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PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
ON
TRIBES AND TRIBAL WELFARE

**Jawaharlal Nehru Centenary
Celebrations, 1989**

**TRIBAL CULTURAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE
TRIBAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
HYDERABAD**

1990

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON TRIBES AND TRIBAL WELFARE
(PAPER PREPARED IN CONNECTION WITH JAWAHARLAL NEHRU-
CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS, 1989)

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4. Sri P.S.Krishnan, IAS.,
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Govt. of India, New Delhi. 23.1.89
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Further, studies were also conducted on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's memorable contribution towards the cause of Tribal people of the country and their welfare by the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute and Prof. B.K.Roy Burman, the present booklet contains two papers prepared by TCR & TI and Prof. B.K.Roy Burman which deal with this subject.

We are highly grateful to Government of India and Government of Andhra Pradesh for sanctioning the Museum, a befitting memorial to Late Jawaharlal Nehru for whom Tribals and their Development was cherished desire. Our thanks are also due to five eminent scholars and Administrators who have readily accepted our invitation and delivered lectures providing expert exposure of multifaced personality and variagated works of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Our special thanks are also due to our Former Director of the Department of Tribal Welfare Sri M.V.P.C.Sastry but for whose constant encouragement and instuited support the programme could not have been successfully conducted.

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Dr.K.Mohan Rao,
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C O N T E N T S

Preface

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PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ON TRIBES AND TRIBAL WELFARE

Jawaharlal Nehru was not only a great statesman of international repute but also a champion of the cause of the downtrodden, especially the tribes. He was a democrat to the core who ardently advocated growth with social justice as the hallmark of his strategy for establishing socialist pattern of society in India.

INITIAL CONTACT:

Even before India attained independence, after which Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India, he had been visiting and gaining first hand knowledge of tribes and their ways of life as part of his campaign during the national movement. His strategy was to make national movement as much broad-based as possible, so as to spread the message of national liberation even to the remotest corners of the country so that every area and

group irrespective of caste, creed or area of habitation was actively involved in liberating the country. In this process he came into contact with many tribal groups such as Nagas and other tribes of the then NEFA, Bhills of Western Region, Santhals, Oraons etc. of Central-East Region and Gonds of South-Central Region, etc. Nehru himself once said " I have always long before I became Prime Minister felt very strongly to the tribal people of this country. This feeling was not the curiosity, an idle observer has for strange customs; nor was it the attraction of the charitably disposed who want to do good to other people. I was attracted to them simply because I felt happy and at home with them. I liked them without any desire to do them good or to have good done to me" (F1). In saying so it is evident that he neither wanted to clothe himself with the glory of a saviour nor expected the tribals to be grateful to him. It is a genuine feeling

of friendship and service to these tribals devoid of any curiosity for the exotic ways of life of the tribals. This detached attachment is further amplified in the spirit of comradeship when he observed: "I approach this simple folk in a spirit of comradeship and not like some-one aloof who had come to look at them, examine them, or make them conform to another way of life". (L2) Thus his approach to tribal people is one of friendship without any desire to impose any-thing on them from outside intended to change their way of life.

WHO IS ADIVASI?

He never appreciated the use of the term Adivasi as a derogatory term to refer to tribals. While addressing a tribal conference he clearly stated who constitute the category of these Adivasis. "I have not been able to solve this puzzle. In my opinion all of us are Adivasis. I do not like this distinction. We are all

Adivasis. Yes, there may be some differences. In our country there are different kinds of castes. Where several castes are prevalent, whether they call themselves Brahmins or Kshatriyas, they are all Adivasis. We have to abolish all restrictions of high and low. This distinction of hierarchy of castes has to be abolished and uprooted from our country" (I2).

He is totally opposed to the superiority complex exhibited by the so-called civilised societies of the plains and called it a false idea "To call some people primitive and to think of ourselves as highly civilised" (L1).

Qualitatively speaking, he strongly felt that there is no distinction between tribals and non-tribals, the only distinction being in terms of area of habitation (i.e.) hills and plains. "There are differences between people living in the hills and people living in the plains. Geography and climate account for differences of food and clothing

and living conditions which are inevitable. But I am sure to think of the tribals and non-tribals as people qualitatively different is wrong"(H1). He further stressed that "we must cease to think of our being different from the so called tribal people. This vicious idea and superiority complex should go. Many of tribal people have reached a high degree of development. Infact, I found that in some places the tribal people are better educated and disciplined and lead a better corporate life than the caste ridden society that we suffer from"(H2). He further feels that their way of life and culture are superior to ours, when he said that " I am not at all sure which way of life is better, ours or theirs. But in some ways I am quite certain their's is better. There is a very great deal to learn from them especially in the frontier areas. They are people who sing and dance and try to enjoy life not people who sit in stock exchanges and shout at each other and call that civilisation"(L2).

He toured the tribal areas to have an insight into tribal conditions so that he could have a grasp of their problems and formulate the future policy. He stressed this point when he said "my brief visit to the tribal areas was intended to provide me with a general overall picture of the conditions prevailing there. My main object was to get material for the better understanding of these problems, and then to endeavour, in consultation with others to develop the kind of policy we should pursue in the future" (C 1&2).

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THE TRIBALS:

In a positive and foresighted move at the time of the constitution of an Advisory Committee in connection with the work of the constituent Assembly, Nehru realised and advocated a new policy in the wake of new developments in India. In 1946 i.e. on the verge of India attaining independence, he said "apart from success or failure of the past policy it was evident that new developments in India necessitated a new

approach in many ways. Indeed the proposal to have an Advisory Committee, partly for tribal areas, in connection with Constituent Assembly, itself necessitated a new approach. Far reaching changes in India would inevitably produce their repercussions on the tribal people. Even apart from the political changes, the dynamism which is so evident in India today and which is reflected in political and economic movements and sometimes in conflicts would shakeup the frontier" (C2).

He was a visionary with a real zeal for working for the welfare of the tribes. The various constitutional safeguards incorporated in to the constitution of India are a product of this commitment of Pandit Nehru.

PRIMITIVE Vs THE PROGRESSIVE:

For him, the word 'advanced' has special connotation in the context of tribal people when he said "Normally what has happened everywhere in the world is this; wherever there were in some

sense less advanced people, I use the word 'Advanced' with some hesitation but use it in the normal sense that is, people who were used to some what primitive habits of life, wherever they have come in touch with other more advanced, they have often been almost destroyed. That has been the case in the South Sea Islands and everywhere. Therefore one has to proceed with great care"(E2). He thus cautioned about the adverse effects of a contact situation in which the less advanced suffer due to contact with more advanced sections.

His deep knowledge of the levels of development of different groups of people in the country can be understood from a statement made in 1952 after a visit to the then NEFA "Some of them were undoubtedly rather primitive, but many were remarkably developed and advanced. Indeed, it is quite absurd to call them backward. An average crowd of some of these tribes would probably be more advanced in many ways

than an average crowd elsewhere in India"(K1). He thus could know that while some tribes are very primitive and backward, certain tribes are relatively more advanced than some of the non-tribal backward groups living in plains area.

He was vehemently opposed to the idea of branding whole groups or communities as backward. While speaking on a debate on a 'Constitutional Amendment Bill' in 1951, he declared that "we must distinguish between the communal approach and the approach of helping our weaker and more backward brothers and sisters. And, although it is ~~my~~ my amendment I don't particularly like the words 'backward class of citizens' and I hope the select committee will find some better wording. What I mean is this it is the backward individual citizen that we should help. Why should we brand groups as backward and forward?"(B1). However he ~~xxxxxx~~ felt that tribal folk deserved a special and compassionate approach since they are under represented in the house. Thus he says "that a

group or class which, perhaps, deserves greater sympathy, from this house is the tribal folk, whether in the North East Frontier tract or elsewhere. We have very few persons in this house to speak for the scheduled tribes. Therefore, it should be the special concern^{and} care of this house to look after the interests of the Scheduled Tribes and their advancement in every way and when we add these words to Article 15, we certainly include the Scheduled Tribes" (B2). This shows the special concern Pandit Nehru had for the Scheduled Tribes. He once again stressed that they are not backward in the real sense of the term as they possess a distinct culture of their own which is not in any way inferior to the other cultures of India. But being an ardent integrationist he advises the tribals to think of the larger country since the very existence of India is dependant upon this feeling of oneness with India. He says that "the tribes of India possess a variety of cultures and are in many ways certainly not

backward. But they should always think in terms of India. If that fundamental and most essential practice is forgotten, India will be no where"(J2).

As a matter of fact he feels that irrespective of caste and tribal origins of a person, every body has a right to claim the highest office in the country (i.e) Prime Minister or Rastrapati, if only one possesses the necessary capability.

He said "there are many castes and tribes. Every one of them has the right to become Prime Minister or the Rastrapati of the country. You too have got the same right. Any competent man from amongst you can become Prime Minister or Rastrapathi of this country"(J3).

He always appreciated the vitality of the tribals and was attracted by the specific qualities which were possessed by tribals but were missing from the plains people. He said "I have found many qualities (among the tribals) which I miss in the people of the plains, cities and other parts of India. It was these qualities that attracted me"(F2). He further felt that "the tribal people of India are a varied people who naturally went astray sometimes. They

quarrelled and occasionally cut off one another's heads. These were deplorable occurrences and should have been checked. Even so it struck me that some of their practices were perhaps less evil than those that prevail in our cities. It is often better to cut off a hand or a head than to crush and trample on a heart. (F3)" He is thus of the firm opinion that ~~xxxxx~~ physical assault is much better than causing mental agony, the damage from the former being of a momentary nature and that from the latter being slow and long lasting.

He was all admiration for the basic human qualities exhibited by the tribals in their uninhibited behaviour. He once said " what appealed to me about all these tribal people was not only their physique and health but that the men and women alike looked one in the face and were not afraid or inhibited. Altogether they struck me as a fine lot of which any country can be proud (G1)". He was also highly appreciative of the democratic functioning of their elders, without having a written constitution, but following oral traditional

laws and codes of conduct that have been handed down from generation to generation. Appreciating the corporate, disciplined and democratic way of life of tribal people, he once remarked. "They are an extremely disciplined people, often much more democratic than most others in India. Without a constitution and the rest, they functioned democratically and carry out the decisions made by their elders or their own representatives almost without exception. Above all they are a people who sing and dance and try to enjoy life"(G2).

While appreciating local culture and language, he exhorted the people to develop a national outlook with national integration as the sole motto. During one of his inaugural addresses of a tribal conference he extolled the tribals to keep up their fine arts: "I have seen today your folk dances seperately of different communities and I have found them quite enchanting, I hope that you will keep up this art of yours and will make more progress in it, I want that in our country, songs

and dances should develop much and that people should do their work happily. You should not think you have to leave your songs and dances. They are not bad"(11). At the same time he also asked them to play their role as law abiding citizens in order to avoid confusion and lawlessness. Stressing this point he said "You know that in your tribe also you have your rules and regulations and all of you follow them strictly. If you do not follow them, there will be some disorder, in the same way there are laws and rules in the country. Laws and Rules are codified. They are codified after consulting the general public. Hence they are to be followed and obeyed by the public other wise confusion and chaos would prevail". (14)

He extolled the tribal gathering to identify themselves with our nation "you have to bear in mind that we all belong to our country Bharat. We are all equal and we all have equal shares and rights in our country and we have all to forge our country ahead"(13).

He is a firm believer in collective action based on the cooperation of all sections in our endeavour for building up a prosperous country. "Whatever we have to do for the country let us do it collectively. Let us do it in consultation and with the cooperation of all; then only we can prosper, you have to bear one thing in your mind whether you reside here in Bastar or at Delhi or in any other part of the country, we are sailing in the same ship in the sea. You must remember that unless all of us propel the ship in a right manner, we are doomed to be drowned in water. Therefore we all have to do our jobs in close cooperation and to forge ourselves and our country ahead to achieve progress and prosperity". (15)

He believed that Adivasis have also a role to play in promoting the progress of this country. However, he was aware that their culture and customs are to be protected. "The Adivasis of our country should learn, be educated and cultivate their lands and see that our country progresses. We want that your customs, traditions and religion should not be

interfered with. Some people say that they should be changed. But I do not like it. I want that such arrangement should be made that you should decide for yourself how you would like it to be (16). Your organisations should remain, songs and dances should survive and at the same time you have to work for the progress and prosperity of the great country of ours i.e. Bharat. We shall take your advice and cooperation in the administration of the country" (17). This shows Nehru's unflinching faith in local democracy and the need for seeking advice and cooperation from even grass roots level in the common endeavour for building up of a prosperous and forward looking Bharat. This he wished to achieve without supplanting the local organisational framework while encouraging song and dance as symbols of traditional culture handed down from generation to generation.

SPIRIT OF THE TRIBAL AND CORPORATE LIFE:

Nehru felt that there are many things which the so called civilised sections of the population should learn from the tribals. He extolled the

spirit of the tribal which should be imbibed from them by others. "If we go to them ^{and} meet these people, we must learn and imbibe something of their spirit and not go there with long faces and black gowns and try to kill the spirit among these people"(L3). He further appreciated their free and frank life embodying cooperative life. He always spoke of their frank demeanour. "Free and uninhibited mixing" and "Peaceful corporate life"(L4). He always advocated a policy of appreciating tribal mind and friendly approach for establishing a bridge between the tribal and the non-tribal.

"These people, make them understand us and create a bond of affection and understanding between us"(L6). Consequently he was opposed to any attempt aimed at altering their way of life. "If you approach the tribal people with affection, go to them as a liberating force and as a friend so that they may feel you have come not to take away something from them, but to give them something, that is the right intergration; but if they feel you have come to try to change their methods of living then

it is all completely wrong"(L5). Stressing this last point further and elaborating it he said: "I am alarmed when I see not only in this country but in other great countries too how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image and likeness and to impose on them their particular way of living. We are welcome to our own way of living, but why impose it on others"? He thus vehemently opposed to the idea of making Tribal people "Second rate copies of ourselves"(K2). He explained his own way of tackling tribals and their problems. "I approached them in a spirit of comradeship and not like some one aloof who had come to look at them, examine them, weigh them, measure them and report about them or to try to make them conform to another way of life"(K3). Nehru gave reasons for his liking for tribal people. "Perhhaps I felt happy with these simple ~~folk~~ folk because the nomad in me found congenial soil in their company". (K4)

It was only after independence that the Gadia Lohars were convinced that their land was freed from foreign Yoke and agreed to return to their native land. Pandit Nehru, when appraised of their heroic and patriotic pledge of the nomadic tribe and their eagerness to return to their cherished land, gave consent to lead the entry-procession of this patriotic race into the famous fort of Chittorgarh fort in 1955. About 400 families were rehabilitated at that time.

However Nehru was not all praise for nomadism. Though he liked to travel from one part of the country to another and desired to be stationary, he opposed the Type of nomadism practised by some of the tribes as it was posing many problems in their way of development. This is evident from the speech he delivered in Nomads tribal conference at Dehradun. He said "A few years ago I went to Chamba and Dakhonsie and met Gujjars. I tried to understand their problems... I believe, there should be equal opportunities for all in development. My heart likes to adopt nomadism and if I could get an opportunity, I would never sit at one place.. . . But nomadism, which you have adopted, is no good. I don't say that you should not move but if you travel or wander only for your livelihood, it is an obstacle in your progress" (NI).

Nehru strongly feels that market economy and introduction of foreign liquors into tribal areas cause utmost damage to the tribals since "these two serve to put an end to their traditional handicrafts and arts. They gave up their simple way of living and adopted the so called European Civilisation which was the most disastrous" (H3). He even felt the same with the Indian Civilisation also when he remarked "To some extent there is danger of the so called Indian Civilisation having a similar disastrous effect if we do not apply proper checks" (H3). He thus firmly believed that introducing the tribal to the larger Indian Civilisation also should be a slow process, carefully planned with proper checks.

He strongly opposed any action that results in uprooting the tribals from their native moorings and making them soft as "the tribals are a hardened lot accustomed to a vigorous life suited to the difficult terrain. There must not be any attempt to uproot the tribal people from their surroundings; they must not be made to grow soft and thus loose some of their fine qualities". (J1). He therefore of the firm opinion that the tribal should not be displaced from

his native land. Even when displacement became inseparable, the tribal should not be totally removed and shifted to a far of place. He should be rehabilitated in his own area of habitation.

INTEGRATION:

Being a staunch integrationist, who worked for consolidated India by bringing together various princely states and other autonomous regions in the country and merging them with larger India, he was also conscious that mere political integration alone is not sufficient to make India an integrated whole. He therefore ardently pleads that real integration is a natural process that can be helped to grow by creating congenial conditions. The greatest need of the hour is therefore psychological integration that results in eradication of fissiparous tendencies i.e. regionalism, casteism, religious bigotry etc. "You may talk here day after day about development programmes in regard to schools and other matters, but you will fail completely if you do not touch the core of the problem. The problem is to understand these people, make them understand us and create a bond of affection and understanding between us. After the achievement of independence, the basic

problem of India as a whole, is one of integration and consolidation. Political integration is now complete but that is not enough. We have to do something much more intimate than political integration and that process takes time. It is not a matter of law. It grows. You cannot force it to grow just as you cannot force a plant or flower to grow. You can only nurture it and produce conditions where it grows. So the greatest problem of India today is psychological integration and consolidation to build up a unity which will do away with provincialism, communalism and various other 'isms' which disrupt and separate" (J5&6). He also advocated emotional integration especially that of the tribes of NEFA. But he is against immigration of too many non-tribals into tribal areas. He is of the opinion "Integration in a sense is slowly taking place, but pushing in a few or larger number of outsiders does not help integration" (A1). He further feels "We must approach the tribal people with affection and friendliness and come to them as a liberating force. We must let them feel that we come to give and not to take something away from them. That is the type of psychological integration India needs. If on the other hand, they feel you have come to

impose yourselves upon them or that we go to them in order to try and change their methods of living, to take away their land and to encourage our business men to exploit them, then the fault is ours, for it only means that our approach to the tribal people is wholly wrong. The less we hear this type of integration and consolidation of tribal areas, the better it will be". (F) Evidently he is warning us against a paradoxical situation in which while we advocate integration of tribals in our society we allow exploitation of tribals at the same time. That is what is going on now in the tribal areas against which Nehru rightly warned us some thirty five years back.

He further said that in the name of assimilation, force should not be used nor the virtues and values of tribal customs and laws be supplanted. He was of the opinion that "The way of forcible assimilation or of assimilation through the operation of normal factors would be equally wrong. In fact I have no doubt, if normal factors were allowed to operate, unscrupulous people from outside would take possession of tribal lands. They would take possession of the forest and

interfere with the life of tribal people. We must give them a measure of protection in their areas so that no outsider can take possession of their lands or forests or interfere with them in anyway except with their consent and good will" (F7). He thus very vehemently pleaded for the safeguard of tribal interests in forest and land which are highly susceptible to alienation by outsiders in the garb of assimilation.

STRATEGY AND APPROACH:

As a pragmatic man with full grasp of the prevailing tribal situation in India, he opposed the two extreme approaches i.e. (a) The museum curio (development in isolation) approach and (b) the open door (total assimilation) approach because he felt that both these approaches are ~~xxx~~ equally damaging to the tribal life and culture. While talking about the tribals of NEFA especially those of Assam he felt "My liking for them grew and with it came respect. My ideas were not clear at all, but I felt that we should avoid two extreme courses, one was to treat them as Anthropological specimen for study and the other was to allow them to be engulfed by the masses of

an Indian humanity. These reactions were instinctive and not based on any knowledge or experience, latter, in considering various aspects of these problems and in discussing them with those who knew much more than I did and more especially with Verrier Elwin, more definite ideas took shape in my mind and I began to doubt how far the normal idea of progress was beneficial for these people and indeed whether this was progress at all in any real sense of the word. It was true that they could not be left cut off from the world as they were. Political and economic forces impinged upon them and it was not possible or desirable to isolate them. Equally undesirable it seemed to me was to allow these factors to function freely and upset their whole life and culture which had so much of good in them" (G3). He is very eager to see that they are developed but while developing, they should not lose their native moorings and cultural identity. I am anxious that they should advance but I am even more anxious that they should not lose their artistry and joy in life and the culture that distinguishes them in many ways" (DL)

He advocated proper planning so as to win over their hearts. "That with any one, more especially the tribal people that to win them over, one has to proceed on well thought out plans, to affect their minds and emotions". (El).

His approach for tribal development is mainly based on the basic issue of ourselves identifying with the tribal with a sense of unity, complete identity and understanding. All our approaches should endeavour for improving the quality of life of the tribal, economic development being secondary. He also advocated giving freedom to the tribal in choosing his own path of progress. However we can help them progress by imparting training to adopt improved development practices, that are aimed at a gradual development of areas without any element of compulsion or force. He said "the first thing therefore is to train their own people. That could be far more effective than for outsiders to work for them. We have to make them progress but progress does not mean an attempt merely to duplicate what we got in other parts of India. What is good in the rest of India will of-course be-adopted by them gradually. Imposition has to be absent as far as

possible and people have to be trained to train others. The progress may not be rapid. But we must remember that the training takes time whatever profession you may adopt, Engineering or Medicine, it takes years to train people. It is better to go ahead on a systematic basis than by an old job approach"(H4). He further extolled the people to think that "they are our own people and our work does not end with the opening of so many schools, dispensaries and hospitals.

What we are to do is to develop a sense of unity and understanding. That involves a psychological approach. The need today is to understand these people, make them understand us and thus create a bond of affection and understanding"(F4).

His basic strategy is thus based on a psychological approach intended to promote mutual understanding and trust between tribal and non-tribal.

His widespread tours coupled with the advice he received from well known Anthropologists of India like Verrier Elwin helped him in grasping the emerging tribal situation in India and suggesting strategies for tribal development. The interaction with the

tribals on one hand and Anthropologists on the other crystalised into basic policy postulations popularly known as 'Panchsheel' for Tribal development as given below:

1. People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing any thing on them but should rather try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
2. Tribal rights in land and forests 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.
4. We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of ~~xxx~~ 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 the quality of human character that is evolved.

The five principles enunciated by Pandit Nehru synthesised his philosophy for the development of tribals. In the first instance he clearly brings out the need for recognising tribal genius and its unfettered utilisation for their own benefit. Thus he does not contribute to the popular misconception that a tribal

is basically unintelligent and does not know what he wants for his economic and social growth. His first principle thus shows his immense confidence in the native genius and its capacity to plan for tribal development. Besides he also emphasises the need for ~~xxx~~ encouraging the traditional tribal arts and culture as these lend a distinct hue to these two aspects of larger society.

In the second principle he rightly identified the two basic sources of livelihood for the tribal i.e. land and forest. Consequently he pleaded for preserving the traditional rights of tribals in these two vital economic bases of the tribals.

The third principle is a necessary corollary to the first one since it advocates training the tribals to administer themselves and develop their areas while not ignoring the initial need for utilising the services of technical personnel from outside. But he is very firm against appointing too many outsiders in the tribal areas. In this connection it is very appropriate to refer to his earlier statement about the type of personnel to

be entrusted with the administration of tribal areas. We ought to be careful about appointing officers anywhere, but we must doubly be so when we appoint them in tribal areas. An officer in the tribal areas should not merely be a man who has passed an examination or gained some experience of routine work. He must be a man with enthusiasm, whose mind and even more so whose heart understands the problem it is his duty to deal with. He must ~~be a man with enthusiasm~~, not go there just to sit in an office for a few hours a day and for the rest curse his fate for being sent to an out of the way place. That type of man is completely useless. It is far better to send a totally uneducated man who has passed no examination so long as he goes to these people with friendship and affection and lives as one of them. Such a man will produce better results than the brilliant intellectual who has no human understanding of the problem. The man who goes there as an officer must be prepared to share his life with the tribal folk. He must be prepared to

to enter their huts, talk to them, eat and smoke with them, live their lives and not consider himself superior or apart. Then only can he gain their confidence and respect, and thus be in a position to advise them" (F6). In a nut shell he advocates posting of officers of proven capability to understand human implications of tribal development, irrespective of qualifications but possessing an ingrained feeling for identification with tribal life and culture without any inhibition or superiority complex.

The fourth principle expressly mentioned that we should not ever administer these people nor should we overwhelm them with multiplicity of ~~schemes~~ schemes. It is in tune with this principle that Pandit Nehru suggested priority in implementing programmes. He said that the first priority in tribal areas as well as elsewhere in the country must be given to roads and communications. Obviously, there is need for schools, for health relief, for cottage industries and so on. One must always remember, however, that we do not mean

to interfere with their way of life, but want to help them to "live it" (F8). Thus while recognising the need for other social services like schools, he laid special emphasis to opening up a tribal areas by laying a net work of roads and communication facilities. Though every body, especially social scientist lays special emphasis on education as an important social input expected to generate growth on its own and by helping the tribal to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to properly utilise the potentialities of other developmental programmes for their benefit. Nehru advocated basic education when he said that "I am not interested in favour of large improvement in literacy education. In India today we talk of basic education. We generally adopt resolutions about it. The fact is that we have done very little about real basic education in the country. Now education obviously is necessary to everyone. When I say education I do not mean literacy. If we have to progress economically as a country, we must have much wider education" (J4).

He was also aware that tribals do not readily accept education. Consequently he suggests literacy campaigns even by using education films. He says "it is said that any educational or like approach is resented by tribal people as they consider this as an attempt to penetrate and infiltrate. This is understandable. Probably if the approach was made in a different way and after some kind of psychological change has taken place, it could not be so resented. An immediate approach which is likely to be appreciated and to do immense good is through the films. Naturally these films will be of educational character. They should even be used for literacy campaign"(C3).

Last but not the least, the fifth principle of his clearly warned us not to judge results by statistically measuring them or in terms of quantum of finances invested. He rightly emphasised the need for measuring the results only in terms of quality of human character evolved. That is to be the basic yard stick of development in this country.

This multifaceted personality of India was a statesman of world renown, father figure of non-aligned movement, prolific writer of international repute, a mature philosopher and a great national hero. He was always in the fore front of non-violent freedom struggle. Being an ardent disciple of the great apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi he could suggest peaceful solutions to the problems of the weakest of the weaker sections of our society, the tribals and enunciate the basic concepts for their development. The vastness of his vision could be gauged from the fact that he could write on such unrelated and poles apart matters like the problems of the primitive tribes living in isolation in a remote corner of the country and the problems of international relations with clean understanding and authority.

Eminent Anthropologists eulogised the services of Nehru and appreciated his great capability to understand tribal problems in their proper perspective. One of the fore-most Indian Anthropologists Prof.L.P.Vidyarthi said "On many occasions one is vividly reminded of the manifold images of this great national hero.

As an Anthropologist and a student of tribal culture, ~~xxxxxx~~ if I look to Nehru's writings, statements and speeches, I am reminded of the warm feelings that he had for the tribals but in comparison to his other numerous contributions and writings they are so meagre that they are likely to be lost sight of.

He in fact regarded the tribal people as a significant matrix of Indian civilisation and discovered many virtues among them. To sum up it has been rightly said, "Nehru loved the tribals and they loved him" (L7).

Dr. Elwin, the German born Indian Anthropologist of international repute who was the foremost applied Anthropologist of the country said "but in fact Mr. Nehru's influence on me has been paramount. He is so vitalizing a person that every time I met him my ideas are enriched with new life. In him are combined Gandhi's austere devotion to truth and peace with the world-affirming attitude of Tagore, the hardness and realism of Gandhi with Tagore's warm love of beauty and children. Into our thinking about the tribes he has brought science, humanity and respect; and I liked the man who once remarked to me that the whole of the Prime Minister's tribal policy can be summed up in one word-humility" (M1).

Dr. Roy Burman, another versatile Indian Anthropologist feels that 'Nehru's arrival on the tribal scene was a mile stone in an intellectual moral affective long march through many terrains. It was a journey towards socialist humanism a commitment to carry on relentless struggle not only for national freedom but also against oppression everywhere. It was this ardent spirit committed to socialist humanism, which found its denouement in its concern for the tribals. Nehru thus discovered in the various social formations not only a coexisting plurality, but also autonomous entities in continuous discourse with one another, with meaningful systems which were distinctive and at the same time which were not bereft of universal appeal.

Nehru's approach to the tribal problem is to be understood against this intellectual-moral-affective lands-cape traversed by his restless spirit".* . Ultimately Nehru's approach to tribal development can be broadly analyse and synthesised as follows:

*Dr. Roy Burman B.K. An Appraisal of the Contemporary Tribal Situation in India in the Light of Nehru's commitment to Socialist Democracy, talk delivered on 25-1-89 in the lecture series conducted by TCRMI., Hyderabad in connection with Nehru Centenary Celebrations-1989.

1. Recognition of tribal genius and planning for their development to suit their ingrained capability.
2. Work for their development through their own established traditions and institutions.
3. Tribal human resource development so as to help them to manage their own development programmes.
4. Neither to over administer nor to over overwhelm them with multiplicity of programmes.
5. Improve the quality of human life in tribal areas so as to build up inner strength of tribals through well knowns throughout educational and health programmes.
6. Afford protection from outside exploitation by the enactment of protective regulations which are backed up by comprehensive constitutional provisions.
7. Approach the tribal with a sense of equality without exhibiting any superiority complex.
8. Promote and nurture tribal arts and crafts.
9. Respect for tribal culture and traditions and appreciation of traditional tribal customs and laws as part of the variegated cultural milieu of the country.

This great son of the soil had thus exhibited his ingrained mental capability and flexibility to view in its proper perspective the smallest and largest issues by paying the attention due to them. He was an aristocrat among aristocrats, a promising enterprenuer among industrialists, an artist par excellence among artists, a statesman of gigantic stature among statesman and politicians of the world, last but not the least a foremost social worker among social workers who paid his whole attention to the minutest detail of social service intended for even the smallest man in the country. With his enlightened approach he could not only bring light to the suffering millions of the country but also enlighten the most enlightened of the human scientist of the country.

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AN APPRAISAL OF THE CONTEMPORARY TRIBAL SITUATION IN
INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF NEHRU'S COMMITMENT TO SOCIALIST
DEMOCRACY- B.K.ROY BURMAN

Nehru's arrival on the tribal scene was a milestone in an intellectual moral-affective long march through many terrains.

In 1912 Nehru attended for first time the congress session at Bankipur as a delegate. He found that it was very much an English-Knowing upper class affair. Essentially it was a social gathering with no political excitement or tension. With the emergence of Gandhi as the leader of India's freedom movement, the peasant problem became a part of national concern. But even then in the words of Nehru in 1920, he was totally ignorant of labour conditions in factories or fields and his political outlook was entirely bourgeois. Just then a new interest developed in his life, which, again in his own words "was to play an important part in later years". He was thrown "almost without any will" of his own, "into contact with the peasantry". Early in June 1920, about two hundred kisans marched fifty miles from the interior of Parbatgarh district to Allahabad city

with the intention of drawing the attention of the prominent politicians there, to their woe-begone conditions. They persuaded Nehru to accompany them to their place. And then as he tells in his autobiography "A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable. And their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me".² It was an important milestone in the journey of the fighter for national freedom towards deeper humanist commitment. Another milestone was Nehru's participation for the first time in the All India Trade Union Congress, which was held in 1928, at Jharia, the Centre of coal mine area which also had a large concentration of tribal population. He found a vast difference in the outlook between two sections of the participants in the Congress. There was the old trade union group, moderate in politics and indeed distrustful of politics in industrial matters. The other group was more militant, believed in political action and wanted to link up

the struggle of the workers with the struggle against imperialism. Nehru's sympathy was with the latter group³.

In between these two milestones, there was another. By mid 20's ideas of some common action between oppressed nations interse as well as between them and the labour left wing were very much in the air. In 1927 a Congress of Oppressed Nationalities was held at Brussels and Nehru attended it on behalf of the Indian National Congress. It was a journey towards socialist humanism, a commitment to carry on relentless struggle not only for national freedom, but also against oppression everywhere.

It was this ardent spirit, committed to human betterment, which found its denouement in its concern for the tribals. But as mentioned earlier, the journey was through diverse terrains. It required one not only to be aware of what was around, but also to be aware of what was deep inside the ground, under the surface layer. In his own words "During the thirtees, in the intervals of my life out of prison I travelled more extensively throughout

India, in towns and cities and villages alike". "I was again on a great voyage of discovery and the land of India and the people of India lay spread out before me". "It was not her, inside spaces that eluded me, or even her diversity, but some depth of soul which I could not fathom, though I had occasional and tantalizing glimpses of it. She was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously. All of these existed in our conscious or subconscious selves, though we may not have been aware of them, and they had gone to build up the complex and mysterious personality of India"⁴.

Nehru thus discovered in the various social formations not only a co-existing plurality, but also autonomous entities in continuous discourse with one another, with meaning systems which were distinctive and at the same time which were not bereft of universal appeal.

Nehru's approach to the tribal problem is to be understood against this intellectual-moral-affective

landscape, traversed by his restless spirit.

In the 1930's when the legendary Naga freedom fighter Gaidinlieu was incarcerated in the British Jail for her crime of leading the revolt against the British after her preceptor Jaduhang was put to the gallows, she was hailed by Nehru as the 'Rani' (Queen) of the Nagas. Moreover Nehru promised to do whatever means he had in his ability and influence to obtain her release⁵.

Though this appears to be Nehru's first important public pronouncement linking up the freedom struggle of a tribal community with the freedom struggle of India, the tribals themselves were forging this link in many parts of the country. In this connection mention may be made of the Koya revolt led by Alluri Sitarama Raju in the Agency tract of Andhra Pradesh during 1922-24. Raju is said to have been greatly influenced by the Indian national movement and particularly by Gandhi⁶. Tana Bhagat movement of the Oraons of Chota Nagpur,⁷ Halapati movement of South Gujarat⁸ and many other such movements however were more closely linked up with the national freedom struggle, both at ideological and organisational levels.

Jawaharlal Nehru was aware of this. In 1952, he mentioned during the course of a speech that his general impression about the tribes had been derived from such people as the Bhils, the Santhals, the Gonds, whose habitats he had visited during his election tours in the 30's. He also recognised that they had not remained unaffected by the surge of India's freedom struggle⁹. Though he found that they were living in a backward condition of life, they had many strong points¹⁰.

Thus, if there was communion of spirit between one who with the spiritual heritage of Gandhi has contributed most to the building of modern India and the tribal communities, it was not one way traffic. If in spite of their crushing poverty and miserable conditions of life the indomitable "will" of the tribals of the central belt was not subdued, and they participated in the freedom struggle, it must have reinforced Nehru's world-view which looks upon the quest for freedom as the non-stop music of the human spirit. When Nehru spoke of learning from the tribal people, he must have meant it in more than one sense, and the same could not have precluded the one indicated here.

The experience about the tribes of North East India touched a different chord of the music of the mind. In the words of Nehru "The North East Border area deserves our special attention, not only of the Government, but of the people of India. Our contact with them will do us good and will do them good also. They add to the strength, variety and cultural richness of India. As one travels there, a new and vaster picture of India comes before the eyes and the narrowness of outlook which sometimes obsesses us, begins to fade away. One feels that India is not just one particular part which we might know intimately, but something infinitely more, a meeting place of all manners of races, languages and cultures".¹¹

It is however not only the freeing the collective psyche of the rest of the population of the country from the cobweb of narrowness that Nehru envisaged through building up a common community with the tribal people of North East India, but also he envisaged a creative stimulus even in the individual psyche, through such process of identity expansion. Again in his words". Just as the hills breed different types of persons from those in the plains, so also the

frontier breeds a different type of persons from those who live away from the frontier. My own predilection is rather for the mountains than for the plains, rather for the hill-folk than the plains people, so also I prefer the frontier, not the frontier physically, but the conception of living near the frontier, because living near the frontier, or round about it prevents one from becoming complacent. Frontier is thus not a mere physical space, it is a space of creative discourse of man with his self and his surrounding.

The implication of this profound observation can perhaps be fully appreciated if one cares to have even a passing glance at the diverse genre of creative art on simple materials, like bamboo and cane or pieces of wood or hoops and horns of animals and so on that the tribals have presented to mankind. Nehru's five point cardinal principles are well known ¹³. But many do not realise that these mark arrival to a transit station in the course of a long march, which commenced more than three decades earlier. The five cardinal principles are:

1) People should develop along the lines 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 crafts. (ii) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected. (iii) 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. (iv) 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. (v) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

Among these five cardinal principles the second one, namely tribal rights in land and forests should be respected, is of crucial importance. This reminds one of Gandhi's concept of trusteeship as revised in 1945 with the help of Dantawala¹⁴. This is contained in a six point statements as follows:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
2. It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property, except inasmuch as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
4. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable, equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

Thus so far as the basic survival system of the peasant or the tribals is concerned there is a common Gandhi-Nehru framework. This is not surprising for two reasons. First of course, is the accommodative dialogue, with very different idioms although, that the two leaders carried on throughout the national freedom struggle; second is the fact that while in the "enchanted frontier" Nehru found a rich material for strengthening the forces of creative humanism throughout the country, sizeable sections of tribal population in the central belt of India, were drawn by the humanist activism of Gandhi much earlier and had been making their contribution in the composite anti-colonial struggle of India.

The implications of Gandhi-Nehru framework in the approach to the basic survival system of the tribals have not however been worked out in detail.

When Nehru speaks of the tribal people developing along the lines of their own ~~own~~ genius and opposes

external intervention, one may ask what is the long range implication of this. For an answer to this question one may consider two views prevailing among the anthropologists about the future of tribal social formations. ¹⁵ The predominant view is to look upon tribal social formation as a stage in the evolution of human societies. The second point of view is to look upon tribe as a type of society incorporating a world-view of enjoying sublime fulfilment through communion and reciprocity between man and man and between man and nature; rather than being held together through agonising institutional arrangements based on coercive state power and market competition. Though Nehru has not spoken on this matter in theoretical terms, he has by implication, shown his preference for the second point of view through his many utterances. But then one has to examine whether in post-independence India tribal policy has been formulated based on this premise. Similarly when Nehru said that we should not over administer the tribal areas, obviously he was speaking

about 'minimal state', though not in philosophical term, but in operational term. In this Gandhi however had spoken both in philosophical term and operational terms. To him 'state' organisation was as evil, but he envisaged 'minimal state' as a transitional arrangement. But if one examines the evolution of administrative arrangement in the tribal areas, one finds that the trends is away from what Nehru had envisaged at the operational level and what Gandhi had envisaged at both operational and philosophical levels. The deviation is however maximum in the matter of recognition of tribal rights in land and forest¹⁶. The source of this deviation is not mere manipulative pressure of of vested interests, but also continuation of a colonial legacy in the cognitive paradigm informing the legal system. Until recently studies on land questions were predominantly informed by an empiric-positivistic orientation. But the recent trend seems to be moving towards historico-comparative method. These two approaches are tied up with two approaches to law, viz legal positivism and legal pluralism (or more appropriately epistemological-anxiology inherent in

social formation). According to legal positivism all command laws of the state are legitimate. As against this, legal pluralism avers that social behaviour rather than the compulsive norm of the state is source of legitimisation of law. When applied to land rights, two conflicting approaches result from these two orientations. One is *res nullius*, according to which rights to property accrues to individuals from the property of nobody, thus the state is having superior right over all lands. The other is *lex loci rei sitae* (law of the place where the thing is situated). During the colonial period, the first approach held the ground and even now the judicial thinking by and large continues to be guided by it. But as pointed out by Justice Hidayatullah,¹⁷ Indian tradition is entirely different. Besides, among many tribal communities the rights of individuals are subsumed within the rights of communities. If the community as the rationale of the rights is removed in the name of abolition of intermediary, the age-old rights of the individuals also disappear. Fresh rights are conferred by the state according to

criteria laid down by the state apparatus during the preparation of record of rights.¹⁸ As a result, it has been found that in some states hardly one percent of the land traditionally under occupation of the tribals, has been recorded in their favour.¹⁹ Again it has been found that when a large number of persons are dislodged from their habitat for the purpose of implementation of massive development projects, no compensation is paid as a sequel to the non-recognition of the traditional rights.²⁰ Much of the unrest and upsurge in tribal areas appear to be due to continuation of this colonial legacy which it has become possible to implement more vigorously now, because the requisite administrative, communication and other infrastructures have also come into existence. The nation is paying the price for deviation from Gandhi-Nehru framework. It is hightime to look back to look forward.

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