ADIVASI IDENTITY OF ASSAM'S TEA TRIBES

Identity as Justice: Who Has the Authority to Define the Self, and How Is This Negotiated in the Context of the Tea Tribes of Assam

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Abstract

Human beings hunger not only for food and drink but also for recognition, the hunger for identity. This hunger shapes lives, moulds communities, and at times breaks them when denied. Identity is what allows a person or a people to truly "be" within their social, cultural, and political worlds. This paper examines the condition of the so-called "Tea Tribes" of Assam, a label imposed by the government, and argues that the question of identity is more fundamental than the ambiguous facilities offered under welfare schemes. Such provisions, instead of empowering, often function as instruments of bureaucratic control that weaponise the life and culture of marginalised peoples. The issue extends beyond Assam, reflecting a universal struggle of oppressed groups worldwide who face hermeneutical injustice through misrepresentation and epistemic injustice through the silencing of their voices. By contextualising the plight of one community, the research raises a larger philosophical question: Who holds the authority to define identity? Can political powers, under the rhetoric of freedom and democracy, impose definitions that serve only power and expediency? Or must identity remain the right of individuals and communities to articulate for themselves? The study argues that identity is inextricably linked to justice. To demand recognition is not to resist the nation but to affirm dignity within one's own homeland. Identity, therefore, is not a privilege granted by rulers but an existential right of every people, a right that transforms recognition itself into justice.

Keywords: identity; justice; Adivasi; Chotanagpur; Tea Tribes; epistemic injustice; hermeneutical injustice

1 Introduction

For instance, imagine a farmer who has worked tirelessly to cultivate potatoes, only to be accused of selling tomatoes. This misinterpretation is not merely a mistake of words; it becomes an injustice when it delegitimises the farmer's work and livelihood. In the same way, minority communities often find their identities misrepresented or misinterpreted by dominant groups. This analogy reflects the condition of the tea tribes of Assam, whose identity is frequently misunderstood, marginalised, or misrepresented within the broader socio-political discourse. Just as the farmer's potatoes are falsely labelled as tomatoes, the lived experiences, histories, and cultural practices of the tea tribes are often redefined by external narratives that do not correspond to their own self-understanding. Identity, therefore, is not a mere word of language. It functions as a tool of interpretation, a tool that can be used either to empower or to oppress, depending on who controls the discourse. In contexts shaped by majority influence, identity becomes a site of struggle. For the tea tribes of Assam, this struggle is not only linguistic or symbolic but also material, affecting their access to rights, recognition, and social justice. Thus, the issue of identity injustice is not limited to mislabelling but extends to

systematic patterns of exclusion and misrecognition. Language, politics, and power intersect here, showing that identity is always more than a name; it is a lived reality that carries consequences for dignity, belonging, and survival.

This research is self-inspired by the author. On 20th April 2025, during a tour to Tripura, the author observed that Adivasis working in tea and rubber plantations have been granted Scheduled Tribe (ST) status (Tripura State Government, n.d.). This observation led the author to critically analyse why the Adivasis of the tea gardens in Assam are not recognised as STs, despite sharing the same cultural, linguistic, and historical traits as those of Chotanagpur, a region that today extends across Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh (Baro, 2021). Tribes such as the Kadia, Munda, Oraon, and Santhal are officially recognised as STs in those regions, yet in Assam, they are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (Niyogi, 2025). The author argues that this discrepancy reflects a deeper drama of epistemic injustice perpetuated by the Constitution, the state, and political parties. By labelling these groups as "tea tribes," the state imposes a hermeneutical injustice, erasing or misrepresenting their historical identity. As a result, their history is marginalised, their identity fragmented, and their ability to unite and establish a political presence in their homeland severely weakened. This concern of 'identity as justice' resonates with struggles across the world. Comparable cases include the Kurds in the Middle East, the Palestinians, Sri Lankan Tamils, Basques, Tibetans, Rohingya, Catalans, and Uyghurs. In India, similar fragmentation can be seen in the case of the Bhils, divided across states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan (Khan, 2024). Globally, aboriginal and Indigenous groups have faced analogous challenges: the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Tuareg of North Africa, the Maasai of East Africa, Native American nations, and ethnic minorities such as the Rohingya, Kachin, Shan, and Karen in Myanmar (Burhani, 2024; Jalali, 2013; Mtuy et al., 2022; Liberty, 2023; Stanton, 2017). These examples illustrate how identity, in one context, may be celebrated as cultural heritage, while in another it is stigmatised as separatism, terrorism, or a threat to nationalism. Such dynamics of power, exclusion, and recognition are central to contemporary debates, as also reflected in Yuval Noah Harari's *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (Harari, 2018, pp. 101–186).

Therefore, the author attempts to understand the question of 'identity as justice' philosophically, with particular reference to the tea tribes of Assam, and how they deserve to actualise their identity. There are many challenges involved in this process. Although several tea tribes have now become aware of their constitutional rights, the reality of party politics has prevented them from fully actualising those rights. Historically, the tribals of Chotanagpur did not conceive of the "state" in the modern, geographical sense. For them, the state was not merely a territory but a living body infused with the mystery of ancestors. Consequently, they did not demand a separate state in political terms; rather, they expected that the state should refrain from enforcing laws that conflicted with their social and cultural practices. For them, justice itself was synonymous with identity. In the contemporary context, however, many tribals have realised that the Constitution often remains only a document on paper, while actual governance lies in the hands of mainstream society, which tends to overlook or erase their identity. As a result, increasing numbers of tribal groups are demanding separate states as a means of self-determination. At the same time, there is a profound awareness among tribals that the creation of a state can itself become a manipulation of their existence. A state, governed by external laws and political manipulation, may sever their deep relationship with nature, ancestors, and human elements that remain at the core of its existence, as tribals in India.

In this research, I will engage both theoretical arguments and lived experience as a tribal person, alongside insights from philosophers who work on justice and identity, especially Miranda Fricker,

John Rawls, and Jean Paul Sartre. This study adopts a dialectical approach, interpreting the lived reality of my people through the lens of identity and justice. My aim is not to romanticise this experience, but to critically situate it within broader philosophical and social debates. As Harari (2015) observes in his book *Homo Deus*, human societies have long been shaped by stories, which were originally meant to bind people together. Yet as societies advanced, these same narratives were often taken so literally that they fueled violence, exclusion, and even the mass killing of others across cultures and religions (Harari, 2018). Still, stories are not merely vehicles of destruction; they also hold the potential to foster peace and harmony on a global scale. This raises a deeper metaphysical question that troubles the inquiry into identity and justice: is human society truly grounded in ethical justice, or merely in a convenient ethics of survival? Harari's *Sapiens* reminds us that Homo sapiens were not inherently friendly or just, but often cruel, even to the point of eliminating other human species (Harari, 2015).

There is a large body of research on the Tea Tribes, but very little literature approaches the struggles and dynamics of the community through a philosophical lens. Most existing studies come from the social sciences, yet it is evident that the government has failed to adequately recognise this community. Current research is also highly sensitive within the context of Assam, especially as Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma frequently frames debates in terms of demographic change (Zee Media Bureau, 2025). This creates the possibility of controversy, since the Tea Tribes are often regarded as outsiders by Assam's Scheduled Tribe groups. My own research may remain incomplete, as I have only recently begun this work; however, through the few people I have met, I have sought to understand their struggles and their ongoing quest for identity.

The author's main research question is: Who has the authority to define identity, and how is this authority negotiated by the Tea Tribes of Assam within the broader discourse of justice? This research question seeks to analyse the power dynamics that have historically undermined the identity of a community, while also focusing on the idea that identity itself can constitute a form of justice. The researcher has three primary aims in exploring issues of identity and injustice: (1) To examine how the identity of tribal communities is interpreted and represented through various philosophical frameworks, particularly drawing on Fricker's work. (2) To analyse the phenomenon of such injustices and assess their relevance today, not only in India but across the globe. (3) To amplify the voices of the Adivasis of Assam, exploring the possibilities and limitations of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, and to argue for the concept of 'identity as justice' in the world in which we live. This research holds significant value. It can contribute to policymaking for tribal communities and has practical relevance when addressing questions of identity. Moreover, it carries importance across multiple disciplines, including politics, economics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. By providing a critical understanding of identity and justice issues often overlooked when communities are not part of the mainstream society, this study highlights the lived experiences of Assam's Tea Tribes and the broader implications of identity-based injustice.

2 Identity as justice for Adivasis of Assam

The question of identity is very important in human life. We need it for practical purposes and to live meaningfully. However, identity can also be manipulated; sometimes people try to suppress it or exaggerate it for their own benefit. Whether we agree or not, this is a real phenomenon in today's world. In society, identity is necessary for basic functioning; that much is true. Yet in practice, we rarely recognise the real identity of people or things. Identity becomes merely relational and often

superficial. We end up discriminating based on identity itself. This happens even in ordinary daily activities. For example, while preparing food, we knowingly or unknowingly differentiate ingredients according to our perceived value. What seems like a simple act actually points to a deeper ontological question: Is it fair to discriminate in this way? This becomes even more serious when we look at the identity of the Tea Tribes. Historically, they were brought by the British to work as indentured labourers in tea plantations (Baro, 2021). Many elders I met used to narrate how our tribal people were taken to Assam and to *Taapu* (a Nagpuri term referring to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands). As a child in 2007, I used to wonder what happened to them. Now it is 2025; I have grown up, and globalisation and technology make it clear that our tribes still live in Assam and Taapu. There is a great irony here. While mainland Adivasis have gained Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, their constitutional rights often exist only on paper. Yes, there is some space for tribal communities in governance, especially since most mineral-rich regions fall under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, yet even there, tribal rights are frequently violated. So, the question is: Will granting ST status to the Tea Garden Adivasis truly solve their problems in 2025? From what I witnessed during my visit to Tripura (7th–26th April 2025), the answer seems uncertain. The Adivasis who migrated to Tripura for tea plantation work did receive ST status, but their lives remain unchanged. Their labour continues to be hereditary, their health and education remain poor, as if the identity label changed, but their condition did not. Therefore, the main issue is not merely to demand or criticise government structures. Rather, it is to understand how identity becomes a core principle of justice. I am not speaking of the negative justice found in many Fifth Schedule Adivasi areas, where constitutional provisions reserve seats for tribal leaders, yet those leaders often end up as puppets of political parties and capitalist interests, prioritising profit over environment and tribal rights. Despite all the hurdles faced by the Adivasi tea tribes of Assam, their identity cannot be erased simply because the State desires it so. From a Rawlsian perspective, this treatment is far from fair. Although the Assam government has classified them as OBC, which may appear as a form of justice, existentially, it functions like a modern-day political sacrifice not of bodies, but of identity. It is not a visible genocide, but rather an identity genocide carried out through bureaucratic categorisation. Rawls argues that *justice as fairness* must go beyond traditional contract-based arrangements, yet the Assam government has applied a contract-like form of justice, offering benefits only during elections, such as the long-promised ST status, which is never fulfilled in reality (Rawls, 1999). This exposes the performative nature of state justice. The identity crisis deepens when the same community is recognised as Adivasis of India in Chotanagpur, yet labelled 'Tea Tribes' within Assam. This dual identity is contradictory and unjust. Their counterparts in Chotanagpur enjoy ST status and preserve their culture with dignity, something that cannot be taken from them. But in Assam, those who migrated generations ago to work in tea gardens, risking their land, culture, language, and life, are now denied their rightful recognition. Given that the tea tribes have contributed immensely to Assam's economy through low-wage labour and landlessness, justice demands that the state should rethink land rights, livelihood, and recognition. Their exploitation is economic, cultural, and linguistic: a) Low wages fail to meet basic needs, b) Loss of language and cultural erosion, c) Lack of access to education. Therefore, their demand for ST status is not power politics; it is, in Rawls's words, a "rational choice" rooted in the truth of their own identity (Rawls, 1999, p. 15). Rawls rightly states: "A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions, no matter how efficient and well-arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust (Rawls, 1999, p. 03)." Here, Rawls's thought on justice stands absolutely true; the label imposed on Adivasis as OBC is unjust, for it fails to recognise their authentic identity as tribals. In this sense, both law and political institutions operate not as agents of fairness but as mechanisms of misrecognition. When

identity is categorised for administrative convenience rather than lived truth, justice becomes compromised. Henceforth, identity becomes the ground of justice. The tea tribes are no longer voiceless; they are negotiating, reclaiming history, and challenging state-imposed identities. Their identity was not formed under a *veil of ignorance*, as Rawls would suggest in the fair formulation of laws without bias, but rather under a veil of power and intellectual manipulation, designed to keep them marginalised (Rawls, 1999). This reality is evident not only in Assam but also echoed in Chotanagpur, where Adivasis face similar struggles, particularly in matters concerning their constitutional rights under the Fifth Schedule. The injustice faced by the Tea Tribes is not only social or political, it is fundamentally epistemic injustice. Their identity as *Adivasi* has been knowingly and systematically mislabelled by the government, which categorises them as 'Tea Tribes' despite their own preference to be recognised as *Adivasis*. As Fricker (2007) explains, *epistemic injustice* operates in two major forms, and both are clearly visible in this case. First, *testimonial injustice* occurs when the credibility of a speaker is unfairly dismissed due to prejudice related to their social background, ethnicity, accent, or perceived status. In the case of the Tea Tribes, their demand for ST status is repeatedly ignored because their testimony is considered untrustworthy or invalid, primarily because they are migrants from Chotanagpur, and historically perceived as 'Poor Adivasis.' Despite their continuous protests and repeated assertions of being Adivasis like their counterparts in Chotanagpur, the state refuses to acknowledge their voice. Second, this leads to what Fricker (2007) calls *hermeneutical injustice*. Even when Tea Garden Adivasis clearly state, "We have our own name, language, and culture," the state chooses to interpret them only as OBC for administrative convenience, thereby erasing their lived identity. This distorts the meaning of their existence, reducing a cultural identity into an economic labour category. However, such epistemic injustice cannot survive for long, because no community can existentially deny its own identity. The Adivasis of the Tea Gardens are actively resisting this imposed identity, even at the cost of protest, sacrifice, and struggle, because identity matters more to them than party politics. To put it simply, through an analogy: calling Adivasis "Tea Tribes" is like showing mangoes to schoolchildren and insisting they are oranges. Everyone can see the truth, yet the system forces a false label. This analogy proves that justice for the Tea Garden Adivasis is inseparable from the reclamation of their true identity, for them, *identity itself is justice*.

3 The limits of identity as justice

Although the Constitution provides the possibility for Tea Tribes to be recognised as Adivasis, rather than merely as 'Tea Tribes,' there remains a deep impossibility rooted in epistemic injustice. Adivasis historically did not conceptualise their identity through state-imposed categories. Many of the concepts used to define them today, such as *sanskriti* (culture), sin, king, state, come from dominant languages like Hindi or Assamese, rather than their own mother tongues. For Adivasi communities, such concepts are not organically rooted in their worldview but are exogenous impositions. This process of conceptualisation from outside becomes a form of objectification, forcing Adivasis to frame their identity through mainstream categories rather than their lived experience. In Fricker's (2007) terms, this results in *testimonial injustice*: when Adivasis assert, "We are Adivasi," their testimony is dismissed, and the government overwrites their self-definition by formally tagging them as 'Tea Tribes.' Further, *hermeneutical injustice* occurs when Adivasis are denied the interpretive tools to define themselves within state structures; their identity is formulated by outsiders for political gain, not by themselves, and it is very prevalent in all the nations in the world. Globally, concepts have been used as tools of power and domination, dividing societies, just as democracy and communism became

ideological weapons. In contrast, Adivasi philosophy does not rely on abstract categorisation; it is lived rather than conceptualised. However, once abstraction and categorisation take over, identity becomes trapped within power structures. I am not claiming that absolute justice is possible, but epistemic fairness could be extended to Tea Garden Adivasis. Yet, even this seems unlikely, because exploitation has been normalised for over a century, and identity has become a bureaucratic matter rather than a question of justice. Moreover, political complexity deepens the issue: there are other tribal groups in Assam who may resist granting ST status to Tea Garden Adivasis out of fear of competition in reservations. Political parties exploit this divide for vote-bank politics, as seen when the BJP promised ST status to gain votes, yet never implemented it (Grey, 2021). This appears to be a deliberate hermeneutical manipulation, using identity promises not to deliver justice, but to capture electoral power. Therefore, when we speak of 'identity as justice' in the context of Tea Tribes, we must also confront its limits. Identity cannot become a vehicle of justice when it is controlled, defined, and manipulated by those in power.

4 The possibilities of identity as justice

As Rawls (1999) argues, any law or institution that perpetuates injustice must be abolished. The Tea Garden Adivasis, through long reflection on both their lived experience and the government's constructed narratives, have begun to recognise this truth. One cannot hide sunlight unless one is born beyond the galaxy; meaning, the existence of Adivasis in Assam cannot be denied, as if they were invisible or alien. Their identity cannot remain suppressed simply because they are poor or less formally educated. They are not static subjects; they are in the process of becoming, and one day, they will actualise their rightful identity. Even though epistemic injustice has been inflicted upon them by both the state and the multi-ethnic social fabric of Assam, which often misinterprets them as outsiders, there still exists the possibility of dialogue. Through genuine engagement between communities, the Tea Garden Adivasis can rewrite hermeneutical injustice into hermeneutical justice, contributing not to division but to the protection and enrichment of North-Eastern cultural plurality. Suppression and control will only lead to violence, as we have already witnessed in Manipur. Dialogue is not merely ethical; it is necessary for peace. Another possibility lies in rethinking the state's fear. If the government is unwilling to grant ST status, while still extracting surplus value from Adivasi labour, then it must at least ensure fair wages, land rights, and housing. Justice cannot be indefinitely delayed without consequence. From a philosophical standpoint, epistemic injustice cannot sustain itself forever. Power politics is temporary. Adivasi philosophy itself resists the permanence of domination. They believe in living fully in the present rather than surrendering to the state's future-oriented control. For them, justice is not a distant promise; it is a lived experience, here and now.

5 The authority of defining the self

When we speak of identity, especially from the philosophical lens of Adivasi thought, it is important to recognise that identity is not merely a political label or an external classification. For Adivasis, identity is ontological; it is lived, embodied, and continuously sustained through ancestral practices. Unlike mainstream society, which often treats identity as individualistic and objectified, Adivasi identity is fundamentally relational and communitarian. The self is not isolated; it is formed through a collective existence that includes not only human beings but also land, rivers, animals, and even non-living elements. There is no rigid separation between subject and object; everything that exists participates in identity. For the Tea Garden Adivasis, this deep sense of identity faces an existential

rupture. In Chotanagpur, they lived harmoniously within a relational ecosystem of community and nature. But upon being brought to Assam as tea plantation labourers, they were stripped of that organic belonging and reduced to mere instruments within the machinery of the mainstream society. Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of *Être-pour-soi* (Being-for-itself) resonates strongly here. His famous statement, "Man is condemned to be free," suggests that no authority, including the state, can ultimately define one's identity (Schwarz, n.d.; Howells, n.d.). The true authority lies in one's conscious assertion of selfhood. However, Sartre's framework remains anthropocentric; it presumes that only humans exercise freedom and identity formation. Adivasi ontology challenges this by asserting that identity is co-created with both the living and the non-living. In their worldview, *Être-en-soi* (Being-in-itself) is not a passive, objectified state, as Sartre suggests, but a living presence that actively shapes communal existence. Yet across history and across cultures, identity has often been imposed from the outside. In the modern world, labels such as "migrant," "outsider," "refugee," or even "terrorist" are assigned by state power, as seen in the cases of Rohingyas, Bangladeshis in India, or Jews during the Nazi era. Recognition and legitimacy frequently depend on external validation rather than inherent truth. Thus, while in principle, every community has the freedom to assert its identity, in practice, power politics determines which identities are affirmed and which are suppressed.

6 The personal insight of identity as justice

Identity as justice is essential, especially in the Indian context, where our society proudly speaks of unity in diversity. But the grim reality is that diversity often becomes a barrier when certain groups, socially, ethnically, linguistically, or demographically, remain unheard and unseen. Even within protected constitutional spaces like the Fifth Schedule areas, the rights of Adivasis are rarely raised by their own political representatives. This creates a dilemma: How can Adivasis reclaim their rights when even those who represent them fail to speak for them? Justice, then, is not given to people; it is negotiated by power. Yet there is hope. Adivasis can reclaim justice through identity, but only if they are not divided by party politics. I recall an encounter in Tripura with a young Munda boy. I asked him whether he worked in the tea gardens. He replied, "No. My family somehow managed to escape the tea gardens and acquire a piece of land. Now I am trying to study and get a job." He also told me that in Tripura, many Adivasis have Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, but those still trapped in the tea gardens remain labourers for life. In his words, "Our life begins in the womb inside the tea garden and ends inside the tea garden." This statement deeply moved me. These were my own people, Adivasis from Chotanagpur, yet condemned to generational bondage. What struck me most was that despite their suffering, they had not forgotten their mother tongues, Munda and Orang (here, people call them Orang, but they are also known originally in Chotanagpur as a Kurukh). This proves that identity rooted in one's own culture does not disappear naturally; it only fades when it is forcibly renamed or misinterpreted. That is precisely what Miranda Fricker calls *hermeneutical and testimonial injustice*. I also observed that some Adivasis who escaped the tea estates in Assam and began living independently are labelled as 'Ex-Tea Tribes.' This too is a form of *epistemic injustice* because they all belong to the same Adivasi community from Chotanagpur, who elsewhere rightfully enjoy ST status. Despite generations of exploitation, the Tea Garden Adivasis continue to assert their identity, and this very assertion becomes an act of justice. However, I remain cautious. While I agree that identity can be a form of justice, in Assam, the government often highlights demographic change as a reason to deny ST status to tea tribes. It is unlikely that the dominant communities will easily accept this demand. Even if identity is justified ethnically, it may not be politically accepted. Anyway, while identity can be a path to justice, if not handled with care and deeper understanding, it can also

become a trigger for conflict, as history shows us in cases of immigration crises, genocides, and ethnic cleansing across the world. Therefore, identity must be pursued not merely as power, but as responsibility.

7 Conclusion

This research is deeply personal to me. I have not sought to exaggerate the issue but rather to understand the lived struggles of the tea garden Adivasis. The central finding is clear: no one has the right to impose labels on a community. For the tea garden Adivasis, identity and justice are inseparable; their path to justice lies in reclaiming their identity through their own narratives, not through externally imposed definitions. Although this research strongly privileges the perspective of the Adivasi community, it also acknowledges the political and institutional constraints that prevent them from obtaining Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Assam. A critical question arises: if Tripura can grant ST status to Adivasis, why not Assam? And if political pressures prevent such recognition, why does the government not ensure fair wages and quality education for tea garden workers and their children? However, this study has limitations. The issue is highly sensitive in Assam, where party politics, often driven by religion and demographic anxieties, dominates public discourse. Therefore, the research could not identify a single conclusive reason for the state's unwillingness to recognise the immense labour and contribution of the tea garden Adivasis. Furthermore, while there is considerable data on their exploitation, very little research explains why Tripura succeeded in granting ST status while Assam did not. Future research could take a more philosophical direction, particularly through the lens of misrepresentation and misrecognition in power politics. Comparative studies between tea tribes and ex-tea tribes, as well as investigations into how identity persists despite oppression, could provide deeper insights. It also remains to be studied whether the identity of tea garden Adivasis is hermeneutically misunderstood or perhaps even a hidden form of resilience. Ultimately, identity is not granted by the state but formed by individuals and communities themselves. No matter how much institutional power attempts to suppress or manipulate identity, selfhood cannot be erased. Therefore, we must respect the identities of all, both minorities and majorities. Where institutions are unjust, they must be challenged and reformed. I firmly believe that the tea garden Adivasis have already begun this journey of resistance. A profound philosophical question continues to return as I reflect deeply on identity. Do we truly have an identity, or are we merely constructing identities to function within society? Observing realities like the Tea Tribes of Assam and other marginalised communities, I wonder whether humanity has become trapped by the very concept of identity and the power structures built around it. My own lived experience tells me that many minority identities are gradually erased or absorbed, yet on an existential level, perhaps there is no fixed identity at all. Maybe identity is both illusory and relational, existing only because we exist in relation to others, like links in a food chain. If so, our current understanding of justice and identity politics becomes deeply questionable. Human history, from ancient kingdoms to modern nation-states, has been a long struggle over identity. Yet perhaps beneath all these divisions lies a more fundamental shared humanity that we too often forget.

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