

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made a number of significant contributions to India as a freedom fighter, as a leader of the common people, as a champion of forces of justice, freedom and peace in the internal arena and as an author. His contributions have been many and varied in all these roles. This article deals with his sense of social justice and development which found expression in his attitude towards the tribes. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while addressing a conference in 1952 said "I am not at all sure which way of living is better, ours or theirs. I am quite certain, that theirs is better. A great deal of things can be learnt from their culture."¹

of attachment for rivers, trees and hills and led their life in its lap. So they cultivated a life of quite withdrawal. This habit is often misinterpreted for isolation or aloofness. It has long been recognized that some of the traditional views of tribal people 'as tiresome savages who caused troubles or as colourful and picturesque folk engaging themselves in sexual orgies, human sacrifice and head hunting or as backward, mired in superstition and squalor were unjust and unreal and needed to be changed. But tribal people are always treated as an inseparable part of our civilization and culture. Every aspect of their socio-cultural life be it religion, language, art, painting, dance, drama,

Tribal Philosophy and Pandit Nehru

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There are hundred million tribal people inhabiting in nucleated villages all over India. To them, life means living in harmony with one's environment. This has given them a deep sense

of attachment for rivers, trees and hills and led their life in its lap. So they cultivated a life of quite withdrawal. This habit is often misinterpreted for isolation or aloofness. It has long been recognized that some of the traditional views of tribal people 'as tiresome savages who caused troubles or as colourful and picturesque folk engaging themselves in sexual orgies, human sacrifice and head hunting or as backward, mired in superstition and squalor were unjust and unreal and needed to be changed. But tribal people are always treated as an inseparable part of our civilization and culture. Every aspect of their socio-cultural life be it religion, language, art, painting, dance, drama,

TABLE-I

TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA.

Year	Tribal Population	% to total population	Decadal Growth Rate.
1951	19,111,498	5.29	41.19
1961	30,130,184	6.86	33.84
1971	38,015,162	6.94	24.80
1981	51,628,638	7.83	24.69

1991	67,658,638	8.08	23.79
2001	84,326,240	8.20	22.7
2011	10,43,000,00	8.61	23.7

(Source: Census of India from 1951 to 2011, Government of India.)

Pandit Nehru's attitude towards tribals was based on following principles viz. (1) Philosophy of social-economic justice, (2) National reconstruction and right to equality and freedom. All these principles were the integral part of the freedom struggle and a hallmark of Gandhian philosophy. As a leader of the Indian National Congress, Nehru was committed to this concept.

Nehru was fascinated by the spontaneity of tribal culture and their capacity of joy and heroism inspite of their appalling poverty, destitution, and ignorance. To him, the protection of tribals from exploiters, the safeguarding of tribals' age old customs and free and enchanting in their societies and culture and bring them in to the mainstream of development process were important tasks. Nehru always tried to introduce development plans with a careful handling of challenges come across the tribal life and culture in a thinking that tribes had as much right to their own culture and religion as anyone else in India. In Nehru's view, the process of modernization must not be taken as forcing a sudden break with the tribals past but help them build upon it and grow by a natural process of evolution. This did not imply preserving everything of the past. As Nehru wrote in "An Autobiography" "We cannot stop the river of change or cut ourselves adrift from it and psychologically, we who have eaten the apple of Eden cannot forget the taste and back to primitiveness".

Nehru built up a relationship with tribals based on sympathy, affection and sincerity. He addressed to a gathering on Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh in 1955 and declared "you should live in your own way. This is what I want you to decide yourselves ... your old customs and habits are good. We want that they should survive but at the same time we want that you should be educated and should do your part in the welfare of our country." Undertaking of mining projects and the setting-up of large-scale industrial units like steel plants, aluminium companies in the tribal belts in Odisha, Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh led to large scale displacement of tribal population. The monetary compensation did not always help them. According to a survey:- "with cash in hand and many attraction in the nearby industrial towns, tribal funds were rapidly depleted and in the course of time they were without money as well as without land." So they were left at the mercy of the new economic system and easily became victim of exploitation.³

Attempts and adequate steps have been taken for socio-economic development of the Tribes in post-independence period. It envisages a shift in the principles from 'isolationism' to 'assimilation' in to the mainstream of the national culture. Attempts made for their development can be discussed under two heads such as: - (a) Development Intervention, (b) Protective Legislation.

Protective Legislation and Constitutional Safeguards:

In our constitution several provisions are made to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Tribes, to mention a few:

- a. Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- b. Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- c. Article 16(4): Reservation of appointments or posts in favour of backward class citizens.
- d. Article 17: Abolition of Untouchability.
- e. Article 19(5): Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.
- f. Article 29(5): Cultural and educational rights-protection of interest of minorities.
- g. Article 46: Directive principles of state policy- promotion of education and economic interest of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections.
- h. Article 164: Appointment of a minister in charge of Tribal Welfare in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.
- i. Article 275: Grants from the Union for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and raising the level of administration of the scheduled area.
- j. Article 330: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the house of the people.
- k. Article 332: Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.
- l. Article 335: Claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts.
- m. Article 338: Appointment of special officer for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes etc. Appointment of a National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes by the President of India.
- n. Article 339: Control of the Union over the administration of Scheduled areas and welfare of Scheduled Tribes.
- o. Article 336(25): Definition of Scheduled Tribes.
- p. Article 244(1): Administration of Schedule areas and Tribal areas. Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. Governor of each state having scheduled areas is required to submit a report to the President annually regarding administration of such areas in the state.⁴

Tribal Development Programme in Five Year Plans:

Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, the main architect of the five year plans had given emphasis on Tribal Development policies. Tribes should enjoy the advantages of modern medicine, education, agriculture and economic growth. He laid the foundation of such development programmes in the **First Five Year Plan (1951-56)**. The community development programme in Tribal areas was supplemented initially in 1954 by some 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks (SMPTB) and by introducing the concept of Tribal Development (TD) blocks in the **Second Five Year Plan (1956-61)**. Each was planned for about 25000 people as against 65000 in a normal block. An amount of Rs. 15 lakh per SMPTB was contributed by the central government. The committee of SMPTB was set up under the chairmanship of Verrier Elwin in the year 1959 and studied the working of these blocks and found that they were providing very useful

services. **Third five year plan (1961-66)** advocated for greater equality of opportunity and to bring about reduction in disparities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power. While appraising the programmes of the Third Plan the Shilu Ao Study Team remarked that 'if progress is to be judged by what remains to be done to bring the tribes on par with the rest of the population, the leeway is still considerable. In the meanwhile Pandit Nehru passed away on 27th May 1964 but Nehru legacy is still continuing in the five year plans. In the **Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)** aimed at supplementing the diet of Tribal infants to save them from malnutrition through the Crash Special Nutrition Programmes and Crash Employment Programmes. It proclaimed that the 'basic goal was to realize rapid increase in the standard of living of the people through measures which also promote quality and social justice'. An important step was setting up of SIC pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha in 1971-72 as central Sector Scheme with the primary objective of combating political unrest and left wing extremism. A separate Tribal Development agency was established for each project. The fourth plan outlay for each plan was Rs. 1.50 crore for the core programmes of economic development and Rs. 0.50 crore for arterial roads. These agencies were later merged with Integrated Tribal Development Projects during the Fifth Plan. In the **Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79)** the areas having a tribal population of 50% or more are underlined as the Tribal Sub-Plan Areas (TSP) for special care. Formation of the Large Agricultural Multi-Purpose Societies (LAMPS), Tribal Development Corporations (TDC), and Tribal Cooperative Marketing

Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) in 1987 are in **Seventh Five Year Plan**. The administration of Tribal Development was streamlined with the emergence of the Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs), as the units of administration in the Tribal Sub-Plan areas. In Odisha Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) are worked, headed by a Project Administrator. In the **Sixth Five Year Plan**, the excluded tribal pockets from ITDPs, were placed under Modified Area Development Approach (MADA), with the following goals - (a) Raising the productivity levels in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, cottage industry etc. (b) Developing human resources and upgrading education, (c) Development of adequate infrastructure, (d) Elimination of exploitation of Tribals in the field of the alienation of lands, money lending, debt, bondage, trade, excise, forests etc. To create an economic impact on the Tribes which will enable a targeted numbers of families in the TSP area to cross the poverty line (working group records, 1980-85:15). The **Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)** focused on the issue of social and economic empowerment as well as social justice.

The Fifth and Sixth Five-Year Plans have marked the turning points in the history of the Scheduled Tribes. It was for the first time that anthropologists, development administrators and policy makers joined together to review the earlier policies and programmes and devised ways for the welfare of the tribals.

The provision of funds for these programmes rose from rupees 39 crores in the First Five Year Plan to 327 crores in the Fifth Plan.⁵

CHART-1
PLAN PERIOD STRATEGIES⁶

Sl.No.	Plan Period.	Tribal Development Programme.
1	1 st five year plan	Community development approach(Tribal Development Projects)
2	2 nd five year plan	Special multipurpose projects for tribal people(creation of TD blocks)
3	3 rd five year plan	Improvement over the general CD approach (improvement of TD blocks)
4	4 th five year plan	Administrative frame programme implementation and protective measures (Tribal Development Agencies ITDA)
5	5 th five year plan	Total and comprehensive view of the tribal problems and coordination of sectoral programme (Tribal Sub-plan and creation of LAMPS)
6	6 th five year plan	Integrated approach and large financial allocation(expansion of TSP)
7	7 th five year plan	Mix-up of beneficiary oriented programme and infrastructural development (Intensive Tribal Development)
8	8 th five year plan	Plan considering the need of the people and participation (District/Regional planning and participation of voluntary organization and elimination of exploitation socio-economic upliftment)
9	9 th five year plan	Empowerment of women to act as agents of socio-economic change and development in their area, social justice.
10	10 th five year plan	Sustainable development equality and social justice, increasing literacy rate to 75%.
11	11 th five year plan	Inclusive growth, physical infrastructure expansion of MGNREGS in tribal area.
12	12 th five year plan	Administrative strengthening of implementing different programmes in the areas, need based, area based and specific tribal communities (most vulnerable) and their overall development.

TABLE-II

DETAIL PLAN WISE FUND ALLOCATION FOR TRIBAL WELFARE.⁷

Plan Period	Total Fund Allocation	Allocation for Tribal (in crores)	Percentage Development Programmes
1 st plan (1951-56)	2069.00	13.93	0.06
2 nd plan (1956-57)	4800.00	49.92	1.08
3 rd plan (1961-66)	7500.00	50.53	0.06
Annul Plan (1966-67)	2081.54	32.32	0.48
Annul Plan (1967-68)	2246.00		
Annul Plan (1968-69)	2359.00		
4 th plan (1969-74)	15901.47	79.5	0.5
5 th plan (1974-79)	38853.24	1157.67	3.0
Annul Plan (1979-80)	12176.00	855.16	
6 th plan (1980-85)	97500.00	3640.25	3.7
7 th plan (1985-90)	180000.00	6744.85	3.8
Annul Plan (1990-91)	65714.50	N.A	N.A
Annul Plan (1991-92)	73482.15		
8 th plan (1992-97)	434100.00	22409.65	5.2
9 th plan (1997-2002)	859200.00	32087.26	3.7
10 th plan (2002-2007)	1618460.00	1481.00	0.09
11 th plan (2007-2012)	3644718.00	3633.00	0.09
12 th plan (2013-17)	35, 68, 626, 00		

Eighth five year plan (1992-97). A review of tribal development in early nineties revealed that 'Though the TSP strategy has yielded results, yet were not in a position to commensurate with the efforts put in and investments made.' However the allocation for development of Scheduled Tribes was increased during this plan period also. This plan emphasized elimination of exploitation and

also paid attention to the special problems of suppression of rights, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on right to collect minor forest products etc. attention on priority basis, continued to be paid for the socio-economic upliftment of Scheduled Tribes. Efforts were intensified to bridge the gap between the levels of development of the Scheduled Tribes

and those of other sections of the society. **Tenth Five Year Plan** (2002-07) adopt eradication of deprivation and exploitation of Tribes as the central point in its approach, while pursuing simultaneously the Ninth Plan commitment of empowering the tribes.

TABLE-III

LITERACY RATE OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION DURING 1961-2011

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35
1991	40.65	18.19	26.60
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10
2011	71.07	64.0	63.1

(*Source:* Selected Educational Statistics 2004-2005, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.)

Location of Assam had a great attraction for Nehru. He paid his visit to this land just after the end of Second World War in December 1945. On his return to Calcutta (Kolkata) on 21st December 1945, he wrote:-

“Assam has the look of great reserves of strength and potential power. . . I have no doubt that great highways by road, air and rail will go across her, connecting China with India and ultimately connecting East Asia with Europe. Assam will then no longer be an isolated far-away province but an important link between East and West.”

Again the finest expression of Nehru on tribal philosophy is recorded in his preface to Verrier Elwin’s Treatise a Philosophy for NEFA.

“We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just not take interest in them in the world of today. That is not possible and desirable. At the same time we should avoid over-administering these areas and in particular sending

too many outsiders into tribal territory. It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function development in various ways. There has to be communications, medical facilities and education and better agriculture. These avenues of development should, however be pursued with the broad framework of the following five fundamental principles in the name of **Tribal Panchasila**.

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 ways their own traditional art 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. Some technical personnel from outside will, no

doubt, be needed especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders in to tribal territory.

4. We should not overadminister these areas or overwhelming them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to their, own social and cultural institutions.
5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.”⁸

The Constituent Assembly was entrusted to provide institutional framework to this vision. The Constituent Assembly viewed the problems of tribals from two broad perspectives. (1) Those related to the tribal in general and (2) those related to the tribal population concentrated in India’s North-East. Special provisions were made in the Constitution to reserve seats for the scheduled tribes in the state legislatures and in the National Parliament and in the field of appointment for services and posts of both union and the states.

The Constituent Assembly formed the North-Eastern Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-committee and worked under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi with four other members including J.J.M. Nichols Roy, a hill tribe leader from Shillong and Rupnath Brahma, a plains tribal leader from the Brahmaputra valley. Nehru stated in the Constituent Assembly: “there are tribal people and others who require very help. It is no good for us to say that we have given a vote to the member of a tribal folk and we have done our duty to him by giving him a vote we consider ourselves absolved of our all other duty. Therefore, we have to think always in terms of raising the level of all those who have been denied opportunities in the

past. I do not personally think myself that the best way to do that on the political plan in reservation of seats and the rest. I think the best way, and the more basic and fundamental way, is to advance them rapidly is the economic and educational spheres and then they will stand on their own feet.”

The Committee found that (1) the fact the hill people have not yet been assimilated with the people of the plains of Assam has to be taken in to account. (2) the assimilation process was least advanced in the Naga Hills and the Lushai Hills and the policy of seclusion has tended to create a feeling of separateness and (3) the various tribes in the foot hills under the administrative jurisdiction of one frontier tract or the other were closer to the plains tribes through family as well as economic bonds. The committee wished to safeguard tribal institutions, so that new political organizations could be built on the old foundations. The district features of tribal way of life pertaining to land, forest and Jhuming and settling disputes were sought to be preserved, changes would emanate as far as possible from the tribe itself.

Keeping in view all these considerations the Bordoloi Committee recommended that (1) Khasi and Jaintia Hills (excluding Shillong town), the Garo Hills, the Lushai Hills, the Naga Hills, the North Kachar Hills, and the Mikir Hills (excluding certain plains areas) be made autonomous districts with wide-ranging powers vested in the district councils for the administration and development of these areas. (2) The Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts, the Tirap Frontier Tracts, and the Naga Tribal areas should be non-autonomous areas and responsibility for their all-round administration and development should be vested in the Governor of Assam and (3) the plains tribals of Assam should be recognized as a minority and

be entitled to all the privileges of a minority, including representation in legislatures and in the services and that their land should be protected. The district council was an administrative innovation which found its place under the sixth schedule of the Constitution. It was a democratic framework in which seventy five percent of the councilors were directly elected. It was also significantly traditional as twenty five percent of councilors would be nominated by the Government from among ex-tribal chiefs. All these bear testimony of Nehru's great love and affection for the tribes and to his vision of creating institutions to safeguard and promote interests of the tribals in a fast-changing world. It became clear that tribals are no longer be neglected or ignored.

With regard to the tribal development and welfare, Pandit Nehru observes that our duty which comes "first is to preserve, strengthen, and develop all that is best in tribal society, culture, art and language. The second is to protect the tribal economic right. The third is to unite and integrate the tribes in a true heart unity with India as a whole, so that they may play a full part in their life. And the last is to develop welfare and educational facilities so that every tribesman may have an equal opportunity with rest of the fellow citizens who work in the fields, factories and workshops in the open country and the plains."

After independence certain group of Naga tribe demanded for an independent country. An armed revolt was started by the Naga revolutionaries. So in the second half of the 1950s a fierce armed conflict took place between the underground Nagas and the security forces of India. Nagas did not cooperate and participate in the first general election held in February 1952. In the year 1953 Nehru visited Burma and Assam,

where Naga tribes inhabited, to find out the cause of such demand and came to know that from the days of legendary Ahom rulers of Assam and the British, this tribe of tough people had received a great deal autonomy and consideration. So in fear of losing these things (facilities) they had demand for separation. There Nehru made it clear that "we are willing to accommodate the *Nagas* in every possible way but not at the cost of national integrity. Violence would be met with force."⁹

According to Kautilya, the legendary Prime minister to Chandragupta Maurya and the author of *Arthashastra* "The acquisition of the help of local communities is better than the acquisition of an army or profits." After a long discussion with the *Nagas* an amicable solution came out and on 11th December 1963 Nagaland was carved out of Assam (Administration of Naga hills at the time of independence was the responsibility of Assam of which it formed a part) and made in to a state eventhough it then had a population of only 0.3 million. The first election to Nagaland Legislative Assembly and for a Parliamentary seat was held in January 1964. N.N.C. a party close to the Indian National Congress party and Democratic party candidates competed for forty six assembly seats and one parliamentary seat. But N.N.C. party led by Zapu Phizo boycotted the election. In this election N.N.C. party led by Shilu Ao got its majority and formed the government. But the forces of insurgency continued to command over the valley. Again in 1964 with Nehru's approval, Jayaprakash Narayan, Michael Scott and B.P. Chaliha went to Nagaland with a peace mission and signed an agreement with the underground Naga leaders that led to a cessation of hostilities and beginning of peace. The idea that the power can be turned to utilitarian goals in a democracy is well accepted. The democratic process has since taken root in Nagaland. India can be

reasonably proud of a stable constitutional culture in Nagaland.

Nehru's sharp intellect, his empathy for the tribals, his life-long contact with the oppressed, neglected, humiliated, imbecile, poor and downtrodden people and his philosophical bent of mind enabled him to think and act in an effective manner. The practice of caste syndrome and untouchability found irrational and totally wrong to Nehru's scientific mind. Placing himself vis-à-vis a tribal he once stated:

"If I may say so, in many ways they are far better as human beings than non-tribal people like me. Because they have not developed their economy in the conventional way, they are called tribals. They are a democratic people; they are fine men and women and possess many cultural qualities which we do not possess."

"Above all they are a people who sing and dance to enjoy life, not people who sit in stock exchanges, shout of one another and think themselves to be civilized." Nehru wanted the range of extremely limited choices of tribals to be widened through education and state intervention through the instrumentality of planning and community development programmes. He was also well aware of the pitfalls. He wrote: "It has often happened in other areas of the world that such contact has been disastrous to the primitive culture and gradually the primitive people thus affected die out... I am alarmed when I see not only in this country but in other great countries too high anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness and to impose on them their particular way of living." It is true that different societies have different social and cultural realities and face specific problems of harmony between social justice and economic development. What methodology is to be

adopted to strike a balance between conflicting claims of social justice and economic development would vary from one society to another. The basic approach that Nehru laid down is, however, of intrinsic value. As he put it:

"It is obvious that the tribal areas have to progress. Nobody wants to keep them as museum specimens. It is equally obvious that they have to progress in their own way. They do not like something alien to be imposed upon them, no individual can grow in alien surroundings, habits or customs. How are we going to reconcile these two considerations? There are two extreme approaches; one is the museum approach, keeping them as interesting specimens for anthropologists to discuss. The other may be called the open door approach. Both are equally bad. The second approach attracted all the undesirables from outside who exploit these people economically and otherwise and take them out of their moorings. We have to find a middle course that can succeed any if there is no element of compulsion about it. That attempt has in fact to be made through their people."¹⁰

Equality with plainsmen in the fields of education, job and political representation of tribals was due to Nehru's tribal philosophy. Nehru wanted to create a new group of people with self-confident and capable engineers, civil servants, and public leaders along with other Indians.

It is difficult to sum up Nehru's tribal philosophy and his contribution to tribal culture and progress. In the words of Verrier Elwin: in to 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.'

Nehru was a great humanist of the kind rarely seen in the present day world. As Rabindranath Tagore says, Nehru was a person 'greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings.' Nehru's mind was 'impregnated with the deep pathos of human life, he felt for sorrows of others and a man of empathetic attitude.'¹¹

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Filigree works of Odisha