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ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

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There has been a growing convergence of interests among historians and social scientists about the origins and shape of the modern world. After some decades of archival empiricism, on the one side, and abstract theorizing about ‘society’, on the other, several sociologically minded historians and historically concerned sociologists have felt the need to bring the findings of their respective disciplines together to trace various aspects of the rise and nature of the modern world of capitalism, secularism, and bureaucracy. In the work of E. H. Carr, Seton-Watson, Hobsbawm, Kiernan, and Tilly, Skocpol, Barrington, Moore, Hechter, Gellner, Armstrong, and in the Indian context, Ghurye, Weber, Srinivas, Bose, Mookerji, and Beteille, among others, we find these concerns informing their individual contributions to the growth of historical sociology and sociological history. However, one vital aspect of these concerns is the growth of nations and states. More work has perhaps been done on the origins and nature of the specifically modern form of the state, but there have also been a number of attempts to grapple with the problems of ‘nation-formation’, both in the West and in the Third World.

The aim of this special theme is to analyse some of the origins and genealogy of nations or ‘nationhood’ in the modern world, in particular their ethnic roots. The theme has two parts. The first requires a study of the pre-modern ethnic formation of modern nations, the ‘roots’ of which are to be found, both in a general way and in many specific cases, in the model of ethnic communities prevalent in much of recorded history across the globe. The second part requires the trace of the historical deposit of collective actions and experiences in the formation of modern nations.

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In the Indian context, sociologists look at these two parts together (historical deposits and collective actions in ethnic formation of Indian nation) in terms of historically inherited social reality, which has to be coordinated within the democratic discourse of social cohesion by recognising the relative significance of five factors: (1) language, (2) religion, (3) caste system, (4) class relations, and (5) culture. They recognize the impact of at least six momentous phases of integrative and disintegrative changes in the making of Indian ethnic communities and civilization with collective actions – (1) Vedic-Aryan, (2) Buddhist-Jain influences, (3) Gupta period, (4) Harsh and Vikramaditya, (5) Mughal era, and (6) interface with Western influence, the British Raj, and the Indian National Movement (awakening of Indian Nation).

Considering the scope, depth, and significance of the problems, the broader topic of this special theme has been designed to make comprehensive sociologically historical research further based on collective actions and empirical evidences by dividing it into the following sub-themes:

1. Foundations of Ethnic Community in the Theoretical and Historical Perspectives
2. Ethnic and Nations in the Modern Era in a Global Perspective
3. Ethnic and Ethnicism in Social History: A Review
4. Ethnic Communities and Collective Actions: A Reflection
5. Structure and Persistence of Ethnic Communities in India
6. Class and Ethnic in Agrarian Societies in the Indian Context
7. Ethnic Polities and Policies Prevailing Globally: A Critical Review
8. Demographic and Cultural Continuity: A Review
9. The Christian Community of Tribal Origin in India and their Collective Actions
10. Any other topic closely related to Ethnic Communities and Collective Actions for future research.

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