

Chapter2

Evolution of Tribal Policy in India: Pre and Post-Independence

India being a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious country, it should not surprise us with the fact that Indian society is not homogenous. The tribal groups, who live in big or small concentrations in the midst of forests or in areas which were largely inaccessible till recent times, occupy a prominent place among such groups. They are proud of their cultural heritage and lead a distinctive way of life. The British approach to tribal society was basically governed by colonial self-interest. The tribesmen were generally allowed to pursue their life in isolation partly because the task of administering the marginal areas where they lived was difficult and partly because many officers honestly held the view that these people were better left as they were.¹ The aim was to maintain the *status quo*. This encouraged the vested interests viz., the zamindars, landlords, contractors and money-lenders, to exploit and usurp the tribal lands and forests. The tribesmen had to remain at the mercy of officials and usurers.² Their encroachment on tribal land and property led to the outbreak of a series of rebellions.³

Another group that tried to bring the tribals under their influence were the Christian Missionaries. They employed diverse strategies to spread the message of the gospel among them. The government however hesitated to interfere whenever any sign of unrest among the tribal population came to the surface. Sometimes through violent subjugation and quite often through negotiations with tribal chiefs and the more powerful sections of tribal society, they succeeded in deriving great political advantage. 'The chief aim of the administration was to secure peace. They were not concerned about tribal development in any way. Survey settlements were carried out and revenue collected wherever and whenever possible.'⁴

Since Independence, the government of India is concerned with securing the interests and socio-economic upliftment of the tribal people. Embedded in the Constitution of India are several articles that have the objective of promoting and protecting the interests of the Scheduled Tribes.⁵ Thus, Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV of the Constitution of India) recommends ‘the State shall promote, with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.’⁶ The present policy of the government of India, imbued with a high sense of respect for tribal cultures and traditions, is strongly opposed to any kind of interference by outside agencies which are likely to contribute to the obliteration of tribal art, culture etc.

Pandit Nehru’s attitude towards the tribals was a part of his philosophy of social justice and modernization. The concept of social justice was an essential part of India’s freedom struggle and a characteristic of Gandhian philosophy. As an important leader of the Indian National Congress, Pandit Nehru was dedicated to this concept and believed that every man has a right to equality and social justice.

The spontaneity of tribal life fascinated him and their capacity for joy and heroism. At the same time, he was aware of their terrible poverty, destitution and ignorance. He was especially concerned about the protection of all that was beautiful, free and enchanting in tribal society and culture. In formulating his tribal policy, Nehru always took into consideration the interests of both the tribal population and the nation as a whole. He thought that the tribes had as much right to their own culture and religion as anyone else. So, the state system had to be responsive to the tribal way of life.

Keeping in mind these differences, it is possible to compare the earlier policy of tribal isolation followed by the British with that pursued in Independence India.

Approaches to the Study of Tribals in India

Under British administration, the tribals generally lived in isolated packet due to lack of communication. A few roads were indeed constructed for security purposes and to enable contractors to exploit the forest produce of these areas. But in general, tribals had little or no contact with the people of the plain areas. The most glaring example of this was to be found among the tribes living in the north-eastern Himalayas. They had no communication with the rest of the world and consequently led a life of their own.⁷ Dr. J.H. Hutton, who was the Census Commissioner in 1931, was a prominent example of the isolationist school of thought. He suggested the creation of self-governing tribal areas that would decide their own course of action.

Verrier Elwin, a Roman Catholic Missionary from Great Britain, who came to in 1927 and was in course of time acknowledged as an authority of the Gond tribe of Central India supported this view. In his book *The Baiga* (1939),⁸ he advocated establishment of a sort of 'National Park' in a wild and largely inaccessible part of the country under the direct control of a tribal commissioner. He abolished the administration to allow the tribesmen to lead their lives with utmost possible happiness and freedom within this area. Power should be exercised by the old tribal council and the village headman. Non-tribal settlements within the reserved area would require a license. Economic development would be given high priority. Tribal culture would be promoted and tribal freedom will also be restored and maintained. Simple and need based education would be provided to the tribal people. There would be no restriction on their hunting and fishing and the Officials would never be allowed to dominate. Tribals were to be free from missionary interference.

In later book *The Aborigines* (1943) Elwin made a four-fold classification of Indian tribes, on their cultural development.⁹ To Class I belonged the purest of pure tribal

groups, numbering about two to three million persons. Elwin and a large section of missionary reformers and anthropologists grew lyrical over the robust, vibrant and healthy life of this tribal group. Elwin said that these highlanders do not merely exist like so many other people, they really live. Their religion was of a unique nature, their social organisation was unalloyed, and their artistic and choreographic tradition rooted in the past. Their mythology sustained them in every walk of life. Geographical conditions had largely protected them from coming into contact with outsiders. As Elwin remarked, the hoot of the motor-horn would sound the knell of the aboriginal tribes.

Class II of Elwin's this category of tribes of India includes those who have been contaminated by coming in contact with the people of the neighbouring plains. Instead of living in a community, a group of this type tends to settle in a village and become individualistic. The communal life and traditions among them are preserved only in village dormitories. Tribes of this category are less simple and less honest than those belonging to class I.

About four-fifths of the tribal population in India, numbering nearly twenty million to what Elwin categorises as belong to class III. They are in a peculiar state of transition. Tribes of this group have been appreciably affected by both the economic and socio-cultural forces of Hindu society and resemble lower caste Hindus in their way of living. They have also been subjected to missionary influence. Some among them have adopted Christianity. But, above all, they have been most adversely affected by the economic and political policies of the British, which resulted in their being uprooted from the traditional modes of production. They were dragged into the orbit of the capitalist system of colonial India in much the same way as millions of cultivators and artisans living in the villages were torn from their traditional self-sufficient way of livelihood. Many of them were reduced to the status of bonded slaves of the money-lenders, zamindars and contractors

who prospered under the British. Another section was reduced almost to the category of slave labourers working on plantations, mines, railways or road construction or in other enterprise. Finding no other means of subsistence, many of these tribes took to illegal means of livelihood and earned the disrepute of being 'criminal tribes'.

By tribes of the Class IV category Verrier means those were included in the old aristocracy, represented today by the great Bhil and Naga Chieftains, Gond Rajas, a few Binshevar and Bhuyia landlords, Korku noblemen, wealthy Santal and Uraon leaders and some highly cultured Mundas. They retain their own tribal names and clan and totem rules along with elements of tribal religion despite adopting in full the Hindu faith. They live in modern or even European style. In Elwin's opinion they adopted to modern condition without losing their tribal identity. They attained economic stability and reveal, a certain arrogance and self-confidence, characteristic of both their traditional lineage and modern enterprise. To Elwin the aim is to lead the tribesmen of the first and second classes into the fourth category, without having to suffer the despair and degradation of the third. For this, he thinks it is necessary to adopt a policy of isolation to grant such protection to the tribal during the transitional stage that they learn to stand on their own and become strong enough to resist those who exploit them.¹⁰

At the same time Elwin cautioned that 'it would be deplorable if yet another minority community which would claim special representation, weightage and a percentage of Government posts were to be created'.¹¹

Immediately before the Independence of India in 1946, Elwin was appointed as Deputy Director of the Anthropological Survey of India, located in Calcutta. He rose to be the head of the institution and documented many native tribes and lifestyles in central and the eastern portions of the country. The Government of India appointed him besides as a consultant in tribal affairs with a view to improving their conditions. It created in 1948 the

union territory of NEFA by carving out a portion of the border areas of Assam and placing it under a special administration.¹² In 1950s, Elwin served as an Adviser to the Governor of Assam on tribal affairs. He described himself as an emissary of Nehru in tribal affairs. Nehru, on the other hand, found in Elwin an advisor who had a genuine sympathy for the primitive people.¹³ With the exception of some work on the Nagas, thorough study had been made so far on the tribal population of this region. For the most part, Elwin's researches were confined to a survey of these indigenous people. These findings were first submitted in the form of a report, which Nehru supported in general. After a few years and some more exploration, Elwin compiled a book named 'A Philosophy for NEFA' (1957).

Elwin policy was expressed in two other works. (1) The Report of the Committee for Multipurpose Tribal Blocks (1960) of which he was the Chairman and for the writing of which he was largely responsible. (2) The Report of the Scheduled Tribes Commission, generally known as the Dhebar Commission of 1961 of which he was a member. In the Scheduled Tribes Commission Report Dhebar's emphasis on social justice led him, on the one hand, to stress protection and on the other to stress development among the tribal. In essence, this report which was accepted after an exhaustive debate in the Parliament was a justification of the stand and Elwin had advocated for entire length of his career.¹⁴

Elwin's policy was opposed to what Gandhi and most of the nationalists thought about the tribal problems. For example, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of January 5, 1946 reported that in course of a discussion with the political workers of Midnapore, Gandhiji had said that the Government of India should have tried to unite the adivasis with the outside world instead of leading them to an excluded area under direct administration of the Governor and thus detaching them from the rest of the country under the Act of 1935.¹⁵ A few days later on January 12, 1946, Gandhiji dwelt again on other than of the adivasis in a speech delivered at a political workers conference at Guwahati. The *Amrita*

Bazar Patrika in its issue of January 14, 1946 reported that, Gandhiji regretted that the Adivasis had been divided into water-tight compartments by the ruling authority. He thought that it was shameful they should remain isolated from the nation of which they were an inalienable part. Here was a vast field of constructive work which Gandhiji exhorted his followers to take up. They should not be afraid to go to jail in undertaking such constructive work.”¹⁶ Gandhiji’s recommended that the welfare of the adivasis be included in a pamphlet on constructive work which was being drafted by Morarji Desai.¹⁷

In a democratic state, group of people should remain outside the mainstream society. Tribals have to be involved in all the matters concerning their country. The assimilation of the tribal people with the rest of the population is another approach. It is a continuous process cultural contact with the neighbouring population has created some problems for them, partly because of their isolation and limited world view. Some tribals have steadily been adopted accepted into the Hindu way of life, while others have been connected to Christianity.¹⁸ G. S. Ghurye and D. N. Majumdar may be said to represent the two different approaches respectively.

In Ghurye’s opinion, the tribals are backward Hindus and ought to be directly and completely assimilated into Hindu culture. The sooner this happens, the better on the other hand D.N. Majumdar favours that it is not possible to ignore the entire tribal population and leave them to their own lot. It is not also possible to completely assimilate them in the Hindu culture. Therefore, recommends a gradual assimilation of the tribal in the main stream of society. We should try to help them in assimilating those elements of alien culture which are compatible with their own way of life. The Christian missionaries and some social reformers like Thakkar Bapa have also recommended and have worked for the assimilation of these tribal groups into Christianity and Hinduism respectively.

Ghurye's essay on the *Integration of Tribals* (1943) is essentially replying to the 'isolationist' approach of Verrier Elwin. The only solution to the tribal problem is in their progressive assimilation of the tribals with the farmers and peasants of the adjoining districts, since the major problems they face are similar.

Like Elwin, he classified the tribals according to the extent to which they had been assimilated into Hindu society. To the first category belong the Rajgonds and others who are now organised as members of fairly high status within Hindu society. The second category constitutes of a large mass that has been partially Hindu and has come into closer contact with Hindus. Finally, we have the hill tribes which exhibit a greater power of resistance to the alien cultures that encroach on their border.¹⁹

Tribal solidarity, according to Ghurye, has been disrupted by the influence; on the one hand, the consequences of the British administration. On the other hand, a section of tribal population is assimilated into the Hindu fold; it is ushered into an altogether strange social world. Hindu castes, at least many of them, tribes that have been incorporated in Hindu society develop an internal organisation on caste lines, while retaining some characteristics of tribal society in the management of their internal affairs.²⁰

Many of these tribes, though they have preserved their tribal languages, can and do employ languages of the neighbouring people in their routine intercourse. Many of them thus are bi-lingual, having their own mother-tongue and having more or less acquired languages of the neighbouring people. There are others, like the Baigas, who have taken up the Indo-Aryan tongue of the locality in preference to their own language. Others, like the Bhils, speak languages which are a kind of dialect of local languages. Till recent times, the languages spoken by the so-called aborigines have no script.

In his book '*The Scheduled Tribes*' (1959), Ghurye criticised the government's policy as a departure from the integrationist approach laid down in the constitution. Any

attempt to isolate the tribals from the mainstream of Indian life would be in Ghrye's opinion.²¹

Ultimately the Government of India adopted a middle of the road policy towards the tribals. The policies of isolation and assimilation, the planners were forced to take a middle path, viz. the integration approach. This approach was mainly the brain child of Jawaharlal Nehru. It consists of two kinds of measures (1) Protective and (2) Promotional. The first consists of land and the forest policies to protect tribal culture and traditions, while it seemed to be identical with development and welfare programmes undertaken by the government through plans and other voluntary agencies to make tribal life better. P.D. Kulkarni states that "the policy of protection and development is undoubtedly same in itself, but it remains to be seen whether development is possible without upsetting the harmony that exists in the placid tribal life."²² The Constitution of India contains certain provisions with a long term aim to assimilate tribals in the mainstream of Indian society.

Nehru, Like Gandhiji, became at the time of the freedom struggle strongly attracted to the tribal people long before he became the Prime Minister. This was, what he explained, not because of the curiosity of an idle observer for strange customs but because he felt happy and at home with them.²³ But, despite Gandhiji's exhortations, Congress workers could not establish much contact with the tribal people. The freedom struggle had some impact on the tribes of Central India but not on most of tribals in the frontier area of Assam.²⁴ According to Nehru, "this was due to lack of initiative and obstructions put forth by the British in the movement of the political workers in tribal areas."²⁵ News about the freedom movement reached these people only in the shape of occasional rumours. While the main body of society had to go through several decades to prepare themselves psychologically for basic changes, the tribal people had no such opportunity.²⁶ Nehru's views in this regard gradually underwent a change. Though opposed to the British policy

of exclusion, he began to appreciate the dangers of assimilation and concluded that “it is between these two extreme positions that we have to function.”²⁷

Taking part in a debate in Parliament on May 18, 1951 he said that the tribal people deserved greater sympathy from the members of the House. He added that ‘many of our colleagues in this house represent the Scheduled Castes. However, we have very few persons in the house to speak for 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.’²⁸

In his address at the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas conference in New Delhi on June 7, 1952, Nehru justified the policy of his government and stated that so far, they approached the tribal people in one of two ways. One is the anthropological approach which considers them to the museum specimens to be observed and written about. The other tries forcibly to absorb them in the main pattern of social life. The way of forcible assimilation or of assimilation through the operation of normal factors would be equally wrong. In fact, he had no doubt that 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 the tribal people. Thus, we must give them a measure of protection in their areas so that no outsider can take possession of their lands or forest or interfere with them in any way except with their consent and good will.²⁹

In his inaugural address at the Tribal Affairs Conferences held in New Delhi on December 4, 1954, Nehru once again expressed himself as follows -

There are two extreme approaches. One is the museum approach, keeping them (the tribal people) as interesting specimens for anthropologists to discuss. The other may be called the ‘Open Door’ approach. Both are equally bad. The second approach attracts all the undesirables from outside, to exploit these people economically another wise and

take them out of their moorings. We have to find a middle course. This can succeed only if there is no element of compulsion about it.³⁰

The following words of Nehru explain what he meant by ‘no element of compulsion:

“As I said 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 kind of psychological approach 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 businessmen 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 of this type of integration and consolidation of the tribal areas, the better it will be.”³¹ Nehru had great respect for tribal institutions and provided all sorts of encouragement for the development of their indigenous arts and crafts. He consciously at the same time said that it is the government’s duty to protect their right to land and forest resources. They had to be saved from being exploited by outsiders.

After him many Hindu reformist organizations, voluntary bodies, government officials and politicians got busy attacking tribal culture and imposing non-tribal value system. On account of the zeal for national integration on the part of the government and individuals, efforts to assimilate the tribals in the neighbouring Hindu societies as low castes have gained authenticity. There have been reactions from the tribal people too who are progressively more asserting their identity and organizing themselves politically self-protection.

Under the Voluntary Agencies Approach, social workers, social welfare agencies, social movement agencies, social reformers, etc., are working to uplift the weaker sections

of our society in their own ways. Among them the Bharatiya Adimjati Sewak Sangh is the foremost. When India became Independent in 1947, and the attention of the Government to tribal welfare activities increased, the social workers found the political and administrative set-up very favourable. They found their own colleagues and party men at the helm of governmental affairs. The Government, therefore, sought all co-operations from the social workers in framing tribal policies and delegated their powers to social workers in the execution of welfare schemes among the tribals. In this way, as a matter of fact, the social workers assumed the roles of both semi-officials and scientists. They began making recommendations to the Government on tribal matters. They also help to procure substantial grants from the Government fund for 'helping' the tribals, and held administrative posts for tribal welfare schemes on small honoraria. They began to organize the tribal welfare Conferences at all-India level.³²

The other voluntary organisations which deserve mention are the Bharatiya Depressed Classes League, Servants of India Society, Indian Red Cross Society, All India Backward Classes Federation and Indian Council for Child Welfare. However, the pioneer in this field is Shri A. V. Thakkar a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. Voluntary social service organizations have done considerable humanitarian work in the tribal areas, but often their idealism and spirit of service have not been matched by their understanding of tribal organizations, values and problems. The State-level agencies are mostly affiliated to the all-India agencies specially with the Bharatiya Adimjati Sewak Sangh.³³

So, the present position is that the government and the people have stopped even paying lip service to Nehru's five principles. Most of the State Governments never had a tribal policy. Now, even the Central Government too seem to be without any policy whatever for tribal people and tribal India. As a result, the tribal people are facing a real situation of

pauperization, deprivation and ultimate assimilation against their will into neighbouring communities.³⁴

Ultimately, the Government of India adopted a middle of the road policy with regard to the tribal population of India. The administrative pattern had to be kept as simple as possible and the tendency to initiate a multiplicity of officers from outside to run a confusing variety of projects had to be restricted. In the final analysis the success of developmental activities was to be judged by improvement they brought about in the quality of tribal life. Two types of measures had therefore to be adopted: (I) Protective – so far as their rights to land and use of natural resources was concerned and (2) Developmental – with regard to their society and culture. ‘Panchsheel’ or five principles enunciated by Nehru (in 1958) in collaboration with Verrier Elwin laid down as under:

- i) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and should have nothing imposed on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- ii) The tribal’s right to land and forest should not be violated.
- iii) The task of administration and development should be left in the hands of a team trained and brought up from among the tribals themselves. They may require the presence of some technical personnel from outside initially, but care should be taken to see that not too many outsiders are involved.
- iv) Assimilation should be brought about by working through the social and cultural institutions existing among the tribals and not from above.
- v) The terms of the money spent but should be judge not in by the changes it brings about in their life.³⁵

It was Varrier Elwin who prepared the initial draft of the above mentioned principles, which in his opinion contained a lot of similarity with the contentions of His

isolationist which turned into integrationist approach and the principles of *Panchseel* and he therefore wanted to merge his own idea with the broad-based principles of Nehru.³⁶ The central thrust of the *Panchseel* lay in cooperation among nations for harmonious existence in the world; the same, in Elwin's terms, was the cooperation between the state and civil society for the development of tribes. It is alleged that Elwin deviated from his integrationist approach in NEFA when he recommended prohibition of entry of politicians, research teams and common men into this territory. By doing so Elwin implied that civil society had not yet given up its contemptuous attitude towards tribes, and that the ghosts of the colonial moneylender and landlord continued to make their presence felt in this decolonized state, and could easily push the tribes into the same state of poverty as they were in the colonial period. Elwin, therefore, believed in selective and slow integration of the tribes with the mainstream development process.³⁷

Behind the tribal policy of free India there lay the growing influence of Verrier Elwin whose writings had made the Indian elite aware of tribal problems. While Elwin described himself as a missionary of Nehru's views on tribal affairs, Nehru demurred: 'It would, therefore, be more correct to say that I have learnt from him rather than that I have influenced him in any way.'³⁸ Nehru's political authority did make many of Elwin's ideas-based on a philosophy of love for the tribals into the guiding principles of state policy particularly in the North-East, until the border conflict in 1962 raised many questions about it.³⁹

From the experience of the working of the *Panchsheel* for the tribals we find: (i) that we should not force tribals to do anything against their work, (ii) that tribal rights aim at saving tribals from exploitation which can be possible only by integrating them with their neighbouring people, (iii) that only tribal officers may work in the area with some local bias. Even experienced non-tribal officers sometimes have been seen to be bookish in

approach, (iv) that tribal programmes should be very simple, and (v) that one has to 'serve the tribals in a dedicated spirit'.⁴⁰

In actual practice even Nehru's views and the principles enunciated by him, were not following in formulation of policies and planning and implementation of development programme. After him these principles were thrown to the winds. In the Second and Third Plans great emphasis was laid on industrialization and productivity as tools for abolition of poverty. As a result, large industrial and irrigation projects came into existence. As tribal areas were rich in mineral deposits and ideal sources for generation of power and irrigation potential, these became hub of industrial performance. 'The integration of the tribals with the non-tribal people of the plains is of fundamental importance, and to ensure this the non-tribals need education as much as the tribals themselves.'⁴¹

To address the constitutional mandate meant for the tribals, a number of commissions, committees, working groups and study teams have been constituted from time to time to evaluate the condition and development problems of the STs. The annual reports of the Commissioners for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes from 1950 onwards are important documents in this connection. These reports have helped to reformulate the developmental strategies with reference to the tribals. But the most important have been those that were prepared by committees, commissions instituted to look into the specific problems of the development of the tribes. The earliest of the committees were set up by the government to look into the matter of the tribes has been the Elwin Committee. The Committee recommended reduction in the number of projects and simplification of administration in the tribal areas.⁴²

Besides Central and State Governments, a number of humanitarian agencies are earnestly working to improve the economic, social, educational, political and other conditions of the tribal people. Different social and religious movements have also done a

great deal in this regard. Before proceeding to analyse the different approaches to tribal welfare lets consider the views that have been put forward in this context.⁴³ D. N. Majumdar finds two types of efforts that have been made for the welfare of the community, viz., (i) Reform Approach and (ii) Administrative Approach.

The reform approach includes social reformers work done by administrative and backed by social scientists. In Majumdar opinion anthropology is not merely an academic discipline, it is also an applied science, and has worked everywhere as a handmaid to politics, imperialism and colonialism. Reform, he says, should be brought about among the tribals only by first understanding the dynamics of tribal society. Expert knowledge of anthropological methods and techniques of approach should be used both by the administrators and social reformers. Majumdar does not think that the reform approach can solve the problems of the tribals, unless, and it is important to emphasise this, the tribal leadership is initiated in matters of tribal reform. On the other hand, the administrative approach according to Majumdar suffers from the stereotyped way in which the State and Central Governments function, enumerating the number of wells that have been dug, schools have been opened. We should see that tribal education is being imparted through their own dialect.⁴⁴

S. C. Dube presents four main approaches to the tribal problems. They are: (i) the social service approach, (ii) the political approach, (iii) the religious approach, and (iv) the anthropological approach. The social service approach focuses on the considerable amount of work done by the voluntary social agencies, keeping their own culture in mind. The political approach covers both British policy in the pre-independence period and the policy by the Government of India since Independence. Various all-India Tribal Conferences have been healthy since Independence. These have health to create indirectly a filing of unity among the tribal. The religious approach includes study of the practical help given

by the Missionaries to convert the tribals to Christianity. Ultimately this has led to the spread of Christianity among the tribals. The anthropological approach is restricted to a study of the tribals on an anthropological basis.⁴⁵

The tribals are democratic by nature. Their leaders respect every one among them. About seven per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha are reserved for them. Tribal issues are getting politicized with the emergence of new tribal leaders. Their co-operation is needed for a peaceful and democratic advanced in the tribal way of life.⁴⁶

The British “policy of exclusion” continues in a modified form in the Indian Republic through the partial exclusion of large tribal areas from the rest of the country and the adoption of special welfare measures for them. A more desirable course would be to work for the integration of the tribals in the regional and national setting and to avoid the creation of a separatist block with vested interests. The consequences of such a development have to be carefully considered in the context of present-day separatist tendencies in the country.⁴⁷

In framing the policies and programmes for tribal welfare, the Central Government has set up an Independent Tribal Welfare Ministry with the advisory bodies - the Tribes Advisory Council and the Tribal Research Institute in areas where the tribals are concentrated in large numbers. A Deputy Director for Backward Classes is appointed by the Centre acts as liaison between the National and State levels. The Governor of the State and Chief Minister and Welfare Minister are in charge of the special schemes to be implemented in the tribal areas. In some areas where tribals are concentrated in large numbers, State governments have set up an independent Tribal Welfare Ministry.⁴⁸ From time to time the Government has constituted different commissions to assess and analyse the welfare work. The five principles for the development of the Scheduled Tribes as laid

down by Nehru where later endorsed by the Dhebar Commission (1961) and Shilu Ao Committee (1966).

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission (more popularly known as the Dhebar Commission) set up under the chairmanship of Sri U.N. Dhebar in 1961, noted that the pace of development in the tribal areas was slow. Investment and other protective measures were taken till there were in its opinion inadequate, for which reason there was need for urgent attention. It called for comprehensive legislation to cover all tribals living within the Scheduled Areas and outside, and also a simple administrative system for the tribal areas. Yet, there was little change in so far as protective measures and development programmes were concerned.⁴⁹ The Dhebar Commission (1961) stressed an integrated approach. According to them, “problem of economic development for the bulk of the tribals cannot be solved unless those resources of land, forests, cattle wealth, and cottage and village industries are all mobilized in an integrated basis.”⁵⁰

P. Shilu Ao was the first Chief Minister of Nagaland. The Ao committee set up by the Planning Commission to appraise the functioning of tribal development programmes in the Third Five Year Plan came to the conclusion that most of the recommendations of the earlier committees have not been implemented and emphasized their implementation without any delay. The block approach was described as too small and inadequate to function effectively as a basic unit of planning and implementation. In the view of the committee, the main problems of the tribals were related to indebtedness, land alienation, economic backwardness and problem of communication. Hence, these should be tackled on priority basis under the comprehensive development programmes.⁵¹

Government had set up three Parliamentary Committees, the first in 1968, the second in 1971 and the third in 1973, to examine the implementation of the Constitutional safeguards for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The different

states of India having scheduled areas as also in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have constituted tribe advisory councils according to the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.⁵²

In 1972 under the chairmanship of S. C. Dube an Expert Committee was set up for advising on the formulation of a new strategy during the Fifth Five Year Plan 1974-79. A commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consisting of a chairman and not exceeding four other members including the Special Officer were appointed in July, 1978 under Article 338 of the Constitution known as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, was to investigate all matters relating to Constitutional safeguards. It was to study the implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, with particular reference to the objective of removal of untouchability and invidious discrimination arising from there, and to ascertain the socio-economic and other relevant circumstances responsible for the commission of offences against persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with a view to recommend appropriate remedial measures.⁵³

The report of the Commissioner for SCs & STs; 1973-74, strongly recommended that a fresh legislation for amendment of the Scheduled Tribe list is needed to give concessions to such tribes who deserve to be scheduled. The controversial question of the status of Scheduled Tribe persons converted to Christianity and Islam was thus sought to be solved.⁵⁴

The national committee on the development of backward areas under the chairmanship of Sri Sivaraman (Sivaraman Committee) recommended the "Sub-plan approach" with suitable adaptation for other backward areas for the better planning and development. Some committees were formed by government of India under the chairmanship of prominent politicians and government officials. These committees were included in the working group report of Sixth Five Year Plan 1980-85.⁵⁵

The set-up of the tribal development administration has been criticised on the grounds mentioned below: -

Firstly, there is lack of commonality of goals among different governmental sectors. The value orientations differ widely. Secondly, arising out of Community Development Programmes, there are problems of co-ordination. The problem of co-ordination may be sought to be tackled through committee work, allocation of perspective areas of authority and responsibility. But the tribal development administration as a whole cannot make a concerted impact on tribal culture under the existing framework. Thirdly, all personnel should undergo training for work in tribal areas. It should also be insisted upon that each officer working in a tribal area is conversant with the dialect of the area. It is also necessary to build up suitable institutional framework for the implementation of policies accepted in principle for tribal areas. Fourthly, the social scientists vis-à-vis development administration have no working relationship which is badly needed.⁵⁶

The above have been listed in brief so that these could be discussed in greater detail. It is however, clear that there is a need to make the tribal development administration better adapted to the environment of the tribal culture. The goals have to be clarified vis-a-vis national development and not only communicated through training programmes or supervision of field staff but also made part of their value pattern. Integration can be developed only through building up a spirit of team-work as well as a high level of moral through democratic leadership on the part of the administrator and restructuring of the basic pattern of administration.⁵⁷

To conclude, the policy of isolation was neither possible nor desirable. Assimilation as advocated by some was not accepted because it would mean imposition of mainstream culture. Only such policy should be accepted which makes available to the tribes the benefits of modern society and yet enable them to retain their separate identity.

The tribes when compared to other people are facing more problems and difficulties. Though the introduction of several Five-Year Plans has tried to help and support the tribes by more well-planned and effective schemes for the welfare of the tribal community. The travails of tribal development need to be understood properly. The programmes should be related to the specific needs of the tribal community. Also, tribal development programmes should be integrated with the ongoing rural development programmes meant for poverty improvement. A realistic and holistic approach to tribal development alone can produce good results.