



NATIONAL LAW INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL
CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH



Vol. 2 Issue I (2025)

THE T*Ri*BAL INSIGHT



Image: Gond Painting by Saroj Venkat Shyam

ABOUT CTSR



The Centre for Tribal Studies and Research (CTSR) has been established with the objective of adopting a comprehensive approach to issues concerning tribal rights, and the preservation and protection of their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. The Centre engages in studies and research related to tribal law, focusing on the implementation and analysis of Central and State Government schemes for tribals, in collaboration with NGOs, local communities, and government bodies. The Centre also envisions to research and review the legal instruments and policies related to Indigenous rights and their protection in international forums across jurisdictions. The Centre shall organize seminars, conferences, and training programs in areas including education, economy, resettlement and rehabilitation, forest rights, customary laws, and the tribal criminal justice system, and shall publish related literature.

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MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR



It gives me immense pride to witness the publication of the second volume of *The Tribal Insight*, a flagship initiative of the *Centre for Tribal Studies and Research (CTSR)* at the National Law Institute University, Bhopal. This magazine continues to serve as a vibrant platform for the celebration, documentation, and critical engagement with the diverse cultures, histories, and knowledge systems of tribal and indigenous communities.

As CTSR deepens its commitment to fostering inclusive academic dialogue and social awareness, this volume stands as a testament to the Centre's growing impact in bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and contemporary scholarship. In an age where the notions of progress and development often risk marginalizing the most vulnerable, the relevance of tribal voices in national and global discourse on sustainability, rights, and identity has never been more crucial. Through *The Tribal Insight*, we strive to honour these voices and amplify their significance. It serves to remind us that development must be inclusive, participatory, and respectful of the traditions and wisdom that tribal communities have preserved through generations.

I congratulate the CTSR team for their continued dedication and the contributors for their thoughtful perspectives. I am confident that *The Tribal Insight* will continue to evolve as an essential resource, sparking dialogue, reflection, and action. May this publication inspire in every reader a deeper sense of responsibility, curiosity, and solidarity with tribal communities across the world.

Best Wishes,

Prof. (Dr.) S. Surya Prakash

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR PERSON



It is with a deep sense of satisfaction and hope that we present the second volume of *The Tribal Insight*, an initiative that continues to grow both in substance and spirit under the guidance of the *Centre for Tribal Studies and Research (CTSR)*. This edition continues our mission of fostering academic, cultural, and policy-oriented engagement with the lives, rights, and futures of tribal communities in India and across the world.

This volume reflects not only the academic strength of our contributors but also their empathy, curiosity, and commitment to representing the realities of tribal and Indigenous communities with care and accuracy. Each article, analysis, and creative contribution stands as a reminder that the stories, struggles, and knowledge systems of tribal communities deserve a central place in contemporary discourse, not just as subjects of study, but as sources of insight and direction. Through this publication, CTSR seeks to foster a dialogue that is not confined to academic spaces, but reaches into communities, policy circles, and classrooms, urging a more just and inclusive understanding of India's social fabric.

I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to the editorial team, students, researchers, and members of CTSR for their tireless efforts. I am also deeply grateful to the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor for his unwavering support and encouragement. I encourage all readers to engage with this edition critically and empathetically. I hope this edition encourages readers to pause, listen, and learn, and above all, to carry forward the values of respect, solidarity, and critical engagement.

Warm regards,
Prof. (Dr.) Bir Pal Singh



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NHRC Issues Directions to Improve Education Access of Tribal Children

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), on 23 January 2025, has issued an order directing the Union Ministry of Education and Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs to consider the implementation of National Tribal Policy to improve education access and quality of life of children from tribal communities. This direction was issued in the backdrop of a complaint filed before the Supreme Court by lawyer and human rights activist, Radhakanta Tripathy. The complaint had raised concerns regarding poor socio-economic conditions and human rights violations faced by tribal children in India. Tripathy highlighted several challenges including language barriers, teacher absenteeism, poverty, and poor infrastructure that lead to high dropout rates among tribal children.

The complaint called for urgent implementation of National Tribal Policy to improve access to education among tribal children and sought intervention from the ministry of tribal affairs and ministry of education to address the same. Specific examples were highlighted in the complaint including an incident in Keonjhar district of Odisha where four children could not complete their school education due poverty and poor education facilities. The complaint had highlighted several issues including, language barriers, poor teacher-student ration, early dropout rates, etc.

WHAT IS NATIONAL TRIBAL POLICY?

It is a comprehensive framework formulated with the objective of addressing historical injustices and empowering tribal communities in India. It focuses on key aspects including education, healthcare, land rights, cultural preservation and economic development. The policy seeks to bring Scheduled Tribes into the mainstream of society while respecting their distinct culture.



Source: Orissapost.com

NATIONAL TRIBAL POLICY

SOURCES:

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/nhrc-directs-ministries-to-improve-edu-access-quality-of-life-of-tribal-kids/articleshow/117495653.cms?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs Directs Compliance with FRA, 2006



Source: <https://scroll.in/latest/1077923/ensure-law-protecting-forest-dwelling-communities-from-eviction-is-followed-centre-tells-states>



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47317361>

SOURCES:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/centre-asks-states-to-create-mechanism-for-compliance-with-forest-rights-act-9777367/>

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/tribal-ministry-directs-states-to-create-fra-compliance-mechanism-report-on-evictions-from-tiger-reserves#:~:text=The%20Union%20Ministry%20of%20Tribal,to%20address%20such%20issues%20transparently.>

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs has urged the state governments to establish a mechanism to ensure compliance with provisions, particularly relating to the rights of forest dwellers, of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 in response to complaints relating to illegal eviction of forest dwelling communities. It has also called for a grievance redressal framework to address the issues in a transparent manner. The issue stems from a complaint the ministry received regarding villages situated inside tiger reserves in states including M.P., Maharashtra, and West Bengal alleging forced eviction from their traditional lands. This was being done via a directive by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), which had ordered the relocation of villagers from tiger reserves.

The order impacted 89,808 families across 848 villages. So far, 257 villages, comprising 25,007 families have been relocated. However, 591 villages, comprising of 64,801 families, remain within notified core areas. This directive has faced opposition from conservationists and activists on grounds that such an action violates FRA.

The Union Ministry via a letter dated 10 January 2025, has iterated that FRA protects forest-dwelling communities from unlawful eviction and provides that resettlement be carried out with informed consent and participation. So forth, the Ministry has directed state tribal departments to provide information regarding tiger reserves, name and number of villages with population of residents, details of FRA claims received. It has also sought information on whether free prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the Gram Sabha of the concerned villages was carried out and the likely compensation.

Union Budget Increases Tribal Affairs Allocation

The Union Budget 2025-26 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2025, has increased the budget allocation for the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs by 45.79% in comparison to the previous year. The Union budget 2025-26 has allocated Rs. 14,925.81 crore for the the Ministry, up from Rs. 10,237.33 crore in 2024-25. The three major initiatives of the ministry, Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JGUA), and Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) received an increase in their financial allocation.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools, a programme to set up residential schools for students from ST communities with the objective of providing quality education, will receive Rs. 7088.60 crore, an increase from Rs. 4,748 crore last year. The Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan scheme, targeted towards saturation coverage of government schemes in health, infrastructure, education and livelihood, was allocated Rs. 2000 crore, quadrupling the allocation of Rs. 500 crore from the last year. Similarly, the budget for the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyan, aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of the PVTGs has been allocated Rs. 300 crore, double the amount that was allocated the previous year.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been allocated Rs. 14,886 crore budget. This is an increase of about 4.6%. The increase in allocation comes towards National Overseas Scholarship for SCs and pre and post matric scholarship for SC, OBC and Economically Backward Classes and Denotified Tribes.



Source: Indian Express



SOURCE:

[https://indianexpress.com/article/india/outlay-hike-residential-schools-welfare-schemes-tribal-affairs-budget-9812254/#:~:text=The%20Union%20Budget%202025%2D26,estimate\)%20in%202024%2D25.](https://indianexpress.com/article/india/outlay-hike-residential-schools-welfare-schemes-tribal-affairs-budget-9812254/#:~:text=The%20Union%20Budget%202025%2D26,estimate)%20in%202024%2D25.)

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/union-budget-2025-packages-for-scheme-saturation-ekalavya-schools-push-tribal-affairs-allocation-up-148/article69168738.ece>

The President of India Inaugurates the *Aadi Mahotsav* 2025



Source: Press Information Bureau



Image: <https://gknow.in/aadi-mahotsav-2025-from-february-16-to-25-2025-at-the-major-dhyan-chand-national-stadium-in-new-delhi/>

SOURCES:

<https://ddnews.gov.in/en/the-president-of-india-to-inaugurate-aadi-mahotsav-2025/>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=2103858>

The Tribal Co-operative Development Marketing Federation of India (TRIFED), under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, organised the Aadi Mahotsav 2025 its flagship initiative, between 16th February to 24th February 2025 at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi. The event showcased the vibrant culture, heritage, and economic potential of tribal communities in India.

The Hon'ble President of India, Shrimati Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the festival as the Chief Guest. The Mahotsav brought together over 600 tribal artisans from across India and about 500 performing artists showcasing tribal dance forms. In her address, the Hon'ble President of India, emphasised on the significance of the initiative in empowering tribal artisans and entrepreneurs.

The Tribal Affairs Minister, Shri Jual Oram also emphasised the importance of the event in empowering tribal communities by bridging the gap between traditional art and modern consumers. Additionally, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Shri Durga Das Uikey highlighted the event's positive impact in fostering growth of tribal artisans by opening to them the national and international markets.

The festival included several key highlights including signing of over 25 MoUs and international delegations from Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Partnership with platforms such as IFCA and NEST also aimed at supporting tribal culinary and capacity building.

'Left Out' Communities in Sikkim to Get ST Status

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang announced the inclusion of 12 left out communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes by the Central Government in due course. This was said while addressing the fourth (and the final) meeting of the Sikkim High Level Committee (SSHLC) for the inclusion of the said communities.

The 'left out' communities includes – Bhujel, Gureng, Jogi, Kirat, Khambu Rai, Kirat Dewan, Khas, Mangar, Newar, Sanyashi, Sunuwar, Thami, and Majhi. The Chief Minister pointed out that these communities share cultural and ethnic identities of the indigenous people of Sikkim. He further added that SSHLC will prepare a comprehensive ethnographic report of the respective communities based on field visits, research and consultation to align with the criteria set by the Central Government for the inclusion in ST, i.e., primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness, geographical isolation and backwardness.

BACKGROUND

This decision comes in the backdrop of the ongoing effort for past several months for the including these left-out communities in the ST list. The members of the 12 groups along with several organisations consolidated themselves under the umbrella of EIECOS+1 with the objective of restoring their ST status as guaranteed under Article 371F of the Constitution and signed a resolution in furtherance of their demand. Subsequently, the SSHLC was constituted by the State Government on 4th November 2024 vide Notification NO: 59/SWD/AMD/2024, to prepare a comprehensive and scientific report on the issue.



Source: <https://www.sikkimexpress.com/news-details/sikkims-left-out-communities-adopt-resolution-seeking-restoration-of-their-tribal-status-under-art-371f>



Source: https://sikkimherald.com/2025/02/19/sikkims-eiecos1-to-submit-tribal-status-report-for-left-out-communities-by-march-31/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

SOURCES:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/12-left-out-communities-in-sikkim-will-get-st-status-in-due-course-cm-101743695823945.html>

<https://www.sikkimexpress.com/news-details/sikkims-left-out-communities-adopt-resolution-seeking-restoration-of-their-tribal-status-under-art-371f>

Kannadipaya of Idukki Gets GI Tag in Kerala



Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kannadipaya-gets-gi-tag-anchoring-tribal-craft-on-global-map/article69408207.ece>



Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2025/Apr/04/with-its-unique-charm-kannadipaya-of-idukkis-tribal-artisans-lands-gi-tag-in-kerala>

SOURCES:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kannadipaya-gets-gi-tag-anchoring-tribal-craft-on-global-map/article69408207.ece>

The Kannadipaya, a glossy, mirror-like bamboo mat handcrafted by tribal artisans in Kerala's Idukki district, has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, marking a significant milestone for tribal heritage. This is the only handmade craft from Kerala to receive the GI tag, secured through efforts led by the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI).

TRADITIONAL CRAFT WITH A SACRED PROCESS

The Kannadipaya is produced by the Urali, Mannan, and Muthuvan tribes, using ultra-thin slivers from a rare bamboo species called *Teinostachyum wightii*, locally known as 'njoonjiletta'. The bamboo is collected through a ritualistic forest expedition that lasts from full moon night to the next day. It takes over a month to complete a single mat, which is highly flexible and reflective, hence its name (kannadi meaning mirror, paya meaning mat).

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE & CHALLENGES

Traditionally, the mat was offered as a prestigious gift. Despite the artistry and cultural value, the product suffered from low market demand and returns, posing challenges to the artisans' livelihoods. The GI tag is expected to enhance its marketability, prevent misuse, and support branding and conservation of tribal knowledge.

BOOST FOR TRIBAL LIVELIHOODS

The recognition will benefit tribal communities in Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Palakkad. The government has also initiated efforts to modernise production facilities and repopulate the bamboo species to ensure a sustainable supply chain.

Telangana Launches Indira Solar Scheme to Empower Tribal Farmers

The State Government, on 15th May 2025, announced a new initiative, 'Indira Solar Giri Jal Vikasam' scheme allocating Rs. 12, 600 crore to provide solar-powered irrigation to six acres of land for the period of next five years, benefitting 2.1 lakh tribal farmers who were granted land titled under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka officially launched the scheme from Machram village in the Amrabad madal in Achampet constituency on 19th May 2025. The scheme shall be implemented jointly by various government departments including, forest, energy, health, rural development, etc. The scheme also supports development of horticulture via drip irrigation, provisions of saplings and interim income assistance through intercropping until long-term crop begin yielding. In doing so, Telangana has become the first state in the country to introduce a specific irrigation and livelihood enhancement scheme tailored to the FRA beneficiaries.

The scheme provides a comprehensive plan on the development of six lakh acres land with off-grid solar pump based irrigation system at its centre. At district level, the collectors are entrusted with task of implementing the scheme and granting necessary permissions in consultation with concerned ministers.



Source : <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telegana/telegana-cm-revanth-launches-scheme-to-provide-solar-pumpsets-to-all-tribal-farmers/article69593792.ece>



SOURCE:

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/telegana-launches-12600cr-indira-solar-scheme-to-empower-tribal-farmers/articleshow/121195412.cms?utm_source=chatgpt.com

In a landmark milestone, Andamans' Jarawa tribals now enrolled as voters



Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/isolated-hostile-for-long-andamans-jarawa-tribals-now-enrolled-as-voters/>



SOURCE:

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/isolated-hostile-for-long-andamans-jarawa-tribals-now-enrolled-as-voters/>

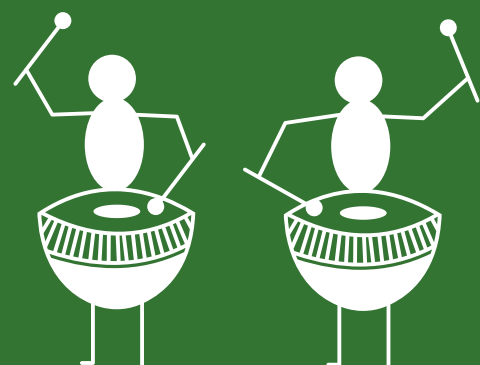
Historically known for their isolation and avoidance of contact with the outside world, the Jarawa tribe of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands made a landmark move in becoming officially registered as voters of India.

Though these Jarawas, one of the five Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) living in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, are being asked to take part in the electoral process only by the 2029 Lok Sabha election, merely the registration is being regarded as a significant step towards the inclusion of an isolated and frequently hostile community in India's democratic process.

INITIAL EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH CONTACT

Situated on the western coast of the Middle and South Andaman Islands, the Jarawas have historically been cautious and suspicious of outsiders. In attempts at establishing a rapport, the islands' local administration has consistently sent out outreach efforts intended to gain the trust of the tribe. The first historical peaceful contact was made in 1974, in a joint expedition by the administration and the Anthropological Survey of India. Since the initial contact, the Jarawas progressively opened up to gifts like coconuts and bananas from the visiting groups. It was thought that only in 1991 was meaningful and regular interaction between the Jarawas and the external world achieved.

Prior to the Jarawas, election officers on the islands were able to register voters from the Onges, Shompens, and Great Nicobarese tribes, the other PVTGs there. These other tribes are thought to be friendlier than the Jarawas. The Onges voted in the 2019 LS poll, while the Shompens voted in 2024.



IFIP 2025 Global Conference Held in Kenya

The International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP) 2025 Global Conference was held in Kenya between 17th February 2025 to 21st February 2025. The event brought together a dynamic group of Indigenous leaders, youth representatives, philanthropists, and development practitioners. Under the theme, 'Global Impact, Local Solutions: Funding Indigenous Self-Determination and Leadership', the conference provided a crucial platform to the advance discussions on Indigenous philanthropy, youth leadership, climate resilience, and inclusive development. Building on prior engagements, such as the Africa Dialogue 2023, the conference intended to deepen collaboration and reinforce the global philanthropic community's commitment to Indigenous-led solutions.

OBJECTIVES

- Amplify the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in global forums, ensuring their right to self-determination are recognised and respected.
- Promote meaningful dialogue and collaboration between indigenous organisations and global philanthropic community.
- Encourage knowledge exchange, capacity building, and networking between funders and indigenous leaders to foster long-term collaboration.

KEY THEMES

The discussions in the conference centred around three major points:

- Redistributing resources and direct funding to Indigenous Peoples.
- Promoting Indigenous sovereignty and self-governance in defending Indigenous rights to lands, oceans, and climate justice.
- Philanthropy in fostering and strengthening intersectional Indigenous leadership.



Source: <https://www.alliancemagazine.org/conf-report/ifip2025/>



**International Funders
for Indigenous Peoples
Global Conference**

**Global Impact, Local Solutions:
Funding Indigenous Self
Determination and Leadership**

Pre-Conference: 17-18 February 2025

Conference: 19-21 February 2025

Enashipai Resort & Spa, Naivasha, Kenya

Source: <https://www.hrfn.org/events/ifip-global-conference-2025/>

SOURCES:

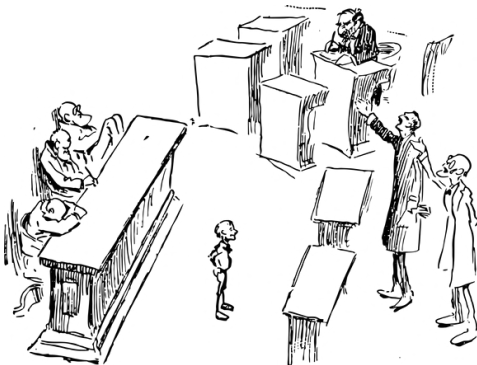
<https://www.alliancemagazine.org/blog/global-impact-local-solutions-reflections-from-the-ifip-global-conference-2025-on-indigenous-self-determination-and-leadership/>

<https://internationalfunders.org/global-conference-2025/>

Ecuador Held in Violation of Rights of Uncontacted Indigenous Peoples



Image: Conta, a member of the Tagaeri and Baihuaeri Waorani Indigenous groups, appears before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights | Credit: Inter-American Court of Human Rights



Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Source: <https://www.centerforenvironmentalrights.org/news/press-release-cder-to-appear-before-the-inter-american-court-of-human-rights-on-the-climate-emergency-and-rights-of-nature>

SOURCES:

<https://www.survivalinternational.org/news/14185>

<https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/ecuador-inter-american-court-of-human-rights-rules-gov-violated-indigenous-rights-over-oil-drilling/>

In a first of its kind ruling, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, found that the government of the state of Ecuador has violated the rights of uncontacted indigenous peoples, thereby creating a worldwide precedent for upholding the rights of indigenous peoples. The ruling was issued on March 13, 2025. The tribes in question are the Tagaeri and Taromenane Indigenous peoples. The court held the State had violated their right to collective property, self-determination, a dignified life, health, food, cultural identity, healthy environment, housing, life, judicial guarantees, and judicial protection.

In 1999, Ecuador had created a territorial boundary called the Zona Intangible Tagaeri and Taromenane (ZITT), to protect the communities from outside interference. The court found that the state failed to protect the ZITT from invasion by outsiders. The Court has also ordered for the expansion of the territorial limits of ZITT to encompass all the lands used by the two communities and to prevent oil exploration and other extraction activities in the region. It also directed the state to monitor the ZITT via forming a commission and report within a year.

The court also observed that the state did not evidence any efforts on its part regarding measures taken to ensure that exploitation activities would uphold no-contact principle thus, violating the communities' right to collective property and self-determination. The court clarified that the uncontacted indigenous peoples right their free, prior and informed consent involves that in any decision affecting them, their isolation is taken into consideration.

24th Session of United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Held at UN Headquarters

The 24th session of the UNPFII, the largest convening of indigenous peoples globally, was held between 21 April to 2 May 2025. This year's theme was centred around "implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing challenges". Over 1500 delegates attended the event including human rights advocates, policymakers, and academics from across seven socio-cultural regions, including Asia. Several issues were highlighted in the event such as, the consequences of mining activities on local population. Delegates emphasised on equity and justice and expressed concerns over suppression of Indigenous rights and the loss of biodiversity, and cultural heritage.

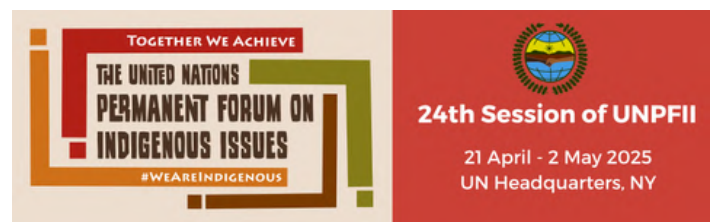
The forum authorised an expert group meeting on specific issues pertaining to climate change, biodiversity governance and territorial integrity of nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples.

WHAT IS UNPFII?

It is a high-level advisory body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The forum was established in 2000 by Resolution 2000/22 with the mandate to deal with issues pertaining to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights. The UNPFII is one among three UN bodies that have mandate to specifically deal with the issues related to indigenous peoples. The latter two are Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (established as a subsidiary body of the UN Human Rights Council), and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (also mandated under the Human Rights Council).



Source: <https://media.un.org/photo/en/asset/oun7/oun71094126>



Source: <https://indico.un.org/event/1016296/>



SOURCES:

<https://en.rti.org.tw/news/view/id/2012865>

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/amplifyin-g-indigenous-voices-24th-session-un-permanent-forum-indigenous-issues>

<https://unpfii.desa.un.org/about-unpfii>

Dja Dja Wurrung People Initiate Treaty Negotiation



Image: Rodney Carter, Chief Executive, DJAARA | Credit: The Guardian



Image: The ancestral land of the Dja Dja Wurrung is in central Victoria | Source: ABC News

SOURCE:

[https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/may/27/traditional-owner-group-seeks-to-negotiate-local-treaty-with-victorian-government-in-state-first?](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/may/27/traditional-owner-group-seeks-to-negotiate-local-treaty-with-victorian-government-in-state-first?hpid=hp_top-news-story%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&hpid=hp_top-news-story%3Ahomepage%2Fstory)

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/traditional-owner-group-begins-local-treaty-in-national-first/jukemr6jx>

In a first, the Dja Dja Wurrung people of central Victoria, Australia, have initiated a process of local treaty negotiation in the state. The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) – a body representing the Dja Dja Wurrung people – has registered with the state’s independent treaty umpire, the Treaty Authority, formally indicating its willingness to negotiate a treaty with the concerned government. In doing so, the DJAARA has become the first traditional owner group seek to negotiate local treaty with the Government of Victoria. The DJAARA will firstly, conduct consultation with members of the community to determine what treaty shall focus upon and will form delegation of people responsible for negotiating with the state government. Subsequently, the state government shall be invited to the negotiation process.

The First Peoples’ Assembly, the Victoria’s democratically elected Indigenous body began the nation-first treaty talks in the November of the previous year. The traditional owner treaty would allow the indigenous communities to enter into agreements pertaining to issues on a priority basis. The chief executive of DJAARA, Rodney Carter stated that the group wanted more independence and the authority to manage land on its country in the region.



Brazil's Federal Government Calls for Restoration of Indigenous Lands

On 11 April 2025, the Federal Government of Brazil made a public call for BRL 150 million from the Amazon Fund for the ecological restoration of indigenous lands. This marks the third such call since the inception of the Amazon Restoration programme – largest restoration initiative focused on indigenous lands in the country's history.

The programme is being headed by two institutions – National Development Bank (BNDES) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MMA), Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (MPI) and the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI) in Brazil. It covers reforestation projects within three defined macro-regions of the Legal Amazon, ranging from the state of Maranhao, Amazonas, Rondonia, Mato Grosso, Tocantins, Para, and the state of Acre. Each region is expected to receive BRL 46 million as funds.

This also forms the part of Brazil's broader Restoration Arc strategy which seeks to reforest six million hectares of land over next few decades and also contribute to mitigating carbon emission in the country. The call for proposals would be open till 19th July.

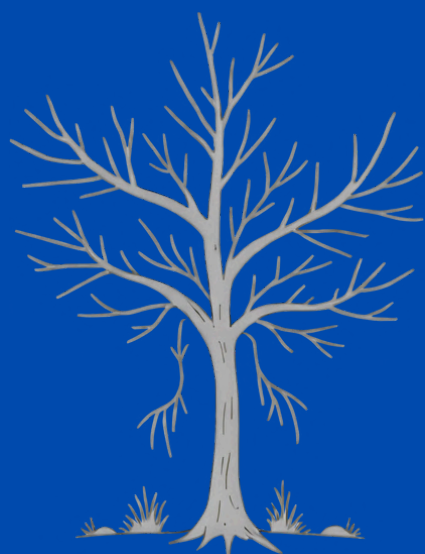


Image: Representatives of Institutions presented the initiative to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva | Credit: Ricardo Stuckert/Secom-PR



SOURCES:

<https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2025/04/brazil2019s-federal-government-launches-brl-150-million-public-call-for-restoration-of-indigenous-lands>

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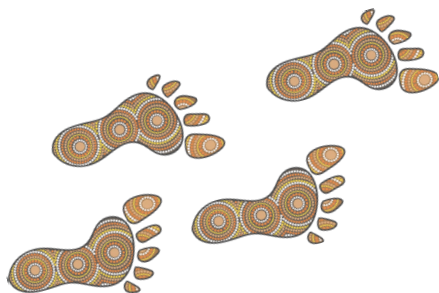
‘Gathering of Nations’ Celebrates Indigenous Culture



Source: gatheringofnations.com



Image: A man wearing his feathered headdress at the 2025 Gathering of Nations | Credit: Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican



SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/gathering-of-nations-powwow-indigenous-new-mexico-5fe6c43e9c9455a10e3e07e81ba7ac06>

From 24th April to 26th April 2025, the Gathering of Nations, North America’s largest ‘powwow’ was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. They even brought together over 565 tribes from the United States, and 220 from Canada celebrating indigenous culture via indigenous dancers, musicians, and artisans from around the world.

BACKGROUND

‘Powwow’ is a relatively modern phenomenon emerging in the 1800s in the USA as the government seized indigenous lands resulting in forced migrations and upheaval of indigenous communities. Their plight led to solidarity among the tribes. Alliances led to cultural exchanges including songs and dances during gathering between the tribes. The word, ‘powwow’ is derived from ‘pau wau’ an Algonquian Narrtack word for ‘medicine man’. Scholars argue that the English settlers used the word to refer to meetings of medicine men and later, to any kind of Native American gathering. Today, large powwows like the ‘Gathering of Nations’ have become a commercialised event that uses dances, competitions, etc. to celebrate indigenous cultures.

Albeit, some argue that it is a struggle to keep traditional cultural practices and commercial *powwows* from being lumped together. The concept holds a very different cultural connotation among the native American and indigenous cultures.



Amazon Indigenous Leaders Demand Oil Drilling Ban at COP30

Indigenous leaders from throughout the Amazon rainforest are demanding an end to oil and gas drilling in the planet's largest rainforest, calling on negotiators at next year's COP30 climate conference in Brazil to present a binding treaty to transition away from fossil fuels. In a gathering in Peru this month, representatives of dozens of Amazonian communities signed a declaration calling for an irreversible plan and timeline for such a transition.

The Amazon is a new frontier for the prospecting of fossil fuels, with vast reserves found in recent years. Certain indigenous peoples have long opposed drilling on their lands on grounds of environmental and way of life destruction. Certain leaders, such as the Mura Indigenous of Brazil's Jonas Mura, have been victims of violence and intimidation for their resistance to oil and gas activities on their lands.

In spite of the risks, the leaders are now joining their voices on the global stage. The leaders make the point that as governments are negotiating off fossil fuels, Indigenous peoples are frequently left out of negotiations. The leaders are demanding cancellation of oil blocks without Indigenous peoples' consent, halting new oil infrastructure investment, and developing renewable energy alternatives and climate funds for local economies. Their demand for action points out the "shameful" irony of hosting COP30 in a place where new oil and gas exploration is being actively sought.



Source: <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2025/04/23/shameful-amazon-indigenous-people-assembly-oil-drilling-ban-cop30/#:~:text=This%20month%2C%20they%20met%20again,for%20phasing%20out%20fossil%20fuels%E2%80%9D>



Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/13/brazil-to-auction-oil-exploration-rights-months-before-hosting-cop30>

SOURCE:

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2025/04/23/shameful-amazon-indigenous-people-assembly-oil-drilling-ban-cop30/#:~:text=This%20month%2C%20they%20met%20again,for%20phasing%20out%20fossil%20fuels%E2%80%9D>

KEY EVENTS AND INITIATIVES BY MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS 2024-25

REPORT

On 19 June 2024, to mark World Sickle Cell Day, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), in collaboration with the Birsa Munda Centre at AIIMS Delhi, organized a National Conclave on Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) in New Delhi. The event focused on raising awareness about SCD and discussing strategies to halt its intergenerational transmission. It was attended by Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram and Minister of State Shri D.D. Uikey. The day also marked the launch of a two-week-long screening and awareness drive across over 340 districts in 17 states, identified as high-incidence areas for SCD.

By September 2024, the Ministry shared a comprehensive update on the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. A total of 23.73 lakh individual titles and 1.16 lakh community titles had been distributed, covering 190.39 lakh acres of forest land. This marked a significant rise from 2013–14, when 14.36 lakh individual and 23,000 community titles were issued. The number of claims disposed of also saw a major increase—from 25.11 lakh to 42.475 lakh. It was highlighted that from the inception of the FRA till May 2014, only 55.30 lakh acres of land had been distributed. In contrast, between 2014 and November 2024, approximately 190.39 lakh acres had been granted—over three and a half times the earlier figure. Of this, 50.77 lakh acres were granted to individuals and 139.62 lakh acres to communities.

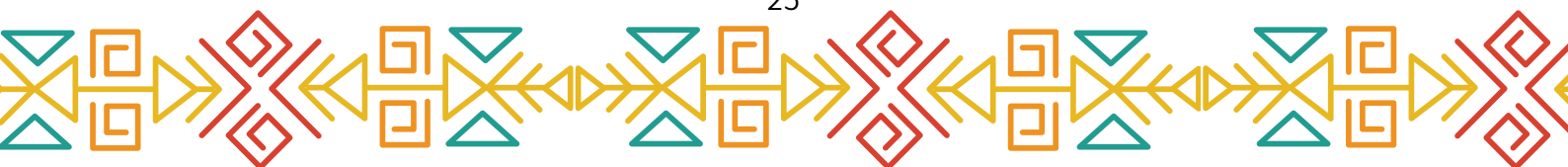
In Jammu & Kashmir, the implementation of the Forest Rights Act began on 31 October 2019. As of November 2024, the region had distributed a total of 4,505 titles, including 305 individual and 4,190 community rights. This marked a significant step in ensuring tribal rights in the Union Territory.

On 15 November 2024, the nation celebrated the fourth Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, instituted by the Government of India in 2021 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, the iconic tribal freedom fighter. The day serves to honor tribal heroes, celebrate their cultural heritage, and inspire future generations. A national event was held at Prerna Sthal, Parliament House, where President Smt. Droupadi Murmu paid floral tributes to the statue of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Across 29 States and Union Territories, state-level and district-level functions were organized. These events included health camps, Tribal Artisan Melas, Nukkad Nataks, and sessions where beneficiaries shared their stories, underscoring the positive impact of government initiatives. State dignitaries, including Chief Ministers, Governors, and Cabinet Ministers, participated and distributed benefits to the tribal population.

From 15 to 26 November 2024, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs extended the Janjatiya Gaurav Divas celebrations to coincide with Constitution Day. During this period, an IEC campaign titled “Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan” was launched to increase awareness about tribal welfare schemes and mobilize Gram Panchayats across the country.

On the same day, 15 November 2024, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed a public gathering in Jamui, Bihar, to mark Janjatiya Gaurav Divas. The event included the inauguration and foundation stone laying for multiple tribal welfare projects. The Prime Minister was joined by notable dignitaries, including Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Tribal Affairs Minister Shri Jual Oram, and several Union Ministers such as Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Giriraj Singh, Jitan Ram Manjhi, Chirag Paswan, and Durgadas Uikey. Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar was also present. This national-level function was connected to 100 districts through two-way communication. During the address, the Prime Minister declared that the period from 15 November 2024 to 15 November 2025 would be celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh, dedicated to honoring tribal freedom fighters and their legacy.

Earlier in the year, on 15 August 2024, EMRS students, PM-JANMAN beneficiaries, and Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVK) representatives from across the country were invited to participate in Independence Day celebrations in New Delhi. They attended the flag-hoisting ceremony at Red Fort, followed by visits to prominent national landmarks such as the Prime Minister’s Museum, Parliament House, and Rashtrapati Bhawan. President Smt. Droupadi Murmu personally welcomed the tribal delegations and VDVKS, highlighting the government’s inclusive approach and its recognition of the tribal community’s role in the nation’s development.





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ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION

Shompen is a semi-nomadic forest dwelling tribe living in the Great Nicobar island since ages (approximately 60,000 years). Usually restricting their interaction for the purpose of selling their produce, the Shompenese are one of the least interacted tribes in the world. They have their own way of quarantining after their interaction with the outsiders. This nomadic tribe has its boundaries determined by the rivers that cut across the forest. Being a Moon-worshipping tribe, they consider it to be the universe's creator. The Shompenese recognize marks on the Moon as symbols of their earliest ancestors, and the Moon Goddess is said to descend to Earth to transport the deceased to paradise.

Living Environment



The Shompen tribe has its habitat under two National Parks—namely, Campbell Bay National Park and Galathea National Park. Both the parks form a part of the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve and are famous for their unique biodiversity. The Galathea park hosts a variety of flora and fauna, featuring several endemic and endangered species. The Nicobar megapode, Nicobar pigeon, saltwater crocodiles, and giant leatherback turtles, wild boars and crab-eating macaques, monitor lizards are some of the birds and animals that can be found in the park. It can only be accessed with special permits because of its ecological sensitivity. Both the parks are encircled by verdant tropical rainforests and mangroves. Their coastal waters teem with colorful coral reefs, numerous fish species, and other marine organisms, establishing them as a sanctuary for marine biodiversity.

Origin



There are little hints about the Shompens' origins on the island. The group most likely moved to the Great Nicobar Island from the neighbouring Malaysian areas a number of years ago, according to Radcliffe Brown. In the Island's thick inner forests, they reside in tiny groups. The Nicobari name "Shamhap," which means "one who lives in forests," may have been pronounced "Shompen" in Britain. They are referred to by the Nicobarese as "Shompehan" and "Champion." The Shompens, who have their own language and a primitive culture, may be the only remaining members of the Malay race to live independently in dense jungles. The Shompen, along with four other tribes, are classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) and are of Mongoloid descent. Their light yellow-brown skin, straight hair, narrow eyes, and stocky build make them strongly resemble the people from Myanmar and Indonesia.

Food Habits

They are proficient in hunting and gathering, and they also cultivate plantations of diverse crops, including pandanus, lemon, and colocasia. They mainly rely on these plants, wild boar, wild fruits, honey, and fish for sustenance. The government provides free food grains to the tribe. Some people believe that a pernicious culture of reliance is being established, threatening these individuals' ability to support themselves by providing them with clothing and food grains.



The Language

The study conducted by Roger Blench put forward that the Shompen might be an isolate language. This is directly in conflict with the idea that Elangaiyan gave, that Shompen may be a part of the Nicobarese subgroup within the Nico-Monic branch of Austroasiatic. 223 Shompen tribe members were counted in the 1981 census. Out of which, 44 were involved in hunting and fishing, while 46 were recognized as "workers" and there were two literate women and four literate Shompen men. Other researchers like the Englishman Edward Horace Man and the Danish scholar Frederik Adolph de Roepstorff, the first scholar to collect data on the Shompen tribe, reported that the language of the Shompen, who are native foragers who live in Great Nicobar Island's hinterland, has long seemed to be very different from the other Nicobarian languages. Both of them had the belief that the Shompens are the aboriginals of the Nicobars.



Health Status

A survey was conducted in March 2017 by ICMR- Regional Medical Research Centre and Tribal Welfare and Health Department, situated in Port Blair along with other organisations revealed that Undernutrition was not common among children under five years old, and the Shompen population structure is not skewed. The lack of dengue, filariasis, and malaria were the other encouraging findings. Nonetheless, measles and rubella were naturally occurring infections. Intestinal parasite infestations and fungal skin infections were common. There were indications of an increasing risk of overweight, hypertension, and dyslipidemia despite the modest cardiovascular risk profile. These factors, along with the high rate of smokeless tobacco use, could significantly impact the Shompen population's future vulnerability to cardiovascular disease.

The Anthropological Aspect

Based on Radcliffe Brown's study, tradition, kinship, and locality form the basis of the social organization of the Shompen. The Shompens typically reside near drinking water sources and areas rich in pandanus fruits. No class division is seen in the tribe. The head of the family, i.e. the eldest male member controls a Shompen family. He is chosen based on their integrity, belief, intellect, ability to manage social control, and familiarity with the region. Then, the headman prohibits 'Band' members from contacting or meeting outsiders, as well as Shompens from other 'Bands'.

Exercising Franchise

According to the Chief Electoral Officer of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Shri. B.S. Jaglan, seven members of the tribe participated in the Lok Sabha 2024 elections by voting in the Andaman and Nicobar Lok Sabha constituency. According to data from the 2011 Census, Shompen had an estimated 229 residents. Mr. Triloknath Pandit, the former Director of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the first researcher who contacted the Sentinelese, asks to let them as they are and warns that if we enter their abode, their end will be much faster, such as from disease. If they need us, they will reach out. The Shompen may be few in number, but their knowledge of the forests in their islands is supreme.

Suggestions for conservation of the Shompenese

The Shompen people need modern tools and technologies to enhance their economy, particularly in hunting, fishing, and horticulture. AAJVS should provide upgraded resources. Child development programs, maternal and child healthcare, and educational institutions are essential to support Shompen women and children's education. Healthcare facilities at the Shompen Complex and Campbell Bay lack adequate medical supplies and need improvement. Additionally, the management of the Shompen Hut Complex could be transferred to the administration, with streamlined staff under better supervision. These are some of the suggestions given by the Prof. T. Subramanyam Naidu in his research titled “Conservation of the Shompen Tribe of Great Nicobar Island- Problems of Future Survival”.

The Great Nicobar Island (GNI) Project

A massive initiative aimed at turning the island of Great Nicobar into a commercial center. An international container transshipment facility, a greenfield international airport, township development, and a 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant covering 16,610 hectares of the island are all part of this project's extensive infrastructure upgrading, which is valued at Rs 72,000 crore. This project was started by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIDCO) as part of the holistic development of islands initiative.

Location Feasibility

The island is closely located to the ports in Columbo in southwest, and Klang and Singapore in the southeast as per the pre-feasibility report conducted by AECOM India. Located near to the crucial bottlenecks in the Indo-Pacific area-the Malacca Strait, the Sunda Strait, the Lombok Strait, and the Coco Island- all of which require urgent reinforcement because of China's growingly aggressive military presence.

Government's Response

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, when asked about the issue in the Lok Sabha through an unstarred question, answered that the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) is the responsibility of the respective State and UT administration. The Andaman & Nicobar administration assured that due procedures were followed, with no violations from the infrastructure upgrade proposal.

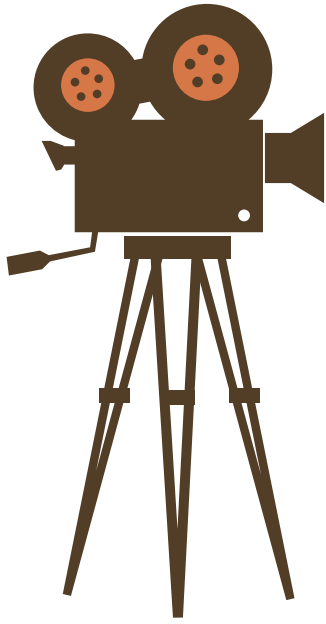
The Island Development Authority, chaired by the Home Minister since June 2017, oversees development while ensuring tribal rights. Measures include retaining tribal land ownership, prohibiting land transfer in Tribal Reserved areas under the 1956 Regulation, and enforcing protective laws like the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. A 2015 policy on the Shompen tribe mandates consultations for development projects. An Empowered Committee, including anthropologists, monitors tribal welfare, with assurances that the project will not displace the Shompen tribe.

What is Government doing ?

The A&N Administration's 2015 policy on the Shompen Tribe safeguards their cultural heritage while recognizing their social and economic diversity. The MoEF&CC granted environmental clearance for the Great Nicobar Island Project with conditions to protect the Shompen tribe, including minimizing disruptions, defining land use, and establishing a Special Medical Unit. ₹75 crore has been allocated for tribal welfare initiatives like boat ambulances and geo-surveillance towers. Additionally, the Directorate of Health Services has proposed a ₹126 crore upgrade to medical infrastructure, while the AAJVS continues to support Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by providing essential services and promoting traditional tribal crafts. These are some of the actions implemented by the Government to safeguard the rights of the Shompen tribe in overseeing the tribal reserve.

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Screen

'NEWTON' MOVIE REVIEW

India, a democracy, but is it the same for Tribals too?

'Newton'—no, it's not a science fiction movie or anything remotely related to physics. Instead, it delivers an intricately crafted narrative that highlights issues often left unaddressed. Amidst the chaotic and overwhelming nature of mainstream Bollywood, *Newton* (2017), directed by Amit V. Masurkar, feels like a breath of fresh air. Breaking away from clichéd heroes with unrealistic stature and grand romantic gestures, this quiet, thought-provoking film protests subtly but powerfully. Beneath its humor and simplicity lies a raw depiction of democracy, an exploration of whether it truly reaches everyone in India, especially the tribal people living deep within the country's jungles.

The film critiques democracy in its most basic and flawed form. While most Indians understand elections, how many are aware of the immense challenges of holding them in the nation's most isolated and conflict-ridden regions? Rather than preach, 'Newton' depicts ground realities, prompting viewers to question whether democracy as it exists today is truly inclusive.



Image: IMDB

The plot follows Nutan Kumar (Rajkummar Rao), who renames himself Newton to escape childhood bullying. After securing a government job, he is assigned the thankless task of conducting elections in a remote village in the dense forests of Chhattisgarh, a region plagued by frequent Naxalite attacks.

The village, home to barely 70 residents, epitomizes the systemic obsession with “procedure over purpose.” Despite possessing voter IDs, the locals remain oblivious to their voting rights or the mechanics of machine voting. Newton Kumar’s character embodies morality and professionalism. He is steadfast in facing obstacles to fulfill his duty, confronting corruption and negligence that the public has come to tolerate.

Upon arriving at the village, Newton realizes how disconnected he is from the struggles of such regions. The government procedures he idealized are far removed from their advertised versions. Determined to ensure fair voting, he risks danger from Naxalite attacks and clashes with apathetic colleagues accustomed to a broken system.

Malko Netam (Anjali Patil), a local schoolteacher, serves as a bridge between Newton’s rigidity and the villagers’ reality. Proud of her tribal roots, Malko speaks up for her people while maintaining professionalism. She is fearless—or perhaps simply accustomed to conducting elections in her danger-prone hometown. In one poignant scene, Newton explains the voting process to the villagers, stating, “If you follow all the rules and regulations stated by the government” (originally in Hindi). Malko, acting as a translator, interjects, “Sir, they already have their rules, which are a thousand years old.” This dialogue starkly underscores the tension between indigenous traditions and an insensitive government that demands adherence to its rules without offering basic amenities or genuine support.

Midway through the film, we meet Atma Singh (Pankaj Tripathi), a cynical paramilitary officer who prioritizes his team’s safety over his official duty. Having witnessed the system’s failures firsthand, Atma Singh’s jaded perspective contrasts sharply with Newton’s rigid idealism. While Singh’s character may seem dismissive of democracy, it resonates with audiences familiar with conflict zones where survival often takes precedence over idealism. Conversely, Newton’s unyielding adherence to rules, even in high-risk situations, can seem impractical and overly idealistic, romanticizing bureaucratic perfection at the expense of realism.

The film’s power lies in its subtle yet impactful performances, supported by evocative cinematography. The dense jungles of Chhattisgarh come alive with warm, muted tones, and the understated background score complements the narrative perfectly. However, the film could have delved deeper into the challenges faced by the Gond Tribe or other tribal communities, making them the central focus.

Inspired by real events in the Maoist-affected Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, Newton was India’s official Oscar entry in 2017. This black comedy, with its blend of humor and stark realism, leaves viewers both amused and contemplative, a refreshing antidote to Bollywood’s often overstimulating fare.

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