

A
NEW DEAL
FOR
TRIBAL INDIA

5. 1963

Edited by

VERRIER ELWIN



सत्यमेव जयते

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
NEW DELHI

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A NEW DEAL FOR TRIBAL INDIA

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A NEW DEAL FOR TRIBAL INDIA (1963)

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PREFACE

The concern of the Constitution of India for the tribal population is illustrated by the provision in Article 339 that the President shall appoint a Commission at the end of ten years from its commencement to report on the administration of what are known as the Scheduled Areas (that is to say, areas which have a preponderance of tribal population) and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States.

I will go into this more fully in the Introduction and will be content to say here that the Commission was appointed on the 28th April 1960 and produced a large and detailed report which was signed on October 14th, 1961.

This report, with its appendices, runs to 756 pages, which is perhaps a little formidable in these busy days when many people regard the reading of a paper-back novel as an achievement.

Shri U. N. Dhebar, Chairman of the Commission, therefore, suggested to me that I should edit and shorten the report and produce what may be regarded as a popular version for the general reader as well as for the busy official in the field who may not have very much time for serious reading.

The result is this much smaller book which I have called *A New Deal for Tribal India*.

This book is not, however, intended in any way to supersede the full report of the Commission but rather to introduce it and to stress, as a result of selection, the most important aspects of what is, in my opinion (and I say this even though I was myself a Member of the Commission), a most significant step forward in India's attitude to and interest in the tribal people.

I must say a word about my method of abridgement. Part IV of the report, which runs from pages 357 to 486, examines in detail conditions in the individual States and Union Territories. I have omitted this Part entirely, for I think we may assume that the officials concerned, even if they read nothing else, will study that section of the report which deals with their own areas.

The report contains a large number of statistical tables and many financial statements which may be consulted with profit by those who wish to go deeply into the subject. In this summary, however which is more concerned with the quality rather than the quantity of the work done, I have omitted most of these, partly because of the test proposed by the Prime Minister, that 'we should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved', and partly because it is now over a year since the Report was signed and many of the statistics must have become out of date. Since then already a great deal more money has been spent and more exact Census figures have been obtained.

I have also dealt lightly with the subjects of Administration, the office of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, schemes for training, research and so on, for these are

largely technical matters and will be studied by those whose concern they are.

On the other hand, I have gone into considerable detail on matters of general policy—the position in the Scheduled Areas, the use of the Governor's powers, problems of land and forest, indebtedness, the impact of industrialisation and all aspects of Development.

The Commission's Report can be obtained through any bookshop and has been widely distributed to official and other agencies throughout the country. I hope that it will be read in full. At least, however, I hope that this shorter version will find its way into the hands of many readers, for the report brings out, as has not, I think, ever been brought out in quite the same way before, many of the urgent problems affecting the welfare and happiness of millions of our fellow-countrymen.

VERRIER ELWIN

SHILLONG : December 1962.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	v

PART ONE

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. THE PROBLEM	1
2. THE SCHEDULED TRIBES	5
3. THE CONDITION OF THE TRIBES BEFORE INDEPENDENCE ..	9
4. THE CONSTITUTION AND THE TRIBES	15
5. THE SCHEDULED AREAS	18
6. GOVERNOR'S POWERS UNDER THE FIFTH SCHEDULE ..	22
7. TRIBES ADVISORY COUNCILS	25
8. CRITERIA FOR THE SCHEDULED AREAS	28
9. ARTICLE 275 OF THE CONSTITUTION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATES	34

PART TWO

10. ASSESSMENT	39
11. LAND AND THE TRIBES	45
12. FOREST POLICY AND THE TRIBES	51
13. AGRICULTURE	62
14. VILLAGE AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES	69
15. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS	71
16. THE PROBLEM OF INDEBTEDNESS	75
17. CO-OPERATION	80
18. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	84
19. HEALTH	91
20. HOUSING	95
21. COMMUNICATIONS	101
22. THE IMPACT OF INDUSTRIALISATION	104

PART THREE

23. ADMINISTRATION	111
24. THE COMMISSIONER FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES	114
25. NON-OFFICIAL AGENCIES	116
26. TRAINING PROGRAMMES	121
27. REPRESENTATION IN THE SERVICES	124
28. ROLE OF THE TRADITIONAL TRIBAL COUNCILS	129
29. SURVEY, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION	133

CONCLUSION	135
INDEX	141



INTRODUCTION

As I have said already, Article 339 of the Constitution provides that:

'The President may at any time and shall at the expiration of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution by order appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States.'

The terms of reference of the Commission were very wide and the subjects on which it was asked to report were as follows:—

- (a) the administration of the Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution, and, in particular, as to
 - (i) the functioning of the Tribes Advisory Councils;
 - (ii) the laws applicable to the Scheduled Areas and the exercise by the Governors concerned of powers under paragraph 5 of the Fifth Schedule; and
 - (iii) the principles to be followed in declaring any territory to be, or to form part of, a Scheduled Area, or directing that any territory shall cease to be, or cease to form part of, a Scheduled Area;
- (b) the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States and, in particular, whether the development plans in relation to matters connected with the welfare of Scheduled Tribes require any alteration in respect of objectives, priorities or details of working; and
- (c) any other matter connected with the administration of Scheduled Areas or the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States which may hereafter be specifically referred to the Commission for investigation and report.

It will be noticed that the Sixth Schedule, which governs the administration of the Tribal Areas (as they are called) of the Hill Districts of Assam and the Union Territories lies outside the scope of the Commission, but later it was decided that we should also enquire into the development plans connected with the welfare of Scheduled Tribes in the Union Territories and in Assam.

The Commission was appointed on 28th April, 1960 and was asked to submit its report by the 31st of December of that year. But it was soon obvious that this period was far too short and its term was accordingly extended and our Report was finally signed on October 14th, 1961.

The members of the Commission were as follows:

- Shri U. N. Dhebar—Chairman.
- Shri D. Basumatari, M.P.—Member.
- Shri H. C. Heda, M.P.—Member.
- Shri Jaipal Singh, M.P.—Member.
- Shri T. Sanganna, M.P.—Member.
- Shri Manikyalal Verma, M.P.—Member.

Shri Narayan Rao M. Wadiwa, M.P.—Member.

Shri Subodh Hansda, M.P.—Member.

Shri D. J. Naik—Member.

Shri Dharam Dev Shastri—Member.

Dr. Verrier Elwin—Member.

Our first meeting was held in New Delhi on the 25th May, 1960; special committees were appointed and a general scheme of work was drawn up, altogether sixty-four meetings being held. An elaborate questionnaire was circulated to all States Governments, Members of Parliament, tribal Members of the States Legislatures, important non-official organizations and individuals working for tribal welfare, and during the next ten months members of the Commission toured throughout the country, enlarging their interest as far as NEFA, Spiti and Lahaul on the one side and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on the other.

The Commission had also had many discussions in the capitals of the States and the Union Territories as well as in New Delhi. They met the Chief Ministers, Ministers in charge of Tribal Welfare, Chief Secretaries, Development Commissioners and also District Officers. They contacted and examined a very large number of non-officials, both at headquarters and in the field.

Shri S. Narayanswamy, Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, held charge as Secretary to the Commission, and the Report specially mentions the 'great effort' made by him and by Shri O. K. Moorthy, the Officer on Special Duty, Shri. D. D. Gothi, the Administrative Officer and Sarvashri A. C. Sen and V. B. Mandlekar, the Research Officers.

When I was working earlier as Chairman of the Committee to evaluate the Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks, I came closely in touch with Shri Govind Ballabh Pant, and had the opportunity of seeing the concern this great man had for the tribal people. His death was a cause of deepest grief to the members of the Tribal Commission and in our Report we observe that: 'We had the good fortune to commence this work with his good wishes. While he was alive he continued to take keen interest in the work and was of great assistance to us in the discharge of our responsibilities. It was a coincidence that we could submit to him our interim proposals on the 19th February, 1961, just thirty-six hours before his fatal illness. In his death the tribals of India have lost a sincere well-wisher and a devoted servant. As we look at the hard work that he had put in their cause ever since he assumed the office of Home Minister, we feel how immensely he was attached to the cause of development of the tribals of India.'

PART ONE



CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

The Tribes

The word 'tribe' is nowhere defined in the Constitution of India, which has been content to declare, in its Article 342, that the Scheduled Tribes are 'the tribes or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities' which the President may specify by public notification. As these groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the population, the term 'Adivasi' ('Adi' original and 'Vasi' inhabitant) has become fairly popular. The International Labour Organisation has classified them as 'indigenous'.

The Problem

The problem is not one of carving out an exclusive destiny for tribal society. Exclusiveness, as we understand it, which means a parochial political outlook, is not a tribal weakness. Tribal corporate life is still strong and holds out hope for a co-operative way of life. It has a much wider and broader outlook than the individualistic or exclusivist. It is therefore, only necessary to widen its consciousness.

Similarly the problem is not simply one of securing material prosperity. Poverty and indigence are abundant in the tribal areas. But there is something in the tribal philosophy which has kept these people free from unseemly greed for material possessions. Tribal society does yearn for improved standards of living but its attitude to them is normal and rational.

Nor is the problem one of 'improving' the culture of the tribals to act as an incentive for their development. Tribal culture has a personality of its own, which pervades every aspect of life. That culture still draws fresh inspiration and vigour from the people and enriches them in turn.

The problem is also not one of the tribal people wanting to escape from the struggle of life—the struggle that is a normal feature of every growing society. Their very existence has depended, during these centuries of their forest and mountain existence, upon the principles of challenge and response. The rigours of climate have not driven them from their home-lands nor obliged them to abandon their way of life.

The problem again is not one of rigid or obstinate adherence to beliefs even after they have been exposed or faith in them has been lost. The people are in fact very open and frank about their beliefs and will act upon them so long as their conviction lasts.

Here then is a section of the community—simple, trusting, tough and hardy, convinced of the wholesomeness of its way of life and yet willing to change when faith and reason convince it that a change is necessary.

Tribal Loyalties

Let us give a few examples of the strength of tribal loyalties. We will go first to Spiti on Independence Day 1960. The Punjab Government had deputed a Minister to participate in the Independence Day

CHAPTER TWO

THE SCHEDULED TRIBES

Population

The largest concentration of tribal people anywhere in the world, except perhaps Africa, is in India. According to the 1951 Census, the population of Scheduled Tribes was 19,147,054 which was 5.30 per cent of the total. After the Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956, this rose to 22,511,854, or 6.23 per cent. The increase of 34 lakhs was due to the addition of certain groups which had been mistakenly omitted from the earlier list.

The largest tribal concentrations are in the States of Madhya Pradesh (48.44 lakhs), Bihar (38.80 lakhs), Orissa (30.09 lakhs), Gujarat (20.92 lakhs), Rajasthan (17.74 lakhs), Assam (17.61 lakhs), Maharashtra (16.50 lakhs), West Bengal (15.66 lakhs) and Andhra Pradesh (11.49 lakhs). The tribes themselves vary in strength from a few hundreds to the 32 lakhs of Gonds, 27 lakhs of Santals or 23 lakhs of Bhils.

The Scheduled Areas, which have an extent of approximately a hundred thousand sq. miles, by no means accommodate all the Scheduled Tribes in India, no more, in fact, than one third of the total. There are also non-tribals in the Scheduled Areas, the percentage of tribal to total population ranging from 35, as in Andhra Pradesh, to 90, as in the Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh.

Social Organisation

The isolation and the conservative outlook of most of the hill tribes have helped to retain the shape and strength of their social organisation.

Among the Santals, for example, the Manji has both civil and moral authority in the village; he supervises the farming arrangements and distribution of land for cultivation. He also has religious functions, and officiates as the master of ceremonies at births and marriages and takes care of the morals of the younger people. Among the Mundas, the village headman is the most influential person guiding the panchayat. The Hos have a system whereby the headman has a sort of federal jurisdiction over a group of villages. The Mutadars in the Agency areas in Andhra Pradesh are intermediaries between Government and people. They have been entrusted with the collection of land revenue and also help the administration in the maintenance of law and order.

There is, however, one aspect of village organisation and leadership different from that in the rest of India. The tribal tradition is generally contrary to the elective principle. Yet it is not undemocratic, for the entire village helps the body of elders to reach their decisions and all abide by them. The existence of dormitories, such as the Ghotul, Dhumkuria and Morung, has contributed to the growth of youth leadership and community development. These institutions have inculcated a sense of discipline and cooperative endeavour among their members, and social education through the narration of stories about the traditional tribal heroes, the teaching

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONDITION OF THE TRIBES BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

The British Policy of Isolation

The tribal people living in their remote hills and forests for many centuries led a life of their own, generally uninfluenced by the main currents of history. It was only with the entry of missionaries into these areas that the officers of Government started paying some attention to them. But this contact was superficial and prompted them to come to some equally superficial policies, the foremost of which was to isolate the tribal people from the rest of their countrymen and separate the tribal areas from the purview of the normal administration. The people in the plains were either too subdued or too ignorant to mind what happened. If Government contributed to the difficulties of the tribal people by its policy of isolation, the people of the plains added to the problem by their conscious and unconscious neglect.

Isolation Leading to Exploitation

The British policy of isolating the tribes resulted in exploitation by zamindars, landlords, money-lenders and contractors. These contacts with non-tribals were none too welcome to the tribes; they added to the strain of fighting a lonesome battle against ruthless nature, soil erosion, denudation of hills and erratic rivers.

The programme of conservation and preservation of forests resulted in a progressive encroachment on the rights enjoyed by the tribes for centuries past in respect of the use of fuel and timber, exploitation of minor forest produce and hunting, and they did not take kindly to a policy of intrusion which shook their last foothold of sustenance. The British could not control the zamindars and jagirdars in the management of their private forests, and this in turn intensified the tribals' suspicions. The coming in of the contractor, who carried away the profits of forest produce, resulted in exploitation of the most sordid kind. It was not unnatural that these incursions into tribal rights over forests resulted in sporadic retaliation which eventually led to a dislocation of the tribal economy and consequent frustration in the tribal mind. Yet in the name of safeguarding the people from the possible consequences of non-tribal incursion, they were cut off from the main currents of India's social and economic life. The desire for protection was good, but unfortunately the policy was entirely negative. What the tribal people needed was not isolation but planned contact on the basis of a positive policy of economic progress.

Land and Forest, the Twin Needs of the Tribal People

All students of tribal economy agree that the two things of greatest significance to the people are land and forest. As a missionary, the Rev. W. J. Culshaw, writes :—

'The most powerful motive in Santal life is possession of the land which they till...No motive is so strong in a tribal people as the preservation of the life of the tribe and its mores...and a

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE TRIBES

For the first time in the administration of the tribal people, the Constitution placed the responsibility for their welfare on the popular Governments through the President and Governors. The result was far-reaching and momentous.

The former policy, as we have seen, provided for a sort of protection achieved largely through isolation, and even before independence many protests were raised against it. Yet despite their isolation and their comparatively poor economic condition, many of the tribal people were already showing a keen desire to move forward and develop economically, politically and socially. There were several reasons. The welfare of the Scheduled Tribes had engaged the attention of national leaders. It was one of the points in the constructive programme of the Indian National Congress. Gandhiji himself emphasised the need to develop the tribes living in inaccessible places so as to ensure their integration with the rest of the country.

Although the public remained ignorant or misinformed about the tribal people, the ground was prepared for the new attitude and policies of recent years. Shri A. V. Thakkar and other social workers did pioneer work among the tribes. The name of the late Sarat Chandra Roy will long be remembered in Chhota Nagpur as a champion of tribal rights. Christian missionaries in certain parts, especially in Assam and Bihar, did much to rouse the tribal people themselves to a greater desire for progress. A few eminent British officials such as the late Sir W. V. Grigson and Dr. J. H. Hutton, made important suggestions for the welfare of the tribes and worked for their welfare for many years. A number of Indian anthropologists even at this stage drew attention to the needs of the tribes; on a more popular level translations of their songs and stories revealed that they had a rich vein of poetry and this gradually paved the way to a proper appreciation of tribal culture.

It was, however, only with the attainment of Independence that India, which was gradually becoming conscious of her tribes, became fully aware of her responsibilities towards them. Indeed one of the first acts of the Constituent Assembly was to appoint what was known as the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (other than Assam) Sub-committee with Shri A. V. Thakkar as its Chairman.

The most important finding of this Committee, which was accepted by the Constituent Assembly, was to establish the principle that the new democratic State had a responsibility for the welfare of the tribal people and the development of the tribal areas, however remote and inaccessible they might be. The tribal problem thereby became an integral part of the development of the Indian people as a whole.

The Sub-committee emphasised that 'the great need of the aboriginal was protection from expropriation from his agricultural land and virtual serfdom under the money-lender'.

It also sounded a note of caution:—

'The tribes themselves are for the most part extremely simple people who can be and are exploited with ease by plains

CHAPTER FIVE
THE SCHEDULED AREAS

The Scheduled Areas and their Population

The President has issued two orders, declaring certain tribal areas as scheduled in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab and Rajasthan. The extent, total population and Scheduled Tribes population in the areas and the percentage of the latter to the total are as follows :—

State	Area in square miles	Total population of the area	Scheduled Tribes population	Percentage of col. 4 to 3
1	2	3	4	5
Andhra Pradesh ..	11,342	8,20,384	7,67,000	93·0
Bihar	15,611	58,65,675	24,57,993	41·9
Madhya Pradesh ..	25,652	28,12,168	16,86,464	59·9
Maharashtra ..	9,380	13,46,113	7,33,948	54·5
Gujarat	6,917	15,76,086	9,93,653	63·0
Orissa	22,014	32,29,049	15,22,527	47·0
Punjab	4,700	11,423	2,661	23·2
Rajasthan	4,077	7,31,986	4,45,394	60·0

These areas extend over 99,693 sq. miles and cover a tribal population of 86 lakhs (1951 Census).

This, of course, has reference only to areas coming under the Fifth Schedule and thus does not include Assam or the Union Territories.

Powers of Governors

The Scheduled Areas are administered as part of the State in which they are situated, but the Governor is given powers (a) to modify Central and State laws in their application to them; and (b) to frame regulations for their peace and good government and, in particular, for the protection of the rights of tribals in land, the allotment of waste land and their protection from money-lenders. In the framing of these regulations, the Governor is required to consult the Tribes Advisory Council in the State. The Governor is further required to submit to the President of India an annual Report. Thus, in the Constitution ample provision exists to protect the rights of the tribals in land, to guard them against exploitation by money-lenders and to preserve their social and cultural life.

Administration under the Fifth Schedule

The scheme of administration of the Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule visualises a division of responsibility between the State Governments and the Union Government. The State Government is charged with the duty of screening legislation unsuitable for extension to the tribal areas, and of framing regulations for their

CHAPTER SIX

GOVERNOR'S POWERS UNDER THE FIFTH SCHEDULE

The Fifth Schedule gives certain powers and lays certain duties on the Governor of every State that has Scheduled Areas, except that the Governor of Assam has been empowered separately with regard to the Tribal Areas by the Sixth Schedule. Part B, para 5 of the Fifth Schedule runs as follows:—

'(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, the Governor may by public notification direct that any particular Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State shall not apply to a Scheduled Area or any part thereof in the State or shall apply to a Scheduled Area or any part thereof in the State subject to such exceptions and modifications as he may specify in the notification and any direction given under this sub-paragraph may be given so as to have retrospective effect.

'(2) The Governor may make regulations for the peace and good government of any area in a State which is for the time being a Scheduled Area.

'In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such regulations may:—

'(a) prohibit or restrict the transfer of land by or among members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;

'(b) regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;

'(c) regulate the carrying on of business as money-lender by persons who lend money to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area.

'(3) In making any such regulation as is referred to in sub-paragraph (2) of this paragraph, the Governor may repeal or amend any Act of Parliament or of the Legislature of the State or any existing law which is for the time being applicable to the area in question.

'(4) All regulations made under this paragraph shall be submitted forthwith to the President and, until assented to by him, shall have no effect.

'(5) No regulation shall be made under this paragraph unless the Governor making the regulation has, in the case where there is a Tribes Advisory Council for the State, consulted such Council.'

Part A, para 3 further lays down that 'The Governor of each State having Scheduled Areas therein shall annually, or whenever so required by the President, make a report to the President regarding the administration of the Scheduled Areas in that State and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of directions to the State as to the administration of the said areas'.

The Governor's reports are intended to enable the Union Government to discharge their responsibilities to the tribes. They are only a medium on which further action is to be taken. No instructions have been issued by the Union Government about their formal contents with the result that State Governments have come to look upon them as departmental reports. The main purpose is thus not

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRIBES ADVISORY COUNCILS

An instrument of great potential value for the welfare of the tribes is the Tribes Advisory Council which is provided for in the Fifth Schedule.

'There shall be established', it says, 'in each State having Scheduled Areas therein and, if the President so directs, also in any State having Scheduled Tribes but not Scheduled Areas therein, a Tribes Advisory Council consisting of not more than twenty members of whom, as nearly as may be, three-fourths shall be the representatives of the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly of the State.'

Before the Constitution was promulgated there were Advisory Committee attached to some of the then provincial Governments, but they played a very minor role. Even after the Constitution came into being, administrative complacency in the States led to considerable delay in the formation of the Councils. Had they been constituted immediately and had they taken up the question of legislative protection as the Fifth Schedule provides, the tribes might have been saved from much of the exploitation that has continued from the pre-Independence stage.

Even since the Advisory Councils have been formed they have met irregularly.

Although the Governors are empowered to determine the procedure or conduct of these meetings, there seems to have been little or no effort to brief them about their purpose. The wording of the Schedule does not seem to have been fully understood, though it is surely clear enough, for it says that 'it shall be the duty of the Tribes Advisory Council to advise on such matters pertaining to welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes in the State as may be referred to them by the Governor'.

A new pattern of administration and new laws and rules are being introduced everywhere, and for a society that was formerly used to no administration or a very simple administration, there should be simple rules and equally simple procedures. The consequences of applying complicated rules and procedures to the tribes have sometimes been just the opposite of what was intended by Government. For instance, as a result of the application of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Police Manual to the tribal areas in Madhya Pradesh and the old Bombay State, in case of accidental deaths the tribes are sometimes required to carry the dead bodies over long distances, sometimes 20 to 40 miles, for post-mortems.

The Tribes Advisory Council was intended to be a channel of discussion about the stages in which the laws and rules generally obtaining should be applied to the tribal areas. In Bihar, for instance, the Acts which contain special safeguards for the tribes about land tenure, debt redemption and restraints on money-lending were put on the Statute Book before the commencement of the Constitution. But lands continue to be transferred, debts continue to mount and money-lending continues to spread. In Andhra Pradesh, the Tribes Advisory Council was not specifically consulted before general legis-

CHAPTER EIGHT

CRITERIA FOR THE SCHEDULED AREAS

The Commission's terms of reference required it to report on the principles to be followed in declaring any territory to be or to form part of a Scheduled Area or in directing that any territory should cease to be, or cease to form part of, a Scheduled Area.

The criteria for determining a Scheduled Area should be related to the objectives of the Fifth Schedule. These, as we have seen already, are (i) protection of the Scheduled Tribes; and (ii) raising the level of administration in the Scheduled Areas. In determining the criteria those factors which promote the objectives of the Schedule should invariably be present; others may or may not be.

The most important factor is the concentration of tribal population, which should not be less than fifty per cent in any area proposed for declaration as a Scheduled Area. This is particularly necessary when intensive efforts for protection and large-scale development are contemplated.

The compactness of the area is an important consideration since scheduling involves special administration. A sub-tehsil should be the unit. Wherever there is a Tribal Development Block, the size of the sub-tehsil should correspond with it. Elsewhere sub-tehsils should be formed which could conveniently be converted into Tribal Development Blocks.

The area should be under-developed. It is possible to apply tests to assess the degree of under-development, e.g., the extent of cultivated and uncultivated land against the total land available, extent of irrigation, the mileage of roads in the area, the percentage of literacy and the number of dispensaries.

There should be marked disparity in the economic standard of the tribals living in the area compared to that of their neighbours outside. This factor should be reckoned as fulfilled in areas where shifting cultivation is still in vogue; the size of holdings is less than 5 standard acres per capita; the per capita incomes are lower than half the all-India incomes; and the quantum of under-employment is so severe that the people do not get work for more than 200 days in a year.

All these four factors—

- (1) preponderance of tribals in the population,
 - (2) compact and reasonable size,
 - (3) under-developed character, and
 - (4) marked disparity in economic standards of the people
- must invariably be present before any area can be considered eligible for declaration as a Scheduled Area. Other factors such as a primitive or distinctive way of life or the practice of shifting cultivation relate to the condition of the people and not to the area and are covered by the above criteria.

For the purpose of scheduling areas, no distinction should be drawn between the States and the Union Territories.

CHAPTER NINE

ARTICLE 275 OF THE CONSTITUTION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATES

Article 275 of the Constitution reads as follows :—

‘Such sums as Parliament may by law provide shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India in each year as grants-in-aid of the revenues of such States as Parliament may determine to be in need of assistance, and different sums may be fixed for different States :

‘Provided that there shall be paid out of the Consolidated Fund of India as grants-in-aid of the revenues of a State such capital and recurring sums as may be necessary to enable that State to meet the costs of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by the State with the approval of the Government of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in that State or raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas therein to that of the administration of the rest of the areas of that State’.

Let us examine the implications of making special financial provisions for welfare schemes intended for one section of the community. There is nothing very extraordinary about this and precedents may be found in the U.K., U.S.A., Canada and Australia. But in some of the States this has not been properly implemented and the tribal people and the tribal areas have had to be largely satisfied with programmes provided by the special provision, because the State Governments have not pursued normal development activities for them. It is not always understood that these special provisions are intended to *supplement* and not to *supplant* the general welfare programmes which are directed to the entire community, of which the tribes are an important part.

The distribution of grants-in-aid on the basis of population alone would not be equitable, although there is no doubt that it is convenient. But since the 275 grants are intended to develop places as well as people, the relative under-development of an area and its problems should also be assessed. In the allocation of funds under Article 275, the following criteria should be followed :—

- (a) Population;
- (b) Level of development reached by the State in welfare activity for the tribes and the level of administration in the Scheduled Areas;
- (c) Financial position of the State.

In addition to these three factors the position of the border States in the north and north-eastern regions, which have suffered a serious dislocation of their economy and trade due to recent changes in the international atmosphere, should be taken into consideration in deciding the outlay for tribal welfare.

Beyond allocating funds to the State, the Union Government have no adequate machinery to ensure that the funds given are

CHAPTER TEN

ASSESSMENT

A new pulsating life is stirring the tribal people, the natural impact of freedom on their consciousness. Freedom, like the first rays of the rising sun, has a magical effect, bringing life to the creation all round. It can be said to the credit of the Government and the people of India that they have not been slow to take advantage of this new opportunity in the tribal areas. The noble work of emancipation thus commenced almost simultaneously with the dawn of India's freedom. The First Plan was launched on the 1st April 1951. On the 2nd of October 1952 came the Community Development scheme. On the 2nd October 1959, the Panchayati Raj movement started. These were all intended to take the benefits of a new life to the most isolated citizens residing in the farthest corner of the country. With the Plan came other changes; the strings of the country's economy were picked up and properly arranged and the task of providing the wherewithal of living and equality of opportunity was accepted as the responsibility of the Government. Community Development was to provide the institutional set up. The Panchayati Raj was intended to provide, in this gigantic task, the backing of the people through a new local leadership. These small beginnings are gaining momentum. As they gain strength and speed they are disclosing their latent potential in tackling the vast problem of human emancipation.

Achievements of the First Plan

The First Plan for India was in the order of Rs. 2,356 crores, of which 39 crores was allotted for the unfortunately named 'Backward Classes', Rs. 25.98 crores (including the sum of Rs. 17.36 for tribal welfare) being actually spent.

Achievements in the tribal areas were admittedly of a preliminary character. About 4,000 schools were established, including a thousand Ashram and Sevashram schools; 1,50,000 school children received State assistance; a few received instruction in their own mother-tongue through text-books based on the life of their own tribe; about 8,500 tribal students received scholarships for higher education. About 2,400 miles of roads, bridle paths and hill paths were constructed. Tribal labour was organised under 653 cooperatives to take up the responsibility of exploitation of major forest coupes. About 50 farms were opened to initiate new methods of cultivation. 8,000 families were settled in colonies. 350 grain banks were organised; 310 multipurpose cooperatives were set up. 800 tribals were taught weaving, sericulture and food preservation; 750 families were given assistance to settle in small trades; 110 cottage industry centres were established. 3,200 medical units, 25 malaria-control centres, 26 maternity and child-welfare centres were established. Some arrangement was made for drinking water facilities.

A start was also made in fundamental work; Tribal Research Institutes were opened in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. A Tribal Bureau was started in Orissa.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LAND AND THE TRIBES

Land, Land Reforms, Land Transfers

According to the 1951 Census, out of 191 lakhs of tribal people, 173 lakhs (90.5 per cent) were engaged in agriculture. Of these 28 lakhs were estimated to be landless labourers and their dependents. These figures illustrate the dependence of the tribal people on land.

Like his brother in the plains the tribal is land-hungry. There are several reasons for this, besides the common desire to possess land. One is that those tribals who practise shifting cultivation are growing in numbers and the jhum cycle is shortening alarmingly in most places. Similarly, those who have taken to settled cultivation are also increasing in numbers. The heavy pressure on land of an ever-growing population is more and more apparent.

The Commission's enquiries showed clearly that in the tribal areas the majority of the cultivators have uneconomic holdings. It should be remembered also that in general tribal land is of poor quality. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that there should be an ever-increasing hunger for more and better land.

Poor soil, poor techniques of cultivation and the burden of indebtedness have been largely responsible for the many handicaps and hardships which the tribal has suffered for decades. Before Independence, he was fighting a losing game. Even after Independence the odds continue to be against him, even though steps, unfortunately often inadequate, have been taken by Government to help him.

Land and Legislation

There have been two types of legislation to preserve tribal rights in land. One is protective, intended to prevent non-tribals acquiring tribal land, and the other deals with the question of land reforms. Both types of legislation have fallen short of the needs of the situation. The protective legislation could not be of much use as no arrangement for alternative credit was made. The land reform legislation could not help the tribal because it was too intricate for him to follow. Let us first examine the legislation concerning land reforms.

Land Reforms

The problem of land reforms in the tribal areas stands on a different footing from elsewhere. In large parts of the tribal areas there was at one time a sort of communal ownership. But even where the tribals used to own the land in their own right, indebtedness and poverty forced a good proportion among them first to hypothecate and then to part with it. They came to be tenants of their bondees or mortgagees. The problem here therefore, is a mixed one of security of tenure, protection against rackrenting and protection against the usurious methods of the money-lenders. In the plains the land-holder was the owner or held directly from the Government and the tenants were those who got their title from it. Unhappily, the State Governments have not fully appreciated the difference

CHAPTER TWELVE

FOREST POLICY AND THE TRIBES

To a vast number of the tribal people the forest is their well-loved home, their livelihood, their very existence. It gives them food—fruits of all kinds, edible leaves, honey, nourishing roots, wild game and fish. It provides them with material to build their homes and to practise their arts. By exploiting its produce they can supplement their meagre income. It keeps them warm with its fuel and cool with its grateful shade. Their religion leads them to believe that there are many spirits living in the trees. There are special sacrifices to the forest gods; in many places offerings are made to a tree before it is cut and there are usually ceremonies before and after hunting. Tribal folk-tales often speak about the relations of human beings and the sylvan spirits and it is striking to see how in many of the myths and legends the deep sense of identity with the forest is emphasized.

From times immemorial until comparatively recently the tribal people enjoyed freedom to use the forest and hunt its animals and this has given them a conviction, which remains even today deep in their hearts that the forest belongs to them. Some of them call themselves Pashupati, the Lord of the wild animals, and believe that they have a peculiar power over them.

This state of affairs continued happily until about the middle of the 19th century. Thereafter, people from outside began to move into the forest and conditions began to change. The gradual extension of the authority of the Government and the natural desire of the forest officials to exercise ever closer control over the use of forest products deeply disturbed the entire tribal economy and introduced a psychological conflict. The members of the Commission were almost overwhelmed with complaints from the tribals against the forest administration everywhere. Not all these complaints, of course, are justified, but there can be no doubt that a state of tension and mutual distrust exists. We must diagnose the cause and explore the possibility of cure.

The 1894 Policy

The present forest policy was adopted by the Union Government in 1952. This in turn owes its existence to a policy that was initiated in 1894, the gist of which is contained in the following quotation:

‘The sole object with which State forests are administered is the public benefit. In some cases the public to be benefited is the whole body of tax-payers; in others, the people of the tract within which the forest is situated; but in almost all cases the constitution and preservation of a forest involve, in greater or lesser degree, the regulation of rights and the restriction of privileges of users in the forest area which may have previously been enjoyed by the inhabitants of its immediate neighbourhood. This regulation and restrictions are justified only when the advantage to be gained by the public is great; and the cardinal principle to be observed is that the rights and privileges of individuals must be limited, otherwise than for their

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AGRICULTURE

Over ninety per cent. of the tribal people are engaged in agriculture and this is likely to be the predominant pattern of their economy for a long time to come. In the hills, jhuming or shifting cultivation is practised extensively. Otherwise both hills and plains tribals follow the old and traditional methods of cultivation.

State of Agriculture in Tribal Areas

Important crops, raised by the tribals of the Central Zone and north-east India, are paddy and the lesser millets which constitute their staple food. Though broadcasting of paddy is generally practised, transplantation is not unknown. The soil is usually ploughed and manures are used to replenish its fertility. Some already know that taking leguminous crops in rotation increases the fertility of the soil. Some have remarkable indigenous methods of irrigation. The Marias of Madhya Pradesh construct embankments, which exhibit considerable engineering skill, to irrigate their fields. Terrace cultivation has been known to some of the tribals for decades. Some of them, such as the Angamis of Nagaland are experts in it and introduced cultivation of rice and potatoes on terraces long ago. It is said that the Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput Districts in Orissa have some of the most splendid terraces in the world. A few tribes in the south-western belt, the Muduvans of Anjanad valley, for example, have also been practising terrace cultivation from remote times.

Except in the above places and such other startlingly advanced areas as the Apa Tani plateau of NEFA and the Khasi Hills of Assam, agriculture in the tribal areas is in a primitive stage. There is the same problem of small holdings, fragmentation, poor quality of soil and elementary methods of cultivation in both the tribal and the rural areas generally, though the former are probably less developed than the latter. Improvement of agriculture for the tribes, therefore, has to follow the same principles of improved cultivation introduced in other parts of the country.

Shifting cultivation (for which we will use the Assamese word *jhum*) is the traditional system practised by the tribal people in the hill areas. It involves clearing the forest slopes, burning the fallen trees and bushes, and dibbling or broadcasting the seed in the ash-covered soil. The rest is left to nature. For the first one or two years, good crops are produced but the fertility of the soil is soon lost, and some of it is washed away in heavy rain. Cultivators then shift to other clearings and thus the cycle continues in rotation. Nearly 26 lakhs of people live in this way, the majority being in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam (including NEFA), Bihar, Orissa and in Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland.

The Two Views

Shifting cultivation naturally—for it undoubtedly damages the forest to some extent—has always been a bugbear to the Forest Department, according to which it is ruinous and wasteful; dries up

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

VILLAGE AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Let us examine the question of cottage industries with three aims in view :

- (i) to utilise and develop the creative faculties of the tribal people;
- (ii) to provide gainful employment for them; and
- (iii) to offer them an avenue to convert their raw materials into processed articles and thus take their economy a step forward.

Avenues of Employment

The answer to the continuous struggle for existence has to be found in land, cottage industries, animal husbandry and forests. Any one of these four by itself will be inadequate to support the ever-increasing population. The scope of higher employment in agriculture is limited by the growing pressure on land, sub-division and fragmentation of holdings, employment of family labour and prevalence of mutual help among land-holders. The quantum of average employment available to the casual adult male agricultural labourer is about 197 days in the plains. This together with self-employment for 40 days comes to 237 days in a year even in the case of a person who has some land. All this points to one definite conclusion, that we cannot look to land alone for a satisfactory solution of the problem of destitution.

Poverty in the midst of considerable unused human and material resources and undeveloped creative faculties is the phenomenon that faces us in the tribal areas. It was the genius of Gandhiji that conceived of a plan to combat this poverty by providing opportunities for work and developing the local resources through improved techniques in the field of production. It was a mass approach to the problem of unemployment and under-employment, and led to the village and cottage industries movement through which the problem of destitution or sub-normal standards of living in the tribal areas is to be tackled.

Three Kinds of Industries

The village industries in the tribal areas can be divided into three categories : (i) consumer goods industries, (ii) processing industries and (iii) handicrafts and art pieces, for each of which different treatment is required.

Taking consumer goods industries first, the tribals' needs are still insignificant. There will not, therefore, be much of a local market for articles manufactured in tribal villages. There should be close study of the possibilities before a consumer goods industry is opened anywhere. Similarly, the third type of industry which is also dependent upon the outside market, requires a survey or an assessment of what is possible. Wherever there is any expectation that an industry will succeed, a pilot project can be started, but there should be no unplanned endeavour; the effort should be systematic and should be accompanied by provision for adequate financial

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS

The Community Development movement has been described as one of the major experiments of the 20th Century, for it is intended to meet all the problems of the rural population of India—ignorance, illiteracy and poverty—through an integrated comprehensive approach which is simultaneously economic and social, and aimed at both future production and current welfare. 'Its theory is that change cannot take place in an isolated fragment of a society, but must be a total process involving the total person and the entire community. The energies upon which it depends are mainly those of the people; the chief source of capital upon which it must draw is the surplus labour of the villagers.'

This project to develop the neglected villages of India, especially as it affects tribal India, is thus one of the greatest importance. A Development Block has on an average twenty technicians and about a dozen trained Gramsevaks and Gramsevikas. Never before in India's history has such concentrated attention been paid to the economic and technical needs of the rural people. When the whole country is covered there will be about 150,000 trained persons to help the awakened rural areas.

In order to implement the objectives of the movement, the country has been divided into Blocks. Each of these Community Development Blocks contains about 100 villages covering an area of about 150 square miles and a population ranging between sixty and seventy thousand.

During the Second Five Year Plan, however, a number of Special Blocks intended to accelerate development in the tribal areas, were opened. These were known at first as Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks, but are now called more simply Tribal Development Blocks. Since in the tribal areas the population is often sparse and the terrain difficult, each Tribal Development Block is planned to cover about 25,000 persons as against 65,000 in a normal Block. To encourage more intensive effort in these Blocks, the Ministry of Home Affairs contributed in the Second Plan an amount of Rs. 15 lakhs per Block in addition to the usual Rs. 12 lakhs available for a State I Block. In the Third Plan the Ministry of Home Affairs' initial contribution is Rs. 10 lakhs per Block.

During the Second Plan 43 of these Special Blocks were opened. They covered 23,540.58 square miles, and had a population of 16.85 lakhs, of which 12.1 lakhs (71.0%) was tribal. The average coverage in each Block worked out at 182 villages with a population of 39,193 spread over an area of 547.45 square miles.

Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks Committee's Recommendation for the Third Plan

In 1959 a Special Committee was appointed by the Home Ministry to examine the working of these Blocks and it submitted its report in March 1960. It was satisfied that the Blocks were proving useful

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE PROBLEM OF INDEBTEDNESS

One of the worst forms of exploitation to which the tribal people have been, and are still, exposed is through traditional money-lending. The Fifth Schedule empowers the Governor of a State to regulate the carrying on of business by persons who lend money to members of the Scheduled Tribes in Scheduled areas. We propose in this Chapter to assess the extent of indebtedness among the tribal people, examine the role of the money-lender, examine the success or otherwise of legislative and executive measures adopted by the State Governments to control the evil and suggest measures for the future.

Although we have little scientific data, it is obvious that the size of the problem is enormous. It has various aspects—psychological, social and economic. It is difficult to estimate the psychological burden: for some at least, all happiness and peace of mind is lost, while others so burdened seem to sink into a dull and hopeless apathy. Often the debts descend from father to son and even to the third generation. Generally speaking, the tribal people appear to accept indebtedness as a normal, almost inescapable aspect of their existence. On the social side, the customs of marriage, death and hospitality are deeply ingrained, though for a time it is true that these customs provide occasions for the tribal to escape from the dull routine of village life. On the economic side, the tribal relies entirely upon the money-lender for the settlement of his dues. His faith and trust in him is quite astonishing. One reason is that the money-lender gives easy credit when it is needed most. The tribal does not seem to believe in the law of limitation, nor in defending himself in a court of law, nor in distrusting the money-lender's word. The cumulative result of this three-sided oppression is crushing. It is in this context that we proceed to consider this tragic and all-pervasive problem.

Various Practices

One of the most urgent matters that face the State Governments is the abolition of forced or bonded labour, which is known by various names in different parts of the country. The most prominent feature of the system is that a man pledges his person and sometimes a member of his family against a loan, and is released only on its discharge. Until then the man himself or the member of the family is required to work for his creditor against his daily meals. Since he gets no money, he has to depend upon someone in the family to procure the sum required for his release and this, of course, is rarely available. The relationship lasts for months and sometimes years, occasionally for an entire lifetime and not infrequently descends to the male heir.

There is another category of money-lender known by different names in different areas, in one as 'Punjabi', in another as 'Madras', in a third as 'Kangal Bank'. They lend petty sums, on atrocious rates of interest and stop at nothing to recover their dues.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CO-OPERATION

Indebtedness in the tribal areas, when related to the average family income, is by no means light, especially when we remember that in the main we have to reckon with a subsistence level of economy, where savings are insignificant; there is hardly any prospect of large-scale deposits; and exploitation in some form or other adds to the depression. In such a situation co-operation has a treble role to play. It has to combat the factors that cause depression; it has to ensure that the maximum benefits of present production and future development go to the tribals; and it has to encourage the habit of thrift. In practical terms, the co-operative movement, if it is to thrive in the tribal areas, has to concern itself with the discharge of outstanding debts; with the day-to-day needs of the people including non-productive requirements; and with the demands of corporate development.

Co-operatives for Rendering Alternative Credit

When we consider the problem of current needs we must recognise that, unless arrangements are made for finance through alternative sources, the tribal will have to get money from someone and that someone is not going to give it for charity. It is necessary, therefore, for the Union Government to take a firm decision to make arrangements for adequate alternative credit with a view to eliminating all sources of exploitation in the tribal areas.

Proportion of Productive to Unproductive Loans

For a time, until the tribals gather some experience of economic functioning in the modern world and attain sufficient maturity, arrangements will have to be made to give them loans for social purposes. There is no provision in the Co-operative Societies Act or Rules which debars a society from doing this, but the practice may, however, be gradually discontinued as the economic status of the people improves. The ratio between productive and unproductive loans should be fixed carefully in the light of conditions in the various States.

Social obligations may be defined as festivals and other religious ceremonies, weddings, funerals and special ceremonies to be performed for the sick. One of the main causes for the indebtedness of the Saoras of Orissa is an expensive ceremony for propitiating the spiritual agents of disease. These non-productive items are often regarded as unnecessary extravagances and sometimes attempts are made to persuade the people to give them up. On the other hand, it may be argued that the tribal does not divide life into compartments, into secular and religious or productive and non-productive. He regards life as a whole and each part of it affects the other. Tribal religion, for example, is intimately connected with production. If the agricultural festivals are not observed, if the ceremonies before hunting and fishing are forgotten, the tribesman suffers from a sense of guilt and anxiety which prevents him from working properly.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The country is growing more and more education-conscious. This is reflected among the tribals, and the State Governments are becoming increasingly aware of their duty to them. The Prime Minister has recently approached the question, not only from the standpoint of intellectual training and equipment, but from that of equality of opportunity.

Tribal Education Responsibility of the States

Education is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments. This is a salutary provision, for one of the aims of education in India is to promote integration in all fields. Had there been a division of responsibility, it would have led to a psychological division in the minds of the tribal children. Education, in that event, would have been regarded as something to be developed through the State for non-tribal children and through the Centre for the tribals. This would have promoted a wrong idea that they were the Centre's beneficiaries and were separate from the majority of the children in the State.

Education and Economics

There are many difficulties in promoting education among the tribes. For a tribal family, to send its grown-up boy or girl to school is essentially a matter of economics and entails dislocation in the traditional pattern of division of labour. Girls give every kind of help to their mothers at home. During the agricultural season, boys work in the fields with their parents. At other seasons, they are busy in collecting minor forest produce and firewood, grazing goats and cattle, watching the crops, bringing water, hunting and fishing. Many parents just cannot afford to send their children to school. It has been suggested that adequate provision for midday meals, clothing, a small amount of pocket money, say Rs. 2 a month for the girls, the supply of free books, slates and stationery would surely attract tribal boys and girls to school in sufficient numbers. This might be done, not everywhere, but at least in places where education has not made sufficient headway.

Even now there are many villages in the tribal areas which have no primary school within a radius of 4 to 5 miles or even more. In the hill areas of Assam, students have sometimes to travel long distances to attend school, as the villages are scattered, and, although the schools are situated so far apart, there is no provision for hostels for boys or girls, except in NEFA. It is, of course, difficult to set up so many schools and hostels in small villages which are little more than hamlets. Nevertheless, giving due allowance for this, the number of schools and hostels should be increased. Where 50 children of school-going age are available in one locality, the school should not be located at a distance of more than one mile. In no case should a child be required to walk for more than two miles to go to school. In other cases there should be hostels attached to the schools.

HEALTH

Good work has been done in the field of public health, especially malaria control, in the past ten years. A new freedom is coming to the tribal areas which will soon be independent of the oppressive Anopheles mosquito. Progress has also been made in other fields. But there is a vast leeway to be made up and medical facilities in the tribal areas are still inadequate. While the normal health of the tribes cannot be said to be bad, after infection their condition often becomes chronic.

A sum of Rs. 154 lakhs was spent on medical and public health services for the tribes in the First Plan period and Rs. 500 lakhs was allocated for the Second Plan. There have been, however, serious shortfalls in expenditure in several States, the principal reasons for which have been the lack of a proper approach to the people, the difficulty of obtaining suitable and sufficient doctors and other medical staff, inadequate communications and complicated rules about the supply of medicines.

One of the major difficulties in the interior regions in the way of persuading the tribal people to come for medical treatment is the fact that they have a well-developed system of diagnosis and cure. The usual theory of disease in tribal society is that it is caused by hostile spirits, the ghosts of the dead, or the breach of some taboo. What is spiritually caused, therefore, must be spiritually cured, and this is the main reason why the people in the interior prefer to go to their own doctors rather than to ours. There is no doubt that this theory of disease is a deterrent to many who would otherwise come to dispensaries and hospitals for treatment and it is natural that the doctors should regard the tribal priest as a dangerous professional rival. But this surely is not necessary. A pious invalid will send for both the priest and the physician. The priest will pray for him, the physician will give him a pill. The theory is that God answers the priest's prayer by making the pill more efficacious: the physician is the instrument through which the divine compassion works.

An interesting experiment is being tried in NEFA where the medical staff has been asked to regard the medicineman not as his rival but his ally. The doctors have been directed not to be antagonistic to the system of tribal diagnosis and cure, cease to sneer at it as 'superstitious', and extend to it the sympathy they would feel for any other kind of faith-healing and psychological treatment (for this is what in effect it is), of which there are ample examples throughout the world.

The essential thing is for the medical staff to take the right attitude to tribal medicine and the tribal priest. The most successful doctors have been those who have interested themselves in what we may call medical sociology, in such things as the tribal pharmacopoeia, the tribal theory of the influence of dreams on health, tribal methods of diagnosis. The subject is fascinating in itself and to study it almost automatically changes a man's attitude and thus helps him to win the confidence of the local people.

CHAPTER TWENTY

HOUSING

The Environment

The problem of tribal housing is complicated by the enormous differences in climate, prosperity or poverty of the villages and the type of architecture in the tribal areas. A very large number of the people are fortunate in living in almost ideal climatic conditions. To the Chhota Nagpur plateau, classic home of a dozen tribes, come many visitors anxious to escape the heat of the plains. The lovely Khasi Hills around Shillong and the Lushai or Naga Hills are cool, bracing and healthy. The Maikal Hills of Madhya Pradesh, though less elevated, are cool and invigorating for most of the year. The Nilgiris, home of the Todas and Kotas, are famous as a tourist resort.

But India is a large country and other areas are not so fortunate. The Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, inhabited by many of what are known as plains tribals, is oppressively hot in summer and some of the dense forest districts, as for example in Chanda, are dry, airless and dusty. At the opposite extreme, in the high mountain areas of the Sub-Himalayan ranges, the climate is extremely severe and the tribal people there have to face the rigours of snow and wind, rain and storm, glacier and avalanche. A number of tribes live in the seismic belt and the great 1950 Earthquake in Assam had a devastating effect on their economy. In the areas of extreme climate, however, the people have learnt to adapt themselves. Their houses and clothing are designed to keep out heat or resist the cold.

Examples of good Tribal Houses

There is equal divergence in the economic status of the tribal people, their sense of pride in their homes and the vitality and energy which they put into building them. Many tribal houses are attractively built, and architecture and lay-out have been evolved through the centuries with a view to their own comfort. In the hot areas of Tripura, for example, and in lower Assam, houses are built with a bamboo framework which lets in plenty of air. Where the soil is consistently damp and the rainfall heavy, houses are generally arranged on piles well above the ground to keep them dry. In cooler areas, houses are built on plinths of mud and stone raised from one to three or four feet above the ground. In the coldest areas, many of the buildings are of stone or in the nature of log-cabins.

Utility and Artistic Value

But whatever the type, the existing houses of the majority of the tribal families are very well built, making use of locally available material and at the same time combining both utilitarian and artistic values. The Garos, for example, and many Mishmis build admirable houses. Some of them are 100 to 150 feet long. They are raised well off the ground and are thus healthy and ventilated. The people make good floors, weave bamboo expertly, keep their houses spotlessly clean and, though they do not have windows, they do have doors all

COMMUNICATIONS

Isolation has been the enemy which has kept the tribal people back. It is essential to bring them out of their age-long loneliness, to make them at home in India as a whole. We can do this largely through the development of communications.

It is possible that communications may not always prove a blessing. They can, for example, facilitate the entry of exploiters and other harmful elements before the tribes become sufficiently conscious to look after their own interests. But the benefits outweigh the dangers. The march of events is fast. The needs of frontier defence, of industrialisation, of mining and development of every kind are compelling. There is really no controversy here, for everyone is agreed that we must go ahead, but always keeping the tribal needs in mind.

Priority for Development of Communications

The problem of roads and communications in the tribal areas may be considered from five aspects:—

- (i) those indispensable for national needs and defence;
- (ii) those indispensable for industrial development;
- (iii) those necessary for administration;
- (iv) those needed for trade and commerce interests;
- (v) those needed in the interests of the tribal people.

The highest priority should be given to (i) and (v) above; second priority to (ii) and (iii) while the importance of (iv) can be given after a close study of the trade and commercial data available and of the relative advantage to the tribal population.

The tribal will normally be more concerned in connecting his village with the forest, the weekly market or the school for his children. These roads should be planned in such a manner that they can be used all the year round and be widened for carts and jeeps as occasion arises or funds permit. Similarly, if it is possible to link up a village with a hospital or dispensary, that also will be useful. A priority worked out on this basis will offset any feeling that the tribal interests are being given the lowest place in the development of communications. The Government should undertake a programme of roads to meet tribal needs and give such roads the first priority. This has not been done.

The majority of these roads should not be very expensive. Careful planning is, of course, necessary to spread their benefits to the largest possible number of people, and it will have to be based on prevailing conditions. In the Aijal town in the Mizo Hills, for instance, the people have to fetch water from a few furlongs down the hills, when the supply in local reservoirs gets exhausted. At the time of the Commission's visit, water was actually being sold by the tin and there was no direct road to the stream at the foot of the hill. But there was a tarred road linking the Rest House with the Government offices. The feelings of the tribals can well be imagined. This is only one example, but it underlines the

THE IMPACT OF INDUSTRIALISATION

Certain areas which have been the traditional homes of the tribals in the central belt of India and a portion of the southern and western belts are being rapidly transformed as a result of gigantic industrial programmes. They remained unexploited until recent times for various reasons such as their inaccessibility, lack of industrial enterprise and the then Government's reluctance to industrialise the country. India's industrial revolution, which really began during the Second World War, has gained a new momentum by the adoption of the objective of a socialistic pattern of society on the basis of planned economic development. The power, irrigation and industrial projects in the First and Second Plains laid the real foundations of a new industrial revolution which is expanding with every year that passes.

There is no doubt that *pari passu* with the industrialisation of these areas, the tribal people are also becoming conscious of their rights, are taking advantage of the development schemes and are gradually being integrated with the neighbouring population. What we need to know, however, is how they are standing the effects of industrialisation, for the processes of assimilation in the normal texture of society can hardly be expected to keep pace with the mass-scale effects of large-scale industrial activity. Industrial development has its impact on the individual, the family, society and the entire environment. This impact has psychological, social and economic consequences. But unhappily this urgent problem has not yet been viewed in this broader light, and the research work done so far is wholly inadequate.

The States as trustees of the tribal communities should take up the matter. While it would not be fair to expect them to halt the march of industrialisation, there is a consequential obligation to the tribes to see that it does not sweep them off their feet. Gandhiji did not want the tribes or anyone else to remain in a prison-house. He desired the doors and windows of the house of India's life to remain always open. But at the same time he wanted the foundations to remain secure. We have to see that they are not shaken and the tribal house does not crash. It should surely be possible to devise ways and means by which, on the one side, industrialisation can proceed unabated and, on the other, the tribals can be enabled to build on their moorings and secure the utmost advantage out of the new wealth-creating machines that have entered their areas.

The Problem of Rehabilitation consequent on Displacement

One of the first things that requires attention is the problem of rehabilitation after displacement. The major power and irrigation projects in the First and Second Plans such as the Maithon, Konar and Panchet in Bihar; the Mandira, Machkund and Hirakud in Orissa; the steel projects of Rourkela, Durgapur and Bhilai in Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, are among the many undertakings that have resulted in a substantial displacement of the

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

ADMINISTRATION

Need for Effective Implementation

Nine years ago, in the First Five Year Plan Report, it was pointed out that 'in all directions, the pace of development will depend largely upon the quality of public administration, the efficiency with which it works and the co-operation which it evokes. The tasks facing the administration are larger in magnitude and more complex . . . The patterns of organisation and the claims upon both Government and administration will now be determined by the needs of development.'

The Commission, therefore, went into the possibility of improving the machinery of administration in considerable detail. But as this is primarily a technical matter of great concern to officials but a little obscure for the general reader, I will only give a very brief outline of our recommendations.

The Ministry of Home Affairs

In view of the specific targets fixed and the time-limit of ten years for their fulfilment, it is probable that the existing arrangements in the Ministry of Home Affairs for dealing with tribal problems may not be adequate. A separate Ministry for this purpose is not suggested; a separate department devoted exclusively to tribal problems, placed in the full-time charge of a Minister under the Home Minister, would be sufficient. Its functions would include examination of the Governors' Reports, implementation of the provisions of the Fifth Schedule, functioning of the Tribes Advisory Council, progress of the Plans, general administration of welfare schemes, training of personnel and coordination. Its actual set-up is a matter of administrative detail.

Evaluation of physical and financial targets is the function of the Planning Commission and it may be improved and perfected. Again, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be charged with the responsibility of qualitative evaluation and the study of the impact of development on the tribal people. The co-ordination of all further branches of tribal interests, social, economic or cultural, should be the function of the Ministry of Home Affairs, which will also be the competent—indeed the only possible—agency to evaluate the work of the research institutes.

The Ministry of Home Affairs should arrange for periodical research through a cell or cells specifically for the examination of various subjects affecting the tribes. Special cells in the Ministry to follow up actively the progress of work in the Tribal Development Blocks, which constitute the largest single programme, and the development of the weaker sections of the tribes should be constituted.

Schemes received from States are referred to the Ministries concerned and the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This leads to duplication. The technical and financial examination by the States should be sufficient and the Ministry of

THE COMMISSIONER FOR SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

An important element in the administrative machinery of Government, as it has been devised for the welfare of the tribes, is the office of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Here again I will briefly summarise the Commission's recommendations; the reader who desires to study the subject more thoroughly should refer to the full text of our Report.

The first Commissioner was appointed in November 1950. His office was a new one and there was no organisation at the Centre to study tribal problems. The Commissioner had to break new ground. He had to set up his organisation, establish contacts with the States, collect data and material and proceed to draw up welfare schemes out of practically nothing. Despite these difficulties he was able to make an impressive and detailed study of the tribal problems and schemes of development all over the country.

The office of the Commissioner has a special significance in the scheme of tribal welfare. It is also a link between the Constitution on the one side and the Union Government and the State Governments on the other. It is the medium through which the Union Government and Parliament are kept informed of the progress in the implementation of the safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes and schemes for their welfare. The Commissioner has to maintain contacts with them, examine their programmes and through discussion guide them in the framing and execution of their schemes.

The Commissioner's investigations are embodied in an annual report to the President, which is intended to assist the President, the Parliament and the Union Government to discharge their responsibilities under the Constitution. The report enters into a host of matters and the substance occasionally gets lost in a forest of details. The sense of urgency and priority, which should be the real concern at the Union Government and Parliament level, is lost.

The essential thing about the Commissioner's reports should be an assessment of the way the constitutional safeguards are being implemented in the States; the progress achieved in raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas; fields in which direction is required from the Centre; a qualitative evaluation of welfare work and the impact of all this on the tribal people.

The Commissioner should focus his attention on certain items of strategic importance and ensure that the States and the Centre work them out in accordance with a time-schedule.

The office of the Commissioner should be given a status and rank that would attract a person of high status, calibre and wide influence.

The non-statutory functions of the Commissioner, namely, representation on the managing committees of non-official organisations, examination of the accounts of such organisations, advising the Union Government on schemes received from the State Governments, should be withdrawn from him. They are not an essential part of his duty and in making this arrangement the Ministry has reduced

NON-OFFICIAL AGENCIES

The great forests of India have, for thousands of years, attracted men who desired to retire from the world and devote themselves to spiritual thinking. They were, we are told, kind and gentle to animals and we may be sure that they were equally kind and gentle to the ancestors of the tribal people of today amongst whom they lived. It is true that at that time there was no idea of catering to their physical and material needs and no programmes of social welfare, but these Sannyasis and others carried with them an atmosphere of peace and love which even now is one of the greatest gifts that we can give to people anywhere.

It was the Christian missionaries of the energetic and aggressive West who first brought to the tribal people their welfare programmes. The missionaries were the pioneers in education. They opened the first hospitals in the tribal areas. Some of them set a shining example by their care of lepers. Their devotion and self-sacrifice in the remotest hills and forests have led us even today, when we wish to speak of an ideal social worker, to say that he has a missionary spirit.

In particular, the missionaries led the way in certain matters which all workers, official and non-official, would do well to follow. In many cases, by their translations of the Bible, they first gave form to the tribal dialects, by the mastery of which they gained much of their influence. Secondly, once they went to a place they usually stayed there for a very long time and some of them actually took vows never to return to their own land. Thirdly, they were always accessible and friendly. They were among the first to inspire the tribal people with the idea of progress and to awaken them to a sense of their rights.

On the other side of the ledger, the missionaries insistence on proselytising has always been abhorrent to the tolerant Indian mind and this has unfortunately vitiated the value of their work in the eyes of many and has roused strong criticism against it. In many places the effect of their teaching has been to break up families and divide villages. One may see a village, which at one time worked and lived as a single unit, now split into a Christian hamlet and a non-Christian hamlet. In one tribal village no fewer than five different Missions were carrying on propaganda, opening separate schools and teaching different forms of Christianity. The effect on the simple tribal mind can easily be imagined. The attitude of some missionaries has been completely destructive of the tribal culture. To them everything which is not Christian is 'heathen' and some of the finest aspects of tribal life have been abandoned. Dance and song, even the weaving of lovely textiles and the traditional tribal institutions have perished before their intolerance. The tribals have been taught to despise their past and as a result a strong inferiority complex has been created. In some cases, the idea that the converts are 'saved' and all non-converts 'damned' has tended to create a feeling of separateness from the rest of their country. Lastly, the less

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The success of the development programmes in the tribal areas will be largely conditioned by the approach of the official and non-official agencies, their understanding of tribal culture and traditions, and their appreciation of social, psychological and economic problems. A body of trained personnel with the necessary aptitude and background of tribal life will be required. Such workers are not available readily nor can they be found ready-made, but have to be recruited and trained. One important recent report has stated that the slow progress in the implementation of welfare schemes was largely due to the non-availability of trained personnel; another has observed that the success of the welfare programmes was conditioned by the calibre of the staff provided; that the present staff position was far from satisfactory and that very little had been done to improve the situation. This report further observed that in many of the Tribal Development Blocks and Tribal Welfare Centres, the officials employed lacked proper training and had no understanding of tribal problems. They also found that sanctioned posts had remained unfilled owing to the fact that suitable staff was just not available. Among the various causes for the inadequate progress of the tribal welfare schemes, the shortage of trained personnel is probably the greatest single factor.

The programme for tribal welfare is expanding fast and will be considerably intensified in the next few years, especially if our Commission's recommendations are accepted. In order to operate these schemes a very large number of officers and staff at various levels will be required. In addition, there are the shortages which will have to be made good in the developmental activities of other departments, such as Education, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Co-operation, Public Works, and so on. The personnel of all these departments working in tribal areas will require training. This training is specially necessary because it will not be possible to find all the required technical personnel from amongst the tribes, and a large number of non-tribals will have to be recruited.

Recommendations

For a detailed appreciation of this subject, reference should be made to the full text of the Tribal Commission's report. Here I will give a summary of our more important conclusions and recommendations.

The administrative officers working at and above the district levels should have an orientation course in tribal welfare at the Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development at Mussoorie at the time they receive training in the Community Development programme.

The training proposed for Collectors and Commissioners, who are directly concerned with planning and implementation of tribal welfare programmes, should also be extended to other heads of departments and Divisional Officers.

REPRESENTATION IN THE SERVICES

The Constitution provides for the reservation of posts, in services under the Union and State Governments, in favour of the Scheduled Tribes. Articles 16(4) and 335, which are the relevant provisions, read as follows:—

16(4). 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State'.

335. 'The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State'.

The constitutional safeguards, therefore, reflect the concern of the people of India for the welfare of the tribes. The Union Government and the State Governments have taken steps to discharge their constitutional obligation by executive instructions. This matter is of such great concern to the tribes that I will reproduce the Commission's findings in some detail.

The Union Government, in fulfilment of their constitutional obligations, have laid down their policy as follows:—

- (i) Five per cent of the vacancies to be filled by direct recruitment on an all-India basis should be reserved for members of the Scheduled Tribes.
- (ii) In the case of local or regional recruitment for Class III and Class IV services and posts made otherwise than through the Union Public Service Commission except in Delhi, the reservation will be in direct proportion to the tribal population in that area, subject to a minimum of 5 per cent.
- (iii) The principle of reservation has been extended to such grades in services which are filled by promotion through competitive examinations limited to departmental candidates, the quantum of reservation being 5 per cent as in the case of direct recruitment.
- (iv) The reservation is subject to the overall condition that the tribal candidates should possess the prescribed qualifications.
- (v) If a sufficient number of tribal candidates for whom reservations have been made are not forthcoming the vacancies would be carried over for two years. Thereafter, the vacancies would be treated as unreserved and filled by other candidates.
- (vi) Before a reserved vacancy is treated as unreserved, the vacancy should be advertised and also brought to the notice of the non-official agencies who would be in a position to assist in the matter.

ROLE OF THE TRADITIONAL TRIBAL COUNCILS

In this Chapter, to avoid confusion, let us speak of the traditional tribal bodies as Councils and the statutory bodies as Panchayats. Examined from the modern or western point of view the Tribal Councils may have significance, in so far as they reflect some of the characteristics of modern democratic institutions. But their actual role must be assessed in a different perspective. First, we must look at them in the background of the history of the society which gave them birth. Secondly, we have to think of the purpose for which they were created by their society. If they are examined in that light, we shall have a fuller idea about the role they played and the context in which they played it. Their functions in many places were primarily to decide social and religious matters in the light of their customary laws and, in some areas, to determine judicial matters also, on the basis of the consent of the people as a whole, just as the functions of the Panchayats in the plains were to deal with social and economic matters coming before the rural community on the basis of consent of its people as a whole.

This does not mean that the Tribal Councils did not decide economic questions or the plains Panchayats did not decide religious questions. These came before them incidentally as part of their social responsibilities. In actual fact, Indian society has functioned on the basis of an integrated approach to all the problems of life, never taking an extreme position. The aim of the Panchayats was to evolve harmony in every sphere of life.

The old Panchayats of India were not elected bodies. Everybody participated in the discussions and every adult had an equal right to argue and raise any question. The decision was taken by the elders, who were called Panchas. These were selected on no rigid formula, though heredity was often the basis. Often, however, character and the personal life of an individual elevated him to this coveted position. But what is worth noting is that the decisions of the Panchas were not arbitrary; they had to go by the consensus of the general opinion. As we will see, the modern Tribal Councils are very similar to the ancient Panchayats.

Villages in ancient India were able to attain such a decisive importance in the administrative machinery mainly because of the close unity in which the people were knit together through the Panchayat institution, and their consciousness of their duties along with rights and sense of justice. The Panchayats did not work it out scientifically. It was a question of common sense and wisdom, some idea of fairplay and the people's confidence in them.

The main purpose of this Chapter is to discuss the respective roles of the traditional Councils and the new statutory Panchayats. The State Governments and the Administrations of the Union Territories are vying with one another in the rapid expansion of the Panchayati Raj institution. There appears to be a unanimity of opinion that these village Panchayats should be, not merely the administrative unit, but also the medium for development.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

SURVEY, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Surveys and research can be examined from four different angles—

- (1) from the point of view of fulfilment of the package programme discussed in Chapter 8;
- (2) the special surveys needed for education, health and economic development of the tribal areas;
- (3) the impact on the tribals of development schemes; and
- (4) the removal of deficiencies that have been noticed in the surveys undertaken so far.

Rapid Sample Surveys

Let us first deal with the fulfilment of the programme for tribal development and welfare on the lines suggested in Chapter 8. In order to have a proper survey there should be a really competent staff with sufficient resources and reasonable time at their disposal. Implementation of the development schemes, however, cannot wait till all these are found. The Commission has suggested the speeding up of developmental activities to save the administration and the people from undertaking long enquiries about the criteria for continuing or adding to the Scheduled Areas or de-scheduling them and also to accelerate the pace of progress so that the economic gap between the tribal and the non-tribal areas does not expand. For this purpose some special arrangements will have to be made for rapid sample surveys of selected tribal areas and completed within a reasonable time. Such surveys should concentrate on certain items, collect the data on them and examine the possibility of Government carrying out the programme within the time-limit fixed. The emphasis should be upon rapid sample surveys of representative tribal areas and not on elaborately detailed surveys of all the tribes in an entire State.

Similar surveys should be conducted in selected adjoining non-scheduled areas to assess any disparity existing between the tribals and the non-tribals and the comparative development of the different kinds of area.

Special Surveys

In addition to the sample surveys of representative tribal areas and tribal, the State Governments should arrange to survey special problems facing specific areas, which will, of course, involve technical knowledge of the subjects as well as the science of statistics, and will naturally will have to be entrusted to qualified persons.

One of the shortcomings about such special surveys is that the results are not published immediately after their completion and the delay creates difficulties in ascertaining to what extent the data collected and the recommendations are still applicable at the time they appear.

As a scientific survey is a condition precedent to the planning of the development programme, so evaluation is a necessity for ascertaining its progress and suggesting improvements. Evaluation should present a balanced picture of achievements and deficiencies,

CONCLUSION

It is now time to look back and summarise the philosophy that inspired the Commission and the fundamental ideas from which its recommendations stemmed. Its aim was that of India's Constitution itself, to secure to the tribal people, along with all the people of India, a social order based upon justice in all fields of life, liberty of person and property, equality of status and opportunity and a fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation.

The most important fact that we have to face is the effect of changes of every kind that are sweeping across the hills and forests in India—changes initiated by people, by Government and by the tribes themselves. The tribal people today are faced by an unprecedented evolutionary crisis in their history. The Commission went into this very carefully, basing its thinking on Gandhiji's famous saying :

'I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any'.

The tribal people have been awakened from their centuries-old slumber. The urgent needs of border defence are affecting even the most secluded villages of the sub-Himalayan mountains. Great schemes for development are bringing and, by the end of the Third Plan, will have brought to every tribal village new ideas, new techniques and new contacts. Roads are everywhere urging their way into places which have hitherto been virtually inaccessible. Education, as it spreads, is revolutionising the social and economic conditions of the tribal villages and is creating new demands as it generates new skills. In many of the hills and forests where the tribals live, there are vast resources of minerals, industrial raw materials and hydraulic power. The demands of the industrial age cannot be refused. At the same time they must not be permitted to push out the tribal or allow him to be overwhelmed. In other tribal areas great changes are taking place as a result of industrial development. The short-term and the long-term consequences of the industrial invasion of the tribal areas, at any rate in the central belt, have, of course, an enormous significance. They raise the issues of rehabilitation, land possession, education, training and equipment. If the tribals are to be absorbed, it must be at a proper level. They may be poor, but they are persons of dignity and self-respect: each has his place in his own society. We must fulfil the ideal of the Constitution in ensuring them continued dignity with equality of opportunity. Other aspects of industrialisation will effect the aims and standards of the people who will now be residing in the tribal areas along with the tribals.

All these things will make demands for extensive psychological and physiological adjustments. They will affect the code of tribal life, and specially social discipline, the integrity of the family, the integrity of the village community (may even in some places cause the disappearance of the village community), the general culture

and spiritual and aesthetic values. The new way of life may lead also to the spread of certain social vices which generally accompany urbanisation.

We must accept these changes and bear the burden of the perplexities they bring. The tribals themselves are not afraid of them. Indeed many demand a speedy entrance into the modern world. The doors and windows can no longer be kept shut. Change is inevitable whether among tribals or non-tribals generally as in the rest of the world. But whatever the demands of the changes, the moral and cultural foundations of society must be safeguarded if it is not to be rootless. A tribal's home and family is the precious and fundamental basis on which the future edifice of his welfare is to be built. A freedom that does not guarantee him the freedom to decide how he will mould his destiny, official programmes that do not give him the choice of how he will organise his own development and to what end, will be sad impositions on him, materially poor but spiritually rich and independent as he is.

It is obvious that the views of the tribal people themselves, and their own desires for the future, in these days of democracy, must have the supreme consideration. Happily their emphasis on the preservation of the best in their way of life is not inconsistent with a desire for change. Change and adjustment are in fact the two indispensable conditions of human survival. It is a challenge to the leadership engaged in this great sociological process, to ensure that the best of the old does not vanish in the excitement of the new. The instrument of democracy moreover is a guarantee that nothing will happen which is not acceptable to a substantial section of the tribals. What is best and worth preserving in the final analysis can be determined only by themselves.

We must, at the same time, also ensure to the tribal people all the facilities of life to which as citizens and human beings they are entitled, and provide them with everything necessary to fight successfully against the privations of poverty and ignorance, unemployment and disease, exploitation and neglect. We must also ensure that they are not overwhelmed by the technological superiority of the invaders of their hills and forests and do not lose their moorings in the industrial age.

For in this ferment of new ideas and new possibilities of life there is a danger that the foundations of the tribal house may be impaired. This has happened in other countries. We should do all we can to ensure that it does not happen here. Mere economic advance will have little value if the discipline and standards of society are destroyed and the spiritual ideas of life are lost. In other words, we should strike a balance between stability and change. In any such balance, the most important way of safeguarding even the spiritual and psychological stability of the people is through land. The tribes will never feel fully integrated with India unless they have a stake in the land to which they belong. Many of them, under the impact of change, may leave their villages and go in search of other ways of life; many may feel lost and bewildered. But so long as they have their own land at home there will always be something at their back to reassure them and to which they can return. The Commission has proposed legislative and administrative measures to put a halt to the widespread and tragic diversion of

land out of tribal hands throughout the country. What we need now are officials and social workers who will make it their mission and responsibility to see that these plans are implemented, who will be inspired with a passion for economic justice. This will mean an enormous amount of rather dull and tedious labour in offices and courts. But the result will be seen in the smiling faces of the poorest of the poor enjoying a new life on land that is really theirs. We have to reconcile our duty to the new age and to the tribal people, for in some cases the tribesmen will have to move from their ancestral lands in the interest of great national projects. Men with a sense of mission and inspired by love will have to ensure that they are given other lands instead.

Almost equally important is the establishment of a Tribal Council in every tribal village. It is through these Councils that for centuries the people have maintained their moral and social standards and their religious ideas. If these weaken, the whole fabric of tribal life may weaken and decay. They must not and need not be swept away by the new Statutory Panchayats but should co-exist with them. Here again are needed men and women with a sense of mission to build up afresh what has been lost in some places and has declined in many.

There will, of course, be a great many tribals who, for years to come, will be unaffected by industrialisation and will continue to live in the hills and the forests. It is important that these interior and border lands continue to remain inhabited. It is only then that it will be possible for their wealth to be developed in the interests of the country as a whole. It is only then that we will be able to assure a permanent vigil on our frontiers. Only the hardy tribals will be willing to live in them on a long-term basis. It is necessary that they should be considered to be an essential part of the forests and it is essential therefore that their forest rights should be preserved. A policy of friendship and alliance between forest officials and forest dwellers will be to the advantage of both.

A third matter of great importance is the attitude of the official or social worker, indeed of every kind of non-tribal, to the tribal people whose attitude will thus be influenced towards their own foundations. All changing and developing societies must come to terms with their past. It is common for all simple peoples, who have always lived in isolation, when they come in contact with the modern world, to throw away everything in their old life and to despise their past, however, good and valuable it may have been. The important thing, of course, is to build on the past and to grow out of it by a natural process of evolution. By their correct attitude the non-tribals can greatly assist in this. If they approach tribal institutions with humility and respect, the tribals themselves will be less inclined to despise them; they will not develop a sense of inferiority; they will retain their self-respect and dignity.

The Commission does not stand alone in this opinion, and I will quote three fine statements of the kind of approach that should be made. The Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, has said of the tribes that :

"They are our own people and work does not end with the opening of so many schools and so many dispensaries and hospitals. Of course, we want schools and hospitals and dispensaries and roads and

all that, but to stop there is rather a dead way of looking at things. What we ought to do is to develop a sense of oneness with these people, a sense of unity and understanding. That involves a psychological approach.'

'As I have 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 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 businessmen to exploit them, then the fault is ours, for it only means that our approach to the tribal people is wholly wrong.'

'Avenues of development', he has said elsewhere, 'should be pursued within the broad framework of the following five fundamental principles :

- '(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 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 into tribal territory.
- '(4) 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.
- '(5) We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved'.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad has said: 'There can be, and should be, no idea or intention of forcing anything on them either by way of religion, language or even mode of living and customs. Even where we feel that the religion or the life that is offered is better than theirs, there is no justification for forcing it upon them against their will. My own idea is that facilities for education and for general improvement in their economic life should be provided for them and it should be left to them to choose whether they would like to be assimilated with, and absorbed by, the surrounding society, or would like to maintain their own separate tribal existence'.

And a third statement of policy, which stresses the part which must be played by the tribes themselves in schemes for their own development, comes from the report which set out the proposals of the Planning Commission for the Second Plan.

'Welfare programmes for the tribal people have to be based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and an appreciation of the social, psychological and economic problems with which they are faced. The welfare and development programmes in tribal areas inevitably involved a measure of disturbance in relation to traditional beliefs and practices. In their implementation,

therefore, the confidence of the people and, in particular, the understanding and goodwill of the elders of tribal communities are of the highest importance. It is, therefore, necessary that welfare extension workers of all kinds should be found as far as possible from amongst the educated youth in tribal communities. In commending the adoption of new techniques, tribal leadership should have a major role and any suggestion of imposition from without should be avoided, and for each step the ground should be carefully prepared in advance. The anthropologist, the administrator, the specialist and the social worker have to work together as a team, approaching the problems of the tribal people with sympathy, understanding and knowledge of the social psychology and needs of the tribal communities. The tribal people have to be assisted largely through their own institutions. Details of development programmes should be formulated in consultation with members of Advisory Councils, leaders of tribal opinion and institutes engaged in the study of tribal problems. The tribal people should feel that these programmes are, in a real sense, a response to their own urge for better standards of living and the development of their culture. If the programmes are implemented with popular support, they will give the tribal people in all parts of the country a sense of partnership and integration with the Nation as a whole'.

Translated into practical terminology this means :—

- (i) The tribal should be made to feel confident that no one will tamper with his way of life or his beliefs and customs. It is for him to decide how he will adjust himself in future.
- (ii) He should be assured that his rights in land are safe. If, for the requirements of the nation he has to be dispossessed, the State will, as a part of the scheme which leads to his shifting, see to it that he is fully rehabilitated.
- (iii) He should be also assured that his rights in forests are equally safe. If there is any change in the forest policy leading to any curtailment of his rights, he will be given satisfaction in other ways. It will be better still if forest development is integrated with his own economic betterment.
- (iv) He should be assured that Government and society are there to protect him from all forms of exploitation.
- (v) He should recognise that changes are indispensable, for without them no development is possible. This development is intended to secure for him and his family greater opportunities of life along with the rest of the country of which he is an inseparable part.
- (vi) As a part of this process of change which is implied in any development activity, while we should ensure that all help in rehabilitation, education, training and equipment is given, he should be prepared for the necessary adjustment.
- (vii) It is understandable that he would wish that the very process of change should be accompanied by schemes for rehabilitation, education, training and equipment. This is undeniably an obligation which society has to fulfil.
- (viii) Till this happens, he should not be disturbed from the moorings of his agricultural or forest economy.

- (ix) All this demands research and sympathetic study. This side of the problem has so far received scanty attention at the hands of Government and social organisations. The State Governments should begin thinking about these problems without delay, even though the main responsibility will rest upon the Centre.

Last but not least there is the problem of healthy, co-operative and fruitful contact with the rest of the country. This cannot be left to chance. It can be achieved partly through education, partly by care in the selection of officials and others sent into tribal territory. The whole approach to the tribal problem should be to promote integration.

These are the problems attendant on the question of approach. They cannot all be tackled simultaneously. The time concept is fundamental in the development of all human beings, whether they are tribals or others. Gradualness is not the enemy of progress if it is purposeful and does not lead to complacency. Therefore, the progress may appear slow but it is only a scientific rational approach to the question of progress that can pave the way for a speed that would astound even the planners.

This completes my summary of the report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission. It is only an introduction to the full text of the report, which I hope will be widely read in its entirety. The report concludes with the following passage which I quote in full :

'Thus ends our quest for the solution of one of the most important and vexed problems that confronts the country. The problem emanates from centuries of isolation. Only to this extent it is different from the problems facing the other sections of Indian society. The most hopeful feature is that the tribal himself has awakened to the need of finding a solution and is responding. The aim of the country is to secure the advancement of the tribals without disturbing the essential harmony of their life and securing their integration without imposition. We have viewed the tribal problem from this wider angle of the interest of the tribals, the need for maintaining harmony and of integration. We hope and trust that our recommendations conform to that objective and will be helpful in fulfilling it.'

.INDEX



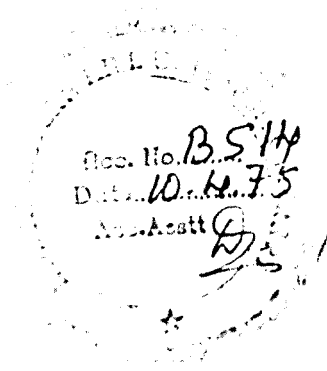
INDEX

- Absenteeism, among tribal labourers, 107
- Absorption in new set-up after displacement, 105
- Accounting by non-official agencies, 119f.
- Accounts Cell, in Home Ministry, proposed, 35.
- Administration, of tribal areas, Chap. XXIII, *passim*; inefficiency of, 111; under the Fifth Schedule, 18f.
- Agriculture, Chap. XIII, *passim*; in British period, 10
- Aijal, lack of roads in, 101
- All-India Rural Credit Survey, 76
- Allotment of land, 24, 49
- Animal husbandry, 10f., 68f.
- Anthropologists, work of, 2, 15f., 139
- Architecture of tribal houses, 97
- Article 275 of Constitution, 17; Chap. IX, *passim*
- Artistic industries, 70
- Attitude of non-tribal to tribal people, 2, 137
- Awakening of tribal people, 39, 135
- Ayurvedic dispensaries, 93
- Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, 118
- Bhil Seva Mandal, 117
- Bonded labour, 12, 75f.
- Bor, N. L. qu., 63
- British, basis of policy, 10; condition of the tribes under the, Chap. III, *passim*
- Cash crops, 67f.
- Central Social Welfare Board, 118
- Change, inevitable, *if.*, 136, 140
- Chaturvedi, M. D., qu., 63
- Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, discussed, 46
- Christian missionaries, work of, 7, 13f., 15, 116f.
- Circumvention of protective legislation, 46f.
- Collector, position of, in tribal areas, 112
- Colonies, amenities in, 66, 99
- Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Chap. XXIV, *passim*; his functions, 114; his reports, 114; separate Commissioner for tribes recommended, 115
- Communications, Chap. XXI, *passim*; priorities for, 101; in British period, 14; in Second Plan, 41
- Community Development, Chap. XV, *passim*
- Compulsory Primary Education, 88
- Concessions for tribal candidates, 125
- Constitution of India, provides for Commission, v; and the tribes, Chap. IV, *passim*; Article 275 of, Chap. IX, *passim*; 135
- Consumer goods industries, 69f.
- Contact, guided, 140
- Contractors, exploitation by, 54
- Co-operation, Chap. XVII, *passim*; to render alternative credit, 80
- Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation, 58f., 61, 76, 82
- Co-ordination of work essential, 44
- Cottage industries, Chap. XIV, *passim*
- Creditworthiness, 81
- Culshaw, W. J., qu., 9
- Customary law, 14
- Dalton, E.T., qu., 7
- Deputy Commissioner, position of, in tribal areas, 112
- De-scheduling, 29
- Development, 31f. and *passim*
- Disease, tribal theory of, 19
- Displacement, problems, of, 104f.
- Distilled liquor, and drunkenness, 6, 13
- Dormitories, communal, 5, 13f.
- Dress, tribal, 7f.

- Economic development in Second Plan, 40
- Education, in British period, 13; and economics, 84; general discussion, Chap. XVIII, *passim*; in Second Plan 40f; and school programme, 85; and school buildings, 86; and medium of instruction, 86; and administrative problems, 89; of girls, 40, 73
- Elective principle, 5; in tribal councils, 129
- Employment, avenues of, 69
- Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub-Committee, 15f.
- Field staff, lack of, for medical services, 92; for communications, 102
- Fifth Schedule, 16f., administration under, Chap. V; Governor's powers under, Chap. VI; and money-lending, 78; and *passim*
- Financial assistance and Article 275, 17; Chap. IX, *passim*
- Financial year, change in, proposed, 35
- First Five-Year Plan, achievements of, 39f.
- Food habits of tribes, 6
- Forest Labourers Cooperative Society, 58, 82, 119
- Forest policy, importance of, 9f; Chap. XII, *passim*; in 1894, 51f; in 1952, 52; new approach to, 57f.; recommendations on, 59f.; rights in to be assured, 139f.
- Forest villages, 55
- Freedom, effect of, on the tribes, 39, 135
- Furer-Haimendorf, C. von, 6
- Gandhiji, qu., 104, 135
- Governors, powers of, v, 16f., 18f., 31, Chap. VI *passim*
- Grants-in-aid, criteria for, 34
- Grass, improved variety of, 60
- Grazing, 56
- Grigson, W.V., qu., 6, 15
- Handicrafts, in British period, 11; Chap. XIV, *passim*
- Health, of tribes, 6, 12f.; Chap. XIX, *passim*; in Second Plan, 41f., education, 93
- Herbal medicines, 93
- Horticulture, 67f.
- Hospital returns, too elaborate, 93
- Housing, Chap. XX, *passim*; in Second Plan, 41; Commission's recommendations, 98f.
- Howard, S.H., qu., 63
- Hutton, J. H., qu., 6, 15
- Imposition, to be avoided, 4, 138, 139
- Improvement of existing houses, 98
- Indebtedness, 19, 23, 43; Chap. XVI, *passim*; recommendations to alleviate, 78f.; and co-operation, 80
- Industrialization, impact of, Chap. XXII, *passim*; 135
- Instrument of Instructions, 19f.
- Integration, emotional, 3; without imposition, 4; importance of, 140
- Irrigation, 49, 66f.
- Isolation, effect of, 8; British policy of, Chap. III, *passim*; and communications, 101; cause of problems, 140
- Jamshedpur Survey's conclusions, 106
- Justice, in British period, 14
- Kol, migration, 11
- Land, importance of, 9f., 15, 19, 23, 30, 47f., 50, 137, 139; Chap. XI, *passim*; tenure, tribal ideas of, 66
- Legislation to preserve tribal rights in land, Chap. XI, *passim*; to control money-lending, 77f.
- Legislatures, representation in, 14; reservation of seats in, 17
- Liquor, effect of, 6, 13
- Loans, productive and non-productive, 80f.
- Local materials, to be used, 97ff., 102
- Loyalties, tribal, illustrated, 1f.
- Malaria control, 91
- Maternity services, difficulties, 92, 94
- Mauritius, migration to, 12
- Medical personnel, correct attitude of, 91; insufficient, 92; special cadre suggested, 113

- Medical services, in First and Second Plans, 91; shortfalls, 91
- Medicine chests, 93
- Medicinemen, function of, 13, 91f.
- Mills, J. P., qu., 13, 63
- Minimum Wages Act, 56
- Ministry of Home Affairs, separate tribal department is needed, 111
- Minister for Scheduled Tribes, 17, 112
- Minor forest produce, 58ff.
- Missionaries, effect of, 7, 13f.; work of, 15, 116f.
- Mobile health units, 93
- Money economy, introduction of, 12
- Money-lender, methods of, 75f.; why preferred, 76; malpractices of, 77 : legislation to control, 77
- Money-lending, 12, 15, 19, 23, 30, 47
- Multiplicity of schemes, to be avoided, 73, 121, 138
- Nehru, Jawaharlal (Prime Minister), 4, 84, 138
- Neill, A.S., 2
- Nicholson, Mr, qu., 63
- Nomadic tribes, 90
- Non-essentials in development, 73
- Non-official agencies, Chap. XXV, passim
- Non-tribals, problem of, 2, 137
- Panchayats, Chap. XXVIII, passim
- Pant, G.B., vi
- Past, attitude to the, 137f.
- Pauperization, danger of, 97
- Permits in forest areas, 54
- Plains tribals, 16
- Planning Commission for Second Plan, Report of, qu., 139
- Polyandry, 2f., 7
- Postal facilities, 103
- Priorities, 32
- Problems, of tribal society, 1; common to all, 8; due to isolation, 140
- Processing industries, 70
- Production centres, 70
- Promotion of tribal officers, 121
- Protection, 15f., 30f. and passim
- Rajendra Prasad, Dr., 118, 138f.
- Ramakrishna Mission, 118
- Record of Rights, 49f.
- Reforms, land, 45f.
- Regeneration of forests, 56
- Rehabilitation, after displacement, 104f., schemes of, 108; principles of, 48f.
- Religion, tribal, 7, 117
- Reports, by Governors, 18; Chap. VI, passim
- Representation in the services, Chap. XXVII, passim
- Research, needed on impact of industrialization, 108; importance of, 39, 120, 134, 140
- Reservation of posts for tribals, 122f.
- Reserve Bank, and problems of tribal economy, 82
- Reserved forests, cultivated lands in, 53
- Restrictions on use of timber, 98
- Rice-beer, 6
- Roads, constructed under difficulty, 102f.
- Rourkela Steel Plant, situation in, 106
- Roy, S. C., qu., 14, 15
- Rules of P. W. D. need adjustment, 103
- Sanitation, 99
- Scheduled Areas, extent of, 5, 18; population of, 18; Chap. V, passim ; criteria for, Chap. VIII, passim
- Scheduled Tribes, concentration of, 5; described, Chap. II, passim
- Schematic budget, 72
- Scholarships, 90
- Second Five-Year Plan, achievements of, 40f.
- Security, 81
- Shifting cultivation 3, 10 ; Chap. XIII, passim
- Shortfalls in expenditure, 43f., 91
- Sivaraman, M. S., qu., 63, 64
- Sixth Schedule, v, 16
- Slavery, abolition of, 12
- Smokeless chulhas, 100
- Social changes due to industrialization, 107
- Social organization of tribes, 5f.

- Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks Committee, 71f.
- Spiti, visit to, 1 f.; hospitals in, 92; roads in, 102
- Sponsoring agency to promote co-operatives, 82
- Succession Act, 14
- Surveys, Chap. XXIX, passim ; 73, 131f.
- Symington, D. qu., 13
- Tana Bhagats, 2
- Tannery, 70
- Tata Iron and Steel company, 11
- Taungia cultivation, 65
- Tea plantations, 12, 105
- Teachers, in tribal areas, special cadre suggested, 111; right type of, 87f.; training of, 123
- Technical education, 89
- Terrace cultivation, 62, 64f.
- Text-books, 87
- Thakkar, A. V., 15, 117f.
- Training centres, 70
- Training programmes, Chap. XXVI, passim
- Transfer of tribal lands, 46f.
- Tribal councils, Chap. XXVIII, passim; 137
- Tribal Development Blocks, 27, 31f., 42, 118; Chap. XVI, passim
- Tribal languages, encouragement of, 86f.
- Tribal reaction to forest rules, 54f.
- Tribal Welfare Fund, 35
- Tribe, meaning of word, 1
- Tribes Advisory Councils, 18, 23; Chap. VII, passim
- Union Government, responsibility of, 20f., 24, 31, 124
- Ventilation, 98
- Village forests, 56
- Village industries, Chap. XIV, passim
- Villages, lay-out of, 96
- Vinobaji, qu., 117
- Voluntary surrenders so-called, 47
- Water supply, importance of, 93
- Weaving, 11, 70
- Women, status of, 6f.
- Working season, limited, 43





THE SCHEDULED AREAS AND SCHEDULED TRIBES COMMISSION

The concern of the Constitution of India for the tribal population is illustrated by the provision in Article 339 that the President should appoint a Commission at the end of ten years from its commencement to report on the administration of what are known as Scheduled Areas (that is to say, areas which have a preponderance of tribal people) and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States.

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission was accordingly appointed on 28th April 1960 with Shri U. N. Dhebar as Chairman and ten other Members, a Secretary and Administrative and Research Officers. The Commission toured widely throughout India, interviewed hundreds of persons, official and non-official, tribal and non-tribal, and produced a substantial report which, with the appendices, runs to 756 pages. It was signed on the 14th October 1961 and later presented to and debated in both Houses of Parliament.

Since the full report, which goes in very great detail, is rather lengthy, Dr. Verrier Elwin was asked to prepare a popular and shortened version for the general reader as well as for the busy official in the field. The result is this little book, *A New Deal for Tribal India*.

This is not intended in any way to supersede the full report of the Commission, for it has had to omit many matters of importance, but rather to introduce it and to stress, as a result of selection, the most vital aspects of what marks a significant step forward in India's attitude to and interest in the tribal people.

The recommendations of the Commission which are here described will, when they are implemented, really mean a new deal for the tribal people who, as a result of centuries of isolation, have lagged behind their neighbours in development and political consciousness. Here will be found challenging facts and proposals about tribal rights in land and forest, the extent of indebtedness, the impact of industrialization, the special powers of the Governors under the Fifth Schedule and all aspects of development—education, health, village industries, communications, agriculture and co-operation.

It is hoped that this little book will lead many readers to obtain and study the full version of the Commission's report.