¹⁹³ Sundar, *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854-1996*, 180.

namely the creation of national unity. As Prasad shows, it was the Nationalists and the Verrier Elwin who smoothed the way for the Hindu right amongst the Adivasi, setting the stage for the present climate, to be explored in subsequent chapters, in which Adivasi are seen as Hindus, and Christians and Muslims as enemies.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Prasad and Three Essays Press., *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, 92.

Chapter 4: Adivasi and Independent India

As in many other areas of governance, independent India's approach to the Adivasi was to a certain extent inherited from the British. This chapter will present a history of this approach and of the Adivasi's interactions with the wider society since independence. In particular, the Adivasi will be situated in the context of Gujarati and wider Indian politics and economics to demonstrate how their communities are deeply connected to the wider society and have been internally stratified by the spread of the market economy. This will provide the background for my arguments in subsequent chapters as to how Hindutva has managed to win over sections of the Adivasi.

The chapter begins with an account of the new Indian state's attitude towards the Adivasi, an attitude that was, surprisingly, largely inherited from the British, and that continues to underline state policy on the Adivasi to the present day. I will then look more closely at Gujarat, in particular situating the Adivasi in the context of the evolution of Gujarat's caste structure. One of the major effects on the Adivasi of over six decades of Indian independence and Tribal policy, and that which is most relevant to this thesis, has been increasing internal stratification. The chapter closes with an examination of the causes of this stratification and a portrayal of modern Adivasi society in Gujarat.

Despite the Nationalists protests (only several years earlier) of colonial "divide and rule" Tribal policy, as the Constituent Assembly prepared independent India's constitution in 1949 it sought to provide legal safeguards for the millions of Adivasi and scheduled castes. Pathy attributes this about-face to a number of factors including a review of colonial accounts of Adivasi struggles, as well as briefings from Thakkar

Bappa and Jaipal Singh, an Adivasi assembly member.¹⁹⁵ The most important result of this was Article 46 of the constitution which lists the following directive principle of State Policy: “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 castes and the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”¹⁹⁶ Towards this end, borrowing from the Government of India Act of 1935, Article 46 allows for the designation of Tribal-dominated areas for which special provisions would be made. The sixth schedule pertains to the scheduled areas and tribes of the North East (which had been historically more isolated) while the fifth schedule deals with the rest of the country.

The debates on these schedules took place on September 5-6, 1949 and for the most part concerned the isolation versus assimilation issue. The argument may be represented by the comments of two assembly members: Professor Shibban Lal Saksena and Jaipal Singh. Saksena’s statements support assimilation:

... the existence of the scheduled tribes and the scheduled areas are stigma on our nation just as the existence of untouchability is a stigma on the Hindu nation. That these brethren of ours are still in such a sub-human state of existence is something for which we should be ashamed... I only want that these scheduled tribes and scheduled areas should be developed so quickly that they may become indistinguishable from the rest of the Indian population.¹⁹⁷

Singh represented the other side of the debate: “If however your mission of amelioration of the lot of the *Adibasis* is of the kind that the British professed to have, coming to India

¹⁹⁵ Pathy, *Tribal Peasantry Dynamics of Development*, 166.

¹⁹⁶ "Constitution of India," Article 46. The Directive Principles of State Policy are guidelines for the development of laws and policies in India and are not binding.

¹⁹⁷ Constituent Assembly Debates, vol. 9, new Delhi, (30 July – 18 September 1949), 979 as quoted in Sundar, *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854-1996*, 185-86.

over all this distance of six thousand miles, I would ask you mercifully to leave us alone.”¹⁹⁸ It is interesting to note that during the debates Mr. Singh’s ability to represent the Adivasi came under sharp criticism. Some assembly members felt that as an Oxford-educated elite Adivasi staying in the Hotel Imperial, he could not speak for most Adivasi. As is perhaps inevitable in a liberal parliamentary bourgeois democracy, insofar as the Adivasi are represented politically, it is to this day by members of an Adivasi elite, far removed from the troubles of the wider community.

In line with the broader mandate of “special care for the weaker sections,” the constitution implemented a reservation system of positive discrimination. Article 15 allows union and state governments to make “any special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.”¹⁹⁹ This allows for the reservation of a certain number of positions in post-secondary education institutions (Article 15), government jobs (Article 16), and seats in the *Lok Sabha* (Article 330) and State Assemblies (Article 332) for members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (as determined by the President). It was initially expected that these reservations would only be required for ten years, but they have been extended through constitutional amendments through to the present.

Nehru and India’s Tribal Policy

As the Constituent Assembly debates show, the conflict between isolation and assimilation did not disappear with Independence. Neither of these two approaches was acceptable to India’s first Prime Minister, and he instead attempted a compromise middle ground approach which explains India’s somewhat schizophrenic Tribal policy. Nehru

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 186.

¹⁹⁹ "Constitution of India," Article 15.

sought to develop Adivasi areas gradually without disturbing the traditional Adivasi way of life. The new state's policy towards the Adivasi was best summarized in Elwin's 1959 book, *A Philosophy for NEFA* (North East Frontier Agency):²⁰⁰

We are agreed that the people of NEFA cannot be left in their age-long isolation. We are equally agreed that we can leave no political vacuum along the frontier; that we must bring to an end the destructive practices of inter-tribal war and head-hunting and the morally repugnant practices of slavery, kidnapping of children, cruel methods of sacrificing animals and opium-addiction, none of which are fundamental to tribal culture. We wish to see that the people are well-fed, that they are healthy and enjoy a longer span of life, that fewer babies die, that they have better houses, a higher yield for their labour in the fields, improved techniques for their home-industries.... And at the same time, we want to avoid the dangers of assimilation and detribalization which have degraded tribal communities in other parts of the world....

The great problem is how to develop the synthesis, how to bring the blessings and advantages of modern medicine, agriculture and education to them, without destroying the rare and precious values of tribal life. We can solve this problem if we do not try to go too fast: if we allow the people a breathing-space in which to adjust themselves to the new world: if we do not overwhelm them with too many officials; if we aim at fundamentals and eliminate everything that is not vitally necessary; if we go to them in genuine love and true simplicity.²⁰¹

Even when it was written a half-century ago, Elwin's approach was seen by some as "over-optimistic and even naïve" in that it sought to preserve traditional Adivasi lifestyles while at the same time changing the material condition in which the Adivasi lived.²⁰²

Elwin and Nehru proposed a delicate balance between protection and assimilation which, insofar as it has been followed, appears to have failed at both.

²⁰⁰ This book was written to describe the situation and policy for the North East Frontier Agency (an almost entirely tribal region in present-day Assam) but the philosophy described here is consistent with the India-wide policy as well.

²⁰¹ Verrier Elwin, *A Philosophy for Nefa*, [2d rev. ed. (Shillong: [S. Roy on behalf of the North-East Frontier Agency], 1959). As quoted in Morris E Opler, "Review of a Philosophy for Nefa by Verrier Elwin," *American Anthropologist* 62, no. 2 (1960): 343.

²⁰² Morris E Opler, "Review of a Philosophy for Nefa by Verrier Elwin," *American Anthropologist* 62, no. 2 (1960): 343.

In his preface to the second edition (1959) of Elwin's book, Nehru outlines five fundamental principles of Adivasi development which have come to be known as his

Tribal Panchsila:

1. People should develop along the line of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
2. Tribal rights to land and forest should be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.
4. We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.
5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.²⁰³

It is upon this philosophical foundation that India's Tribal development has been ostensibly based. However, in reality many of the shortcomings of colonial policy were perpetuated and even exacerbated after Independence, and many Indian leaders shared the condescension and racism of the Colonial administrators.²⁰⁴

The rapid industrialization that was expected to bring Adivasi regions up to pace often served only to further alienate Adivasi from their lands and means of subsistence. As Baviskar notes "the pursuit of these policies has brought about rapid exploitation of natural resources in Tribal areas, violating the interests of dispossessed Adivasis."²⁰⁵ In

²⁰³ Principles listed in Ramachandra Guha, *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 268.

²⁰⁴ Sundar provides a revealing account of the Constituent Assembly debates on the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, Sundar, *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854-1996*, 185-90.

²⁰⁵ Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, 82.

the Dangs, the Indian Forest Service replaced the Imperial Forest Department but the exploitation of the forests and the alienation of the Adivasi from them continues apace.

Unlike Gandhi, who believed that poverty could be alleviated through village self-sufficiency, Nehru saw the introduction of modern technology—industrial and agricultural—as the only way to end India’s widespread poverty. Despite Nehru’s professed dedication to development without damage to the traditional Adivasi way of life, such an approach often either was not followed or failed. Govinda Chandra Rath describes the reality of the Nehruvian model of Adivasi development:

The Nehruvian approach could not retain its uniformity in ideology and practice. Nehru subscribed to the principles of not-interfering or uprooting during the introduction of new development programmes, but in practice almost all the large-scale industries and big dams planned during his lifetime were established in the tribal areas, causing massive displacement.²⁰⁶

It is not our purpose here to investigate the merits or shortfalls of the Nehruvian development model; rather, it is to show that despite any ideological professions to the contrary, the Adivasi have not been spared assimilationist pressures. Indeed, in many cases major projects have directly impacted the Adivasi and communities have frequently been displaced, only quickening their incorporation into the wider society as wage labourers.

In an analysis of state expenditure on Tribal development in five-year plans from independence to 1979, Jaganath Pathy finds that plan-wise actual expenditure never exceeded one percent – which he finds inadequate given that during this period the scheduled tribes made up approximately seven percent of the population.²⁰⁷ While the

²⁰⁶ Rath, "Nehru and Elwin on Tribal Development: Contrasting Perspectives," 87.

²⁰⁷ Pathy, *Tribal Peasantry Dynamics of Development*, 174-75.

focus of this spending changed over the eleven five-year plans, a number of important issues have been central throughout; these include food security and nutrition, health services, and education.²⁰⁸ Priyavadan Patel looks specifically at Gujarat (where the scheduled tribes constitute 14.8 percent of the population²⁰⁹) and finds that from the late 1970s to the early 1990s on average 11 or 12 percent of the total state budget was invested to develop the Tribal areas²¹⁰ Patel argues however that most of this spending has been on welfare/consumption-oriented benefits such as materials for house-construction or repair, medical expenses, or free books and clothes for students, not production-oriented benefits such as fertilizer, milk cattle, training for employment, etc. which could have long-term benefits and lead to structural changes. And as described below, where benefits have been offered they have gone to a small, relatively wealthy segment of the Adivasi population.

Initially, Adivasi development fell under the community development programme which was not Adivasi-specific. Then, in 1954, 43 *Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks* were established. In 1960, a committee chaired by Verrier Elwin recommended smaller *Tribal Development Blocks*. These were the administrative units of India's Adivasi development policy. By the end of the third five-year plan (1966) about 500 of these blocks had been set up covering 40 percent of the total Adivasi population. In other words 60 percent of the Adivasi population was not even targeted by these plans. A review in the early 1970s found that the first four five-year plans had been largely

²⁰⁸ Govinda Chandra Rath, *Tribal Development in India : The Contemporary Debate* (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006), 16.

²⁰⁹ Source: Census of India, *Gujarat Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes* (New Delhi: Data Dissemination Wing, Office of the Registrar General: 2001), 1.

²¹⁰ Priyavadan Patel, "Status of Tribal Development in Gujarat: Case of Itdp, Dahod", in *Tribal Transformation in India* ed. Buddhadeb Chaudhuri, *Tribal Studies of India Series T 147-T 151* (New Delhi, India: Inter-India Publications, 1992), 71.

ineffective and recommended a more integrated approach – the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy. Adivasi regions are now divided into TSP areas, each with its own sub-plan which is then incorporated into the wider state plans. As of 2010, Tribal development continues to be administered through these Integrated Tribal Development Programs (ITDP) of which there are 12 in Gujarat.

Adivasi and the Politics of Gujarat

As Ghanshyam Shah has shown, caste has always been a defining feature of Gujarati politics. Political elites have time and time again resorted to caste sentiments and identity to overshadow the immense economic differentiation that has emerged amongst the members of the dominant classes.²¹¹ This method of political mobilization has of course worked to the disadvantage of Gujarat's lower strata – that is the untouchables, lower castes and Adivasi, but also the less affluent members of dominant castes. During the 1980s the emergence of a class-based mobilization of Gujarat's disadvantaged communities provided a glimmer of hope for change; however, any progress made has since been lost and, if anything, mobilization along caste lines is now even more prominent. This section will situate the Adivasi within this history of caste politics to contribute to an understanding of the present politics of violence and hatred of which the Adivasi have become a part.

Following Independence, the Congress Party dominated Indian politics, and in the Adivasi regions of Gujarat its hegemony went virtually unchallenged for decades. Congress was more than just a political party, it led education and social services in Adivasi Gujarat for decades leading up to and following independence. In Adivasi

²¹¹ Ghanshyam Shah, "Caste Sentiments, Class Formation and Dominance in Gujarat," in *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order*, ed. Francine R. Frankel and M. S. A.F. Rao (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 61.

Gujarat, therefore, the Congress party came to represent the Government, and more importantly, the source of education, healthcare, and so on. As the tables in Appendices B and C show, show, it was not until the 1990s with the emergence of the BJP in these constituencies that the Congress faced any real threat to its dominance (Appendix B shows the results for Scheduled Tribe Constituencies in the Gujarat *Lok Sabha* elections and Appendix C shows the results for the Scheduled Tribe constituencies in the *Vidhan Sabha* elections).

Despite its widespread electoral success amongst the Adivasi, the Congress party was largely in the hands of the upper castes and classes.²¹² The case of failed land reform legislation illustrates the control these groups had over the Party: in the mid-to-late 1950s when present-day Gujarat was still part of Bombay, comprehensive legislation in the form of the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act and later the Tenancy and Lands (Amendment) Act were enacted to give possession of land to its tillers. Ghanshyam Shah finds that these laws were not rigorously implemented in Gujarat “partly because Patidar, Vania, and Brahman landholders who would have been adversely affected by the Act dominated the ruling Congress Party and administration.”²¹³ Shah’s research shows that the tenants belonging to lower castes, scheduled castes, and tribes, who were largely uneducated, found it difficult to challenge the landowners of the dominant classes. When lands did change hands, in many cases it was owner-tenants, or intermediate and upper caste tenants who benefited from the legislation. Later, the Land Ceiling Act 1960 was introduced and then amended in 1974, but it ran into the same problems as the earlier laws: as Shah concludes “although various

²¹² Ibid., 105.

²¹³ Ibid., 82.

land reforms led to the redistribution of land to some extent, they did not change land relationships in terms of caste or class.”²¹⁴

Congress hegemony in Gujarat was first challenged in 1974 when an unprecedented protest movement, the *Navnirman Andolan* emerged – a largely urban middle class agitation against the Congress state government on the issue of price rise of essential commodities. The protests led to the dismissal of the Congress government, and after a period of presidential rule new elections were held in 1975. The United Front (later the Janata Party) won the elections – for the first time in Gujarat’s history the Congress Party was not in power.

It was the 1980 elections that finally brought the Adivasi, as well as other poorer sections of Gujarati society into the spotlight of Gujarati politics. To regain the leadership of Gujarat, Congress shifted its focus to class mobilization and adopted a new electoral formula known as KHAM. This was an alliance of the lower *Kshatriyas*,²¹⁵ *Harijans*, Adivasi and Muslims – together comprising 56 percent of the state’s population.²¹⁶ The party depicted Indira Gandhi as *garib-ni-ma* (mother of the poor) and distributed party tickets to members of these groups. Under this formula, Congress won an overwhelming victory with 140 out of 181 seats in the state assembly and 25 of 26 *Lok Sabha* seats. For the first time ever there were no *Patidars* in the Cabinet; an untouchable was sent to the Union Cabinet as Minister of State for Home, and an Adivasi

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ While *Kshatriyas* are traditionally an upper caste/class, their inclusion in this alliance represents the broadening of the category under the Gujarat *Kshatriya Sabha*, a *Kshatriya* caste federation. The motivation for this was to widen the *Kshatriya* social base by mobilizing lower caste groups and thus counteract threats to *Rajput* interests in Gujarat. For more on this see Ghanshyam Shah, “Caste Sentiments, Class Formation and Dominance in Gujarat,” 103 and Rajni Kothari and Rushikesh Maru “Federating for Political Interests: The Kshatriyas of Gujarat” in *Caste in Indian Politics*, ed. Rajni Kothari (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970)

²¹⁶ Yagnik and Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva, and Beyond*, 254.

was made Cabinet Minister. Even the Chief Minister, Madhav Singh Solanki, was a *Kshatriya* from a family of landless labourers.²¹⁷

This was of course a direct attack on the power of the traditional upper castes and classes, and it contributed to their widespread departure from the Congress Party. Moreover, the new situation prompted a violent response from the educated middle class. The *Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad* (ABVP) the student wing of the BJP led protests and 51 people were killed – mostly from the scheduled castes.²¹⁸ Yagnik and Seth write that the violence only stopped once the BJP changed its strategy and sought to win over the lower castes and Adivasi for themselves (while still maintaining an anti-reservation stance).²¹⁹

In 1985 Solanki won an even more impressive victory under the KHAM Alliance – 149 of 182 assembly seats. This time he had promised to extend reservations in universities and government jobs for the Other Backward Castes from 10 to 28 percent, in addition to the 21 percent already reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. With this increase, reservations would have reached 49 percent, the maximum allowed under the constitution. This proved to be more than Gujarat's economically dominant communities would take, and violence broke out the same day that the new government was sworn in (with 14 out of 20 cabinet seats and all major portfolios going to KHAM members). Buses were set ablaze, and in one case a conductor was tied and burned alive. Solanki offered to delay the reservations but it was already too late. The violent response

²¹⁷ Ibid., 254-55.

²¹⁸ John R. Wood, "Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India," *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 3 (1987): 421.

²¹⁹ Yagnik and Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat : Plurality, Hindutva, and Beyond*, 255.

to Solanki's plans show that the threat of increased reservations and the dominant communities' loss of power threw Gujarat into complete chaos.

By the first day of the assembly session Ahmedabad, particularly the old city, was in anarchy. The army was brought in but still the rioting carried on. On April 22nd, Ahmedabad police responded to the death of a head constable by going on a rampage "looting killing and burning, they terrorized the city and gutted the office of the Gujarat Samachar, Ahmedabad's largest newspaper, which had published stories of police violence."²²⁰ In early June, anti-reservation state employees went on strike and 400,000 employees were off the job for 73 days – the largest government employee strike in independent India's history.²²¹ On July 6th, after over 200 people had been killed the central government in New Delhi instructed Solanki to submit his government's resignation. The violence carried on for two more weeks and 75 more people were killed.²²² Surprisingly, Solanki's home minister Amarsinh Chaudhary, an Adivasi, was installed as Chief Minister. Needless to say Chaudhary's newly installed cabinet had considerably more upper caste representation.

As Patel points out, the anti-reservation mobilization "undid Congress electorally, ideologically and politically."²²³ Solanki's replacement was forced to abandon the cause of reservations, and the entire KHAM experience, while electorally a great success for Congress, made little substantive difference in the lives of Gujarat's poor. Policies that

²²⁰ Wood, "Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India," 424.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 425.

²²³ Patel, "Politics and Mobilization of Lower Classes: Part 1," 2.

were implemented, such as “food for all” and “mid-day meal,” Patel argues, were merely symbolic.²²⁴

John Wood believes that one of the major reasons that Solanki had been able to complete his first term’s five year mandate (the first time that had ever happened in Gujarat) was that he had not introduced any legislation that would threaten Gujarat’s capitalist interests.²²⁵ The KHAM alliance was the first instance of the disadvantaged and lower class communities of Gujarat coming together to represent their common class interests. Sadly, the Government ultimately failed to effect any real change and was unable to withstand the force of the powerful middle and upper class/caste communities. With much to lose, the *Patels* and other upper castes exerted a tremendous right-wing, communal, anti-poor mobilization that reasserted their privileged position and significantly altered the socio-political situation in Gujarat, with their dominance carrying on to the present day.

The Stratification of Adivasi Society

Most accounts of the Adivasi, especially those on the Adivasi’s interactions with Hindutva, present the Adivasi as a homogenous and even egalitarian segment of Indian society living in isolation from capitalism. This myth, rooted in an ecological romanticism which portrays the Adivasi as egalitarian and communal persists even in contemporary literature. Not only have the Adivasi always been stratified along the lines of purity and status, as noted in the previous chapter, they have also been affected by processes of modernization in largely the same ways as the rest of society. They are now

²²⁴ Ibid., 3.

²²⁵ Wood, "Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India," 419. Wood gives a number of reasons for the completed mandate, also including Indira Gandhi’s support for him and the size of his coalition which allowed his government to withstand several prominent defections.

stratified along economic lines. The process of the incorporation of Adivasi into the wider market system, as we have already seen, began in earnest with British efforts to civilize and exploit these regions (although the Adivasi were not entirely isolated before this). This integration has been a rapid process that was carried on, and indeed was hastened by the advent of Indian independence. Contemporary events can only be understood by investigating the socio-economic realities of Adivasi Gujarat, and in particular the emergence of an Adivasi elite.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the Centre for Social Studies, Surat, conducted extensive research into the stratification of Adivasi society in Gujarat.²²⁶ These studies note that Gujarat's impressive post-independence agricultural growth has not missed the Adivasi regions. On the contrary, Adivasi regions have experienced widespread agricultural development and changes to socio-economic patterns have been analogous to those in non-Adivasi Gujarat. They find that "the tribals have entered into a complex system of production and market network at different levels and this has produced distinctions based on land and wealth in the same manner as is observed in the macro-society."²²⁷ This rapid development of course did not mean uniform improvement in the living conditions of all Adivasi; rather, as is always the case with this type of capitalist development, inequality and poverty increased.²²⁸ Though this data is from the 1970s and very early 1980s (research of this nature has not been conducted since), Bose and Shah describe the stratification they observed as incipient, and it is safe to assume

²²⁶ See Ghanshyam Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals ". ———, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Surat and Valsad Districts of Gujarat," (Surat: Centre for Social Studies, 1977). Pradip Kumar Bose, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Vadodara, Sabarkantha and the Dangs Districts of Gujarat," (Surat: Centre for Social Studies, 1978). ———, "Stratification among Tribals in Gujarat," *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 6 (1981).

²²⁷ Bose, "Stratification among Tribals in Gujarat," 193.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

that as capitalist development has progressed the Adivasi are today even further stratified. Indeed, given the increasingly neoliberal character of economic policy since the study, namely the reforms of the 1990s, these trends can be expected to have accelerated.

As we have seen above, Adivasi communal land holding was brought to an end by colonial initiatives to end shifting agriculture. Today, Shah finds that land ownership is the principal differentiator of the Adivasi, and variations in education and lifestyle are secondary.²²⁹ In his studies, he divides the Adivasi into four distinct classes, each of which can be found in all districts. These strata are: landless labourers (anyone with less than one acre of land), poor peasants who own from 1-5 acres of land, middle peasants who own 6-15 acres of land, and rich peasants who own 16 or more acres.

The studies find that from the 1950s to the 1970s a significant number of poor peasants were reduced to the status of landless labourers despite the laws prohibiting Adivasi land alienation noted above.²³⁰ Certainly, as with other laws of this kind, non-Adivasi moneylenders and landholders have found ways around these laws, but at the same time many Adivasi (predominantly those belonging to the rich peasant category) have expanded their landholdings by purchasing land from their fellow Adivasi. Shah also finds that prosperous Adivasi have lent money to other Adivasi on the security of their land and at rates as high as 144 percent.²³¹

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the landlessness and general impoverishment of Gujarat's Adivasi is the stream of thousands of Adivasi migrant

²²⁹ Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals ", 178.

²³⁰ Ghanshyam Shah, "Tribal Issues: Problems and Perspectives," in *Tribal Transformation in India*, ed. Buddhadeb Chaudhuri, *Tribal Studies of India Series T 147-T 151* (New Delhi, India: Inter-India Publications, 1992), 133.

²³¹ Ghanshyam Shah, "Tribal Identity and Class Differentiations: A Case Study of the Chaudhri Tribe," *Economic and Political Weekly* 14, no. 7/8 (1979), 461.

workers. While this is not a new phenomenon, it has increased exponentially as Adivasi landlessness has gone up, landholdings have fragmented, and alternatives such as the collection of minor forest products have disappeared.²³² As Jan Breman has shown in *Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers*, growing numbers of landless and marginal-holding households can only survive by leaving their villages for long periods of time each year to work as casual labourers.²³³

The Adivasi leave their villages during the lean season to work in sugar cane farms, tobacco farms, brick factories, road construction, and as general casual labourers. By all accounts, their working and living conditions are wretched: “At work sites migrants experience long hours, hard work, harsh conditions, injuries (with inadequate medical help or compensation), and social isolation and humiliation.”²³⁴ The migrant labourer is highly exploited: they are paid less than the legal minimum and are often the victims of brokers and contractors who advance living money at high rates of interest. In extreme cases, Breman finds, the workers return home even further in debt than when they left.²³⁵

Mosse et al. show that some relatively better-off households can send one or more young men “opportunistically” to mitigate seasonal fluctuations in farming, or to pay for investments or loans, but in many cases whole families migrate and even children are put to work. For the latter, the authors provide a very pessimistic outlook:

²³² Ghanshyam Shah, "Unrest among the Adivasis and Their Struggles," ,111.

²³³ Breman, *Of Peasants, Migrants, and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India*, 216.

²³⁴ D. Mosse; S Gupta; V Shah, "On the Margins in the City: Adivasi Seasonal Labour Migration in Western India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 28 (2005). For additional accounts see also Shah, "Unrest among Adivasis and Their Struggles." Breman, *Of Peasants, Migrants, and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India*.

²³⁵ Breman, *Of Peasants, Migrants, and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India*, 156.

For a majority... labour migration is linked to long-term indebtedness and fails to generate net cash returns and perpetuates below-subsistence livelihoods. The poor... find it impossible to work themselves out of debt. In the meantime fresh debts are incurred to meet subsistence and medical needs. Long absence and dependence on distant patrons reduces status, erodes social capital, makes the poor marginal to the networks through which credit (or marriages), or benefits from development projects are obtained.²³⁶

Occurring on such a large scale, we can see that this migration contributes to the degradation of Adivasi social institutions at both the village and household levels. Moreover, it does not serve to eliminate social inequalities but rather amplifies them.

While one would expect state-led development projects to focus on these poor landless Adivasi, in practice it has been the rich peasants who have reaped the rewards of government spending. Both Priyavadan Patel and Jaganath Pathy provide case studies of how the Indian government's approach to Tribal development has contributed to the stratification of Adivasi society. In Patel's examination of the Integrated Tribal Development Plan in Dahod for example, he found that despite a very large outlay, its projects reached very few households. At most only 4.4 percent of target households (3,785) benefited each year from the project which had over 60 million rupees at its disposal.²³⁷ Pathy's study investigates the socio-economic background of development recipients in Gujarat. He finds that only 10 percent of Tribal households in Gujarat had benefited from three decades of development spending and that landlords as well as rich and middle peasants have secured most of this development spending for themselves –

²³⁶ Shah, "On the Margins in the City: Adivasi Seasonal Labour Migration in Western India," 3028.

²³⁷ Patel, "Status of Tribal Development in Gujarat: Case of Itdp, Dahod."

particularly in terms of spending on land restoration, irrigation, institutional finance, reserved jobs, milk cattle, and education.²³⁸

This is not necessarily due to maliciousness on the part of development workers. The rich Adivasi are more likely to be educated and literate and therefore more easily able to avail themselves of the development programs. As Shah notes “the officers do not have either time or scope, irrespective of their commitment, to wait and persuade the ignorant and poorest to take advantage of government benefits.”²³⁹ In a meeting I attended of the Gujarat Rural Development Commissionerate in Gandhinagar, the development officers acknowledged that their projects were limited to those Adivasi with land upon which the Commissionerate could support agricultural investments. There was little that could be done for the landless Adivasi.²⁴⁰ Subsidies and loans for farming equipment, fertilizers, seeds, etc. are of no use to the Adivasi who has nothing to begin with, or whose land is so small and miserable that it cannot benefit from agricultural inputs.²⁴¹

Traditionally, most scholars and activists in Gujarat have viewed Adivasi as the exploited and non-Adivasi as the exploiters. This dichotomy is an oversimplification of the actual economic relations in Tribal Gujarat: Jaganath Pathy shows that in many cases rich Adivasi households exploit their poor fellow Adivasi, and Ghanshyam Shah has found that prosperous Adivasi cultivators are increasingly abusing their Adivasi workers,

²³⁸ Pathy, *Tribal Peasantry Dynamics of Development*, 193.

²³⁹ Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals", 180.

²⁴⁰ Meeting of Ganesh Devy of Bhasha with the Gujarat Rural Development Commissionerate, Gandhinagar, January 4, 2005.

²⁴¹ Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals", 180.

calling them lazy and inefficient and lending them money at high levels of interest.²⁴² A *Times of India* article of June, 2004 titled “From Loincloth Labourer to Vengaboys Fan” tells the story of Adivasi who had made it to the “select band of tribal businessmen who control the economy in the region today.” The men profiled were from Bodeli, Chotta Udaipur and Kanwant and made up to 35,000 rupees (\$900 CAD) a month supplying cheap Adivasi labour to Gujarat’s industries.²⁴³

This “creamy layer” of Adivasi elite made up of the rich and middle peasants has used reservations and economic benefits provided by the government as well as other forms of privilege within Adivasi society to move into the lower echelons of the Gujarati middle class as politicians and civil servants.²⁴⁴ One would expect the emergence of this middle class to be a sign of progress for the community as a whole, a sign of the upliftment of the Adivasi. Yet on the contrary these elites, rather than serving as an Adivasi voice in the state administration, tend to disassociate themselves from Adivasi society; any demands that they put forward generally serve their class (elite) interests, not those of the poor majority Adivasi.²⁴⁵ For example they call for more white-collar jobs and political offices and increased reservations in higher education (which would be out of reach for the average Adivasi) rather than funding for elementary education which would benefit the more disadvantaged.²⁴⁶ Even as early as 1973, middle and rich Adivasi farmers allied with the Patidars to oppose land ceiling legislation and a paddy levy, both

²⁴² ———, "Unrest among Adivasis and Their Struggles," 102.

²⁴³ Paul John, "From Loincloth Labourer to Vengaboys Fan," *The Times of India*, June 2, 2004 2004, 5.

²⁴⁴ Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals ", 180.

²⁴⁵ Ghanshyam Shah, "Gap between Representatives and Constituents: An Aspect of Tribal Society in Gujarat," *Economic and Political Weekly* 8, no. 31/33 (1973). Lobo, "Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat."

²⁴⁶ Shah, "Unrest among Adivasis and Their Struggles," 99.

of which would have benefited small and marginal farmers at the expense of larger farmers.²⁴⁷ The actions of the Adivasi elite are, I suspect, part of the structure of domination and oppression of which Adivasi are a part. Perry Anderson has observed this same trend amongst blacks and Latinos in the US: “little is granted the mass of the coloured or poor; but much has been gained by those who speak in their name.”²⁴⁸

This elite behaviour differs from that seen in some other communities in Gujarat. In her account of the rise of India’s caste society, Susan Bayly shows how groups such as Gujarat’s *Patidars* and *Kshatriya* used caste associations and marriages to pursue group interests and the upward mobility of their communities.²⁴⁹ In the *Harijan* or untouchable case, Kothari and Maru found that caste corporate mobility movements were often elite led.²⁵⁰ F.G. Bailey explained similar patterns as the result of elites being “unable to throw off kinship links with their fellows,” instead “they formed caste associations with the object of raising their collective status.”²⁵¹ This contrast between these cases, and the Adivasi case could stem from the negative image and lack of appreciation for Adivasi culture in both mainstream Gujarati society and subsequently within the minds of the Adivasi themselves. Indeed, no widespread positive Adivasi identity has emerged and therefore neither has a coherent Adivasi social movement.²⁵² In this context: it is not difficult to see the appeal to these elites of the *Sangh Parivar* ideology which allows

²⁴⁷ Shah “Caste Sentiments, Class Formation and Dominance in Gujarat,” 93 and 109.

²⁴⁸ Perry Anderson, “US Elections: Testing Formula Two,” *New Left Review* 8, no. March-April 2001 (2001): Section V, Para. 3.

²⁴⁹ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, 330-32.

²⁵⁰ Rajni Kothari and Rishikesh Maru, “Federating for Political Interest,” in *Caste in Indian Politics*, ed. Rajni Kothari (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970), 151.

²⁵¹ F. G. Bailey, *Politics and Social Change; Orissa in 1959* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 133.

²⁵² Shah, “Unrest among Adivasis and Their Struggles,” 116.

them to dissociate themselves from their Adivasi past and join in a more positive Hindu identity.

Throughout history the Adivasi have existed to a greater or lesser extent on the margins of Indian society. This marginality, however, as we saw in the previous chapter, has by no means meant isolation: there has long been interaction but the Adivasi have either resisted or been denied assimilation into the Hindu social order. Nonetheless, encounters with the wider society and political economy of the subcontinent have now had far-reaching effects on the Adivasi to the extent that they cannot be studied without being situated within the wider context. As we have seen, while the incorporation of the Adivasi into the wider economy has been rapid and extensive, neither protectionism nor development programmes have resulted in any significant improvement in the majority Adivasi's well being – material or otherwise. Moreover, class mobilization which had the potential of bringing about progress for the Adivasi and other downtrodden communities has failed to counteract the dominance of caste identity in Gujarati politics.

Despite this failure, the nature of development programmes and the commercialization and privatization of Adivasi regions has resulted in the emergence of an Adivasi elite. However, this group of relatively prosperous Adivasi remains on the margins of the wider society and is barred from ascendance into the middle and upper strata of Gujarati society. Contemporary events and the salience of Hindutva ideology can be understood in part as this group's attempt to break free of the constraints imposed by their Adivasi status.

Chapter 5: The Adivasi as the Foot Soldiers of Lord Ram

The argument of this thesis rests on the premise that substantial sections among the Adivasi of Gujarat are, to a greater or lesser extent acting in accordance with the ideology of Hindutva and supporting the BJP. This is not a universally accepted fact: some observers look only at the incidences of violence while ignoring the electoral support that the BJP has garnered. Violence, some would say, requires no further analysis as it can simply be explained away by reference to the Adivasi's "fiery tempers," for many communities have historically been viewed as criminal tribes prone to violence. In another vein, Ganesh Devy and Father Cedric Prakash, for example, see Adivasi actions more as opportunism or a reaction to fear mongering:²⁵³ the Adivasi saw that looting was being permitted, if not encouraged, by the authorities, and some took advantage.²⁵⁴ Devy recounts a variety of terrible rumours which were spread to prompt violent reactions from the Adivasi. The violence on its own then may not be sufficient evidence of Hindutva's success. However, where the Adivasi are participating in these communal atrocities and at the same time voting for the BJP, certainly their actions cannot be misinterpreted.

By providing an account of two examples of Adivasi communal violence, first against Christians in the Dangs and then against Muslims in Panchmahals, we can begin to see the extent of Hindutva's cooption of the Adivasi. The chapter will then go on to explore the electoral element of Adivasi support for Hindutva by tracing the rise of the

²⁵³ Conversation with Father Cedric Prakash and Devy, "Tribal Voice and Violence."

²⁵⁴ K. Balagopal, "Reflections on 'Gujarat Pradesh' of 'Hindu Rashtra'," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 22 (2002): 2118.

BJP in the scheduled Tribe constituencies of Gujarat. The BJP has taken a strategic electoral approach to Adivasi in Gujarat, and as we will see it has used many of the same tactics there that have brought the party success amongst other downtrodden communities, specifically the untouchables and lower castes. In examining these tactics we can begin to see the material element of Adivasi support which will be expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

It is important to note that the details of the 1998/1999 and 2002 violence are highly contested: claims of some Muslim victims I spoke with were at times as outlandish as the BJP's rhetoric.²⁵⁵ While I have reviewed the *Sangh Parivar's* accounts of the violence²⁵⁶ (and in this category I place the Gujarat Government's reports), I rely here exclusively on reports from reputable non governmental organizations including the National Alliance of Women, Communalism Combat, Human Rights Watch, the Concerned Citizen's Tribunal of Citizens for Justice and Peace, the People's Union for Democratic Rights, and the Indian Social Action Forum. As much as possible, I have avoided the use of reports from strictly Muslim or Christian organizations. As Ignatius Dabhi and the People's Union for Democratic Rights point out regarding the Dangs and Panchmahals violence, the local Gujarati daily papers largely touted the government line while the national English language dailies provided more balanced portrayals of the situation.²⁵⁷ Accordingly, in most cases I have drawn from these more reputable papers.

²⁵⁵ In a conversation on November 8, 2005 with a Muslim resident of Tejgadh, he told me about how no Hindus had been harmed when carriage S6 was torched in Godhra in 2002, for it had been filled with bodies from the morgue.

²⁵⁶ For example see Khosla Shyam, K.S. Arya, N.K. Trikha, B.L. Gupta, "True Story of the Dangs: A Field Study," (Delhi: Panchnad Research Institute, 1999).

²⁵⁷ Ignatius Dabhi, *Fire in the Hills* (Media House, 1999), 23. Also Javed Anand and Teesta Setalvad, eds., *Maaro! Kaapo! Baalo!*, 30.

Dangs

Christian missionaries have been active in the Dangs for over a hundred years, but it is only recently that they have been met with violent hostility. This situation reached a violent climax on December 25, 1998 when, despite pleas from the Christian community,²⁵⁸ the District collector granted permission for a rally of the *Hindu Jagran Manch* (HJM) to coincide with the Christmas celebrations.²⁵⁹ As planned by the HJM leaders, on Christmas Eve, truck loads of people from both within and outside the Dangs were brought to the district headquarters of Ahwa. On the morning of December 25th, Hindutva activists began preparing for the rally by decorating the main road with saffron flags and driving through town in jeeps shouting anti-Christian slogans.

Knowing that the Church of North India (CNI) would be on the route of the rally, the Christian community instead held its Christmas service earlier than planned in the mission bungalow some distance from the church. While the service took place without incident, shortly afterwards the HJM rally began. Some of the anti-Christian slogans which were shouted and printed on placards were “*Hindu Jago, Christi Bhago*” (Hindus awake, Christians flee), “*Gali, Gali Me Shor he, Padrisab Chor Hai*” (There’s a public outcry that all Christian priests are thieves), and “*Christi Chor Hai*” (Christians are thieves).²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ On December 12th a delegation from the Dangs went to the Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, to seek protection for the Christians; they also petitioned the District Collector four times to request that he not permit the rally. Kamal Mitra Chenoy, "Violence in Gujarat: Report of the Citizen's Commission on Persecution of Christians in Gujarat an Initiative of the National Alliance of Women," (National Alliance of Women, 1999), 5.

²⁵⁹ The Hindu Jagran Manch is one of many Hindu fundamentalist organizations which fall under the umbrella of the RSS. See Appendix A.

²⁶⁰ Chenoy, "Violence in Gujarat: Report of the Citizen's Commission on Persecution of Christians in Gujarat an Initiative of the National Alliance of Women," 7.

The District Collector, whose job entails maintaining the peace, not only attended the rally but was even garlanded by the organizers. During the rally a group of Christian Adivasi who had gone to the bazaar to shop were pelted with stones. The mob then went on to attack shops owned by Christians and Muslims as well as the Deep Darshan High School, causing extensive damage to the boy's hostel.²⁶¹ At around 5:00 PM the rally moved on to the CNI church. Members of the congregation gathered there to protect it and violence broke out. Of course both sides deny having instigated the violence, but it is worth noting that the Christians were apparently highly outnumbered, at only a few hundred compared to a mob of approximately 1500. The police broke up the violence with lathis (a stick or cane used by police) and teargas but the Christian community alleges that many of their congregation sustained injuries. In addition to the HJM rally, there were a number of other alleged attacks on Christians and their places of worship throughout the District.²⁶²

The Christmas day violence was only the start of a long period of insecurity for Dangi Christians. On December 26th, churches in Behdun and Karadiamba were severely damaged and a large mob attempted to burn down the church at Waki. The following day places of worship were damaged in Barda, Raochand, Sepuamba, Shivbara,

²⁶¹ Interestingly, the Christian-managed school was started in 1975 at the request of the then collector and district *panchayat* president. In 1998/1999 only 100 out of 840 students, and 7 out of 24 staff members were Christians. The school is widely regarded as the best in the district. The Report of the Citizen's Commission on Persecution of Christians in Gujarat (Ibid., 9.) provides a comparison of district average verses Deep Darshan SSC (standardized test) results:

	996	997	8	199
Deep Darshan School score	4.87%	2.37%	%	78.4
District-wide average score	9.5%	8.84%	4%	19.1

²⁶² Ibid., 11.

Pipaldagad, Gougan and Karenjpada, all villages in the Dangs. Sporadic attacks on individuals, their property, churches and prayer halls carried on well into January. The visit of BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee on January 10th did not put an end to the violence. On the contrary, as he came not to urge peace or to console the victims but rather to proclaim the need for a debate on conversions, he tacitly condoned the violence.

It is widely accepted that government officials were, at the very least, complicit in the violence. The BJP Chief Minister Kushubhai Patel's response only further aggravated the situation; rather than denounce the violence he attributed it to the aggressive proselytizing of the Christian missionaries. He also sought to downplay the extent of the violence and accused the Christians, other political parties, and the English language media for exaggerating the severity of events.

The events described above are not as shocking or violent as the atrocities committed against Muslims in Gujarat. And anti-Christian violence has been much more brutal in other parts of the country.²⁶³ Nonetheless, the Dangs case is a telling example of Hindutva's expansion. The population of the Dangs is overwhelmingly Adivasi (93.8 percent), and there has been relatively little Hindu influence compared to the other Adivasi districts. Moreover, in the Dangs case, the Adivasi are attacking their fellow Adivasi. That Hindutva can make inroads in the secluded Adivasi district of the Dangs is a frightening development.

2002 Post-Godhra Violence

On February 27, 2002, in the town of Godhra, Gujarat, a train stopped in the Muslim Signal Falia area where it was attacked by an allegedly Muslim mob. Within

²⁶³ In 1999, for example, Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons aged 7 and 9 were burnt alive by Hindu activists in Orissa.

twenty minutes, carriage S6, which was carrying *Kar Sevaks* (Hindu activists) was set on fire and another, carriage S5, was damaged. Fifty-eight people died including twenty-six women and twelve children.²⁶⁴ The *Kar Sevaks*, of which there were approximately 1200 aboard the train, were returning from Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, where they had been supporting the *Ram Janmabhoomi* movement. *Ram Janmabhoomi* refers to the alleged birthplace of *Ram*, and Hindutva forces believe that in the sixteenth century a temple to *Ram* was demolished and replaced with the *Babri Masjid*, a mosque that stood until 1992 when it was demolished by Hindutva activists. Following the destruction, thousands of people died in communal violence across India. The *Kar Sevaks* aboard the train in Godhra were part of a movement fighting to construct a Hindu Temple to *Ram Lala* (infant *Ram*) on the contested site.

There are reports that the *Kar Sevaks* provoked the attack by abusing Muslim passengers on the train. I have chosen not to recount these allegations because not only are they not verified by reliable reports, but also because regardless of the conduct of the *Kar Sevaks*, there is no justification for the horrible attacks.²⁶⁵ If the similar allegations of skirmishes at stops all along the train's journey are true, however, the question arises of why authorities did nothing to prevent the escalation of the violence. Indeed, although the train had stopped less than a kilometer from the station and railway police armed with rifles arrived within minutes, there are accusations that they did not adequately attempt to disperse the mob.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ "Genocide Gujarat," 9.

²⁶⁵ For more on these accusations of *Kar Sevak* provocation see *Ibid.*: 10, 12, 13.

²⁶⁶ "Genocide Gujarat," 10.

Despite the lack of evidence of premeditation, BJP politicians were quick to label the attack a terrorist incident. Chief Minister Narendra Modi described it as a “pre-planned, violent act of terrorism,” and Home Minister Advani attributed the attack to the ISI (the Pakistani Intelligence Service). Minister of State for Home, Gordhan Zadaphia, a senior VHP activist also blamed Pakistan and threatened retribution, saying “We will teach a lesson to those who have done this. No one will be spared and we will make sure that the forces behind this act will never dare repeat it.”²⁶⁷

Some of the media added fuel to the fire by taking this same view: the victims of the Godhra attack were depicted as innocent Hindu devotees of Lord Ram killed in an “inhuman, unprovoked and premeditated assault.”²⁶⁸ While more reputable English-language national dailies were to a certain extent guilty of this, again it was the Gujarati language press that produced the most hateful journalism. The *Sandesh* for example published baseless incensing pieces such as a report that Muslims had abducted two Hindu women from the train and then proceeded to gang rape them, cut off their breasts, and kill them.²⁶⁹ These stories were reminiscent of the coverage of the Dangs violence and represent the tendency of the Gujarati press to contribute to communal tensions rather than working against them. As Justice K Jayachandra Reddy, Chairman of the Press Council noted on April 3, 2002:

a large number of news channels in the country and, in particular a large section of the print and electronic media in Gujarat has, instead of alleviating communal unrest, played an ignoble role in inciting communal

²⁶⁷ SP Shukla Kamal Mitra Chenoy, KS Subramanian, Achin Vanaik, "Gujarat Carnage 2002: A Report to the Nation," (An independent Fact Finding Mission, 2002), 7.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁶⁹ “From among those abducted from Sabarmati Express two dead bodies of Hindu girls found near Kalol in mutilated state” *Sandesh*, March 1, 2002, 16. As translated in *Ibid.*, 24.

passions leading to large scale rioting, arson, and pillage in the state concerned.²⁷⁰

It was not only through their comments that politicians and government officials contributed to the carnage that followed the Godhra incident but through their political decisions as well. The bodies of the Godhra victims were moved almost immediately to Ahmedabad (a city historically prone to communal outbursts) for post mortems. The bodies were then paraded publicly – the arrival time was even broadcast on the radio to ensure a large turnout. The VHP announced a *bandh*²⁷¹ for the following day in protest over the tragedy, and, despite a Supreme Court decision banning *bandhs*, the governing BJP party gave its support. There could have been no doubt that a post-Godhra *bandh* would lead to violence, but rather than forcing the VHP to withdraw, or deploying forces sufficient to suppress it, Narendra Modi condoned it and set the stage for the carnage that followed. On February 27th the political leadership of Gujarat had ordered senior officers to do nothing “which would hurt Hindu sentiments.”²⁷² Predictably, forces did virtually nothing to prevent or stop the violence; there are many reports of the police even taking part in it.

As could have been predicted, horrific violence broke out almost immediately, and over the next several months official figures of the dead rose to roughly 950. Unofficial figures stand at over 2000. The unspeakable acts of horror that were perpetrated against Muslims during that period have been covered in numerous reports, and it is not necessary here to provide a thorough account except in regards to Adivasi

²⁷⁰ As quoted in *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁷¹ A *bandh* is a protest in the form of a general strike, typically lasting one day, in which shops are closed, and cities generally come to a standstill.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

participation. Nonetheless, for those unfamiliar with the events of 2002, several examples of typical atrocities should shed light on the extent of the massacre – by many accounts, the worst that India has seen since partition.

Reports indicate that there were several patterns to the violence inflicted on victims: gang raping, dismembering, and burning alive. Often the victims suffered through all three of these atrocities and even young children were not spared. Tanika Sarkar describes the brutality which Muslim women in particular suffered:

A majority of rape victims were burnt alive... Some were beaten up with rods and pipes for almost an hour. Before or after the killing, their vaginas would be sliced or would have iron rods pushed inside. Kausar Bano, a young girl from Jaroda Patiya, was several months pregnant. Several eyewitnesses testified that she was raped, tortured, her womb was slit open with a sword to disgorge the fetus which was then hacked to pieces and roasted alive with the mother.²⁷³

This targeting of women was a defining feature of the post-Godhra violence. The Citizen's Initiative-sponsored report by a women's panel, "The Survivors Speak," recounts many similar horrific acts. Raka Roy, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, in an editorial in *The Hindu* argues that this targeting of women begins with the caste system's requirement that women's sexuality be controlled. The woman's body thus belongs not to herself but to her community and as such, an attack on her body and sexuality constitutes an attack on that community as a whole.²⁷⁴

As police protection was often not made available to the Muslims, and as they had nowhere to run, they were often forced to barricade or hide whole villages in homes. In some cases this resulted in whole communities being wiped out. The Peoples' Union for

²⁷³ Tanika Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 28 (2002): 2875.

²⁷⁴ Raka Roy, "Where the Women Bore the Brunt," *The Hindu*, May 11, 2002.

Democratic Rights describes one such incident in Delol Taluka, Kalol where, on March 1st, a large mob moved through the village shouting “Today is Bharat Bandh – drive the Muslims out, hack them, kill them.” Fifty to sixty Muslims who had taken shelter with some Hindus were chased into the fields by the mob (made up of people the Muslims knew from their village), and many were killed. In the same community a group of eleven hid with a Hindu family, and when found they ran and hid under a tree. That night a mob of 500 to 700 people arrived and assured them they were safe and asked them to leave. When they did, the mob hacked and burned ten people. A thirteen year-old girl, Yasmeen, was gang-raped before she was killed. Two boys aged ten and twelve whose father had been killed were forced to go around the pyre shouting “*Jai Shree Ram*” before being thrown in themselves.²⁷⁵

In other cases, such as in Pandarwada, Panchmahals, Hindus offered to hide Muslims in buildings or fields only to later betray them, in one case burning down the house they had hidden in. Family members were often brutally killed in front of each other. In Pandarwada, a woman found her three year-old son sitting next to her beheaded husband, and in Eral a woman watched a mob rape her daughter and then cut off her breasts before killing her. In Randhikpar a five-month pregnant woman was gang-raped by three men from her village, and her three-year-old daughter was killed in front of her.²⁷⁶

The incidents outlined above were not necessarily perpetrated by Adivasi, but the Adivasi were nonetheless active participants in the violence. As noted in Chapter Two, some analysts and observers have downplayed the role of the Adivasi in the violence.

²⁷⁵ Javed Anand and Teesta Setalvad, eds., *Maaro! Kaapo! Baalo!*, 11.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

For example Lancy Lobo writes that in Adivasi areas “rioting limited itself to arson and loot and not so much rapes, murders, or burning people alive as in other parts of Gujarat.”²⁷⁷ In a conversation with me, Father Cedric Prakash of Prashant, said that the Adivasi mostly looted for subsistence items such as sacks of sugar.²⁷⁸ However, K Balagopal and many NGO reports argue that though the Adivasi may not have led the violence, but they participated alongside non-Adivasi throughout Gujarat.²⁷⁹ Balagopal notes that the sympathetic depictions outlined above may have been based on early reports of the violence in ChottaUdaipur, Vadodara – where neither Adivasis nor Hindus raped and murdered. As the Adivasi and non-Adivasi tended to travel and participate in the same mobs, it is impossible and not particularly necessary to determine who committed which acts.²⁸⁰

The following three accounts are examples of Adivasi participation in the violence perpetrated against the minority Muslims. Each are taken from the reports of reputable NGOs and are typical of the atrocities which took place throughout the Eastern Adivasi region of Gujarat:

Fatehpura, Dahod

Adivasi were part of the mobs in Fatehpura, Dahod district, which committed some of the most gory mass raping of the post-Godhra violence.²⁸¹ The violence was described by two activists from Bombay:

²⁷⁷ Lobo, "Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat," 4846.

²⁷⁸ Conversation with Father Cedric Prakash, December, 2005.

²⁷⁹ Balagopal, "Reflections on 'Gujarat Pradesh' of 'Hindu Rashtra'," 2117.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

The 100 people in one of the houses hid there from 9 am to about 3:30 pm. The house was set on fire and the people could manage to escape only after they broke open the roof and escaped from the roofs of the neighbouring houses. As the women came out, many of them were stripped and harassed. One woman was definitely raped and perhaps some more were also raped but people do not want to be identified. The people came out from here and managed to reach the police station where they all finally took refuge on the evening of the 2nd.

The people of around 15 households in another part of Fatehpura took refuge in one concrete house. They were attacked by the crowd at about twelve noon. They were surrounded from all sides and then the crowds entered the house. They first snatched at all the money and the jewelry and then took all the young women and children out. All this while they kept on verbally and physically assaulting the women and saying “give us all your young women and girls. We will take them.”

There were about 30 women and ten children and many men as well. They all kept on pleading that please take away our money, jewellery and house, but leave the women alone. The women were dragged out of the house. These were women from other houses around who had come and taken refuge in this house.

The women were pulled out. Their clothes stripped. The children snatched from their hands and thrown away in which some of them also got injured. Then in front of their house and in full view of the others in the area also, these women were sexually assaulted by the mob. The three men who came out to protest and intervene were killed. Of these the older man was burnt alive and the others (the Jeths Yusuf Bhai and Ahmad Bhai) were stabbed to death. The other men were also warned from intervening and hit. This went on till six in the evening.²⁸²

Panvad and Kawant, Vadodara

A panel for the People’s Union for Civil Liberties described the violence in Panvad and Kawant where there are reports that Hindus offered to pay Adivasi to burn Muslim properties: “A mob consisting of around 4000 Adivasis had come. Initially they pelted stones but later on they started shooting with arrows that burnt because they had ends soaked in kerosene and cloth”²⁸³.

²⁸² As described by members of the Forum Against Oppression of Women and Awaaz-e-Niswan, Bombay in "Genocide in Rural Gujarat: The Experience of Dahod District," (Bombay: Forum Against Oppression of Women and Aawaaz-E-Niswaan, 2002), 27.

²⁸³ "Women's Perspectives," (Vadodara: People's Union for Civil Liberties and Vadodara Shanti Abhiyaan, 2002).

Sanjeli, Dahod

On March 1st, as a result of VHP mobilization and a skirmish between Adivasi youth and some Muslims, a mob of 2500 to 3000 including many Adivasi burnt 100 to 150 Muslim properties, the minority community fled to their mosque. The following day a peace committee meeting was held but had little effect, as soon after a mob of anywhere from 8000 to 15000 once again attacked the Muslim community, this time with bows and arrows, catapults, and guns. After several days of looting and destruction, police forces finally arrived and attempted to evacuate the Muslims to Dahod. Despite the police convoy's attempts to avoid the many roadblocks set up to stop evacuation, at least six small children and one middle-aged woman were stoned to death when the tempos (vans or buses) carrying them were attacked. The People's Union for Democratic Rights describes the fate of one of the tempos:

One Tempo (709) containing some 80-100 people had a puncture a kilometre out of Sanjeli, caused by the large nails on the roads, and then another puncture 8 km away near village Rainiya. At Rainiya, they were attacked by a Tata Sumo containing 9 men equipped with swords, stones and iron pipes. Four people who had got down, all Bohras were killed and burnt. Two women – Zainab ben Burhanbhai Mulla Meetha, and Fatima Murtaza Gadbadawala – were also raped before being killed. The killers included leaders of the VHP and Bajrang Dal and were identified by some six people hiding in the bushes, who managed to get away and walked to Sukhsar police station. A seventy year old man and his 65 year old wife were chased and killed with stones at Rainiya.²⁸⁴

While it may be true that the Adivasi did not lead the violence against the Muslim minority in the post-Godhra riots and in many cases were encouraged or even bribed into participating, this does not change the fact that they were involved in a very serious way. Any attempt to downplay their role or present them as passive participants is misleading

²⁸⁴ Javed Anand and Teesta Setalvad, eds., *Maaro! Kaapo! Baalo!*, 16.

and once again strips the Adivasi of their agency and responsibility and distorts our understanding of the rise of Hindutva. Myriad reports make it very clear that to a greater or lesser extent the Adivasi did take part in horrible acts for which there is no excuse or justification. This participation represents one element of Hindutva's success and we can now move on to examine how the Adivasi have been increasingly calling on BJP politicians to represent them in the *Vidhan Sabha* and the *Lok Sabha*.

The BJP's Electoral Success

Following Gujarati elections, the media often notes the BJP's gains in Adivasi regions, and in a state with one of the highest Adivasi populations in India this can play a decisive role in elections. Nonetheless, these gains have not yet been tracked and analyzed comprehensively. In Appendices B and C, I have traced the BJP's success amongst the Adivasi by compiling the election results for the Scheduled Tribe reserved constituencies. These are constituencies which are required to elect a Member of Parliament from a scheduled tribe in order to ensure representation in the *Lok Sabha* (seats are also reserved for the scheduled castes). These seats are allocated based on the proportion of the state's population that is classified as scheduled tribe. So, for example as 14.8 percent of Gujarat's population is "Tribal," approximately 14.8 percent of seats are reserved. The distribution of the seats is determined by the delimitation committee which ranks the constituencies from highest Tribal population to lowest and then goes down the list reserving seats until the correct proportion of seats is reserved. In Gujarat, there are four seats for Adivasi in the *Lok Sabha* (Indian General Assembly) elections and twenty-six seats in the *Vidhan Sabha* (State Assembly). Unfortunately, these constituencies do not coincide with districts and therefore it is not possible to determine

the proportion of the population that is Adivasi. However, it is worth noting that the Adivasi population of Gujarat is highly concentrated on the eastern border of the state and in this region Adivasi make up a very high proportion of district populations. For example, in the Dangs, 93.8 percent of the population is Adivasi; in Dohad, 72.3 percent; and in Panchmahal, 27.5 percent.²⁸⁵ Figures 2 and 3 show the location of Scheduled Tribe Reserve Constituencies in Gujarat.

Scheduled Tribe Reserved Constituencies in Gujarat (2002 Vidhan Sabha Elections)

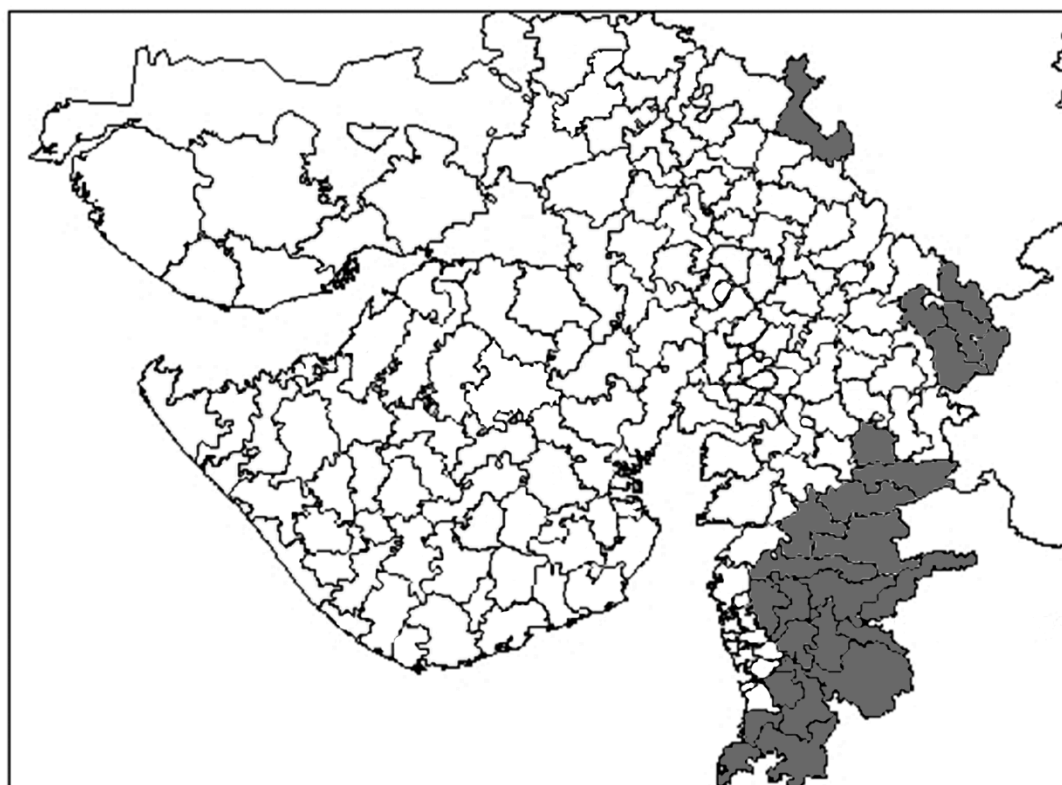


Figure 2: Vidhan Sabha Scheduled Tribe Reserved Constituencies (in grey)

²⁸⁵ Source: Census of India, *Census of India 2001 Gujarat: Area Profile of State and District* (New Delhi: Data Dissemination Wing, Office of the Registrar General: 2001).

Scheduled Tribe Reserved Constituencies in Gujarat (2004 Lok Sabha Elections)

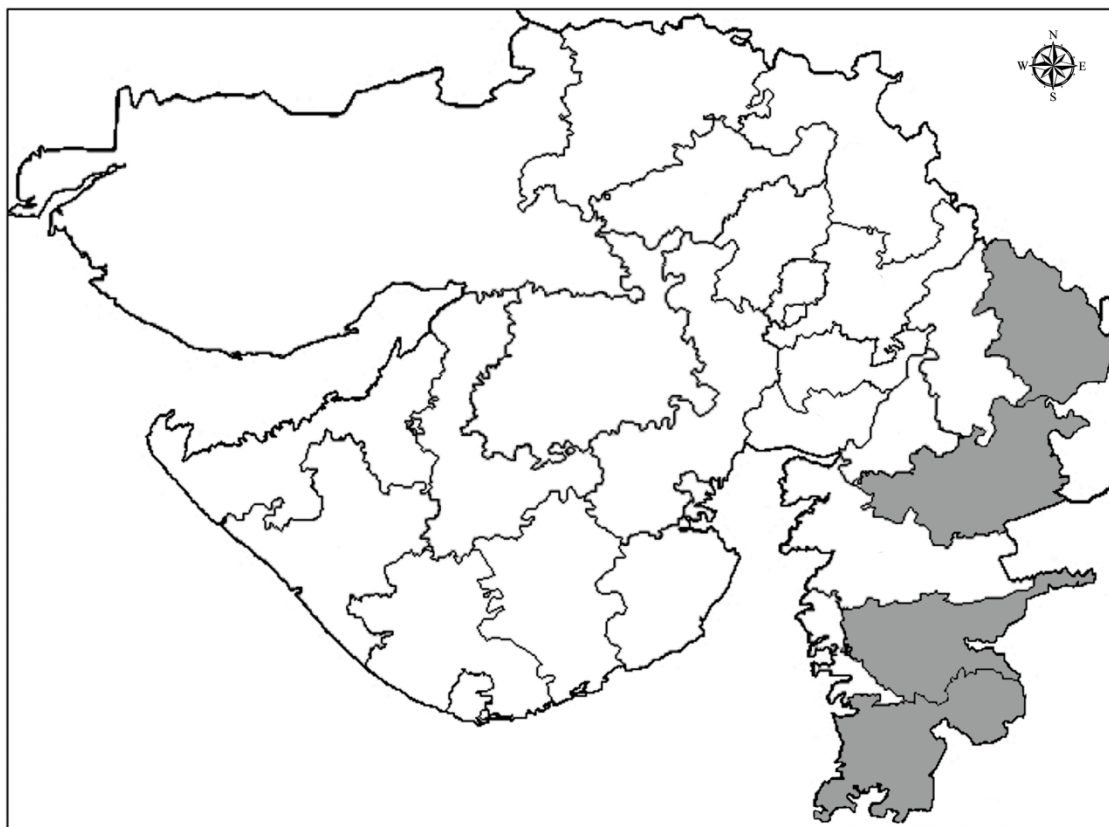


Figure 3: Lok Sabha Scheduled Tribe Reserved Constituencies (in grey)

As non-Adivasi including Muslims and Hindus also live and vote within these constituencies, we cannot know the percentage of Adivasi that voted for the BJP, but rather only what percentage of all voters in each constituency voted BJP. Despite this limitation, as these constituencies are generally predominantly Adivasi these data are still useful indicators. While some writers, notably P.M. Patel have drawn from Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) pre-and post-election surveys to measure Adivasi support for the BJP, such data are not available for all elections and have their

own limitations.²⁸⁶ Nonetheless, where available, the CSDS survey results corroborate my findings that Adivasi support for the BJP has increased over the last 15 years.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have limited my examination of election results from 1980 to 2009, 1980 being the year the BJP was founded. Prior to the BJP, the Hindu right was represented in Gujarat by *Bharatiya Jan Sangh* (BJS). As the BJS was never successful in Adivasi Gujarat, 1980 is a useful starting point. In fact, prior to the arrival of the BJP, the Tribal Belt was a Congress Party stronghold which had never been significantly penetrated by any other party. It was not until the 1990 State Assembly elections that the BJP emerged as the first threat to Congress dominance. The chart below shows the percentage of the vote received by the BJP in each election since 1980 in the reserved Scheduled Tribe constituencies, as well as in all Gujarat constituencies. The comparison shows that while support for the BJP in the scheduled tribe constituencies is somewhat lower than the state average, overall it has increased dramatically in the last twenty years, particularly in the 1990s.

²⁸⁶ While in India I was in contact with CSDS in order to procure the Adivasi data sets but as Adivasi voting was not a focus of the surveys the Adivasi sample was too small to be statistically useful. Dr. PM Patel, whose assistance was invaluable during my stay in Vadodara works closely with the CSDS and presumably limited himself to elections in which the sample size was large enough. Where appropriate, I have incorporated this data.

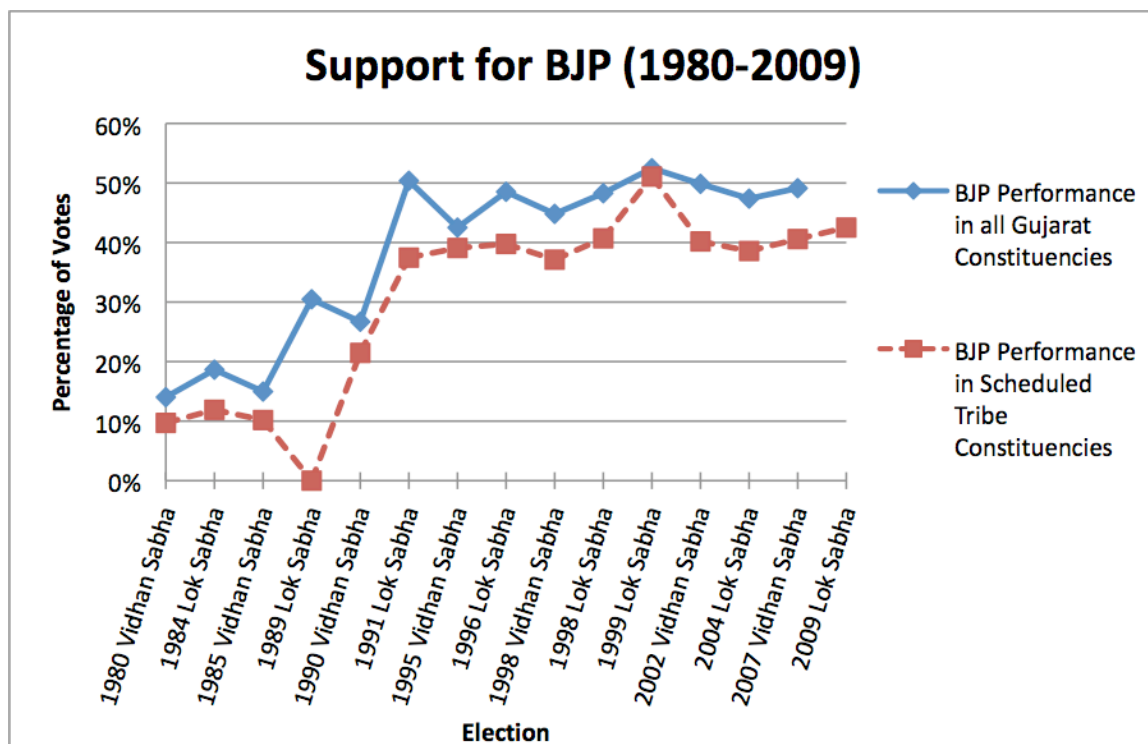


Figure 4: BJP Percentage of Votes (1980-2009)

The BJP first contested elections in Gujarat's Adivasi constituencies in 1980. While it contested 19 of the 24 State Assembly constituencies reserved for Tribals (Scheduled Tribe or ST constituencies/seats), it was only elected in Chikhli and received just 9.7 percent of the popular vote in the ST constituencies.²⁸⁷ By 1990, the BJP had become a serious contender receiving 21.46 percent of the vote and winning six ST seats in the state assembly. The following year in the 1991 *Lok Sabha* (national) elections the BJP nearly doubled its vote share with 37.46 percent of the vote but still failed to win any of the four ST reserved seats in Gujarat. In all subsequent elections, the BJP maintained a vote share of around 40 percent (between 37.12 and 42.73 percent) with the exception

²⁸⁷ Given India's use of the first-past-the-post electoral system, percentage of total votes is a much more useful indicator of support than number of seats won. In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections the BJP did not contest and S.T. seats so received 0% of the vote.

of the 1999 *Lok Sabha* elections in which it received 51.08 percent of the vote and won all four ST seats. Priyavadan Patel draws from the National Elections Study-2004 to report that in the 2004 *Lok Sabha* elections, 48 percent of Adivasi supported the BJP.²⁸⁸ It is worth noting that this is actually higher (by almost ten percent) than the percentage of the entire vote that the BJP received in the reserved Scheduled Tribe constituencies. In the most recent elections to the State Assembly (December 2007), 40.58 percent of votes in ST constituencies were cast for the BJP and nine seats were won. When this is compared to the CSDS pre-election survey results, as provided by Jaffrelot, we see that the estimate based on election results by ST constituency is again slightly lower than the 45% of Adivasi that the survey finds support the BJP.²⁸⁹ In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections the BJP's share of the vote increased to 42.51% although only one of the four ST seats was won.

These are not all overwhelming victories and approximately as many voters in these ridings are choosing the Congress as they are the BJP, perhaps slightly more. It is the nature of India's first-past-the-post electoral system that such a minority of the vote can win many seats and even overwhelming majorities in parliaments. We also know that some voters in these ST constituencies are not Adivasi. Nonetheless, these results represent a sea change for a region of India that until 1990 had been voting Congress since Independence.

The BJP's electoral success has been distributed quite evenly across the Tribal Belt. The only constituencies in which the party has had relatively little success and has

²⁸⁸ Priyavadan Patel, "Anti-Incumbency Begins" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 51 (2004): 5474.

²⁸⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, "Gujarat: The Meaning of Modi's Victory" *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 15 (2008): 15.

never been elected to office are Songadh and Vyara in Southern Gujarat. Until the most recent elections the neighbouring Dangs constituency could be included in this category as well. As in the Dangs, Christians have been particularly active in Songadh and Vyara which could explain the BJP's difficulty in the region. However, should the BJP make a concerted effort here, as it has in the Dangs, these Congress strongholds too could conceivably be broken.

Electioneering in the Tribal Belt: the Strategies of the BJP

The arguments above are not meant to suggest that the BJP has not had to work to earn Adivasi votes; on the contrary, the RSS machine has spent years making inroads into rural Adivasi Gujarat. There are reports that every Adivasi village has at least one VHP activist. This section will provide an account of the strategies used by the RSS to make inroads in the Adivasi areas of Gujarat.

Chapter Two briefly described Kama Kellie Maclean's "Embracing the Untouchables: The BJP and Scheduled Caste Votes," in which she examines a very similar phenomenon, namely the BJP's success amongst the untouchables. She tries to explain how the BJP has managed to include the untouchables in a wider Hindu identity and thus capture this vital portion of the electorate by using violent, religious, and symbolic strategies. In attempting to incorporate the Adivasi into its vote bank, the BJP has faced slightly different challenges. As we have already established, the relationship between the Adivasi and Hinduism is complex and constantly in flux. Unlike the untouchables who have a set place in the Hindu social system (the bottom) the Adivasi remain somewhat outside it and therefore in some circumstances can hope to be included on better terms. The Adivasi do not face the same barriers to inclusion as the

untouchables as they are not typically stigmatized with unclean status. Regardless though, both communities are situated at the bottom of all conventional social indicators, are somewhat excluded by Hindu society, and constitute an essential block of the Gujarat electorate. It is reasonable then to expect that the BJP might use similar tactics to win the Adivasi votes, and thus, an analysis of Maclean's findings is useful. My research suggests that in the Adivasi case, the BJP relies heavily on the violent and religious strategies identified by Maclean, but not on the symbolic. I also observe a fourth, material strategy, which Maclean does not include in her analysis.²⁹⁰

Violent Strategies

In the accounts of the violence in the Dangs and the post-Godhra violence we have already seen hideous examples reminiscent of the violent strategies of which Maclean writes. As in the case of the untouchables, to a certain extent, fighting a villainized "other" alongside the caste Hindus could lead some Adivasi to feel more a part of the Hindu community. The collective violence creates a common interest between the Adivasi and the Hindus – at the very least one of personal security from the Muslims – an interest which the BJP can serve in the form of protection. In riots such as those following the Godhra incident, the imagined Muslim enemy is transformed into a very real enemy. Maclean quotes psychologist Sudhir Kakar's analysis of communal riots:

Distances and differences – of class, status, age, caste hierarchy – disappear in an exhilarating feeling that individual boundaries can indeed be transcended or were perhaps illusory in the first place.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ While Maclean does not include a material strategy in her analysis, it would be premature to see this as a difference between the two cases. While the untouchables are not the subject of this thesis, my research would suggest that to some extent the BJP uses this approach with the untouchables as well. It is curious that Maclean does not mention it in her paper. Maclean, "Embracing the Untouchables: The BJP and Scheduled Caste Votes."

²⁹¹ Sudhir Kakar, "Some Unconscious Elements of Ethnic Violence in India," in *Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, ed. Veena Das (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 142-43.

It is well documented that the BJP and VHP activists encouraged the Adivasi to join them in their attacks on Muslims. These *Hindutvawadis*, we have seen, spread rumours such as one that Muslims had kidnapped and raped Adivasi women, and also offered alcohol or even money as incentives to fight.²⁹² This strategy of eliciting support from the Adivasi can be seen as serving three purposes: first, the immediate advantage of more manpower for Hindutva's attack forces; second, fostering divisions that would further break any possible Muslim-Adivasi-Untouchable voting bloc that could threaten the BJP; and finally, the more long-term effect of incorporating the Adivasi into the broad Hindu fold thus garnering further votes for the BJP without any change in the material status quo or threat to Hindu sensibilities and customs. It is not surprising then that Narendra Modi sought to hold elections almost immediately after the post-Godhra violence.²⁹³ On July 7, 2002, Modi dissolved the *Vidhan Sabha* (state assembly) to prompt an election but the electoral commission of India refused given the charged situation in Gujarat, and the matter was referred to the Supreme Court. The elections were finally held on December 12, 2002 when Modi and his BJP were reelected. In this election the BJP gained five additional ST seats including three ridings that it had never before won. However, the BJP's total share of the ST constituency vote only increased by a modest three percent, and therefore the efficacy of this "violence" tactic may be viewed with some skepticism. It is just as likely that the arrival of such communal violence in Adivasi villages – often initiated by outside BJP forces – could have further divided the Adivasi community and even alienated some Adivasi from the party.

²⁹²On the rumours see Devy, "Tribal Voice and Violence," 3. On alcohol see Lobo, "Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat." On paying them to burn houses see "Women's Perspectives," 16.

²⁹³ "Post-Riots, Polls Were Always on Modi's Agenda," *Times of India*, April 14, 2002, 3.

Religious Strategies

The second type of strategy that Maclean examines is the religious. In this sphere, the Adivasi case again differs from the untouchable one. For the untouchables are more likely to be considered Hindu but are nonetheless excluded from many Hindu customs due to their unclean status, whereas the Adivasi are not always considered Hindu but do not carry the stigma of being unclean. Thus in the Adivasi case the RSS does not, to the same extent, run into the internal roadblock of its own supporters objecting to Adivasi inclusion. Maclean describes the *Sangh's* attempt at making the untouchables feel a part of the wider Hindu community by involving them in new kinds of religious practices. We have already seen that Hindutva ideology insists the Adivasi are Hindu: they too are encouraged to engage in religious activities such as temple-building in Adivasi villages, *yatras*, religious gathering and (re)conversion ceremonies to tie the Adivasi to Hinduism and the *Sangh Parivar*.

Yatras

The Sangh began to work along such religious lines with the Adivasi in the late 1980s and 1990s. At this time, Adivasi in Gujarat were incorporated into the *Ram Janmabhoomi* movement by *Rath Yatras* and *Ram Mandir Yatras* of a senior VHP and BJP leader, L.K. Advani.²⁹⁴ One and a quarter rupees was collected from Adivasi households to buy bricks for the *Ram Mandir* (Ram temple) that the VHP planned to construct on the site of the *Babri Masjid* (at this time the ancient mosque had not yet been destroyed): “Are you Hindus?” the *Hindutvawadis* shouted, “If you are, then prove it by contributing Rs 1.25 for Ramshilapujan [consecrated bricks for the construction of temple

²⁹⁴ Priyavadan Patel, "Gujarat: Hindutva Mobilization and Electoral Dominance of the Bjp," *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy* XV, no. 1-2 (2003): 128.

at Ayodhya]. If you do not contribute then you prove that you are from a Muslim womb.”²⁹⁵ Thus the Adivasi were being invited to contribute to the glory of Hinduism alongside upper-caste leaders such as Advani. This “campaigning” as it were, proved highly successful and won the BJP many supporters in Adivasi Gujarat.²⁹⁶

Prostelyzation

In Adivasi Gujarat, the *Sangh Parivar* sees Christian missionaries as its direct competition, and in many cases it has emulated the behaviour of the Christian churches. For example, in the Dangs, the *Sangh* widely distributes idols and calendars of the Hindu monkey-god *Hanuman*. In that same tiny district, between 1999 and 2002, Lancy Lobo writes, 41 new Hindu shrines were constructed – most to *Hanuman*. The symbolism of using *Hanuman* as the Adivasi god is interesting; *Hanuman* features prominently in the Hindu epic the *Ramayana* where he is presented as a subservient devotee of *Ram* to whom he and his army of monkeys provide martial services. The incorporation of Adivasi into the militia of Hindutva then is reminiscent of the service of *Hanuman*’s army. Hemant Babu explores this connection:

The adoption of Hindu symbols and rituals by the tribals of Gujarat suggests their subordinated absorption, as a regiment of foot-soldiers detailed by the Hinduized polity to kill on command its ‘enemy’ of the moment. And as in the mythology, all they get in real terms is an honourable mention for services rendered. In both the myth and the current reality (a distinction that often has no meaning in the recent politics of India), the labourers of the aboriginal under-class are directed towards the almost exclusive benefit of the caste-Hindu leadership that commandeers it.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Stany Pinto, "Communalisation of Tribals in South Gujarat," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 39 (1995): 2417.

²⁹⁶ Patel, "Gujarat: Hindutva Mobilization and Electoral Dominance of the BJP," 128.

²⁹⁷ Hemant Basu, "The Social Engineering of Gujarat," *Himal South Asian*, July 6, 2003.

Who have been the missionaries of Hindutva? In the case of the Dangs, senior VHP functionary and Bengali monk Aseemanand was brought in, and his ashram has become the centre of the VHP's activities in the district. He would seem to have been very successful at spreading the message of hate. This has not been the work of just one man of course; visits were made to all villages to recruit *Bajrang Dal* and VHP members – saffron headbands and *trishuls* (tridents) were also distributed widely.²⁹⁸ Activists also hold rituals such as *deeksha* (religious initiation) where Adivasi are blessed and anointed.²⁹⁹

Shabari Kumbh Mela

Another example of an application of the religious strategy is the *Shabari Kumbh Mela* held by various Sangh organizations in the Dangs district February 11-13, 2006. *Kumbh Melas* are massive Hindu gatherings that traditionally take place four times every twelve years rotating between four locations: Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. The *Shabari Kumbh Mela* is not part of this cycle and has no scriptural basis, and there have been accusations from Christians and anti-communal NGOs that the event is more politically than spiritually motivated.

The official website for this *Kumbh* describes it as “the culmination of sustained efforts towards awakening the Hindus in general and the *Vanvasi* Hindus in the Dang regions of Gujarat in particular.”³⁰⁰ The anti-Christian nature of the *Kumbh* is clear from its website as well:

²⁹⁸ Lobo, "Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat," 4846.

²⁹⁹ Amita Baviskar, "Adivasi Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in MP," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 26, 2005: 5108.

³⁰⁰ "Shabari Kumbh Website: Towards a Massive Hindu Awakening," <http://www.shabarikumbh.org>.

On 11, 12 and 13 February 2006, an estimated six-seven lakh Hindus will gather at a remote area in Subir, Dang district, Gujarat and resolve to work for the defense of Hindu society in general and the vanavasi/tribal Hindus in particular. It was at this very spot that Shabari Mata met Sri Rama and Sri Lakshman when they were in exile. The sustained conversion activities carried out by Christian missionaries with the help of their foreign masters has altered the religious demography of large parts of our country. The tribal areas of our country are a special target of this missionary offensive. This has caused self-alienation among the tribals and fanned separatist and terrorist activities. The Shabarikumbh has been organized to deal a death blow to such anti-dharmic and anti-national activities.³⁰¹

Reportedly 800,000 people descended upon the Dangs district which has a population of only about 186,729 people (93.8 percent Adivasi). A site of 250 hectares was required for the event, roads were built and electricity was extended into the area for the first time. Moreover, 22 check dams were built along the river to create the *pampa sarovar* where the holy bath took place.³⁰² To make way for all of the visitors and the tent-cities, land was commandeered from Adivasi, and protected forests were illegally cleared. While the event was not formally hosted by the government, the state played a large role in the preparations. All of the aforementioned development and infrastructure was paid for by the state out of money designated for Adivasi development.³⁰³ Moreover, the state government provided transport, medicine and security for the event. The MLA for the district Madubhai Bhoje (of the opposition Congress party) lamented the fact that this money was being spent on the *Kumbh* rather than on the education and healthcare so greatly needed by local Adivasi.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid. This is the recreation of a holy lake at which Rama met Shabari in the Hindu epic the Ramayana.

³⁰³ Dionne Bunsha, "Festival of Fear," *Frontline*, February 25 - March 1, 2006.

³⁰⁴ Citizen's Inquiry Committee, "India - Gujarat: Untold Story of Hindukaran of Adivasis in Dangs," (New Delhi 2006), 16.

Not surprisingly, Chief Minister Narendra Modi was in attendance spreading his politics of hatred: “Mahatma Gandhi fought conversions. Our constitution disapproves of them, and yet some people turn a blind eye. Let me warn everyone. It is my constitutional duty to prevent conversions.”³⁰⁵ The Christian community was of course quite nervous about the event and some even fled the area. One Christian told Frontline magazine that *Sangh* activists had come to their homes to tell them they would “be made to bathe in order to purify [them] and make [them] Hindu.”³⁰⁶

One of the stated aims of the *Shabari Kumbh Mela* was to bring the “*Vanvasi*” back into the Hindu fold through “reconversion” ceremonies in a *Sangh* campaign called *gharvaapasi* (returning home). It is interesting to note the use of the term “reconversion” here as opposed to Christian “conversion” which the *Sangh* wants to have outlawed. In these cases the claim is that “*Vanvasi*” who have strayed from the Hindu fold are simply being brought back.³⁰⁷ The hypocrisy is quite striking.

These religious strategies likely play a major role in the BJP’s success in Adivasi Gujarat. Looking at Gujarati electoral patterns more generally, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in its 2002 pre-election survey of Gujarat found an increased, direct and positive correlation between voting for the BJP and religious practices. That is, “those who worship regularly and participate more in collective religious

³⁰⁵ Quoted in Bunsha, "Festival of Fear."

³⁰⁶ Ibid. The hostility and tension were such that two different NGOs which were sending contingents to observe the Kumbh, Bhasha Research and Publication Centre and Prashant Centre for Human Rights, Justice, and Peace, refused to take me to the event due to concern for my safety and to avoid the attention my presence would bring to their organizations.

³⁰⁷ Baviskar, "Adivasi Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in Mp," 5108.

activities more frequently are more likely to vote for the BJP.”³⁰⁸ This may not be surprising, especially given the polarization caused by the post-Godhra violence, but it is a new phenomenon for India and represents a decline of secularism.³⁰⁹ In Gujarat at least, caste and economic issues have been replaced at the foreground of electoral politics by religious identity. What makes this even more significant is that the same survey finds that levels of participation in religious activities increased markedly between 1998 and 2002.³¹⁰ While Adivasi-specific statistics are not available, given the *Sangh*'s intense prostelyzation, it is likely that Hindu religiosity has increased in Adivasi regions as well and has contributed to the BJP's electoral success. In the following chapter we will examine a major reason why these activities may be finding resonance in Adivasi Gujarat.

Material Strategies

These “reconversion” ceremonies which I have classified as part of the religious strategies of Hindutva do not generally take place in isolation but are accompanied by examples of a fourth approach which Maclean has not mentioned as operating amongst the untouchables: material strategies. There is a long history of organizations (originally many under the Indian National Congress) providing education and healthcare to the Adiviasi, often, as we saw in Chapter Two, with a focus on improvement along Hindu lines. In recent years this effort has been intensified and taken on more political and religious undertones. The *Sangh*'s activities, carried out by organizations such as the *Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra* and the *Bharateeya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* can be seen as a direct response to the work of Christian missionaries. Indeed, as Romila Thapar shows,

³⁰⁸ Yogendra Yadav and PM Patel, "Advantage Bjp: The Findings of the Pre Poll Survey Done in Gujarat by the CsdS," *Frontline*, December, 2002, 11.

³⁰⁹ Patel, "Gujarat: Hindutva Mobilization and Electoral Dominance of the Bjp," 140.

³¹⁰ _____, "Advantage BJP: The Findings of the Pre Poll Survey Done in Gujarat by the CSDS," 11. This trend was described to me in many informal conversations during my stay in Vadodara.

they have modeled their approach towards the Adivasi on the historic success of the Church.³¹¹

An article in the *Sangh Parivar's* journal, *The Organizer* of December 2004, provides a clear example of the combination of these two strategies. The article boasts of a major achievement, the “homecoming” of 336 *Vanvasis*. It reports that “a total of 336 people belonging to 80 families of 11 villages in Sundergarh... returned to the Hindu fold” from Christianity, which they had embraced several years earlier. The article goes on to describe how at the same time a free health camp was held providing medicine and treatment.³¹² The *Indian Express* reports a similar event in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh where the *Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* staged a reconversion ceremony which included a free clinic with a visiting eye specialist.³¹³

Writing on South Gujarat (including Dangs) Stany Pinto notes that *Sangh Parivar* organizations are active in all *talukas*. In Dediapada for example, aside from (re)conversion or purification ceremonies, they also run a boys hostel and a mobile dispensary.³¹⁴ In an interview with India Express, a *Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad* Trustee in Gujarat boasts that his organization now runs children's centres and organizes sports, religious programmes, medical camps and mass weddings.³¹⁵

Up until now, like Maclean, I have discussed mainly psychological strategies, that is, strategies that give the reward of inclusion or positive identity. Such explanations, as I will argue in the following chapter, are insufficient: “material strategies” like those just

³¹¹ Romila Thapar, "Syndicated Moksha?," *Seminar* 313(1985): 18.

³¹² While this example is from Orissa, not Gujarat, it is typical of the Sangh's approach across the tribal belt. Rashtradeep, "Homecoming of 336 Vanvasis in Orissa," *The Organiser*, December 19, 2004, 24.

³¹³ Raman Kirpal, "Bjp to Preside over 'Reconversion'," *Indian Express*, February 14, 1999, 1.

³¹⁴ Pinto, "Communalisation of Tribals in South Gujarat," 2416.

³¹⁵ Virendra Kumar, "Playing the Christian Card," *Indian Express*, January 7, 1999, 3.

mentioned are the first example we see of material rewards being offered to the Adivasi. One must realize that these clinics or schools are not minor inducements to the Adivasi – for in many cases they represent the only medical or educational opportunities the poor, rural Adivasi has access to. Prior to the arrival of the various *Sangh* organization (tied closely to the BJP) there were sometimes no social services at all. The significance of these services then cannot be underestimated, for as we have seen, the Adivasi have been neglected by the Indian state since its inception, and any political or ideological force which provides such services is bound to be greatly appreciated and respected by the Adivasi. The complete failure of the Indian state to improve the living conditions of the Adivasi has left these rural areas highly susceptible to the work of the *Sangh Parivar*. In the Dangs, where Christian missionaries have traditionally filled this role – for the most part without aggressively pursuing conversion – the *Sangh's* message has historically found considerably less resonance, as is shown by election results and the relatively subdued level of violence. Nonetheless, this should not lead to a false sense of security; as we have seen, the *Sangh* is intensifying its activities in that region as well.

Chapter 6: Hindutva as Symbolic Capital

We have seen the extent to which the Adivasi have put their electoral support behind the BJP and lined up to do the bidding of the *Sangh Parivar*. The BJP invested considerable time and money on winning over the Adivasi and reaped the electoral rewards of this activity in the later 1990s. But the fundamental question remains: why did the BJP's message find resonance in Gujarat's Adivasi communities? What is Hindutva able to offer some Adivasi to garner their consent for and even participation in the maintenance of a Hindutva hegemony. Nandy et al. suggest a psychological element in describing the untouchable participation in communal violence: "a violent or heroic defense of Hinduism allows one to transcend one's lowly caste status, at least temporarily."³¹⁶ Radhika Desai touches on this topic briefly in *Slouching Towards Ayodhya* suggesting that for disadvantaged groups "the psychological reward of being useful to the dominant propertied groups goes some way to alleviating the sense of economic injustice." She goes on to note that "good service can always hope to be lucky enough to be financially rewarded as well."³¹⁷ It is this potential material benefit, even if abstract and indirect, that is of importance in this case.

At the outset of this project my intent was to discover why some Adivasi supported the BJP considering that everything I knew about the situation would lead one to conclude that they should not. The notion of the psychological reward that Hindutva,

³¹⁶ Ashis Nandy, *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 103.

³¹⁷ Desai, *Slouching Towards Ayodhya: Three Essays*, 36. McLean draws a similar conclusion in reference to untouchables when she writes that a positive identity is all that Hindutva can offer the untouchables. Maclean, "Embracing the Untouchables: The BJP and Scheduled Caste Votes," 498.

and indeed any conservative political force, offers its downtrodden followers appeared to be a promising explanation to investigate. It seemed likely that the poor, disrespected Adivasi would flock to an opportunity for recognition and appreciation from their social superiors. In India, Adivasi society is seen as devoid of culture, and with very few exceptions, to be Adivasi is seen as a defect which should be counteracted either through sanskritization or outright conversion to Hinduism or Christianity.³¹⁸

As I examined this notion of a psychological reward, however, and particularly after time spent in Gujarat observing the poverty of the Adivasi, it seemed unlikely that post-modern values such as identity and recognition would be at the forefront of Adivasi concerns and that the possibility of material reward raised by Desai needed to be elaborated upon more fully. My investigation led to the work of Pierre Bourdieu which provides a way of looking at this issue in which recognition and prestige are not “mental” or “cultural” phenomenon alone, ending with an internal sense of satisfaction devoid of material aspects. Rather, social recognition and prestige are themselves deeply intertwined with material structures and processes and represent the attitudes that other actors, both above and below the Adivasi on the social hierarchy, have towards them. As such, these are inherently political and powerful forces that can be effectively material.

The prestige and honour enjoyed by a Brahmin landholder is not internal to him, indeed its only value lies in how his prestige allows him to exert power and control over other Indians – power and control which are rooted in the material structures which uphold the position of his caste fellows in society. On the opposite end of the spectrum, those Indians such as Adivasi, Untouchables, and in some cases Muslims, who generally

³¹⁸ Bhasha is one organization promoting a positive recognition of Adivasi culture.

lack any prestige or honour, are left powerless, their entitlements to dignity ignored by the wider population. Thus the relationship between prestige and material power is dynamic in that prestige can be both a cause and consequence of material power.

Prestige and acceptance open access to a wide variety of material benefits, ranging from having one's demands and claims heard, to access to schools, clubs, jobs, etc. In this context, any apparently post-material claim for prestige, acceptance and respect must be understood as having material importance.

It is through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, introduced in Chapter One, that in my opinion the close relationship between material and cultural/psychological elements can best be revealed. The usefulness of Bourdieu here is that he broadens the analysis by exposing the wide variety of resources besides the economic that people rely upon to “maintain and enhance their positions in the social order”³¹⁹ Bourdieu introduces sources of power not traditionally understood as capital, namely cultural, social, and symbolic capital. As we saw in Chapter One, cultural capital refers to the cultural tools that are passed down from generation to generation, social capital refers to group affiliations such as family, tribe, etc. which come with rights and benefits, and symbolic capital is the power drawn from recognition, honour, and prestige.

For Bourdieu, all action is interested (material), and it is “impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory.”³²⁰ Likewise, we can only understand occurrences in Adivasi Gujarat by bringing these alternative forms of capital to the forefront. We know that the Adivasi were not, with some exceptions, paid

³¹⁹ Swartz, *Culture & Power : The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 73.

³²⁰ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 242.

to attack Christians or Muslims, and we know that BJP policy does not support redistribution to subordinate communities. But what about the other forms of capital? In what ways can those Adivasi who support Hindutva and the BJP be said to be pursuing cultural or social capital, and the prestige and respect which function as symbolic capital and are thus misrecognized as disinterested? Bourdieu's interest is in understanding how dominant groups are able to maintain and recreate their power and how these processes are generally concealed from view. However, as Matt James has shown in his examination of Canadian social movements, Bourdieu's work can also be useful in understanding how subordinate groups, similar to the Adivasi, utilize these various forms of capital to facilitate their own upward mobility.³²¹

This chapter applies Bourdieu's concepts to the case of the Adivasi of Gujarat in order to better understand the relationships between the material and the psychological elements of Adivasi support for Hindutva. In doing so, cultural, social, and symbolic capital are examined to identify the roles that they play in mobilizing certain elements of Adivasi society – particularly the Adivasi elite. This analysis reveals a process that is closely related to, but distinct, from Srinivas's concept of sanskritization through which some Adivasi increasingly present themselves as Hindu rather than Adivasi, in a way that breaks down the traditional distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva.

Cultural Capital

In his studies of the French education system, Bourdieu finds that like economic capital, culture – including for example accent, tastes and educational qualifications – can act as a source of power. Bourdieu's writings on cultural capital are based on an analysis

³²¹ Matt James, *Misrecognized Materialists: Social Movements in Canadian Constitutional Politics*.

of high society in one western developed country, namely France; its applicability in other contexts has been questioned. As DiMaggio, Lamont and Lareau have argued, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital may be less relevant in more highly differentiated societies.³²² Lamont, who uses Bourdieu as a point of departure for his own work suggests that "instead of defining cultural capital as familiarity with high culture and what is valued by the school system, one should examine through interviews and observation what counts as high status cultural signals for particular social actors."³²³

It has been suggested that Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital then is most applicable to a situation of high cultural hegemony, that is, a context in which there exists a strong high culture that is widely recognized as dominant and that this is the case with Brahmanical Hinduism in Gujarat.³²⁴ As such, this concept can offer alternative ways of looking at the actions of Gujarat's Adivasi, particularly the elite among them. For while the immediate benefits of the Adivasi's behavior may not be apparent, formally converting to Hinduism, adopting a Hindu lifestyle, learning to speak Gujarati, and in general being aware of and comfortable with the cultural norms of non-Adivasi society, can be seen as the pursuit of cultural capital.

In France, this embodied cultural capital takes the form of the proper dialect, accent, mannerisms and tastes which are the unwritten requirements for access to, or at

³²² Michele Lamont and Annette Lareau, "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments," *Sociological Theory* 6, no. 2 (1988); and Paul DiMaggio, "Review: On Pierre Bourdieu," *The American Journal of Sociology* 84, no. 6 (1979).

³²³ Michele Lamont, "Looking Back at Bourdieu," in *Cultural Analysis and Bourdieu's Legacy: Settling Accounts and Developing Alternatives*, ed. Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde (London: Routledge, forthcoming (2010), 5 (of pdf), available at <http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/soc/faculty/lamont/publications/Looking-Back-at-Bourdieu.pdf>. It is important to note though, that Bourdieu's theory allows for circumstances in which possession of the cultural capital associated with "low culture" (such as Adivasi culture) are of value. What is important is which cultural capital is relevant in any given field.

³²⁴ Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 81.

least success in, good schools and high-paying government or business jobs. In the same way, Hindu cultural sensibilities are prerequisites for access to and success in the Indian education system and the civil-service jobs to which upwardly mobile Adivasi aspire. For the Adivasi this means adopting Hindu habits that differ dramatically from traditional Adivasi behaviour: style of dress, abstention from alcohol, vegetarianism, and speaking Gujarati (rather than Adivasi languages). While the focus of Ghanshyam Shah's research in Adivasi Gujarat is on economic, rather than lifestyle indicators of stratification, he also observes these changes in behaviour. He reports difficulty communicating with Adivasi labourers in Gujarati whereas the richer Adivasi landholders had adopted Gujarati. Similarly, his team observed a wide spectrum of clothing, from labourers and poor peasants in loincloths to wealthier Adivasi wearing pajamas or western-style trousers.³²⁵ Bourdieu allows us to see these actions as more than just displays of taste, but as sources of power.

It is necessary to understand that Hinduism, and in particular Brahmanical Hinduism, is the high culture and hegemonic ideology of Gujarat, and aspiring towards a Hindu lifestyle coupled with economic ascendance is necessary for upward social mobility. Acceptance of Hinduism and Hindutva as an all-encompassing way of thinking, displayed by lifestyle and when necessary by physical violence, can be seen as an interested action. In this sense it constitutes cultural capital, a power resource which can be passed on to one's children and ideally converted into material rewards, or economic capital.

³²⁵ Shah, "Stratification among the Scheduled Tribes in the Bharuch and Panchmahals," 176.

Social Capital in the Hindu Fold

Much of the literature available on the pro-Hindutva activities of India's subaltern communities (Untouchables, Adivasi, and Other Backward Castes) focuses on a desire for acceptance.³²⁶ I do not disagree with the argument that this desire is significant, but these works fail in that they view this "acceptance" as simply an emotional reward, or an end in and of itself. Bourdieu's notion of social capital allows us to expand upon this "acceptance" and understand its material basis.

The concept of social capital concerns how social networks can function as sources of power: "the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected."³²⁷ According to Bourdieu, one's membership in a group or community – such as Hindu society – comes with access to a wide network from which the individual can draw support. Moreover, it essentially allows the use of the "collectively owned capital" as a "credential which entitles one to credit."³²⁸ In other words, the Adivasi's pursuit of acceptance into the Hindu "network" can be seen as an investment strategy. For Bourdieu, any such group is aimed at "establishing or reproducing social relationships which are directly usable in the short or long term."³²⁹

The Adivasi can reasonably expect membership in the Hindu community, or even

³²⁶ Anandhi for example quotes an untouchable *Panchayat* leader as saying "We are very proud that a Brahmin, placed high in the social hierarchy, who treated us as Untouchables, has voluntarily come to us to impart knowledge and involve us in various public activities." S. Anandhi and Indian Social Institute., *Contending Identities : Dalits and Secular Politics in Madras Slums* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1995), 38. This argument is also a focus of Maclean, "Embracing the Untouchables: The Bjp and Scheduled Caste Votes." and Anand Teltumbde, *Hindutva and Dalits: Perspectives for Understanding Communal Praxis* (Kolkata: Samya, 2005).

³²⁷ Ibid., 249.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

association with it, to come with the benefits of belonging to a prestigious group. This social capital will then operate symbolically by garnering the Adivasi the respect or honour that would be required to gain access to coveted educational and employment opportunities.

The Symbolic Capital of Hindutva

For Bourdieu, symbolic capital is the source of legitimization of the exercise of power. It refers to the prestige, honour and respect that an agent can use to justify his dominance and exert control over others. Symbolic capital is any capital that is misrecognized as a legitimate and inherent trait which warrants deference, obedience, and recognition. As was seen in Chapter Two, Bourdieu himself notes that social and cultural capital almost always operate as symbolic capital,³³⁰ and indeed any capital can function as symbolic capital insofar as it is misrecognized.³³¹ The Adivasi, then, in attempting to acquire symbolic capital are in fact seeking a source of power to legitimize claims of higher status and ensure that they are heard by the wider population. As such, the social capital attained by being part of the Hindu community, or the cultural capital of being able to speak Gujarati function as symbolic capital in that they elicit the respect of others, a respect which can be used to achieve desired outcomes in social exchanges.

These alternative sources of capital, or power, are not specific to capitalism, nor are they new to Adivasi Gujarat: social, cultural, and symbolic capital have no doubt always been important sources of power in the region. However, as we have seen, traditional subsistence patterns, modes of production and social relations are being replaced as the region becomes more connected to the wider Hindu society and capitalist

³³⁰ Ibid., 245.

³³¹ For more on this overlap see Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 92.

economies. As this happens, traditional social or cultural capital can become obsolete. In the Dangs for example, where the *Bhil* were the traditional rulers, members of that tribe, and in particular the *Bhauband* (*Bhil* nobility) possessed symbolic capital, which was a source of power. Whereas at one time each of these communities may have been a kingdom on its own, with the requisite social hierarchy, today the entire community has become subordinated.

Far from being passive followers in contemporary ethnic violence, the Adivasi can clearly see that positions of power and wealth are reserved for Hindus and particularly those Hindus closely associated with the ruling BJP. Especially for the elite Adivasi for whom upward mobility is a possibility, the requisite social status can only be achieved by being Hindu. And as the VHP slogans proclaim, what better way to demonstrate one's "Hinduness" than by fighting the Christian and Muslim enemies of the Hindu faith.

Hindutva as Hinduism

Thus far I have more or less differentiated between the closely related terms of Hinduism and Hindutva and have adhered to traditionally understood usages: Hinduism refers to the religious tradition of the subcontinent and Hindutva to a fundamentalist political ideology. However, in this section, I also show how the Adivasi's portrayal of themselves as more "Hindu" has given rise to a synthesis between the two. Here the adoption of Hindu customs and the acceptance of Hindutva ideology both merge into indistinct demonstrations of "Hinduness," which can be seen as the acquisition of cultural capital.

Some would likely criticize this as an inaccurate and slanderous account of what is in fact an open and peaceful religion. Writing on the Adivasi of Gujarat, Lancy Lobo is careful to distinguish between Hinduization and what he calls Hindutvaization.³³² Jaffrelot writes that “the essential characteristics of Hinduism scarcely lend themselves to a closed and monolithic radicalism.”³³³ This approach on my part is not an oversight: in Gujarat especially, Hindutva is the contemporary manifestation of Hinduism. Indeed, it is not even accurate to limit this to contemporary times, for the very idea of a unified monolithic Hinduism is relatively recent. There is no historical basis for viewing the various faiths of the subcontinent as part of a larger religion, and there is no single text or core belief which joins them. Heinrich Von Stietencron, a German indologist, has argued that a single “Hindu religion” does not even exist but rather the term can be used to refer to a group of related religions.³³⁴ It is widely accepted that “Hinduism” did not actually emerge until early modern times and a good portion of its evolution occurred within the context of colonialism. By the twentieth century it had evolved into what can be better understood as Brahmanical Hinduism.

Comparing Hindutva to some imaginary benign and pluralistic religion is of little analytical use. As Radhika Desai argues, it is much more accurate to see Hindutva as the “most prominent and politically and culturally energetic strand of modern Hinduism.”³³⁵ For, as she notes, all but one of the *Shankaracharyas* (heads of Hindu monasteries of the

³³² Lobo, "Adivasis, Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat," 4846.

³³³ Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s : Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)*, 1.

³³⁴ Heinrich Von Stietencron Stietencron, "Hinduism: On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term," in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, ed. Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke, *South Asian Studies No. 24* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1989), 18.

³³⁵ Radhika Desai, "The Cast(E) of Anti-Secularism," in *Will Secular India Survive?*, ed. Mushirul Hasan (new Delhi: Imprint One, 2004), 187.

Advaita tradition) and many other Hindu leaders support Hindutva and many VHP organizations are connected to or even dominate religious institutions.³³⁶ Under these circumstances, I do not see a need to differentiate between the Adivasi's pro-Hindu and pro-BJP activities. Moreover, it is hardly a distinction that the Adivasi themselves would make.

Hindutva and the Adivasi Elite

Many analyses of the rise of Hindutva in Adivasi Gujarat have failed to take into account the major shifts in power relations that have come along with the emergence of an influential Adivasi elite. It is this group that has the most to gain from aligning itself with Hindutva and the greatest prospect of being at least marginally accepted into elite Gujarati society through these means. The BJP has long-denied the indigeneity of India's Tribals – a position that serves the elite Adivasi's interests as well. These elite Adivasi who have, ironically, cornered the few benefits that reservations and various development programs have offered, seek to distance themselves from their Adivasi heritage to allow for their own individual upward mobility. Recognizing the obstacle presented by their status as Adivasi, the elite join the BJP in denying any distinction between Adivasi and Hindu. The elite attempts to present itself as Hindu and thus acquire cultural capital by, publicly at least, abandoning traditional practices such as consuming alcohol and meat. Supporting various *Sangh* organizations and the BJP (even if this means engaging in violence) not only demonstrates their Hinduness (a long-term investment in symbolic capital) but can also afford the more immediate rewards of political patronage.

³³⁶ Ibid., 188.

This political element of the BJP's success cannot be underestimated.³³⁷ Much of the BJP's success in Adivasi Gujarat can be attributed to the serious economic changes in the region which the Congress's well-developed channels of political patronage have been unable to accommodate. As seen in Chapter Four, the Congress Party was long hegemonic in Adivasi Gujarat from at least independence and operated through the local Adivasi elite. The dynastic nature of the Congress party is not limited to the position of National Party Leader: leadership within individual constituencies also tends to stay within families, leaving little room for new elites that have emerged out of more recent social transformations. In the Chota Udaipur region of Vadodara District, for example, Congress leaders Mohansinh and Sukhram Rathwa were competing for their eighth and fourth times, respectively, when they were defeated by the BJP in the 2002 elections. Their family members and associates had also filled important posts in the region.³³⁸ As the region developed, stratification increased, and the traditional elite is now not necessarily the most powerful. The arrival of the BJP in Adivasi Gujarat opens space for the political aspirations of these new forces.

Another aspect of these new developments that many analyses have failed to take into account is that these Adivasi are aspiring members of the wider Gujarati middle class. As such, they have the same interest (or at least perceived interest) in the BJP's Hindutva and neo-liberal policies as any non-Adivasi member of this class (and as we have seen, have tended to be mobilized along these class lines). Moreover, Hindutva serves to legitimize and secure their privileged material position within Adivasi society,

³³⁷ On this note I am indebted to comments received on a paper I presented at the 19th Conference of the European Association for South Asian Studies in Leiden, Netherlands, June, 2006.

³³⁸ "Rathwas Swept Away by Hindutva Tsunami," *Indian Express*, December 18, 2002, 4.

and as stratification proceeds apace, this could prove increasingly useful. It is the nature of India's complex social hierarchy that all but the very lowest have others below them on the social ladder; someone over whom they can assert dominance through reference to the caste system.

It is important to note that while this Adivasi elite is prosperous in comparison to other Adivasi, it is by no means on par with India's ruling classes. In fact, the Adivasi elite's aspirations are curbed by a social structure which does not allow them an equal footing. This inherent barrier means that any alliance between the Adivasi elite and mainstream society is tenuous.

Of course it is not only the Adivasi elite that have supported the BJP and participated in anti-Muslim or anti-Christian violence. Given that this creamy layer makes up such a small portion of Gujarat's Adivasi population, it is clear that Adivasi further down the socioeconomic ladder have also, in some cases, been mobilized in support of Hindutva. As anywhere, the dominant Adivasi elite are able to sway the vote and mobilize their communities for the BJP. Writing on the role of elites in Adivasi villages in Rajasthan, Renuka Pamecha finds that rural tribal elites played a major role in garnering grass-roots support in elections and that every village had an elite figure that served as a vote bank.³³⁹ This can also in part be seen as a demonstration effect; the Adivasi can see the benefits afforded to Hindus, or to those Adivasi who present themselves as Hindu, and act accordingly. As ever larger numbers of Adivasi are forced to travel to the larger centres as migrant labourers they have been brought into closer

³³⁹ Renuka Pamecha, *Elite in a Tribal Society* (Jaipur: Printwell Publishers, 1985), 127.

contact with the wider Hindu society than ever before, contributing to their perceptions of the benefits of a Hindu lifestyle.

Sanskritization

The process that I have described above is closely related to the well-documented and theorized process of sanskritization, a concept developed by MN Srinivas in his 1952 study of the *Coorgs* of Karnataka. Srinivas uses the term to refer to a process of caste mobility:

Sanskritization is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or Tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently 'twice-born' caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community.³⁴⁰

This upward ritual mobility, however, is not independent of a group's or caste's material position: as Srinivas notes, "the possession of secular power by a caste is either reflected in its ritual ranking or leads, sooner or later, to an improvement in its position."³⁴¹

Srinivas thus dispels the inaccurate view of caste which sees it as a static system operating independently of material reality. Indeed, one of the functions of sanskritization is to "bridge the gap between secular and ritual rank: when a caste or section of a caste achieved secular power it usually also tried to acquire the traditional symbols of high status, namely the customs, rituals, ideas, beliefs, and lifestyle of the locally highest caste."³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, The Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lectures, 1963 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 6.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 27.

In describing contemporary India, Srinivas also applies the related concept of westernization; that is, the adoption of a western lifestyle by the middle and upper castes which have been most exposed to western education and popular culture. This is not to suggest that traditional culture is being abandoned, but rather that westernization, as demonstrated by consumerism and a western style of dress for example, has been incorporated into traditional indicators as requirements for upward mobility. While in contemporary times ritual rank in the most formal sense may have become less important, cultural acceptance by elite Hindus remains an important accompaniment to upward economic mobility.

A number of scholars have suggested that untouchables and other lower caste communities have supported the BJP following the logic of sanskritization. By supporting Sangh organizations, these writers argue, the untouchables are emulating upper caste behaviour.³⁴³ While sanskritization has no doubt been taking place in Adivasi Gujarat for generations with far-reaching effects – including increasing support for the BJP – this has not necessarily been demonstrated by the accounts of the previous chapter. The processes that I have described above have resulted in much more superficial changes, and we do not see the structural changes that are typical of sanskritization. To understand the role of sanskritization here would require much more

³⁴³ See for example Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Sangh Parivar between Sanskritization and Social Engineering," in *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52. Also Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, Westview Special Studies on South and Southeast Asia (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 102.

in-depth research into the particular behaviours that the elite are emulating and how dominant communities are reacting to these aspirations.³⁴⁴

Despite the socioeconomic progress made by some Adivasi and the symbolic capital attained by marginal acceptance into the Hindu fold, the alliance between the Adivasi and Hindutva is a tenuous one. As I have already mentioned, even most of those at the top of Adivasi society are entirely outside the wider Gujarati elite. We can expect the Adivasi to only be accepted insofar as they do not encroach upon the privileged position of Gujarat's dominant groups by controlling land or taking too many jobs and seats in schools. BJP governments are unlikely to increase reservations significantly, or to fund generous development projects in Adivasi areas for fear of alienating their core constituency of upper caste/class Hindus. Due to these limitations on BJP policy, the Adivasi allegiance to the Hindutva political project is potentially unstable.³⁴⁵

Here we run the risk of reverting to the traditional false consciousness explanation of Adivasi behaviour, and it is therefore useful to revisit Therborn's forms of ideological domination. Of particular relevance here is the sense of representation. As Therborn notes, "the representativity of the rulers may be based on a perception of likeness or belonging, such that the rulers and the ruled are seen as belonging to the same universe, however defined."³⁴⁶ For the elite, this representation comes from a shared class interest with the leaders of Hindutva, but the general Adivasi population as well may, through the

³⁴⁴ For example, in an interesting confluence of cultures, while visiting a Muslim shaman in Chota Udaipur, I met an Adivasi who had come to the Shaman for assistance in bringing his daughter, who had eloped with an untouchable, back to his home. The man was very distraught and disgraced that his daughter had married such a lowly individual thus suggesting that at least some Adivasi consider themselves to be ritually superior to untouchables.

³⁴⁵ For a more in-depth examination of the challenges the BJP faces in appealing to non-elite and elite electorates simultaneously see Jaffrelot, "The Sangh Parivar between Sanskritization and Social Engineering."

³⁴⁶ Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, 96.

processes identified above, share this sense of belonging. Insofar as the Adivasi identify as Hindu, through the creation of a Muslim “other,” through participation in Hindu rituals such as *yatras* and so on, they may see themselves as represented by Hindutva and the BJP.

The Adivasi’s pursuit of recognition and inclusion – or what this thesis suggests could be symbolic capital – is also not necessarily a futile exercise. One need only look as far as Gujarat’s Muslims to see how recognition, be it as Hindus, Indians, or even just as human beings, can provide tremendous material and physical security. The accrual of these alternative forms of capital is a lengthy process that involves the dedication of considerable labour, and it cannot be immediately converted into economic capital. Moreover, while cultural, social, and symbolic capital have the advantage of being easily concealed, they are much less secure than economic capital. Writing on social capital, Bourdieu notes that there is always a risk of refusal of recognition of nonguaranteed debts which are the basis of this form of capital.³⁴⁷ The Adivasi may find that the BJP and Hindu society more generally would not honour the Adivasi’s symbolic, social, or cultural capital, if they were in fact to make an attempt to use it for material advancement.

Having said that, these Adivasi are not only pursuing this increased recognition and prestige, or symbolic capital, to facilitate their progress vis-à-vis non-Adivasi; indeed, that is most likely a secondary pursuit. Of more interest to the Adivasi would be enhancing their position relative to their fellow Adivasi with whom they interact and compete on a daily basis. For the Adivasi elite, symbolic capital can both justify and

³⁴⁷ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 254.

enhances their privileged position in Adivasi society. The symbolic capital that an individual holds gives him an authority and political power over others, and thus the ability to further his own interests. In a rapidly changing environment such as Adivasi Gujarat, such symbolic capital could be extremely advantageous and influential.

It is widely accepted that much of the motivation behind the Adivasi's, and other subalterns' support for the BJP is the resulting psychological rewards of acceptance, honour and prestige. This is a useful first step but falls short of a full analysis by failing to recognize the significance of this honour. By drawing on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, we can begin to see the real, material value of these abstract, psychological rewards, making them tangible and material, and thus providing a better understanding of how a hegemony of Hindutva can be sustained. Some Adivasi, particularly the elite among them, may have turned to Hindutva not because it makes them feel better about themselves, or because of a false consciousness through which they are tricked into thinking that Hindu nationalism and neoliberalism are good for them, but rather because it can afford them a higher status within the wider society they are increasingly a part of. The ideology of Hindutva clearly does not serve the interests of the Adivasi, or any non-elite community for that matter; nonetheless, supporting it can, for the time being, insofar as it allows for the accrual of symbolic capital, be beneficial for individual Adivasi.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The story that this thesis has told is a frightening one: Gujarati Adivasi joining the forces of the *Sangh Parivar*. In Gujarat, Adivasi have, to a large degree, transferred their political allegiance to the BJP and have taken part in unspeakable violence towards their Muslim and Christian neighbours. These are not isolated incidents, and in the years following the 1999 and 2002 Gujarat violence, similar events have taken place in other Adivasi areas of India, particularly in Orissa and Karnataka.

This thesis has shown that these cannot be discarded as anomalies but are the outcomes of systemic changes in the political economy of Gujarat and in particular its Adivasi regions. They represent the entrenchment of Hindutva, a politics of elitism and hatred, as the hegemonic ideology in the state. It was once believed that the success of Hindutva, and thus of the BJP, would be limited by its exclusionary nature and would only be palatable to elite Hindus. Unfortunately, history has disproven this hypothesis: here, I have presented just one example of Hindutva's ability to transcend its elite confines.

By examining the socio-political history of Adivasi Gujarat, this thesis has presented a more nuanced history of the region through which there emerge alternative ways of understanding the establishment of Hindutva's hegemony and the behaviour of many Adivasi. In this history, we can see that relationships between the Adivasi and the wider society, and amongst the Adivasi themselves, are in fact much more complex than the current literature suggests. The Adivasi of Gujarat are highly stratified and are deeply

connected to the wider Gujarati society and economy and thus cannot be examined in isolation.

It would be easier and much less frightening to see the behaviour of the Adivasi as isolated events, merely their fiery response to some minor incident – ill treatment by a Muslim moneylender, or an inciting rumour – as something that does not require analysis. However, to do so would be to underestimate Hindutva and the pervasiveness of its ideology. The reality is more troubling: Hindutva's appeal to the Adivasi and its success in entrenching itself in Adivasi Gujarat is actually directly related to wider socio-economic changes that have been taking place within Gujarat.

The description of contemporary Adivasi reality which has been presented here is dramatically different from the non-critical accounts which remain pervasive today: accounts which have somehow lingered on from colonial times and are perpetuated by the subalternists, neotraditionalists and well-meaning social activists. The Adivasi history of Gujarat provided in this thesis demonstrates that throughout various historical political stages the Adivasi have actually interacted extensively with wider societies and economies. Far from a static homogenous population, Gujarat's Adivasi society has in fact been highly restructured, first, by its interaction with the Hindu plainsmen and the British Raj, and then by the increasing pervasiveness of the market economy. One effect of these interactions, as we have seen, has been the stratification of Adivasi communities. Development programs, rather than countering this stratification, have instead intensified it. Moreover, for centuries the Adivasi have carried the stigma of being a wild, criminal and simple people.

It is out of this climate of poverty, stratification and disrespect that Adivasi support for Hindutva has emerged. The BJP has thrived, replacing the Congress party which failed to offer anything to the Adivasi in terms of development or respect. The *Sangh* did not have to somehow mislead the Adivasi into supporting the BJP; rather the ideology of Hindutva was able to serve the needs of those Adivasi who had emerged as a creamy upper layer of Adivasi society. The supremacist ideology spoke to the need for a justification of their advantaged position vis-à-vis the general Adivasi population. Moreover, portraying oneself as Hindu, and ardent supporters of Hindutva, offered the possibility of greater acceptance and mobility within mainstream society.

Other analyses have shown how subaltern groups support Hindutva for the psychological reward of acceptance and status. The contribution of this thesis is to more closely examine this notion of a psychological reward and in doing so show how these explanations fall short of a full understanding. By drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu on symbolic capital, I have shown that these psychological rewards could in fact have real material value for the Adivasi, especially the elite amongst them. In portraying themselves as Hindu, taking part in violence, and supporting the BJP, the Adivasi elite may be pursuing a symbolic capital that it can use as a source of power: a capital which legitimates their dominance over other Adivasi and gives them access to schools, jobs, and economic opportunities from which Adivasi would generally be excluded.

Drawing on Marxist conceptions of ideology and in particular Gramsci's notion of hegemony, this thesis has presented an alternative perspective from which to examine Adivasi, and indeed any subaltern support for the hegemony of a far-right ideology such

as Hindutva. As in the subaltern studies approach, the focus here is on recognizing the agency of the subaltern (the Adivasi) but where this thesis differs from the subalterns is in its rejection of a sharp elite/subaltern dichotomy which homogenizes those groups on either side of the divide and, instead, recognizes the continuities and overlaps that increasingly characterize Adivasi Gujarat.

This thesis has not closely examined the specific instances of elite Adivasi collusion with Hindutva and the particular benefits it has imparted to them. Thus more in-depth research is needed to understand more precisely the workings of symbolic capital and its exchange into a more tangible source of power and material wealth for the Adivasi. Such research would examine the emergence and strengthening of the Adivasi elite in the context of Hindutva's entrenchment in the region.

It cannot be forgotten, though, that the tenets of Hindutva and the policies of the BJP do not serve the interest of most Adivasi, rather they benefit a small portion of the Adivasi population and even then only some of the time. Moreover, Adivasi support for the BJP is not even necessarily as large as the electoral results suggest. While it is often enough to win elections through manipulation, intimidation and misinformation, particularly when coupled with the limitations of the first-past-the-post system, not even a majority of the Adivasi vote for the BJP and the party has of yet been unable to secure the overwhelming monopoly that Congress enjoyed for so many decades. By inciting violence and implementing neoliberal fiscal policies, the BJP threatens the well-being of India's poor and vulnerable, including the Adivasi. The inability of the BJP to ever take substantial action to improve the lot of the Adivasi means that its hegemony over these regions is tenuous. To date, however, the only real alternative is the Indian National

Congress which has proven itself unable or unwilling to address, in a meaningful way, the plight of the Adivasi or any other subaltern group.

Historically, in the same way that untouchables converted to Buddhism in the 1950s, the Adivasi have at times embraced emancipatory ideologies such as Christianity or Naxalism to break free of oppressive conditions. As discussed in Chapter Four, as recently as the 1980s, the neglected segments of Gujarat's population, the *Kshatriyas*, Untouchables, Adivasi and Muslims were brought together by the Congress party to form the KHAM alliance which, in theory, should have been responsive to the needs of these communities. Today, some of these same communities have been mobilized by Gujarat's Hindu elite to carry out horrific acts of terror and hatred against each other.

One cannot say unequivocally why any individual Adivasi has supported the BJP and Hindutva, and it has not been the intention of this thesis to do so. Rather, here I have presented an alternative way of looking at Adivasi behaviour in which actions are connected to Gujarat's socio-economic reality and through which one can begin to see the possible benefits, perceived or actual, that Hindutva has to offer the Adivasi. In doing so, the political agency of the Adivasi is recognized. It is only by shedding light on these roots of Hindutva's success in the region that one can begin to understand where and how resistance and support for emancipatory ideologies and secular pro-poor movements can emerge.

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Appendix A: Selected Sangh Parivar Organizations

Sangh Parivar literally translates as “family of organizations,” and is made up of a wide variety of Hindu nationalist organizations that subscribe to the values of Hindutva. The following are some of the primary organizations:

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (<http://www.rss.org>): The *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) is a militant Hindu volunteer organization and is the most influential organization of the *Sangh Parivar*.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (<http://www.bjp.org>): The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Party of the Indian People, is the political wing of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, established in 1980. Prior to this, Hindutva was represented by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (<http://www.vhp.org>): The *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) literally the World Hindu Council is an international organization established in 1964 by the RSS largely in response to a perceived threat from other, possibly more organized and centralized religions, particularly Christianity. It aims to bring together the various sects of Hinduism.

Bajrang Dal (<http://www.bajrangdal.org/>): The *Bajrang Dal*, formed in 1984, is the youth wing of the VHP and its members are often described as the footsoldiers of Hindutva.

Akhila Bharatiya Vidya Parishad (<http://www.abvp.org/>): The *Akhila Bharatiya Vidya Parishad* (ABVP) is the *Sangh's* student organization.

Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (<http://www.vanavasikalyan.org>): The *Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* (ABVKA) was established in 1952, largely in response to the activities of Christian missionaries, to work among the Adivasi and runs schools and hospitals in tribal areas. Along with these welfare activities the ABVKA carries out (re)conversion ceremonies to bring Adivasi back to the Hindu fold and works to spread Hindu Nationalism among the Adivasi.

Akhila Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (<http://www.bms.org.in>): The *Akhila Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh* (ABMS) is a Hindu Nationalist labour organization.

Rashtriya Sevika Samiti: The *Rashtriya Sevika Samiti*, (National Women Volunteers Committee), is the women's wing of the RSS.

Hindu Jagran Manch: The *Hindu Jagran Manch* is an aggressive Hindutva activist group and the national coordination committee of various Hindutva organizations.

Appendix B: Detailed Lok Sabha Election Results

Constituency Number	Constituency Name	1984 Lok Sabha			1989 Lok Sabha			1991 Lok Sabha			1996 Lok Sabha			1998 Lok Sabha			1999 Lok Sabha			2004 Lok Sabha			2009 Lok Sabha		
		BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP Votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes
LS -17	Dohad ST	DNC	251863	DNC	DNC	322487	DNC	105998	281740	37.62%	104463	299820	34.84%	161731	516976	31.28%	232288	463502	50.12%	228154	517845	44.06%	192050	534423	35.94%
LS -21	Chota Udaipur ST	DNC	350902	DNC	DNC	448929	DNC	129722	329842	39.33%	114310	338553	33.76%	218852	549214	39.85%	248970	510280	48.79%	210616	556516	37.85%	353534	765217	46.20%
LS -25	Mandvi ST*	DNC	392385	DNC	DNC	417617	DNC	152813	424510	36.00%	196808	486415	40.46%	269419	628959	42.84%	320172	600610	53.31%	213210	644812	33.07%	339445	832542	40.77%
LS -26	Bulsar ST**	165527	395555	41.85%	DNC	438120	DNC	125260	335351	37.35%	198531	419776	47.29%	290312	615039	47.20%	300195	582106	51.57%	277283	689982	40.19%	350586	774429	45.27%
Total Votes in ST Constituencies		165527	1390705	11.90%	0	1627153	0.00%	513793	1371443	37.46%	614112	1544564	39.76%	940314	2310188	40.70%	1101625	2156498	51.08%	929263	2409155	38.57%	1235615	2906611	42.51%
Total votes in all Gujarat constituencies		1971469	10577661	18.64%	3943247	12942999	30.47%	5394221	10708877	50.37%	4854432	10004069	48.52%	7864750	16291161	48.28%	7145614	13615022	52.48%	7204915	15210904	47.37%			
Scheduled Tribe Seats Won		ST Seats won 0 of 4		ST Seats won 0 of 4		ST Seats won 0 of 4		ST Seats won 0 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4		ST Seats won 4 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4		ST Seats won 1 of 4	
Legend																									
DNC		Did not contest																							
		Orange highlight indicates BJP candidate elected																							
D/U		Data unavailable																							
*In 2009 this constituency became Bardoli (#23)																									
**In 2009 this constituency became Valsad (#26)																									

Appendix C: Detailed Vidhan Sabha Election Results

Constituency Number	Constituency Name	1980 Vidhan Sabha			1985 Vidhan Sabha			1990 Vidhan Sabha			1995 Vidhan Sabha			1998 Vidhan Sabha			2002 Vidhan Sabha			2007 Vidhan Sabha																				
		BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes	BJP votes	Total Votes	BJP % of votes																		
AS - 103	Khedbrahma ST	2296	29670	7.74%	4414	34518	12.79%	33273	58266	57.11%	33310	108089	30.82%	29066	93137	31.21%	54219	119361	45.42%	34680	109189	31.76%																		
AS - 112	Jhalod ST	1408	18894	7.45%	1416	23932	5.92%	12538	49073	25.55%	42952	108449	39.61%	12753	84611	15.07%	66019	111929	58.98%	45351	106720	42.50%																		
AS - 113	Limdi ST	1145	20571	5.57%	2426	18531	13.09%	5987	38886	15.40%	16948	86304	19.64%	13897	61652	22.54%	41427	92188	44.94%	35259	101298	34.81%																		
AS - 114	Dohad ST	1169	27424	4.26%	1169	27424	4.26%	20056	50608	39.63%	24407	69943	34.90%	29087	68970	42.17%	46383	89582	51.78%	28708	89728	31.99%																		
AS - 115	Limkheda ST	2061	19534	10.55%	DNC	18502	DNC	205	41372	0.50%	42117	87772	47.98%	20693	69300	29.86%	46548	98958	47.04%	30930	90135	34.32%																		
AS - 123	Randhikpur ST	DNC	17789	DNC	4365	17077	25.56%	1509	52715	2.86%	52404	93354	56.13%	36165	79623	45.42%	63730	108593	58.69%	50935	94042	54.16%																		
AS - 141	Chota Udaipur ST	2438	34567	7.05%	964	29828	3.23%	2760	55387	33.25%	18798	88104	21.34%	29801	74309	40.10%	58948	104125	56.61%	44422	98300	45.19%																		
AS - 143	Nasvadi ST	DNC	38988	DNC	DNC	31462	DNC	4142	54895	7.55%	20298	96154	21.11%	25610	78251	32.73%	55782	100675	55.41%	43422	105348	41.22%																		
AS - 144	Sankheda ST	DNC	37925	DNC	DNC	33225	DNC	875	60940	1.44%	41151	87514	47.02%	31155	66283	47.00%	56248	84049	66.92%	40654	82004	49.58%																		
AS - 158	Jhagadia ST	DNC	29698	DNC	DNC	30968	DNC	9917	64979	15.26%	21671	102142	21.22%	15495	85285	18.17%	22442	105471	21.28%	22983	106156	21.65%																		
AS - 159	Dediapada ST	1161	28034	4.14%	DNC	43988	DNC	20606	57287	35.97%	50330	115582	43.54%	23566	94933	24.82%	32902	123869	26.56%	18898	141467	13.36%																		
AS - 160	Rajpipla ST	422	42341	1.00%	1387	43388	3.20%	20509	67955	30.18%	54405	99039	54.93%	29214	83981	34.79%	54575	103775	52.59%	37722	102125	36.94%																		
AS - 161	Nijhar ST	3694	37953	9.73%	3732	39333	9.49%	18424	55405	33.25%	37330	106243	35.14%	24696	89535	27.58%	28836	113281	25.46%	50749	123694	41.03%																		
AS - 162	Mangrol ST	3740	31576	11.84%	DNC	30460	DNC	DNC	48400	DNC	43498	95169	45.71%	24385	84105	28.99%	51227	112181	45.66%	64357	127321	50.55%																		
AS - 163	Songadh ST	DNC	27470	DNC	DNC	23770	DNC	DNC	47874	DNC	19416	96726	20.07%	18995	77606	24.48%	19289	99317	19.42%	19683	112168	17.55%																		
AS - 164	Vyara ST	DNC	36703	DNC	DNC	44522	DNC	2614	71004	3.68%	19490	108259	18.00%	30265	92324	32.78%	14389	109428	13.15%	46063	119358	38.59%																		
AS - 165	Mahuva ST	1001	40083	2.50%	DNC	42675	DNC	6817	68032	10.02%	26638	111490	23.89%	48250	94678	50.96%	34850	95938	36.33%	52954	113562	46.63%																		
AS - 166	Bardoli ST	4226	43279	9.76%	2946	39467	7.46%	DNC	62844	DNC	43331	106986	40.50%	44861	98534	45.53%	34942	103567	33.74%	52465	121152	43.31%																		
AS - 167	Kamrej ST	5686	43842	12.97%	4217	42282	9.97%	32613	67722	48.16%	50936	100853	50.51%	40168	87525	45.89%	45987	97054	47.38%	62677	119949	52.25%																		
AS - 174	Nasari ST	10412	41647	25.00%	10782	47960	22.48%	34118	67915	50.24%	58346	104327	55.93%	55578	98807	56.25%	52520	111896	46.94%	64293	123339	52.13%																		
AS - 176	Chikhli ST	21503	46202	46.54%	18560	46591	39.84%	39644	73289	54.09%	72523	108675	66.73%	48110	90751	53.01%	43730	114905	38.06%	59471	123876	48.01%																		
AS - 177	Dangs Bansda ST	DNC	31098	DNC	5975	38859	15.38%	5474	52887	10.35%	19670	99294	19.81%	22185	74634	29.73%	27188	98225	27.68%	56860	117628	48.34%																		
AS - 179	Dharampur ST	4986	35228	14.15%	22576	58705	38.46%	22576	58705	38.46%	52991	110060	48.15%	36082	78632	45.89%	34923	116559	29.96%	47412	123636	38.35%																		
AS - 180	Mota Pondha ST	DNC	32401	DNC	DNC	38503	DNC	DNC	52068	DNC	35417	104503	33.89%	31207	84780	36.81%	32648	121547	26.86%	46126	145607	31.68%																		
AS - 181	Pardi ST	10991	33529	32.78%	9790	44960	21.77%	21614	62960	34.33%	62346	106703	58.43%	37498	85806	43.70%	41589	102768	40.47%	61738	118890	51.93%																		
AS - 182	Umbergaon ST	4582	27972	16.38%	DNC	39297	DNC	7423	67149	11.05%	60316	111113	54.28%	50380	101831	49.47%	47277	119834	39.45%	85278	150766	56.56%																		
Total votes in ST Constituencies		82921	854418	9.70%	94719	930227	10.18%	323694	1508617	21.46%	1021039	2612847	39.08%	809162	2179883	37.12%	1108618	2759075	40.18%	1204090	2967458	40.58%																		
Total Votes in all Constituencies		1090652	7781133	14.02%	1379120	9221149	14.96%	3386256	12685977	26.69%	7672401	18048194	42.51%	7300826	16292114	44.81%	10194353	20448692	49.85%	10739972	21866189	49.12%																		
ST Seats won		1 of 26			ST Seats won			0 of 26			ST Seats won			6 of 26			ST seats won			15 of 26			ST Seats won			8 of 26			ST Seats won			13 of 26			ST Seats won			9 of 26		
Legend																																								
DNC		Did not contest																																						
		Orange highlight indicates BJP candidate elected																																						