

PRESENTATION

BY

THE INDIGENOUS TRIBAL PEOPLE OF INDIA
TO

THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION WORKING GROUP
ON INDEGENOUS POPULATION
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WGIP 87/SAS.INDO/2

Madam Chairperson, Members of Working Group, respected representative of Nation States, Officials of Specialised International Government Agencies, Members of the ~~N.G.O.~~ N.G.O. community and fellow friends belonging to the indigenous people from all over the world.

I propose to concentrate my deliberations ~~on the subject~~ on the right of Self-determination, Self-government and Autonomy than on Health, Medical care and Housing. However those two subjects are very much relevant and important too.

This subject of Self-determination is, indeed, a very sensitive one. Yet it need not be so sensitive that we avoid speaking about it. In the context of present day world, when the indigenous population all over this planet are loudly complaining of being subjected and suffocated in the socio-political atmosphere of their respective countries, it has become imperative to think about, to talk about and to do something about the right of Self-determination.

In the past, as indigenous people, we have been practising it in our own social and political system. The concept of Self-determination is in-built in our relationship with nature and with one another, both as individuals and groups. It is fundamental, related and consequential. Just as we find a relationship with the Sun, the Moon, the Universe, the change of season and its reflections in nature and in relationship with human beings. So also the concept of Self-determination has in itself a rhythm, a balance, an excellence and a conscience. Self-determination is a fundamental aspect

of indigenous peoples life and their existence ~~in~~ and in their social ~~relationship~~ relationship. It does not mean licence, it is necessarily not breaking away or cessation from a nation and a country, though under a very special circumstances and condition it might amount to that. Self-determination is not an ultimate goal in itself. It is a means means to achieve harmony, cohesion with other groups in the country so that in a peaceful atmosphere even the ethnic minorities and weaker section of the population can preserve their geographical boundary or territory and maintain their distinctive ethnic identity and that way help attaining dignity and self respect, attaining the highest standard of civilisation. Self-determination also imposes upon a sense of self-discipline in both individual and collective sense. It is a principle to live and let live.

In order to express the philosophy of self-determination in its social and political sense, it should first express itself in the form of Constitution. This Constitution gives the operative expression to the concept of self-determination. The indigenous peoples concept of self-determination co-exist with the concept of Constitution. This Constitution must be flexible to suit the change of circumstances.

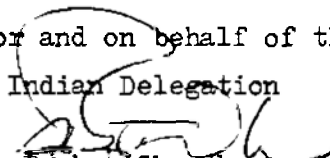
In the context of multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, ^{Country} like India right of self-determination within the framework of the nation is the precondition to the very survival of indigenous and tribal people who are invariably backward and weaker section of the population. The experience of the indigenous people all over the world is that the dominant group or groups develop vested interests in the areas of the indigenous and tribal people, in their economy and oftentime in the name of integration create such conditions where the weaker indigenous people are compelled to die away in favour of those dominant groups. In other words in the name of integration they are forced to assimilate. It is also the experience all over the world that good laws, beneficial schemes and pious wishes, ^{the masses} do not do any good to the indigenous people. The vested interests of dominant groups snatch away the political and administrative will of the Government and Administration. Good law, Constitutional provisions of lofty ideals bear no meaning unless they are translated into action. We know that many countries have very good protective provisions ~~for them~~ enshrined in their respective constitutions. In the international forum like this one they very loudly and proudly proclaim this. But lack of proper mechanism to implement

these provisions reduce them only the laws in statute book, provisions confined on the pages of Constitution. So an administrative arrangement, based on the principles of consent, consultation and participation is imperative for making these provisions meaningful. So the right of self-determination in the form of autonomy, in the form of self-government is necessary. Where there is no autonomy, no self-government the indigenous people, the weaker section, the ethnic minority are bound to face decadence.

So, Madam Chairperson, we the Indian delegation insist on the necessity of granting of right of self-determination in the form of autonomy, in the form of Self-government to the indigenous and tribal people of different countries of the world. Before conclusion I once again assert that the right of self-determination, Self-government and Autonomy of the Indigenous people as a distinct identity with all their social-economic-cultural and political values must be respected.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

For and on behalf of the
Indian Delegation


Samar Brahma Choudhury.

Dated 6.8.87