



# **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

**IN**

# **LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STATES**

**A Comparative Study of Conflict and Accommodation in  
Canada and India**

**H. SRIKANTH**



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2010

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Dedicated To

*Fr. Joseph Kalicharal*  
*S. Narayana*  
*Shukla Prasad*

my school and under-graduate teachers

who introduced me to

the world of life, literature and politics

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- ADC - Autonomous District Council  
ARC - Autonomous Regional Council  
AFAs - Alternative Funding Arrangements  
AFN - Assembly of First Nations  
BC - British Columbia  
BCANSI - British Columbia Association of Non-Status-Indians  
BCTC - BC Treaty Commission  
DIAND - Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development  
FN - First Nations  
HBC - Hudson's Bay Company  
ILO - International Labor Organization  
INAC - Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada  
IPACC - Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee  
NAIB - North American Indian Brotherhood  
NBCC - Native Brotherhood of British Columbia  
NCC - National Council of Canada  
NDP - New Democratic Party  
NEFA - North-East Frontier Agency  
NIB - National Indian Brotherhood  
NNC - Naga National Council  
NSCN (IM) - National Socialist Council of Nagaland - Isak Muivah  
NSTFDC - National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation  
NWC - North West Company  
PDS - Public Distribution System  
PTGs - Primitive Tribal Groups  
PYLL - Potential Years of Life Lost  
RCAP - Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples  
SCs - Scheduled Castes  
STs - Scheduled Tribes  
SVITF - Southern Vancouver Island Tribal Federation  
TRIFED - Tribal Co-Operative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd.  
TSP - Tribal Sub-Plan strategy  
UBCIC - Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs  
UNPO - Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization  
UNWGIP - United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations

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**F**or over a decade, I have been trying to study and understand the political dynamics of the indigenous peoples inhabiting India's northeastern region. In a way, my interest in tribal politics drove me to apply for Canadian Studies Faculty Research fellowship to study the problems and struggles of First Nations in Canada. My initial commitment under the approved research project entitled, "Liberal Democratic Nations and the Indigenous People: A Comparative Study of the Strategies of Accommodation pursued in the Province of British Columbia in Canada and the State of Assam in India" was only to produce a couple of research papers on the theme and to publish the same in some academic journals in India. But after I started interacting with scholars and activists in Canada and began collecting data from the libraries at the Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia, I was so fascinated by the information that I could collect that I decided to write a book. Initially I thought I could complete it in a year or two. But because of my other academic and social preoccupations, it took nearly four years for me to complete the same. As the book is finally getting ready to see the daylight, I cannot but remember all those who assisted me in completing the project.

The book would not have materialized in the first instance, had I not received the Canadian Studies Faculty

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*H. Srikanth*

## INTRODUCTION

When colonialism was making inroads into the continents and countries little known to Europeans at large, both apologists and critics of colonialism in the West contended that the indigenous peoples inhabiting the colonies and semi-colonies would perish as communities unless they learned to adapt themselves to the changing times.<sup>1</sup> It was then assumed that penetration of the market economy, expansion of the institutions of private property, development of modern education, spread of Christianity, and growth of liberal values and practices in the colonized world would overshadow and replace the pre-capitalist structures and traditions of the native communities and subsume them under the capitalist mainstream. Such predictions, however, did not come true.

Despite all the hardships and sufferings that they had to encounter, the indigenous peoples survived the onslaughts of colonialism and made their presence felt in the post-war world by leading many a struggle for recognition and restoration of their aboriginal identities and rights. Far from giving up their identities, the indigenous peoples are reorganizing themselves as communities and fighting for restoration of their dignity and rights as indigenous peoples. Through organized struggles and campaigns at national and global levels, the indigenous peoples successfully indicted the colonial rule and were able to internationalize their problems and concerns. Collectively, they ensured that the

Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) came out with a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 1994. In 1995, the Commission on Human Rights established its own working group to examine the Draft Declaration. Although the draft is yet to be adopted by the UN General Assembly, several rounds of negotiations by UNHRC on the draft have helped in influencing the national policies of several countries around the world. Several nation states have revised their earlier policies toward the indigenous peoples and are exploring ways and means to accommodate the interests and concerns of these hitherto neglected and discriminated segments of modern nation states. Compelled to address the indigenous peoples' demands, even powerful liberal democratic states are now amending their constitutions, restructuring their political and administrative structures, reviewing their development strategies and becoming advocates of communitarianism and multiculturalism. However, given the structural limitations of capitalist societies it is not clear at the moment as to what extent the liberal democratic states will be able to fulfill the aspirations of indigenous peoples and succeed in erasing the bitter memories of the colonial past. Assessment of the indigenous peoples' future in modern liberal democratic states requires an understanding of the indigenous peoples' experiences, problems, concerns, aspirations, potentialities, and limitations.

### **Who are Indigenous Peoples?**

The term "indigenous peoples" means different things to different people. Although intellectuals and activists have been debating issues concerning indigenous peoples, they have not yet arrived at one acceptable definition. Both the concept and theory of indigenous peoples are still evolving.

In the Report for the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination of Minorities (1986), Martínéz Cobo stated that indigenous populations are:

composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.<sup>2</sup>

Cobo's definition is criticized for being limited in scope and focus, as it basically talks about the native aboriginal communities inhabiting the Americas and Oceania and ignores many other deprived tribal and ethnic communities living in other parts of the globe. The International Labor Organization (ILO) in its Convention No. 169 on the working rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989, used the said term to refer to both tribal peoples whose social, cultural, and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations, and also to peoples who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country at

the time of conquest or colonization.<sup>3</sup> Realizing that there are several communities in the world claiming indigenous status on one or the other grounds, Erica-Irene Daes, Chairperson of UNWGIP, avoided giving a precise definition of the term. Yet she helped in broadening the concept by recognizing different communities of peoples as indigenous. According to her, indigenous peoples include: (1) descendants of groups which were in the territory of the country at the time when other groups of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived there; (2) those who have preserved almost intact the customs and traditions of their ancestors which are similar to those characterized as indigenous because of their isolation from other segments of the country's population; and (3) those who are placed under a state structure which incorporates national, social, and cultural characteristics alien to theirs.<sup>4</sup> The Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC), which articulates the indigenous claims in Africa, argued that the concept should encompass all politically and economically marginalized people in colonial set-ups; communities such as the San and the Pygmy who are physically distinct and hence subject to specific forms of discrimination and, those hunting and herding people who inhabit deserts and forests and are discriminated against and dominated by agricultural peoples in the state system.<sup>5</sup> Realizing the changing contours of the concept, even the World Bank has given directives to identify the indigenous peoples on the bases of the following characteristics: (1) close attachment to ancestral territories and to the natural resources in those areas; (2) self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group; (3) an indigenous language, often different from the national language; (4) presence of customary social and political institutions; and (5) primarily subsistence-oriented production.<sup>6</sup>

In the background of all such efforts to understand and respond to the issues of indigenous people, the term indigenous people has been gaining popularity among aboriginal peoples inhabiting developed countries like Canada in recent decades. However, ever since their territories were colonized, the Native Indian communities in Canada, who now call themselves First Nations, have been fighting for recognition and restoration of their identities and rights as aboriginal peoples/First People. As was evident in the reports of the Royal Commission to Sieur de Monts (1603) and the British Royal Proclamation of 1763, the French and British colonizers had recognized the aboriginal Indians of Canada as indigenous nations and stressed the need for entering into mutually beneficial treaties with them. Although in subsequent decades the treaties became unequal and one-sided, still treaties continued to be viewed as the basis of the aboriginal – Canadian relations. The native activists and organizations in Canada view their fight for recognition of their separate identities and interests as aboriginal peoples as part of the global struggles of the indigenous peoples. But this has not been the case in India, wherein the British colonizers annexed both tribal and non-tribal territories and made everyone the subjects of British India. Although certain legal immunities were given to certain categories of backward communities, who were later recognized as scheduled tribes, the British did not officially treat them as indigenous nations. The colonial power granted some concessions to certain tribal communities and regions in India, not because the tribes were recognized as indigenous nations, but because they were treated as backward communities needing state protection. Partly influenced by this colonial precedent, the post-colonial rulers in India also refused to give official recognition to tribal communities as indigenous people. This reason apart, the na-

tional leadership in India consciously avoided acknowledging the idea of indigenous people considering the fact that the Indian subcontinent has been host to hundreds of immigrant communities, tribal and non-tribal. Unlike the European colonizers, the early immigrants who migrated to India at different points of time settled in India and made it their homeland. They integrated themselves with the communities which were already there and contributed in their own ways to the development of Indian civilization. Since the communities moved from one part of the country to another it is difficult to know for sure who among the communities came and settled first in the territories of their present habitation. Although the local expression *adivasi* (meaning the "first people") is used in India to refer to tribes, to call all tribes "first peoples" or "first settlers" is beset with many problems. Many non-tribal communities like the Ahoms and Koch living in India today were also tribes at one time. Further, some tribes such as the Kukis in northeast India migrated to the present areas of their habitation only during the British rule.<sup>7</sup> Prior to British colonization India was more a geographical and civilizational entity than a unified political unit. The possibilities of building nation states in such multicultural and multiethnic countries developed only after the European colonizers annexed the territories inhabited by different communities and brought them under a common colonial political and administrative structure. The contradictions of colonial rule gave birth to anti-colonial movements led by the emerging national bourgeoisie. After gaining political independence the new ruling elite in the post-colonial states took upon themselves the tortuous task of building modern nation states by bringing together various communities of people belonging to different races, languages, religions, and nationalities. Any official acceptance of the chronological def-

inition of indigenous peoples in such states engaged in nation building would create politically explosive situations, threatening their nation-building projects. In view of all these considerations, Indian intellectuals like Andre Beteille, Justice Y. K. Sabharwal, and others expressed their reservations against the use of the term “indigenous peoples” in the Indian context.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding such objections, one comes across many activists and social scientists in India who think that it is appropriate to designate Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the country as indigenous peoples.<sup>9</sup> According to them the tribes are indigenous peoples, not because they are the first settlers, but because they have many things in common in normative and relational senses with indigenous peoples of the Americas and Oceania. Arguing their case, about 20 social scientists who gathered at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, in 1993 stated in their resolution that:

the word “indigenous” should be used not in [the] chronological sense but in the normative sense to cover people who feel rooted in their surroundings, entertain a custodial sense about their territory and resources, are bound together primarily through moral bindings and entertain a sense of reciprocity and mutuality reinforced by egalitarian ethos. We consider that in [the] ideal typical cognitive realm, tribe as a social category can be considered to be indigenous in the foregoing sense.<sup>10</sup>

According to this perspective indigenous peoples are distinguished by their continuing adherence to traditional ways of life, their wish to maintain their aboriginal identities, and their opposition to all external attempts at main-

streaming them. Communities are identified as indigenous on the basis of the kind of relationship they have with the dominant communities that hold political and economic power in the nation states. Colonization of traditional lands and resources, cultural subordination and racial discrimination, structural incapability to compete with dominant communities in a competitive market economy, inferior socioeconomic status, denial of the right to self-determination, etc. are the bases for identifying indigenous peoples. Invoking similar logic, some tribal communities in India are asserting their status as indigenous and making efforts to build alliances with other similar communities elsewhere. The Isaac–Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN–IM), for example, has ensured international recognition of the Nagas as an indigenous people by becoming a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). Several global organizations working for the cause of indigenous peoples have also given recognition to STs as indigenous peoples and are providing moral support to their struggles.

The meaning and scope of the term indigenous people has thus evolved over time. Initially, it was used to refer to the communities that inhabited the Americas and Oceania prior to European colonization. But of late as a result of active interventions and rigorous campaigning by different NGOs in Asia and Africa, many other peripheral and subjugated communities in post-colonial societies have also started getting recognition as indigenous peoples. In the present context, the categories of people who are accepted as indigenous peoples include the following:

1. Descendants of groups of people who inhabited the territories prior to the arrival of other groups of people who were culturally different and economically and politically more powerful.

2. Communities of people who lived in isolation, practicing their own customs and traditions before they were conquered and subjected to alien control and exploitation.

3. Tribal communities that are bound together through sense of reciprocity and mutuality, reinforced by egalitarian ethos emanating from their predominantly non-acquisitive material existence.

4. Marginalized ethnic communities that, despite their peripheral status in colonial and post-colonial societies, refuse to be assimilated into the dominant national culture.

5. Socially and politically backward communities that mostly depend on traditional occupations which have little relevance to a market-oriented capitalist economy.

### **Need to Study Indigenous Peoples**

These conceptual and theoretical developments enable us to understand several communities spread across the world as indigenous peoples. The term “indigenous peoples” now covers a wide range of communities starting from the Aboriginal First Nations (FNs), Inuit, and Metis in Canada to the Samis in Scandinavia, Maoris in New Zealand, Pygmies in Uganda to the STs in India. The identification of communities or peoples as indigenous is a two-way process. At one level the communities are identifying themselves as indigenous peoples and bonding with other indigenous communities in national and global arenas to defend their rights. At another level, irrespective of

whether the particular national governments recognize them that way or not, the global community is according recognition to them as indigenous peoples and lending their support to the struggles of aboriginal peoples. With several indigenous peoples' struggles now receiving global attention thanks to media attention and the growing concern for human rights, several activist NGOs and intellectuals in different disciplines across the globe have started documenting various issues concerning them. A number of insightful documents, research articles and books have been written and published on their problems and struggles in different countries. Some such studies have also probed the responses of national governments.

However, there are not many comparative studies analyzing the indigenous peoples' struggles in different countries.<sup>11</sup> Most have focused on the native people's struggles in North America and Oceania. One hardly comes across studies comparing the indigenous peoples' experiences and movements in developed and developing countries. These would help in broadening our understanding of indigenous peoples in different stages of development. They would also widen our knowledge of how modern states with different socio-cultural milieus handle the challenges posed by the indigenous peoples' movements. Since each state is experimenting in its own ways to accommodate the indigenous peoples, there is a lot one could gain from each others' experiences. The present book, written primarily with these objectives, seeks to comprehend the interface between the state and the indigenous peoples in two countries, namely, Canada and India. In the background of the experiences of FNs in Canada and the STs in India, the book investigates the extent to which the two countries – claiming to be liberal parliamentary democracies, but at different stages of capitalist development – have

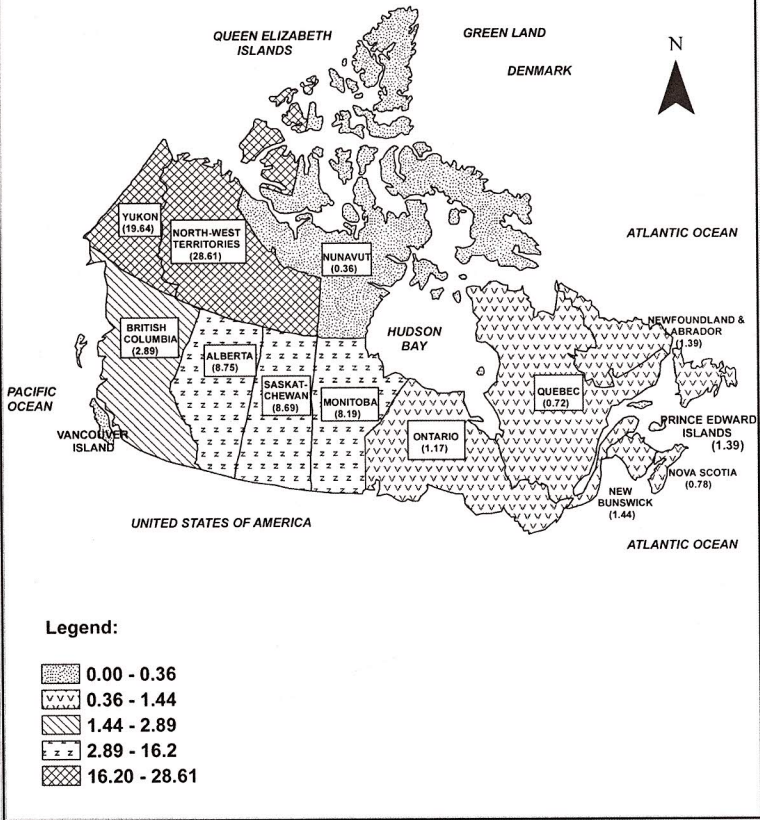
been able to uphold the interests and concerns of the indigenous peoples in their respective countries. To contextualize the concerns of the book, one may start with a general understanding of the history, struggles, and present status of the FNs in Canada and the STs in India.

### Aboriginal First Nations in Canada

The Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes FNs, Metis, and Inuit as the aboriginal peoples of Canada. The total aboriginal population in Canada was 976,305 in 2001. They account for only 3.3 percent of the total population of Canada. FN people, who are officially referred to as Native Indians, constitute about 65 percent of the total aboriginal population in Canada. Nearly 60 percent of FNs live on reserves.<sup>12</sup> The distribution of the FN populations across Canada is shown in Map 1. Following the colonization of North America, these indigenous communities lost aboriginal rights over their territories and were confined to living on reserves. FNs experienced racial and discriminatory policies for about one hundred years. The Canadian government denied their identities and rights as aboriginal peoples on one hand and on the other refused to treat them as Canadian citizens.<sup>13</sup> Despite all these obstacles that they experienced under colonial and Canadian regimes, FNs in Canada began to organize themselves into different associations and fight for their identity and rights as aboriginal peoples. Participation and positive contribution of FNs to the Allies in the Second World War helped Canadian citizens overcome their racist bias and compelled the government to give up its oppressive and discriminatory policies and attitudes towards the aboriginal peoples. The Canadian government guaranteed citizenship rights to FNs and allowed them to participate in federal and provincial elections. Since the

1950s, the Canadian state has been taking definite steps to bridge the socioeconomic disparities between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities.

**Map 1. Regional Distribution of First Nation Population 2001  
(Figures as percentage of population of province/territory)**



Although the living conditions of FNs have improved over the years, income disparities between the FN communities

and the rest of the Canadian population continue.<sup>14</sup> Even to this day, the majority of FN individuals are preoccupied in traditional sectors and employed in primary and unskilled jobs. Not many have access to higher education. They are underrepresented in managerial and white-collar jobs. The unemployment rate remains the highest among FNs. Although their health indicators have improved to some extent, FNs continue to top the list of incidence for tuberculosis, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, and Potential Years of Life Lost due to injury. Although they have been granted citizenship rights, one hardly finds aboriginal representation in the parliament, assemblies and ministries at federal and provincial governments. To this day there is no province in Canada wherein aboriginal peoples are in a majority. Regions like the Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, and Nunavut, which have substantial aboriginal populations, do not enjoy the status of provinces. Till the 1970s many of the policies and programs for FNs were executed by Canadian governments without involving the band members. Since the band governments constituted under the Indian Act neither had administrative powers nor financial resources to conceive and implement programs of their choice, they failed to satisfy the natives' urge for autonomy and self-reliance. For decades the FN communities in Canada have been waging relentless struggles for self-governments conceived and administered by the FNs themselves. It is only in recent decades that their movements began to bear fruit with the Canadian governments' recognition of aboriginal peoples' right to self-government.

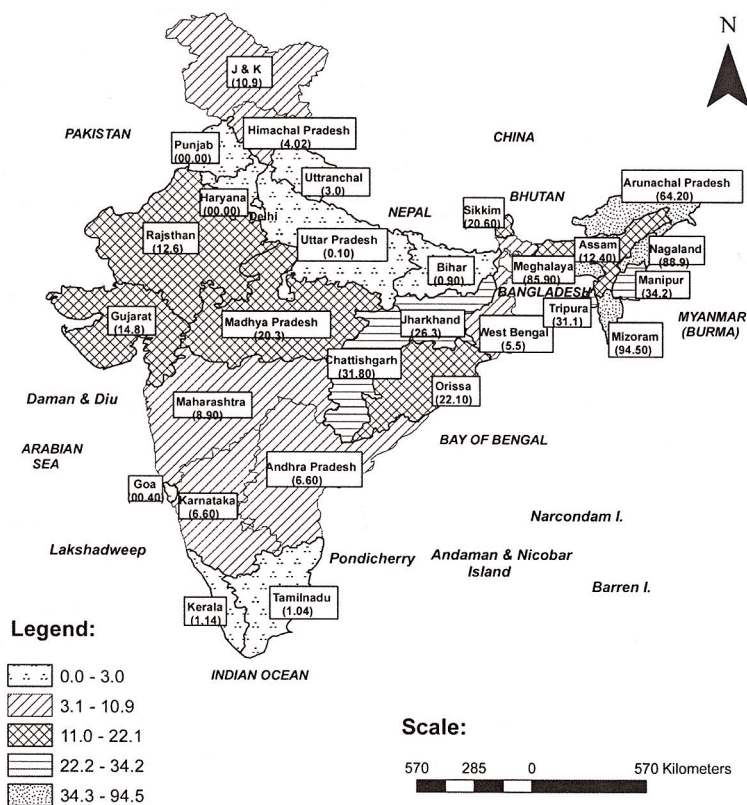
### **Status of Scheduled Tribes in India**

Like the FNs in Canada, STs in India are a legally-notified category. Officially, all STs are tribes, but all those which

claim themselves to be tribes may not be STs. Only those communities which have been declared as such by the President of India through a gazette notification or through an amendment of the Act of Parliament will be considered STs. Over the years the Government of India has included several communities in the list of STs. According to the Annual Report 2004–05 of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 700 communities are notified as STs. The total population of STs in 2001 was 84.3 million, constituting 8.2 percent of the total population of the country. The ST population grew at a rate of 24.45 percent during the period 1991–2001. The STs are spread over 187 tribal districts covering an area of 0.4 million sq km. Some, like the Bhils, Gonds, Santhals, Meenas, and so forth number in the millions, whereas others like the Chimals and Jarawas in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands are reported to be less than a hundred. Most STs live in central India, although numerically they are not in a majority in any of the states there. Interestingly, although the tribal people in the seven northeastern states together constitute only about 12 percent of the total ST population in the country, they constitute the majority in four states. Map 2 shows state-wise distribution of STs in India.

In general the tribal communities in India had experienced the worst forms of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and alienation during the British rule. Because of their socioeconomic backwardness the STs could not cope with the changes introduced by the colonial regime. Colonial developments like the introduction of private property relations, penetration of markets, takeover of forests, imposition of taxes, and restrictions imposed on shifting cultivation worsened the plight of the tribal communities. Taking note of the sad state of tribal communities, after India became independent, the post-colonial regime took several initiatives to improve the living

**Map 2. State-wise Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Population in India 2001  
(Figures as percentage of state population)**



conditions of the tribal communities. Furthermore, the Constitution of India made special provisions for the development of STs. Under Schedules V and VI of the Constitution some degree of autonomy was granted to tribal areas for administering their own affairs. Several Acts, programs and policies have been initiated to protect and pro-

mote the socioeconomic status of the tribal peoples. In 1999 a separate Ministry of Tribal Welfare was constituted at the Center with the objective of ensuring integrated socioeconomic development of the tribal communities.

The constitutional safeguards and the governments' interventions no doubt did help in bringing about marginal changes in the lives of STs. But even today there are any number of tribal villages in India that lack basic facilities like roads, electricity, safe drinking water, schools and health-care centers, communication facilities and an effective Public Distribution System (PDS). The governments' policy of affirmative action did help a small section of tribal people to climb the political and administrative ladders and attain middle-class status. However, such privileged sections, often referred to as the tribal elite, constitute a very small fraction of the tribal population. The majority of STs, especially those living in the villages and interiors, still suffer from different types of deprivation. Many amongst them continue to live in inhospitable terrains like forests or hilly areas. The tribals gained little even in the regions which witnessed rapid economic development. The industries that came up in the tribal areas hardly employ the tribal people. Although most of the dams are located in tribal areas the percentage of irrigated tribal landholdings remained far below the percentage of irrigated landholdings of the general population. Many development initiatives like construction of dams, power projects, roads, airports, industries, etc. have displaced over one million tribal people from their original habitats. Many landless tribal laborers and displaced tribal people migrate to urban areas to eke out a living by working as coolies or casual laborers in mines and industries.<sup>15</sup>

The STs lag behind the general population in all human development indicators such as literacy, health, em-

ployment, and income. The majority of them are engaged in the primary sector. A large number of tribes continue to practice dry cultivation in the plain areas and shifting cultivation in the hills or forests. Because of constraints imposed by poverty, indebtedness, primitive technologies, unfriendly market conditions, and lack of access to irrigation and power, most tribal people find it difficult to carry on cultivation. They tend to sell their lands to those better-off among the tribal communities or lease their lands to enterprising non-tribal peasants. Many Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) eke out their living depending on their traditional occupations such as hunting, rearing animals, handicrafts and tool-making. Despite provision for reservation in education and jobs, the tribals who could make it to higher education and to white-collar and managerial jobs are still few.<sup>16</sup>

The deprivations that tribal peoples in India encounter are in several respects similar to those of the FNs in Canada. Awareness of their status and their distinct identities has given birth to different kinds of tribal movements in India. The tribals have participated in different radical movements led by the leftist parties against feudal and capitalist exploitation. Besides, the tribals themselves have led many movements against the domination of non-tribals in different parts of the country. Several social movements for restoration of tribal institutions, culture, language, and traditions have taken place. The feeling that they cannot have a future in governments led by the non-tribal elite has given birth to different types of autonomy movements for self-rule. Compelled by growing tribal militancy the Government of India had to reorient the forest and other development policies which had colonial overtones. New autonomous district councils and new states had to be created to accommodate the tribals' aspirations for self-rule. It

is, however, not yet clear whether the new political arrangements conceded by the governments in response to the tribal movements will really ensure political autonomy and economic development of the STs in India.

### Scope and Structure of the Book

An overview of the status of FNs in Canada and STs in India indicates that despite some positive changes that have taken place in the recent past, the indigenous peoples continue to remain peripheral to the politics and economies of the countries they live in. But such apparent similarities should not let one ignore regional- and community-specific differences. One can see differences not only across the countries, but within each of the countries. A study of a general nature is likely to miss the specificities and particularities of indigenous experiences. For an in-depth understanding of the colonial and post-colonial influences, it is necessary to focus on one region in each country and to make an in-depth study of the interface between the indigenous peoples and the governments in those specific regions. Taking this viewpoint, the book confines its scope to the study of the on-reserve FN in the province of British Columbia in Canada and to indigenous tribal communities inhabiting the hill areas of composite Assam in India.

British Columbia is the westernmost of Canada's provinces. It is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west, by the US state of Alaska on the northwest, on the north by the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, on the east by the province of Alberta, and on the south by the US states of Washington, Idaho, and Montana. For centuries these territories were inhabited by different indigenous communities. According to some estimates, the total population of the indigenous peoples inhabiting BC at the time

of the European contact was half the total of the aboriginal population of present-day Canada. British adventurers and traders explored the region only in the nineteenth century. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC), trading in fur, established their settlements in the region for the purpose of trade. In order to compete with the Americans, the two companies united into one in 1821 and took the charter and name of Hudson's Bay Company. Till the mid-nineteenth century the territory was managed by the company. But the bullying tactics of the US government and the immigration of many Americans to BC in search of gold compelled the British government to take direct charge of the mainland territory in 1858, naming it British Columbia. In 1866 Vancouver Island merged with the province of BC. After the formation of the Canadian federation, BC joined it in 1871.

Today BC is one of the most developed provinces of Canada. It has a resource-dominated economy centered on forestry, industry, and mining. Film production and marijuana cultivation also contribute considerably to the provincial economy. Its GDP in 2001 was \$190,214 million. Only 4.5 percent of the working population is unemployed in the province as against the Canadian average of 6.2 percent. Its population in 2008 was over 4.4 million. British Columbia is a multicultural province with a considerable migrant population from Asian and European countries.

In contrast, the hill areas of composite Assam that the book intends to study is not a province or state of post-colonial India. By composite Assam, we refer to the territories earlier under the control of the Commissionership of Assam under British rule in the nineteenth century. In addition to the plains of the Brahmaputra and Surma valleys, composite Assam comprises different hill districts and frontier tracts. The hill areas of the princely states of Ma-

nipur and Tripura were not part of composite Assam. The political map of composite Assam underwent considerable changes in the twentieth century. After Assam became a Governor's province in 1921, the North-Eastern Frontier Tracts were separated from the direct control of Assam and left almost unadministered. On the eve of India's independence, Assam state had retained control over all other hill districts. But subsequently, partly because of indigenous people's movements and partly for administrative reasons, most hill districts of composite Assam were separated from the state of Assam. Today there are only two hill districts in Assam, Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Other tribal-dominant hill districts/tracts have now become separate states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland. Irrespective of whether they are autonomous districts of Assam or separate states within the Indian Union, one can look at all these hill districts/tracts together as a region for the following reasons: (1) The indigenous tribal peoples constitute a majority in all these hill areas. (2) They were all subject to British colonial administration in one way or another. (3) Racially and culturally they are very different from the Indians of mainland India. (4) Located in the northeastern region, far away from mainland India, these areas remain underdeveloped and peripheral to the Indian economy. (5) The hills are close to the neighboring countries of Bangladesh, Myanmar, or China, with which they had cultural and trade relations prior to the partition of British India. (6) The indigenous communities in the hills entertain ambivalent relations with the Indian state and mainland Indians to this day. (7) These hill areas are witness to several identity and autonomy movements of the indigenous communities that have changed the political map of northeast India to some extent.

Looked at from the development angle, the two regions have little in common: BC is a developed province in Canada, whereas the hills of composite Assam in northeast India are one of the underdeveloped regions in the country. But historically and socially these two regions have certain similarities. They were the last outposts of British colonization in their respective countries. In both countries, colonization subjugated the native communities and weakened their traditional political institutions. However, the indigenous communities in these two regions did not experience any large-scale displacement like their counterparts living in other parts of their countries. The reserves in BC and the autonomous districts/regions in the hill areas of northeast India were created more or less in areas which the bands/tribes traditionally inhabited. The reserves in BC and the scheduled districts of composite Assam restricted the movements of indigenous communities and prevented their contact with more advanced communities living in their vicinity, but they also helped in preserving the tribal culture and traditions to a considerable extent. The spread of Christianity and modern education influenced the native communities in both countries, but they could not make the tribes give up their tribal identities. In the post-colonial period these indigenous communities led many an uncompromising struggle for autonomy and self-government, asserting their aboriginal identities. The indigenous peoples' struggles in these two regions might not have threatened the political foundations of Canada and India, but they did succeed in forcing the policy makers in the respective countries to acknowledge the aboriginal rights, amend their constitutions, and reorganize their political and economic policies and programs.

These differences and commonalities apparent in the two regions provide sufficient basis for a comparative

and analytical study of the indigenous peoples' movements in the two countries. This book seeks to investigate the changing conditions of indigenous peoples in the two regions and explore the nature of the relationship that has been emerging in the two countries between the governments and the indigenous peoples. By undertaking a comparative study of issues, movements, agendas, organizations, and struggles of the native communities and by analyzing the nature of interactions taking place between the governments and indigenous peoples in the two regions, the book aims to grasp the extent to which the liberal democratic states of Canada and India can accommodate the interests and aspirations of the indigenous peoples within the framework of a nation state. Keeping these objectives in mind, Chapters 2 and 3 examine the impact of British colonialism on the FN's in BC and the hill tribes of composite Assam in India and evaluate the state policies toward the indigenous peoples in the two regions till 1950. Chapter 4 examines the indigenous peoples' movements in BC since the 1950s to the beginning of the twenty-first century and throws light on the emerging relations between Canada and the First Nations. Chapter 5 studies the nature of the political institutions and developmental interventions that took place in the hill areas of northeast India since independence and examines their impact on the indigenous tribal communities. Based on the findings of the preceding chapters, the concluding chapter makes a comparative analytical study of the status and struggles of native peoples and the response of the governments to the challenges posed by the indigenous people in Canada and India.

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