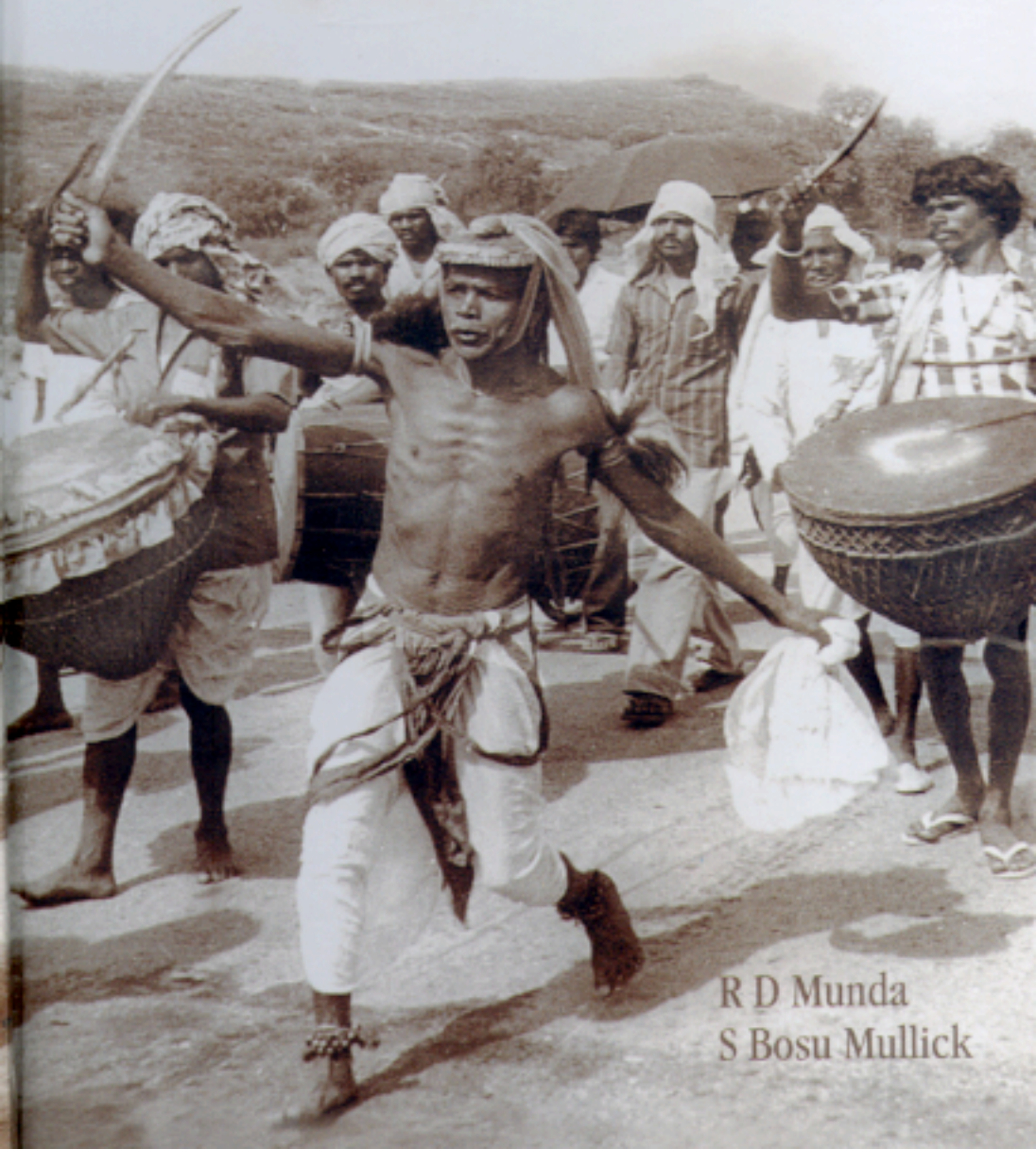
THE

JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India



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Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India

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In memory

of those great souls who sacrificed their lives

for the cause of the dispossessed, deprived and humiliated

peoples of Jharkhand.

LOCATION OF JHARKHAND IN INDIA



Preface

There was an increasing demand for the production of an anthology of scholarly papers on the subject when the Jharkhand Movement was at its peak in the 1990s. Unfortunately none of us were available to respond to the demand as we were awfully busy in the movement. The present volume is an attempt to satisfy such a demand, which has been surprisingly persisting even today not only in India but abroad as well.

The volume contains the most significant articles and documents on the Jharkhand movement, the oldest of the autonomy movements in India, which has recently resulted in the formation of a separate state by that name. The basic line of inquiry concerning the **issues** (dispossession from life-supporting resources of land, forest, water and identity), the **main cause** (internal colonialism) and the **remedy** (provision of autonomy), has been discussed from different angles by leading social scientists and activists. The process has led to the emergence of a development critique with an alternative provided by the tribal/indigenous perspective aimed at reconstructing a society based on equality; economy based on cooperation, caring and sharing, conservation, subsistence and decentralization; a polity based on conscience democracy and art based on collective participation and enjoyment. Analogous to the complexities of the Jharkhand cultural area and the varying ideological backgrounds of the authors concerned, the insights projected are contrastive.

The idea to produce such a volume was originally conceived by Dr. K. S. Singh when he was holding the office of the Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India. Owing to some unavoidable circumstances it could not materialise. Later we took it up and approached the International Work Group for Indigenous Affaires for its publication. We are extremely thankful to Mr. Christian Erni, the Programme Coordinator, Asia, of the IWGIA for pushing the matter and finally convincing the IWGIA to oblige us. We would also like to thank Dr. Stuart Corbridge for extending support in selecting the papers from a huge collection and organising them for publication.

Our sincere thanks are for the contributors of the volume who all agreed instantly to our proposal and expressed their genuine concern for the struggle of the indigenous peoples of India. We are very sad to say that Dr. Amar Kumar Singh, who provided intellectual leadership to the Jharkahd movement, is no more with us. We have also lost Dr. Arvind Narayan Das. He provided a rare historical insight and intellectual support to the movement. Sudden demise of Dr. Mathew Areeparampil shocked us the most. He was a genuine scholar of the life and struggle of the people of Jharkhand and a committed activist too.

We are thankful to Prof. Giridharilal Ganjhu for providing us the rare unpublished written speech of Mr. Jaipal Singh and the group photograph of the members of the Adivasi Mahasabha.

We are particularly indebted to Mr. E. Deenadayalan of The Other Media Communications for encouraging us to compile the volume. We sincerely thank Ms. Urmila Desor for patiently carrying out the tedious job of proof reading and to Mr. K.M. Jolly for typesetting the materials. We are especially thankful to Mr. Kislaya for his brilliant designing of the jacket of the book. He has perfectly conceived and depicted the true character of the Jharkhand movement by the photograph that he himself took years ago as an activist journalist. He has also helped us in recovering the map of Jharkhand that was originally demanded by the Jharkhand Party. Mr. Sunil George deserves our thanks for the painstaking job of reconstructing all the other maps that have been used in the book. We express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Mariamma Daniel for patiently providing secretarial assistance for the preparation of the manuscript. And the last but not the least, Mr. Sandeep Bahl deserves our sincere thanks for all the trouble he took for making the book see the light of the day.

Dr. Ram Dayal Munda
S. Bosu Mullick

10 December 2002
Ranchi

Introduction

S. Bosu Mullick

The Jharkhand Movement has been the most talked about and widely covered subject in the media and academic circles. Various analytical reports, academic interpretations and political explanations, often holding contradictory views, have been published over a period exceeding the last five decades. The production of such a huge corpus of literature proves not only the strength of the movement but also the immense significance of the issues thus raised on the socio-political life of the world's largest democracy and the struggle of the world's largest indigenous population in one country.

This volume makes an attempt to bring a few of them into one fold with a view to further the discourse on the relationship between the mainstream nationalism and the indigenous identity often termed ethnicity, vis-a-vis the nation state, and help the civil society understand the relevance of autonomy and identity of the indigenous peoples of the country as a whole.

Jharkhand Movement has been the oldest autonomy movement in the post-independence India. The Jharkhand Party placed the demand for the formation of a separate Jharkhand state within the constitutional framework of independent India and fought the first general elections in 1952 on that issue. Its landslide victory legitimized the genuineness of the demand. In fact the demand for separation of Chotanagpur and adjoining princely states, known as Jharkhand, (see map-page 10) from the political domination of the neighbouring provinces was raised even before the Simon Commission visited India in 1929. But the real political mobilisation in support of the demand to carve out a separate state started with the formation of the Adivasi Mahasabha (the Great Council of the Indigenous Peoples) in 1938.

The British not only crushed the indigenous people's hundred years of resistance movement to colonize Jharkhand but gradually prepared the ground for turning it into an internal colony of the neighbouring nations. After independence the situation further deteriorated with the adoption of a 'development' model by the Indian nation state that initiated a much more ruthless process of dispossession of the people of Jharkhand and exploitation of their natural resources. Jharkhand Movement has been seen as the immediate outcome of these developments.

While most of the authors find the present Jharkhand Movement a continuation of the indigenous peoples' age-old struggle against the British colonialism, others go even further back into the history of the conflict between the indigenous peoples and the medieval states. Very few authors ignore the internal colonial exploitation of the region, especially after independence. Opinions

also differ on the characterisation of the movement that ranges from pan-ethnic, sub-nationality to nationality. The authors have dealt with the issues of the ideological conflict and transformation within the movement as well as the infiltration of the ideology of the ruling classes and the state in it. Considering the positions of the contributors of the volume we may have a brief overview of the movement and its outcome.

Territorial Identity

During the Mughal rule, there was no definite territorial identity of Jharkhand though the region acquired the name 'the land of forests' even before the 13th century (Areeparampil). It covered the eastern part of the vast topography, known as the Great Central Indian Forests (Habib: 1982) that occupied whole of the central India between the Gangetic plains in the north and the Deccan plateau in the south. It largely remained outside the pale of the empires and kingdoms of the plains. However, a loose connection with them was established with the emergence of the primary states in the region during the 17th century (Sinha, Surajit, 1987).

The indigenous peoples of this vast forest land had a different sense of territoriality. For them the land was a continuous topography where they roamed, settled and resettled. Thus in their vocabulary there was no such word as country. They received the regional identity from the outsiders, the people from the plains who formed states in this forest tract and gave them names, such as Dhalbhum, Barabhum, Manbhum, Chotanagpur, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Bonai, Jashpur, Sarguja and so on. Jharkand was still a vague cultural name of the region and the word itself owes its origin in the non-tribal vocabulary. Even the British never used it in their administrative parlance.

It was the British East India Company that set the ball of territoriality of Jharkhand rolling with the receipt of the grant of *Dewani* (right to collect tax on behalf of the Emperor) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the Mughals in 1765. In the face of strong and stubborn resistance movements put up by the indigenous peoples of this vast 'Bengal Woodlands' (Shivaramakrishnan, K., 1999), as they initially called it, the colonisers were forced to put the region under a separate administrative system called the South West Frontier Agency and the medieval states received recognition. At a later stage also, during the time of the direct rule of the British Empire, the region remained a 'partially excluded' area with a simple administrative system and thus its separate identity was maintained from the neighbouring Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, the Central Province and the united province of Agra and Oudh.

The colonial rule thus prepared the ground for the popular search for a territorial identity of the region in accordance with the demand of their political autonomy. The leaders of the Adivasi Mahasabha picked up the cultural name of Jharkhand

to identify the region politically even before they formed the Jharkhand Party in 1950. At a later stage in 1973 the reorganised Jharkhand Party included two neighbouring districts of the British Bengal into the proposed Jharkhand state on the ground of their cultural affinity with the mainland Jharkhand (see map page 78). In fact, the Committee on Jharkhand Matters, formed by the Government of India in 1989 to look into the demand of the Jharkhand state, in its report, recognised the cultural oneness of the region.

The debate on the justification of giving political recognition to Jharkhand as a 'tribal state' basically for the indigenous peoples rests on the consideration that the peoples fall under the post-independence category of Scheduled Tribes and are not in majority in all the districts of the area. In fact in the Bihar and Bengal parts of Jharkhand they are in minority. This led to the making of a suggestion of carving out a 'tribal state' (*Van Pradesh* or 'forest province') with the tribal dominated districts alone (Sarkar). On the other hand, on the same ground the Hindu fundamentalist forces under the Bharatiya Janata Party demanded the formation of a state (*Vananchal* or 'forested area') with only Bihar part of the Jharkhand (Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas) for the 'development' of both tribes and non-tribes.

The reason why the parties formed under the leadership of the indigenous peoples carrying the name of Jharkhand insist on the formation of a state with the cultural area of Jharkhand may be seen in the persistence of a collective memory of Jharkhand as their ancestral homeland. Their claim, therefore, continues despite the fact that the reality has been changing fast drastically against their interests. However, opening the doors of the various Jharkhand parties to the non-tribals also may either be seen as a strategy for winning the game of head counting and fund raising under the bourgeoisie democracy (Bosu Mullick, S., 2002) or as an expression of an emerging Jharkhandi nationality combining both the indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous early settlers of the region (Nathan, Rana and Keshari).

Adivasi and Diku

There has been a general unanimity in accepting the fact that the cultural identity of Jharkhand is determined by the way of life of its indigenous peoples, basically the Austro-Asiatic language speaking (North and South Mundari) and Dravidian language speaking (Kurukh and Malto) ones. There is yet another group consisting of communities who may not speak these languages but are culturally and socially similar to these peoples. The former group dominates the scene since they are the earlier settlers and are more numerous. All these communities taken together assumed the identity of the *Adivasi* (first settlers). Besides, there are some Hindu lower castes that speak Indo-Aryan languages but are culturally integrated with the rest. Thapar and Siddiqi present a reconstructed historical

background of the growth of this identity with the gradual migration of different communities over a long period of time, their evolving mutual relationship; and the transforming characteristics of that identity based on their relationship with the land and the forest under the impact of the medieval states and British colonial rule. Sengupta argues that the term 'tribe' is a colonial ploy to divide the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand. He points out that the name 'Jharkhand' was coined in 1936 during the formation of the Adivasi Mahasabha. Only later, after the government sponsored dichotomy—tribe and non-tribe, spread widely—the leaders discovered that '*adivasi*' did not mean all Jharkhandis any more. Thereafter they changed the name to Jharkhand Party. The confusion was further compounded when the colonial category of 'tribe' was further narrowed down after independence by scheduling 'most backwards' among them in the Constitution of India. Now in common parlance, only the Scheduled Tribes are known as the '*adivasis*'.

In Jharkhand movement the distinction between '*Adivasi*' (indigenous peoples) and '*diku*' is still a matter of dispute. Etymologically the term '*diku*' stands for 'the other people'. However, over a long period of interaction with the ever increasing volume of the in-migrating 'other peoples' the term *diku* underwent a change of meaning and is understood today as denoting the 'exploiters' of the '*Adivasi*'. But all the people who migrated to the land of the '*Adivasi*' were not exploiters; particularly the artisan casts and peasant communities of the yesteryears and the wage labourers and industrial workers of the modern times who are not necessarily considered as the real enemies of the 'tribes'. With such people the 'tribes' developed a symbiotic relationship and they sometimes form another category of 'sahia' / 'mitan' meaning friends. The category of 'sadan', mostly used in the erstwhile estate of the Maharaja of Chotanagpur, i.e., present day districts of Ranchi, Gumla, Lohardaga, Simdega, Palamu of Chotanagpur and Jashpur and Surguja of the adjoining Chattisgarh, is an uncertain one with respect to its exploitative character. The people in this category migrated to Jharkhand much before the advent of the British. Some of them were the adventurers who initiated state formation in the $16^{th} - 17^{th}$ century and the rest formed a part of these primary states, also called the Jungle states, as traders, rich peasants, administrators, irregular army (*paik and barkandaz*), etc. They developed a working relationship with the '*Adivasis*'. In the later period they fought with the '*Adivasis*' against the colonial rule and were considered as 'lesser evils'. The category of 'tribe' is also not very definitely determined. The colonial government enlisted 96 communities as the inhabitants of Chotanagpur and the Santhal Pargnas according to the 1871 census. Out of these, 28 were identified as non-tribe in 1923–24. The rest of the 68 tribal communities had a sub-category of 'Primitive Tribes' that included 30 tribes who were later categorised as the Scheduled Tribes by the Constitution of India after independence (Kadwar and Ekka: 2000). The rest of them were

divided into Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes rather arbitrarily, because in Jharkhand the caste system was never a dominant social reality and there were never any outcast communities. Thus those who were categorised as the Scheduled Castes were actually tribes who imbibed some Hindu norms and traits. In the same vein a large community called the Kurmis was put into the category of the Other Backward Classes on the basis of the same assumption of their being a part the caste Hindu society. These peoples have been demanding their inclusion into the Scheduled Tribe list since then and a large number of them have declared 'sarna', the belief system of the 'tribes', as their religion during the last census operation. These last two categories of peoples are often referred to as 'semi tribe' (ILO: 157) or 'people analogous to the tribes'.

The authors are fairly divided on the lines of the opposing views of the Jharkhandi tribes presented by Béteille (1974) and Weiner (1978). While majority of them accept the category of tribe both in its broader and narrower sense, Corbridge is prepared to accept at the most the present Scheduled Tribes as a peasant-tribe continuum, although he questions the very definition of 'tribe' and describes it as misleading. Das presents a class analysis of the change in tribal society. He argues that the social aggregate, referred to as 'tribe', is merely a concept and if tribes existed, they did so in the undefined past. What exists today is tribe in transition. Bosu Mullick holds the view that the root cause of the Jharkhand movement lies in the historical conflict between the two mutually exclusive ways of life represented by the two categories of people commonly known as the '*Adivasi*' and the '*Diku*'.

Ethnicity, Nationality and Regionalism

A section of the 'left' theorists holds the view of the Jharkhand movement as a political expression of an emerging Jharkhandi nationality. Two important factors are pointed out in the emergence of the Jharkhand nationalism. One is the presence of a broadly common and distinct cultural life among tribes and the *sadans* and the other is their subjection to the same kind of exploitation. The former compensates the absence of 'a common language, a literary tradition and a high culture'; the latter compensates the absence of a national bourgeoisie classically considered to be the essential factor for the growth of national movements. This view has particularly been expressed by Nathan, Alam and Rana in this volume. Nathan and Rana point out an emerging composite culture combining the *Adivasi* (tribe) and *Sadan*. In fact Jharkhand Coordination Committee held the same view in its declaration. For Rana the process of the Jharkhand nationality formation was thwarted by the imperialist rule of the British colonialism that tended to divide the people on ethnic lines.

These authors tend to minimise the economic and cultural difference between the *tribe* and the *sadan.* Tribes are basically seen as peasants; that brings them

closer to the *sadans*. Alam terms both tribes and *sadans* as peasants and ignores their general dependency on foraging from forests that Nathan has rightly pointed out. Sharma, however, observes the emergence of Jharkhandi sub-nationality along with the increasing participation of the downtrodden *sadans* in the movement on the basis of a cultural affinity.

Munda and Kesahri argue by quoting the Jharkhand Coordination Committee declaration that the basic criteria for the boundary of the geographical area demanded by the movement as Jharkhand is not where the population is predominantly tribal but where the Jharkhand culture persists. And the base of this culture is provided by the tribal culture of the region. In other words, even the section of the non-tribals who had adopted the tribal culture would be considered as Jharkhandis. While Sengupta considers all the peoples of pre-colonial period as the Jharkhandis, Roy holds the economic criteria by declaring all the downtrodden and working class people living in Jharkhand as Jharkhandis. The distinction between the *sadan* and the *diku* appears to be quite unsteady or blurred under Roy's project of Jharkhandi nationalism. He finds in Jharkhand a fusion of national and class oppression.

Alam argues that the ethnic boundaries between the tribes and *sadan* communities have collapsed and belying the prediction of Frederic Engels and anthropologists N.K. Bose and G.S. Ghurye the tribes, instead of being assimilated into the mainstream Hindu society, have moved towards the assertion of a nationality. However, while he rightly observed the strong hatred among the tribes for being assimilated into the caste hierarchy his assertion that in the emerging process of Jharkhand nationalism the tribal shell is no longer important for political mobilisation does not at all reflect the reality.

However, others do not subscribe to the idea of an emerging Jharkhandi nationality. Bosu Mullick considers the Jharkhand Movement as basically the socio-political expression of a pan-ethnic aspiration. He questions the emergence of the Jharkhandi nationality in the absence of powerful elite, let alone a national bourgeoisie. Just by coming together for a common cause the *adivasi* and the *sadans* may not merge into one to develop a national consciousness. Corbridge calls it the Jharkhandi ethno-regionalism. K.S. Singh finds in the movement a transition form ethnicity to regionalism that includes at least in principle 'all the Chotanagpuris' into the category of Jharkhandi. He, however, does not mention the emergence of any Jharkhandi nationality.

For Alloysius the transformation of ethnicity to regionalism, as has been observed by Singh, K.S., signifies a shift from the 'community' to the 'region', from tribal to whoever lives in Jharkhand; for ethnicity is the idiom of the tribals and regionalism is that of the dominant communities. Regionalism is encouraged by placing priority on the nationality question that combines all

the people of Jharkhand irrespective of tribe and caste. He considers it to be a reduction of ethnic consciousness into a regional or class consciousness, and a denial of 'tribal nationality'. Criticizing K. S. Singh's position, Sharma argues that to call the Jharkhand Movement a 'separatist movement' in the past and now transforming it into a 'regional movement' is to undermine its present-day reality, historicity and the concern for the oppressed of the region. Alam argues that the demand of the people of Jharkhand cannot be categorized as regionalism since the Jharkhand Movement is not simply demanding more resources and special privileges for the region.

Changing Ideology

There has been a remarkable growth of ideological framework in Jharkhand Movement over the period spanning more than 70 years since the revivalist, localised and community specific movements of the 19th century entered into the phase of pan-ethnic autonomy movement covering the vast Jharkhand region by the fag end of the British colonial rule in 1930s. This was prompted by the changing objective condition of Jharkhand. The basic change that took place by the turn of the century was the end of the hundred years of tribal revolt and the consequent consolidation of the colonial rule in Jharkhand. The British introduced a centrally organised administration, a judiciary and a police system. In land the concept of private property was imposed as opposed to the traditional notion of collective usufrutuary rights of the community. Communal resources were considered as the 'eminent' domain and taken over. Thus forests and other individually unclaimed fallow lands were declared as the property of the state. The colonial rule also brought in several hitherto unknown and other modern elements into a traditional society of horticulturists and foragers. The indigenous peoples were exposed to Christianity and a modern educational system, railways, roadways and telegraph, money, economy and industry and above all the modern political thoughts that shook Europe during the 18th and the 19th century. These new elements also brought in a qualitatively different form of economic and social relations, a new hoard of exploiters and a novel form of exploitation. The post-colonial situation was greatly influenced by these changes. The independent government adopted bourgeoisie democracy as the political ideology and 'mixed economy' as the economic policy of the state. Industrialisation was given precedence over agriculture and the strategy of development was premised on a value-free concept of economic growth. Though the previous agrarian system under Permanent Settlement or the Zamindari system was abolished, the basic land relations were not reversed and the alienated land of the indigenous peoples was not restored. In the resource rich habitats of the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand colonialism was simply replaced by 'internal colonialism' (Roy, A.K., Das and Singh, A.K.).s

In response to this changing scenario the ideology of the Jharkhand Movement passed through radical changes. The first phase of the Jharkhand Movement (1950-63) is marked by the transformation of the Adivasi Mahasabha (formed in 1938) to the Jharkhand Party in1950, merger of Jharkhand Party into the All India National Congress in 1963 and then emergence of not less than 9 Jharkhand parties and groups out of its ashes. From the inception of the movement in the early 30s of the last century till the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in the early 1970s, both Jaipal Singh and and N. E. Horo followed the liberal ideology. Thus lack of interest in agrarian and trade union issues and total dependence on the electoral politics for the achievement of autonomy and identity dominated the strategy and organisation of the movement. This was the phase of ethnic consolidation of the indigenous peoples. Though the political organizations were open to the *sadan*s their participation was negligible.

The second phase of the movement (1973 – 80) began with the introduction of the radical and left ideology to organise agrarian, industrial and mining movements. The ever increasing resource exploitation in Jharkhand, causing massive displacement of the indigenous and other rural population, and the unprecedented exploitation of the miners and unorganized industrial labourers, mostly the indigenous peoples, was the immediate cause of the emergence of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (literally means Jharkhand Liberation Front) in 1973 under the leadership of the left leaders like A.K. Roy and Binod Bihari Mahato. While Mahato successfully brought the Kurmis into the fold of the Morcha, Shibu Soren, a charismatic Santhal leader became instrumental in forging a Santhal–Kurmi unity. Naturally the epicentre of the movement shifted form the tribal dominated Ranchi or Dumka to the mining and industrial belt around Dhanbad, Bokaro and Jamshedpur and its neighbouring rural areas.

In addition, the increasing rate of in-migration of outsiders and unabated out-migration of the indigenous and allied peoples, fast growing hold of the non-tribals over the resources and power structure and mounting state terrorism against the protesting indigenous peoples forced a corresponding change in the strategy of the movement and the rationale of the demand. A. K. Roy presented the theory of internal colonial exploitation of Jharkhand and endeavoured to forge a tribe, peasant and working class unity irrespective of their ethnicity, caste and nationality. The focus of the movement was thus expanded from the aspirations of the indigenous peoples to those of the other exploited classes. For the first time in the Jharkhand Movement the issues of regional disparities and ethnic oppression were merged with class exploitation under feudal and capitalist production relations (Roy, Amit). This has been identified as a change from 'ethnicity to regionalism' (Singh, K.S., Das) or the emergence of ethno-regionalism (Corbridge).

The third phase (1986 – 90) is characterized by the consolidation of the theory of national reconstruction of Jharkhand. The strategy adopted by the newly formed Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) and the All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU), two leading organisations of the period, was based on the notion of political emancipation of the Jharkhandi nationality through militant action. A call was given to politically boycott elections and socially boycott the political party leaders thriving on electoral politics. Attempts were made to forge unity with other struggling indigenous peoples' movements throughout the country with a view to make their demands of autonomy and identity an all India issue.

Electoral Politics

The reason for renaming the Adivasi Mahasabha by the Jharkhand Party was to expand its fold by welcoming non-tribals, especially the '*sadans*', so that it could win the number-game of the electoral politics. Unlike the north-eastern tribes the Adivasi Mahasabha leadership decided to resort to the Westminster form of democracy, just adopted by the independent government of India, to fulfill their demands. Its spectacular success in the general elections before and after the rejection of their demand of autonomy by the State Reorganization Commission in 1956 was enough to prove the presence of tremendous mass support for the demand. But the tempo could not be sustained in the following years. As soon as the new system settled down exposing all of its loopholes the people started losing the game. Ignes Kujur reveals the internal ideological problem of the Jharkhand Party that caused its downfall. It precisely emerged out of the Party's incapability of handling the ruthless demands of the electoral politics. Jaipal Singh and his followers chose the path of electoral politics alone, not being accompanied by any other forms of struggle, to achieve their goals. They were first compelled to become gradually dependent on the moneybags both from inside and outside Jharkhand, who had no concern for Jharkhand movement; and then play into the hands of the ruling party leaders. Consequently the leaders become corrupt and compromising for posts and prestige in the system and finally ruined the party itself. The Jharkhand Party's merger with the Congress is often considered as the betrayal of an individual, the 'great leader' Jaipal Singh. What is overlooked is his and other leaders' incapability to continue to play the game of electoral politics successfully after the initial spurt of victory without falling into the traps of the people who set the rules of the game.

The game, however, went on with newer parties using the brand name 'Jharkhand' for entering into the fray one after another in the following years. These parties floated by the minor leaders were gradually routed registering marked decline in their popularity.

Electoral politics in the second phase of the Jharkhand Movement assumed a different character under a different ideological mould. During its long period of existence neither the Jharkhand Party under Jaipal Singh nor the ones under N.E. Horo and the likes ever took up the unresolved agrarian issues of land alienation, feudal exploitation and uneven distribution of land seriously. Similarly they rarely addressed the issues of mining and industrial workers. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha emerged precisely out of the struggles on these issues. And when the question of autonomy was added to them electoral victory was at its doorstep. But in turn the electoral politics also took its toll. It divided the Morcha into many groups, corrupted the leaders to the neck and finally became the cause of its fast eroding mass base.

The All Jharkhand Students' Union emerged by giving a boycott call to the elections but soon it too, along with its associate political party, the Jharkhand Peoples' Party, jumped into the electoral arena to try its luck. The result was an unrecoverable disaster.

The present electoral process and the party politics have remained largely ineffective to make the voice of the indigenous peoples heard at the centre and at the state level decision-making processes for two reasons: Firstly, they find it very difficult to adjust themselves to the demands of the modern representative democracy in a multi-party system, which has replaced their traditional participatory democracy. The growing importance of money and 'muscles' in the elections has compelled the leaders to become corrupt. Thus the true voice of the people can neither be articulated nor conveyed properly. Secondly, the multi-party system of democracy has divided the people from within. The indigenous peoples with no tradition of elections but of decisionmaking by consensus have now been forced to choose one among many of their own contesting brothers. It is generally observed that a voter seldom votes for a candidate in cognition of the virtue of voting. Personal obligations or monetary incentive often play more important role than the personal character of the candidate and the issues that are raised. Rigging at a grand scale and boycotting at an alarming rate mark the polling process in a considerable number of the tribal dominated polling booths of the reserved constituencies. The elected members of the peoples also cannot act jointly in the Parliament or in the state assemblies for the common cause of their communities because of their affiliation with different political parties (Haimendorf, Christoph von Fürer: 1985:163; Sachchidananda: 1976: 25 and Bosu Mullick, S: 2002).

But still the indigenous peoples have been casting their votes progressively in greater numbers. Because for the majority of them it is the only silent way left to vent their political opinion.

It is gradually becoming a reality in Indian politics that the days of one party rule have come to an end. In the changed political situation, with the emergence of regional political parties and governments run by them in the states and the coalition governments at the centre running with their support, the importance of the Scheduled Tribes in the electoral politics has increased considerably. The political parties are now being compelled to take them seriously. The bargain, however, is very tough and tricky. If the indigenous leadership misses this opportunity now their hope of fulfilling their demands through peaceful electoral process will remain a distant dream and more and more people will join and swell the ranks of the parties with extra parliamentary strategies to achieve their demands.

Response of the State

Nationalist ideology stood for assimilation of the indigenous peoples into the Indian mainstream. However, the constituent assembly finally agreed to adopt the integrationist policy. But in the long run it turned out to be a covert policy of assimilation. Because the state straightaway rejected the demand of autonomy on flimsy grounds and it was termed as perverse and irrational to the progressive tribal policies of post-independence administration. The state responded to the ethnic demand of autonomy by introducing a set of economic privileges like reservation in public sector and administrative services, free education and quota in educational institutions, reservation of seats in both assembly and parliament, all under the policy of progressive discrimination.

Indian nationalism that emerged as a middle class response to the British colonialism always remained divided on religious lines, between the Hindus and the Muslims. This finally led to the formation of two nation states out of the British India in 1947. The Indian nation state united the pre-British Hindu dominated nations on the basis of their common aspirations, and forced 'others', who were in minority, to be a part of it on the basis of the principle of 'unity in diversity' not the 'union of diversities'. Thus the aspect of unity always remained dominant over that of diversity. The indigenous peoples formed an important part of these 'others'. Despite the superficial impact of 'sanskritisation' or Hinduisation during the pre-British period they largely remained outside the pale of Hinduism, but at different stages of their disintegration. The British colonial rule aggravated the process of their disintegration by opening up their habitats for ruthless exploitation and dispossession in collusion with mostly the Hindu landlords, traders and contractors. Thus those who were historically always outside the Hindu caste system were now exposed to caste oppression and class exploitation. Their large scale conversion to Christianity and participation in revivalist movements exemplify the barrenness of the appeal of Indian nationalism to them. Hindu nationalism not only failed to impress the indigenous peoples but also remained largely unsuccessful in gaining the

confidence of the low caste and outcaste communities who remained integrated with the indigenous societies in Jharkhand. This explains why the overreaching nationalism of the Indian nation state demanded integration of these peoples in the 'mainstream' of the national life rather than accommodating their aspirations in the political system after independence.

The observation of a few authors that the intensity of tribal opposition to the British colonialism gradually changed to 'loyalty' (Singh, K.S.) is noteworthy. It may be seen as a strategy to confront the greater evil, the native element of the colonial system. Tribal hatred for the '*diku*' (exploiter, outsider, other then the indigenous peoples) appeared to be much deeper than that of the '*sayob*' (White men). This has been observed during the Sipoy Mutiny and the Second World War. Their unenthusiastic attitude toward the nationalist Congress and meeting the Simon Commission to place the demand of autonomy and separation from Bihar ignoring the boycott call of the Congress to the Commission's visit to India; and the Jharkhand Party's strategy to make an alliance with the Muslim League during the time of partition of the British India are some of the indicators.

The rejection of the demand for the formation of the separate Jharkhand covering the ancestral domains of the indigenous peoples by the State Reorganization Commission in 1956, despite the landslide victory of the Jharkhand Party in the first general elections of the independent India and its repetition in the following years, is a case in point. SRC report conveniently considered only the area of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas that was then a part of the Bihar state leaving aside the whole area of Jharkhand as demanded by the people to show that the Scheduled Tribes were in minority there. And therefore, it was a minority demand, which could not be entertained in a democracy. Had they taken the whole of Jharkhand into consideration they would have found that even the Scheduled Tribes alone were in majority in the area. The Commission also refused to accept the opinion of the de-scheduled and Scheduled Caste communities of Jharkhand who were arbitrarily removed from the list of the 'aboriginal communities' prepared by the British government. Taken together with the Scheduled Tribes, these communities are, even today they are not only in majority in the greater Jharkhand but also in the area of Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas.

However, SRC verdict was never accepted by the people and the Jharkhand Movement kept surfacing on the issue of autonomy. The state never relented to it, but only changed its strategies. On the face of the mounting popular pressure and gradual involvement of the left ideology in the movement the state's immediate response changed. First the ruling political parties tried to hijack the demand only to distort it in the end. None of them accepted the area of the actual Jharkhand for consideration. Chotnanagpur and Santhal Pargana region of Bihar became their focal point for the obvious reason that it was the

Rurh of India, the centre of industries and mines. Congress was prepared to offer Union Territory status to it. Janata Dal brand of socialists demanded a full statehood status way back in 1977 for the same region on the basis of their policy of forming many such smaller states in India for better administration. BJP wanted to kill two birds with one stone. It floated the idea of the *Vananchal* (woodland) in the late 80s when Jharkhand movement was at its peak with the same area for the development of the *Vanvasi* (forest-dwellers) as opposed to Jharkhand and the *adivasi*. It redefined tribe as fundamentally Hindu. The strategy was to counter the influence of the Christian churches on the *adivasi*s on the one hand, and to promote the interests of the *diku*s on the other (Bharti). The formation of the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council was the beginning of the implementation of this idea of the ruling parties (Ekka and A.K. Singh) and carving out of a new state bearing the name of Jharkhand comprising the same area was its culmination.

The New State and After

The Indian nation state on the 15th of November 2000 gave birth to a deformed child, the 28th province of the Indian nation state, euphemistically called Jharkhand. Ironically it coincided with the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, the great *adivasi* leader of the 19th century millenarian movement. It was carved out of Bihar, where the Scheduled Tribes constitute only 27% of its population. The remaining areas of the original Jharkhand in the West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were left out. Had they been included the indigenous population of the new state would have been in majority. Another state was born around the same time, the state of Chattisgarh bifurcating Madhya Pradesh. Two districts of Jharkhand dominated by the Uraons were incorporated into it. Rest of the districts consisted of the homeland of mostly the Gond and Khond indigenous communities. Majority of the Gonds were left in Madhya Prades. It served two purposes: firstly, it divided the indigenous peoples of the Jharkhand cultural region and secondly, by having two small states with no dominant nationality, it would be easier for the state to exploit their rich natural resources with comfortable ease.

Now the new state of Jharkhand is under the control of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the party of the Hindu chauvinists and petty bourgeoisie. It is also the ruling party at the Central Government. The party and its affiliate organisations have already started working in the direction of creating a permanent divide between the Christians and non-Christian indigenous peoples. A massive propaganda has been going on to make people believe that privatisation, globalisation and sanskritisation are going to bring in peace and initiate sustainable development in the region. The newly formed government has already adopted policies to that end, which are surly going to aggravate state–people conflict.

The state has been able to co-opt the entire leadership of the last phase of the Jharkhand Movement, barring a few committed individuals and intellectuals. The half a century old demand of *'Jharkhand alag prant'* (separate state of Jharkhand), so dear to the heart of the indigenous peoples of the land, seems to have suddenly taken a back seat. Today the economic issues have come to the forefront. The strife is increasingly getting acute. There is every possibility of the gory history of the colonial days being repeated. A.K. Roy's prediction that Jharkhand would never be separated, it would only be liberated may be what future holds for the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand.

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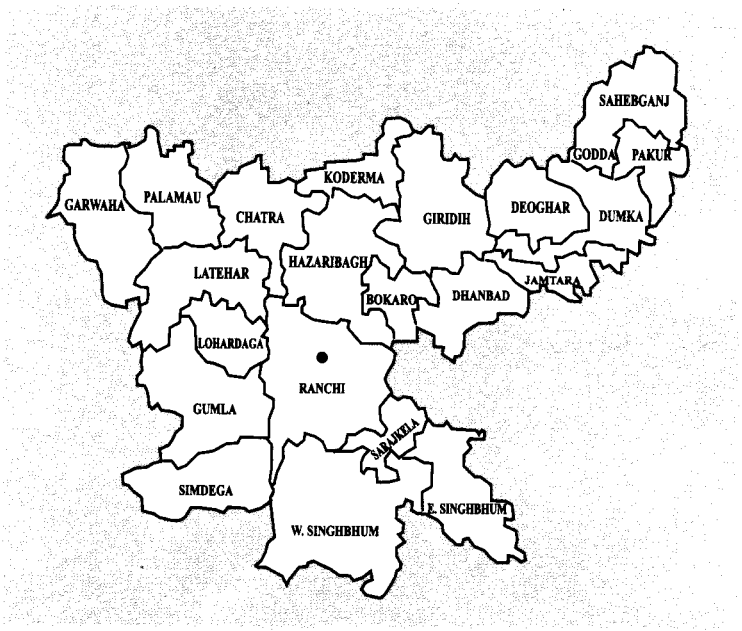
JHARKHAND 2000



JAI JHARKHAND! JAI ADIBASI! JAI HIND!

JAIPAL SINGH

Before we go to our normal business, I want to take this, the first opportunity I have in an official meeting of the Adibasi Mahasabha to make reference to the tragic assassination of Gandhiji. Gandhiji was the friend of the poorest of the poor and, as such, he intended to be a friend of Adibasis also. When I was in West Africa, Dinabandhu Charlie Andrews, who was my guest there, told me that Gandhiji had launched a nation-wide reconstruction plan. Immediately my thoughts ran to the 30 million Adibasis of our country. On my return to India, I found that Gandhiji's principal attention was revetted to the welfare of Harijans, the name he gave to the depressed classes of the Hindu community. You know my views about the depressed classes. It is my opinion that they are Adibasis who have been roped into the Hindu fold. In other words, there are Adibasis, unconverted, that is, they are still carrying on the faith of their forefathers; and, others, converted, who have become Hinduised or proselytised into Christianity and Islam. That is why I have always maintained that the census figures had to be quadrupled to get a correct estimate of the aboriginal people of this country. The momentum of Gandhiji's reconstruction work spread to the unconverted Adibasis also. There are, throughout the Adibasi tracts, Adibasi Seva Mandals, which in their own narrow way, endeavour to serve the tribals. We have lost the greatest man of our age. In fact, his murder means that humanity has been murdered. Yet, his spirit lives and must live, and, now, the burden of his work falls upon the shoulders of each one of us, men and women, young and old. The last time Chota Nagpur saw Gandhiji was when he came to Ranchi to visit the Blind School and Bivaranpur during the Ramgarh Session of the Congress. Let us stand up in silent homage to the modern architect of Free India.

SILENCE

I have been in your midst continuously since December 1938 and, last year, I indicated I would like to be relieved of Presidential responsibility of the Adibasi Mahasabha. I was quite serious. It was not meant that I was anxious to desert my post or that I was insensible to the trust you had always reposed in me. On the contrary, I was anxious I should have more time to devote to strengthen the

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Presidential Speech to All India Adivasi Mahasabha at Ranchi on 28th February 1948.

sinews of our movement and also to give more attention to the All-India aspect of the Adibasi Movement. Earlier years, you will recollect, I devoted entirely to the Chota Nagpur Plateau. I did my best to penetrate jungle fastness so that the ideals of the Adibasi Movement might be correctly interpreted and understood by the most illiterate of our people. Latterly, however, the momentum of the Jharkhand movement—that is, in fact, the correct name for the Adibasi Movement in the Chota Nagpur Plateau—spread and became also the All India Adibasi Movement. You will remember the advice Subhas Babu (Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose) gave us all when he visited Jamshedpur and Ranchi. He said that we would have to get out of the shell of isolationism and think of Adibasis throughout India, and, not confine ourselves to Adibasis but ensure that our Movement aligned itself with the nationalist movements of the country. I set about to carry our message to Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces, and, of course, to all the Chota Nagpur States. Today, we can say with confidence that there are very few aboriginal tracts without some individual organisation. Certain things have helped us bring the Adibasi question into prominence. Here, in Chota Nagpur, within a few weeks of the first Conference presided over by me, there was firing on April 25, 1939, at Simko in Gangpur State when nearly 100 people—innocent and unarmed—assembled to discuss how to redress their grievances in regard to rent were killed. This tragedy was not the first one. It had been preceded by what has been known as the murder of Major Bazalegette and Ranpur. Simko set Adibasidom in conflagration politically. All of a sudden, a new awakening began, and, much of our success in the District Board elections in Singbhum and Ranchi—the only two districts which contested—depended upon the sacrifices made by the people of Rajgangpur and Ranpur. Thereafter came a systematic assault on our movement by the Bihar Congressmen who refused to believe the Adibasi Mahasabha was, in every detail nationalistic and was worthy of being considered a part of the Indian National Congress. We made repeated attempts to get the Bihar Congressmen to see our point of view and accommodate our organisation in the Congress. We were forced to contest once again, but this time, for the Legislative Assembly against Congress nominees. We could put up candidates, due to our shortage of funds, in two districts only. We did put up candidates in the Santhal Parganas also, but, we were not serious enough there. You know what happened. On March 2, 1946, goondas, hirelings from Bihar murdered several of our people at Tapkara. And not one of these murderers has been punished. On the contrary, the Tapkara murder case went on for months and months and it was our people who were harassed by the well-known technique of procrastination in courts. At very many other places, our volunteers were involved but not one prosecution succeeded against them. The whole idea was, and still is, to paint us as goondas, an unlawful body, a communal organisation hostile to the nationalist interest. I have done all that was possible to make friends with the Congress. I have

gone so far as to get the Congress to agree to create Jharkhand into a separate organisational area so that the main fear of this area being dominated by Bihar Proper would disappear and we would all be able to work in harmony, undisturbed by any brute Bihar majority. Singhbhum District had been carved into a separate area to satisfy the late Professor Abdul Bari. In Singhbhum District, there was also the Utkal Congress to appease Oriyas. I cannot understand why Congressmen are frightened of giving us autonomy within their own set-up. There is one and only one explanation, and it is the correct one. It is that they want to run us instead of accepting us as fellow workers or their equals. When the British departed, the Indian National Congress became supreme as a political party in this country, and it was only right that I should have cooperated with its leaders, particularly Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. When I supported his Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly, there was the usual propaganda accusing me of having deserted the Adibasi Mahasabha to join the Congress. You know the truth. I have no particular prejudice against the Congress and, as I have often told you, I was its representative in West Africa. Here, however, I cannot compromise on the Adibasi question. Either we receive a place of honour in the Congress or we do the next best by ourselves. If our hand of fellowship is despised, we must go on till the rest of India recognises our prescriptive rights in the national life of the country. Before the British quit, nationalists ignored problems of Adibasi Tracts by saying that most of them were excluded, partially or fully from the purview of the general administration and, therefore, they could do nothing. They went so far as to say they had been prevented from working amongst Adibasis. The cheap joke was to say the British had kept us in national parks as zoological specimens! The wildest accusations have continued to be made against anthropologists who have endeavoured to study the primitive man. We can no longer blame the British. British are not here. Everything now falls upon our own shoulders. What do our national leaders have to say now? When the Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly visited Chota Nagpur last year to report on our Partially Excluded Area, we had considerable difficulty in getting the names of our representatives accepted by the Provincial Government to appear before it. As a matter of fact, none of our representatives were accepted. Instead, the provincial government sent in names of persons who had no connection with Adibasidom here nor were they representative of the people concerned. We did, however, manage to thrust ourselves into the presence of the Sub-Committee in Ranchi District. I am afraid things were not quite so nice in Singhbhum and the Santhal Parganas. In regard to the Santhal Parganas, the Provincial Government advised the Sub-Committee not to visit them, the excuse being a very lame one, that they were highly electrified with the communal situation. Actually, as you all know, there was no communal tension in the Santhal Parganas at all. The Provincial Government did not want that the Sub-Committee representatives be put up by the Provincial Government, with the result that

our organisation decided to boycott the Sub-Committee. It is as well I repeat that in both the districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum, the Jharkhand Province Party polled many more votes than the Congress Party at the Assembly election, but, when it came to the question of our appearance before the Sub-Committee, we were denied our physical right for reasons best known to Bihar Congressmen. This might seem a gloomy picture, but, I want to assure you that the rest of India is not so hostile; on the contrary, it is most sympathetic towards the Adibasi problem. The report of Sub-Committee has already been published and it is not wise for me to say too much at this stage, because its recommendations have to be thrashed out on the floor of the Constituent Assembly when it meets in a couple of months. One thing I can tell you with full confidence and it is that we must not expect anything to be done for us by others. Whatever gains we may make will depend on our own efforts. In other words, you must shed the MA-BAP (mother-father/paternalistic) idea. Heaven helps those who help themselves. You must stand on your own legs. Upon your own endeavours will depend the speed of your real freedom.

I know that the problem of Jharkhand is uppermost in your mind. I have no doubt whatever that there can be no solution to the Chota Nagpur problem without the creation of a separate administrative unit in Jharkhand. No amount of co-operation, however friendly, can alter the economic hostility that must exist between Bihar Proper and the Chota Nagpur Plateau. It is unnecessary to go into details. British imperialism may have been eradicated from our midst, but unfortunately, in its lieu, has stepped in, automatically as it were, Bihari imperialism as far as the Chota Nagpur Plateau is concerned. The budget is concrete evidence that there has been no change of heart whatever in regard to the Adibasi question. Instead of our national heroes working for the integration of disintegrated Adibasidom, every effort is being made to split the tribal people into more helpless bits. Within our own fold, there is no religious fanaticism. We do not draw a distinction between the unconverted and the converted. The Bihar Government on the contrary, are determined to pit the Sarna Adibasis against Christian Adibasis and Momins. We must resist every such endeavour and treat everyone equally. Only last December, the Biharis and, in fact the Indian National Congress as such, had a glorious opportunity to exhibit their good faith towards Adibasis. Upon the merger of the States of the so-called Eastern States Union (now defunct) which comprised States of the Orissa and Chhattisgarh States Agencies, the question came up of the return to the Chota Nagpur Administration of 11 States, which have always been known as Chota Nagpur States. These 11 Chota Nagpur States namely, Kharsawan, Seraikella, Keonjhar, Bonai, Bamra, Gangpur, Jashpur, Surguja, Udaipur, Korea and Changbhakar were, before the States agency system was introduced, under the Commissioner of the Chota Nagpur Division. They are either contiguous to Chota Nagpur or inside it, as for example, Kharsawan and Seraikella are in

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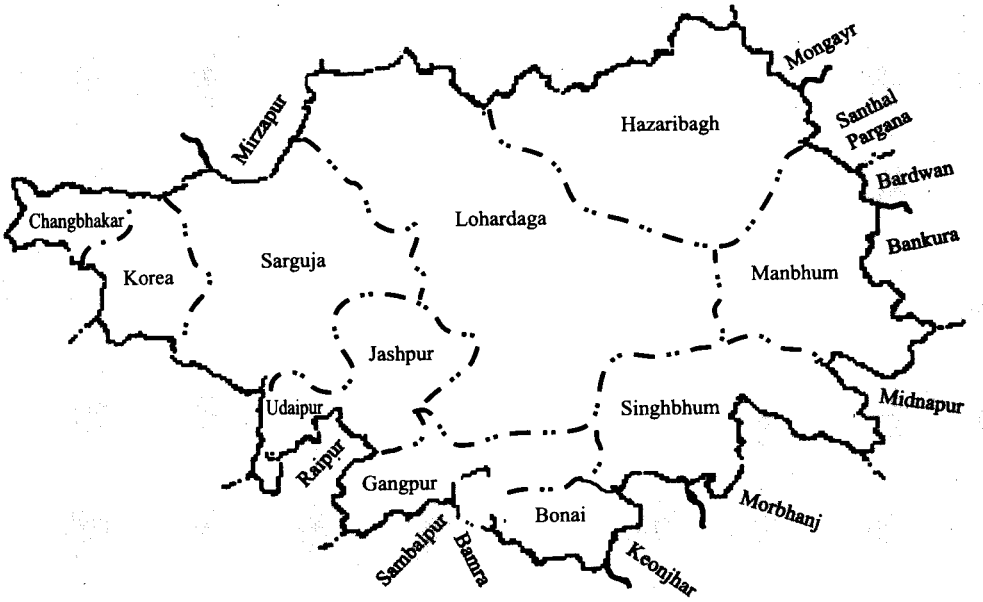


the heart of Singhbhum District, but the other nine states are adjacent to Singhbhum, Ranchi and Palamau. The people inhabiting them belong to the same group as the people of the rest of Chota Nagpur. They speak the same language and, in every way, geographically, administratively, culturally and ethnically, they are indistinguishable and inseparable from Chota Nagpur. Jharkhand means the whole of the Chota Nagpur Plateau. Bihar Congressmen missed a glorious opportunity to undo, at one stroke, the mischief of the last ten years. They kept quiet and did not represent the claim of Bihar to the 11 Chota Nagpur States. In silence, they permitted the Greater Orissa leaders to hoodwink the States Ministry to occupy all the Chota Nagpur States of the Orissa States Agency. The Chota Nagpur States of the Chhattisgarh States Agency have been consigned to the administration of the Central Provinces temporarily. While I speak of the integration, however temporary, of the Chota Nagpur States to the Provincial Administration, I cannot but condemn the stupidity of the States Ministry in creating unnecessary interprovincial friction. Was there any need for bad blood, for bitterness, between Orissa, Bihar and the Central Provinces? The most patent facts were ignored. I have, ever since the Kharsawan massacre on January 1, (1947) been trying to probe into the deeper reasons for the promiscuous merger, and, I am more and more inclined to the view that there has been some conspiracy either at the Centre or in the Provinces to create the present situation with a view to administering a rude shock on the Adibasi Movement. What other explanation is there? The Biharis are naturally frightened that the return of the 11 Chota Nagpur States will strengthen the claim for a Jharkhand Province and, therefore, they think it is in their interest to connive with the Centre or Orissa and the Central Provinces to lose what belongs to Bihar historically as well.

I want to say a few words about the Kharsawan massacre even at the cost of grim repetition. It was a surprise to all of us to find that Seraikella and Kharsawan had been committed to the Orissa Administration pending a final disposition. The Greater Orissa leaders have always had their eyes on Singhbhum District, on Jamshedpur, on the immense mineral wealth. At the time Orissa was carved out into a separate province, violent attempts were made, in vain, to get Singhbhum included in Orissa. The people of Singhbhum, to a man, said that blood would flow were an inch to go to Orissa. Ever since then, the Greater Orissa authorities have continued their campaign of peaceful penetration. At different strategic places, they have opened out Oriya schools. In Sona, for example, no boy is admitted to the school unless he agrees to accept Oriya as the medium of instruction and the names of inmates of the hostel connected with the school are altered to Oriya names. Earlier I have mentioned the Utkal Congress. At the last Assembly elections, the Congress Parliamentary Board allowed B.K. Pani, a notorious Oriya leader at Chakradharpur, to contest one of the Singhbhum seats. He was badly defeated

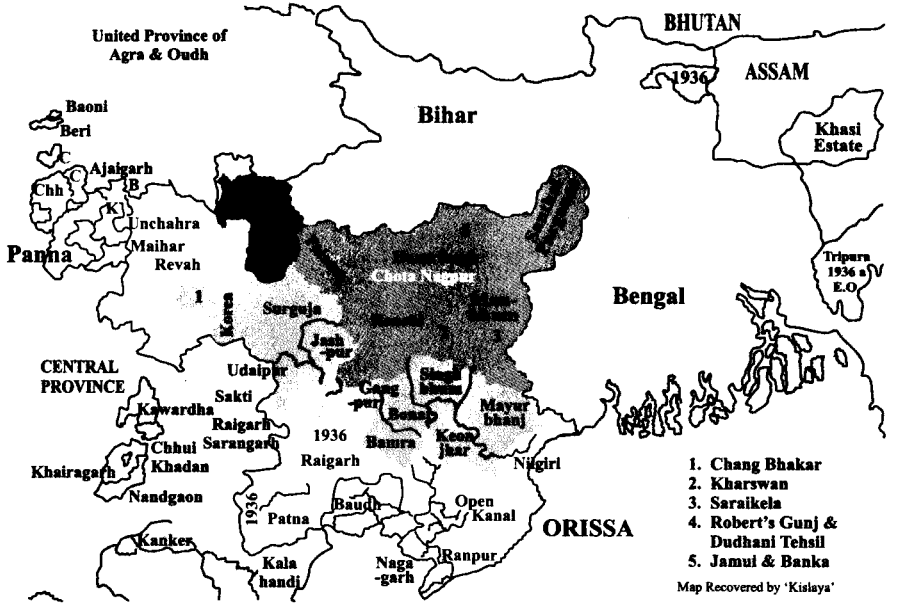
by our candidate and, in fact, he forfeited his deposit-money. This same Pani played an important part at the Kharsawan massacre. He has disappeared since then. Kharsawan and Seraikella are in the heart of Singhbhum District. The Orissa authorities knew that the general population were hostile to them. Therefore, their administrators and soldiery accompanying them drove through Kolhan at dead of night and sneaked into Kharsawan and Seraikella like thieves. The Singhbhum authorities were told nothing about the passage of the Army trucks through their territory. You know what happened on January 1, New Year's Day. With the permission of the newly-installed Orissa administrators, a procession took place in the morning and nothing untoward happened. In the afternoon, about two o'clock, a public meeting was held at the market-place. It happened to be market day also. The meeting passed off peacefully and without any incident whatever, and, at four o'clock, our leaders asked the people to go back to their homes. About an hour later began the battery of two bren-guns. Showers of bullets were fired at people in the market-place. Those who knew lay flat to save their lives, but, others were mercilessly mowed down for nearly thirty minutes. The trees, the houses and the number of killed and wounded are evidence of the intensity of the firing. Orissa authorities have been trying to destroy every evidence in the market-place but they have not cut down the trees which still remain riddled with bullets. I still maintain that about one thousand people, men, women and children were victims of Oriya savagery and about 1300 were wounded. Even cows, horses and goats of the market-place were not spared. I have seen most of the wounded and doctors tell me that the bullets are shots fired at people fleeing away. It is ridiculous for any sane person to say that only two scores were killed. We have taken a house-to-house census and, in my Jamshedpur, Chaibassa and Ranchi speeches delivered last month in connection with the Kharsawan butchery, I have already pointed out how the dead bodies were dealt with. About 10 lorry-loads of dead bodies were collected after sunset and taken away to the remote interiors of the dense jungle and thrown about as meat for wild animals. Some corpses were burnt with petrol and others were buried in mass trenches or thrown into deep ravines. The wounded were left out in the open throughout the wintry night and cries for water were unheeded. Even Missions of Mercy were prevented from reaching Kharsawan. The Government of Bihar sent a Medical Mission, but it was not allowed to stay. I do not wish to review all the grim details of the first Jallianwala Bagh of Free India staged by the Orissa authorities, one in which it fell to the lot of poor and simple Adibasis to be martyrs. News was blacked out and the Orissa Government spent a good deal of money to do this. I do not wish to enter into arguments with the Orissa Government. It stands self-condemned. What is the idea of distributing free cloth to people in Kharsawan and Seraikella? Do the Oriya leaders think they can shoot the Adibasis one minute and, the next minute, win them over by distributing free cloth? The fact that no Adibasi would accept even free cloth from the hands of the Oriyas, ought to suffice to

demonstrate the Orissa Government is unwanted, and the sooner it pulls out of the Chota Nagpur States the better for its own reputation and peace.

You are aware that I endeavoured to move an adjournment motion at the Central Assembly. I want to tell you that I had the blessing of three Cabinet Ministers, all of whom were intimately associated with the Province of Bihar. Before I decided to submit an adjournment motion, however, I made several attempts to meet the Honourable Minister for States, but either he was out of his headquarters or not visible. The sole purpose of my adjournment motion was to give facts and figures and present the historical antecedents of the 11 Chota Nagpur States so that the Government would have been enabled to make the final disposition of the States justly (avoiding blunders of the type "Menongitis" led Patel into). I have very good grounds for believing that, in the original plan, Seraikella and Kharsawan were to have been committed to Bihar, but, a last minute alteration was made. Everything to my mind goes to prove that the bungling was deliberate and had a nefarious purpose behind it. There is still time for the States Ministry to make honourable amends. The people of the 11 States have expressed their determination, in unequivocal language, to return to the Chota Nagpur Administration, and their 11 rulers also are of the same view. The States Ministry ought to do the obvious thing, but, I feel it is my duty to warn you that something wicked might be done instead. In the latter case, our work for the integration of the vivisected plateau must continue till we achieve full results.

A few words about our future programme. Hitherto, our main emphasis has lain on the necessity of making the primitive man conscious of his political rights. Adibasis have begun to realise that their salvation is in their own hands. Hereafter, we must go one step further. We must teach our people their political duties also. Rights and duties must go together. There can be no rights without corresponding duties. Duties, as I see them, relate more to economic activities—activities which will improve the lot of man, which will redeem him from crass ignorance, indebtedness, landlessness, dependence upon others, loss of nerves, loss of self-respect, and general decadence. I do not deny we have not been without achievements in the economic direction. The Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj (Chota Nagpur Improvement Society) founded in 1920, which was succeeded by the Adibasi Mahasabha in 1938, opened many grain *golas* in the District of Ranchi, which are still there flourishing. There are several hostels, particularly for Sarna Adibasis in places like Gumla and Chaibassa, but, generally speaking, our organisation has not taken up seriously enough any economic programme, any policy for or against socialisation. We have cooperated with any organisation—political, social or religious—which promised to better the lot of our people. That kind of indifferent enthusiasm will not do. Now we must undertake economic measures. We must not be in

JHARKHAND AS DEMANDED BY THE JHARKHAND PARTY UNDER JAIPAL SINGH



a hurry, but begin with what we can do right now and gradually expand and intensify our ambit. To my mind, the greatest problem in Chota Nagpur is the land problem. Nearly 10 lacs of Chota Nagpuris have been crimped away to the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal and settled there more or less permanently. Chota Nagpur is littered with coolie-catching organisations and every year thousands of men and women go to the tea gardens on short contracts. We must see that this stops. In fact, it is my fervent hope that when the Damodar Valley Project is completed the Damodar Valley Corporation will take concrete steps to repatriate people who had to leave the area to get a living elsewhere. Great injustice has been done to the land system of Chota Nagpur. The Cadastral Survey Settlements and the Revision Settlements have, one after the other, reduced and dwindled the ancient rights of the people. It was because the landlords in the West petitioned Rakhaldas Haldar to the effect there were no khunt-kattidars in the West that only the Mundas received khunt-katti rights. In course of time, khunt-katti became broken and other insidious distinctions were drawn even in khunt-katti territory by the introduction of Rajhas and Majhias. In my own village, all the three categories of land are to be found and my village is a khunt-katti village. This injustice must be washed away and a Commission should be appointed by Government to rehabilitate khunt-kattidars and standardise all land as khunt-katti.

The ancient system of democracy is to be found in every part of Chota Nagpur. The Mankis, the Mundas, the Parha Rajas, the Parganaits, the village Mahatos, the Pahans and the Desmanjhis exist everywhere, but, the extent of their respective authority is not the same everywhere. Only in Kolhan and the Santhal Parganas is the old system of self-government still intact. The 22 Parha Rajas have been resuscitated by our Sabha. Whatever be the case, the fact remains that our ancient institutions have been divested of their character and authority and, now that PANCHAYAT RAJ is being talked of so much, we should set about to give new life into our ancient institutions, the genius of which the most primitive man understands and appreciates. The rule of the DAROGA must disappear. It is said, with a great deal of truth, that a country gets the government it deserves. I want our educated people to bear this in mind when they are dealing with the ignorant masses. We must talk the language of the people. We must if we have to bring about a revolution in society and social order, work with the people and always for the people. I am not so blind as to think that everything of the past is wonderful. We have much to learn from the past but, if the past cannot adapt itself to the changed and changing circumstances, it should be discarded. We do not live in the same kind of houses our forefathers used to live in. Form follows utility. Our social order must assume such a shape that it will harmonise with the present-day function. While I say this, I must emphasise that I do not think we can improve much on the simple life we have inherited as a result of thousands of years of experience.

I urge upon our Indian leaders to stop and think. The aboriginals have much to teach the non-aboriginals; and equally is it true that aboriginals have something to learn from their neighbours. All that I plead for is we should not look down upon the Adibasis just because they refuse to shed their simplicity and decline to swim into the maelstrom of modernity. If the new constitution protects the improvident aboriginal from losing his land, the greatest thing would have been achieved. The aboriginal is a child of the soil and everything should be done to see that he remains rooted to his foundations. Once the aboriginal loses his land he is completely lost. Some of you are inclined to think in terms of isolation and segregation. This is a most pernicious and dangerous thing. The world is getting smaller and smaller every day. Nobody can live in isolation nor must the Indian aboriginal think that he is different from others. I am very proud of Adibasi culture, but, at the same time, I must acknowledge that contra-acculturation activities of some of our leaders are deleterious in the long run. The process of acculturation, of cultural symbiosis, is inevitable and the only question which remains is whether we can accelerate its speed. NATURA NON FACIT SALTUM. Gradually or FESTINA LENTE. Hurry slowly!

I have already made reference to the importance of our social customs. I shall say a few words about our languages. People are so ignorant about the Adibasis in general that they make irresponsible statements about their culture and languages and even religious beliefs. Adibasis have been variously described as animists, heathens without religion at all. The same kind of charge is leveled against our languages. It is said that aboriginal languages are not worth developing and that in the aboriginal tracts the medium of instruction should be Rashtrabasha, whatever it might be. To such fanatics of Rashtrabasha, to such soulless humanitarians, I would say that they should have a look at the 14 Volumes of the Mundarica Encyclopaedia, at the monumental works published by Bodding on the Santhals, at the Oraon tomes published by Grignard, at Gondi and Bhil literature and then say whether Adibasi folklore can enrich our thoughts or not. It is criminal of the Bihar Government to attempt to destroy the Santhal language. By all means, let us have the Rashtrabasha, but, let us also develop our own mother tongues. I would ask the members of the Adibasi Students' Fellowship—they are all young, enthusiastic and energetic—to collect all folk-tales and folk-songs they can get before these die out. The impact of civilisation threatens to annihilate some of the aboriginal languages and, before it is too late, we should unearth the linguistic wealth of those languages. I would ask the Fellowship Members to do intensive propaganda in the villages, particularly amongst Sarna Adibasis in favour of education. I do not mean education which divorces young people from their villages. On the contrary. I am thinking of education which will enrich the villages. We have experimented with the Adibasi Dhumkuria in Ranchi, giving in it a bias of Adibasi culture, of Adibasi songs and dances. This Dhumkuria is struggling against the heavy

odd of poor finances. But we must carry on despite difficulties and open many more Adibasi schools throughout the country.

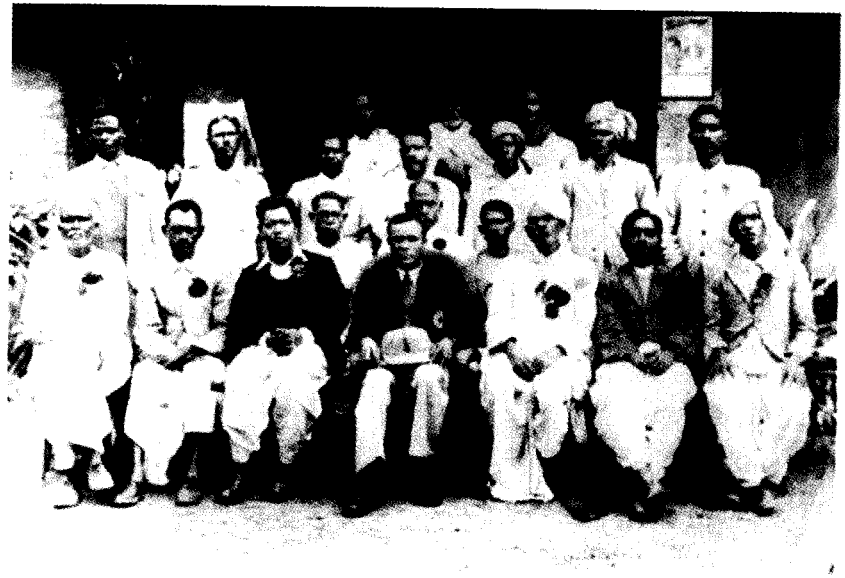
We all know that Chota Nagpur is one of the richest mineral areas of the world. Singhbhum District alone is estimated to have 3,000 million tons of high-grade iron ore. Lohardaga has vast bauxite deposits, a very important mineral in modern times. There is copper in Dhalbhum. In Manbhum there is practically three quarters of the coal deposits of India. We have the monopoly of mica so essential in an age of electricity and also lac. There is no mineral that I can think of which is not available in plenty in Chota Nagpur. In other words, we are sitting on top of immeasurable wealth. Why is it we are amongst the poorest people in the country? How is it that anybody who comes from outside seems to make money here? I think it is because we have refused to exploit our potentialities. It is high time that our educated young men and women ceased to run after government appointments and took to commercial and industrial enterprise. The primitive man is improvident, lives from hand to mouth, is care free, lacking the acquisitive instinct and unmindful of the future. These are negative qualities which have been exploited mercilessly by outsiders. Go where you like—Jamshedpur, Dhanbad and the tea gardens—you will find Adibasis, both men and women, doing the hardest work but getting the worst emoluments. We must get out of this torpor and boldly take to trade and other enterprises outsiders carry on in our midst. In a village there should be no room for the money-lender and other social pests. I wish to appoint an Economic and Planning Committee so that we may have a well-defined plan for our work or reconstruction and socialisation.

Before I end, I would like to say a few words against the Government policy of interference with our religious rites and rights. The common picture non-aboriginals give of an Adibasi is that he is a drunkard and that he swims in his drink all the time. In every society, excesses lead to vice. Just as a man who eats too much rice is an unhealthy creature, so also is the Adibasi who drinks too much rice-beer. People forget the important role rice-beer plays in the life of the aboriginal. There is no social or religious function an Adibasi can perform without rice-beer. He offers rice-beer to his Gods. He cannot get his daughter married without rice-beer. He cannot propitiate his ancestral spirits without rice-beer. People will not assist him in paddy transplantation unless he gives them rice-beer. In birth, in marriages and in burials and religious festivals, he must have his rice-beer. How does Prohibition affect aboriginal life is a question the Prohibitionists have refused to examine. I certainly believe there is plenty of room for temperance workers, but prohibition amongst Adibasis would spell their downfall. Much has been made of the Bitlaha ceremony among the Santhals and pronouncements have been made by High Courts condemning it. I contend High Courts have no jurisdiction over Bitlaha. When an outsider perpetrates the crime of seducing a Santhal woman, Bitlaha is the

ceremony, an ancient one, whereby the culprit, the social enemy, is excommunicated. It seems absurd to me that morals can be legislated.

Before I resume my seat, I would like to pay personal tributes to the Kharsawan martyrs and also to those at Tapkara, at Simko and at Gamaria. I do not forget the splendid services and devotion I received from the late Masih Dayal Pandit, the late Hehemiah Tirkey, the late Asha Dadel, and others. I could not have carried on all these years without such a band of faithful workers. We do badly need men and women of this type—selfless, self-sacrificing and fearless.

I welcome all of you, especially those of you who have walked for several days in order to attend this Conference. I hope you are fairly comfortable and that you will go back carrying with you the message of this Conference which is the moral, material and spiritual advancement of the most ancient people of India, Adibasis.



'Founding members and leaders of the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1939'.

1st Row Sitting: 1st person - not known, 2nd-Theble Oraon, 3rd-Theodore Surin, 4th-Jaipal Singh, 5th- Raisaheb Bandi Ram Oraon, 6th- Paul Dayal, 7th- Nehemiah Kujur. 2nd Row Sitting: 1st- Igness Beck, 2nd- not known, 3rd- not known. 3rd Row Standing: 1st- not known, 2nd- Mr. Amin, 3rd- Boniface Lakra, 4th- Julius Tigga, 5th- not known, 6th- Michel Tigga, 7th- Harman Lakra. 4th Row Standing: 1st- not known, 2nd- Dayal Kujur (Pandit), 3rd- not known.

JHARKHAND BETRAYED

IGNES KUJUR

Jharkhand Party

Towards the latter half of the decade 1940–50 we had succeeded in building up a strong political party for us. The Unnati Samaj of the earlier days had changed into Adivasi Mahasabha; the latter in turn had become the Jharkhand Party, which was preparing to fight the general elections, the first in free India, in order to attain our goal, Jharkhand, a separate state. A resolution to this effect was being passed every year in the annual general conference of the Party after a two to three day session by literally lakhs of us attending them, our young men doing so with their bows and arrows. Those were the days in which the Congress was engaged in a life and death struggle on the one hand for gaining freedom and on the other for eradicating evils which hampered progress. Landlordism was coming to an end; our slave status was well on its way to disappear. But we had keenly begun to feel our political bondage worse than slavery. Jharkhand demand was writ large on every Adivasi face.

From the start the Congress was against this demand. The Bihar leaders left no stone unturned to impress on us that Jharkhand was an anti-national demand and that it could do nothing but harm us. The Congress had been in power and its government was functioning in several states and among others in Bihar, from much before the British had decided to leave India. The Bihar Government had pitted itself completely against us. Dr. S.K. Sinha, the Chief Minister of the then government, made no secret of his intention that he would not hesitate to drop bombs on us if we agitated for truncation of his province.

It was not very difficult to see why Bihar leaders had been unnerved by our movement. Only a knave or fool would suggest that they saw no implications. From time to time truth came out of their mouths: But why are these missionaries converting and spreading education among these semi-civilised people? If they picked it up, where do these missionaries think they'll get the labour for all the menial work required in statecraft?

Chotanagpur Sangyukta Sangha (Reprint), 1986.

Author is Founder Editor, '*Abua Jharkhand*', Official Hindi Weekly of Adibasi Mahasabha, later on transformed into Jharkhand Party. Also, Jharkhand Party M.L.A., 1952–62.

Bihar Government's View

In those days it appeared that Bihar Government had no other work to do in Chotanagpur except that which in effect would make of us backwoodsmen again. It went on increasing the number of distilleries in these parts. It kept on pouring out grants to one-member-institutions for opening schools at places where the missionaries had already done so. It made it a state policy to differentiate between the different tribes among us on the one hand, and Christians and non-Christians on the other. All governmental welfare measures were taken up with the set purpose to make us fight with one another among ourselves. It also manipulated our census to show that we were decreasing in number. Above all these, it declared that we were so 'backward' and our areas so undeveloped that a state, even if formed, would not be viable.

Indian National Congress Reading

At the national level, however, the Congress was very well aware that Jharkhand demand was by no means an anti-national demand. In fact quite early in the struggle for freedom it had been observed that several states had incompatible areas included in them. These areas had nothing in common with their residuary parts. It was known to all how the states and their boundaries had been formed by the British. No principle was involved. These States and their boundaries, if they meant anything they meant, the different dates on which they were brought under the British Rule. The Congress had decided long before that after independence the states would be reorganised on the basis of their language and culture. It was realised that all development plans would fail and that exploitation of one by another would be the only result if people of one culture were kept under a state government of those with a different culture. The British had not mentioned even about parting with any power but the names of Andhra, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka (Kerala), were all in mouths of the Congressmen themselves.

The Jharkhand Party was gaining momentum rapidly; Bihar Congressmen were perturbed. In one of the Congress sessions at all India level, they tried to impress on the A.I.C.C. that culture could never be the criterion for new state formation, that there should only be one language. They maintained that we are their 'bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh' even though our culture was slightly different. The fact was that they didn't want to be caught napping. They could never deny that Jharkhand and its Adivasis differed from Bihar and Biharis not a bit less than what the Aryans did from non-Aryans, living anywhere on earth. Nor could they deny that we lived in homogeneity, united and compact. That in our history, geography and all other matters of human study, we differed from them. But they scored in one point; we had several tongues to go by. With this they tried their best to fight our demand.

States Reorganisation Commission

In the last week of December 1953, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India announced the formation of a commission, the State Reorganisation Commission. Sri Fazle Ali, Shri Hriday Nath Kunzru and Sardar K.M. Pannikar were appointed the members to it. To this Commission was given the task of investigation of differing lingual and cultural areas in all the states of the Union and find out their social, economic, historic, geographic and administrative links to them. On the result of their findings they were to recommend alteration in their boundaries by amalgamation or bifurcation as also by the formation of new states.

There were some cogent reasons for forming this Commission. Firstly, as already observed, the Congress was committed to it. It had become clear that any programme of large scale planning of the whole country must take enduring political unit into consideration. The schemes of development could not be implemented in a state, if because of exploitation, a section of the people therein evinced no concern. The most forcible reason for forming this Commission was that further deferment of the question would lead to sure unrest in the country. The state of Andhra had been formed early that same year and there was enough evidence of brewing trouble in Bombay already.

The Jharkhand Party was also expecting the formation of some such commission for a long time. It was precisely by raising the very same question of a 'boundary commission' in the minds of its voters that it had won 32 seats in the Bihar Assembly and had emerged the largest opposition party. Shri Jaipal Singh the president of the Party told the followers to be ready to prove their case.

The year 1954 will not easily be forgotten from the history of Jharkhand Movement, for this was the year which marked the beginning of the end.

Early in February, Shri K.B. Sahay, the then Revenue Minister of Bihar, met Shri Singh at New Delhi. The former known as Chotanagpur Kesri in Congress circles was a sworn enemy of Jharkhand demand. He was continually pulling out our leaders from the fold and giving them either some lucrative position or post in order to weaken our movement. Shri Singh had never appeared to have a single good word for him. Their opposing views had always kept the two leaders fencing each other. On this occasion it was reported in the papers that they had a very cordial talk on the problems of Chotanagpur in general and Adivasis in particular.

Immediately after this talk at New Delhi, Shri Singh asked his party workers to arrange public meetings all over the Jharkhand area in order to inform the people of the grave situation, which had arisen on the wake of the S.R.C. visit in these parts. These meetings, amongst others, were held at Dumka,

Dhanbad, Jhalda, Chandil, Purulia, Ranchi, Chaibasa, Rairangpur, and Gangpur. What was surprising, was that in all these places he avoided making any case for Jharkhand. He spoke to his audience referring to Bengal or Orissa most of the time. He said that both these states had suddenly developed land grabbing attitude: that Bengal wanted Dhanbad and Orissa wanted Singhbum. He added that in order to save them he had joined hands with the Government of Bihar. It was interesting to hear him speak with a double voice in one and the same breath. He believed that the Adivasis of Manbhum wouldn't allow themselves to be mauled by the Bengal tiger, that they wouldn't part with an inch of their land to it; but he could find no Adivasis there to justify the demand of Jharkhand before the S.R. Commission.

Prior to its visit to the places concerned, the Commission had given notice of its detailed programme and asked for memoranda, memorials or representation from interested parties.

The whole nation got excited over the issue. Over three thousand memoranda were received by the Commission. They had been submitted to it by all kinds of parties, political, non-political, social, communal, non-communal, educational, etc. and even by governments. Almost all the leaders of the country appeared to give their evidence before it. Even Shri Nehru did so; but not Shri Singh.

The Commission visited our state in the last week of January 1955. We demonstrated before it. In each of the places—Dumka, Ranchi and Chaibasa—about 2–3 lakhs of people rent the skies with the slogan of 'Jharkhand Alag Prant!' The Congressmen also tried to state a counter demonstration for their claim of keeping Bihar intact. They were nowhere near us, as their demonstrators were being transported in buses and trucks from place to place. Shri Singh was also present on the occasion. He was prancing right and left of the Commission during its visit of these areas, but he did not meet with it. Nor did he submit any memorandum to it.

The S.R.C. took about two years and a half to complete the work entrusted to it. Its report was published in June 1956; it was a voluminous report of 264 pages. It suggested the formation of number of new states as also increase or decrease of area in certain states, lying adjacent to one another by alteration of their boundaries. In dealing with the question, too great an importance was not given to the issue of language and culture. They were important enough; but it was stated that before making any suggestion for any change three more vital points were considered. Firstly whether such a change would be desirable from the viewpoint of preservation and strengthening the unity and security of India. Secondly the question of financial and economic feasibility and administrative convenience. And thirdly the successful working of the National Plan.

In fact the S.R.C. was against the creation of purely linguistic states. They observed that the idea of a federating unit, organised as the political expression of a single language group would encourage exclusivism and that it would even tend to blur, if not obliterate national unity. The self image that such language group creates is necessarily one of superiority as compared to others and this will inevitably be reflected in its educational and cultural institutions. It looked as though the principles enunciated were to make an unassailable case for Jharkhand itself. The maps too printed on the occasion showed its extent; but however much one tried to find it in the report, it was not there. In its place, we were recommended a special development board for Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas, which was not even remotely mentioned in the terms of reference. I shall refer to this board later when I shall be dealing with the merger of the Party with the Congress.

The above is the story of how the Jharkhand Party failed to win our battle on at least one count. Our pain over our defeat was all the more piercing as political observers drew the conclusion that we lost because we actually had no case. This was also the view of all the Bihar newspapers. Very few observed that we were let down. What I have got to say below will reveal that our failure was neither due to the fact that we had no case nor due to any external cause. The rot had set in internally. Shri Singh had, by the time, fallen down to immeasurable depths.

Induction of Non-Party Men

Ever since the Maharaja-Adhiraj of Darbhanga, Shri Kameshwar Singh was given the party ticket for his election to the New Delhi Rajya Sabha; in the Party, entered an element of doubt and suspicion, which could never be forgotten. Even today the incident is occasionally referred to by elderly Adivasis as the 'Darbhanga episorh' (episode). The Maharaja was ushered in the Party in 1952 at the wake of the Biennial Rajya Sabha elections of the year. He never had any connections with Adivasis. Obviously the MLAs were directed to vote for him for some consideration other than that of Jharkhand. Later when the news permeated the countryside, they resented their galling position but dared not ask Shri Singh for any explanation for fear of falling from his grace and risk their future of Assembly membership.

This incident proved to be the one which gave tremendous powers to Shri Singh; he emerged a virtual dictator. In earlier days he had appeared dedicated to the cause of Jharkhand. It was beyond imagination that an Adivasi who had so deep a feeling for his people; could ever go astray. It was considered not only unnecessary, but even harmful to have other-elected leaders in the executive or working committees. Thus he always took his decisions all by himself, be it a matter of policy or selection of a candidate. There was the seeming sanction of a Parliamentary Board invariably in all matters; but it was

known that no such board existed in the party. And it was further known that if the board existed any day, it consisted of members whom Shri Singh liked to surround himself with on that day. Darbhanga Maharaja was only the beginning. Subsequent elections saw the entry of innumerable men of fortune.They dropped out of the Jharkhand scene as soon as the elections were over. It was immaterial whether they won or lost in them. The manner in which the so called well-wishers of Adivasis walked in and out of party, left no one in doubt that the seats were being sold.

A Little About Myself

In spite of the fact that Shri Singh took party decisions all by himself, he could not on all occasions have his own way. In this connection I feel obliged to bring certain facts to light regarding myself. In my political career I was elected a member to the Vidhan Sabha twice. In the first instance, I had neither applied for a seat nor had Shri Singh kept me in his mind for any contest. At a later stage, when it was discovered that a colleague, who had been selected as a candidate for contesting a seat reserved for us, was not able to procure the Tribal certificate, Shri Singh suddenly asked me to file my nomination as a dummy. It so happened that my colleague failed to file his nomination for want of S.T. certificate and I emerged a full fledged party candidate to win the seat.

When my term expired in 1957, I was again given no ticket for my re-election. The reason assigned was that I did not locally belong to Lohardaga, the constituency which I represented. The real reason, however, was not far to seek. After the election of Darbhanga Maharaj to the Rajya Sabha, I had questioned as to his position in the party. I had stopped paying the MLA subscription, as it was called, since his entry into the party. During the S.R.C. visit also, I had made allegation of suspicious deals against Shri Singh. My attitude in both these matters had kept his brain wrangling and I believe he never forgave me for them. But as providence would have it wrought, two of my friends and colleagues were quarrelling among themselves for candidature to one and the same Parliamentary seat, with the result that the Assembly seat, for which one of them had been selected, fell vacant. Two days before the last date for filing of nomination papers. Shri Singh very reluctantly asked me to file my nomination and he did so only when he was asked if he wanted the party not to contest in that constituency.

The Maharaj-Dhiraj Again

Shri Singh's inductions of non-party men and also his indecisions and delayed decisions had a devastating effect on the Party, which continued to remain as poor as it had remained since its earliest days. Every Jharkhand MLA felt that he did all this for his private gains, but no one thought of giving any resistance to him. They said that it would only weaken the party and said further they

cared more for the preservation of unity of the party than for their MLA-ship. Now as I look back over these years, I find that I have lived to see my worst fears realised. They valued their MLA-ship more than anything else. This was proved to the hilt in later years. Even now the only work for them is to vie with each other to be ministers in any government.

The Maharaja of Darbhanga remained a member of the Rajya Sabha for a full term from 1952–58. When his term expired the question arose among the party MLAs as to who would succeed him. They were not in favour of voting him for a second term. Their choice fell on Shri Harman Lakra, a colleague who had failed to get himself elected in the 1957 general elections. These facts were known to Shri Singh but he did not care for such conscientious pricks from his MLAs. He knew that he would issue the party mandate and they would abide by it.

The Maharaja was in Calcutta at that time, Shri Singh went there to meet him. Meanwhile he gave out that the party ticket would be given to him for another term. He said that as the Maharaja had done nothing discreditable, it would be unbecoming to drop him out without rhyme or reason. But he had to fly from New Delhi to Calcutta, reportedly, two or three times. The last time he flew to Calcutta, he started from New Delhi accompanied by Mrs. Jahanara Singh. He dropped her at Patna with the instruction to file her nomination for the seat. On the day previous to the day of poll, when he arrived at Patna, he declared that Mrs. Singh would be our candidate.

The Maharaja and Shri Harman Lakra had also filed their nominations, obviously hoping to get elected by the same support. In other parties such a course of action on their part would have amounted to a gross act of indiscipline and they would have been declared ineligible for the party ticket for not only the particular contest they had filed their nominations for, but for some years to come, until they could manifest better conduct. In the Jharkhand party Shri Singh discovered a new way. He asked all the aspirants, who sought the party ticket, to file their nominations and then reject all but one, on the day of poll itself. In political circles it was said that he took to this practice in order to increase his own earnings.

The party MLAs were in a fix. They were 32 in number, which was hardly enough to return one candidate. A vote in favour of the Maharaja was rejected as he was not given the party ticket. But it was not easy to choose between Shri H. Lakara and Mrs. Singh. However the problem was not one of making a right choice, but of deciding to defy the so called party mandate. On the day of the poll itself, just before going to the booth, these members of the Jharkhand Legislature Party had an emergency meeting, with the General Secretary of the party presiding over it. They concurred with the President on the choice of candidate. On the occasion, fantastic speeches were made for building up of

party solidarity and discipline without which it was said that our cherished goal of a separate state could not be achieved; but guilt could be seen written on their faces. They were aware that Mrs. Singh would have had to face defeat, if Shri Singh's talks with the Maharaja had been successful and borne some fruits for him even at that late hour.

Mrs. Singh won the seat. She secured 32 first preferential votes. The Maharaja and Shri H. Lakra both could not be returned. The latter had secured only 7 first preferential votes. No doubts were entertained even for a moment, that his votes were in fact those of Jharkhand MLAs. However, Mrs. Singh should have on this calculation got only 25 votes. Shri Singh later dispelled all doubts and anxious calculation; he had arranged for obtaining the votes of the Communist Party. He did not disclose the terms. It had a strength of 7 members in the Bihar Assembly at that time.

Whatever might be said about the defection of the seven MLAs who did not vote for Mrs. Singh, that they exhibited courage, cannot be gainsaid. Later, however, the picture of this exhibition of courage became very blurred when I happened to be the only one to publicly declare that I had not voted for her. I also said that what I had done was right and to the best interest of the party. In due course I received the letter from the General Secretary stating that I had been expelled from the party for my activities prejudicial to it.

Shri Harman Lakra was also expelled from the party for his audacity to contest for a seat against its candidate. For a time it appeared that a new party would spring up with him and the 7 defecting MLAs. But barring myself the rest never owned their act of heroism or guilt. And the elections being one of secret ballots, Shri Singh feigned ignorance and kept them under the impression that he did not believe in the story of their defection at all. But when the next general election arrived he dropped every one of them out. Shri H. Lakra also proved to be very infirm while 7 MLAs had burnt their boats for him; at the very next biennial elections for the New Delhi Rajya Sabha he went to Shri Singh, apologised for his past misconduct and tried to get his blessing and a seat. The defecting MLAs turned against him also and they tried to regain their political stature by hobnobbing with other parties which had no respect for us and our ideals. I found myself a lone man.

I have a strange feel in the recollection of those days. Shri Singh's inductions of millionaries were continuing and I thought that I would be the happiest man on earth the day I walked away from him. But when the time came and I did so I was far from being happy, in spite of the fact that Shri Singh had become a ruthless dictator. I became a man without a party and a man without a friend or colleague.

Jharkhand Merger

The 1962 war between India and China had ended ten months ago. All of a sudden in the first week of June 1963 there appeared a news in the papers that Shri Singh was considering the question of a merger with the Congress. It was reported that he had written a letter to Pandit B.N. Jha, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, stating his intention to place the Jharkhand Party 'unconditionally and unreservedly' under the Congress, in order to save the nation from the peril of China. At first the news was not taken seriously. After all, this was not the first occasion when such news about him had appeared in the press. On the contrary the Congress had tried to spread false news of this very type in the past on numerous occasions. It was no little surprise to read that Shri Singh was contemplating a merger because of the peril of China. It was well known to all that China had withdrawn troops and stopped all movements after making a unilateral declaration to that effect almost a year ago. It is noted that the nation had forgotten all about it. All the political parties were one with the Congress as far as Chinese war was concerned. The news of its peril setting Shri Singh to rise to a patriotic gesture sounded too hollow to give any credence to it.

But matters came briskly to a head. On June 20, the Congress celebrated the merger with triumph. A public meeting was held in front of the Government House at Ranchi, in which were present Shri Sanjiva Reddy, President AICC, Pt. B.N. Jha, Shri P.C. Sen and Shri Bijoy Patnaik, the then Chief Ministers respectively of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa; Shri Atulya Ghosh, the President of Bengal PCC; Shri and Smt. J. Singh and the sitting Jharkhand members of Bihar Assembly. On this occasion all the Congress leaders mentioned above praised Shri Singh and all of us for the merger.

They said that no better move could be taken by our leader under the particular curcumstances of our country, that we could not live in isolation in the present circumstances. That it was a boon to us that we were able to join the Ruling Party of India. After the meet the document of merger was signed by all the above dignitaries on behalf of Congress and Shri Singh and his camp following MLAs for us. As this merger envisaged no terms or conditions to begin with it was as though a blank cheque was given to the Congress.

Thus was the Jharkhand Party suddenly made to vanish in thin air. However, according to not a few observers, this was only the logical outcome of Shri Singh's activities in the past years. Since the visit of the S.R.C. he was left with absolutely no programme for the party. He directed the Jharkhand members of the Bihar Assembly to be on the side of Bihar, when according to the Commission award Purulia and Kishanganj were being ceded to Bengal. He directed them to take their stand behind Bihar Government even when it put up a dramatic show of seeking to merge the two states themselves. These events were then taking place in Patna where his MLAs stayed only for some months

in the year. Nearer home in Jharkhand itself, he ceased to have public meetings. The holding of annual conferences were also given up. They would have required the passing of Jharkhand resolution and the slogan 'Jharkhand Alag Prant' had begun to sound jarring to his ears.

The Party had started cracking. In 1957 general elections the number of seats won remained the same (32) but many Jharkhand voters were fast getting out of his hold. He tightened his grip on his MLAs. He exhorted them to work hard for soldifying the vote under his name. He continually threatened to drop them to repent at leisure if they did not heed. In spite of his exhortions and warning, the Party went on losing seats. Evidently he could do nothing when the people did not vote for his 'cooks' worth millions. He betook himself to live permanently at New Delhi and adapted to its 'Ashok' life there. It came to be known in all high circles that he was no longer a man of austere ways dedicated to any cause. He had even been caught giving speeches in Parliament in inebriant condition. Many wondered how he managed to live the life of the great Moghuls with only the earnings of an MP. In the third general elections the party had all but crumbled. Ten Assembly seats were lost. It didn't win any general seats either in the State Assembly or Parliament. The Ranchi North Constituency which had returned Shri M.R. Masani in 1957 on our party ticket was given to Shri A. Agarwala, a business magnate of Dhanbad for contest in 1962. In spite of pouring out before us all the good and bad things of life he could not catch our votes and failed to get elected. Shri Singh's fall after the third general elections was considered only a matter of time. It obviously became necessary for him to do something spectacular in order to re-establish himself as our leader. This he did, he led the party to its merger.

It was natural that his lieutenants welcome his move. Their role of functioning as an opposition party in the Assembly had become paradoxical. Every situation arising out of award as per SRC recommendations found them on the side of government. Shri S.K. Bage was continually hobnobbing with Bihar Congress leaders. There was never any doubt that with or without Jharkhand he wanted to be a minister. The merger appeared a godsend for him. He gave his own reading of the situation also; Shri Singh would be a minister at the Centre and that he himself would be another in Bihar.

In about a fortnight Shri Singh was made a minister of Bihar. This bewildered Shri Bage; but fortunately for him, a kind of some heart searching programme was on in the Congress at about the same time in order to purify and strengthen it. Under the programme, Kamraj Plan as it was called after the name of the inventor, the Jha ministry dissolved and Shri Singh could remain a minister hardly for a month.

It might in this connection be recalled that the people of Jharkhand had been overwhelmed with joy when in 1946 he had become only a member of

Constituent Assembly. Welcome gates had been erected all over Jharkhand and he had been ushered in with shouts of 'Marang Gomke ki jai'. At this time when he became a minister nobody evinced any joy. His home-coming was not our concern.

It might also be noted here that Shri K.B. Sahay was, at the start, against this merger. It has already been pointed out that he was one of the greatest enemies of the Jharkhand demand. Quite a number of show boys strutted in the Congress due to him and we appeared divided in two camps to the world at large. He himself had been trying for the merger for a long time. But now that Shri Jha had succeeded in giving effect to it, he was against it. The fact was that Shri Jha had now gained 22–23 votes in his own favour in the matter of group leadership contest in state Congress. With all Jharkhand votes gone in favour of Pt. Jha, Shri Sahay could never hope to be the leader and chief minister of Bihar; either his ambition or the merger must go. He chose the latter. Later however, when Pt. Jha resigned his post of chief ministership and he himself succeeded in getting elected to the posts, he came out all for the merger.

The Terms of Merger

In his benign wisdom Shri Singh first gave a blank cheque to the Congress, then later came out with some agreements. Out of the six or seven points of agreement, the two main points were that there would be formed a development board at state level for our uplift and a subcommittee at state Congress level for coordination of our activities.

After the dissolution of Jha ministry, when the Sahay ministry succeeded it, Shri Bage became the minister and Shri Singh retired to New Delhi. The latter's general secretary Shri G. Munjal kept saying that some of the merger terms were flagrantly being violated and some not implemented at all. And that if the Congress did not take heed, his President would come out and again demand Jharkhand. He also said that the merger could not take full effect till it was ratified by the Jharkhand Working Committee, the highest policy forming body of the party. Shri Munjal who claimed that the party was still functioning, maintained that he would carry on till board and sub-committee got formed or Singh got out.

The Development Board

Even though Shri Singh occasionally issued statements through the press to warn the Sahay ministry that he would break away if merger agreements were not fully implemented, he never pointed what actually were the shortfalls. The demand of the development board was kept up by Shri S.K. Bage who had stepped into the shoes of Shri Singh in government. The real fact is that Shri Singh never had the slightest faith in these boards made by the Congress or its government.

As far as he was concerned, the terms of merger were violated when it made Bage a minister. He could never bear this. In the ensuing general elections he released all the venom he had in his pouch and got him floored.

As regards the board itself Shri Singh had an inkling of it when the Tribes Advisory Council had been established in this state in 1953. This Council was a statutory board formed by government strictly according to the provisions made in the Constitution of India. It included 20 Adivasi members elected to state legislature. The chairman of the Council was the then C.M. Dr. S.K. Sinha. The then Revenue Minister Shri K.B. Sahay was also a member. Of the 20 Advasi members, 12 were Congress MLAs and MLCs. Two of them were illiterate. Shri Singh was not deemed fit to be taken in as a member to it even though he was then an elected member to the highest legislature of the country. In the very first meeting, which was held in Patna the Council recommended to Government to plant all over in Chotanagpur palm trees, which were there in a very small number. It was said that that would go a long way to provide sugar to the poor among us.

The much debated Development Board has finally been formed by Government last year. Shri Kartik Oraon, MP has been appointed to be its Deputy Chairman. There was a hot race among our leaders for the post. It is yet to be seen, what good or goods it delivers us.

Sub-committees Under B. P. C.C.

The assurance of a sub-committee under B.P.C.C. was also at best an insult to Shri Singh. On innumerable occasions in the past Congressmen had tried to net him into the Congress. The talks always failed because of his insistence on a regional Congress committee under AICC. It will be seen that the two committees are entirely different things.

The Fall and All That

The 1957 general elections in our state produced the very results, which were feared they would. The Congress failed to obtain a clear majority. This resulted in the formation of a non-Congress coalition government, which was headed by Shri Mahamaya Pd. Sinha. The Congressmen expected this government to last for not more than a couple of months; but it fell down only after about a year on January 25, 1968, and this too came about only when the Congress made an unholy alliance with a newly created party of dissatisfied Congressmen called the Shoshit Dal. This government was a minority party government headed by Shri B. Pd. Mandal. All the members, who numbered a little less than forty, became ministers. It lasted for about a month till March 19, 1968. Another group of Congressmen walked out of Party and formed the Loktantrik Dal Congress. Joining hands with the opposition parties they replaced Mandal

government by a Sanyukt Vidhayak Dal government. Shri Bhola Shastri of L.D.C. led this government. This SVD coalition government was expected to last for a full term, but it also fell down on the 5th June and led to the promulgation of President Rule in the state.

On all these days, in which Bihar was busy toppling governments Shri Singh remained at New Delhi. In 1967 general elections he had contested his Ranchi West Parliamentary seat on Congress ticket. He won it by defeating his rival by a very slender margin. In fact he managed to win only after dupes and false promises of Jharkhand formation at once. It was, however, known that he was in the Congress and was in charge of the allotment of Congress tickets. No Jharkhand Party worker asked him for a seat, not even those MLAs who had signed the document of merger with him.

Ten Adivasi leaders succeeded in getting elected as Jharkhand independents. On the occasion the conduct of our leaders was anything but becoming. They all wanted to be MLAs. There was hardly a constituency where less than a dozen came up to try their luck. Obviously this was so due in part at least to the situation created by exit of Shri Singh. The Party was in splinters. After having filed nominations they all talked of unity. Not one was prepared to stand by.

Providence does not always allow a man to fiddle when he sets such consuming fire to his people. Shri Singh fell seriously ill as they began counting the ballots. He himself commenced by losing. It was said that he would not survive the illness. He did but succumbed to it in a year.

In the Assembly House the ten Jharkhand Independents soon discovered that they could gain something only when they functioned as a party; but their anxiety for unity was not born of any desire to serve us or to build or rebuild the party. Their sole aim in the matter was to put in claims for seats for themselves in the Cabinet. By the time the President Rule was promulgated, the different sets of ministers and deputy ministers appointed by the passing governments had left us completely confounded.

In the Mahamaya government, Shri P. Toppo was appointed a minister. This alienated Shri N.E. Horo who turned to support the Shoshit Dal and became a minister when it formed the government. But Shoshit Dal had been born in 'sin' and by 'money bag'. Its government toppled as soon as some Congressmen decided to defy their High Command. Thus when SVD government was formed Shri P. Hansdah got the covetous post. Shri Simon Tiga had no qualms in getting sworn in as minister whenever he was asked for, irrespective of the government which offered him the post. And as he kept jumping from government to government. People wondered what qualities of head and heart he possessed that everyone found him suitable for serving us!

We painfully realised that in the eyes of Bihar government, whichever the party forming it, the fittest man to be a minister is one who has the easiest conscience for pawning our cause.

In the last 1972 general elections, out of the four Jharkhandis returned, the two stalwarts are Shri Bage and Bagun Sumbrai. They stand for Jharkhand till somebody comes and picks them up to run the house of Bihar. Lately they are reported to have joined Congress. The two other stalwarts always speaking of our solid grounds for separation are Shri Bodra and Tiga. However they also make no secret of their faith in self first. They joined the Congress before the elections for the 'n'th time and the former is a minister.

Recently I was asked by Shri Suresh Singh the author of a book on Birsa Munda and a noted writer about us as to what I thought of the present situation of Jharkhand Movement. I think I gave a long and irrelevent answer; but my opening sentence was that the movement was dead. That was right and to the point.

Apart from non-achievement of a cherished goal the losses due to the stoppage of movement are already being felt by us. It is not my intention here to go into the details of the problems of education, employment, land, forests, etc., and matters connected with the Dheebar Commission 1961. I propose to do so in another booklet.

But I feel I must point out here that all these problems will only increase in proportion to the number of ministers that Bihar makes of us. This is the established method of not only checking growth or vigour of mass movements but of setting up of colonies as well. Some observers are giving very little time for Chotanagpur to become a full-fledged colony of Bihar. This view was strengthened when very recently a demonstration of Bihar Morcha was staged at Jamshedpur. Reportedly an assurance of 75 per cent of jobs was wrested away from Tisco authorities by the Morcha for Biharis on the ground of being local people. They did not disprove that we were local people but said that our rights in all spheres are specially being guarded by the state government. That we are covered in their demand. That Tisco need not worry for us. As we are already thrown out in the matter of government services and public sector, our exit from other sectors can only mean that colonisation of this land is complete.

Before ending I feel obliged to answer a question I have been asked on several occasions. That is, why I worked under Shri Singh for so many years, which probably were the best years of my life, knowing that he had become corrupt. While I maintain that I was never a party to his nefarious deeds I can hardly defend myself against my undue credulity. In spite of his faults I could never thoroughly dislike him. In this connection I would submit the words of a senator of U.S.A. He was asked why he did not oppose Henry Clay, a

brilliant but corrupt Parliamentary leader, when he held such a bad opinion of him. He said, 'I don't like Henry Clay, he is a bad man, an imposter, a creator of wicked schemes. I wouldn't speak to him, but by God, I love him.'

Shri Singh had the Clay touch of brilliance in him. On many an occasions he set our hearts beat faster by his speeches. Before the Darbhanga episode he had once said: 'Brethren, you work hard to build up your party. In this wide world, your own political strength is your only safeguard.' I have never forgotten it.

Note:-

The original title of this brochure was "We are Betrayed" we, i.e. the Jharkhandis, particularly the Adibasis, are betrayed. To convey the appropriate point that the very aim of achieving A Separate Province of Jharkhand has been betrayed, the title has been modified accordingly.

The Publisher.

CHOTA NAGPUR: THE PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL SITUATION

ROMILA THAPAR AND MAJID HAYAT SIDDIQI*

Among the many generalisations made about Chota Nagpur, there are two which have a bearing on the question of ethnic group relations in the area. The first is that the Chota Nagpur plateau in eastern India was cut off from the mainstream of Indian history until the last couple of centuries, and the second, that the tribal institutions have remained virtually untouched since their early beginnings with history regularly superimposing layers of immigrants but leaving the autochthons relatively intact (A popular misconception holds that the tribal system was a hunting and gathering one, plough agriculture being a recent innovation). Both these generalisations probably stem from a colonial historiography which placed unfamiliar cultures outside of what was considered to be the mainstream. There was a distinct cult of the preservation of earlier forms in such areas and familiarity with these areas is looked upon as a journey back in time. This chapter sets out to evaluate these generalisations. Such an exercise involves an attempt to reconstruct the history of the early period, particularly in terms of the changes introduced once the State system came to be imposed on the earlier tribal one. We are concerned with the problem here only as it relates to the Munda tribes.

Any effort to reconstruct the precolonial history is hampered both by the lack of historical sources for the period prior to the Mughal arrival in the seventeenth century and the present paucity of archaeological evidence.[1] For

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[1] Chota Nagpur is one area where a major archeological effort will be virtually the only means of discovering the early history. This in itself might be a very useful exercise in the interrelationship of archaeology and ancient history particularly for archaeologists and historians of ancient India who are prone to rely more heavily on literary sources.

the moment, one can only attempt an hypothesis on the basis of the very occasional evidence. A still bigger problem is that there is no known chronology and much of the chronological reconstruction is based on deduction and therefore remains controversial.

The original inhabitants of the Chota Nagpur plateau are believed to be the Mundas, identified as speaking the Mundari language (which is more widespread, however, than the Chota Nagpur plateau itself, extending into parts of Orissa as well). Mundari has been described as a branch of the Austro-Asiatic language group, although in recent years this view has been questioned. On the basis of linguistic identification, it was suggested that the Mundas migrated from South-East Asia to eastern India where they finally settled. This contradicts the origin myths of the Mundas which consistently speak of a migration into Chota Nagpur from the north-west of the plateau. The only archaeological possibility of a South-East Asian link is the stone, shouldered hoes which have been found in both areas,[2] but this is too tenuous a connection on which to build a theory of migration. At most, contacts between these regions can be postulated as possibly going back to the Neolithic period. The question of migration is probably closely related to the introduction of rice which appears to have occurred earlier in South-East Asia. If the hoe-using people are to be identified as Munda immigrants, it would be as farmers of the early Neolithic age.[3]

Prior to this there is evidence of settlement on the plateau with the Stone Age and microlithic sites along the river valleys and particularly those of the Subarnarekha, Koel, Sankh and their tributaries.[4] The sites along the Koel River could indicate movements from the upper Narmada and Son valleys. Given the distribution of megalithic sites in central India, the currently very limited excavation of megalithic sites,[5] if expanded, may also yield supporting

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[2] A.H. Dani, *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India*, p.223, Calcutta, 1960.

[3] Munda cosmology provides no clues to these problems. It speaks of a primaeval condition of water from out of which the earth is created (S.C. Roy, *The Mundas and their Country*, p.325 et seq., Bombay, 1970), a theme common to many of the later cultural influences of the area such as Puranic Hinduism and Christianity. There is, however, an insistence on the first ancestors being sibling twins (F.B. Bradley-Birt, *Chota Nagpur: A Little Known province of the Empire*, p.13, London, 1900). Whereas sibling incest is antithetical to both the Puranic and Christian tradition, it occurs repeatedly in Buddhist origin myths. The argument that sibling twin ancestry is indicative of matrilineal forms would hardly hold in this case as subsequent Munda social organisation is exclusively patrilineal.

[4] *Indian Archaeology—A Review* 1959–1960, p.12–13; 1961–1962, p.8; 1962–1963, p.6–7; 1964–1965, p.5; 1965–1966, p.8.

evidence for such a direction of movement. Migration from the north-west cannot therefore be ruled out. Munda mythological tradition speaks of Azimgarh as the point of departure with a long migration via a circuitous route across central India, eastern Rajasthan, north-western India, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar to a final arrival in the Chota Nagpur region from the north-west.[6] The route may be mythological, but the point of entry may carry a trace of historical memory. Another as yet uninvestigated direction, not referred to in any tradition but which appears to have been used in later historical times, was along the river valleys moving generally northwards from Orissa.

While certain authors believe that links with Bihar to the north may have developed with the search for iron-producing areas in the late first millennium B.C., currently availabale evidence is to the contrary. Among the more intrepid travellers of this time were the Buddhist and Jaina monks who, based in Magadha (south Bihar), extended their missionary efforts to various parts of eastern India. However, their routes tended to bypass the Chota Nagpur region, skirting round it to the east and going via Bengal to Orissa.[7] This is not altogether surprising. Buddhist and Jaina monks required reasonably well-populated prosperous agricultural villages with a sufficient surplus to afford the feeding, housing and clothing of groups of monks and these were to be found in the peripheries of urban centres. This was not the case in Chota Nagpur during this period.

The intensified interest in iron-working, under the Mauryan Empire (fourth to second centuries B.C.), may have led to the intrusion of the Asuras into the area or they may have been brought in to work at iron-smelting by post-Mauryan entrepreneurs. The Asuras are in many ways an ambiguous category, vaguely

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[5] *Ibid.*, 1965–1966, p.10. The site at Khuntitoli in the Khunti subdivision of Ranchi District. The migration of the black-and-red pottery culture in central India seems to have travelled along the Son valley to south Bihar in the traditions millennium B.C. This general direction is also indicated in the traditions regarding the lineages of the Haihayas in Puranic literature. See Romilla Thapar, 'Puranic Lineages and Archaeological Cultures', *Puratattva,* Vol. VIII, 1976.

[6] Roy, op. cit., p.33. The area of migration brings to mind as early linguistic argument that place names ending in *anga*, thus Ganga, Kalinga, Vanga, etc., could be of Munda origin. See P.C. Bagchi (ed.), *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India,* Calcutta, 1929. More recently it has been suggested that some Munda etymologies can be linked with names in the *Ramayana.* N. Zide, 'Some Munda Etymological Notes on Names in the Ramayana', contributed to the Khetreshachandra Chattopadhyaya Felicitation volume published in *The Journal of Ganganath Jha Kendriya Vidyapeeth,* (Allahabad), Vol. XXVIII, p.747–63, 1971. This would again suggest a wider distribution of Munda-speaking people to the north-west and west of Chota Nagpur in an earlier period.

[7] As late as the seventh century A.D., Hsuan Tsang's itinerary, visiting places of importance to Buddhism, leads him to bypass Chota Nagpur.

identified, but consistently associated with the working of iron. Munda tradition speaks of the Asuras as early inhabitants of the area,[8] and their association with iron-working would place them, at the earliest, in the latter half of the first millennium B.C. though they may have come to the region much later. A recent excavation of what has been described as an Asura site at Saradkel[9] (Khunti subdivision) indicates a substantial iron-working settlement with a large range of iron artefacts. The settlement itself was not primitive, with houses built of kiln-produced bricks, an extensive defence wall of bricks, using wheel-made pottery and a variety of copper and terracotta objects. The presence of ploughshares and caltrops suggests a long familiarity with iron as also does the quality of the objects. The settlement would point to a society based on plough agriculture and which, in terms of comparable sites in northern India, was familiar with a fairly advanced culture. Copper coins indicate some trading contacts as do the presence of beads of chalcedony, agate and carnelian, more often associated with the Narmada valley. A number of unexcavated Asura sites are known and perhaps when enough of them are excavated it may turn out that the earliest extensive historical culture of this region was that of the Asuras.[10] The excavators have dated the site to the early centuries of the Christian era and have described it as being 'devoid alike of genesis and decay.'[11]

Areas with a relatively easy availability of iron would have been prized by the early empire builders. Perhaps the politically dominant groups of Chota Nagpur may have tried to keep it as a closed area to prevent others from gaining access to the metal. The pressure to open up came gradually, and for a different

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[8] Roy, op. cit., p.337 et seq.

[9] *Indian Archaeology—A Review, 1964–1965,* p.6. For earlier attempts to excavate such sites, see S.C. Roy, '*Distribution and Nature of Asura Sites in Chota Nagpur*', Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Vol.I, Pt 3, 1916, p.393–406.

[10] If brick structures are to be associated with Asura sites (the bricks being of approximately the same size at various sites) then such places of potential historical importance as Devaki and Anjan (Gumla subdivision) indicate a literal superimposition of medieval icons on such brick structures. Similar brick structures are reported from sites in the Bundu subdivision. This would point to either a fairly advanced culture in the early centiries A.D., or else the date for these Asura sites having to be placed later, in the latter half of the first millennium A.D. It is perhaps worth mentioning in passing that the Asuras, although among the more often mentioned peoples in early Indian sources, remain one of the enigmas of Indian history. Bannerjee Sastri has tried to put together the various references and build a theory on the role of the Asuras as a major people. 'The Asuras in Indo-Iranian Literature', *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Rersearch Society*, Vol. XII.

[11] Curiously the Munda myths described the destruction of the Asuras and their iron-smelting furnaces by the Munda deity Sing Bonga, in the Asura Legend. Roy, *The Mundas and Their Country,* op. cit., p.338 et seq.

reason, when, over the centuries, there was a demand for land.

The north-west was the point of entry for a new group of people, the Oraons. Rohtasgarh was fortified in the seventh century by Sasanka against possible attacks from the west.[12] It was from this direction, if tradition is correct, that the Dravidian-speaking Oraons or Kurukhs entered Chota Nagpur. They moved up the Son valley to Rohtas and when attacked split into two groups, one going towards the Rajmahal hills and the other into Chota Nagpur.[13] Claiming descent from Ravana, they recall the Ravanavamsi Gonds, another Dravidian-speaking group in central India.

The arrival of the Oraons resulted in a major differentiation in terms of linguistic identification. Culturally, however, the Oraons did not develop substantial dissimilarities and tended to accept the existing pattern of Munda social organisation.

Munda society was structured on the basis of the *Khuntkatti* system, which was also adopted by the Oraons.[14] Land was owned by a lineage or *khunt* and rights over land required lineage membership; the argument being that it was the lineage's ancestors who first cleared the land and settled on it. The cultivated area was expanded through the clearing of new land and the setting up of new villages by segments or branches of the main lineage. The heads of these partrilineal clans or *kili* were the powerful *mundas, pahans* and *mahtos*. The *munda* was regarded as the secular chief, while the *pahan* was considered to be his 'spiritual' counterpart. Gradually, both offices became hereditary and had their own lands attached to them. In addition, some land was also set aside as service land dedicated to various spirit cults—the *bhutakheta.* This was distinct from the *sarna*, the sacred grove in which the god resided, and near which, in the *Sasandiri* (burial ground), where members of the village lineage or lineages wished to be buried. *Sasandiri* membership was an important proof of the claim to kinship rights in the *kili* or clan. Professional services were provided by craftsmen who were outside the lineage. Lineage landowners *(khuntkattidars)* collected a tribute or a kind of rent from the affinal relatives *(praja)* living in the village.

With the growth of the cultivated area came the need to demarcate village boundaries as well as to organise units of villages for services and administration. Groups of villages—often twelve—were formed into a unit called the *patti* (the parha of the Oraons) and the chief of the *patti* was the *manki.* The village

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[12] A seal matrix of Sasanka cut into the rock at Rohtasgarh stands testimony to his occupation of the area. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,* Vol.III, No.78, p.283–4.

[13]. Roy, *The Mundas and Their Country*, op. cit., p.67.

[14]. R.D. Halder, *Report,* 1873, Government of Bihar.

chiefs swore allegiance to the *manki,* promising him military services and certain gifts which, inevitably, as the *manki's* power increased became regularised as dues. The *manki* often had one village for his personal maintenance and his office was hereditary.

Thus, the emergence and need for the *manki*, the hereditary character of the offices of *manki, munda, pahan* and *mahto,* the hierarchical arrangement and the gradual transformation of the gifts into dues, all encouraged a hierarchical arrangement of power based on access to land and its produce which ran counter to the original lineage system with its stress on egalitarianism. British Indian reports of the nineteenth century have made much of the system as 'the non-Aryan village commune'[15] but it would seem that the egalitarian aspect had been declining for quite some time. The tribal system was giving way to chiefdoms, bringing in the complexities of a ranked society.

It is against this background that the beginnings of a State emerged. Whether the development was internally evolved or imposed by aliens is still a subject of controversy. It has been argued that State-formation occurs particularly among the 'Dravidian' elements who had come from central India[16] but it seems more worthwhile to look for other preconditions since presumed familiarity with the institution of the State cannot be a sufficient cause. The formal symbol of the emergence of the State was the establishment of the Chota Nagpur Kingdom under *the Nagavamsi* dynasty. The origin myth of the *Nagavamsis* is similar in structure to a large body of such myths incorporated with the *vamsavalis* or dynastic chronicles. These frequently relate how a number of formerly obscure families came into prominence in the early medieval period (from about the eighth century A.D. onwards) and ultimately established independent kingdoms. Such origin myths cannot be accepted as authentic history in their details but do provide some historical assumptions in their structuring of events.

A characteristic feature of the agrarian system of northern and eastern India in the first millennium A.D. was that of kings making grants, initially of land and later of villages, to either religious or secular grantees. The grant carried the rights of ownership and revenue from the land and, in the case of villages, the rights of administrative authority at various levels and the collection of taxes and dues. Grants to religious beneficiaries such as Buddhist monasteries and individual Brahmins predated those to secular grantees. These became more common in the latter half of the millennium and were frequently made to

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[15] Halder, op. cit., A Progs. No.S 4–6, Land Revenue, July 1873 (BSA).

[16] K. Suresh Singh, 'State-formation in Tribal Society; Some Preliminary Observations'. *Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1971, p. 170 et. seq.

officers in lieu of salaries for services. In addition, when senior administrative offices became hereditary it was possible for families to use these grants to build a base for themselves and eventually emerge as independent rulers.[17] Such families used origin myths to acquire *ksatriya*[18] status.[19]

From about the eighth century A.D. the frequency of the grants increased. Improved irrigation techniques, such as the Persian wheel, in some areas increased the productivity of land already under cultivation and, in others, made possible the utilisation of hitherto uncultivable land. There was therefore a search for new land. The period from A.D. 1000–1200 has been described as the heyday of land grants in northern and eastern India with an increasing tendency to grant whole villages.[20] The Gahadvalas, based in western Uttar Pradesh, had feudatories as far away as Palamau in Chota Nagpur, such as the Khayaravalas of Japla who were themselves sufficiently well off to make grants of villages to others,[21] thus encouraging the process of subinfeudation. In Bhagelkhand to the north-west of Chota Nagpur, the system of grants was well established by the Kalachuri kings. Brahmins migrated from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal to Orissa and other parts of the subcontinent and were in great demand in these areas. Orissa records a heavy number of grants to Brahmins, particularly during the reign of the Tunga dynasty, which claimed to have come from Rohtas.[22] In the earlier part of this period, records relating to the granting of villages did not define village boundaries clearly, thus suggesting the availability of land. Twelfth century records, however, indicate these boundaries very precisely. This has led to the suggestion that by the thirteenth century the colonisation of new land was exhausted in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal.[23] If this was so then a search would have to be made further afield for less optimum areas. Possibly at this point Chota Nagpur came into the search for new lands.

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[17] One such example was the Mairakas of Vallabhi in western India. These officers of the Gupta kings moved up the ladder from generation to generation in the post-Gupta period from *senapati* (army commander), *samanta* (feudatory) to raja and finally maharaja.

[18] *Ksatriya* is the second of the four major castes—associated with warriors and landowners.

[19] Such myths are referred to briefly in the inscriptions, particularly land grant charters and donatory inscriptions, of the newly established kings. Further details on the myths and the acquisition of status are to be found in the various *vamsavalis* of the kingdom.

[20] R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism,* Calcutta, 1965.

[21] Ibid., p.172.

[22] Ibid., p.274 et seq.

[23] Ibid., p.210 et seq.

Brahmin grantees settled on their estates and either introduced or strengthened the influence of Brahminical, Sanskritic culture in the region. Before the period of extensive subinfeudation they were also the innovators of improved agricultural techniques. Secular grants were made either to existing village headmen or chiefs who would remain in their own areas but would indicate their new status by acquiring the trappings of Sanskritic culture and courtly norms in imitation of the more powerful courts of their overlords; or the grants were made to officials who, as aliens, took up residence in the new area and brought the courtly life with them and used the area to create their political base. The emergence of the Nagavamsis in Chota Nagpur seems to have followed one of these patterns.

Some clues are provided by the origin myth of the Nagavamsis[24] whose significant features are that the founder of the dynasty, Phani Mukut Rai, is of Naga origin and does not claim the higher status of a *suryavamsi* or *chandravamsi ksatriya* (i.e. of either the solar or lunar lineage, or even the *agni-kula* or fire lineage, all of which were accorded a high rank). As is often the case, his mother is of Brahmin descent and his father a serpent in human form explaining the name *naga* (serpent), as well as giving him a supernatural ancestry. The child is born and abandoned soon after when the parents are returning from a pilgrimage to Orissa. The orphaned child is protected by a sun-worshipping Sakadvipi Brahmin, a category which was looked upon as distinctly inferior until the medieval period when it rose in status and became particularly influential in Orissa. The child is adopted by a *manki* thus securing his local status. The problem of succession is then raised and the Munda and Oraon clan chiefs jointly decide to put him to the test. He proved his superiority over the *manki's* own son and was therefore, given precedence over him. Eventually, he became the first raja of Chota Nagpur, although the myth glosses over the intervening steps from *manki* to raja.

Clearly, Phani Mukut Rai was not a Munda but an adopted alien. The coming of the family to Chota Nagpur may have been due to one of the two possibilities. Either a Sakadvipi Brahmin family had been given a grant of villages and had gradually built up a political power base through appropriating revenue-collecting rights and taxes, possibly marrying into a local *manki* family, after investing it with the appropriate caste rank and ultimately established a kingdom; or, a member of a Nagavamsi family was similarly granted villages in the region and used the same technique to acquire a kingdom. The territory of the kingdom was probably quite small at this stage. Nagavamsi families were known in various parts of the subcontinent but among the more prominent ones in the medieval period was that of the Chakrakottas (the Bastars in the Madhya Pradesh).[25] In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this dynasty successfully campaigned against the Kalacuris in Dakshina Kosala (to the west

of Chota Nagpur) extending its territorial control to the borders of Chota Nagpur. A campaign against Orissa is also on record as is the existence of a Nagavamsi dynasty in that region.[26] Possibly a branch of one of these families established itself through a series of grants in the north-west part of Chota Nagpur, in about the thirteenth century or even later.

Thus, validation of a dynasty came through the origin myths, marriage alliances and ritual symbols. Its formal symbol was expanded into other observances and rites associated with the Great Tradition and State-formation in medieval India.[27] The Brahmins presided over rituals especially those connected with 'rites of passage', and marriage alliances with *ksatriya* families from elsewhere buttressed status.[28] There was a conspicuous display of wealth in imitation of a 'Hinduised' life-style as manifested by the construction of temples and palaces, while elements of the literature of the Great Tradition—

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[24] R.D. Haldar, 'An Abstract of the Annals of the Rajbansi Family of Chota Nagpur', *Man in India,* Vol. VII, 1928 p. 259–93. From time to time Phani Mukut Rai has to be given an explanation for Munda customs and practices, suggesting that he was unfamiliar with these.

[25] The family has been described as a branch of the Sinda dynasty claiming to have originated in western India, but based in the Karnataka. This would be strongly suggestive of a non-Aryan origin with later Sanskritisation. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol.V, p.214 et seq. T.V. Mahalingam, 'The Nagas in Indian History and Culture', *Journal of Indian History,* Vol.XLII, Pt. 1, April 1965, p.1–71.

[26] The connection with Orissa appears to have been fairly close during this period since the Panchpargana area south of Ranchi displays traces of Oriya influence in its icons and temple architecture. D.P. Patil, *Antiquarian Remains in Bihar.* The Surya icon in the *sarna* at Buradih bears a striking resemblance to the Surya image from Kiching. A systematic study of the icons and shrines of this area could provide valuable evidence on chronology and contacts. Perhaps the river valleys of the Subarnarekha and Baitarni acted as routes inland from the coastal areas.

[27] Surajit Sinha, 'State-Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India', *Man in India*, Vol.42, No.1, January–March, 1962, p.35–80.

[28] This is reflected in the Nagabansi Annals when Phani Mukut Rai wishes to marry the daughter of the Sikhar raja. The latter belonged to the high-ranking Parmara *ksatriyas* of the *agni-kula* (fire lineage) and was naturally hesitant about giving his approval. We are told that Phani Mukut Rai's father appeared before the messenger of the Sikhar raja in his natural form of a snake and declared the parentage of his son whereupon the bride's father agreed to the marriage.

the epics and the *puranas*—filtered down to the levels beyond the court and so on.[29]

Not that these symbols were entirely alien. Local cults and customs were incorporated into the elite culture but presented as manifestations of the Great Tradition. Thus, local goddesses came to be worshipped as the consorts of Siva and were invested with the correct attributes, iconic forms and puranic myths.[30] The link with Sivaism reflects the earlier phase of contact.[31] More intensive Hinduisation occurs with the arrival of Vaisnavism. The saint Chaitanya is said to have travelled from Orissa through Chota Nagpur in the fifteenth century with some evident impact for, from the seventeenth century onwards, Vaisnavism acquired substantial royal patronage.

The more fundamental changes, however, related to rights over land. The axis shifted from clan to territory: tenurial rights based on kinship were encroached upon by those based on professional services. The raja granted lands and villages on perpetual tenures for military, administrative and personal services—the services required by the infrastructure of a State. The grantees attempted to appropriate the maximum rights. A distinction was made between the lineage lands or *bhuinhari* (the remnant of the old *khuntkatti*), the lands held directly by the grantee or the *manjhas* lands and those from which the produce was collected and given to the grantee for the raja, the *rajhus* lands.[32] Quite clearly, the original *khuntkatti* had been dealt a severe blow and was

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[29] The Nagabansi Annals are based quite clearly on the genealogical sections of the Puranas and the Mahabharata. A more widespread influence can perhaps be observed in the significance of the flood in Munda cosmology where it plays the same structural role as in the Puranic tradition.

[30] These influences were not limited to Saiva cults alone as is evident from the occasional Buddhist icon from the medieval period which turns up in the western areas of the Chota Nagpur plateau. A striking example of what seems to be an Avalokitesvara figure is to be found in a devta jhumra (sacred grove) near the village of Majhgaon, not far from the shrine of Tanginath. This would again tie in with the existence of a particular sect of Buddhism in eastern India mostly during the early medieval period, as well as indicating a growth in the agricultural base in this region.

[31] The story of Tanginath, whose shrine is located in the Chainpur subdivision, shows evident borrowing from Puranic tradition, Tanginath himself echoing Parasurama in the association with the axe, which reflect a mixture of the two traditions, Puranic and tribal. The shrine is served by Kherwar priests (*baiga*) who now call themselves Aharapankhi Kherwars, but the ritual is Brahminical. The shrine, although well-endowed with icons of the medieval period, seems not to have been a major centre of brahminism. Interestingly, local opinion associates the shrine with the *sadhus* of the Nath-sampradaya—an influential, popular, pan-Indian movement, not always acceptable to the orthodox. K.N. Sahay, *Hindi Shrines of Chota Nagpur,* p.24 et seq., Simla, 1975.

[32] Halder, *Report,* op. cit.

further weakened when the grantee acquired the *bhuinharis* of those who had died intestate or had migrated. Later, with the giving of villages or even *parganas* to such members of the raja's family as the Kanwars, Thakurs and Lalls as maintenance grants, a further erosion of lineage rights took place especially when they, in turn, granted land to their retainers. Thus, the tendency towards social straitification which had already begun with the *khuntkatti* system was not only intensified and accelerated under the State, but was also made more complex with the interpolation of various levels of intermediaries. The breaking down of the tribal mode of production related not merely to the loss of lineage rights over land and the redistribution system according to lineage, but also to the loss of politico-juridical rights invested in the lineage. These rights now passed into the hands of professionals outside the lineage, and often from outside the region. With the resultant strengthening of the correlation of social status with landholding and power, the earlier lineage connections became less important although they did not disappear.[33] The situation has been described as the superimposition of a feudal State on tribal society. To some extent this is true. But had the tribe been converted into a caste or had the State evolved through a process of internal development, it is likely that tribal identity would have still been eroded.

The question as to how tribal identity (albeit in a battered form) survived needs an answer. Perhaps the availability of wasteland or forest with a relatively sparse population provided the continuing possibility of new *khuntkattis,* at least in the period prior to the seventeenth century. Inevitably, the new *khuntkattis* would be swallowed up in the State system but the grantees may have encouraged them initially as a means of bringing more land under cultivation. Given the generally low yield of the land and lack of agricultural innovation, Chota Nagpur was not to experience intensive colonisation during this period. The best land would slowly be acquired by the hierarchy of grantees, but the less fertile areas and the uplands would not arouse great interest among the new landowners.

State information requires the availability of a substantial surplus of a kind which the tribal mode cannot provide. Presumably there was some improvement in agricultural technology and irrigation facilities which helped in the generation of a surplus. Yet the Saradkel excavation would suggest that

[33] This is again reflected in the Nagabansi Annals where we are told that Phani Mukut Rai invited all the Munda and Oraon chiefs to a feast and plied them with liquor. In an ensuing drunken brawl they began killing one another. Only a few survived and the Kols were put down. Among those who survived were the two *mankis* (in some versions only one is mentioned) who had reared Phani Kukut Rai as an orphaned child. Permitted to ask for a favour, they requested to become *bhuinharas* and be permitted to take this title. Perhaps this account proves that the accession of the Nagabansis was not as peaceful as it is often made out to have been.

plough agriculture was known prior to the coming of the State. Irrigation technology could have meant the introduction of the water-lifting system or the Persian wheel, both of which would have reduced dependence on rainfall. Whereas the former appears to have been widely used, the opposite seems to be the case for the latter, possibly because it was not very suitable for the terrain. Perhaps the surplus was produced not by a system of intensive agriculture but by extending the acreage under cultivation.

As we have suggested, the preservation of tribal identity was in part due to the nature of land relations. In addition, the cultural legitimisation of the elite was in terms of a wider Indian context, i.e. the world of Sanskritic courtly culture, however watered down its expression may have been in areas at a distance from the nucleus. Integration existed at the court level for the *jagirdars* and possibly some clan chiefs, but did not permeate much further. Elite culture was, therefore, a Sanskritic culture thus deepening the differentiation between the Munda and Oraon on the one hand, and those who represented the State, on the other. The arrival of Vaisnavism, perhaps the most assimilative of current religious movements, was late, requiring and encouraging as it does a well-established agricultural base and a network of trade connections.

There is a noticeable absence of references to large urban complexes in Chota Nagpur in the early period. Even the State centres, the capitals of the raja, can hardly be distinguished today from the landscape which surrounds them. If the major trade routes continued to bypass the area, the incidence of trade would then be restricted to local markets and small-scale traders. Commodity production does not flourish in tribal economies; but here even the non-tribals appear to have been unconcerned with commodity production. Apart from some agricultural produce, there was little to attract the trading entrepreneur. Iron production was frequently a State monopoly and diamonds did not offer opportunities for large-scale trade. In such a situation the trader would be the alien simply bringing in goods from the outside world to bolster the life-style of a local elite. Trading activities would increase and reach the non-elite levels only after the introduction of money. It is perhaps not altogether surprising that the term 'diku' (outsider/alien) was initially applied to the moneylenders. Commodity production on any appreciable scale may well have weakened tribal identity.

The pressure on the land would appear to date from the seventeenth century when the area was drawn into the orbit of Mughal influence; up until then the court at Delhi showed little interest in the Argaon. We are told that in the fourteenth century Firoz Shah Tughlaq, returning from a campaign in Orissa passed through Jharkhand[34]—the forest land, as Chota Nagpur came to be called.

[34] Shams-i-Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*. Quoted in B. Virottam, *The Nagabanshis and the Cheros*, p. 2, Note. 2.

Incursions into the adjoining areas by adventurers and others from the courts of northern India are also on record for this period. It would seem that the accommodation of outsiders as retainers was in full swing even in Chota Nagpur. It was the Mughal Emperor's interest in diamonds mined in the area which led the Mughal army into Khokhara.[35] The Mughal action resulted in the demand for a regular revenue from the raja and this, in turn, necessitated a fuller exploitation of the land.

The memoirs of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir record how a region called 'Khokhara' in the south of contemporary Bihar and ruled over by a petty chief was brought under Mughal rule after its diamond mines had attracted the emperor's attention. Jahangir's military commander, Ibrahim Khan, was ordered by the Emperor in 1616 to go and take the province out of the possession of that unknown and insignificant individual (Raja Durjan Sal). As soon as he arrived in the province of Bihar, he assembled a force and went against that Zamindar. According to former custom he (the raja) sent some of his men with a promise to give some diamonds and some elephants.....[36]

But Ibrahim Khan could not be persuaded to withdraw and pursued Durjan Sal to the jungle area of the plateau where the raja took refuge in a cave. Elephants and diamonds worth several thousands of rupees were extorted from Durjan Sal who was captured and taken to the Mughal court. After a few years of captivity and the payment of some more tribute, Durjan Sal was released. From that time on, while continuing as a part of the larger province of Bihar, and later of Bengal, and technically a tribute-paying subordinate chieftainship of the Mughal Empire, Khokhara was a quasi-independent kingdom in the heart of that empire. It was not an exceedingly productive area and as such was never really coveted by Mughal feudalism which survived for over two centuries on the produce from the more fertile and better cultivated areas. As mentioned earlier, the point to remember in all this is that the autonomy of the quasi-independent Chota Nagpur was not absolute. In terms of the nature of the existing relations of production and exchange in the region surrounding Chota Nagpur, this small isolated chieftainship was surrounded and assailed by an economic system in which the cash-nexus prevailed.[37] Consequently, the regular revenue payments which had to be made after the inclusion of Chota Nagpur in the British East India Company's dominions changed the internal tribal social structure composed primarily of the original Munda and Oraon settlers to one of increasing landlordism during the first and second stages of

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[35] Abdul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari.*

[36] H. Beveridge (ed.). *The Tuzuk-i-Jahanagiri*, Vol.I, p.315–16, Delhi, 1968 (Munshiram Manoharlal Reprint).

[37] I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India,* Asia, 1963.

colonial rule. This led to social dislocations, i.e. tribal revolts, the most important of which were those of 1831–32, and between 1895 and 1900.

The history of the rise and growth of the merchant capital companies is well known. They were founded in the period of early capitalist development in Europe and played an initially progressive role in the European economies. In 1600, these companies in Great Britain, grouped together as the East India Company, were given a monopoly for trade with the eastern parts of the world. Until the monopoly was attacked by the industrial bourgeoisie of Great Britain in the nineteenth century, the company ruled the lands with which it traded.[38] The East India Company had acquired monopolistic control over Bengal and its traders, primary products, handicraftsmen and artisans by the force of arms. The declining Mughal Empire had in fact granted the right of *dewani* (revenue collection) in Bengal to the company in 1765. The Chota Nagpur region, a part of the province, was reduced much later. The first contact came in 1772 when Captain Camac, an officer of the company's army, exchanged turbans with the ruler of Chota Nagpur, Drip Nath Sahi, who acknowledged the suzeranity of the British. Almost from that moment on, the levies demanded proved to be, for various reasons, too heavy for the raja to pay. His original agreement to pay 12,000 rupees annually was subsequently increased to 15,000 rupees which was still too heavy a burden for him. Over the years, the raja's recalcitrance about *mankins* payments often led to disturbances, in Tamar in 1789 and again in 1807 and 1808. In 1809, after he had been forced to pay his arrears, the settlement stipulated that he should bear the costs of the maintenance of a police force in the region, control over which was taken away from him in 1819.[39]

These new arrangements with the Chota Nagpur Raj placed a heavy additional burden on the ruler. Unaccustomed to making regular revenue payments or paying tribute, he and his subordinate rajas began to let out their lands to 'aliens' or to the non-aboriginal men of Bihar. In themselves, such payments were not onerous. In the rest of Bengal, they were heavier and the *zamindars,* unable to pay, had resorted to selling their land, which, in spite of its agricultural value, did not always fetch a high price.[40] Compared with the amount levied on Bengal as a whole in 1793 which came to approximately 27

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[38] For an interesting account of the nature of the East India Company's early growth and 'adventures' see Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company*, Berlin, 1953.

[39] The above account is based primarily on the excellent summary of Chota Nagpur history in the District Gazetteer, Ranchi (DG), 1917, p. 26-8.

[40] B.B. Chaudhuri, 'The Land Market in Eastern India, 1793-1940.' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.XII, No.1, 1975, p.1-42.

million rupees,[41] the 15,000 rupees demanded from the Chota Nagpur raja was a pittance. But since this tract was undeveloped agriculturally, there was nothing in this region which could have been profitably sold on a none-too-differentiated market to buy either food grains or other commodities. Consequently, the need arose for men who could provide the cash required to meet the levy payment. This they could do through the rents which they paid for the leases granted to them for the lands cultivated by the aboriginal population. This process of sub-infeudation from above—the grant of land to thiccadars (contractors) who gradually assumed *zamindari* (land ownership rights)—in turn, altered the existence of a tribal population, heretofore unaccustomed to paying any rent other than a nominal quit-rent to the *manki* or *munda* (village headmen). The introduction of such men—their being horse-dealers and shawl and brocade merchants is emphasised in many accounts—would not have been possible save for the payment demands of the company. It is true that the incursions into Chota Nagpur by 'aliens' from the non-tribal areas of Bihar had in fact begun much earlier. The first recorded instance of a land grant in this fashion dates back to 1676.[42] But the commercialisation of land and agriculture in the regions surrounding Chota Nagpur and the probable inability of the new buyers of land to check the influence of former owners on the estates of Bengal proper[43] accelerated this process.

In other parts of India, under the Cornwallis system of a permanent settlement of payment demands (1793), *zamindaris* had been sold for arrears that resulted from over-assessment.[44] In the ceded and conquered provinces to the north-west of Chota Nagpur while the company constantly realised that the percentage of the gross produce it demanded was high, and a theoretical scaling down necessary, more and more was actually being collected between 1800 and 1840.[45] This had a levelling impact on the area where traditional levy payers of the earlier regime fell into the clutches of a growing, usurious money lending class. Such a drastically heavy land revenue demand was not to be found in

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[41] R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India Under Early British Rule*, Vol. I, p.63, New Delhi, 1970.

[42] Andre Beteille, 'Tribe and Peasantry', Six Essays in Comparative Sociology, p.71. Oxford University Press, 1974.

[43] Ratna Ray, 'Land Transfer and Social Change under the Permanent Settlement', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.XI, No.1, 1974, p.1-45.

[44] I. Habib, *The Colonialisation of the Indian Economy:* 1757–1900, 1974 (mimeo).

[45] Habib, *The colonialisation of the Indian Economy:* 1757–1900, op.cit.; A. Siddiqi, *Agrarian Change in a Northern Indian State* 1819–1833, Oxford University Press, 1973.

Chota Nagpur. But considering the low level of agricultural productivity in a primarily subsistence agriculture area, such regular levies proved to be heavy.[46]

The revolt of the Kols (1831–32), directed against 'alien' Indian and white men alike, was the result of the pressures described above. In a despatch written by the supervising British officers in this area soon after the suppression of the revolt, it was reported that:

> The Kols throughout Nagpur.....within the last few years had their rents increased by their *elaquadars, zemindars* and *thiccadars* 35 per cent.....They had made roads through the Pargana without payment, as *beggaries* (forced labour). The *mahajans*, who advanced money and grains, managed within a twelve-month (sic) to get from them 70 per cent, and sometimes more. They disliked the tax upon liquor (homemade brew consumed locally) which was fixed at 4 annas per house.[47]

Added to this were a host of small 'manorial' perquisites which were extorted forcibly. The Kols were also asked to cultivate the opium poppy. The authors of the despatch reported that 'the Kols were averse to undertake the cultivation of the poppy, and we find a great disinclination on the part of other classes to carry it on'.[48] In a carefully detailed work of more recent origion, the introduction of poppy cultivation in this area has been described as a 'grave mistake' committed by the officer responsible for the area.[49] But notwithstanding the excellence of this work, the larger perspective needs to be stated, especially since opium production, first introduced in this area around 1828, 'had doubled' by 1830.[50]

The exact amount of opium produced in the area is not known. At any rate, it could not have been very much, as poppy cultivation was discontinued after the revolt.[51] But we do know that the price which this opium fetched was

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[46] The need for such exactions of revenue arose from the fact that at a 'crucial stage in the English Industrial Revolution, India was furnishing an amount that was almost 30 per cent of the total national saving transformed into capital'. For details of this computation see Habib, *The Colonialisation of the Indian Economy:* 1757–1900, op. cit., p. 14-15.

[47] Joint report of Captain Wilkinson and Mr. Dent, quoted in J. Reid, *Ranchi Settlement Report*, p. 24, 1911.

[48] Ibid., p.24.

[49] J.C. Jha, *The Kol Insurrection of Chota Nagpur*, p.57, Calcutta, 1964.

[50] Ibid., p.57.

[51] Reid, op. cit., p.24.

very low, 3–8 rupees per seer of opium.[52] The motive for the introduction of opium poppy cultivation is not to be found in the error of an individual administrator but in the pattern that trade assumed in the second stage of colonialism in India when not only were the hinterlands being opened up to the 'beneficial' effects of 'modernisation' (and to British goods), but Indian soil was being used to grow the opium poppy, to enable Great Britain to pay for Chinese tea and silk. The cultivation of the opium poppy was also motivated by the company's desire to be able to control the price. Hence, it did not encourage an outright policy favouring the commercialisation of this crop and from a position of monopolistic control even interfered in the opium poppy cultivation and trade of the other areas of India not directly under its control.[53] The props of this triangular trade were set up only after a great leap forward in the company's opium trade:

> During 1816–1817 only 3,210 chests of Indian opium had been exported to China; in 1830–1831 no less than 18,760 chests....Opium advanced to the position of the premier article of export of India....(of the value of) £ 9.1 million in 1858, easily dwarfing the other items of export, and accounting for nearly a third of the total value of Indian exports. Under this impetus the cultivation of poppy, during the twenty years preceding 1837, is said to have multiplied fourfold.[54]

The 'mistake' of the officer responsible for introducing the opium poppy into Chota Nagpur was thus in the logic of colonial trade.

The revolt of 1831–32 was put down by the might of British arms. Its immediate aftermath saw rents reduced, particularly in the *pargana* of Sonepur where the uprising had been the most severe, and some *mundas* and *mankis* reinstated.[55] Later, when relatively fewer 'disturbances' were taking place, the old zeal for greater revenues and the utilisation of the 'Coles' as a fighting force once more filled the mind of the local officer Wilkinson:

> When the Coles have been brought into good order, and become more civilised—which I have no doubt they will be in a few years under judicious management—the government will be amply repaid for any expense it may be at, in the first instance, not only by an

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[52] Jha, op. cit,.p.163.

[53] For details see Benoy Chowdhury, *Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal 1757–1900.* Vol.I, p.3–73, Calcutta, 1964.

[54] Habib, *'The Colonialisation of the Indian Economy: 1957–1900'*, op. cit., p.41–3.

[55] DG, op. cit., p.36.

increase of revenue, but by having at its command a powerful people.[56]

And the *mundas* and *mankis* were in fact used by Wilkinson himself in suppressing the *zamindars* who had revolted against company's levies in neighbouring Palamau and the Kolhan.[57] However, the relative calm continued. British justice was reinforced through piecemeal reforms.[58] But entrusting the *zamindars* with the management of the police force once again proved disastrous. In June 1838, reports began to trickle in to the supervising officer of how small *zamindars* were taking advantage of their control of the police. An officer disgusted with the way in which the *zamindars* administered law and order wrote: 'I am so impressed with the evils which result from the present system that if obliged to choose between the absence of all police and the continuance of it, I should prefer the former'. The zamindars extorted bribes, protected cattle theft, charged whole villages with dacoity and threw innocent inhabitants into jail.[59] In other words, the company's attempt to restore tranquillity was a failure, for although no new major revolt took place, peace could only be maintained at the cost of the local population continuing to suffer at the hands of the zamindars. This was a feature which was to characterise developments even more so after 1858.

A new element was introduced with the arrival of the missionaries in 1845. The first to come were Lutheran missionaries, followed by Roman Catholic and Anglican, literally a godsend for the poor and struggling Mundas and Oraons. They brought with them a new religion which was eagerly accepted by the aboriginal population. Much has been made of the coming of Christianity to this region and it seems that the influence of the evangelical argument of the early decades of the nineteenth century continued to be felt by later writers as well.[60] Thus, it was assumed by ethnographers and historians, chief among whom is S.C. Roy,[61] that Christianity appealed to the tribal population because they saw in it an egalitarian religion with the help of which they could shake off *zamindar* oppression. This view was stated within fifteen years of the arrival

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[56] Wilkinson to Mangles, Secy Bengal, 28 February 1837, Chota Nagpur Commissioner's despatch register, letter No.9, Bihar State Archives.

[57] Ibid.

[58] DG, op. cit., p.38.

[59] Davidson to Wilkinson, 16 June 1838, G.G.A's S.W.F. letter No.52, Bihar State Archives.

[60] The evangelical mood infused into colonial policy was one strand of the ideological argument for the acceptance of the free-trade principle by the British Parliament. cf. Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India,* p.1–80, Oxford, 1959.

[61] Roy, *The Mundas and their Country*, op. cit.

of the missionaries and was constantly reiterated during the entire course of the Sardai Larai.[62] In 1859, Captain Davies, the Senior Assistant Commissioner, wrote:

> With Christianity has naturally come an appreciation of their rights as original clearers of the soil, which rights in many instances they have asserted and established; this, independent of other causes which induce the higher castes of natives to view with displeasure the spread of Christianity, caused great alarm among the landholders.[63]

In actual fact, Christianity acted merely as a catalyst under conditions which from 1860 to 1928 were characterised by rising prices and, hence, by the rising value of the produce of the fields. The entire struggle over rents and praedial conditions was a reflection of a more 'prosperous' situation in which the *zamindars* and the farmers struggled for a greater share of the produce and not only one in which an absolutely impoverished tribal peasantry was being ground under the heels of extortionate Hindu, Moslem or 'alien' *zamindars.* The word 'prosperous', however, needs to be qualified. We are arguing that the rise in the prices produced a well-off peasantry who fought the landlords for greater rights. But all this occurred in an area where paddy cultivation was not very extensive, hence not directly beneficial to even those of the tribal cultivators whom we have chosen to call prosperous. In relation to the rapid commercialisation of agriculture in the rest of British India, Chota Nagpur became a scarcity area where high prices did not imply that benefits could be derived from an expanded market for agricultural produce. In fact, high prices meant that whatever was available heretofore for consumption by the local population could now find its way into the market, not to benefit the actual grower but only to create a shortage for him. Such produce that did reach the market did so only through the agencies of the moneylender or the *zamindar,* neither of whom could be expected to relax his control over the land. Such a situation also produced an increasing stratification within the tribal social structure where a dominant stratum emerged that had earlier been characterised by traditional *manki* or *munda* leadership. This same group later became those who had managed to retain some land for their own private use. Such a group naturally provided the local leadership. Hoping for an improved state of affairs, they stayed on and fought for the benefits that *Pax Britannica* promised to bring them. Many followed their lead, while others left Chota Nagpur for the tea plantations of Assam.

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[62] Tribal struggle over land rights in the 1880s.

[63] DG, op, cit., p.40.

When the great revolt of 1857–58 shook northern India and dislodged company rule, the tribal population of Chota Nagpur remained uninvolved in the events. The main reason for this was the absence among the tribal people of links which would make them regard the rebellious *zamindars* as their natural leaders. The Oudh and Bihar peasantries had rallied behind their *taluqdars* and *zamindars* because of ties of kin and clan.[64] The Chota Nagpur situation was entirely different. It was even alleged in the *Friend of India* that the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, Dalton, had refused the aid of 2,000 native Christians whom the missionaries had offered to place at his disposal for the suppression of the insurrection in his division. Dalton denied the charge asserting that 'no offer of the kind ever was made to me'.[65] This could have been possible, however, especially because some *zamindars* had seized the land of the cultivators during the 1857 revolt.[66]

The first conflict between the newly converted Christians and their landlords took place in 1858 at Basia and Sonepur.[67] The usual pattern for such conflicts is well illustrated by a violent one between the Jagirdar of Bala and the *Mundas* who claimed to be *bhuinhars*, or original settlers, and thus entitled to pay only a quit-rent to their headmen and nothing more. When an attempt was made to collect the rent by force they resisted:

> Opposed force to force; an affray ensued, and two men were killed on the side of the *Jagairdar;* three men, one a servant of the Thakoor, and a horse belonging to another one besides some arms, were captured and taken by the Christians to the Sub-Assistant Commissioner at Ranchi, together with the body of one of the men slain in the affray and there lodged their complaints.[68]

The point to be noted is that the tribal Christians, though violent, were law abiding in the manner in which they submitted to British justice. This explains much of the later petition-mongering of the Sardari Larai. The petition approach to politics characterised the early activities of the Indian National Congress as well. The belief in the essential goodness and possible benefits of British rule, so firmly implanted in the political mind of early Indian nationalism,

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[64] S.B. Chaudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies*, Calcutta, 1957; E. Stokes, *'Traditional Elites in the Great Rebellion of 1857'*, in E. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee (eds.), *Elites in South Asia*, p.16-32, Cambridge, 1970.

[65] Chota Nagpur Commissioner's Office letter No.56 of 1858, Bihar State Archives.

[66] Munda memorial. B. Progs, July 1906, No.S 124–129, Rev. Dept. Bengal, p.6; Roy 1912, p.139.

[67] *DG*, op. cit., p.44.

[68] Roy, 'Distribution and Nature of Asura Sites in Chota Nagpur', op. cit., p.141.

Christian missionary activity, and zealous but careful Crown administration, was reflected in the behaviour of the Chota Nagpur tribals as well. But government policy towards them differed, however, from missionary sympathy. In a minute replying to representations made by the German Lutheran missionaries on behalf of the Munda and Oraon population in 1876, the Lt. Governor of Bengal remarked that 'the attitude of the Government is, and must be absolutely impartial in regard to the Kolhs, and those who are not Kolhs, both to the Christians and those who are not Christians'.[69] In response to a suggestion that 'a Missionary versed in law' be appointed to watch over 'the interests of the Kolhs', the government considered such an idea 'quite inconsistent with the position of a religious body'.[70]

Three points clearly emerge from the available material on the developments of the 1860–95 period. These are:

First, that the better-off farmers organised the strongest opposition to the landlords and in this were supported by their tribal brethren who had also acquired a growing self-awareness through their contact with Christianity.

Second, the impoverished families, victims of natural calamities like famine and poor harvests, sought a better life on the tea estates of Assam and even in this they were exploited by other tribesmen—their own kin—who could turn a profit merely by delivering them into the right hands;

Third, that the government policy was one which protected the landlords' estates from moneylenders for political reasons but did not do the same for the less-influential tribesmen; differences between different sections of the population were resolved only to keep the peace and not in the interests of a lasting solution since this ran counter to colonial state policies being followed all over India.

When the settlement operations of 1902–10 prompted by the revolt of the Birsa were completed, Reid, the settlement officer, found that the area of the land under the *khas* (personal) management of the Chota Nagpur estate had grown by over 5 per cent compared to what it had been in 1888. In absolute terms it had expanded by 40 square miles.[71] Since the clearing of the forest land or the reclamation of uncultivated land was not done by the landlords during this period, this extension of lands could only have occurred at the expense of some settler farmers. No right to a concessional rent was allowed on such lands. It was against this background of landlord encroachment on the

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[69] Minute by Richard Temple, 5 July 1876: Land Revenue Progs., Bengal August 1876, No.S 52–53.

[70] ibid.

[71] Reid, op. cit., p.112

ill-defined peasant proprietorship rights that the agitations of the Christians began. Nor were such encroachments confined only to the estate of the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur. At times the *mankis* themselves were active participants. In 1871, it was observed:

> The Mundas are the heads of the villages, their office being an hereditary one, and they have rights separate and distinct from the *Mankis*; and it is these men and the ryots who have suffered from the interposition of alien farmers.....With respect to those (lands) which have so passed (from Munda hands) rather more detailed proceedings might be necessary in order to secure the Mundah and ryots from the aggression of the farmers, unless indeed it be thought possible to get rid of the farmers altogether, on the grounds that the *Mankis* have acted in direct contravention of the orders.....by which their tenures were confirmed to them.[72]

However, it is on record that not a single *zamindar* in this period was removed in favour to the original settlers. At the same time, it must be understood that it was not easy for the landlords to continue to make encroachments under the watchful eye of the local officers. The dispute, therefore, was not so much over encroachments as over the rising value of the produce through the extension of the commercialisation of agriculture. It will be evident from Tables 1 and 2 that the 'better-off' farmers could constantly hope for greater gains from the produce as it increased in value.

The rise in prices indicated in Tables 1 and 2 was an India-wide phenomenon. It began in the regions of immediate development and pulled such backward regions as Chota Nagpur into the process of the equalisation of prices. In all this, the railway played an important 'intrinsic' role as opposed to the 'extrinsic' function which its growth was intended to serve.[73] The development of the railway network in eastern India between 1854 and 1910 linked Chota Nagpur with other regions. The Chota Nagpur plateau was linked to a wider network 'one district....in each decade'.[74] One hundred and sixty-five kilometres in Birbhum (1859–1910), 125 in Hazarbagh (1871–1910), 170 in Purulia (1889–1910), 245 in Singhbhum (1890–1910), 160 in Dhanbad (1894–1910) and 90 in Palamau (1902-10)[75] had put Chota Nagpur squarely on the map of those places in which the peasantry would respond to the concomitant

[72] Land Revenue A Proceedings May 1872, No.S 1/2, Government of Bengal.

[73] Sunil Munsi, *Railway Network Growth in Eastern India*, 1854–1910, p.3–4, December 1975, Calcutta, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (Occasional Paper No.3).

[74] Ibid., p.17.

[75] Ibid., p.29–30.

rise in prices of agricultural produce. And, in the case of Chota Nagpur there is reason to believe that they did.

TABLE 1. Annual average prices of rice for Chota Nagpur in quantity available per rupee (in seers)

Year	Quantity	Year	Quantity	Year	Quantity
1861	25	1874	17	1887	24
1862	28	1875	23	1888	18
1863	28	1876	28	1889	18
1864	30	1877	27	1890	19
1865	20	1878	16	1891	17
1866	9	1879	18	1892	15
1867	24	1880	29	1893	14
1868	18	1881	29	1894	15
1869	24	1882	29	1895	18
1870	30	1883	24	1896	13
1871	31	1884	19	1897	10
1872	26	1885	20	1898	14
1873	20	1886	25	1899	17

TABLE 2. Index showing variations in the quinquennial averages of the price of rice (1871–75 being taken as = 100)

1861–1880	1866–1890	1871–1891	1876–1875	1881–1980	1886–1985	1891–1890	1896–1895	1897	1898	1899
89	111	100	100	96	113	149	173	238	159	137

Source : Prices and Wages, 1899.

There is scattered but direct evidence available indicating the condition of the Christian peasantry. There was a growing reluctance on the part of the tribals, particularly Christians, to perform services which the landlords expected from them as the result of a curious amalgam of forced labour and obligatory tribal custom. It was reported around 1875 that 'the Christian Bhuinhars in many places.....have ceased to work without remuneration for the *zamindars*. Having secured their lands by registration, these peasant proprietors could well afford to defy their superior landlords.[76] It was also observed that the truth

[76] Land Revenue Department, Government of Bengal, Misc. Collection IV, No. S 82-83, Chota Nagpore Division, October 1876.

'about the whole question is this, that in the beginning the oppressions of the Chota Nagpore zamindars against the Bhuinhars and ryots in exacting "forced labour" was somewhat exaggerated. The cultivators here appear never to have fared much worse in this respect as a body than people of their class elsewhere in Bengal'.[77]

In response to the representation made by the German Lutheran missionaries on behalf of the Mundas, it was similarly noted that 'it seems that the Kols are in the habit of making unmeasured accusations'[78] against their landlords, i.e. those Mundas who could have prospered from the sale of their produce but for the *zamindari* holder over them. By the Bengal Act II (BC) of 1869, the government had intended to solve the problem of growing conflicts by demarcating the lands belonging to each class of proprietors. The first special commissioner appointed for this task reported that with the success of some tribals in securing *bhuinhari* rights for themselves, he now saw 'plenty and contentment' where he had previously seen only 'desolation'. And often, militant combinations of *bhuinhars* prevailed against not-so-powerful *illaquadars.*[79] A point to be observed in this context is that throughout our period while the value of the produce rose, rents did not rise as enormously as they had in other parts of northern India.[80] This was the result of the check that the *Sardari Larai* imposed on the *zamindars*. That rents did not rise so steeply is supported by Reid's computation of 1902-10. According to him,

> The gross rental of the lands occupied by these two classes of *raiyats (khuntkattidari* and *bhuinhari ryots* on the one hand, and ordinary tenants on the other) is.... in the aggregate only about one-eighteenth of the value of the agricultural produce in a normal year.....The disputes about rent are.....due rather to the arbitrary and illegal manner in which the charges have been increased and their unequal distribution *than to the heaviness of the burden.*[81]

The average area of a cultivator's holding came to about 12 acres per person or head of a family. But it should be borne in mind that the quality of this land varied greatly and that there were a large number of uneconomic holdings on which the cultivators could not survive unless they supplemented their incomes by other means. Uneconomic holdings were the lot of the majority

[77] Ibid.

[78] Home, Rev. and Agri. Dept. B. Progs. March 1881, No. 53, National Archives of India.

[79] Ibid.

[80] M.H. Siddiqi, *Agrarian Unrest in North India, 1918–1922,* Chapter II, Vikas, New Delhi, 1977.

[81] Reid, op. cit., p.116 (emphasis added).

of the cultivators and accounted for their mass participation in the Sardari Larai from which only a thin and indirectly oppressed stratum stood to gain. Reid also observed that this existence of 'such large numbers of uneconomic holdings combined with the impossibility of obtaining continuous employment' led to an 'enormous migration from the district (Ranchi) to Assam, the Duars and other parts of the province'.[82]

Christian agitation was also backed by a great deal of money not all of which came from the missionaries, who only gave financial aid to the Mundas. Most of the money came from the savings of the cultivators. A solicitor, E.P. Wood, on their behalf admitted that 'their present condition under the Queen's Government, which supplies them with roads, bridges and railways *for the transit of their crops*, and thus gives them wealth and security which their forefathers did not possess, is not in any respect like the state of things under which their forefathers held the Bhuinhari lands rent free'.[83] Wood even went so far as to state that *'the rent they now pay for their land is less than an adequate return'*.[84] Doubts had earlier been cast upon the alleged 'poverty' of these petitioners by Temple, the Lt. Governor of Bengal, who, in 1876, had found it difficult to understand whether the Kols were 'a suffering and oppressed race' or not.[85]

Further evidence also seems to suggest that the minority leadership of the Christians belonged to an 'affluent' group in the tribal population. When they were accused of using coercion in their proselytisation campaigns, they denied it, informing the doubters that they freely contributed to the fund used to hire attorneys from Calcutta to write petitions for them 'and that they had a full right to use their money as they liked'.[86] Often these Christians were involved in litigation which involved their spending 3,000 rupees in a short period of time 'in prosecuting unfounded claims'.[87] On another occasion, in June 1866, 800 rupees had been collected for making representations.[88]

A closer look at the kind of stratification emerging amongst the tribals can be had by examining the cases of the *parganas* of Soupur and Suitambe.

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[82] Ibid., p.118-119.

[83] E.P. Wood to the District Commissioner of Lohardugga 13 March 1880, Dept. of Rev. and Agri. Progs. Dec. 1887, No. 23, *National Archives of India* (emphasis added).

[84] Ibid. (emphasis added).

[85] Temple, op.cit.

[86] Commissioner Chota Nagpur to Secy., Bengal, 17 July 1884, National Archives of India.

[87] Home Dept. Judl. Progs. 1888 January, No.S 402–4, National Archives of India.

[88] Commissioner Chota Nagpur to Secy. Bengal, 9 June 1866, Bihar State Archives.

In Soupur, out of 410 villages, 100 were held by eight *mankis*, while in Suitambe only six were held by *mankis*. The incidence of rent in such areas was negligible.[89] *Bhuinhari* land of this sort extended over large areas with the proportion varying from village to village. There were villages in which,

> The proportion of *bhuinhari* to *rajhus* (the 'alien'-owned land rented out to the tribals) vary from even less than the hundredth part of the cultivated lands to more than three-fourths. In some villages, it may be correct to say that one-fourth of the lands is *bhuinhari,* in others one-third, one-half, two-thirds, or even so much as three-fourths.[90]

Instances were found in which such cultivation covered, in absolute terms 1,419 acres, 1,056 acres, 858 acres, 660 acres and 990 acres. Such *bhuinhars* clung to their land with its obvious benefits, especially as 'in the majority of cases where the *bhuinhar* leaves his village, the *zamindar* takes possession of his lands as *rajhas* (ordinary rent-paying land) and does not allow a *bhuinhar* about to leave his home to sell or mortgage his lands for his own benefit'.[91] In Udaipur *pargana*, therefore, we find some 'very well-to-do Oraons'.[92] An illustration of the extent of land which a *manki* could own is given by Haldar, the officer responsible for demarcating *bhuinhari* lands in the 1870s, and deserves to be quoted at length:

> The village (Barum) belongs to Ratan Sahi Manki, a man who may be said to be every inch a Munda, and a fair representative of his ancestors. Under such auspices, the *Bhuinhari* of a village cannot but be seen at its best and the *Bhuinhars* must be prosperous. And we find that the head *Bhuinhar* of Barum, Malar Pahan, is a respectable and well-to-do man, who owns according to his own account.....24 kharis (120 acres)....low-lying lands, while it is stated that the *Manki* has.....(120 acres) *rajhus.*[93]

Almost right from the beginning of the Christian agitation, it was found that in the cases of a breach of peace that went to court, 'the Christians were more frequently aggressors than aggressed'.[94] Of course, this does not excuse the provocations of the *zamindars* such as when, in 1867, the crops of native

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[89] Haldar, *Report.* op. cit.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Rev. Dept. A Progs. November 1868, Government of Bengal, No.S 45–51, Bihar State Archives.

Christians in more than sixty villages were cut by the zamindars.[95] But the Christians were observed as 'the most influential and prosperous portion of the community' even in the early 1860s.[96] It needs to be added parenthetically that while the land of some of the native Christians and other *mankis* was extensive, its infertility precluded its becoming a means of social control as in the northern Indian plains and remained merely a means of earning a livelihood. Also, since the tribal *sardars* who owned this land were under the domination of alien *zamindars,* they had neither the agricultural capital nor the rich peasant's outlet to the agrarian market to enable them to improve their economic conditions. In places where such *mankis* may have been free of superordinate control, they invariably had the worst lands. The *dom,* the low-lying and relatively more fertile land, was always part of some grant of land or another which had been subinfeudated from the Chota Nagpur raja.[97]

While the inquiries and *bhuinhari* surveys were in progress in the 1870s the tribals accompanied the officer in charge when possible. When Haldar was making his inquiries, some tribals urged him to divide the land equally between the *bhuinhars* and the others. The officer wrote about a group of almost 100 men who he described as advocates of this 'fifty-fifty' solution and who dogged his footsteps from Sonpur to Basia, Basia to Doesa, Doesa to Khukhra, and so on. They 'encamped near me, held councils, sent emissaries in all directions and in one week's time I could anticipate the trouble then in store for me'.[98] The trouble usually was a flood of tribal claims to land which according to the government, did not belong to them but which they stated to be their *bhuinhari.*

Almost to its very end the Sardari Larai was characterised by a tone of forceful but reasonable argument with the government. There was a rejection of the earlier *bhuinhari* survey of 1859–62 conducted by a Nagbanshi *zamindar* on only a small portion of the area as favouring the landholding interests. In 1870, in the course of their pleading, 'the Agitators did not remain very long in the special Commissioner's court, and when they left it many Bhuinhars withdrew from the extravagant claims they had previously filed, and a more moderate tone pervaded all classes concerned'.[99] As such, the Sardari Larai did not have a sustained following.

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Rev. Dept. A Progs. op. cit.

[97] Our example above of Ratan Sahi Manki who owned *dom* as well, thus seems to be an exception rather than the rule. Even today, many kinsmen of the Chota Nagpur Raja continue to supervise their cultivation over what are not tenancy but *dom* lands. Tribal ownership and control for the greater part relates to the poorer *tanr* land.

[98] Halder to Oliphant, 30 April 1870, Bihar State Archives.

[99] ibid.

Between 1881, when a group, calling themselves the Children of Mael and headed by John the Baptist, established themselves and set up a 'Raj' at Doesa,[100] and 1885, the Sardari Larai moved slowly. In 1886, the first serious incident took place when a *zamindar* was stopped on a journey by 'a band of Christians' but was allowed to proceed when he gave them false assurances in order to save his life.[101] On 16 March 1887, the General Conference of German Lutheran missionaries received a petition from the Oraons and Mundas of Chota Nagpur, a summary of which has survived in government records. The interesting part about the document is that it nowhere expressed an outright refusal by the tribals to pay rent. They were willing to pay this, if need be, directly to the government.[102] But by the end of the year, there was a worsening of relations with the missionaries, who the tribals accused of having intercepted

[100] Commissioner Chota Nagpur to Secy., Bengal, 19 November 1887.

[101] Ibid.

[102] The petition reads:

'We do not like to see the Rajah and zamindars reigning in our country.

(1) Our forefathers came into this country and cleared the jungle. Now the Hindus rob us of our fields.

(2) There were no Rajahs before; we do not know whence they have come.

(3) We do not know from whom the zamindars have obtained their power; the Rajah must have called them in.

(4) Our forefathers never paid rent to any Rajah or zamindar.

(5) Our forefathers paid rent to the Pahra Rajahs only and where subject to them.

(6) The Rajah deceived the Pahra Rajahs, saying that he would collect rent for them.

(7) There were Pahra Rajahs over seven or eight villages, but there is now a zamindar in every village.

(8) The villages of Ranikhatanga, Korambe, and others have Pahra Rajahs, who have on their flags their respective ensigns.

(9) If there had been Rajahs from the beginning how could Pahra Rajahs have got their ensigns?

(10) We wish to be free as our forefathers were, and we will not pay rent to the Rajah and zamindars, but we will pay it to our Pahra Rajahs.

(11) When the English came into this country, they asked the Rajah to prove that his claims were right; hereupon the Rajah showed them the ensign of the Pahra Rajahs as his own.

(12) We are willing to pay the roll (or revenue) to the English Government but we wish to be free from the Nagabansis (i.e. Maharajahs of Chota Nagpore).

(13) It is not right that 100 should live in prosperity and 1,000 in adversity.

(14) Every nation has its own Government; only we Mundas and Uraons have not.

a Decree from the Viceroy which would have helped them to recover their coveted lands. Freeing themselves from the restraining influence of the missionaries Onasch and Nottro they carried their movement on to increasingly more violent paths. Soon they began claiming that they would ask the Empress (Victoria) for permission to fight the 'Sahibs' for a 'day and a half', and exhorted fellow tribals not to pay rents and 'if the Raja's men troubled them for rents, they must kill and throw them away'.[103] They closed six missionary schools and at one village, Tilma, forcibly drove the *zamindar's* men off his *manjhas* lands. They re-established contacts with Calcutta and set about drawing up a petition for presentation to the British Parliament.[104] From this point onwards, there were more and more meetings to discuss programmes of action at which a letter was read urging the movement into constitutional channels and arguing ultimately in favour of a representation before Parliament.[105] But without waiting for a reply from Parliament, further acts of violence were committed under the leadership of a group of thirty-five *sardars*. Land on the estate of the Rani of Tamar was seized, distributed and cultivated.[106]

(1) The first matter is that we have reached Calcutta safe.

(2) That the papers for England and Parliament are ready and have been signed by us. It is not certain when we shall return. We shall remain till the papers are put up before the four forts. (It is not understood what the 'four forts' are; possibly the term suggests Fort William.)

(3) That we brought Rs.200, which have been paid to the Baboo (lawyer), so we say to all the brethern that when the *punchayet* money is collected the whole amount should be sent soon, so that the work may be done quickly.

(4) "Don't be afraid" notices (These were notices restraining the officers from acting, and were frequently mentioned at the meeting) are being issued to the four hakims of Singbhoom and ten hakims of Ranchi.

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(15) As every child inherits his father's rights, so we wish to have the rights of our forefathers.

(16) The transmission of ancestral rights is exemplified in the story of Abraham.

(17) Under the English administration we have become wiser than before, for which we are thankful to the English now they should also free us from our earthly distrust'.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] The text of this letter was as follows: 'We, Nikodim, Johan, and all the *sirdars* tender our salutations in the Lord Jesus to all the brethern of Singbhoom and Sonpore. (Sonpore, a *pergunnah* of Lohardugga).

[106] Commissioner Chota Nagpur to Secy. Bengal, 19 November 1887.

(5) Don'ts fear for the villages (This apparently refers to the small hamlets cleared away in making the reserved forests in Porahat) abolished. Things won't continue for ever. Don't be anxious. The Sonpore brethern are told to cultivate the manjhihas lands and sow dhan. Send this letter to Piring (a village in Porahat) immediately after you have read it. Whether or not Singha Munda (this leader had been punished by the Deputy Commissioner of Singbhoom for contempt) has been released after we left, please write soon about this.'

Things did not go so well either for the Roman Catholic Christians whose actions brought the Roman Catholic missions into disrepute. Towards the end of November a report was being considered by the government in Chota Nagpur which connected the Sardari activities with the efforts of a Roman Catholic priest who was said to be 'actively engaged in the business of securing nominal converts to his order'. The commissioner of Chota Nagpur, Grimley, met the superintendent of the Roman Catholic mission and the latter assured him that the priest in question was doing no more than 'ministering to the spiritual wants of his converts'. It was said that thousands flocked to this priest to be baptized as soon as they heard that he was assuring the tribals of his intercession on their behalf on the question of disputed claims over rights to land and services. The commissioner warned Father Motet, the superintendent, 'of the extreme folly of meddling with the land question, and strongly advised him to recall his subordinate'.[107] He added, in his communication to the Bengal Government, that 'Father Motet expresses himself most anxious that nothing shall be done against the wish of the authorities, and I am hopeful that the hint I gave him will be sufficient'.[108] Two weeks later, after Grimley had had a conservation with Father Leivens, the priest in question, it was learnt that his followers were not *bhuinhars* but ordinary *ryots* fighting against the local *zamindars* for their korkar or newly reclaimed land obtained for cultivation by clearing forests over which they said the *zamindars* had no right to levy rents at full rates.It was such men who rallied to the banner of Roman Catholicism, getting their top-knots cut and being converted.[109]

At the beginning of 1890, the *zamindars* met and formed an association to protect their interests. Mr. Peppe, the manager of the Chota Nagpur estate, was elected President of this body. The *zamindars* met with government officials

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[107] Grimley to Chief Secy. Bengal, 13 November 1889. Home Judl. Progs. December 1889, No.S 163-170, National Archieves of India.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Grimley to Chief Secy. Bengal, 13 November 1889. Home Judl. Progs. December 1889, No. S 163-170, National Archives of India.

and tried to influence them with their favour.[110] The government, seeing the causes of the disputes to be the indefinite nature of the rights asserted on both sides, issued a proclamation which attempted to standardise the services the cultivators were supposed to perform for the *zamindar*.[111]

The Sardari Larai petered out after 1890, partly due to the stern steps taken by the government in arresting the ring-leaders, and partly through the break with the missions. But it was revived in the mid-1890s and was kept simmering till the big uprising of Christmas, 1899, under Birsa Munda. But before we go on to that let us review the two major developments which colonialism was producing and their effects on the inhabitants of Chota Nagpur: (a) the introduction of British capital into the tea industry; and (b) the overall colonial agrarian policy and its limitations which were affecting the relationships between landlord and cultivator.

The Assam Tea Company was founded in 1839. The long search for tea lands was finally successful. *The Times* (London) reported:

> A joint stock company is forming in the city for the purpose of cultivating the newly discovered tea plant in Assam. Their intention is, in the first instance, to open a treaty with the supreme Government in India for the purchase of the East India Company's plantations and establishments in Assam, and afterwards to carry on the cultivation of tea there, for the purpose of importing it into this country. The project has been taken up with so much avidity, principally by the mercantile houses trading with India and the leading firms in the tea trade, that all the shares were appropriated in a few days and before any public notice of it had appeared. A division of the territory into large farms or estates, adapted for superintendence and cultivation by private capitalists, which might be either let or sold by the India Company, would be likely, perhaps,

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[110] Grimley to Chief Secy. Bengal, 7 February 1890. Progs. 95–109, March, 1890

[111] The services then made obligatory were as follows:

1. Three days' ploughing.
2. Three days' digging.
3. Three days' sowing or planting rice.
4. Three days' cutting rice.
5. One days' threshing corn.
6. One day's assisting in the making of a granary.
7. Carrying loads for the landlord—the labourer to be supplied with food.

Proclamation, Commissioner's Office, Ranchi, April 1890; Memorandum on the working of Act 1 B.C. of 1879.

> to accomplish sooner the great object of establishing a rivalry with the Chinese in this traffic. Ultimately, indeed, this may be the course adopted under the management of the Assam Company, but in that case the actual cultivators could hardly expect to fare so well as under direct holdings from the Indian Government. The capital to be raised is £ 500,000 and it is stated that a communication has already been opened with the Board of Trade and the East India Company, preparatory to a negotiation for the purchase of the Assam territory.[112]

Thus, British capital and expertise came to India to develop an industry that promised rich dividends. By 1864, Dalton, the Commissioner of Chota Nagpur, was complaining of the way in which the inhabitants of Chota Nagpur were being preyed upon by labour recruiters for the tea gardens in Assam. He wrote,

> The districts of Lohardagga and Manbhoom are overrun with Licensed recruiters. In the Manbhoom district up to the middle of the year the deputy commissioners had countersigned 67 of these licenses and I think a larger number must have been countersigned by the deputy commissioner of Lohardagga, but I regret to say that till recently ordered by me there was in that office no record of the number of licenses presented.[113]

Labourers were frequently presented with a false, rosy picture of the nature and prospects of employment.[114] Health and sanitary conditions on the Assam tea estates in the early decades were very bad, with a high mortality rate.[115] And once they were there the labourers could not return very easily, even if they so desired. It was also perceived that the 'recruits thus obtained are procured on cheaper terms than under any other system'.[116] But even so, the labourers went through a multi-tiered system of delivery:

> At present we find amongst the recruiters persons of all stamps—from respectable Europeans and Eurasians, to released convicts.

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[112] Quoted in Sir Percival Griffiths, *The History of the Indian Tea Industry*, p.61, London, 1967.

[113] Commissioner Chota Nagpur to the Secy Bengal, Letter No. 2084, 1 August 1874, Bihar State Archives.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Griffiths, op. cit., p.350-1: 'For the two years ending 30 June 1867 the average yearly mortality on the gardens of upper Assam was over one hundred and seventy per thousand.

[116] Commissioner Chota Nagpur to the Secy. Bengal, op. cit.

> The profit of the speculation is said to be enormous and of the Rs. 70 that each Cooley costs before he reaches Assam or Cachar, it is found that a large amount goes into the pocket of the contractor or recruiter—I have been informed that a batch of 100 Coolies is worth Rs. 1,000 to the contractor in Calcutta and it is known that batches of Coolies register, and all are sometimes bought and sold several times between the recruiting ground and Depot, each purchaser realising a profit.[117]

It is necessary to note that it was also stressed that 'the Districts that now furnish the greater number of labourers are by no means over populated'.[118] This migration continued till 1940 and most of those involved were poorer Mundas and Oraons. In a *Handbook of Castes and Tribes Employed on Tea Estates in North-East India,* printed in 1924 for private circulation by the Tea Districts Labour Association, it was freely acknowledged that labour through *sardari* recruitment was plentiful, but 'to get and still more to keep labour is becoming yearly a more and more vital factor in the prosperity of the Tea Industry'. Of a total of 593,800 Mundas in 1921, 123,000, or approximately 21 per cent, were to be found in Assam, mostly as coolies. But the important thing to remember is that the coolie recruiters were 'very successful' during bad harvests[119] and the poorer Chota Nagpur tribals migrated, creating a situation in the rural economy in which *beth-begari* (forced labour) became an even more disputed issue than before. For while Grimley did try to standardise the quantity of labour to be provided and the government after 1869 attempted a commutation of labour services into its cash value, neither of these piece-meal reform attempts could remedy a basic malady. In a village, Urikeil, surveyed by Dalton in 1868, it was alleged that 50 per cent of the population had migrated to Assam. Dalton's own estimate was 15 per cent.[120]

The more adventurous, but less fortunate tea companies also attempted to grow tea in Chota Nagpur itself. Thompson Shaw & Co. opened a plantation on 66 acres of government land near Ranchi. This was finally extended to about 100 acres. In the Hazaribagh district, the Ramgarh Tea Co. had approximately 400 acres under cultivation by 1865. While on the estate of the Maharaja of Ramgarh, 'a new Company' thought 'of opening out a fresh tea

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Letter No.1171, Chota Nagpur Commissioner's correspondence, Vol.221, p. 131–3, n.d., Bihar State Archives.

[120] A Progs., November 1868, Land Rev., No.S 45–51, Government of Bengal, Bihar State Archives.

plantation' over an area of 20,000 acres.[121] None of these companies were at all able to compete with the more favourably situated companies in Assam and Cachar, though if they had prospered it would have lessened the ill-effects of migration. As Dalton noted, these new tea plantations were 'being opened in the country on which the tea plantations in Assam and Cachar *now mainly depend for labour'*.[122]

As the Sardari Larai grew in intensity and scope, those concerned over the emigration problem noticed that it resulted from unsettled conditions. Wood, the barrister representing the Kols before the government, remarked that the people who could remedy the state of things were 'being drafted off to other regions, through the state of ill-rest that prevails owing to the disturbance of ancient rights and usages'.[123] Around 1889, it was being lamented that the Kol country is being gradually drained of its population, for it is from Chota Nagpur that more than half of the annual number of emigrants to Assam come.....the flow of emigration is acting in this country as the Black Death acted in Europe in the fourteenth century; it is revising the relations of landlord and tenant, capitalist and wage-earner, which previously existed. It is a mere question of the balance of supply and demand.[124]

The extension of *manjhihas* land held by the landlords for their personal cultivation compelled the weaker tribal farmers to emigrate to Assam and elsewhere.[125] In their testimony to some officials, a few *ryots* 'stated that Father Leivens (the Jesuit priest) came amongst them and said that as the country was going to the bad and the people all going to Kora Raj (Assam), the Maharani (Victoria) had sent him a *purwannah* (message) telling him to inform them that if they become Christians' they would have to render less *beth-begari*.[126]

Sometimes, but only rarely, a returning emigrant helped to organise the tenant farmers in their resistance. But this happened only when this person belonged to a lineage which had in the main turned Christian, i.e. could expect some rewards from the opening up of Chota Nagpur to surrounding markets.

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[121] Letter No.1171, Chota Nagpur Commissioner's correspondence, Volume 221, p.132-4, n.d., Bihar State Archives.

[122] Ibid.

[123] E.P. Wood to District Commissioner Lohardugga, n.d., 1880, Land Rev. and Agri., December, 1887, National Archives of India.

[124] Home Dept. Judl. Progs, December, 1889, No.S 163–170, p.2–3, National Archives of India.

[125] Home Dept., Judl. Progs, March 1890, No.S 95-109, p.5, National Archives of India.

[126] Ibid., p.13

Thus, it was a young man, Letha, who returned from the tea gardens in Assam with some money which he spent 'very freely' and organised the *ryots* in their struggle to drive the landlord off their newly reclaimed or *korkar* land.[127]

Another emigration risk was that a migrant returning after a season or two to his land was not always sure of getting it back. Save for the depression years when the tea industry also experienced a slump, this unpleasant possibility was present in the minds of the migrants throughout the emigration period. Around 1940 an officer in Chota Nagpur gave the following description of the fortunes of an emigrant:

> My own experience is that aboriginal tenants emigrating to the tea gardens usually leave their lands in charge of their relatives in the village but in some cases they go off without making any arrangements at all. When the land is left in charge of relatives, they generally respect their trusteeship and are prepared to hand the land back to the emigrant on his return. Cases are, however, by no means uncommon in which the trustee even though a relative has taken advantage of the rightful owner's absence to go to the landlord and get the land settled in his own name on payment of salami (a premium). The landlords of course encourage this and a great many of these cases of abuse of trust by trustees have been directly instigated by the landlord. If the emigrant leaves the village without making any arrangement for the custody of his lands, his relatives sometimes constitute themselves trustees but more often the land is immediately pounced upon by the landlord and either resettled with some one else or made *bakasht* (i.e. declared to be for the landlord's personal cultivation). Formerly emigrant *raiyats* never took the trouble to inform the landlord of their arrangements as regards their land.[128]

The conscience of a missionary, the Reverend Logsdail, was greatly disturbed by the manner in which the recruits were taken to the tea gardens and he vigorously and publicly expressed his views on the subject. The issue of young girls being enticed away exploded into a press controversy when Logsdail's letter appeared in the *Statesman* of 16 November 1902, under the title 'The Case of a Headman's Daughter'.[129] Between 1902 and 1903, Reverend Logsdail wrote a series of ten letters pinpointing the abuses of *sardari* recruitment.

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[127] Bengal Government Land Rev. A Progs. July 1871, No.S 51-59, p.1–2.

[128] Land Revenue Deposit July, 1940, F.No.11T 40/40, p.1xxxxv, Appendix R, Government of Bihar and Orissa, Bihar State Archives.

[129] For details described above see Government of India Rev. and Agri. A Progs., July and December 1903, No. S 28-29 and 6 respectively, National Archives of India.

The correspondence clearly indicates that it was the desire to make money at the registration depot which motivated the 'sellers' of recruits. The headman's daughter referred to by Logsdail was the daughter of a *manki.* Anyone bringing in a recruit was paid 5 rupees by the recruiter. Consequently, it is highly probable that heads of families participated in aiding this labour flow, which though it led to many abuses was not discouraged by the government for fear of offending the tea interests. But Logsdail's campaign began to bear fruit for we find Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, acknowledging, that while 'Mr Logsdail is not very careful in his choice of language—Missionaries seldom are—in the particular cases selected by him for exposure or denunciation he seems on the whole to have scored'.[130] Yet nothing was done by the government because by then the Tea Association was even represented politically in the local legislative body.[131]

Not only was British capital in Assam thus affecting the tribal social structure of Chota Nagpur, but pressure, through the British press was exerted on the Indian Government as well. It was argued that since the tea-garden labourer was provided 'free housing, sanitation, water supply, medical attendance', etc., the right of the tea planters to 'arrest absconders without warrant' and to 'compel idlers to work' was not altogether unjustified.[132] Lord Curzon even declared that his 'own work was as hard as that of any coolie on a tea garden'![133] Probing 'deep down in the psychology of the labouring classes', *The Times* explained to its readers, that once the 'jungly' races and the lower strata of the agricultural population of Chota Nagpur arrived on the tea gardens of Assam, they suffered a 'tea-change'. To this questionable pun, a bit of macabre humour was added when it was suggested that after spending a little time on the estate, 'the kidnapped youth and the abducted woman will have to be rekidnapped and re-abducted before you can induce them to return'.[134] This edifying picture of conditions on Assam tea gardens was denied by an English civilian, Sir Henry Cotton, who knew Assam and its gardens well enough confidently to accuse 'the whole of society and all the newspapers of the British press of partiality'.[135] No agency was, of course,

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[130] Ibid., Curzon 27 June 1903.

[131] Griffiths, op. cit., p.154. For the imperialist point of view, i.e. of promoting the facilities for the recruitment of labour as a factor input, see the series of articles contributed by Arnold Ward, Special Correspondent, *The Times* (London), 4 April, 29 August and 2 September 1902.

[132] The Times (London), 4 April, 1902.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., 29 August 1902.

[135] Ibid., 4 April 1902.

instituted by the Tea Association to 're-abduct' and 're-kidnap' the Mundas and Oraons back to Chota Nagpur.

Post-mutiny government policy on agrarian matters had two main considerations. One, of course, was that which was initiated earlier, coterminously with the attack by the free traders on the monopoly of the East India Company, i.e. the opening up of India to British goods, the development of her internal resources to facilitate the extraction of raw materials and the improved utilisation of her agricultural hinterland. Development became a first-order priority so as to enable India to pay for imported British products. Thus, we find large-scale irrigation schemes being drawn up and processes of agricultural production being adjusted to and tied in with an ever-expanding network of commercial relations, creating, in turn, a market for the land and its produce.[136] An unintentional offshoot of such a policy was the growth in many areas of a usurious money-lending class which provided the funds to buy up the lands of those who were selling out to the cash-crop producing peasantry. But in most cases, even while benefiting directly from producing more of the better crops, these peasants continued to depend upon the moneylender for their credit needs and, consequently, more often than not found themselves hemmed in between the high rates of interest which they had to pay and their revenue obligations to the State. Even in the areas where it was not promoted directly, this policy of favouring a growing commercialisation of agriculture produced similar results, i.e. the displacement of established landed families by the *arrivistes*.

This brings us to the second consideration of the agrarian policy of the raj—the political one. The revolt of 1857 had dictated that it should be, especially with regard to the landlords, one of protection. Thus, we find that Acts were brought into force in Oudh, Bombay, Bundelkhand and Chota Nagpur which sought to give relief to a 'gentry' landholding class if and when it fell into debt to the moneylenders. Such legislation protected the estate from transfer into new hands. While inconsistent with the first consideration of consolidating economic property in the hands of the most efficient, it was a political necessity which could not be ignored.[137]

The origins of British agrarian policy in Chota Nagpur go back to the year of the revolt when the idea of 'opening up' the area was being put into practice. As in other parts of British India, the improvement of roads and

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[136] E. Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*: 1860–1900, Vol.I, California, 1971.

[137] Bipan Chandra, 'British and Indian Ideas on Indian Economic Development, 1858–1905', in B.R. Nanda and V.C. Joshi (eds.), *Studies in Modern Indian History*, p.92–9, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1972.

communications was also being discussed in the Chota Nagpur commissioner's office.

> After well considering the question (wrote Dalton), I am of opinion that as regards my Division this is the first line (between Calcutta and Jubbulpore) to look for the construction of a new imperial road (that)....would connect some of the most important places in this Division open out resources of rich countries now undeveloped.....Sirgoojah (a state to the south-east of the Chota Nagpur plateau) is rich in mineral resources and in lands well-adapted for coffee plantations which have only to be made accessible to be taken up. At present its produce in oil lac tussar & ca. are important and would be much improved by having a good outlet; the same remarks apply to Chota Nagpore and Manboom which are also good grain producing districts.[138]

The opening up of the Chota Nagpur region was followed by a growing indebtedness of the larger estates. Paradoxically, the policy of protection for such estates began in precisely the period when it should have been abandoned if the aim was to stimulate agriculture. The Commissioner in the 1860s had the right to prevent sales of such hereditary land which, by passing into alien hands, could upset the balance of the landlord–State concord. It was thought in 1865 that if the powers of the commissioner to protect such sales were withdrawn 'it.....(would) throw at once into the market nearly half the landed property of the province'.[139] By 1875, the problem of indebtedness on the important estates had become so acute that the Government of India gave its consent to the suggestion for an Act to be passed to protect these landholders.[140] The Chutia Nagpur Act, enacted in 1876, drastically reduced the interest rate on funds borrowed by the landowners from moneylenders to only 12 per cent per annum. The property of a landowner could not be 'alienated' by the lender if his debts were not paid. And in the event of heavy indebtedness, the State moved in as protector, took over the management of the estate concerned and through executive decree, spread out the repayment of the loan over periods as long as twenty years at a time. The moneylenders pleaded that if an estate were not found to be solvent within ten years, the normal course of 'alienation'

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[138] Chota Nagpur Commissioner's correspondence, Vol.218, Letter No.950, Bihar State Archives.

[139] Chota Nagpur Commissioner's correspondence, Vol.215, Letter No.1800, 10 May 1865, Bihar State Archives.

[140] Bill for the Relief of Encumbered Estates in Chutia Nagpur, Rev. and Agri., July 1875, Pro.3, National Archives of India.

procedures should be applied to it.[141] But the State backed the estate which survived though 'encumbered'. The result of such a policy was that the landlords, assured of the State's protection, continued to live off mismanaged estates while quarrelling with their tenant cultivators and turning the screws on them. The moneylenders made a frantic last appeal that was drowned in the din of 'political' considerations.[142] *The Bihar Herald* of 2 January 1883, referring to the protective legislation as a 'draconian law', summed it up well with the comment that 'the Act offered relief against all but the Government Mahajun, and while all other processes are held barred, those for the recovery of Government dues remain in full force'.[143]

An idea of the extent to which government protection to landlords, by not allowing their land to pass into the hands of their moneylending creditors, affected the agrarian tribal social structure can be had from the reactions of the moneylenders. Fifty-one moneylenders from Hazaribagh, seventy from Lohardugga, eighteen from Singhbhum and twenty-seven from Manbhum presented signed memorials to the government, pleaded that their loans could not be liquidated in this expedient fashion. While the social composition of these moneylenders was varied, most were Marwari and Bengali. Most historians tend to assume the existence and role of the moneylending classes in India during British rule at a rather simple inferential level because their interest as a group is often referred to in the records of the government. These memorials offer what is, perhaps, a rare but substantive example of the articulate awareness of the *bania* interest *vis-à-vis* government policy:

> To give a few out of numerous instances, in the Estate of Durgabux Singh of Palamow sub-Division, out of Rs.7,000 principal and Rs.4,000 interest due on bond to Rami Sahu, only Rs.3,000 without carrying future interest was allowed by the manager, and his appeal to the Commissioner was dismissed. Out of Rs.9,000 principal and Rs.4,000 interest due to Jhowri and Dworka Sahus, only Rs.7,000 was allowed by the manager and appeal to the Commissioner was dismissed. Out of Rs.4,000 principal on bond besides interest thereon for 9 years due to Bega Sahu only Rs.3,800 was allowed by manager. In the Estate of Sheo Sarn Singh of Palamow a decree of Thekoor Sahu for Rs.3,300 came up with interest to Rs.4,200, but the manager cut it down to bare Rs.2,800 and disallowed future interest against the terms of the decree. The decree holder is now getting at the rate of bare Rs.450 per annum. Dindial Bharthi of Moradi, the Setti

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[141] Rev. and Agri., B Progs., Feb. 1883, No.80, National Archives of India.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

> mahajuns Ramscoonder and Rambary, and Koonj Lal Marwari of Ranchee have lost about a lac of rupees in this way.[144]

The plea of the *Hindoo Patriot* (13 November 1882) on the behalf of 'innocent capitalists' (!) went unheeded.[145]

The twentieth century brought with it a number of revolts and movements, arising from the thorough shaking up that tribal society had received from British rule in the preceding century. The greatest of them all was the revolt led by Bisra Munda, or Birsa Bhagwan as he came to be called. It began with a bow-and-arrow attack on Christians, both native and foreign, emerging from church services on Christmas Eve 1899. The revolt continued into the first fortnight of January 1900. The rebels, first anti-Christian, then later only anti-*Saheblok* (the British), rallied around Birsa, a young man of 25, a healer and a prophet but above all a rebel against the Raj. His activities from 1892 till the revolt, save for three years Birsa spent in jail (1895–98), were strikingly anti-imperialist albeit without a sustained ideology of nationalism.[146] The rebels who commanded an admittedly patchy loyalty over 400 square miles of hilly country, were motivated by a primitive consciousness of messianic beliefs in the context of a nationalism whose base was to become increasingly broader in the coming decade. According to the biographer of the revolt:

> The Munda movement was basically agrarian and defensive. Driven by an irresistible self-defensive urge, the Mundas had first sought shelter in Christianity, then broken away from the missions and turned to Calcutta lawyers, and finally, clashed with the authorities. The controversy regarding the movement being political or agrarian emanated from a partial view of it. Contemporary British newspapers held the agrarian view of the movement which subsequently assumed a religious character; the Indian newspapers underlined its political character and characterised the movement as not anti-Zamindar but anti-missionary and anti-Government, because no Zamindar or Diku was killed or maltreated during the uprising. The planned murder of the Zamindar at Donali which did not take place....was only a stray case. There was, no doubt, an under-current of hostility against Dikus; the stress on agrarian factors underlined by prophetic and other aspects of Birsa's religion, his prayers and incantations and the deliberations at the meetings preparatory to the uprising was unmistakable. But both Birsa and neo-Sardars from 1890–1892

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

[146] 'Outbreak of the Mundas in the Ranchi District' Home Dept. Progs., 326–353, August 1900, National Archives of India.

> onwards were far more concerned with the British rule that rendered the tyranny of the Dikus possible. Having done his work among his people, Birsa would go to the Dikus to persuade them, and if he failed in his mission to convert them they were to be expelled from the land. The movement was agrarian in its root, violent in its means and political in its end. Birsa in his speeches emphasised the agrarian factors and sought a political solution of the problems facing his people, i.e. the establishment of Birsaite Raj under the New King (himself).[147]

The suppression of the Birsa revolt was followed by a relative calm during which the settlement operations of the revenue department restored to some Mundas their *khuntkatti* and *bhuinhari* rights as original clearers of the land. And sporadic violence of the last hundred years gave way to a new development: the emergence of a tribal moneylending class in Chota Nagpur.[148] It was because of the earlier dominance of the Christians during the Sardari Larai period that this new phenomenon also moved into institutional channels by 1939 when, hit by the severe agricultural depression of the 1930s, two separate organisations were formed: the Sanatan Adibasi Sabha and the Adibasi Sabha.[149] The former was a non-Christian aboriginal association led by Theble Oraons, while the latter—though it did not exclude non-Christians from membership—was a Christian one led by Jaipal Singh. It is interesting to note that the leadership of the Chota Nagpur Kisan Sabha (Peasants Association) was also in Theble Oraon hands, from its inception in 1931 till 1937.[150] the activities of these organisations must in some way have been connected with those of the Bihar unit of the All-India Kisan Sabha,[151] formed in 1935, although this is not evident from the details of the workings of the Chota Nagpur Kisan Sabha.

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[147] Suresh Singh, *The Dust-Storm and the Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and His Movement in Chotanagpur (1874–1901)*, p.191, Calcutta, 1966.

[148] For details see the article on this subject by Suresh Singh (ed.),*The Tribal Situation in India,* Simla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972.

[149] Cutting from *The Indian Nation*, 13 July 1939, in File No.II T 48/40, Land Rev., Govt. of Bihar, July 1940, Bihar State Archives.

[150] For details see: *Final Settlement Report Ranchi*, p.3–4, 8, 1940; *Searchlight,* 10 July 1937; and Government of Bihar and Orissa File No.II T 57/37, Bihar State Archives.

[151] For an account of the Bihar Kisan Sabha, as part of the All-India Kisan Sabha, see the unpublished Ph.D. thesis: W. Hauser, 'The Bihar Kisan Sabha: 1929–1942', Chicago, 1962.

The Birsa revolt, the Tana Bhagat movement among the Oraons in 1915,[152] the tribal uprising in neighbouring Sirguja in 1918,[153] and the emergence of such organisations as the Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj[154] and the Adibasi and Kisan Sabhas of the 1930s took Chota Nagpur into an entirely new arena of political consciousness with class and group relations which were to influence developments in the post-independence period.

In the precolonial period there appear to have been three major phases of historical change apart from the early migrations and settlements. The first remains ambiguous and is associated with the Asura sites. The Oraon presence has left linguistic indications, but its historical identification is uncertain. The second change brought in the Nagavamsi dynasty which, with its parallels in neighbouring regions, ended the isolation of Chota Nagpur. The third phase introduced the Mughal association as well as an accent on wider pan-Indian connections and on the land–State nexus. It is clear, however, that the intermeshing of the land grant continuum with the local cultures had led to an exploitation of agriculture on an extensive scale even before contact with the Mughal Kingdom. When Chota Nagpur became part of a colonial society, this exploitation increased in response to a structurally changing economy. Tribal cultivators became, for all practical purposes, peasants and land acquired a commercial value. Pan-Indian stratification cut across Chota Nagpur as well. While like the rest of agrarian India, landlords and moneylenders characterised the dominant strata, the region itself was transformed into an economically depressed area.

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[152] *Settlement Report*, p. 4, 1940.

[153] Political Department File No.P-5R-3 of 1919, July, Police Progs., 1–10, Bihar State Archives.

[154] Settlement Report, op. cit., p.3.

SECOND PHASE OF JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

AMIT ROY

The second phase of the Jharkhand Movement which began with the decade of the seventies may very well become a turning point provided the leadership is spearheaded by Marxist-Leninists The first phase ended with the treacherous integration of the Jharkhand Party with the Congress by Marang Gomke [great leader] Jaipal Singh. It was characterised mostly by innocuous paper struggles for a separate State interspersed with deputations and demonstrations. As Mr. N.E. Horo, president of the resurrected Jharkhand Party, admitted, those battles were simply a 'war of memoranda'. The dividends came in the elections; the machinations of Jaipal Singh churned out 32 MLAs in the Bihar Assembly. A separate State appeared as a panacea, but the theoretical basis and political programmes remained unformulated and vague. As a result, splits and realignments followed reducing the party strength in the Bihar Assembly from 28 in 1957 to 20 in 1962. Finally in 1963 it merged with the Congress.

The interregnum till 1970 saw factions and cleavages among the remaining Jharkhand leaders. Some revivalist attempts were made before the fourth general elections, but the movement could not be rejuvenated and split further into at least a dozen groups in the early 70s, all wedded to Jharkhand nationalism. Notable among them are Justin Richard's Hul Jharkhand, Moses Guria's Birsa Seva Dal, Binod-Shibu-A.K. Roy's Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Jharkhand Party of N.E. Horo. In November 1978 a bizarre conglomeration of the above parties along with the official CPI(ML), RSP, Muslim League and Urs Congress, called Jharkhand Prant Samyukta Morcha, was formed soon to disintegrate on the question of selection of election candidates.

In spite of this bleak picture, the silver lining in the second phase is that the political movement for a separate Jharkhand State per se has been considered inadequate. Militant economic struggles against exploitation added a new dimension to the movement and shifted the focus away from seat-grabbing in the elections. There has been increasing understanding among the people of the relevance of century-old political struggles exhibiting unflinching heroism of the tribal peasants, which struck terror into the hearts of the British

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imperialists. The nature of oppression remains the same even today. As in the past, the enemies are moneylenders who bleed them white, landlords who grab their ancestral land, traders who demand extortionate terms in unequal exchange, contractors who denude their forests, truculent officials who persecute and harass them. Today's Jharkhand Movement therefore symbolises the economic and political aspirations of the Chuar rebellion of 1799, the Santhal movement of 1855 and the Birsa movement of 1895. In attacking the zamindars-moneylender-trader-official nexus the movements aimed at restoring the pre-British order. In many cases forest rules, agricultural taxes and land alienation were the sore points. Sixty-six per cent of the Santhal families are indebted and the rate of interest varies between 150 and 600 per cent. The moneylenders squeeze the Jharkhandi's last drop of blood. In the first place he loses his lands; later he becomes a bonded labourer. Land alienation is the biggest tragedy in his life. His copper, coal, mica, asbestos, iron ore are being taken away. In return, he is being gradually hounded out from his natural home and placed under the tutelage of the forest department as wage slave on a paltry sum. Major power and irrigation projects, big steel plants, heavy engineering factories and machanised mines have driven him from his well-settled establishment. Cash compensation has been squandered away by greedy officials. Tribal women have swelled the ranks of prostitutes in the brothels frequented by the *dikkus* (outsiders) of Bokaro Steel Plant.

The Issues

Jharkhand literally means a tract of forests. Out of 35 million inhabitants of the proposed Jharkhand State [comprising Ranchi, Singhbhum, Palamau, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Santhal Parganas in Bihar; Bankura, Midnapore and Purulia in West Bengal; Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur in Orissa; Surguja, Raigarh and Sundargarh in Madhya Pradesh], about half the population earn their livelihood from their traditional home, the forests. Sal tree is a part and parcel of the life of Jharkhandis. Everything of a sal tree is used for food and extraction of oil, etc. The forest officers in league with contractors are planning teak trees in place of sal. Massive discontent is brewing over this afforestation policy. Demand for restoration of land is also bringing a large section of the people in the fold of the movement. Mass demonstrations against lower wages and eviction from land in new projects are held. For example, the Koel–Karo river valley project in Ranchi and the Subarnarekha project at Chandil. According to an estimate, 600,000 people have been uprooted in two decades.

Genesis of Struggle

In view of the militancy the movement has gained in recent years the Government has pursued a three-pronged policy: terror by deploying CRP, Bihar Military Police, etc. subversion by influencing vacillating leaders and

activists: and assimilation by way of autonomous development authorities and Christian missionaries. Under the banner of the Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC), Mr. A.K. Roy has been working in the Dhanbad belt. In the process of struggle he realised that the emancipation of the working class would be impossible if their struggles were not linked with the oppressed Jharkhand nationalities. The question of nationalities in the communist movement never received its due importance and was always treated perfunctorily. It is being increasingly felt that without solving this question and bringing it into the mainstream of new democratic revolution, revolution can never succeed. His other JMM compatriot, Binod Mahato, has been working among the peasants in the Dhanbad area and Shibu Soren among the Santhals. The movement launched by JMM generated militancy on restoration of land, registration of sharecroppers and fight against usury. In many cases, Santhals have confiscated the land, animals and grain of the mahajans. Another kind of struggle in which Shibu Soren gave the lead is against drink. The slogan is *kalall toro, Jharkhand chhoro* (smash liquor shops, quit Jharkhand). This movement gained instant popularity for Shibu Soren. JMM gradually gained a stronghold in Singbhum, Santhal Parganas and Dhanbad. As a result of all this JMM scored remarkable victories both in elections to the Assembly and Parliament. But dissensions soon crept in the JMM on basic class issues. The rightists represented by the tribal elite do not want the movement to take a militant form. They want it to be bogged down in reformism and pseudo-militancy in order to catch votes. These elements want to sever relations with MCC. During the emergency, some of them are alleged to have struck compromises with Congress(I). During the Bihar Assembly elections Shibu Soren, JMM secretary, came to an electoral understanding with Congress (I) which subsequently miscarried due to pressure from JMM cadres. This fissiparous tendency is present even now, as was evident in a central rally of JMM at Purulia.

In this massive gathering JMM leaders repeated the demand for a liberated Jharkhand, not simply a separate state. To what extent even the CPM is scared of the Jharkhand Movement is to be seen to be believed. Six battalions of armed police, as well as regular police, threw a barricade around the meeting. Castigating the CPM and CPI for branding the movement separatist and communal, the leaders pointed out the 180-degree volte-face of these parties in decrying even the right of national self-determination. A.K. Roy went to the extent of saying that a genuine communist party has to be built up which would embrace the cause of the oppressed nationalities. The basic issue of the agrarian question, namely, land to the tillers, has been abandoned by these parties. The majority of the speakers dwelt on the exploitation in mines and factories, eviction from land, contractors' exploitation and cultural oppression. The major target of attack was the CPM rather than the Centre. Shibu Soren emphasised the

need to continue the movement against drink and to form their own courts for resolving all disputes. He did not venture to go beyond these reformist slogans and no concrete programme emerged from this meeting, thus reflecting the pulls and pressures in the leadership.

Two days before the Purulia meeting of the JMM, the fifth conference of the Jharkhand Party under the leadership of N.E. Horo was held at Jhargram. Horo pointed out that the British broke the traditional Jharkhand society based on the primitive form of communism and parcelled it to other states. Thus the movement for a separate Jharkhand is the expression of a long historical struggle. Jharkhand Party wants to reconsolidate these areas and press the demand for regional autonomy within the precincts of the Constitution. Some contradictions have cropped up with JMM on the nature of the movement. The party condemns the CPM for its narrow Bengali chauvinism and the Congress (I) for its bourgeois-feudal character, and demands more jobs for Jharkhandis.

Clear Trends

There are distinctly two clear trends in the Jharkhand Movement, against the feudal and comprador bourgeois government, and against regional disparity and national and cultural oppression. The first two decades of the movement since 1947 were characterised by the second trend. In the past decade quite a few movements were launched against the ruling class, but were successfully thwarted and diverted towards parliamentarism and reformism. Communal elements are bolstered time and again to divide the struggle and blunt its edge.

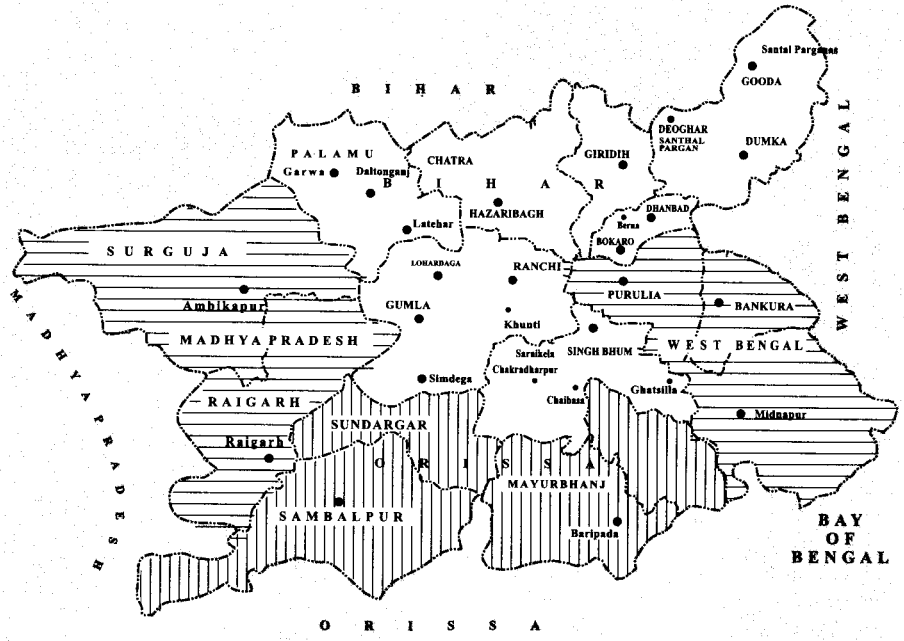
By and large the movement has not been spearheaded against the ruling class, but it has been able to rally people sporadically against traders, moneylenders, forest officials and administration. The State machinery has perpetrated violence on the Jharkhandis. The Gua massacre in Singhbhum and people's armed resistance are the latest example. When the movement turned violent, the leaders either abandoned it or used it for election purposes. Experience shows that the quid pro quo has been ministerial portfolio, contracts, licences, Assembly seats. Generally speaking, the leadership consists mostly of petty-bourgeois elements with class vacillations resulting in unprincipled compromises with the ruling class. Even if poor and militant Jharkhandis are brought into the leadership, the corroding influence of parliamentarism degenerates them in no time.

The principal weakness of the movement is the absence of Marxist-Leninist leadership with clear-cut presentation of the problems. Identification of real enemies and friends is essentially a formidable task. In India there are nationalities which say that they have been coerced to remain in India, e.g. Naga, Mizo, Kashmiri, Sikkimese. In this respect the Jharkhand question is exceptional. Jharkhand is a historically developed stable community with a

common geographic area, economic cohesion and cultural make-up. It satisfies all the criteria to suit the Stalinist formulation of a nation. With respect to language, it can be said that the languages of Jharkhand tribes remained underdeveloped because of the existence of feudal and even pre-feudal relations and subsequent suppression by British colonialists and the Indian ruling class.

The aspiration for a liberated Jharkhand has to be given shape guiding it on to the path of democratic revolution. The theoretical basis of the movement is the fusion of the fight against national exploitation with that against class exploitation. Only then will the revolutionary impact of the Jharkhand Movement be felt and the vast working class in the Jharkhand region integrated with the movement. Such a united front would be able to isolate and defeat divisive and communal elements.

JHARKHAND AS DEMANDED BY THE JHARKHAND PARTY UNDER N.E. HORO



JHARKHAND: INTERNAL COLONIALISM

A.K. Roy

I

The recent unrest in the north-east has again focussed our attention on the problems of uneven development in the country. The issue has assumed a practical political importance, as what used to be at the periphery of the country is gradually approaching towards the centre. Violent clashes between the tribal people and the police have become a major political phenomenon in an area stretching from Gua in south Bihar to Adilabad in north-west Andhra. This vast area, called the central zone of the country, is covered with hills and jungles and inhabited by the tribals and semi-tribal downtrodden people. A big part of this area was known as Jharkhand, meaning literally 'an area of jungle', much before Jharkhand as a political demand for home State of hilly people had come to surface. What is more, this geographical centre also represents the industrial heart of India. All important mines of coal, iron, aluminium, uranium, mica, quartz and all the basic industries like steel, heavy engineering, power plants, etc., lie in this area. The situation and the wealth of natural resources and industry have made Jharkhand a most sensitive area so that a small movement among these hill people or a small commotion creates panic and flutter all over the country.

Mr. N.E. Horo, president of a truncated Jharkhand Party, submitted a memorandum to Mrs. Indira Gandhi in March 1973 demanding the formation of a Jharkhand State within the Union of India. This proposed State included 16 districts, 3 from West Bengal, viz. Bankura, Midnapur and Purulia; 7 from Bihar, viz. Dhanbad, Ranchi, Singhbhum, Santhal Pargana, Hazaribagh, Palamau, and Giridih; 4 from Orissa—Sundargarh, Keonjhor, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur; and 2 from Madhya Pradesh—Raigarh and Sarguja. These had an area of 1,87,646 sq km. and a population as per the 1971 census of 305,98,991. Before this in 1954, under the leadership of the undisputed spokesman of the tribals Mr. Jaipal Singh, a memorandum was submitted to the State Re-organisation Commission demanding a separate State of Jharkhand for the hill people of South Bihar and south-eastern India. The area of his proposed State was 63,859 sq. miles with a population as per the 1951 census of 1,63,67,175

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which was bigger than West Bengal in area and greater than Orissa in population. There is a difference between the two proposed maps of the Jharkhand State. Mr. Jaipal Singh's map left out some parts of West Bengal claimed by Mr. Horo but included a bigger part of Bihar and M.P. and the lower part of U.P. containing hills and jungles. Apart from these exercises, the hilly and jungle areas of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan also come under the contiguous belt with this Jharkhand with more or less the same problems of subjugation and oppression and so may be safely called a greater Jharkhand. Whatever may be the size and other details, the basic tenet of the Jharkhand conception is that it should be the homeland of oppressed nationalities and suppressed societies within India.

If we go back further in the past, we find the tribals demanding Jharkhand before the Simon Commission in 1928. The issue came also before the Congress party of pre-Independence days. Even in the remote history we find the mention of Jharkhand in *Akbar Nama* in the Moghul period, and in the literature of the Vaishnavites. The history of the tribal movement in this area is marked by heroic fights and silent sacrifices. The Kole revolt of 1832, the Santhal rebellion of 1856 and the struggle of the great Birsa Munda of Ranchi between 1890–1900 against British imperialism and the local landlords may not be highlighted by official historians to the extent they deserve but living memories still ring in the hearts of the hill and jungle areas, kept alive by songs and dances and the various tales that float over Jharkhand.

Who are the people of Jharkhand? Out of some 3 crore people, 1 crore belong to tribals, forty lakh are Harijans. The total percentage of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC&ST) constitutes about 47% which is definitely much bigger than the national average of 22%. Amongst the tribals Santhal, Munda, Kharia, Bhumiz, Kharwar, and Mohauli, come of the Austric family while the Oraon belongs to the Dravidian family, who are said to have migrated from Maharashtra to Bihar in some remote past. Amongst the Harijans the Bowri, Mochi, Rajwar, Dhobi, Bhuiya are the main categories. In addition to these, major inhabitants of this area include Nag, Shadan, Kurmi, Cheri, Momins (a sect of Muslims), Mandals who constitute the lower strata of the backward castes nearly placed with the Harijans. The Kurmis were with the ST till 1931 and the Mandals are still SC in the adjacent State of West Bengal. Amongst outside workers who have migrated to the area for work in the mines and industries the downtrodden people also constitute the majority. Taking all this, the people coming from oppressed sections constitute more than 75% of the population of Jharkhand. It is an interesting feature of Indian body politic that those who are socially exploited are economically exploited also and they live in the exploited and backward area called Jharkhand.

II

To understand the Jharkhand Movement properly we must understand how uneven development of the area or of the different segments of the society is creating problem of internal colonialism in the model of South Africa, where the exploiters and the exploited are not connected with any social link though staying within the same geographical area. This is a peculiar situation with no parallel anywhere with which we generally tend to compare our conditions like those in Russia, China or Vietnam and try to draw our political line of action. In India, the under-developed area is exploited by the developed areas as colonies, as are the underdeveloped by the developed people. Society is physically divided and the gap is increasing to the extent that many Indians are openly declared as foreigners in India. The relationship has become that between natives and foreign rulers as in the British days. And the rulers and the ruled speak different languages, look differently, go to different schools, join different clubs. Everything is different for the poor. So they cannot be one even as a nation.

This is the real two-nation theory operating in India. The first ingredient of internal colonialism is the caste system which despite all denials broadly determines the division of labour within the country and still definitely indicates our mental attitude to physical work. According to the report of the Anthropological Survey of India, higher caste controls agricultural production and the less privileged work as farm hands, the more menial task being relegated to those lower down the caste ladder (*The Statesman* editorial 18. 1. 76).

Now the caste system instead of withering away has been reinforced by capitalism and turned into racialism so that the upper caste policemen can do anything in a Harijan tribal village which they cannot dream of doing in an upper caste village just as an Englishman could do anything in India, a fraction of which he could not think of doing in England. What happened in Gua and Adilabad could not have happened anywhere with non-tribal agitators, however great and grave the provocation. This is social unevenness.

The second ingredient of internal colonialism is the uneven development of the different regions of the society. Political upheavals which might lead to development did not embrace all the areas of this vast country for a long time. In the medieval age, all the civilisations rose and fell on the banks of big rivers like the Sindhu, Ganga, Brahmaputra, Godavari, Narmada, Kaveri and there was a mad rush to capture fertile land around these big rivers. In the colonial era the political centre shifted to the shore like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Later on shore-based colonial civilisation combined with the river-based feudal civilisation and regulated the politics of the country. The leadership of the anti-imperialistic struggle also came from this area ensuring a lead in political development. This trend is still ruling in the politics of India, whether right.

left or centre. But India is not merely the bank of rivers or shore of the sea, but much bigger than that, with hills and jungles, plains and plateaus. In the past these areas cut off from the main stream of political struggle used to enjoy an undisturbed autonomy of age-old inertia. If history did not shake them, it did not exploit them either. But things underwent a qualitative change with the advent of capitalist exploitation. Today they face not only exploitation but submergence, suffocation and gradual extinction. They have now become the colonies of the people of the developed area. Their fate is like that of the original people of America now on the way out of history or those of Africa, the birth-place of homo sapiens who used to be shipped as slaves to work in the tobacco gardens and mines of white masters. India is divided into numerous internal colonies and metropolis calling for a new politics of social revolution. This is regional unevenness.

The third ingredient, of course, the universal factor, is the economic unevenness which not only intensifies the extent of disparity which capitalism displays all over the world but something more than that. It is the deformed capitalism from its very birth without social revolution or industrial revolution imposed from above without any scientific education. It is the capitalism of South Africa where industry creates no society but a colony, and that too mostly alien to the society around. The rich and the poor here are not only of different classes but different races, socially cut off with a clear distinction. These privileged parasites, the socially dominating people, have not only the monopoly over the economy, but monopoly over politics as well, and are prone to look abroad irrespective of ideologies, for economic collaboration or political recognition. The productive class has been debarred from politics for thousands of years, at the most it may now pine for relief. The metropolis of the country has formed a nexus with the metropolis of the world. This is true social imperialism enslaving the Indian proletariat. These three ingredients fused together created internal colonialism and among the numerous internal colonies spread over India, Jharkhand represents the biggest and the most precious internal colony just as India used to be in the British Empire.

III

India is a rich country inhabited by poor people. Within India, Jharkhand is the richest area but inhabited by the poorest people. There is light everywhere. Industries and power plants are flourishing in all directions but just beyond an undelimited boundary live the people of the area in the villages where one cannot even get a lamp. *Darkness in the midst of light is Jharkhand.* Africans even after containing and producing 95% of the world's diamond, 33% of gold, 40% of platinum, 20% of copper, 30% of uranium, lead the most exploited and impoverished life in the world. The same is the condition of the people of Jharkhand in general and of Chota Nagpur in particular, which alone contains

50% of India's coal, 100% of India's copper, 40% of bauxite. The area contains almost all the steel plants—Bokaro, Rourkela, Jamshedpur, all the power plants of the Damodar Valley project, and the Hirakund Dam of Orissa. There is no dearth of development but only at the cost of the people there. Industries displace them, dams drown them, afforestration starves them. The natives of the internal colonies are not only the victims of underdevelopment as in the north-east which led to the formations of the North-Eastern Council—of course, with no result—but of development as well in Central India, as this development does not mean the development of the people there but their displacement and replacement by the colonies of developed people, the clever people, the politically connected people coming from the developed areas.

As industrialisation of British India drained the resources of the country and even railways were installed for draining out the raw materials, so was the industrialisation of the Chotanagpur-Jharkhand area where Railways came as early as 1894 to draw out its coal and iron. The total demography of the area changed. While thousands of people are coming there, first, without getting jobs the tribal men and women sell themselves to the contractors to be exported anywhere, from Punjab to Tripura for working in brick kilns or digging earth. Even in forest development and department they have no place, no job. The colonial character of development would be evident from the following facts. 80% of Bihar's income comes from Chotanagpur but only 10 to 15% is spent for the people there. Not even in the proportion of the population. More than 5 lakh people have been displaced in the area for making dams, without rehabilitation and jobs despite assurances. Where 30% of the land in India, 27% of the land of North Bihar gets the facilities of irrigation, the percentage is only 7.2 in Chotanagpur. Today the local people, the Jharkhandis, are scared of development and are opposing the Koel Karo hydel project as that would again submerge 45,000 acres of land of 200 villages to produce 732 MW of electricity. But for whom? In the Chotanagpur area of Bihar which is practically a focal point of the Jharkhand Movement, the per capita consumption of electricity is 204.4 KW against that of India of 96.3 KW. But this figure is misleading. It is not consumed by the poeple of the area but by the ruling class. The actual state of the people would be known from the figures of rural electrification. Systematic attempts are being made to destroy the culture of the Jharkhand people in general and tribal people in particular. Collective culture is being destroyed, so is the concept of community ownership. To disarm the people, the Bihar Government issued an ordinance banning the possession of bows and arrows by the tribals which are part of their life and at the same time lifted prohibition and started liquor shops in the tribal areas. There were clashes and resistance from the tribal people and the Government swearing in the name of Gandhiji provided armed forces to protect the wine shops. Any colony can be kept under subjugation for long only after the character of the

people in the colony is spoiled. Once opium was forced on China and now wine is being pumped into Jharkhand. So between development and non-development, the choice for the people of Jharkhand is like that between the frying pan and the fire. Underdevelopment means languishing death. Development means extinction.

IV

Capitalist economy created some mobility within the country. Mobility resulted in internal migration of the people from one area to another. The internal migration in the background of unequal development created the problem of internal colonialism and today the problem has an ugly character so that Indians have become foreigners in India as the problem is in Assam today. There is alarm and genuine concern about the fate of the basic integrity of the country. The 34 years of post-independence exercise could not decrease the gaps in development between the different areas of the country or between different social groups. Now if restrictions were imposed on the migration and professions of the developed people in the underdeveloped areas, it would amount to promulgation of an Immigration Act, much worse than what is in operation in U.K. It would violate the Constitution of India in force. But if all restrictions in movement, settling, pursuing professions, etc., are removed considering India as one country, then underdeveloped people and their society would be completely submerged and erased out of the map due to the thrust of the people of the developed areas. No golden mean has been found and hence no solution. In the capitalist system of values, there can not be any solutions to the question of uneven development of the oppressed nationalities. There can be no solution of internal colonialism and exploitation either. In essence, capitalism believes, in the name of free competition, in the brute concept of survival of the strongest which means the non-survival of the less strong. The capitalist solution of the underdeveloped nationalities is their extinction. That is why there is not a single multilingual, multinational State in the capitalist world barring the tiny Switzerland though there used to be many multilingual and multinational States even in the feudal time. Balkanisation is not an accidental phenomenon of history but an issue which had started in Europe after the industrialisation and advent of capitalism in the 19th century. Nobody would be able to check the same process operating in a much uglier way if India continues to follow the present path of capitalist development. Integration of India can only remain secure in a revolutionary change of the present system. Unless the motivation is changed, migration would only accentuate bitterness and India's integration would remain in peril.

However there remains one silver lining. It is true that wealth and industries have further enslaved the people. Money power had added to this misery. But at the same time it has created a working class. Despite all deformation it has

created a scope to project working class philosophy and the crisis has forced a bond between industrial workers even if they have come from outside and the rural poor who constitute the vast local masses popularly known as Jharkhandis. This is a phenomenon having immense possibility. The struggle of the Dalits, the people of internal colonies, the tribals and the socially downtrodden against imperialism and the ruling class can develop any time and transcend into a real national liberation movement in the country. This could not come up in the north-east in the absence of an industrial proletariat. But now it 'threatens' to commence in the very heart of the country. There can be so many new States in India and many tribal States like Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal, etc. but Jharkhand was kept firmly tied with a half-dozen provinces in addition to the centre so that even if one fails the other can take charge of the chain that has kept the Prometheus bound. The existence of the working class element in the surroundings of the tribal people and dalits, i.e. the socially oppressed people, means that Jharkhand can never be separated. It can only be liberated and the gap between the liberation of Jharkhand and the liberation of the country as a whole is not beyond the February revolution and the October revolution in Czarist Russia.

LAND AND DEATH

XAVIER DIAS

CHAIBASA: In Illigara village about 10 km form here he was known as Gangaram Kalundia. A tribal, 40 years of age, he had retired from the Indian armed forces in 1976, after serving in the Second Bihar Regiment, fighting in three wars—in 1962, 1965 and 1971. He was promoted to the post of Junior Commissioned Officer, in the rank of Naib Subedar.

Gangaram was spending his post-retirement days working on his land growing vegetables. But fate overtook him. On April 4 at 3-4 AM, a police party led by the Sardar DSP, Sri Kujur, the Circle Inspector, Chaibasa, and Sri. P.G. Chaturvedi, a magistrate on duty, picked him from his house in Illigara. The next day the SP, Sri Randhir P. Verma, the ADC, Sri Gangasagar Thakkur and the SDO, Sri Mandol, visited his wife and requested her to collect the corpse of her husband from the district morgue. Gangaram had died in police custody.

When the corpse was brought home the villagers were stunned. The body was mutilated beyond recognition. After his body was cremated about 750 gm of bullets, slugs and burnt-out cartidges of a 12-bore gun were recovered.

His story is part of the unwritten tribal history of this Jharkhand area. The issue, as always, is 'land' and survival. Gangaram's land would go under the Bihar Government's prestigous Rs 480 crore Kuju Dam, part of the Subarnarekha Valley Project, financed by the World Bank and other international monetary agencies. Gangaram's village will be one among the 110 to be submerged.

The villagers knew nothing about this dam, but work had started. In Telai village, quarters are being constructed. The villagers under the leadership of the local Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) secretary, Sri Radhe Sumbrai, have formed a Kadkai Ban Sangarsh Samiti of which Gangaram was the general secretary. The organisation is spearheaded by a women's front.

On March 16 the JMM called a mass meeting, addressed, among others, by Shibu Soren, MP. Com. A.K. Roy could not attend due to commitments in Parliament. About 15,000 people attended it.

The local administration asked Patna for instructions and orders came to crush the movement. What better way is there to crush a movement than killing

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its leaders and creating panic? This is the logic of Sri Jaganath Mishra's Government.

On March 22, in the early hours of the morning, a police party with Bihar Military Police surrounded Beta village on the Chaibasa-Jamshedpur Road. They were looking for Sidiu Tiu, president of the Sangarsh Samiti, and Sura Purty, another activist. They could not find them, so they looted and completely destroyed their houses. The women who protested, including Sidiu's sisters, were mercilessly beaten up. The BMP even attempted to cut off the breasts of one of them. She escaped with a cut.

When on April 4 the police broke open the door of his house, Gangaram who was sleeping in the open cowshed thought that dacoits had come (here the dacoits wear police uniform when they raid). He picked up a knife from his house and the police at once shot him in the legs. Wounded, he fell. They arrested him and looted all his valuables: a sewing machine, a transistor, a cycle, some gold ornaments, his 12-bore single-barrel gun and its licence with four spare cartridges.

As the returning police party reached Tuibena village, a crowd gathered. They saw the police beating their leader Gangaram in the van and started shouting at the police to stop. The crowd grew bigger and demanded that their leader be released. The magistrate, seeing the situation getting worse, quietly sped away in his jeep leaving the people at the mercy of the BMP. When the BMP saw that they had been abandoned by the magistrate they fired shots over the heads of the villagers. The villagers replied with arrows, three policemen were injured. The crowd ran away in panic. When the police party reached Soso village the villagers saw Gangaram screaming for help. Some villagers say they saw him being bayonetted. An hour later when the battalion reached Chaibasa, they threw Gangram's bullet-ridden body in the sardar thana. The postmortem report is being kept a secret. The administration now claims that Gangaram was a criminal. The Cheif Secretary in Patna the next day echoed the same allegation. With no case against him Gangaram suddenly became a 'notorious criminal'.

A week later, on April 11, this correspondent was in the village for investigation. Warning notes from a beating drum could be heard. The police were in Tuibena village, destroying houses, looting them and beating women. That afternoon drum beats were again heard from Barajaipur village, the police were there. When any village is attacked the drum is beaten to signal danger and appeal for help. In half an hour they are able to gather thousands of men, women and children. Shibu Soren, MP, at the mass meeting warned that Kuju Dam, if constructed would be on the blood of tribals.

The administration is in a state of panic. Who will reason with them and ask them to sit and talk to the tribals? With Kuju all furture prosepcts of a dialogue might be doomed.

TRIBAL AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS IN CHOTANAGPUR

K.S. SINGH

THIS PAPER explores the historical development of tribal autonomy movements in Chotanagpur, sets in depth the goal, strategy and mobilisation of the Jharkhand movement as seen at the micro level in 1977–79, and analyses the ideology and structure of the various autonomy movements in their different phases.[1]

I

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Chotanagpur, where the tribal system had survived relatively intact, became the centre of a dynamic separatist movement due to a combination of many reasons. Firstly, Chotanagpur was the most advanced of the tribal regions in point of literacy, political consciousness, and industrial progress. Secondly, the major tribal communities were concentrated in a geographically distinct region; they were not scattered like the Bhils and Gonds over different political and territorial systems. Thirdly, Christianity was a strong force in Chotanagpur; the major tribes of Chotanagpur became very effectively evangelised. There was no other region of tribal middle India which witnessed such a spread of Christianity. As Christianity spread, it performed many roles; it gave the tribes a sense of identity; it gave them a history and a myth; it accentuated the notion of private rights in land; it promoted education and medical care; it also emphasised among the converts a sense of separateness from the rest. Fourthly, the Chotanagpur tribes had a tradition of militant and organised struggles going back over a hundred years; struggles organised around land and not forests as elsewhere. The incidence of proletarianisation was small when compared with that among the Bhils. Fifthly, there was a rich corpus of anthropological literature to draw upon in order to create a new sense of history to legitimise the tribals' search for identity. Sarat Chandra Roy gave eloquent expression to the tribals' demand for separation; his ideas and draftsmanship left their imprint on the memoranda submitted by tribal organisations before different government

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bodies. He was not a closet anthropologist but rather the first ideologue and active protagonist of the demand for tribal autonomy. Lastly, Chotnagpur was exposed to the operation of many interests: the Bengalis formed a sizeable professional and landowning community, and the Muslims were a significant trading and professional interest. The Bengali–Bihari controversy over employment in the late 1930s and the Muslim League politics also affected the development of the tribal separatist movement.

We shall briefly describe the different phases through which the separatist movement passed and how it was transformed into a regional movement.

The first phase, starting at the turn of the present century, saw the rise of the institutions designed to introduce reforms and stimulate development among the tribes mainly along denominational and partly inter-denominational lines. The leadership came from the missionaries and Christian students. The missionaries pioneered temperance movements to check the evil of drinking among tribals and formed cooperative societies to free them from the clutches of money-lenders. Of the latter movement, the most notable was the Roman Catholic Cooperative Society, founded in 1906, which had a considerable effect in 'civilising' the aboriginals and raising their standard of life generally. Societies were also formed for the promotion of education. Led by Christian teachers and students they constituted the matrix of the political movement which was spearheaded by educated Christians later. As early as in 1898, the Christian Association had been formed by the Lutheran graduates for the promotion of education. In 1918, the Catholics joined it to form the Christian College Union. In 1912, J. Bartholomew of the Anglican Mission, on his return from the Students' Conference at Dacca in 1911–12, founded a branch of the Dacca Students Union to raise funds for the education of poor Christian students. The Munda-Oraon Education Conference (Siksha Sabha), founded by a non-Christian leader, and the Ranchi Union also worked towards promoting education, but chiefly among urban tribals.

Inter-denominational and also, occasionally, pan-tribal solidarity for the socio-economic uplift of the region as a whole found expression in the formation of some societies. In 1912, the Chotanagpur Charitable Association was organised by all aboriginals, Christians and non-Christians, to raise funds for students. Voices were raised for forging unity among the people of Chotanagpur; for abolition of differences between Christian and non-Christian tribals, as also among all tribals such as the Munda, Oraon, Tamaria, Mahali, Lohar and Panre. A new sentiment was in the air, "All Adivasis are one", "Adivasis of lower category such as Lohar, Panre, Bhuniya and Tamaria should not be looked down upon", etc. This pan-tribal sentiment was, however, weak.

When the era of constitutional reforms dawned, and demands for the promotion and protection of regional and sectarian interests grew, the educated

Christian tribals—mostly students belonging to the Lutheran and Anglican Missions—took a hand in organising the Chotanagpur Improvement Society at the instance of the Anglican Bishop of Ranchi. A Munda led this interdenominational (Anglican-Lutheran) body, which voiced its concern in 1916 over the absence of security for tribals and stressed the need for the preservation of tribal identity in the changing political context. "Whatever may be done in the way of reform elsewhere", it urged, "the aborigines of Chotanagpur may be left to the administration of European officers".[2] The Society also offered various suggestions for economic advancement of the tribal community. The Society, however, became more or less moribund by 1920.

The second phase, which lasted from 1920 to 1938, was dominated by the revived activities of the Chotanagpur Improvement Society (Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj). A tribal urban middle class was forming. The Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj embodied inter-denominational unity of the missions for political purposes and, unlike in the first phase, it set up a sustained operation. It was led by tribal teachers and catechists, and sought to secure employment for educated tribals, reservation in the services and legislative bodies, and formation of a sub-state joined to Bengal or Orissa. While it tried to spread its activities to villages, it remained essentially an urban movement. This period also witnessed the development of mini-revivalism among tribes, very much on the lines of the Indian renaissance which stressed return to the golden age of the community, and formulated an individualistic approach to reform and service to the community. It is to this phase that we can trace the revival of *Parha* (ancient tribal assemblies) and the discovery of lost 'scripts' said to have been used by the tribes in their heyday. The Samaj was able to focus the attention of the authorities on the problems of the tribes. The Simon Commission and the Government responded to the tribal problems, and sought their solution within the framework of the existing political structure.

The third phase, from 1938 to 1947, saw the rise of a militant movement under the Adivasi Mahasabha. The immediate cause of the formation of the Mahasabha was the experience of the first elections held in 1937 under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Congress swept the polls. This persuaded Christian as also non-Christian tribals to join forces; the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj and other organisations thus merged to form the Adivasi Mahasabha. This was a wider movement, commanded a larger political base, and possessed pan-tribal composition and objective. Two other factors which influenced the formation of the Mahasabha were the Bengali–Bihari controversy and Muslim League politics. The Bengalis felt that their interests in Bihar were not safe and, therefore, they should combine with the tribals to form a separate state. The Muslim League, in the mid-1940s, played with the idea of forming a corridor passing through the tribal areas to link the proposed areas which would constitute East and West Pakistan. They sympathised with, and gave financial support to

the Adivasi Mahasabha. The Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj and the Adivasi Mahasabha both were 'loyalist'. Jaipal Singh, President of Adivasi Mahasabha, gave support to the British war effort to which the Congress was opposed and played a considerable role in recruiting tribals for the British army. The Adivasi Mahasabha was led by professional political workers, some of them highly educated and articulate. It became a Chotanagpur movement extending over both urban and rural areas. Also, it did not confine its scope to only the Ranchi tribals. It did not demand merely the formation of a sub-state but complete separation from Bihar. A series of violent incidents occurred during this period which underlined the militant nature of the movement. It remained outside the mainstream of nationalist politics and the freedom movement and by 1947 the militancy had not paid off; the Adivasi Mahasabha was routed by the Congress in the elections held in 1946. The link with the Muslim League was broken, and the Bengali–Bihari controversy tapered off.

The fourth phase, from 1949 to 1963, saw the rise of the Jharkhand party. The Adivasi Mahasabha was wound up and this new regional party created. The two factors which contributed to the formation of the party were the experiences of the failure of the militant movement and more important, the framing of the Constitution for India. The Fifth and the Sixth Schedule recognised the tribals as a minority and gave them more than the anthropologists and the British Administrators had prepared them for. The framers of the Constitution also gave the country a secular system, which the missionaries and the minorities found reassuring. Further, it was discovered that the Census of 1941 had given an exaggerated figure of the tribal population in Chotanagpur which had sustained the Adivasi Mahasabha movement. The Census of 1951, like the Census of 1931, showed that the tribals were not a very large community; in fact, they had never been a majority in the Chotanagpur region. Therefore, the Jharkhand party was thrown open, at least in principle as embodied in its constitution, to all Chotanagpuris. There was thus a transition from ethnicity to regionalism as the formative factor in the movement. This was partly in keeping with the larger political and secular stance current in those days that language and not ethnicity should determine the formation of a province.

Some elements of the Congress Socialist Party and quite a few members of the non-Bihari money-lending community, who could be identified as the *dikus* (the alien), joined the party. The concept of the Jharkhand was enlarged to include all the regions that once formed part of the Chotanagpur administrative division. Thus the tracts inhabited by the Chotanagpur tribals which formed parts of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were included in the Jharkhand. The means adopted by the party to achieve its goal were constitutional. Though Christians dominated the movement and provided the leadership there was an unmistakable tribal core to it. This will be evident from the fact that the Jharkhand party polled nearly 750,000 votes in the 1952 and 1957 elections.

The years from 1952 to 1957, which cut across the two elections were in many ways the peak period for the Jharkhand Movement. The Jharkhand Party emerged as the major party in the Chotanagpur-Santhal Parganas region. The second general election saw it extend its influence in Orissa, where it captured five seats and held the balance of power in the state politics which were plagued by instability. It displayed remarkable unity, laid down the law in the tribal region, could mobilise thousands of people and take out mammoth processions at short notice. However, the States Reorganisation Commission in the mid-1950s turned down the plea for a separate Jharkhand State.

The late 1950 saw the decline of the party, which can be attributed to many factors. Firstly, there was the growing impact of development programmes on Chotanagpur and the increasing involvement of the tribals in the developmental process. Secondly, because of the competition for better educational facilities, employment opportunities and control over development inputs and resources, the split deepened between the advanced Christian and relatively backward non-Christian tribals. The non-Christian tribals started looking mainly to the Congress or the Jana Sangh for support among the many All-India parties that appeared on the scene and strengthened their presence (Congress, Jana Sangh, Swatantra, CPI). Thirdly, the experience of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, which had both given representation to tribal interests in the government and the council of ministers, had made it clear that all that the tribals needed was a share in power in order to protect their interests—which could as well be secured by joining the Congress or by coming to some kind of understanding with it, as in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Fourthly, the Jharkhand party did not have any agrarian programme, its leaders were town-based professionals who had little feel for rural problems. The leaders, as a matter of fact, were drawn mainly from the higher strata of tribal society; the Munda (village headman) and Mankis (head of Munda) in the Ho region; the Manjhi and Parganaites in the Santhal region; and educated Christians from the Munda and Oraon areas. Its ally was the Janata Party which represented the zamindars of Chotanagpur; in 1962 the Jharkhand Party accepted as member an ex-zamindar of Chotanagpur and appointed a secretary from the money-lending community. The agrarian situation continued to deteriorate; radical measures were needed to remedy the lot of the tribal masses; measures which the Jharkhand Party could not provide. In fact part of the Congress success later can be explained by its '*garibi hatao*' programme. Lastly, there was dissidence within the party arising out of the style and performance of the leadership, particularly at the time of the reorganisation of states (1955–56). At that time the Jharkhand Party not only failed to press its demand but also saw a sizeable chunk of the 'Jharkhand' being given away to West Bengal. The party machinery was weak; it had always been handicapped by lack of funds. In fact, only a liberal supply of money could sustain an organisation which never functioned

efficiently at the higher level. The search for money led to strange alignments with elements such as the *dikus*, the traditional enemies of the Adivasis. The non-Bihari *dikus*, as mentioned earlier, had a vested interest in the movement to keep the Bihar *dikus* away. Party support was also given to many 'outsiders'. All this created tensions within the party. This became evident when the party was wiped out in the mid-term election in Orissa. But that was not all, a still greater shock was in store for the Jharkhand Party.

In the 1962 elections the number of votes polled by the Jharkhand Party was slashed to almost half of that registered in 1957. This reduced its seats to twenty in the Bihar Assembly and was a sharp reminder to the leaders that its stance of isolation, either ethnic or regional, could no longer be maintained. The merger of the Jharkhand party with the Congress, effected in June 1963, was thus a natural corollary of the operation of the above-mentioned forces.

The fifth phase, lasted from 1963 to 1975, after the fourth general elections when the objective conditions for an autonomy movement were present but there was no unified political party. The Jharkhand Party was fragmented: the parent body had broken up into smaller parties of tribal sub-ethnic groups none of which packed any punch. The Jharkhand was like a splintered glass; there was a movement, but no composite party.

This phase had many interesting features. There was a distinct radicalisation of politics which came about largely as a result of the articulation of the agrarian factor in the tribal situation. The Jharkhand in its constitutional role as a regional party had played down agrarian issue. Meanwhile the agrarian situation became worse. The incidence of alienation of land belonging to tribals increased; more and more educated tribal youths were seeking employment; construction of industrial complexes resulted in the displacement of tribals from their land, and their absorption into industrial culture was slow. Though there was some development in tribal regions, it was on a smaller scale than elsewhere; it was not enough to meet the rising aspirations of the new generation of the tribal community. No doubt, the participation of a section of tribal leadership in the government resulted in distinct improvement in some matters; more tribals were employed in the government than before; the quotas reserved for them were, by and large, filled; more attention was paid to their region, and there was also a larger flow of funds. But evidently this was not enough. The 1971 Census disclosed an alarming state of affairs. The percentage of the scheduled tribes in the population of the districts of tribal Bihar had fallen sharply in the decade 1961–71: in Ranchi from 61.61 to 58.08, in Singhbhum from 47.31 to 46.12, and in the Santhal Parganas from 38.24 to 36.22. This was not only because of the slow growth rate of the tribal population, which was in fact among the lowest, but largely due to the heavy influx of people from other parts of Bihar. This trend persists.

The radicalisation was also due to the influence of the Naxalite movement: the infiltration of extremist elements in tribal organisations and the entry of the leftist parties in the region. The last had generally kept out of tribal politics so far their interest had been limited to the workers engaged in the mining and industries. The leftist orientation to tribal politics meant putting a greater stress on the political education of workers and agrarian issues, linking local and all-India politics, militancy of means, and better organisation. All-India leftist parties became increasingly committed to the concept of tribal autonomy as distinct from that of the formation of a tribal state.

However, as the political character of the Jharkhand Movement became diluted the agrarian aspects came into prominence. The formal political slogan of a separate state was not given up, but the emphasis shifted to the conditions of the tribals, the nature and consequences of exploitation, isolation and neglect. There is a better articulated demand for a dominant role for the tribals in regional administration, for better educational facilities, and more employment opportunities. There is also a demand for restoration of alienated land provision for legal and institutional safeguards to protect tribal interests and to end all forms of exploitation. All parties working in Chotanagpur united in stressing the regional factor.

We may conceptualise the developments during this phase in terms of (i) fragmentation of the tribal party and factionalisation of tribal politics, (ii) rise of urban pressure groups, and (iii) political extremism, agrarian radicalism and cultural revivalism.

Fragmentation and Factionalisation

The merger of the Jharkhand Party with the Congress in 1963 shocked the hard core of the Jharkhandis, who were keen to maintain a separate political identity, and sections of the dominant Christian elite and missionaries who feared loss of the leverage they exercised. It was also stated that the merger had not been ratified by the general body of the party and was, therefore, technically, defective. In fact, no sooner was the merger effected than it began to be criticised. The behaviour of the leadership, which had sought the merger and benefited from it, did nothing to allay the criticism. Mutual bickering and personal rivalries delayed the implementation of the terms of the merger and its consolidation. The attitude of those leaders who lost or relinquished office become ambivalent. The Jharkhand factions were in disarray. As many as nine groups sprang up to fill the vacuum created by the merger, and the main body of the Jharkhand split up into four factions in the late 1960s.

The processes of the split within the split are outlined here. During the years from 1963 to 1968 as many as three groups claimed to represent the Jharkhand Party. After the Party was decimated at the polls in the Fourth

General Election in 1967 attempts were made to unify the factions but a further split could not be averted. A faction of the party refused to recognise the 71-man Executive Committee of the Central Party. On 28 December 1967 the All-India Jharkhand Party was formed. Its first act was to declare the merger with the Congress effected in 1963 unconstitutional and void as it was not approved by the general body. This party split again in 1969–70 owning to the temperamental incompatibility of and conflicts between its leaders. In 1968 the Santhals separated from the Chotanagpur tribals and formed their own party, the Bihar Prant Hul Jharkhand on 28 December, which was named after the Santhals Insurrection (locally called *Hul).* This was the culmination of the longstanding grievance nursed by the Santhals that though they were more numerous than the Mundas and Oraons, they did not command adequate influence in the Jharkhand Movement.

Rise of Urban Pressure Groups

The rise of the urban pressure groups led by the educated tribals, mostly Christian, at industrial complexes to demand jobs for tribal youths in administration and industrial undertakings, also occurred during the years from 1963 to 1968. The process of the formation and the development of the pressure groups was epitomised in the Birsa Seva Dal (BSD) which emerged as the most important of the urban groups. It was essentially a socio-political organisation and not a political party as it did not contest any election. There were two influences at work which led to its formation. Firstly the missionaries of different denominations had been shaken by the fragmentation of the political structure of the Jharkhand Party and were dismayed at the erosion of Christian leadership as revealed by the results of the general election of 1967. Therefore, they felt a new organisation had to be established to safeguard the interests of the educated tribals in urban areas. Secondly, the extremist elements were fairly active in seeking to establish a base of influence in the tribal region; managed to influence the BSD ideology, programmes and methods considerably. The co-existence between the pro-missionary and CPM-L elements was not always happy. The two worked together for some time but subsequently there was a split. The name of the tribal Birsa Munda, who led the uprising of 1899–1900 against the missionaries and the British Government, used in Birsa Seva Dal was, therefore, a little ironical but it served as a draw nevertheless.

The effective life-span of the BSD movement was very short. There were two phases in its development. The first from 1967 to 1969 was a militant phase. Violent methods of struggle to secure tribal rights were advocated. Meetings, processions of the youth armed with bows and arrows, and celebrations of the Birsa Day, were the modes of mobilisation. The BSD demanded creation of a separate state, expulsion of the non-Chotanagpuris, agrarian reforms and measures against money-lenders.

After 1967 the second phase of the BSD movement began. The influence of CPM-L and the missionaries waned. BSD pledged itself to play a constitutional role and adopt peaceful methods of struggle. Violent incidents ceased. But the organisation was soon undermined by internal conflicts, and some of the BSD leaders sought refuge in the Jharkhand splinter groups. The BSD almost ceased to exist. Recently, however, it has converted itself into a political party.

Political Extremism, Agrarian Radicalism and Cultural Revivalism

Political extremism is reflected in the formation, in 1973, of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). The objective of the JMM was to form a separate Jharkhand state, end exploitation of tribals by non-tribals, and secure preferential treatment for the sons of the soil in the matter of employment.[3] In contrast, the BSD, despite its attempt to establish a rapport with the tribal peasants, remained essentially an urban movement.

Agrarian radicalism was best seen among the Santhals who were more sensitive to the agrarian question and militant about it. The agrarian movement among the Santhals—organised by the JMM—came to a head at harvest time in those areas of Bihar (particularly in Purnea and Santal Parganas) where Santhals are engaged as labourers and crop-sharers. The most important series of incidents occurred in 1968 in the Santhal Parganas, when the Santhals forcibly harvested crops standing on their land illegally occupied by money-lenders. Yet it is striking that there was little bloodshed. Such incidents became part of the agrarian landscape of Bihar.

The JMM launched an operation to recover alienated land from money-lenders and big peasants in North Chotanagpur, an area which was not the stronghold of the Jharkhand Party. There were 120 violent incidents including looting of crops or forcible harvesting of crops standing on lands in illegal possession of money-lenders, attacks on 'exploiters,' arson, and murder. The largest number of incidents (69) occured in 1974, since then the number of incidents has declined sharply.

The Mahtos' alliance with Santhals gives the JMM an extra-ethnic dimension; there are the possibilities of the Santhal movement developing into a pan-Santhal awakening cutting across the Santhal areas of Bihar and West Bengal. The Hul Jharkhand has supported it. The Santhals of Hazaribagh, Giridih and Dhanbad have formed a common front with those of the Santhal Parganas.

Cultural revivalism is also to be seen in overall working of the JMM. Elements of the ancient tribal self-government have been revived. The *Baisi* (assembly) in the Santhal Pargana functions as a court without fees or pleaders and deals out simple justice. A volunteer force had been raised. Subscriptions are being locally collected. Tribal traditions of collective farming and preserving

of jungles, pastures and common land have also been revived; a common grain pool has been created.

II

GOAL, STRATEGY AND MOBILISATION

The Jharkhand Party began steadily losing ground in the general elections ever since 1961. The Jharkhand Party did not contest the Lok Sabha poll as a party in March 1977. In the elections to the Bihar Assembly in May 1977, all four splinter groups of the Jharkhand Party polled only 81,227 votes as against 3,61,187 votes in 1972. The Janata wave swept the tribal regions. In spite of this, a militant phase of the Jharkhand Movement started in October 1977. It originated in the statements made by late Jayaprakash Narayanan, about the advisability of the formation of small states, and by the Home Minister, Shri Charan Singh, about the reorganisation of the states. These triggered off developments at two levels in Chotanagpur. First, all parties, including the Janata but excluding the Jharkhand Party, came together to demand to separate state for the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region. Second, the Jharkhand Party demanded the formation of the Jharkhand State consisting not only of the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region of Bihar, but also of the adjoining areas of Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.

In the course of this phase of the movement for a separate state from October 1977 to June 1978, 46 events, incidents were reported from all over South Chotanagpur, out of which there were 25 from Ranchi, 18 from Singhbhum, and 3 from Palamau. Incidents, including demonstrations, *gheraos*, etc., took place in April (12), May (10) and June (14). While no event of any significance occurred in Palamau and Ranchi districts in the month of June 1978, except the celebration of the Birsa Day on 9 June 1978, 11 incidents were reported from Singhbhum (excluding Jamshedpur). Next only to Ranchi town, Jamshedpur was an active centre of movement; slogans appeared on the walls, the Birsa Seva Dal was active behind the so-called encroachments, and funds were raised. In Ranchi district the incidents were concentrated in the Munda region, particularly Khunti(11) followed by Simdega (6), Gumla (3) and the Sadar (5) subdivisions. About 19 police stations (thanas) were affected in the Khunti and Simdega subdivisions and of them, 6 were severely affected. Among the Mundas, the Lutheran Christians formed the backbone of the movement.

The issues against which the leaders of the movement agitated were (a) acquisition of land for large irrigation projects and firing ranges, (b) survey and settlement operations, which were held up, camps closed down, etc., (c) collection of loans, rent and cooperative dues, which were resisted, (d) nationalisation of forest produce and collection of *kendu* leaves, and

(e) panchayat elections which they boycotted in two blocks (Torpa and Rania). Forest godowns were looted and stacks of *kendu* leaves burnt; a rest house was forcibly occupied; demonstrations were held and processions taken out at district and subdivisional headquarters. Forcible collection of subscription from contractors was reported from the Chakradharpur region. The local government officers were *gheraoed,* intimidated and demoralised. The authorities instituted 13 cases against 58 persons who were active in the movement.

This phase of the movement for a separate state reached its culmination in the Ranchi *band* of 12 May 1978. The All India Jharkhand Party Conference held on 21 May 1978, declared that if the demand for Jharkhand State was not conceded by 15 August 1978, it would begin a non-cooperation movement. No tax would be paid to Government; no loan would be repaid; no mineral or forest produce would be allowed to be exported from Chotanagpur; the panchayat elections would not be permitted to be held, and if Mukhias and Sarpanches were elected, they would be *gherao*ed and forced to resign; the settlement operation would be stopped and, finally, no project or dam would be permitted to be constructed. It was also proposed to make the party more broad-based and mobilise youth, including students, farmers and women. However, in a fever of excitement, some agitated processionists indulged in acts of looting and brickbatting which alienated the people in Ranchi town; while the brutal murder of a money-lender in Simdega alarmed a section of money-lenders, some of whom were financing the movement.

Although there was sympathy for the movement among the tribals all over Chotanagpur, and in all parties, and also among some sections of the non-tribals living in Chotanagpur, their support was not well articulated and their participation in the movement varied in range. For instance, the Chotanagpur Santhal Parganas Alag Prant Sangharsh Samiti was formed in October 1977 as a platform for all parties, but it was short lived and soon virtually collapsed. The two militants groups active in the agitation and involved in almost all incidents were the All India Jharkhand Party and the Chotanagpur Chatra Sangharsh Samiti. The first had the backing of all Christian tribals, in particular the Lutherans who provided support, shelter, etc.; the Roman Catholics and Anglicans were not as active. The second, the youth organisation, which was exclusively an urban group consisting of the youth belonging to all Christian and non-Christian communities, staged an ugly demonstration at Netarhat on 21 May 1978 where the Bihar Ministers were staying. Some Jharkhand leaders disassociated themselves from such militant activities and called upon their people to act in a constitutional manner. The non-Christian tribal leaders of Congress (I) were also active—some addressed meetings from a common political platform and demanded a separate party unit for the region but other members of the Congress (I) were against this movement. The tribal members of the Janata Party withdrew their support from the movement and ceased to

be vocal. After the meeting at Netarhat, they kept out of the movement and did not join hands with the militant groups. A couple of Yuva Janata Units, however, voiced their support for a separate state. This movement was also being supported by a section of the Muslims. Among the regional parties supporting it, was the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. At the all India level, the Congress (I) did not support it and the CPI was in favour of tribal autonomy and adopted a resolution to that effect.

Under the impact of the movement, collection of rent, cooperative dues, etc., declined in Khunti. However, despite the attempt to boycott and disturb the panchayat elections, these passed off peacefully though the polling was low at some places and in one panchayat, Karra (Thetaitanagar), there was no voter. No MLA was forced to resign on or after 9 June 1978, i.e. Birsa Day, as announced by the two militant groups. The day was celebrated officially for the first time with the Chief Minister and Finance Minister attending the celebrations.

As the movement progressed the forest question assumed increasing importance. The issues agitating the tribals in this connection were:

(a) payment of remunerative prices for lac and minor forest produce,

(b) payment of compensation for the damage done to the crops by elephants,

(c) payment of appropriate wages for labour in the forest, and

(d) recognition of their traditional rights to reclaim lands by clearing jungles in the areas outside the reserved forests.

To add fuel to the fire, the tribals were also instigated by the forest contractors to agitate against the Forest Development Corporation; this appears to have destroyed the traditional nexus between the money-lenders and the tribals. Paradoxically, the tribal leaders' demand for Jharkhand and the traders' agitation against nationalisation of minor forest produce coalesced in a joint front in August 1978. There were violent protests against the nationalisation of minor forest produce and the operation of the Forest Development Corporation even though the latter paid good wages and generated a record number of man days of employment. In the wake of the agitation, the Government decided to deschedule a few items of minor forest produce from the list of items reserved for purchase by the Forest Development Corporation.

Bands of Munda Christians obstructed felling of trees and plantations by the Forest Department in the Porahat region of Singhbhum district. They *gheraoed* and assaulted the forest officials; they burnt down godowns of *kendu* leaves in Thetaitanagar and Jaldega Blocks of the Simdega subdivision, which caused a loss of Rs. 5 lakhs to the State exchequer. This trend culminated in a violent demonstration at Simdega on 3 August 1978. The mob attacked and

burnt down two Forest Rangers' quarters-cum-office, and attempted to break open the jail. In an attempt to control the mob the police resorted to firing which resulted in the loss of two lives and injuries to two other persons.

Since the demand for the establishment of a separate state had not been met till 15 August 1978 preparations to move into the next phase were intensified.

The Jharkhand Party launched the direct action programme by observing a day of mourning to make the point that independence was not complete without tribal autonomy. Meetings were held, subscriptions were raised—sometimes forcibly—pamphlets issued, slogans written on walls and buses, etc. Though no further incidence of attack on Government offices occurred some employees of the forest department left the villages for fear of their lives and took shelter at block offices.

The second phase of its direct action consisted of *dharna* and observance of a two-day fast on August 25 and 26. The number of those offering *dharna* gradually increased from 359 to 1,839. About 68 offices were affected by the *dharnas*, the majority of them being the block offices (27). The other offices involved were Central Government offices (4), State Government offices(5), Commissioner's office, Deputy Commissioners' offices (3), SDOs' offices (7), thanas (9), railway stations (7) and post offices (5). The party was able to mobilise a large number of young men and women, particularly in the Munda belts of Ranchi and Singhbhum districts, and in the industrial areas of Jamshedpur to offer *dharna*. From the Murhu and Bandgaon regions *dharnas* by 200-300 people were reported. This tactic was followed by *gheraos* designed to paralyse the working of the offices at all levels. However, there was no attempt to physically obstruct the functioning of the offices, with the exception of Kolebira in Ranchi district, Chaibassa, Jamshedpur and a couple of other places in Singhbhum district.

A total of 103 persons were arrested, 68 in Singhbhum and 35 in Ranchi. Among the persons arrested in Singhbhum district, were the top leaders of the Jharkhand Party. At Daltonganj there was also an attempt at *gherao* in a couple of offices but there was no arrest. The *gherao* programme in Ranchi was a flop; even the resistance offered by the people assembled to *gherao* was merely a token gesture.

Another phase of the direct action programme was started at mid-night of 31 August 1978. This was intended to obstruct the movement of traffic on the G.T. road and on the rail line from Chakulia to Rourkela and from Bano to Rourkela. There were also two minor attempts to obstruct traffic at Ghatsila on the rail track on 1 September 1978, and at Bandgaon on 3 September 1978. The crowds dispersed as the police approached them and so this phase also completely failed.

The last phase was concerned with the organisation of *bandh*s in all towns of the Chotanagpur division. The Jharkhand launched the '*bandh* phase' of 'direct action' in all cities and towns of the South Chotanagpur division after 2 September 1978. However, the call for a *bandh* in Chaibassa for 3 September 1978 did not produce any result. On 12 September 1978, some members of the party took out a procession at Chandil and compelled the shopkeepers to close their shops. When the call for *bandh* failed to make any impact, the party decided to concentrate on Ranchi, and obstruct the flow of traffic along Ranchi-Chaibassa road, passing through the Murhu section on 15 September 1978. They took out a procession in violation of section 144 Cr.P.C. on the afternoon of 14 September and called upon the people to observe *bandh* on 15 September. Supporters of the Jharkhand Party, in groups of 20 to 50 people, came out at various points on the Main Road and the Purulia Road in Ranchi town early in the morning and tried to obstruct the flow of traffic. As a result, mini buses went off the road. The missionary schools were closed, but the Government Schools functioned. Reports of the agitators trying to stop trains at Karra (Khunti) and Simdega were also received. A very serious incident took place at Binda in the Murhu sector on the Ranchi-Chaibassa road, when about 500 tribal boys felled 150 sal trees and laid them across the road to obstruct the traffic. As a result of this, the traffic was suspended and could be restored only next day. *Jharkhand Times* of 17 September 1978, admitted that direct action programme except at a few places, like Chaibassa, Jamshedpur, Bandgaon, Murhu and Torpa had not succeeded according to their expectations, and called upon the party members to learn from their failures and weaknesses. However, it derived some satisfaction from the partial success of the Ranchi *bandh*.

It was a combination of the policy of non-interference with peaceful demonstrations and the firm handling of any situation arising out of the violation of the law which isolated the Jharkhand Party. Not only did the other elements of the Jharkhand Movement keep away from it, even the newly formed Yuva Sangh of the students, which held a conference at Chaibassa on 27 August, and a secret meeting at Jamshedpur on 28 August, disclaimed association with it. The All India Jharkhand Party too reportedly planned its movement of non-cooperation separately.

The threat of direct action having failed, the Jharkhand Party switched over to political action, and called a conference of regional parties at Jamshedpur on September 20 to evolve a strategy for the achievement of the Jharkhand state. Only the Lutherans belonging to the German Mission were active in this movement, the Roman Catholics and Anglicans kept away. The local church and the Mundas and Mankis belonging to the German Mission reportedly sent out instructions to their followers to offer dharna and gherao in local offices.

Many groups came together to demand a separate Jharkhand state and formed a common platform with its own flag in September 1978. They held a big meeting at Ranchi on 15 October which was attended by the representatives of the Jharkhand Party, the Hul Jharkhand, the Indian Muslim League, the Congress (Reddy group), Birsa Seva Dal and the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

An important trend that emerged towards the end of 1978 centred round the activities of the extremists in the Munda-Ho areas of the Singhbhum district bordering Ranchi. There was an extensive infiltration in the area by extremist elements. Resistance to the plantation of teak became the symbol of movement. Teak plantation in this region is about a hundred years old, and in 1977–78 the Forest Development Corporation undertook to plant teak in 2000 hectares of the *sal* forests. Rumours were spread that teak was replacing *sal*, considered to be a sacred tree, and that nothing grew under teak, not even grass, roots and tubers, on which wild life and the tribal people subsisted. It was alleged that as elephants did not eat the teak leaves they were forced to seek food in areas under crops where their depredations increased. The agitationists also contended that fruit bearing trees were being cut down to establish teak nurseries thus depriving the tribal of a source of food.

It was mainly in the areas where the Forest Development Corporation operated that the agitation centred. The agitationists cut off all communications to this region by blocking roads and damaging bridges. They began to destroy nurseries, 11 of which were damaged in the two divisions of the Forest Development Corporation, causing a loss of about Rs. 6 lakhs. Felling of *sal* trees was justified by the agitationists on the ground that they enjoyed the traditional right to reclaim land for cultivation. They contended that this traditional right to reclaim land as a Mundari *Khuntkattidar* (the privileged tenant) had been given by the former zamindar of Porahat but was not recorded as such during the last survey and settlement operations. They also claimed that all forest areas constituted the Jharkhand, and so they had the right to fell trees to reclaim land. Felling of trees of the protected forests occurred over an area of about 300 acres entailing a loss of Rs. 4.10 lakhs. As the agitators collected in large numbers to fell trees and cut off communications, there was a confrontation with the police. This was the reason for the first firing on 6 November 1978 in Goelkira. Another problem was to round up agitators who were wanted in various cases. It was difficult to locate them and when they were arrested, they offered resistance which often turned violent. This led to the second firing on 25 November 1978.

The political movement almost died down in 1979, though meetings and demonstrations continue to be held. The Jharkhand Prant Sanyukt Morcha claimed the support of the CPI which, in deference to the sentiments of its local cadre, supported the case for tribal autonomy. Among other parties

which pledged their support were the Muslim League, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, CP(ML) and the Birsa Seva Dal which became a political party during this period. However, this morcha broke up after the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha disassociated itself from it in April 1979. The JMM became particularly active in the Santhal Parganas as mentioned earlier, where it organised a movement against money-lenders and traders and resorted to forcible cultivation and harvesting of crops in the lands taken away from the tribals. The activities of the Jharkhand Prant Sanyukt Morcha dwindled.

The Jharkhand Party remained fragmented. The All India Jharkhand Party, which moved closer to the Janata, won one parliamentary seat, while the Jharkhand Party won another in Ranchi and the Marxist Coordination Committee, Dhanbad the third. The Jharkhand Party boycotted the State Assembly elections in 1980 in protest against the denial of the cook symbol, but its candidates remained in the field. The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress Party continued to dominate the strongholds of the old Jharkhand Party. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha emerged as a major political force in the industrial mining belt of Chotanagpur, and in state politics, particularly since the 1980 general elections. It captured 13 seats and polled 3.38 lakh votes, while the old Jharkhand Party or parties could win only one seat and poll 33, 469 votes. The JMM had reached an electoral understanding with the Congress (I).

III

IDEOLOGY, STRUCTURE AND GEOGRAPHY

While the Jharkhand Party or parties remained committed to the concept of a Jharkhand State, the JMM projected a radical ideology, the Jharkhandi is a producer irrespective of caste, tribe or nation residing in the Jharkhand. The Jharkhand is described as an internal colony which is being exploited by outsiders. Even though the region accounts for 28 per cent of minerals, it avails itself of only 15 per cent of the state's budget for development. The development process itself is exploitative of the local inhabitants and outsiders have moved in to seize all opportunities of employment. There is a Jharkhand nationality and as in all nationality questions, self-determination is the key element in the social formation. It is only with a separate Jharkhand that the nationality question can be satisfactorily resolved for the benefit of the exploited and depressed working classes. The Jharkhand must therefore turn into a *Lalkhand,* that is, the movement of political separatism and struggle of the working classes should go together.[4]

The ethnic movement was not monolithic. A semblance of unity was forged and maintained for about two decades but it barely concealed the currents and cross-currents of differences arising out of the consideration of tribal and

denominational interests. In the first phase of the tribal movement the denominational inspiration behind the political demands was only too evident. In the second phase, the Anglicans and Lutherans dominated the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj movement and provided its leadership; the Roman Catholics kept away from it and formed their own Catholic Sabha to present their case before the government. The Catholic Sabha continued to maintain its identity even after all other bodies had merged to form the Adivasi Mahasabha which maintained a delicate balance between the three denominations by providing suitable representation to their interests in the organisation and leadership. If the president was an Anglican, the secretary was either a Lutheran or a Catholic. This equation was continued into the Jharkhand Party, even though the party was dominated by the Protestant Christians. In 1962, following the reconstitution of the party, its Catholic secretary was dropped, which caused resentment among the Catholic supporters of the Jharkhand. The Catholic were always suspected of maintaining an ambivalent attitude towards the tribal movement. It was believed that the Catholics were guided by global considerations in their crusade against communism; they preferred order to chaos in India and so they lent indirect support to the Congress candidates in elections. In the Orissa election (1947), the Roman Catholic Church was reported to have issued secretly a 'fervent' appeal to the electorate to give 'mass support' to the Congress; the local branches of this Church issued a 'pastoral letter' quoting the secret circular to the Christian Adivasis who constituted an overwhelming majority in Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. This was a windfall for the Congress, which swept the polls.

The protestant missions, Lutheran and Anglican, have been largely Indianised, and they encourage and practise grassroot democracy in electing their church bodies (*mandlis*). This explains their consistent support to the tribal movement. They still form the core of the Jharkhand groups but the Anglicans are beginning to lose interest.

The militant movements in Chotanagpur were led by the Kolarian tribes, the Mundas, Hos and Santhals, who were the dominant communities. The Oraons, having been exposed to outside influences longer were less militant and more resilient. Both the Mundas and Oraons joined the Sardar Movement (1859–1895) which sought to establish the peasant rights of the tribal people, but the Oraons broke away in the mid-1880s. the Mundas provided the leadership for the students' movement in 1915–1920. The Oraons constituted the leadership of the Unnati Samaj Movement; the Mundas kept out of it and formed their own Munda Sabha. Except in the early phase of the Adivasi Mahasabha, the Munda remained the dominant element in it. The Jharkhand Party had its strongholds in the Ho, Munda and Santhal regions. Some sections of the Oraons had become a little lukewarm in their support later, and with pro-Congress Tana Bhagats in their ranks, they switched their support to the

Congress and the Jana Sangh—the votes cast in favour of the latter went up from 17.2 per cent in 1967 to 33.2 per cent in 1969—and have continued to support either the Congress or the Jana Sangh (Bharatiya Janata Party) since. The Jharkhand parties had their bases among distinct sub-ethnic groups: the Hul-Jharkhand is entirely formed by Santhals now; the All-India Jharkhand Party (Bagun group) draws its supported mainly from the Hos of Singhbum, and the Jharkhand Party relies on the Mundas.

An interesting sidelight is provided by the fact that the major tribes have generally dominated the elections while minor tribes have played a smaller role. For example, out of 32 seats captured by the Jharkhand Party in the 1952 elections the Santhals accounted for seven, Mundas three, Hos five, and Oraons seven, while the smaller tribes such as the Kharias got two seats and the Kherwars only one. In 1967, again, while the Santhals captured ten. Oraons seven, Hos six, and Mundas five, the Cheroes could get only one seat out of the twenty-nine reserved seats. The parliamentary seats have always been captured by major tribes. One reason for the dominant role of the major tribes could be their relatively strong economic base and cohesive social organisation. They are settled peasants while minor tribes are primarily artisans and craftsmen or are engaged in shifting cultivation.

In the first three general elections mostly Christian candidates were elected from Ranchi and Santhal Pargana, and non-Christian candidates from Singhbhum and Palamau. The number of Christian candidates had since been gradually declining. In 1967 non-Christians captured 75.08 per cent and the Christians only 24.20 per cent of the reserved seats in the Bihar Assembly. A similar pattern also emerged in the parliamentary elections. This trend has persisted since. Christians dominated the early phase of the Jharkhand Party but have in recent years been further replaced by non-Christians who now dominated the Congress and other national and regional parties. The erosion or Christian leadership has had its repercussions elsewhere.

While the major tribes first supported the Jharkhand Party and later the Congress, some of the minor tribes have always been pro-Congress. For example, the Santhals' neighbours, the Paharias, who benefited from the welfare schemes spearheaded by Congress-supported voluntary agencies, the Asurs of Ranchi and the Kherwars of Palamau have generally voted for the Congress. The Paharias even organised a Yugavasi Sabha to counter the Adivasi Mahasabha. Even among the major tribes, the Hinduised Bhagats, Sapha Hors among Santhals, thread-wearing Santhals in Hazaribagh and Tana Bhagats among Oraons have always been pro-Congress.

The traditional Jharkhand Party has now been eclipsed by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM). The first remains confined to the Munda belt dependent upon the support of the Protestants of the German Mission. The JMM has its

base among the Santals and Hos; it has also the support of the Mahto-Kurmis who seek reversion to their pre-1931 Census status as a tribe. While the Jharkhand Party was dominant in the Munda-Oraon-Ho-Santal belt of the Ranchi, Singhbhum and Santal Parganas districts, the JMM is growing in strength in the industrial belt of Hazaribagh and Dhanbad and is spreading its network in the adjoining districts of West Bengal and Orissa.

At the outset of the movement the Jharkhand state was to include the old feudatory states of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, two districts of West Bengal, parts of Bihar Arrah district (Bhabhua), Bhagalpur (Banka) and Monghyr (Jamui) adjoining Chotanagpur and inhabited by its tribes, and of course, Chotanagpur. In recent years, adjoining parts of Bihar districts have been left out. The Jharkhand map now shows 3 districts of West Bengal, 4 of Orissa, 2 of Madhya Pradesh, and 7 districts of Chotanagpur in Bihar. The Chotanagpur-Santal Pargana belt of Bihar was the epicentre of the movement; while the parent organisations are located in Bihar, the adjoining areas of Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, peopled by Chotanagpur tribes, were marginally influenced by the movement. For instance, in the Lok Sabha elections in 1980, the party could poll only 50,192 votes in West Bengal and 61,881 in Orissa. The assembly election figures for Orissa were 25,002 in 1977 and 34,782 in 1980. It was only in Bihar that it was able to recapture its 1971 performance of polling about 4 lakh votes.

As regards the response of other elements in the situation, the Central Government has repeatedly turned down the proposal for the formation of a Jharkhand state and instead stressed tribal development. So has the Congress Party (I). However, almost all the major all-India parties have set up their regional units in Chotanagpur. The Lok Dal remains committed to the concept of small states. The CPI has charged its earlier stand against a separate state in favour of one in deference to the wishes of its local cadre. The CPM is opposed to the division of West Bengal. The CPM-L parties are in favour of the tribal state.

IV

EVALUATION

It is paradoxical that what the old Jharkhand Party with its impressive electoral achievements could not gain in its heyday from 1949 to 1963, the fragmented Jharkhand parties and urban pressure groups achieved after 1967. There was no participation of tribal elements in the Bihar government from 1950 to 1959. A tribal minister was inducted in 1960. Since 1963 and particularly since 1967 the tribal leaders have played their cards skillfully, there have been adequate representations in the government not only of the two major tribal regions, Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas, but also enthusiastic participation by

both Christian and non-Christian elements in them. At one time, in the 1970s, tribal leaders headed as many as eleven corporations set up by the government. A major demand of the tribals has also been met by setting up the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana Development Authority, which embodies the concept of regional development and provides for a separate pool of resources of which tribals will be the main if not exclusive beneficiaries. The widespread unrest in tribal regions also influenced the passage of a number of agrarian measures including many pieces of legislation, which place stringent curbs on alienation of tribal land and provide for debt redemption, credit support, allotment of homestead sites. Restoration of land alienated during the period of thirty years, which was a major demand of the tribal movements has been made possible through an enactment. There has also been impressive progress in providing employment to tribals in administration and industrial undertakings. Almost all tribal groups including the radical elements welcomed the Prime Minister's 20-point programme as an instrument for accelerated development and radical transformation in the tribal areas.

The failure of the Jharkhand movement to develop into a full-fledged regional movement may be explained by many factors. Firstly, its appeal to the non-tribal sections of the Chotanagpuris was small, because it was essentially a tribal party, and the tribals and non-tribals were not on the best of terms. Secondly, its past record of alliances with the forces which had worked against the national movement and remained 'loyalist' cost it the sympathy and support of a large section of the ruling elite. Thirdly, its structure contained many contradictions which sharpened and multiplied as the cleavage between the Christian and non-Christian tribals deepened. Lastly, the region had always been exposed to the operation of pan-India forces. The ethnic movement therefore could not remain in a state of political isolation. The impact of development and macro-political system and the merger with the Congress considerably weakened the demand for a separate state. The slogan of Jharkhand state has, however, not been given up. But the possibilities of the Jharkhand Party capturing its pre-1962 position of strength appear to be remote. Moreover, as the election results show, there has been a gradual erosion of ethnicity as a factor in regional politics.

Thus, tribal ethnicity is a multi-ethnic society characterised by economic interdependence among different communities struck out a different course of development in Chotanagpur unlike the North-East. Separatism in this tribal region did not develop into secessionism. Recently a section of extremists demanded the formation of a sovereign nation for a part of Singhbhum known as the Kolhan conquered by the British in 1837 on the ground that this part of the country had never merged with the Indian Union during or after the transfer of power in 1947. Two representatives of their organisation went abroad to seek support for this claim, and there was a violent confrontation between its

members and the police on 26 October 1981.[5] However, this move is not supported by the people and parties. Secessionism is neither feasible in the present circumstances nor is it warranted by socio-economic developments.

All tribal parties speak of a set of regional objectives and programmes of action. This has been due to the realisation that tribals do not form the majority in Chotanagpur as a whole and that there are backward communities in this backward region which could also be brought together on a common political platform to demand their share in the control of economic resources and exercise of political power. Now, almost all political parties have their regional units for Chotanagpur, which has acquired the attributes of a sub-state, a mini-secretariat to formulate and supervise the implementation of Sub-Plans of Five Year Plans and a bench of High Court. This has no doubt been due to the articulation of the tribal factor by the Jharkhand and other parties over the years.

Notes and References

1. I started my study of tribal autonomy movements in Chotanagpur as part of the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship project on tribal society. On 29 March 1973, I presented a paper entitled "From Movement to Party: A Study of the Tribal Politics in Middle India 1920-63" at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (K.S, Singh, "The Freedom Movement and Tribal Sub-Movements 1920-47" in B.R. Nanda (ed.) *Essays in Modern Indian History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980). In 1976, I presented a paper on "Tribal Ethnicity in a Multi-Ethnic Society: A Study in the Process of Conflict and Integration in Colonial and Post-Colonial Chotanagpur" at a UNESCO Seminar in Manila; it was later published in *Trends in Ethnic Group Relations in Asia and Oceana, Race and Society,* UNESCO, Paris, 1979. Earlier in September 1975 I had presented another paper "From Ethnicity to Regionalism: A Study in Tribal Politics and Movements in Chotanagpur from 1900 to 1975" at a seminar held by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study which has been published in S.C. Malik (ed.), *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1977. In December 1980, I presented yet another paper on Tribal Unrest partly updating the earlier studies at a seminar on tribal development organised at Bhubaneswar in October 1980 by the National Commission on Backward Areas. In my Devraj Chanana Memorial Lecture, delivered at the Delhi University, on Tribal Transformation on 8–10 December 1981, I referred to some recent aspects of the Jharkhand movements. All this material have been put together in this paper. Also see, *Jharkhand Andolan me Videshi Missionarion aur Viseshi Paison ki Bhumika* (year not given). Further see for a brief review K.L. Sharma, "Jharkhand Movement—Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW), 10 January 1972.

2. "Address not formally presented", *Appendix XI Presented in India to His Excellency the Vic Rt. Hon. Secretary of State for India, East.* Volume XVIII, London 1918, British Museum.

3. For the radical phase of the movement, see Arvind Narayan Das, "Peasants Struggle in Chotanagpur", *EPW*, March 1, 1975 and Arun Sinha, "Bihar's Resurgent Adivasi", *EPW,* 9 September 1978. Also see Nirmal Sengupta, "Class and Tribe in Jharkhand", *EPW*, April 5, 1980 and Hiranmoy Dhar, "Split in the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha", *EPW,* 2 August 1980.

4. A.K.Roy, *Jharkand aur Lalkhand*, Marxwadi Coordination, Dhanbad, July 1981.

5. *Ravivar*, 20 December 1981; *The Sunday Observer*, Bombay, 27 December 1981.

THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

SANTOSH RANA

The Jharkhand Movement since its beginning has highlighted certain demands. They are: (1) Formation of separate Jharkhand province with all the tribal and regional languages as official language; (2) More powers in the hands of the states to mobilise the resources of the Jharkhand region for its development; (3) Inclusion of tribal and regional languages of Jharkhand in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution; (4) Stop felling of sal and mahua trees and their replacement with eucalyptus and akhashmoni; (5) Fulfilment of the quota of reservation for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; (6) Return the land of the tribals usurped by the landlords; (7) Land is lost due to mining and industrialisation; give compensation and employment not only to the owner but also to share-croppers and agricultural labourers dependent on the land.

What is the essence of the above demands? It is the demand of autonomy of the Jharkhandi people, it is a srtuggle for identity; in essence, it is a bourgeois—democratic demand.

Should the Marxist–Leninists support such a bourgeois demand? Do the Jharkhandis constitute a nation? Is the movement a secessionist and a communal one?

The Indian ruling classes and their imperialist masters who have plundered the resources of Jharkhand relentlessly for two centuries and have completely pauperised the indigenous people and oppose the Jharkhand Movement for congent reasons of economic interest. They term the movement secessionist and communal, two code words for lawless suppression. This role of the ruling classes is clearly understood by the Jharkhandi masses and they have enough political and social resources to fight back the machinations of the ruling classes.

But the problems arise when people claiming to be Marxists denounce the movement. The CPI(M), the largest party with a Marxist label, speaks with the vehemence and threat of the ruling classes in denouncing the movement as communal and secessionist. Indeed, they invariably go so far as to attack the movement with physical violence and take every opportunity to suppress it in West Bengal with the state machinery at their command. This identity of the

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CPI(M) with the ruling classes is only to be expected. But their justification for this identity has some connection with classical Marxist texts and, hence, retains some power to hoodwink the masses and certain well-meaning democrats.

The whole CPI(M) argument hinges on a definition. Are the Jharkhandis a nation? No, they say, because the Jharkhandis do not share a common language. Therefore the Jharkhandis cannot claim any right to self-determination. If their movement is not one of self-determination then it must be secessionist. One little fact, that the Jharkhand demand is for *Alag Prant*, separate province, and expressly eschews secession, is too insignificant for a "Marxism" that moves in a metaphysical trance from definition to conclusion certain of itself for having emanated from Holy Writ.

It is true that, by Stalin's definition, the question of linguistic homogeneity is central to nations and, by implication, nationalities. But it is also true that Lenin and Stalin, addressing themselves to solely European (more specifically, east European) problems, confined their discussion on self-determination to nations and nationalities during a particular epoch of rising capitalism. But is it justified to transfer mindlessly Lenin and Stalin's European problematic to the Jharkhand situation and the Indian content

Stalin was aware that, 'it is needless to state that like all historical categories, the nation is also subject to change, that it has a beginning and an end' (retranslated from a Bengali version). Development of capitalism in Europe had created nations and nationalities there, by the time Lenin and Stalin had to face the problem as a practical issue. Their problematic centred mainly around eastern Europe where national strife was at its highest due to the multi-national character of the states there, and to them, the highest achievement of the nation was the modern nation-states of western Europe such as Britain and France. But in India, is the situation the same as in turn of the century Europe? Is there an Indian nation or are there only many separate nationalities, and, beyond nations and nationalities, are there not many stages of the pre-national?

From clan and lineage to tribe and from there to nationalities and nations is a long historical journey. This journey has been undertaken under different conditions in Europe and such ancient Asiatic civilisations as India and China. For example, western Europe witnessed the strong. centralised state as a result of the formation and maturing of nations, but in India and China the strong state appeared in the long feudal era and even before that. Furthermore, in both the Asiatic countries, the process of nation-building came to be subjected to imperialist divide-and-rule policies before the final thrust into nationhood.

This nation–building process in India can be summed up in the words of K.M. Sharma (FND, March–April, 1983) :

> The welding together of various Veddoid, Mongolian, Dravidian and Aryan races and cultures into one composite Indian civilisation was a process that received its dynamism in the spread of iron age, settled agriculture originating in the doab between the Ganga and Jamuna. The spread of this agriculture, as opposed to neolithic slash and burn agriculture and hunting and gathering, was a process that carried with it the stamp of the doab over the whole superstructure. Each tribe, big and small, as it entered the new age, went through a very complicated and protracted process of assimilation entailing the internalisation of the new superstructural forms. These internalisations could never wholly transcend specific tribal and territorial qualities that account for the great differentiations within our Indian civilisation. Of course, these differentiations would have largely vanished if India could have developed an independent, vigorous capitalism of her own, but that was not to be and India became a colony before she could become a unified nation. The continuous process of nation building was severely hampered by British subversion, but inspite of it and in the struggle against it, the people of India reached the crucial identification of themselves as indians.

Vaskar Nandy (*Deshapremik*, Autumn Issue, 1984) has looked at the important aspects of this assimilation and nation building:

> It was a very powerful process with the following important characteristics: the formation of a common world-view on the basis of myths, legends and ideology; caste; land system and other common, general institutions such as those for inheritance; deep 'Sanskritisation' all the languages; large-scale commodity exchange by land and sea throughout the country and beyond; and an almost uniform taxation, revenue and trade-control under unified empires. (translated from the Bengali).

This author goes on to comment:

> The effect of British rule on this process was of basic importance, because the policy at the root of British rule was a simultaneous retention and erosion of the feudal base. As a result, the capitalist development that took place, no matter how stunted and weak, added a new dynamism to the process. The British attempted to deform the process consciously by trying to erect hostile walls between languages and peoples. But unconsciously, against their will, they spurred on the process of assimilation by giving rise to an anti–imperiallst consciousness of Indian nationhood... In the period after 'Independence', the motive power of the anti-imperialist movement

has become weak... This weakness has inevitably stunted the development of national consciousness (translated from the Bengali).

This nation-building process was weakest in the regions where settled agriculture reached late or not at all. In other places, as Sharma states, 'could never wholly transcend specific tribal and local qualities...' This has given rise to the inter-play of two contradictory tendencies — a tendency building up the Indian nation and another that accentuates the linguistic and cultural differences and leads towards separate nationality formation. East European countries lacked such a State-wide nation-building process when Lenin and Stalin's problematic was framed. This is a crucial difference.

The Chinese situation was very similar to the Indian. The communists there expressly rejected the European problematic and used the word. 'Min Zu' or nationality to signify all ethnic groups—at various levels of development and historical stage—with equal status. 'This is moving away from the notion of nation that appeared in Europe during the rise of capitalism', states one of their spokesmen (Social Sciences of China, Vol. 1, No.1, pp. 97–8, retranslated from the Bengali). In fact Marx's own problematic contained such non-capitalist categories as 'peasant nations' (Communist Manifesto), i.e. nations formed during feudalism, and 'pastoral nations' (Grundrisse), i.e. pre-feudal nations which are clearly differentiated from 'hunting and fishing tribes' which had not reached the point from which 'real development' could begin.

It is thus clear that as soon as one moves into areas other than Europe at a particular time, one finds ethnic groups that are developing under vastly different conditions. The Nagas of India speak in at least six mutually unintelligible tongues and thus, definition-wise, cannot claim even the status of a nationality. And yet their ethnic movement is powerful enough to force a no–win conclusion upon lakhs of ruling class troops. This has led all genuine Marxist-Leninists to support the Naga struggle, although such a situation was beyond the purview of the European problematic. Once that Marx calls 'real development' begins, then no matter what the status of the ethnic group in question is, it must be treated with equality and the widest democracy. In fact, under conditions of extreme ethnic oppression, if such a group wishes to secede, then that should be recognised as a right enjoined by democracy. Only the widest democracy and equality (and this is the point of method that is truly Leninist) to all ethnic groups in a country like India can ensure that the prolonged process of building the Indian nation will go towards the swiftest conclusion. Otherwise the opposite process will take over.

Marxist-Leninists must support the process of Indian nation-building because it creates the best International conditions for defeating imperialism by being capable of mobilising the whole of the vast potentials of India. An India divided or in danger of division is weak and presents a possible threat for imperialist divide and rule.

Our view on the Jharkhandis is therefore a concrete one. These Veddoid tribals and others who are more 'sanskritised' have appeared historically as an ethnic group fighting against economic exploitation and ethnic oppression and demanding autonomy. Granting such autonomy and letting the Jharkhandis get integrated into Indian nation-building at a higher level of democracy will only deepen that nation-building process. Otherwise, it will be precisely secessionism that one will face. The ruling classes and their servitors in the CPI(M) leadership are quite willing to face that because they want to retain privileges for what they consider the 'developed' nationalities and believe in forced assimilation. Forced assimilation has never worked, not even in Britain, that supposed model, where today we hear loudly a growing clamour from the Welsh and the Scots.

The essence of the national question in Jharkhand is: Are the Jharkhandis oppressed ethnically? Are they under-privileged in comparison with the Bengalis, Biharis and Oriyas?

Certainly they are under-privileged and discriminated against. Their languages have no official status. In their own territory they are treated as parabasi (outsiders). Outside they are called coolie-bangal, meaning foreigner coolies. The Jharkhand territory has been cut into four pieces quite arbitrarily and forcibly and merged with Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The Jharkhand territories are misfits in these provinces. How artificial these mergers are is quite evident from the fact that Seraikela and Khorswan were included in Orissa in August 1947 and within a few months, in early 1948 they were merged with Bihar. Manbhum, a culturally homogeneous district was divided into three parts, two parts (Dhanbad and Chandil) were merged with Bihar and another part (Purulia) was merged with West Bengal.

Except that both are Indians, what does a Jahrkhandi in Ranchi have in common with a Bihari? Does he even feel that he is a Bihari? Or does even a Bihari from Patna recognise a Santhal or a Mahato in Jharkhand as a Bihari? Neither of them does. The same can be said about the tribals and semi-tribals in Jhargram or Purulia of West Bengal.

The unity of the Jharkhandis with other Indian people can never be achieved by arbitrarily dissecting their territory, by suppressing their languages and culture and by forcibly reducing them into a nation of coolies. The unity can be achieved if and only if the privileges enjoyed by others in Jharkhand is done away with. Without declaring Jharkhand as a separate province and awarding the Jharkhandis autonomy, the basis of equality between Jharkhandis and other Indian people cannot be achieved.

The heads of some people are so preoccupied with the idea of unilingual States that they reject the idea of Jharkhand Alag Prant just on the ground of multiplicity of languages. They do not even care to think that neither of Bengal,

Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Tripura and M.P. is an unilingual State. If Bengal is unilingual then it is so by suppression of Nepalis and Jharkhandis. [It is interesting to note that the CPI(M) has demanded inclusion of Nepali in the 8th schedule of the Consitutiton but opposed the inclusion of Santhali or Mundari in the 8th schedule]. Similarly the Jharkhandis are suppressed in Bihar. In Assam all the non-Assamese-speaking people are forcibly and violently suppressed. On the basis of the idea of unilingual State, how can one recommend inclusion of Mayurbhanj in Orissa or Singbhum in Bihar, part of Manbhum in Bihar and another part in W. Bengal? This can be recommended only on the basis of recognition of the privileged status of Bengali, Bihari or Oriya. This is done by those who 'do not recognise and champion the equality of nations and languages and do not fight against all national oppression or inequality' and therefore they are not Marxists, not even democrats.

Linguistic differences among the Jharkhandis should not be put forward as an argument against a separate Jharkhand province. Lenin said: 'Tiny Switzerland has lost nothing but has gained from having not one single official language but three—German, French and Italian'. Jharkhand too, will lose nothing but gain by having several official languages. That will create the conditions for the unity of the people on the basis of equality and freewill.

Some people suggest that the problem can be solved without a separate state by recognising the tribal languages as official languages in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. This is an absurd proposition. This is not only impractical but is a proposal to keep the Jharkhandi people divided in four provinces where they will have no political voice. The best condition for the development of Jharkhandi economy and languages and culture is the creation of a separate Jharkhand province with more autonomy.

The Jharkhandi people have realised it through their own bitter experiences of life. That is the reason why they carry in their heart the aspirations of Jharkhand Prant though their movement has been violently suppressed and faced betrayal by a section of the leadership at many crucial moments.

The imperialists, the Indian big bourgeosie and the landlords are opposed to this demand because Jharkhand is a happy hunting ground for them. The abject poverty and backwardness of the people is guarantee for getting labourers at wages below value of labour power and for extraction of super profits. The Russian imperialists have invested a lot of capital in the Jharkhand region through the public sector during the last few years. It is therefore quite logical that they and their Indian agents are vociferously attacking the Jharkhand movement as communal and secessionist.

Some people supporting the Jharkhand Movement prefer to describe Jharkhand as an internal colony. According to A.K. Roy, the most eminent

spokesman-exponent of this theory: India is composed of two nations, the nation of the exploiters and the nation of the exploited. According to him, the upper castes constitute the exploiter nation whereas the lower castes i.e. the SC and the ST, etc., constitute the nation of the exploited. In this framework, Jharkhand is a nation of the exploited.

This is gross oversimplification of the caste system in India. India as a whole is under the semi-colonial exploitation of the Russians, the Americans and other imperialist powers and is faced with the task of overthrowing imperialist exploitation and feudal blunder for complete national liberation and democratisation of society. The theory of two nations is not only wrong but harmful because it targets other Indian people as enemies and covers up imperialist exploitation. The Jharkhandi people may achieve their emancipation only if they unite with other Indian people and fight against imperialism and feudalism.

The Jharkhand Movement and Role of Political Parties

All India political parties like the Cong (I), CPI, CPI (M), BJP, etc, are opposed to the movement for a separate Jharkhand State. The position of Janata party is not very clear. The P.C.C. CPI(ML) is a participant in this movement. The RSP was a participant in the Sanjukta Sangharsa Samity in 1979 but its position is not very clear now. It seems that it has been pressurised by the CPI(M) to withdraw its support. At one time the CPI was supporting the separate State movement. Not too long ago, the CPI supported the movement for a separate Maharashtra. Similarly, when there was proposal for the merger of Bengal and Bihar and vociferously supported by the then Congress Chief Ministers of Bengal and Bihar, the CPI in Bengal launched a movement against this on the ground that the Bengalis would lose their identity and the proposal was dropped. Presumably the identity of Bengalis and Maharashtrians is more important than that of the wretched tribals of Jharkhand.

The main attack of the all-India political parties against the Jharkhand Movement is that the movement is communal and secessionist. How far is it correct? The political parties leading the movement are the Jharkhand Party, Jharkhand mukti Morcha, the CPI (ML), the Jharkhand Kranti Dal and some other parties and organisations. Going into the programme of these parties on the Jharkhand Movement it will be found that they have demanded a State within the framework of Indian Constitution, with more powers in the hands of the State. Is this secessionism? Then, Joyti Basu, too, is a secessionist because sometimes he has demanded that more powers be given to the State.

Some people call it a communal movement because in its early phases the movement was led mainly by tribals. But even in early phases the movement was never targeted against the Bengalis or Biharis residing in the region. If

Jharkhand has ever witnessed any communal riot, then it is the riot against the Muslims in Jamshedpur and the anti-Sikh riots in Bokaro. All these riots are acts of ruling class parties and the main participants in rioting are goondas from central and north Bihar. In the coal and industrial belt of Jharkhand the 3–B (Bihar, Begusarai, Bhumihar) goondas are notorious for their criminal activities. If sometimes upper-caste landlords and money-lenders have been attacked, then it is because they happen to be landlords and money–lenders, and not because of their caste or origin. Now, the Jharkhand Movement has sufficiently broadened itself and it includes the Mahatos and some other semi-Hinduised castes.

It is of course true that a section of outsiders will lose the privileges they enjoy in Jharkhand and this is precisely the reason why this section is vociferous in its attack against Jharkhand. Even if the question is looked into from the angle of tribal development, will not the tribals be in a favourable position in a State in which they constitute nearly 40% of the population and where their mother-tongues will enjoy official status than in States where they are hopeless minorities and their languages have no official status? Moreover, if the semi-tribals like the Mahatos who were unjustly de-scheduled in 1931 are taken into account, then the tribals along with these people constitute a majority in Jharkhand.

The Cong (I) and the CPI (M) have a common approach to the problem. Both the parties oppose the movement for a State and as an alternative, talk about tribal development programmes. But these programmes are aimed at giving them consolation and doles. Naturally these have failed to improve the condition of the tribals.

Prospect of the Movement

Since its inception the Jharkhand Movement has enjoyed the massive and vigorous support of the tribals and at later stages has earned the confidence of the Jharkhandis. The people have made innumerable sacrifices for the cause. But despite heroic struggles and heavy sacrifices the movement for separate Jharkhand state has not yet achieved victory. Several factors are responsible for this. Firstly, in its initial stages the movement had a very limited support among the non-tribals. Some leaders even preferred to cash in on the tribal non-tribal contradiction for their narrow interests.

Secondly, the ruling party was able to create a division by buying up a section of the leadership with ministerial posts and money.

Thirdly, the movement was based on emotion rather than on a scientific theory.

Fourthly, the absense of a well-grown bourgeoisie and the failure of the proletariat to provide leadership.

Fifthly, some of the parties identified with the Jharkhand cause had no consistent land programme though land issue is a major issue in that area.The Jharkhand Kranti Dal is that first organisation which came out a with a clear programme on land. Earlier the Mukti Morcha led by Sibu Soren launched movments in Santhal Paragna on land issue but their targets of attack were non-tribals in general, without any differtiation among the landlord, rich peasants and middle peasants. Later on they abandoned that land programme altogether. The Jharkhand Party led by N.E. Horo has never launched any movement on land issue. Their West Bengal unit took up land issue in the eighties but they took up mainly a pro-rich peasant stand. The Jharkhand Kranti Dal has formulated its land programme which targets landlords as enemies and unites other sections of the people.

Due to these weaknesses, the Jharkhand Movement has not been able to achieve victory yet but the aspiration of the Jharkhandi people for their identity is so strong that the movement does not die down.

Very recently some legislators of Jharkhand region in Bihar have proposed a union territory comprising Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana. Some ruling party MLAs, too, have supported that move. This proposal compromises the basic demand of Jharkhand state and its purpose is to calm down the movement. But it is unlikely that the Jharkhandis will be satisfied with the union territory status as against that of the proposed state. A strong movement for Jharkhand state is bound to emerge.

JHARKHAND: FACTORS AND FUTURE

DEV NATHAN

I

Struggles against ethnic or national oppression are important for building democratic foundations for India. These struggles are also important for the working class. For all the segmentation of the labour market, there is nevertheless a connection among the segments. The Jharkhand Movement thus deserves the support of all democrats and socialists.

The resurgence of the Jharkhand Movement has raised a lot of hopes and fears. In the people of the area (tribals and non-tribals alike) there is a renewed sense of unity and expectation, tinged with the apprehensive remembrance of past betrayals. In the ruling classes, both at the centre and the relevant states, there is concern at the possibility of new 'trouble spots', a concern increased by the significant presence of Marxist-Leninists in this latest phase of the Jharkhand movement.

The States' Reorganisation Committee (SRC) in the mid-fifties had given a verdict against the formation of Jharkhand state on three grounds: the tribals are a minority in the region; there is no specific link language in Jharkhand; and the economic balance of the neighbouring states would be disturbed were Jharkhand state to be formed. The clinching reason must certainly have been the third, for the revenue and job potential of the four states of Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh would certainly be affected by the formation of Jharkhand state. Jharkhand forms a kind of reserve for the Indian economy as a whole and for the economies of these four states—a lot can be taken out and not much of it need be put back . Further, the expanding job opportunities in this mineral-rich area (the Ruhr of India) can be useful in mitigating the frustrations of youth in these four states.

There is a common misconception that the Jharkhand demand is for an adivasi (or tribal) state. Then, it is very easily argued, as by the SRC, that since the adivasis do not form a majority of the population in this region, therefore the demand for Jharkhand state, an adivasi state, cannot be granted. The adivasis (a term that originated in Jharkhand) are now less than 35 per

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cent of the population in this area. It is not certain when, if ever, they constituted a majority of the population. For the past few hundred years the adivasis of this area have lived in a symbiotic relation with various artisan and service castes, referred to as *sadans,* who now account for upto 50 per cent of the population. In the many revolts in the area, the sadans too participated in large numbers. Though these sadans are often of the same castes as are found in the adjoining plains, yet there is little contact between the Jharkhand castes and their corresponding castes outside. Marriage, which is a very good indicator of the existence of social relations, is, even for these castes, confined to Jharkhandi circles.

Composite Culture

The symbiotic relation between the adivasis and the sadans has resulted in the creation of a composite culture (and common psychological make-up). This composite culture of the Jharkhand, with its adivasi core, is somewhat different from the adjoining composite cultures of the plains. The sarna dharma, with its naturalistic base, has got fused with the religions that have come from the plains, whether Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. Adivasis and sadans alike partake of both sets of doctrines and practices. Song and dance (in theme, melody and rhythm) are more or less common to the various tribes and to the sadans. In fact, though the effect of both Hinduism and Christianity has been to look down upon communal dancing, the resurgence of the Jharkhand Movement has influenced a return to communal dancing.

Is there a material base for this shared Jharkhandi culture, a material base different from that of the plains? In the first place, the movement towards settled, plough agriculture is here much more recent than it was in the plains. This movement is continuing even today—tribes like the Kharia only settled down in this century, while the Korwa (in Palamu) and many others are still settling down. Besides the regularly-cultivated lowlands, some amount of upland is also cultivated. The uplands, however, are not cultivated regularly. A modified slash-and-burn agriculture is carried on in these uplands—the land is cultivated every three or four years and jungle allowed to grow in between.

Secondly, even where the advasis have long ago taken to settled agriculture (as is the case with the Santhals, Mundas, Oraons and others) they nevertheless retain a considerable element of gathering (as opposed to production) of forest produce in their economic life. Where deforestation has taken place migration for low-paid wage labour has replaced the collection and sale of forest produce, as a necessary supplement to the agricultural income. In areas where forests still exist forest produce yields at least half the income of a village. Further, the sadans, who (except for the traders like the Sahus and Telis or some of the former zamindari intermediaries) are generally worse off economically than

the adivasis, depend even more than the latter on the collection and sale of forest produce. Consequently, the Jharkhand area as a whole is characterised by the combination of gathering and producing in its economic activities.

A third factor in the shared Jharkhandi culture is the weakness of the process of endogenous state formation. The Chero and Nagabanshi kingdoms that did develop were more in the nature of pre-state formations, lacking as they did a standing army. K.S. Singh points out that this state formation too was a feature of the Dravidian tribes (Chero and Nagbanshi) where the land had been made into private property, and not of the Kolarian tribes (Santhal, Munda, Ho) where the land continued to remain the property of the clan. Among the Kolarian tribes there developed only dominant lineages and not a kingdom. The lack or weakness of endogenous state formation meant that the state machinery has remained alien to Jharkhandi society. When the British, for the first time, established an administrative machinery over the area, the intermediaries they had to use, whether traders, landlords, administrators or lowly clerks and policemen, were largely from outside—leading to the identification of *diku* (meaning outsider) with exploiter. The weakness of endogenous state formation also meant that the armed people remained armed—a condition reinforced by the continuing forest economy. This (the weakness of endogenous state formation) is not a factor of production. But it has certainly had its influence on the culture and psychological make-up of the Jharkhandis.

National Question

Coming back to the question of the nature of the demand for Jharkhand state, if it is not an Adivasi state, then what is this Jharkhand state? The newly formed Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee (JCC) has identified it as the demand of the Jharkhandi nationality. This immediately raises from 'Marxists' as from the SRC, the objection that there is no common language in Jharkhand. This is true. It is also true that the existence of a common (or link) language would very much strengthen the process of nationality formation. But, does the absence of a common language mean that a nationality cannot come into existence? Or, that until such a common language can be fashioned the people in question cannot claim the status of a nationality?

The example of the Nagas, who even now have three major languages—those of the Ao, Sema and Angami tribes—shows that the absence of a common language need not prove an insuperable barrier. Nor, as Lenin had pointed out, did tiny Switzerland suffer because it had three official languages. Despite speaking French, Italian or German can anyone deny that the Swiss have evolved as a nation in their own right and not merely as a multi-national state? And what about India itself? Is there an Indian nation coming into being, or are there only so many separate nationalities?

In the name of Marxism there are many varieties of empiricism. Starting from definitions (in this case Stalin's definition of the nation) which are essentially *ex post facto* classificatory devices, they miss out on the historical processes involved. As a result unfolding history yields an increasing number of exceptions to the 'definition'. If we do not start from the fact that Lenin's and Stalin's analysis of the national question was situated in the problematic of Europe in the phase of capitalism. it will not be possible to comprehend the different processes in other parts of the world. For instance, in western Europe the strong, centralised state arose as a result of the formation and maturing of bourgeois nations. But in China, Egypt and, to an extent, India the centralised state appeared in the feudal era itself. Marx had clearly realised that nations could arise under different conditions in different structures. Thus he refers to 'peasant nations' and 'pastoral nations.' These feudal and even pre-feudal nations are distinguished by Marx from 'hunting and fishing tribes'. The Chinese communists explicitly rejected the European approach to the national question. They used the word 'nationality' to signify all ethnic groups, granting them all equal status, irrespective of the historical stage of development at which they were.

The journey from tribe to lineage to nation is a long and complicated journey. In India the usual method, based on the material foundation of the spread of settled agriculture, has been the transformation of tribes into castes and then *via* the growth of local ruling (or sub-ruling) classes. Certain tribes, like the Ahoms of Assam and the Jats of Punjab, have themselves been central to the formation of the corresponding nationalities. More recently the Naga and Mizo tribes have evolved into distinct nationalities.

Imperialism distorted the process of nation and nationality building by, among other things, setting up often arbitrary provincial boundaries. The tribes were the worst sufferers in this respect, divided up among various states—and they had no substantial exploiting classes which could weld them together in the fight for nationality status. Further, imperialism introduced wage labour and other cash relations. In these the Jharkhandis were accorded the position of 'drawers of water and hewers of wood'. Whether as providers of forest products or as suppliers of labour power they came at the bottom of the scale—coolie labour, first for the tea plantations, then for the coal, mines and so on. This status of the Jharkhandis has not changed to this day.

The absence of a recognised and mature national identity helps maintain this low status (low even within the working class and other producing classes) of the Jharkhandis. Ethnic or national oppression/discrimination add to and intensify class exploitation. National oppression deprives the workers of their dignity and weakens them in the fight against the extremes of exploitation to which they are subjects. What imperialism and the Indian ruling classes want is that the Jharkhandis become a 'coolie nation', so that they can easily be

suppressed as the lowest-paid workers and producers. This coolie status is evident not only among the expatriate Jharkhandis in the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal (the earnings of these permanent workers is the lowest of all workers in large-scale enterprise, lower even than that of contract workers in many other industries) but also in the Jharkhandis' own homeland.

Class Exploitation

The link between extreme class exploitation and national oppression was revealed in the mid-seventies wave of struggles in Dhanbad. The trade union struggle was correctly combined with that of identity assertion—and it was this combination that brought some benefits to the lowest of the coal miners. For those who would be socialists and wish to think only in terms of benefits to the working class, that should be reason enough to support the movement for Jharkhand State. The advance of this movement, even without having achieved fulfillment in the creation of Jharkhand State, is already emboldening the Jharkandi workers—not only those in Jharkhand but also those in Bengal and Assam. The struggle for Jharkhand will not end class exploitation, but it will be a weapon in the hands of the most deprived workers to end the extremes of exploitation and bring it (exploitation) to a more 'normal' level. Jharkhand will not automatically end this extreme exploitation, but it will decidedly be a weapon in that struggle.

The extreme exploitation of the Jharkhandi workers is itself bound up with the depressed condition of the other major (rather, the major) class in Jharkhand, i.e. the peasantry. As mentioned earlier, this peasantry is only in a few places a full-fledged peasantry, but otherwise combines gathering of forest produce with agriculture. The seth-mahajan-bureaucrat combine sucks the life–blood out of these producers. Deforestation deprives them of their old world, and pushes them to the margin in the new world. The numerous dams and other projects have had much the same effect. In a particularly cruel irony, the number of dams in Jharkhand has been increasing, while the proportion of land irrigated in Jharkhand has been declining.

Land has been closely associated with the political struggle in Jharkhand. The connection existed not only in the nineteenth century peasant uprising, but has continued to the present day. The peasant uprising of 1969–70 in Debra-Gopiballavpur spilling over into Baharagora and other adjoining areas of the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa border region, has become part of the folklore of Jharkhand. In the mid-seventies, outside Dhanbad, the spread of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was closely linked to militant mass movements for the recovery of land and other assets seized by the money lenders.

Forest issues have not got the same prominence as land. But it should be remembered that the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, enacted after the uprising led

by Birsa Munda, recognised not only the right to land but also, in some places, the community's right to the forests. These *khuntkatti* forests still remain under community and not government ownership. In the mid-fifties Palamu witnessed a movement for 'jungle raj' led by the Kherwars, under Fetal Singh. In the seventies and eighties opposition to deforestation, monoculture of eucalyptus and the like have appeared on the agenda. Surprisingly the question of higher prices for forest produce has not got the attention it deserves. Why this has been so, requires analysis.

The problem of deforestation has merged into another problem—the typically modern one of displacement due to dams, mines, factories, cantonments and so on. The sudden loss of the conditions of labour (land and forest) has turned lakhs of Jharkhandis into destitutes, reduced to selling their labour power for a pittance.

The demand for a state, for recognition as a nationality, is a demand within the limits of bourgeois democracy. It is a demand to end all forms of ethnic oppression and discrimination against the struggling nationality. It is a demand to be admitted as an equal partner in the building of the composite (multi-national) India. All of this places the demand for Jharkhand within the category of bourgeois democracy.

But is there a bourgeoisie in Jharkhand? There are some who would deny the existence of a bourgeoisie in Jharkhand. They would even deny the existence of classes. But these are mere fictions. Not only are there different classes of producers among the Jharkhandis, there are also classes of exploiters among the Jharkhandis. But they are not the main exploiters (who remain the imperialists, their compradors, the state and the big trader–moneylender–bureaucrat network). Whatever landlords and rich peasants exist are confined to the former ruling clans and dominant lineages. But community solidarity and common subordination somewhat modify the relationship of these classes with the labourers they employ. There is, for instance, the practice, not only in the tribes but also in the semi-tribal communities such as Mahatos, of master and servant eating together. The plates of both are washed by the women of the house, expressing both the equality of men and the subordination of women.

More important as exploiting classes are the growing sections of small traders and petty contractors. The former come mainly from the traditional, local trading castes, like Sahu and Teli; though there are new entrants from those like school teachers and other government employees, who do have some cash. These small traders are distinguished from the seths and mahajans not only by the small scale of their operations, but also by their relation with the sellers in buying operations. Jharkhandis distinguish two kinds of traders—those who take the basket of goods in their hands before stating the price; and those who first settle the price and then take the basket. In the former case

they recognise an element of force (the objectification of ethnic oppression). This is the practice of the seths and mahajans who turn ethnic oppression into profit.

Around the industrial centres and in connection with government works, some Jharkhandi petty contractors have grown up. Their origin lies mainly in attempts to buy off the Jharkhand Movement at various times.

Over the years one can identify the growth of a proto-bourgeois class of small traders and petty contractors. From just elements a decade ago, a class is now visible. Proto-bourgeois elements can be more easily bought off, than a proto-bourgeois class. The interests of this proto-bourgeois class definitely lie in the formation of a Jharkhand state, where they would be able to employ governmental and bureaucratic position to use the exchequer for their own accumulation.

Significant entrants into the current phase of the Jharkhand Movement are the educated youth. Here too the numbers have grown substantially. Both discrimination and the contempt in which the dominant nationalities hold them, have pushed the educated youth towards the Jharkhand Movement.

Important for Working Class

All in all, the conjunction of class and community interests in Jharkhand pushes in the direction of realising the ethnic (nationality) aspirations. But whether this will in fact be achieved depends on the strength of the movement. If it pushes forward and links up with other democratic movements in the country, then the Jharkhandi identity could mature and strive to become an equal associate in the composite India. If it fails to push forward, then the people of Jharkhand could continue along the present line and be turned into subordinate castes and coolie labour.

Instead of concentrating on definitions, it is necessary to ask the question: Do the Jharkhandis face ethnic oppression? As the struggle against such oppression is obviously justified, the unity of the victims of this oppression and their common struggle can well lead to the formation of a nationality. Were the numerous Naga tribes already a nationality when they began to assert their right of self-determination in the 1950s? Or did they become a nationality in the course of this struggle? It is not for the high priests of the developed nationalities (or of the 'mainstream') to decided when ethnic groups that identify themselves as a commonality can be accorded the label of nation or nationality. Such matters will be decided on the field of struggle. When this process of struggle against national oppression is under way, it is the task of democrats to support it.

Finally, this struggle is important not only for the Jharkhandis. Areas like Jharkhand are witness to a lack of bourgeois democracy, a lack even more

severe than that in the semi-feudal plains. More so than in the plains, armed suppression is the response of the state to movements in Jharkhand. Struggles against ethnic or national oppression and discrimination are important to build democratic foundations for India. These struggles are also important for the working class. The struggle to end discrimination and to raise the wages of the worst-off workers are necessary parts of the working class movement. For all the segmentation of the labour market, there is nevertheless a connection between the segments—low wages in the bottom segment help to depress the wage standard as a whole. The Jharkhand Movement thus deserves the support of all democrats and socialists.

II

The survivals of collectivism in Jharkhand today are possibly much weaker than the Russian commune was at the time of the abolition of serfdom. Yet, can these survivals of collectivism serve as 'a regenerative force' in Jharkhandi society? They can, under certain conditions.

MOVEMENTS of nations or other social groups (classes, women, etc.) invariably look both at the past and to the future. The past has to be appropriated in order to yield the grounds of the present condition and thus of present actions too. National movements usually appropriate the past in a mythical manner, harking back to some 'Golden Age'. A vision of the future too is necessary in order to inform present actions and invest them with a meaning that transcends the immediate results. It is therefore not surprising that the Jharkhand Movement has sparked off discussions on both the past and the future. The present too is there in the discussions. It is not only the present condition of the Jharkhandis that is rejected but also the present condition of the rest of India that seems to be the future of Jharkhand that is rejected. What follows is a report on discussions, some of it very preliminary, on two questions—socio-cultural regeneration of tribal society and the position of women.

Indian mainstream anthropology has followed one of two approaches to tribes. The first, typified by Verrier Elwin, saw them as some kind of noble savages, who should be isolated in a manner of 'National Park', so as to preserve them in a state of pristine purity by insulating them from the society around. G.S. Ghurye, on the other hand, refused to accord any special status to the tribals and saw them merely as 'backward Hindus'.

The historical process has been to assimilate the tribes into the composite agrarian-cum-industrial society. In industrial society they have been taken in at the bottom rung of the working class. The rank (caste) into which they have been assimilated in agrarian society has usually, as Irfan Habib points out, been related to their tribal status as agriculturists or food gatherers. The food gatherers

have become the 'menial castes' and agricultural labourers. The agriculturist tribes have become the middle castes. A few from the ruling lineages or clans, like the Nagbanshis of Chotanagpur, have been admitted into a manner of Kshatriya status.

One of the important questions in the Jharkhand Movement has been: what is to be the role of these tribes and semi-tribes in the building of India? The Jharkhand movement itself is an attempt to change the role presently allotted to them.

In this movement, the subsequent question has been: Is there anything unique about this tribal society, or this Jharkhand nationality? A.K. Roy, in the days when he did espouse the cause of Jharkhand, answered this by saying, 'Jharkhand is Lalkhand'. The meaning of this was that Jharkhandi society was itself a socialist society and classes (or at least exploiting classes) do not exist in it. The Jharkhandis are born communists; they do not have to learn any of it.

This attempt at portraying a nationality movement as automatically a communist movement had its inevitable backlash. Those whose ideology was restricted to the simple (bourgeois) demand of recognition of the Jharkhandi nationality and had nothing to do with Red politics, moved away from this identification. On the other side, those like A.K. Roy, who had seen communism as the essence of Jharkhand, themselves moved away from supporting even the movement against ethnic oppression.

Socio-Cultural Regeneration

In the next phase of the discussion comes the movement for socio-cultural regeneration propagated by intellectuals like Ram Dayal Munda, now vice-chancellor of Ranchi University, Nirmal Minz, B.P. Kesari, and others. Emphasising the necessity of identifying with adivasi roots, the movement has not been restricted to forms of culture and language but has also dealt with the values of society. Elements of tribal identity are said to be, for instance, harmony with nature, equality in society or collectivism in economic activities. These values are being eroded by those of disharmony with nature, stratification in society and individualism in economic activities. Socio-cultural regeneration requires that the values of tribal society be re-established. The above is the essence of the argument.

To what extent are the above characterisations still valid for tribal society in Jharkhand? It is likely that till the establishment of British rule, land in some of the tribes was communally owned. It belonged to the clan and the individual family had only an usufructuary right. The clan recognised the unfettered possession, the usufructuary right of the family that cleared the land. But within the clan, the dominant lineages—those from whom the village headman

(manki or munda) and the village priest (pahan) were chosen—had a larger share of the best land in the village. In property terms, the situation was something intermediate between communal and full-fledged private property, just as in political terms the establishment of dominant lineages was a transition to the formation of a state.

The British land settlements changed the usufructuary right of the family into the alienable, property right of the male head of the household and thus ended the communal land system. The British were, however, forced to accept the community ownership of the forests in some areas. In parts of Jharkhand, particularly in Ranchi district and the Kolhan area of Singhbum, the forest is owned by the village and not by the government. These *khuntkatti* forests are the only survivors of communal property. Here too the forest plots are allotted to particular families—but the families do not own them. Of course, the village headmen have in many places appropriated for themselves what is supposed to belong to the village community. In some munda villages it is still held that the land can be redistributed—but this is only notional and not real.

Besides the above there are some other survivals of communal economy. There is a regular labour allocation in jobs like transplanting, digging tanks, etc. In some villages the order in which the transplanting will be done is decided by the village assembly and then all work together. An account is kept of the labour put in by each person. At the end of the year, on the basis of the account of labour supplied, each family has to contribute to the village fund. There are also forms of labour exchange and labour subsidy for needy families, operating at an individual level. In *madat*, no wage is paid—only nastha and liquor are provided. In *pacha,* not even the above are supplied—the labour is virtually free and the family only pays a nominal amount to the village fund.

The question that arises is: granted the very limited and circumscribed role of these survivals of collectivism, do they still have any positive role to play in the building of society? Or, is it necessary that collectivism be broken down by bourgeois individualism, and only subsequently can collectivism be recreated in socialism?

Marxists who have not grasped anything of dialectics would think such questions themselves preposterous. But Marx himself was clear that capitalism was historically inevitable only for western Europe. In his discussions on the Russian commune, he pointed out that it could provide the basis for an advance to socialism, without having to be first dissolved by capitalist property. The Russian commune could be 'a regenerative force' in Russian society.

The survivals of collectivism in Jharkhand today are possibly much weaker than the Russian commune was at the time of the abolition of serfdom. Yet, can these survivals of collectivism serve as 'a regenerative force' in Jharkhandi society? Yes, they can, under certain conditions.

Taking the situation as at present, or even as the formation of Jharkhand state may modify it, these survivals of collectivism are bound to be further eroded and die out. Only the pace at which this will happen is indeterminate. But if the Jharkhand Movement were to be linked to the revolutionary movement in the country, then these survivals of collectivism would lend themselves to a greater mass acceptance of the goals of a new democracy, transitional to socialism. In that situation and given that the life blood is not drained out of the economy of these areas, the survivals of collectivism could became a regenerative force in Jharkhandi society—superior to that which exists in mainstream India.

It is then not so surprising that the comparatively briefer experience of class society has made the tribals much more responsive, than the plains' peasantry, to the urges of building a more egalitarian future. The important role played by the tribals in the Naxalite peasant uprisings in West Bangal (Naxalbari, Mindnapore and Birbhum) must be noted.

The socio-cultural regeneration of the tribes on the basis of a revalidation of 'archaic' values (archiac values to which India as a whole must return after the tortuous history of the last two thousand or more years) is possible if the movement is not confined to that for a Jharkhand state, but goes beyond that to accept the goal of a revolutionary transformation. The archiac forms of collectivism provide a wide basis for a mass acceptance of the goal of building a new, more egalitarian society.

Status of Women

There has been an almost parallel discussion on the present and prospective status of women in tribal society. The influence of both Hinduism and Christianity have been to bring about some adverse changes in the condition of women. Both propagate the indissolubility of marriage and frown upon community dancing—these are relatively minor matters, but are representative of the greater restrictions placed on women in the movement from tribe to the composite society. In a sense, the values of Sanskritisation do not depend much on the particular religion that is its vehicle. Adivasi women often stress that they do not want to lose whatever status they still possess in tribal society in order to be developed as part of, or to be accepted into, the mainstream.

The role of women in tribal society and the changes therein have not received much analytical attention. Though there is a lot of anthropological material available, no one has yet attempted to systematise this material in the manner of Morgan, or Marx and Engels. The feminist movement in the country has been content to note that there is male dominance and not gone beyond it to examine concretely in India the nature and material basis of the 'defeat of women' and the historical stages in this transition.

Even before the British came, descent, where land was the family's, was through the male line. But colonialism, which made land alienable, gave a new and qualitatively different dimension to landed property. Along with this, the traditional right of widows' to use the land continued—it is likely that the tensions between these two rights have led to the change from naming witches to killing or driving them out. But even the usufructuary right of widows gives them a position far superior to that of Hindu widows, who live entirely at the mercy of male relatives.

In adivasi society women retain control of the marketing of forest produce and of the cash thus earned. This is in marked contrast to that observed among, say, Jadhavs in Bihar, where women were ousted from the marketing of milk as soon as it became the chief source of cash income.

Both in the family and in society adivasi women have a more prominent position than women in the class society of the plains. The absence of seclusion is only an indicator of this. In tribes like the santhal, women have long been excluded from political councils. Among the mundas some participation still continues, but is being very rapidly eroded. The Korwa have separate assemblies of men and women—in the event that they arrive at different decisions, they then meet together to reconcile the differences.

The above remarks are no more than suggestive of the variations in women's status in tribal society and their differences with the well-developed class society of the plains. The point that needs to be made is that a concrete analysis is needed of the forms of male–female relations in the different tribes, both in order to reveal the history of the transition in India and to help frame policies that will allow for development without relative deterioration.

The question of a different path of development, whether for tribal society as a whole or for women therein, is linked with the relation between the Jharkhand Movement and new democratic revolution in the country as a whole. In this process the traditional political organisations of Jharkhandi society (the traditional panchayats of assemblies), as opposed to the political institutions of 'modern' India, have their role to play. Strengthening these traditional political institutions can be a way to establishing people's power, provide armed suppression by the present state can be overcome. There have been attempts to emphasise the role of traditional political institutions and to ask people to use these institutions to resolve internal disputes, rather than take these disputes to the thana-court-kacheri system of the Indian state. This approach applies also to questions of man-woman relations, where the attempt to get Supreme Court intervention in the matter of land rights for tribal women has not been supported by those who do stand for changes in women's position in tribal society. Breaking up whatever internal cohesion these tribal societies still possess, will not advance the cause of building a more egalitarian society.

THE IDEOLOGY OF TRIBAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY: POLITICS IN THE JHARKHAND, 1950–1980

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In this paper I want to explore the implications of the rise and fall of Jharkhandi ethnoregionalism from the point of view of tribal policy and tribal politics in Independent India. More especially I want to examine an ideology of tribal economy and society which informs most existing accounts of Jharkhandi politics and which makes the case for a specifically 'tribal' policy. The main propositions of this ideology are recounted in Section One of this paper. They are (1) that the concept of a tribe is given and unproblematical; (2) that the tribals of South Bihar are the original inhabitants of the Jharkhand, where they still predominate;[1] and (3) that tribal politics and tribal policies are effective because individual tribes are themselves undifferentiated, united and geographically concentrated (a corollary of this third proposition is that any decline in Jharkhandi enthnoregionalism since the mid-1960s must be due to factional disputes within the tribal leadership and/or to inter-tribal clashes, perhaps along denominational lines).[2] These three propositions are examined in Sections Two, Three and Four of the paper, where they are measured against the recent historical experience of India's Jharkhand. The implications of any shortcomings in the ideology of tribal economy and society are taken up in the concluding sections of the paper where comments are offered, too, on an alternative 'model' of tribal policy and politics in the Jharkhand.

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[1] Within administrative circles 'South Bihar' commonly defines the Districts of Rohtas, Bhojpur, Aurangabad, Gaya, Patna, Nawads, Nalanda, Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Santhal Parganas. In this paper 'South Bihar' is taken to mean the five districts of Chota Nagpur, plus that of Santhal Parganas. In other words, it is used interchangeably with the Jharkhand. It can reasonably be differentiated from North-or-Plains-Bihar, in terms of topography and ethnic composition

[2] On the role of the Christian Missions in nineteenth-century Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas, see Bradley-Birt (1910), Fuchs (1965) and Singh (1966). On the Christian/non-Christian clash within modern Jharkhandi politics, see S.Jha (1968), Galanter (1984), K.L. Sharma (1976) and Vidyarthi and Sahay (1978).

I. The Ideology of Tribal Economy and Society

The ideology of tribal economy and society in India existed long before the rise of ethnoregionalism in central India and in the Union Territories of the North East (see, for example, Dalton, 1872; Elwin, 1942; Grigson, 1946; Roy, 1928). Nevertheless, the political and policy implications of this ideology have surfaced most dramatically in the post-Independence era and particularly since the early successes of the Jharkhand Party in the 1950s and early 1960s (see Table 1). The fact that the Jharkhand Party took the largest number of seats in South Bihar in the State Assembly elections of 1952, together with the fact that it became the chief opposition party to the Congress Party in the State of Bihar, led a number of academics and concerned officials to explore the roots of Jharkhandi ethnoregionalism.

The accounts they came up with may be grouped into three broad camps and at first glance there is little to link them together. Within anthropology and political science a Sons of the Soil model became popular (Jha, 1968; Sachchidananda, 1959, 1964) and this tradition has recently been revived by Myron Weiner (1978). According to this model the success of modern Jharkhandi ethnoregionalism must be seen as but one moment in a one-hundred-and-fifty-year struggle by the tribals of South Bihar to restore their economic, political and cultural hegemony over a region where they, the original clearers of the land, have progressively been displaced by non-tribal outsiders: the hated 'dikus' of North Bihar and Bengal. As Weiner puts it:

> Although messianic and millenarian movements do not [now] exist among the tribals [vide the Santal Hul, Sardar and Birsa Movements in the nineteenth century],[3] the belief in a 'restoration' is an important component of the outlook of many contemporary educated tribals as well as of tribal peasants. It takes the form of advocating the 'restoration' of the land to the tribals and the establishment of a Jharkhand State that wold restore the tribals to power and status. Even the cry for socialism has a restoration dimension, for in tribal context socialism means that tribals, by controlling the means of production, could eject non-tribals from control and could, moreover, assure tribals of employment. The tribals could thereby restore a world which they controlled and in which they did not have to compete with non-tribals, nor suffer the humiliation of being subservient to outsiders (Weiner, 1978, p.202).

A second account has found favour in official circles and informs the writings of many Government Reports on the 'tribal problem'. We might call

[3] The Santal *Hul*, or rebellion is discussed in Datta (1957) and Gosh (1971). On the Sardar and Birsa Movements, see Singh (1966, 1983) and Verma and Sinha (1980). For a useful comparative perspective, see MacDougall (1978).

this the perversity model. Briefly, successive Government commissions and their advisors have suggested that the success of the Jharkhand Party in the 1950s and 1960s was a perverse and irrational response to the progressive tribal policies of post-Independence administrations.[4] According to this thesis ethnoregionalism might have been an appropriate response to the isolationist tribal policies of the colonial power. Under British rule, the argument runs, India's tribals were deliberately isolated from their Hindu neighbours and left to stagnate in what amounted to a group of 'National Parks'.[5] By contrast, the Governments of post-Independence India are said to have followed integrationist tribal policies based upon a philosophy of positive discrimination for tribal development. Against this background, with India's Scheduled Tribes now entitled to Reserved jobs and Reserved seats in Parliament on the basis of ethnicity, the rise of ethnoregionalism can only be considered—as one official put it to me—'ungrateful'. According to one proponent of the perversity thesis, 'The Jharkhand epithet is today being used by individuals and groups anxious to advance their interests at the expense of the needs of the wider tribal community' (Rungta, 1978, p.119). Fortunately, this observer continues, the Jharkhand Movement is now set to decline as the local population learns to challenge its 'irrational and ultimately factional nature' (ibid.) and to trust instead in the Government.

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[4] Like any model, the 'perversity model' or the 'official account' is an archetype. I do not suggest that all of its propositions are accepted in full by all Government officials and their academic supporters, nor can I cite a string of Government Reports which make these propositions explicit. Nevertheless, a reliance upon the perversity model is implicit in many Government Reports on 'tribal problems' published in 1950s, 1960 and 1970s, just as it is a apparent in the philosophy which today inspires the Tribal Medium Term Plan put together by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

[5] On the so-called 'National Parks', see Elwin (1944,1955). On British isolationism see Ghurye (1943), Grigson (1946) and Kanekar (1942). See also the stirring debate in the Constituent Assembly Debates, vol.IX (1948), especially pp.953–94.

Table 1

Elections to the Lok Sabha, 1952–1980—Major Jharkhand Constituencies

Constituency	Election						
	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980
Rajmahal	C	C	C	C	C[1]	J	C
Godda	C	JH	C	C	C	J	C
Dumka	C	JH	C	C	C	J	JMM
Dhanbad	C	C	C	JKD	C	I[3]	I[3]
Hazaribagh	JA	JA	S	JKD	C	J	J
Ranchi	C	JH	S	C	C	J	C
Jamshedpur	LKS	C	CPI	C	C	J	C
Singhbhum	JH	JH	JH	I	AIJP	AIJP	J
Khunti	JH	JH	JH	C	I[2]	J[4]	JH
Lohardaga	C	JH	S	C	C	J	C
Palamau	C	C	S	C	C	J	C

Notes:

C	Congress
J	Janata
LKS	Lok Kalyan Sangh
JH	Jharkhand Party
S	Swatantra
CPI	Communist Party of India
JKD	Jana Kranti Dal
I	Independent
AIJP	All-India Jharkhand Party
JMM	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
BPHJ	Bihar Prant Hul Jharkhand

1 BPHJ came second with 29.76% of the vote.

2 NE Horo, a noted Christian tribal leader.

3 AK Roy, Communist Trade Union leader and one of the three 'founding fathers' of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

4 Jharkhand Party second [NE Horo] with 31.01% of the vote.

Source : Election Commission of India, *Reports on the 2nd–6th General Elections in India* (1958,1963, 1967, 1973, 1978) New Delhi. V.B. Singh and J.Bose (1984) *Elections in India*, 1952–1980.

Finally, a third account of Jharkhandi politics argues that the rise of ethnoregionalism in Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas is an eminently rational response to a state of internal colonialism existing in this area. According to Steve Jones, 'The state in India is maintaining the underdevelopment of the tribals both by not attacking the power of the non-tribal rural oligarchy and by treating the tribal areas as an internal colony' (Jones, 1978, p. 49). Like Minz before him (Minz, 1968), Jones maintains that, 'the value of the resources extracted from tribal areas greatly outweighs the funds employed by Central and State Governments for tribal welfare and development. There is a substantial net flow of resources from the underdeveloped tribal periphery to the more developed non-tribal urban and lowland agricultural centre' (Jones, 1978, p. 51). Jones suggests that this outflow would have been of the order of Rs. 400 crores in 1971/72, as against an inflow of well under Rs. 200 crores. He also suggests that the net imbalance would have been felt most keenly in the mineral and forestry-rich tribal economics of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. This third account clearly has something in common with the Sons of the Soil thesis. Nevertheless, it is distinctive insofar as it blames the State of Bihar, specifically, for participating in, and even directing, the 'neo-colonial exploitation' of its tribal populations.[6]

Despite the diversity of these three accounts, they share an important common ground, I believe, in the ideology of tribal economy and society. In each of these models the tribals of South Bihar are presented as an undifferentiated mass of 'simple cultivators' variously exploited by, and /or misperceiving the actions of, non-tribals (including the Government). Further, all three accounts assume that the struggle for a Jharkhand State is made possible by the territorial integrity of these ethnic units. It is because the tribals of South Bihar are the Sons of the Soil, and it is because they occupy the districts of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas, that the demand for a tribal Jharkhand State has some meaning. I shall comment shortly on the problems inherent within such a model; notably its difficulty in accounting for the post-1963 decline of Jharkhandi ethnoregionalism except in terms of a factionalist model of politiics.[7] For the moment, however, let us detail the three propositions (and one qualification) which together define the ideology of tribal economy and society.

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[6] Further variants on this theme can be found in Sihna (1973) and Rothermund and Wadha (eds.) (1978)

[7] In 1963 the leadership of the Jharkhand party, Jaipal Singh included, defected to the Congress Party. Since that time a number of 'ethnoregionalist' Parties have tried to fill the vacuum, including a resurgent Jharkhand Party, the All India Jharkhand Party, and the more 'class-based' Birsa Seva Dal and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

I. Tribe and Space: Ethnic Closure

A first assumption of the ideology of tribal economy and society is that tribal communities in India are typified by their geographical isolation and high levels of ethnic closure. For Weiner, as for Dhebar,[8] the 'typical' tribal village is a village of tribals: it is not a mixed village of tribes and castes, nor are any minor castes which might be resident in a tribal village entitled to any occupancy or employment rights therein. David Mandelbaum makes a similar point in the course of an extensive discussion of tribe and jati: 'most tribal people of India', he says, 'live in hilly or forested terrain where population is sparse and communication difficult...within their villages and localities....most tribals have a strong sense of their distinctiveness and hold themselves to be quite separate from jati villages' (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 275).

This assumption holds quite definite policy implications. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that official tribal policy in India depends upon the proposition (or assumption) of 'ethnic isolationism.' This first became the case when the British chose to rule its 'rebellious tribals' within the confines of deregulation districts (see Hunter, 1975; Jha, 1964; and Roy, 1970). In more recent times this assumption has attained a new importance. The basis of current tribal policy in India is to pump resources into the tribal Sub-Plan areas which are the successors to the Tribal Development Blocks and the Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks.[9] For this policy to work the government must assume that there is a close correspondence between these geographical units and the undifferentiated tribal communities which supposedly inhabit them. If this is not the case the benefits may flow to local non-tribals (or to a tribal elite). The fact that the government is not at all certain of this assumption is something I shall comment on in Section Three. For the present it will suffice to say that a good deal of laxity has entered into the definition of these Sub-Plan and Scheduled Areas. The Twenty-Fourth Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes records that the 'new approach to tribal development initiated in the Fifth Plan was extended to all the Scheduled Areas and tribal areas with more than fifty per cent Scheduled Tribal population' (1975/77, p.117). Even this may be considered an improvement upon the Dhebar Commission's recommendations regarding the definition of Scheduled Areas. Writing in 1960/61, the Commission proposed that an area could be considered 'eligible for declaration as a Scheduled Area' if it met these four, vague, criteria:

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[8] Weiner (1978, p I68), Dhebar (1962 Ch. 2).

[9] *See the Basic Policy Papers on Tribal Development in the Fifth Plan* (1975); and the *Reports of the Study Teams on Tribal Development during the Medium Term Plan* (1978–82).

(1) preponderance of tribals in the population,
(2) compact and reasonable size,
(3) under-developed nature of the area,
(4) marked disparity in economic standards of the people (Dhebar, 1962,p.63).[10]

2. *The Economics of 'Mechanical Society'*

A second element of the ideology of tribal economy and society runs economic underdevelopment and an absence of economic specialisation alongside the geographical isolation of tribal communities. The latter, indeed, is made a condition of the former. The Dhebar Commission Report suggests that 'Life in the hills, in spite of its attendant disabilities, has made the tribals hardy, self-reliant and vigilant' (Dhebar, 1962, p,8) More precisely, it sees in the 'rigour of climate...and centuries of forest and mountain existence' the basis of a tribal economy which is dependent upon 'land and forest, the Twin Needs of the Tribals' (*ibid.*, p.24).

Given this physical setting the tribal economy is thought to be described by three related parameters. The first of these concerns the limited range of occupations practised by India's Scheduled Tribes. Most students of tribal India are impressed by the pre-eminence of agriculture and forestry—and above all 'simple cultivation'—in the welfare of tribal communities (see Naik, 1974; Jay, 1968; see also Mandal, 1975). In this vein Weiner suggests that 'most of (Chota Nagpur's) tribals live as peasants, cultivating grain crops' (Weiner, 1978, p, 155). Schermerhorn, more expansively, claims that 'More often than not {India's} tribesmen engage in hunting and fishing, slash and burn agriculture and cultivating without ploughs and without irrigation practices' (Schermerhorn, 1978, p.70). By contrast, the Scheduled Tribes are thought to be poorly represented in agricultural labouring, in trade and in industrial pursuits.

Climate and geology aside, the reasons for this (forced) specialisation are said to be bound up with a lack of functional specialisation, or division of labour, in tribal society. David Mandelbaum is emphatic on this point. In his judgement, the communal and subsistence organisation of tribal agriculture is part of the very essence of tribal society and what distinguishes it from jati society. Following Bailey (1961), he argues that 'Direct access to land [especially through clan membership] is the prime test of tribal organisation. The larger the proposition of a given group in India that has direct access to land, the

[10] The Commission also noted that 'The most important factor is the concentration of tribal population. This is particularly necessary when intensive efforts for protection and large-scale development are contemplated. Obviously, such efforts will be partly wasted, and the tribals will only benefit to a small extent, if they are not there in sufficient numbers' (Dhebar, 1962, p.62).

closer that group is to a tribal kind of organisation' (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 578). Schermerhorn takes a similar view. In his opinion, 'to speak of levels of functions in tribal organisation is hardly possible because of pervasive egalitarian patterns' (Schermerhorn, 1978, p. 71). For Schermerhorn, tribal communities take the form of Durkheim's 'mechanical society'. Their organisation, such as it is, is amorphous and diffuse; it is structured by ties of lineage (and family) which are made independently of the more functional and market-oriented demands of 'organic societies'. Above all, the tribal communities lack a hierarchy; their communities are communities of equals.

This lack of an economic hierarchy has in turn been traced back to a 'psychology' of tribal economics which might be described as Chayanovian at best and as irrational at worst. Amongst those leaning towards the irrationalist thesis Myron Weiner is perhaps the best known. His picture of the carefree and hedonistic tribal is essayed at length in *Sons of the Soil* (1978, pp. 155–6) and it is clear from this that Weiner is loath to credit the tribals of Chota Nagpur with anything approaching a degree of economic common-sense. For Weiner, the economics of tribal India are a by-product of quite different principles (of lineage and 'happiness') which guide tribal societies. More flattering, and surely more realistic, are the views of Schermerhorn, Mandelbaum and Sharma (amongst others). For these authors the tribal cultivator is endowed with an economic rationality, but not with the profit-maximising mentality of the commercial farmer. It is rather the case, says Schermerhorn, that 'tribal communities place little value on surplus accumulation [since] they stress prompt consumption and immediate enjoyment' (Schermerhorn, 1978, p. 71). Taking this a stage further, it is implied that the tribal peasant, like all peasants, is interested in achieving an equilibrium between wants and efforts. In search of this equilibrium, which is determined biologically by a family's changing consumer/worker ratio,[11] the tribal peasant has no need of an economic calculus which adopts a 'sectoral' or compartmentalising approach to profits and losses or to production and consumption. Sharma is adamant that 'There is no functional differentiation in the tribal community as yet even in relation to such basic aspects like the religious, social, economic and political. The tribal is not yet used to the sectoralised approach which is the distinguishing characteristic of modern advanced communities. For example, he cannot distinguish between a loan for consumption or for production purposes' (Sharma, 1978, p. 531).

This last quotation takes us to the core of the economic philosophy assumed within the ideology of tribal economy and society. As Sharma sums it up, tribal society is identifiable by a unique correspondence between the

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[11] Concise accounts of the Chayanov thesis can be found in Shanin (1972), Kerblay (1971) and Harrison (1982).

subsistence psychologies of individual peasant households and a social structure which refuses to grant any primacy to economic (as opposed to cultural or religious) calculations. In jati society the existence of both subsistence and commercially minded peasant households is allowed within the framework of a broadly hierarchical social and economic division of labour. In tribal society the pursuit of wealth is conducted within the confines of a harsh physical environment and within the social constraints imposed by an enduring egalitarianism and a refusal to specialise.

3. The Dóminance of Culture

The supposed unimportance of economics in tribal life is further underlined by the importance attached to matters cultural within the ideology of tribal economy and society. Anyone familiar with the many monographs on India's tribal communities will have noticed the typical organisation of these texts: a brief chapter on the economic arrangements of a tribal village is sandwiched between a host of chapters on tribal customs, on tribal folklore, on tribal dance and music, on tribal sexual mores on tribal religions and so on and so forth.[12] The net effect of this organisation is to lend support to Schermerhorn's view that 'tribes are distinguished from one another not so much by occupation (for they are much alike in this respect) as by kinship and lineage' (Schermerhorn, 1978, p. 70).

Whether or not this is the case will be discussed in Section Four. For the moment let us elaborate upon the three propositions which comprise the core of this aspect of the ideology of tribal economy and society. A first proposition concerns the pre-eminence of the lineage in tribal societies. We have seen already how Mandelbaum distinguishes between tribal and jati society in terms of the quality of interpersonal relationships. 'In tribal life', says Mandelbaum, 'the principal links for the whole society are based on kinship. Individual equality as kinsman is assumed; dependency and subordination among men are minimised. Aganatic bonds form the fundamental web, affinal ties are of lesser significance. Lineages or clans tend to be the chief corporate units; they are often the principal units for land ownership, for defense, for economic production and consumption.

Each man considers himself entitled to equal rights with every other' (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 576). In less formal terms this model of tribal society holds two implications. First, it suggests that the normal (or 'ideal-typical'

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[12] See Griffiths (1946), Jay (1968) and Hasan (1972) as three instances. By contrast, Nag (1958) and Saxena (1964) offer a more considered view of tribal economic systems. I am not concerned here with the tribals of North-East or Central-Southern India, where economic transformation seems to have been less marked: see Rustomji (1983) and Fürer-Haimendorf (1982).

organisation of tribal agriculture is through the sort of communal land tenures epitomised by the Munda *khuntkattidari* system (see Reid, 1912; Roy, 1970) In this system rights in land reside with the clan elders (or the leaders of the exogamous *killis*[13] which form the lineages of the original founders of the village). It is up to these *killi* chiefs to allocate clan lands on a periodic and impermanent basis to particular *killi* households and their dependants. A second implication of Mandelbaum's (widely supported) model is that the *killi* controls the generality of employment opportunities within tribal life. Again, this takes us back to the tribe/jati division. According to Mandelbaum, there is in jati society a functional, if hierarchical, interdependence between members of different kinship groups. Within jati society it is possible for agricultural labour to be hired on the open market[14] and in the absence of agnatic ties and bonds. In tribal societies this is not supposed to be the case. Mandelbaum suggests that tribal society exhibits a tendency to segmentation wherein each *killi* assumes a responsibility for its economic and social reproduction. A corollary of this is that dependent groups within tribal villages—where they exist—are assumed 'to be useful but disposable adjuncts to [*killi*] society and not integral, necessary parts of it' (ibid., p. 577). More directly, Mandelbaum endorses the view that agricultural and non-agricultural labour within tribal society must be supplied on a reciprocal basis within the *killis* (and at the behest of the k*illi* chiefs): it cannot be supplied on or through the open market.

A second proposition relating to tribal cultures concerns the role of tribal women. Students of tribal India are rightly impressed by the economic and even ritual importance accorded to the female members of most tribes (see Bodding, 1916; Roy, 1970; and Omvedt, 1982). This importance manifests itself in a number of ways. It is evident, most obviously, in the existence of marriage contracts involving brideprice (rather than dowry) systems. The fact that it is the groom's family which must recompense the bride's family speaks clearly of the economic loss borne by the latter unit.[15] The importance of tribal women is further apparent in the organisation of tribal agriculture where the women maintain a high participation rate. Women are involved equally with

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[13] Exogamous clans known as killis exist in Munda and Ho societies. Different proper nouns define the *khands* and *khunts* of the Santals and the *khunts* of the Oraons: see Prasad (1961, pt. III).

[14] Mandelbaum (1970, ch. 31). Mandelbaum recognises, of course, that *jajmani* relations (and thus a measure of patronage, even bondage: Breman, 1974) are characteristic of rural employment markets in jati society.

[15] 'Among the Hos the problem of a high bride-price and the inability of the average Ho to afford it actually improves the status of the wife who is so difficult to get' (Dhebar, 1962, p. 19).

men in most agricultural operations—save ploughing the sowing—and take a part in agricultural decision making. Finally, the tribal female is said to enjoy an unrivalled parity within the family unit. In many tribes, reports Dhebar, 'household duties which are elsewhere assigned only to women are divided equitably among the sexes....the man often undertaking tasks which belong to the domain of women [*sic*]' (Dhebar, 1962, p. 18). This equality is not thought to extend to the public or political realm (ibid.), nor does it offset the dominant patrilocal and patrilineal systems of tribal society. Nevertheless, it does ensure that 'women's (domestic) dependence is relatively shallow' (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 576). Tribal women tend to marry at later ages than their jati counterparts and they are less restricted than the latter in their marital ties. As W.V. Grigson put it: 'The tribal woman has great freedom both in her marital life and the choice of her husband. She is fairly free to leave her husband if he ill-treats her. The woman who has a taste for ornaments and beads, quite natural in itself [*sic*], is given full scope by the husband who recognises her right to spend her earnings on the purchase.' On balance, Grigson concludes, the 'tribal woman is far freer than a Hindu woman' (Grigson, 1949, quoted in Dhebar, 1962, p. 18).

This freedom relates also to a third dimension of tribal cultures. Underlying the propositions relating to lineage and sex within the tribe there is a more pervasive, if less definable, feeling that tribal societies are organised according to cultural principles which are quite different from those guiding jati society. Mandelbaum points us towards this conclusion when he speaks of the 'pleasure principle' in tribal society. In terms that are reminiscent of Weiner, Mandelbaum suggests that whilst 'Tribesmen are not averse to accumulating food stores, to deferring consumption [and] to maximising productivity.....they characteristically feel that these worthy pursuits should not be pressed so hard as to interfere with the prompt prospect of pleasure' (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 581). Moreover, whilst the tribal people can work diligently when necessary, 'they do not find much pleasure in the sweat of labour, in the righteousness of abnegation or in visions of future power' (*ibid., p. 582*). In short, tribal society is different. Its dominant cultural principles are reflected in its economic organisation in ways which emphasise an attitude towards life (and the future) which is extremely contingent and which may be described as 'exotic'. On this reading the essence of tribal life is its all-night dances and its *dhumkarias*.[16] As Dhebar sums it up: 'It is difficult in the dry pages of an official report to convey to the reader the zest for life expressed in tribal poetry and dancing, the instinct for colour and pattern.....[nevertheless] above all things, the tribal people are intensely lovable and have fascinated most of those who have anything to do with them' (Dhebar, 1962, p.20).

[16] The youth dormitories which figure so prominently in many accounts of tribal culture and village life.

4. The Tribe in Transition

A fascination for things 'tribal' can be entirely meretricious, of course, and there is no suggestion that the Dhebar Commission is anything but sincere in its fellow feeling for India's tribals. What is at issue is the extent to which this ideology of tribal economy and society is borne out by the facts. In the rest of this paper we will be examining the main propositions of this ideology in some detail. Before we do so, however, let us be clear as to two points.

First, it must be obvious by now that by challenging this ideology we are directly challenging three major accounts of Jharkhandi politics. The Weiner account, the 'official account' and the internal colonialism account all draw upon versions of an ideology of tribalism which emphasises the twin qualities of geographical isolation[17] (hence the demands for a tribal State) and a lack of economic differentiation and specialisation (hence the assumed unity of tribal politics). (There is also a radical account of Jharkhandi politics which makes rather different assumptions of tribal economy and society: see Corbridge, 1986; Sengupta, 1982; Hrach, 1978).

Second, it is far from obvious that the concept of a 'tribe in transition' in any way dents the ideology of tribal economy and society. The concept of a tribe in transition was first advanced by Majumdar in 1937 and it has since become a standard feature of most academic (and official) accounts of the 'tribal problem', In some ways the concept of a tribe in transition would seem to soften the edges of the more rigid stereotypes of tribal life which we have just been discussing; for example on marriage customs, on initiation ceremonies and occupations. In essence, however, it does no more than recognise that the concept of a tribe or one tribe is inappropriate in the modern era, when tribes engage in a wider range of activities than once they did. Not all tribes, we now learn, are devoted to slash and burn agriculture or even to 'simple plough cultivation'. We are advised, instead, that tribal India may be thought of more profitably as a combination of groups or classes, much in the same way that Vidyarthi set forth in the mid-1960s. (In 1964 Vidyarthi proposed four tribal 'culture types'—the forest/hunting type, the hill cultivation type, the plains agriculture type and the simple artisan type: Vidyarthi, 1964, p. 16. In 1981 this classification was extended to include a fifth type—the industrial/non-industrial labour type: Vidyarthi, 1981, p.3).[18] What is significant about this classification, and others like it, is that it does not render problematic the internal dynamics and organisation of each tribal type. Although the concept of a tribe in transition recognises a new complexity in tribe/jati relations, it does not challenge the assumptions of ethnic closure and tribal egalitarianism

[17] Albeit defined at different scales: see pp. 20-8.

[18] Similar typologies can be found in Dhebar (1962) and Elwin (1944).

which are so vital to most accounts of ethnic politics and which in turn assume the dominance of cultural factors in the organisation of tribal society. Nor does it consider the historical development of the concept of a 'tribe' itself. It is to these considerations and assumptions that we now turn.

II. The Concept of a Tribe

Let us begin with the concept of a 'tribe'. Although the Weiner, 'Official' and internal colonialism models of Jharkhandi politics all assume the concept of a tribe to be unproblematical, it is significant that a radical account of Jharkhandi 'ethnoregionalism' has lately emerged—with the support of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha—to challenge this view (see Sengupta, 1982; Das, 1983).[19] In calling into question the concept of a tribe or a Scheduled Tribe, Sengupta and others have drawn on the work of G.S. Ghurye (1943, 1980), F.G. Bailey (1960) and André Béteille (1974). All of these authorities discuss the grounds upon which a tribe in India could and should be delimited and Béteille summarises the arguments as pithily as anyone. In an essay on Tribe and Peasantry (1974), Béteille discusses four criteria which have been used to distinguish tribal societies: size, isolation, religion and means of livelihood. Taking them in turn, Beteille finds little support for the claim that major tribal societies exist in modern India.

Consider, first, the question of scale. Béteille notes that anthropologists have long defined tribal societies as small-scale, segmentary systems. Lewis' definition in a case in point. His entry in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* records that, 'Ideally tribal societies are small in scale, are restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal and political relations, and possess a morality, religion and world view of corresponding dimensions' (Lewis [1968, p. 147], quoted in Béteille, 1974, p. 61). Béteille accepts that this may be true of many African tribes but he doubts that it fits the Indian situation where 'some of the major tribes such as the Santhals, Gonds and Bhils are quite large, numbering over a million persons each and scattered over extensive territories' (*ibid.*). A similar lack of correspondence befalls the claim that tribal societies are always 'isolated' and deprived of culture contact with non-tribals. If we accept that the major Indian tribes are 'tribes' we must accept also that most of these tribes have long been in geographical

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[19] The Morcha won a sizeable power-base in the 1970s amongst tribal and non-tribal landless labourers and marginal farmers (under the leadership of Sibhu Soren) and within the ranks of South Bihar's industrial workers (led by A.K. Roy). It sought the establishment of a Jharkhand State not, ostensibly, for one ethnic group, but for all the region's 'peasants and workers' (see Sengupta, 1982a). Since 1980 this peasant/worker, tribal/non-tribal alliance has rather fractured, as has the Morcha's leadership (see Panchbhai, 1983).

contact with Muslims and caste Hindus. At best we can speak of the relative isolation of India's tribals. It is the isolation of hillsmen from plainsmen. This same 'relativity' is evident, too, in matters of religion. In present-day India it is hard to find major tribal communities which practise exclusively animistic religions. In any case, the 'animism', of tribal India has long been tinged with Hinduism, leading some authorities to maintain that 'India's "animists" are best described as Backward Hindus' (Ghurye, 1980, p. 20). Finally, there is the question of livelihood. Beteille notes that an archetypal tribal society is characterised by its lack of any clear division of labour, by its lack of settled agriculture and by its lack of family farming systems. None of these conditions describe a major Indian tribe. The Birhors of Bihar, says Béteille,[20] may follow a hunting and gathering way of life, but even these few souls 'employ' specialised households to make baskets and to press oil. When it comes to the Mundas and the Hos, the Santals and the Oraons, it is clear that settled plough agriculture is the norm and that 'the first characteristic [of these societies] is the family farm' (Béteille, 1974, p. 65).

For all these reasons, Béteille concludes that in India, 'there really is no satisfactory way of defining a tribal society' (*Ibid.*, p. 60). At the margin we may be able to talk of India's 'tribes in transition', or to speak of a continuum of rural societies running from tribe to peasant or from tribe to caste (cf. Bailey, 1960). (On a personal note, Béteille writes of his first field trip to an Oraon village in Ranchi District, Bihar. 'I clearly remember', he says, 'my initial disappointment in discovering that, although we had come to investigate proper tribals, the people who confronted us were outwardly no different from the poorer villagers one might find anywhere in rural Bihar or West Bengal' [Béteille, 1974, p. 64]. Compare this with Myron Weiner's extraordinary, but wholly typical, claim that 'everyone in Chota Nagpur can recognise a tribal. A distinctive racial type, known by physical anthropologists as belonging to the proto-Australoid stock, they are somewhat darker than other Indians and have features that are sometimes mongoloid in appearance. They live in their own villages, many of which are wholly homogenous.....Perhaps the most distinctive feature of tribal life is the very attitude toward life itself. In contrast with their Hindu neighbours, the tribals are a carefree people, hedonistic in their simple pleasures' [Weiner, 1978, pp. 155–6].

If we accept Béteille's conclusion—and there are sound reasons for doing so—it follows that we must ask questions of the Government's rationale in continuing to demarcate Scheduled Tribal communities. It is at this point that the supporters of the radical line become most forceful in their views. Ghosh and Sengupta (1982) argue that the invention and perpetuation of 'tribalism' in

[20] The Birhors are Bihar's most 'classical' example of a small, isolated and 'backward' tribe.

India owes everything to the calculations of a governing elite in three different historical periods.

The first of these periods is the period of Social Darwinism that followed the Pax Britannica in the waning years of the nineteenth century. At this time, says Ghosh and Sengupta, the 'classificatory urges' of the early British anthropologists coincided with the revenue and defensive 'needs' of the British Raj. Men like Dalton (1872) and Risley (1891) were now encouraged to divide India into manageable units of 'tribes' and 'castes' and to identify a group of responsible revenue-farmers with whom the British could deal. In the Jharkhand this led to the equation of a Munda with the position of superior landlord—a leap of logic which Hilary Standing firmly rejects. She argues that: 'In its original usage the term Munda meant a wealthy man or head of a village responsible to the superior landlord for tribute and revenue exactions' (Standing, 1973, p. 5). Only under the British did the term Munda come to mean a particular kind of person and 'whole scheduled tribe defined in ethnic terms' (*ibid).*[21] The British further confused the concepts of tribe and caste within the Jharkhand. Instead of recognising the 'hundred imperceptible gradations' of which W.W. Hunter had spoken (Hunter, 1975, p. 135), the British preferred the certainties of a rigid classification.

These certainties assumed a political significance in the early twentieth century. By this time, says Sengupta, 'the policy of divide and rule was a well-applied policy of British administration' (Sengupta, 1982a, p. 9). One part of this policy was to divide tribe from caste and it was to further this end that the British agreed, in the late 1920s, to the principle of Reserved Constituencies in tribal areas. The problem then arose of how to distinguish the tribal areas and tribal voters. The Censuses of 1901, 1911 and 1921 had not recorded the size of India's 'tribal' population—an omission noted at some length, and with some glee, by G.S. Ghurye (Ghurye, 1980, pp. 3–11).[22] In 1931, however, Dr. J.H. Hutton (the Census Commissioner) was persuaded to enumerate India's 'primitive tribes' on the basis of a theory of soul-substance,[23] a demonstrably unsound procedure made necessary by the electoral proposals of the Simon Commission. Once again, says Béteille, 'It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the list [of Primitive Tribes] reflects the demands more of administrative and political circumstance than of academic or logical rigour' (Béteille, 1974, p. 62).

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[21] Though I take Standing's point it is possible that she has pressed it too far; see Roy (1970).

[22] Nevertheless, these Censuses do provide us with sufficient data to make such a calculation: see Section Three.

[23] See Ghurye (1980, Chapter 1).

Finally, there is the post-Independence era. Since 1947 the Government of India has persisted with a policy of scheduling Areas, Castes and Tribes, even though its demarcation lines grow more opaque.[24] According to the radical school, the Government does this because it—or more especially the Congress—stands to gain politically from the voters of 'Scheduled India'. This might seem rather an odd argument, given what we know about the politics of tribal Bihar, but in India as a whole the Congress Party has benefited from the support of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.[25] In the late 1960s especially, when there was pressure on Government to deschedule many communities, 'the Congress...had become considerably more dependent on the adherence of the occupants of the reserved seats, who now supplied its much narrower plurality in the Lok Sabha' (Galanter, 1984, p. 138).[26]

III. The Jharkhand: Tribe and Caste, Names and Numbers

The ambiguity attached to the 'correct' definition of India's tribals surfaces clearly in the second major assumption of the ideology of tribal economy and society; namely, that in Bihar, the Jharkhand has long been, and remains, a recognisably 'tribal' homeland. In fact two propositions are argued here. A first proposition, which is implicit in Government accounts, holds that the Jharkhand is inhabited more or less exclusively by members of the Scheduled Tribes living at low population densities. A second proposition modifies the first by acknowledging the recent intrusions of 'non-tribals'. In both the Weiner and internal colonialism accounts these *dikus* are presented as unwanted and exploitative outsiders whose geographical presence in the region is nonetheless not thought to threaten the integrity and spatial closure of individual tribal communities. According to this view the tribals and non-tribals mix only as oil and water: the non-tribals are said to reside in separate hamlets and villages and/or in the more urban-industrial areas of the region.

If we go back to the murky depths of Jharkhandi history it is possible that we will find support for both these propositions. Although Weiner offers no evidence that Chota Nagpur was 'once almost exclusively tribal' (Weiner,

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[24] The Dhebar Commission admits that 'The term tribe is nowhere defined in the Constitution and in fact there is no satisfactory definition anywhere; (Dhebar, 1962, p.1). In the *First Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes* (1951, pp. 109-111), it is suggested that four (vague) traits identify a tribal: 'tribal origin [sic], primitive way of life, remote habitation, and general backwardness in all respects'.

[25] See also Weiner and Field (1975, pp. 107–8) who dispute this view.

[26] In 1967 the Congress plurality was 38 seats (279/520); Congress held 72 of 114 'Reserved Seats' (Galanter, 1984, p. 138).

1978, p. 149), his view is not seriously at odds with the detailed histories essayed by Roy (1928, 1970) and Basu (1956, 1956a) amongst others. These histories reveal that Chota Nagpur first became a centre of inter-regional trade in the eleventh and twenfth centuries—well after the region was first settled by the Mundas and other tribes. By the time we reach the late-Mughal era, however, these inter-regional contacts were quite common and the associated migration to and from the Jharkhand wrought a series of changes in the region's ethnic demography. These changes became more marked under British rule and they are closely reflected in the censuses of Bihar conducted between 1872 and 1971.

The first census of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas was conducted in 1872 when the two divisions were part of the Province of Bengal. In some respects this was a flawed census and there are reasons to suppose that the populations of the 'outlying tracts' of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas (and the Tributary Mahals) were under-counted by the census takers.[27] Even allowing for this, the material summarised in Table 2 reveals that in 1872 Chota Nagpur did approach the model of a scarcely populated area. If the Chota Nagpur Feudatory States are included in the general statistics for Chota Nagpur (and most did in time become part of the Division), the region records a density of only 87.1 persons per square mile. This is less than one-third of the density recorded in the Province of Bihar as a whole at this time. Nevertheless, there are variations within this general picture. The populations of Santhal Parganas and Manbhum Districts are already distributed at densities approaching the Provincial average and this tendency to regional convergence becomes more marked over the next fifty years. By 1921 the average density of population in Chota Nagpur is only half that to be found in Bihar as a whole and the total population of the Division in that year accounts for twenty-one per cent of the Provincial total.

Two factors lay behind this slow convergence. Of primary importance was the higher than average fertility of the tribal populations. The Census of 1921 records a birth rate of 45/1000 amongst the tribals of Ranchi District. This high birth rate more than offset the high tribal mortality rates and helps to explain why the rate of reproduction of the 'native populations' of the Jharkhand was in excess of the Provincial average at all times between 1872 and 1971 excepting 1931/41 and 1951/61. A second factor surrounds the turn around in the 'migration budgets' of most Jharkhand districts which occurred between 1872 and 1971 (see Table 3). Prior to the 1930s both Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas (and especially Ranchi District) were areas of high net out-migration. The lack of agricultural employment opportunities, allied to a general absence

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[27] Census of Bengal (1872), p.154.

Table 2

Population, Population Density per Square Mile and District Population as a Percentage of Total Bihar Population: Jharkhand and Bihar, 1872–1971

	Bihar	Santhal Parganas	Palamau	Ranchi	Hazaribagh	Manbhum	Singhbhum	CNFS[1]	Chota Nagpur incg GNFS
1872 a	24,236,172	1,259,287		1,237,123	771,875	995,540	415,023	405,980	3,825,571
b	275.29	229.46		102.72	109.94	202.60	92.17	26.33	87.10
c	100%	5.20%		5.10%	3.18%	4.11%	1.71%	1.67%	15.78%
1881 a	28,031,111	1,568,093		1,609,244	1,104,742	1,058,228	453,775	678,002	4,903,991
b	310.91	287.41		133,60	157.35	255.18	120.91	42.23	106.56
c	100%	5.59%		5.74%	3.94%	3.78%	1.62%	2.42%	17.49%
1891 a	29,905,655	1,754,196	596.770	1,128,885	1,164,321	1,193,885	545,488	883,359	5,512,151
b	331.53	320.75	121.67	158.11	165.83	287.90	145.35	55.02	127.60
c	100%	5.87%	2.00%	3.77%	3.89%	3.99%	1.82%	2.95%	18.43%
1901 a	30,143,163	1,809,737	619,600	1,187,885	1,177,961	1,301,364	613,579	1,001,429	5,901,858
b	345.62	330.85	126.09	166.66	167.78	313.81	163.50	62.38	137.19
c	100%	6.00%	2.06%	3.94%	3.91%	4.32%	2.04%	3.32%	19.58%
1911 a	33,452,186	1,882,973	687,267	1,387,516	1,288,609	1,547,576	694,394	148,646[2]	5,754,008
b	383.56	344.74	139.86	195.31	183.54	373.18	178.46	246.90	207.88
c	100%	5.63%	2.05%	4.15%	3.85%	4.62%	2.08%	0.44%	17.20%
1921 a	29,785,813	1,798,973	733,394	1,334,473	1,276,946	1,548,777	759,438	152,497	5,805,008
b	334.51	329.30	149.19	187.90	181.88	373.47	194.88	253.32	209.84
c	100%	6.04%	2.46%	4.48%	4.29%	5.20%	2.55%	0.51%	19.49%

	Bihar	Santhal Parganas	Palamau	Ranchi	Hazaribagh	Manbhum	Singhbhum	CNFS[1]	Chota Nagpur incg GNFS
1931 a	32,558,056	2,051,472	818,736	1,567,149	1,517,357	1,810,890	929,802	186,622	6,830,556
b	465.45	375.87	166.55	220.66	216.12	442.22	239.70	310.00	247.35
c	100%	6.30%	2.51%	4.81%	4.66%	5.56%	2.86%	0.57%	20.97%
1941 a	36,340,151	2,234,497	912,734	1,675,413	1,751,339	2,032,416	1,144,717	no data	7,516,349
b	521.04	407.75	186.23	234.03	249.62	491.93	293.14		277.23
c	100%	6.15%	2.51%	4.61%	4.82%	5.59%	3.15%		20.68%
1951 a	40,225,947	2,322,092	985,787	1,861,207	1,937,210	2,279,259	1,480,816		8,544,259
b	571.96	425.92	201.35	259.98	276.11	552.01	328.49		308.37
c	100%	5.77%	2.45%	4.63%	4.82%	5.67%	3.68%	—	21.24%
1961 a	46,455,610	2,675,203	1,187,789	2,138,565	2,396,411	1,158,610[3]	2,049,911		8,931,286
b	691.20	489.07	241.18	303.47	341.56	1040.04	394.90	—	353.11
c	100%	5.76%	2.56%	4.60%	5.16%	2.49%	4.63%		19.23%
1971 a	56,353,369	3,186,908	1,504,350	2,611,445	3,020,214	1,466,417	2,437,799		11,040,225
b	838.64	582.62	305.45	370.58	430.47	1316.35	469.62	—	436.49
c	100%	5.66%	2.67%	4.63%	5.36%	2.60%	4.32%		19.59%

Notes:

a. Total population b. Population desnsity per square mile c. District population as percentage of total Bihar.

[1] Chota Nagpur Feudatory States.

[2] Boundary changes.

[3] Dhanbad only: parts of the Purulia sub-division of Manbhum district now trasferred to West Bengal.

Source: Census of India, 1872–1971.

of double-cropping in agriculture, ensured that the tribals were a favoured target for the contractors recruiting for the Calcutta brickyards and the Assam tea plantations. After 1931 a very different picture pertains. In the wake of the burgeoning industrialisation of Dhanbad and Singhbhum Districts (section 3.4) Chota Nagpur becomes a division of significant net in-migration. The details of these changing patterns are represented, in part, in Table 4. This table records, for each Census period, the percentage of a given District's population which registers its place of birth as (a) within the District, (b) within the Jharkhand, (c) within the Province of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa or Bihar, and (d) out of the Province or State. (The figures for Gaya are recorded as a point of reference. The District was randomly selected). The reader should note that the apparent leap in migration into Dhanbad in 1951 (29.84% of out of district births) is due mainly to the division of the old Manbhum District into the predominantly coal mining District of Dhanbad and the more rural District of Purulia (West Bengal). The division of Lohardugga into Ranchi and Palamau Districts in 1892 had little bearing on the statistics here recorded. The implications of the Table are straightforward enough. The Table reveals a significant degree of spatial closure in the Jharkhand prior to 1921; in the censuses before that year not one District in the Jharkhand recorded an immigrant population of even ten per cent. After 1921, however, this closure breaks down and by 1951 the degree of immigration into both Singhbhum and Dhanbad districts is plain to see. By 1971 only Palamau district records a level of immigration (just) below that recorded in Gaya district.

TABLE 3

Immigration and Emigration: Santhal Parganas and Chota Nagpur, 1891–1971

	Immigration	Emigration
1891	96,000	333,000
1901	179,000	NA
1911	293,000	707,000
1921	307,000	947,000
1931	307,000	NA
1941	NA	NA
1951	480,000	NA
1961	1,073,920	NA
1971	1,429,895	NA

Source: K.S. Singh (1978), Statement VII, p. 69.

The effects of this immigration are further inscribed in the changing ethnic composition of the Jharkhand (see Tables 5 and 6). Table 5 records, for each Census year, the percentage of a District's population that would be classified as Scheduled Tribal according to the 1971 list of Scheduled Tribes in Bihar. (The full list of these 30 tribes is provided as Appendix I). The construction of the Table proved simple enough for the period from 1951 to 1971 when separate volumes on the populations of Bihar's Scheduled communities were prepared. For the preceding eight censuses the percentage figures had to be calculated by searching the tribe and caste tables of the Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Bihar censuses for the thirty named tribes and adding up their members on a District-by-District basis. It is possible, again, that the figures for 1872 under-represent the true tribal population, given the unwillingness of some tribals to make themselves known to the census enumerators. It is also possible that the definition of certain of these tribes may have changed over time, but there is no reason to suppose that this is a major problem.

The Table admits two main conclusions. Firstly, it demonstrates that as early as 1891 (the first reliable data set) the population of Chota Nagpur was only one-third 'tribal' (or Scheduled Tribal), although in Santhal Parganas this figure was slightly higher at 38.71% and within Chota Naglpur both Lohardugga (and more especially Ranchi; see 1901 statistics) and Singhbhum Districts recorded tribal majorities. Secondly, the Table reveals a relative decline in the tribal population of the Jharkhand between 1872/91 and 1971. The 1971 census records a tribal majority in Ranchi District alone. In Singhbhum Districit the Scheduled Tribes now comprise only 46.12% of the population, as against 68.16% in 1891. Overall, the northern parts of Chota Nagpur are considerably less 'tribal' than its Southern and South-Western portions. In Santhal Pargana the picture has been a good deal more stable, in part because the area has lacked the sort of industry-led immigration which is common to Singhbum and Dhanbad.

These statistics should make sobering reading for proponents of the ideology of tribal economy and society and particularly for the government which so dearly needs to assume a degree of ethnic closure (and Tribal dominance) in the Jharkhand. Ironically, the government is itself partly responsible for these figures. Section Two noted that the definition of Scheduled Tribes is far from scientific and that it has reflected a series of political calculations in three different eras. This much is clearly revealed in Table 6. This Table charts the changing ethnic composition of the Jharkhand between 1872 and 1971 according to the definitions of tribe and caste provided by the British in 1872. In other words, Table 6 works forward from 1872 rather than backwards from 1971.

A moment's reflection will reveal the significance of these calculations. The base data of Table 6 are supplied from the British Government's list of Primitive and Semi-Aboriginal Tribes as set down in the Census of 1872. The Table then presents the results of a series of re-calculations, from 1872 to 1971, of the 'tribalness' of each Jharkhand District. An example may explain what I mean. Consider the case of the Bhuiyas. In 1872 the British classified this Community as a Semi-Aboriginal tribe in both Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas, but today it is classified as a Scheduled Caste. The assumption in Table 6 is that the Bhuiyas remain a Tribe. Using material on tribe and caste available in the censuses of 1872–1941, Table 6 is constructed by totalling up for each census period, the total members of this community on a district-by-district basis. This procedure is then repeated for all the other communities designated as Tribal in 1872 (see Appendix 2 for the full list) and then the total tribal population for each district is expressed as a percentage of the District's total population. After Independence it is impossible to follow this procedure because the post-colonial state does not produce comprehensive community tables. The figures for 1951–71 must instead be estimated in one of two ways. For those 'tribes' which become Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes the procedure is simple: the populations of these communities continues to be recorded in the census volumes dealing with India's Scheduled communities. For those tribes which now disappear from view—the Ghatwals and the Bhars, for example—the procedure is less clear-cut. For each of these communities one now has to project forward from 1941 rates of population growth known to obtain in other tribal communities between 1951 and 1971. This last procedure is clearly unsatisfactory and it has been used here with great caution. Nevertheless, it is unlikely to have prejudiced the broad conclusions that can be drawn from Table 6. The Table reveals that, on contemporary British definitions, the tribal population of Chota Nagpur in 1891 was fully 49.17% of the Division's total population. In Ranchi and Singhbhum Districts this figure is higher still—at 85.57% and 71.86% respectively—and in Santhal Parganas, too, it is clear that the tribals comprised a majority of the District's population. After 1891 a decline does set in, but not to the extent recorded in Table 5 and not consistently over time and space.[28] According to these recalculated figures, Singhbhum, Ranchi and Santhal Parganas Districts remained predominantly 'tribal' even in 1971.

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[28] Some of the spatial and temporal variation in the 'tribal' population of the Jharkhand undoubtedly reflects certain inconsistencies in census definitions and patterns of enumeration. This is most notable in the apparent, and unexplained, jump in 'tribalness' between 1891 and 1901. Since the post-1901 statistics are more or less consistent with one another, it is likely that the 1901 Census represents the more accurate set of base figures.

TABLE 4
Birthplace and Immigration: The Jharkhand, 1881–1971

	Santhal Paragana	Palamau	Ranchi	Hazaribagh	Manbhum	Singhbhum	Gaya
1881							
Born in District	90.51%	95.72%	95.29%	95.27%	93.38%	96.24%	
Born in Jharkhand	91.86	96.95	96.49	96.75	96.67	—	
Born in Bengal	99.41	99.73	99.85	99.73	99.63	99.81	
Born out of Province	0.59	0.27	0.15	0.27	0.37	0.19	
1891							
Born in District	91.27%	96.46%	93.74%	96.01%	92.82%	97.47%	
Born in Jharkhand	91.49	97.58	97.92	97.75	97.47	—	
Born in Bengal	99.54	99.69	99.82	99.86	99.79	99.63	
Born out of Province	0.46	0.31	0.18	0.14	0.21	0.37	
1901							
Born in District	93.84%	93.73%	97.30%	96.44%	95.23%	94.04%	97.76%
Born in Jharkhand	98.40	98.80	98.88	99.44	98.47	98.14	—
Born in Bengal	99.48	99.00	99.79	99.75	99.51	99.54	99.80
Born out of Province	0.52	1.00	0.21	0.25	0.49	0.46	0.20
1911							
Born in District	94.33%	96.23%	97.57%	96.77%	90.77%	92.82%	97.91
Born in Jharkhand	94.95	97.01	98.91	97.65	93.69	95.90	—
Born in Bihar & Orissa	97.74	99.32	99.59	99.65	96.02	97.93	99.67
Born out of Province	2.26	0.68	0.41	0.35	3.98	2.07	0.33
1921							
Born in District	95.55%	95.72%	97.94%	97.16%	90.10%	89.82%	97.92%
Born in Jharkhand	96.06	96.54	98.93	97.91	92.86	92.17	—
Born in Bihar & Orissa	98.33	98.93	99.46	99.22	96.76	94.61	99.79
Born out of Province	1.67	1.07	0.54	0.78	3.24	5.39	0.21

1931							
Born in District	97.38%	97.04%	98.17%	95.64%	90.56%	88.06%	97.88%
Born in Jharkhand	97.53	97.65	98.99	96.70	92.82	89.57	—
Born in Bihar & Orissa	98.72	99.30	99.44	98.32	96.34	92.62	99.81
Born out of Province	1.28	0.70	0.56	1.68	3.66	7.38	0.19
1941							
Born in District							
Born in Jharkhand			NO COMPARABLE DATA				
Born in Bihar							
Born out of Province							
1951							
Born in District	97.30%	96.40%	97.21%	94.22%	70.16%	87.01%	97.79%
Born in Jharkhand	97.83	97.97	98.15	95.76	77.13	88.58	—
Born in Bihar	99.25	99.46	98.66	97.88	90.12	90.17	99.7
Born out of State	0.75	0.54	1.34	2.12	9.88	9.83	0.27
1961							
Born in District	94.41%	95.12%	94.04%	92.43%	68.77%	85.89%	96.84%
Born in Jharkhand	95.43	97.84	96.57	94.19	73.46	88.12	—
Born in Bihar	97.72	98.82	96.81	97.44	87.14	89.66	98.85
Born out of State	2.28	1.18	3.19	2.56	12.86	10.34	1.15
1971							
Born in District	94.34%	94.99%	92.85%	90.14%	69.62%	86.78%	96.33%
Born in Jharkhand	95.20	97.60	95.17	94.51	71.44	87.61	—
Born in Bihar	97.69	98.83	96.92	97.61	87.34	91.47	98.79
Born out of State	2.31	1.17	3.08	2.39	12.66	8.53	1.21

Source: Census of India, 1881–1971.

TABLE 5
The Scheduled Tribes of Bihar as a Percentage of the Total Population of the Districts of Santhal Parganas and Chota Nagpur, 1872–1971

	Santal Parganas	Palamau	Ranchi	Hazaribagh	Manbhum	Singhbhum	Total Chotanagpur
1872[a]	43.70%	44.71%		7.71%	24.12%	61.90%	32.45%
1881			NO COMPARABLE DATA				
1891	38.71%	67.79		10.91	29.48	68.16	33.60
1901	42.30	17.70	56.51	11.11	23.01	72.49	30.43
1911	41.98	22.16	53.56	10.16	23.01	64.60	32.51
1921	40.01	20.04	55.22	10.12	22.21	62.57	32.62
1931	41.89	19.87	61.93	13.44	22.02	58.36	34.30
1941	41.50	19.18	67.33	12.53	21.29	55.83	34.53
1951	44.67	20.16	60.49	13.81	15.65[b]	48.18	31.15
1961	38.24	19.24	61.61	11.30	11.08	47.31	32.64
1971	36.22	19.09	53.50	10.99	10.61	46.12	30.94

Notes:

a. It is possible these figures underestimate the true strength of Bihar's Scheduled Tribes in 1872. b. Dhanbad only, 1951–1971.

Sources: *Census of Bengal 1872,* Statement VB.
Census of India 1891, Vol.III Lower Provinces of Bengal, Provincial Table V.
Census of India 1901, Vol. VI Bengal PT III, Provincial Table V.
Census of India 1911, Vol. V Bihar and Orissa PT III, Table XIII.
Census of India 1921, Vol. III Bihar and Orissa PT II, Table XIII.
Census of India 1931, Vol. VII Bihar and Orissa PT II, Table XVIII.
Census of India 1941, Vol. VII Bihar, Table XIV.
Census of India, 1951–1971 Special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes: Bihar.

TABLE 6

The Aboriginal and Semi-Aboriginal Tribes of Bihar as a Percentage of the Total Population of the Districts of Santhal Parganas and Chota Nagpur, 1872–1971

	Santal Parganas		Palamau	Ranchi	Hazaribagh	Manbhum	Singhbhum	Total Chotanagpur
1872[a]	62.05%	60.21%	33.48%	45.54%	68.63%	51.38%		
1881					NO COMPARABLE DATA			
1891	50.85		88.57[b]	30.68	43.61	72.86	49.17	
1901	59.55		49.25	64.31	37.06	47.30	76.82	50.61
1911	59.05		48.61	61.82	33.99	40.42	74.15	48.97
1921	55.40		44.22	63.33	32.07	37.80	70.40	47.74
1931	56.49		44.90	66.01	33.82	35.41	66.69	47.81
1941	53.57		43.03	72.99	31.84	33.97	59.25	47.21
1951	55.21		43.03	67.14	32.67	25.92[c]	52.16	45.79
1961	54.69		42.22	65.11	28.00	21.24	50.95	43.17
1971	50.60		40.66	61.92	22.23	17.63	48.16	39.24

Notes:

a. It is possible that these figures underestimate the true strength of Bihar's Aboriginals (and especially the adivasis of Lohardugga—Palamau & Ranchi – District).

b. Double checked. No clear reason why this figure is so high.

c. Dhanbad only, 1951–1971.

Sources: As Table 3.5. Based upon definitions given in the Census of Bengal, 1872—General Statement VB.

We should not get too carried away with these statistics, however, or with the implications they hold for the concept of a tribe. The fact remains that tribal policy is meant to serve just thirty Scheduled Tribes and it is by and for these thirty tribes that a fight for a tribal state is supposedly being waged. Against this background we can draw but two conclusions. A first conclusion concerns the state's official tribal policies. Insofar as these policies assume a correspondence between ethnicity and location they are based on a massive misconception. This is demonstrated not only by the materials assembled in Tables 5 and 6, but also by the figures quoted by the Government's own Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Table 7 reproduces material from Appendix XXIII of the 24th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. To these statistics I have added the figures listed in column 6 and 7. Column 6 reveals that just over two-third of Bihar's Scheduled Tribes are resident in the Sub-Plan areas which, since 1974, have been the basic unit of tribal planning in India. This level of coverage compares favourably with that in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra but it still leaves 21.36% of Bihar's Scheduled Tribal population out of account. Under a planning regime which tends increasingly to equate tribes and areas these tribals are left to the tender mercies of Special Assistance schemes. More worrying still are the implications of Column 7. This column reveals that within Bihar's Sub-Plan area—which is supposed to be more tightly defined than all of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas[29]—fully 54.81% of the population is non-tribal. Just how these non-tribals are to be excluded from the fruits of Sub-Plan spending is not explained, nor is it explained why this state of affairs is allowed, given the Government's firm intention to form Sub-Plan areas only where more than fifty per cent of the population can be classified as Scheduled Tribal.[30]

A second conclusion relates to the politics of ethnoregionalism. In one sense these demographic and ethnic statistics leave untouched both the Weiner and internal colonialism models. Calls for a separate tribal state are clearly not helped by the demonstration that two-thirds of the Jharkhand's population is 'non-tribal,' but the claim that Jharkhandi politics are phrased in terms of tribe versus caste is not disproven. What we can say is that at village level the tribe/caste division is nothing like as clear cut as these two schools maintain. Investigation of the ethnic composition of a random sample of twenty villages

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[29] The Sub-Plan area in South Bihar covers all of Ranchi District, all of Singhbhum District save Dhalbhum sub-division, all of Santhal Parganas District save Godda and Deoghar subdivisions, plus the Latehar subdivision of Palamau Disitrict.

[30] There are exceptions to this conclusion, of course: educational scholarships and reserved jobs can be targeted on an ethnic basis. Of concern here is the far greater amount of 'tribal spending' which is devoted to area and infrastructural programmes.

TABLE 7
Tribe and Region: Scheduled Tribes Population of States/ Union Territories and their Representation in Tribal Sub-Plan Areas, 1971

State/Union Territory	Total Popn. of State/U.T. (lakhs)	Scheduled Tribe Popn. (lakhs)	Total Popn. Of sub-plan area (lakhs)	Scheduled Tribe popn. in sub-plan area(lakhs)	% of State's Sch. Tribes in sub-plan area	% of Sch. Tribes/ total sub-plan popn.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Andhra Pradesh	435.05	16.38	13.21	7.09	43.28%	53.67%
Assam	146.25	16.06	17.07	9.44	58.78	53.30
Bihar	563.53	49.33	74.92	33.86	68.64	45.19
Gujarat	266.98	37.34	38.96	26.82	71.83	68.84
Himachal Pradesh	34.60	1.42	1.14	0.84	59.15	73.68
Madhya Pradesh	416.54	83.87	90.64	58.57	69.83	64.62
Maharashtra	504.12	29.54	26.13	15.20	51.46	58.17
Manipur	10.73	3.34	3.48	3.13	93.71	89.94
Orissa	219.45	50.72	60.07	34.99	68.99	58.25
Rajasthan	257.66	31.26	20.04	13.16	42.10	65.67
Tripura	15.56	4.51	4.16	2.67	59.20	64.18
Kerala	213.47	2.69	0.39	0.16	5.95	41.03
Karnataka	292.99	2.31	*	0.56	24.24	*
Tamil Nadu	411.89	3.12	*	0.64	20.51	*
Uttar Pradesh	883.12	1.99	0.15	0.15	7.54	100.00
West Bengal	443.12	25.33	*	7.33	28.94	*

Notes:

* *No data*

Source: Computed from *The 24th Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes,* Part II, Appendix XXXII.

drawn from the 1971 Census of the most tribal thanas of Ranchi District revealed that not one village upholds the model of a closed community portrayed in the ideology of tribal economy and society. Most villages register a non-tribal population of at least twenty per cent. Of course it is possible that these statistics reveal no more than a spatial juxtaposition between communities, with the tribe/caste boundary being preserved in the daily round of social, political and economic life. Whether or not this is the case is something we shall not know until we begin to examine the economic circumstances of tribal and non-tribal in the Jharkhand.

IV. The Jharkhand: Economic Transformation and Regional Change

A detailed investigation of the economic circumstances of selected Jharkhand communities is essayed in Corbridge (1986, Chapters 3 and 4) and there is space here to draw attention to just three points emerging from that study. Firstly, the economic and demographic transformation of the Jharkhand in the twentieth century has quite undercut any simple equation between a 'tribal' and a 'simple [let alone shifting] cultivator.' In the Census of 1891 the British authorities classified almost all of the tribals of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas as Hunters, Forest and Hill Tribes and Cultivators.[31] If a Weaver's Combination Index is calculated for each of Bihar's tribes using 1961 data a very different picture obtains (see Table 8)[32] Some ten (of thirty) tribes now record significant numbers of agricultural labourers in their ranks, with the Bathudi and Savar being predominantly of this occupation. Other tribal groups record a creditable rate of participation in mining and manufacturing industries, which speaks again of the scale and pace of regional economic transformation in South Bihar.

Secondly, this transformation has not bypassed the aboriginal populations of Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas or buried them at the bottom of what Michael Hechter calls a 'culturally defined hierarchical division of labour' (Hechter, 1975). Whilst it would be idle to pretend that all tribals gained as much as from the industrialisation of Chota Nagpur as perchance they could have, the internal colonialism thesis is betrayed by a series of Census statistics and fieldwork data-sets which reveal the significant labour contributions made

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[31] *Census of India 1891*, Vol.III, Lower Provinces of Bengal—Provincial Table XVI.

[32] Weaver's Combination Index is a simple measure designed to convey the most accurate classification scheme—or intervals—to describe a given body of data: in this case to determine the degree of occupational specialisation of a given tribe. For a brief discussion of the technique, see Hammond and McCullagh (1974, pp. 27–31).

by South Bihar tribes to the region's industrial development. It seems likely, for example, that the 'tribals' of the Jharkhand comprised between 40% and 65% of the unskilled mines' labour force in Chota Naglpur in 1921 (the only year for which meaningful data are available).[33] Further, it is not the case that patterns of land ownership and land operation in 'tribal' South Bihar remained frozen through this transformation. Many tribals have lost land to the immigrant non-tribals, but so too, has much land been transferred within the tribal community.[34] This much is evident from Table 9, which reveals broadly similar profiles of land ownership inequality in tribal and non-tribal South Bihar (and even in Gangetic Bihar). It is also confirmed by the perceptive remarks of Asit Bandopadhyay, Land Reforms Commissioner in Bihar in 1977/79. 'It is time to note', says Bandopadhayay, 'that the many social and economic changes that have come about in tribal areas have created a class of tribal landholders and moneylenders who exploit small landholders of their own community (Bandopadhyay, 1979, Chapter II, pp.3–4).

TABLE 8

The Occupations of the Scheduled Tribes of Bihar, 1961: Classified according to Weaver's Combination Index

Scheduled Tribe	Males	Females	All
Asur	C	C	C
Baiga	C, Ag	C, Ag	C, Ag
Banjara	Mg, C, O	Mg, O, C	Mg, O, C
Bathudi	Ag	Ag	Ag
Bedia	C	C	C
Bhumij	C, Ag, O	C, Ag	C, Ag
Binjhia	C	C	C
Birhor	HHI, C, Ag	HHI, C	HHI, C, Ag
Birjia	C	C	C
Chero	C	C, Ag	C
Chik Baraik	C	C	C
Gond	C	C	C
Gorait	C, Ag	C	C, Ag

[33] Data from *Census of India* 1921, Vol.III Bihar and Orissa, Pt.II, Table XXII. (See also Das Gupta, 1976). The true ethnic figure is difficult to specify, in part because of a 'Workers of Unknown Caste or Race' category, and in part because of the different definitions of a tribe between 1921 and, say 1981. For example, using 1921 definitions, 83.8% of unskilled stone workers were 'tribal', however the Scheduled Tribes of 1981 comprise only 55.5% of the workforce in 1921.

[34] This is one of many paradoxes induced by the area's protective land legislation: see Rothermund (1978).

Ho	C	C	C
Karmali	C, MQ	C, Ag	C, Ag
Kharia	C	C	C
Kharwar	C	C	C
Khond	C, Ag, MQ, O	C	C, Ag
Kisan	C	C	C
Kora	C, Ag, MQ	C, Ag, HHI	C, Ag, MQ, HHI
Korwa	C, Ag, MQ	C, Ag	C, Ag
Lohara	C, HHI, Ag	C, Ag, HHI	C, HHI, Ag
Mahli	C, HHI	HHI, C	HHI, C
Mal Paharia	C	C	C
Munda	C	C	C
Oraon	C	C	C
Parhaiya	C, Ag	C, Ag	C, Ag
Santhal	C	C	C
Sauria Paharia	C	C	C
Savar	Ag	Ag	Ag

Key:
C=Cultivators; Ag=Agricultural Labourers, MQ=Mining, Quarrying, etc.
HHI=Household Industry; Mg=Manufacturing; O=Others

Finally, it is not the case that the tribal element of the industrial working class of South Bihar has been systematically and collectively singled out for exploitation by a class of controlling external capitalists. Nor is it the case that in rural Jharkhand agricultural contracts are now based solely, or even mainly, on intra-*killi* relationships or on the decisions of *killi* chiefs. Regarding the first proposition, and contra Rothermund *et al.'s* Portrait of the 'coalfield as an external enclave' (Rothermund *et al.*, 1978, 1980), there is evidence that many tribals gained remunerative employment in the iron ore mines and copper mines especially (and also in the coal mines in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s). Research by Corbridge (1982, 1986 Chapter 4) suggests that it was the savings amassed by a number of permanent mine labourer—some skilled, most not—which prompted and 'paid for' the recent opening up of the protected land markets of Chota Nagpur. Regarding the organization of agriculture in contemporary Chota Nagpur, I can only report that in the context of a difficult dry-land farming system, commercialisation and commercial attitudes are at least as evident amongst the tribal communities as in the non-tribal communities (see also Wanmali, 1981). The ideology of tribal economy and society, though accurate perhaps in the early part of this century, and perhaps even today in parts of north-east India, is fast becoming a myth which is at odds with the changing realities of 'tribal' life and development in the Jharkhand.

TABLE 9

The Size-Distribution of Operational Land Holdings in Bihar and the Jharkhand (Tribal and all Communities), 1971

	All Bihar			All Jharkhand			Jharkhand: Tribals Only		
Size-Class (Hectares)	% Total Holdings	% Total Area	Av. Area of Holding	% total Holdings	% Total Area	Av. Area of Holding	% Total Holdings	% Total Area	Av. Area of Holding
<0.5	46.55%	7.53%	0.2ha	36.34%	3.77%	0.2ha	34.98%	3.69%	0.2ha
0.5–1.0	17.79	8.56	0.7	15.97	5.22	0.7	15.44	4.80	0.7
1.0–2.0	14.64	13.62	1.4	15.66	9.97	1.4	14.70	8.64	1.4
2.0–3.0	7.59	12.02	2.4	9.57	10.30	2.4	8.12	7.90	2.5
3.0–4.0	4.99	10.09	3.4	6.40	9.66	3.4	6.61	9.17	3.4
4.0–5.0	2.95	8.62	4.4	4.48	8.43	4.5	5.29	8.28	4.5
5.0–10.0	4.22	19.02	6.8	7.77	23.63	6.9	7.85	21.83	6.8
10.0–20.0	1.38	12.12	13.2	2.93	17.41	13.2	4.12	18.65	13.2
20.0–30.0	0.25	3.89	23.4	0.56	5.77	23.1	0.98	6.40	23.2
30.0–40.0	0.08	1.69	33.7	0.16	2.38	33.6	0.74	4.05	33.6
40.0–50.0	0.03	0.88	44.3	0.06	1.21	44.5	0.75	3.63	44.5
>50.0	0.03	1.96	87.4	0.05	1.85	79.8	0.42	2.96	80.6
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**	**1.5**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**2.3**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**2.6**

Note:

The text suggests that the true size-class runs from 0.5–0.99 and 1.0–1.99 and so on.

Source : S.R. Adige (1974) *Report on the Agricultural Census of Bihar, 1970–71*, p. 135 and p. 221. *Census of India, 1971*, Series 4 Bihar, Pt. V-A.

V. Conclusion: Models of Jharkhand Politics

In the final section of this paper I want briefly to consider the consequences of accepting the ideology of tribal economy and society as the basis of tribal policy and tribal politics and as the basis of a scholarly understanding of tribal policy and tribal politics. Two points are at stake here. Firstly, it seems clear to me that the underlying philosophy of tribal development in Bihar must now be challenged. It is not just the case that successive administrations have failed fully to meet their laudable expenditure targets on the Special Tribal Spending account, or to provide significant numbers of Reserved jobs above Class III and Sweeper levels (see Corbridge, 1986a). It is the case also that those benefits which are being chanelled to 'tribal Bihar' are being directed, first, to wide Sub-Plan Areas where tribals are rarely in majority, and, secondly, to those elements within the tribal communities—the political and economic elites—which have the necessary skills and resources to appropriate most of the 'prizes' on offer from Government (see also Maharaj, 1980).

Secondly, there is the question of the present and future, and indeed the past, 'direction' of Jharkhandi politics. A number of related issues are entwined here. Regarding the future of ethnoregionalism in the Jharkhand, it seems unlikely that there will be a return to the heady-days of 'tribal politics' which emerged under Jaipal Singh's leadership in the 1950s. This has rather less to do with inter-denominational and factional clashed—though this 'vertical' circuit of politics (Carter, 1974) is clearly important—than with the erosion of a single tribal constituency to which this politics can correspond and from which it can gain support. In my judgement the decline of a united Jharkhandi ethnoregionalism in the late-1960s and 1970s has everything to do with the increasing and parallel speed of the economic transformation then (and now) destroying old patterns of livelihood and ethnicity in South Bihar. Following on from this, if seemingly at odds with it, we are not yet set, I think, to see the replacement of ethnic politics in the Jharkhand by a resolutely class politics (see Sengupta, 1982; Simon, 1982). Such a scenario fails to enter two important caveats: it overlooks the extent to which individuals and communities can draw strength from both class position and ethnicity (men and women are not one-dimensional puppets), and it forgets that state tribal policies, perhaps misleadingly and no doubt paradoxically, continue to hold open the door for the (limited) pursuit of ethnic politics. In a sense this takes us back to Weiner's work on the 'politics of scarcity' (Weiner, 1962) and to Robinson's account of the state's role in encouraging the growth of Muslim politics in the United Provinces (Robinson, 1974). More precisely, it reminds us of Hechter and Levi's prescient observation that 'state programmes are both resources and targets of attack for ethnic communities'. (Hechter and Levi, 1979, p. 270). The state in India may now be hoist with its own petard: having phrased its tribal policy in terms of a philosophy of positive discrimination, the Government

is at once unwilling to finance the demands of a majority of its tribal communities, whilst finding itself unable to change directions because of the political threat posed by a tribal elite which has benefited from those 'prizes' which are on offer. Conversely, the problem for the Jharkhand Movement, and for the student of it, is this: any account of the rise and fall of ethnoregioalism in South Bihar must explain (1) why ethnoregionalism first surfaced, politically, in the 1950s precisely when the post-colonial state began to make available to 'tribal Bihar' resources such as had not been seen under the British; and (2) why the force of this political movement declined in the 1960s (given that factional struggles and interdenominational disputes had been present from the start: see Vidyarthi, 1970). A detailed response to these questions cannot be supplied here (see Corbridge, 1986). Nevertheless, it must be clear that a meaningful account of recent Jharkhandi politics must first dispense with the ideology of tribal economy and society which today informs most major models of Jharkhandi ethnoregionalism. To assume that the rise and fall of 'ethnic politics' can be modelled in terms of a static ideology of tribal economy and society is both intellectually untenable and quite at odds with the real history of the transformation of the space-economy of modern South Bihar. More positively, I would suggest that a consistent account of recent Jharkhand politics must pay attention to two related, and at times colliding, 'factors': the economic and demographic transformation of South Bihar and the contradictory development of state tribal policies. It is in the complex inter-relationships of these two factors that we may find the basis of a theory of Jharkhandi 'ethnoregionalism' which is at once sensitive to its rationale and fissures, and to its emerging chronology and differential spatial impress.

Appendix 1

The Scheduled Tribes of Bihar, 1971

1.	Bhumij	2.	Asur	3.	Baiga
4.	Banjara	5.	Bathudi	6.	Bedia
7.	Binjhia	8.	Birhor	9.	Birjia
10.	Chero	11.	Chik Baraik	12.	Gond
13.	Gorait	14.	Ho	15.	Karmali
16.	Kharia	17.	Kharwar	18.	Khond
19.	Kisan	20.	Kora	21.	Korwa
22.	Lohara or Lohra	23.	Mahli	24.	Mal Paharia
25.	Munda	26.	Oraon	27.	Parhaiya
28.	Santhal	29.	Sauria Paharia	30.	Savar

Source: Census of India, 1971: Series 4 Bihar Pt.V-A

Appendix 2

The Aboriginal and Semi-Hinduised Aboriginal Tribes of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas, Bihar: 1872

Aboriginal Tribes

a. *Chota Nagapur*: Asur and Agaria, Bhuiher; Boyar; Parhaiya; Bhumij; Binjhia, Binghwar; Birhor; Cherwal; Gond; Kaur Khairia; Khond; Kol (including Ho); Korwa; Kuru; Mal; Munda; Nagesia, Kisan; Naiya, Naik, Uraon; Pahariya; Pandabasi; Puran; Rautia; Sabar; Sonthal; Saout.

b. *Santhal Parganas*: Bhar; Cheru; Dhangar; Kanjhar, Kanghar; Kharwar; Kol; Mal, Mar; Naiya; Nat; Pahariya, Sonthal,; Tharu.

Semi-Hinduised Aboriginal Tribes

a. Chota Nagpur: Bagdi; Bathudi; Bauri; Bhuiya; Bhar; Banjara; Bediya; Bahelia; Chamar; Muchi; Chik; Dom, Turi; Dosadh; Ganda; Ghatwal; Kaora;Khaira; Kharwar; Bhogta, Mahar, Manjhi, Gunjhu, Mahali, Mihtar, Hari; Musahar; Pab; Panika; Pasi; Rajwar.

b. *Santhal Parganas*: Arakh; Baheliya; Bagdi; Bari; Batar; Bauri; Bhuiya; Bin; Bind; Chain; Chamar; Chandal; Dom; Dosadh; Gangaunta; Hari; Kadar; Mahali; Markande; Mihtar; Musahar; Paliya, Rajbansi; Pasi; Rajwar.

Source : Census of Bengal, 1872, Table V-B: Nationalities, Race, Tribes and Castes –Bihar.

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JHARKHAND PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE

JAGANNATH SARKAR

Bihar has been plagued by an intractable ethnic problem for the last five decades. It is the problem of the tribal peoples of the State.

Fifty years ago in 1939 the Adivasi Mahasabha, led by Jaipal Singh, first raised the banner of a Jharkhand State for the tribal peoples of this region. Sometime later, presumably to justify this slogan, it was asserted that in the plateau region a new nationality has emerged – the Jharkhandi nationality.

Ever since then this problem has remained. It has acquired new dimensions from time to time. The attitude of various social and political forces towards it has been changing. It has been causing sharp social and political conflicts, occasionally erupting into violent inter-ethnic clashes. The democratic parties and forces in the State have been worried failing to find any satisfactory solution.

The ruling party has been experimenting with various policies and measures to solve the problem but it has miserably failed. It should be frankly admitted that the opposition parties in the State too have failed to find a proper democratic solution.

The problem raises a number of tough theoretical questions. Are the various tribal peoples getting slowly assimilated and absorbed in the non-tribal nationalities? Is the statement of the spokesmen of Government of India before the UN Working Group correct that India is like a melting pot in which the tribals have fused with the non-tribal peoples, that in India the tribal problem has virtually vanished? Those who claim to be social scientists assert that with the growth of capitalism, the tribal peoples are getting detribalised and that this process will solve the problem of the tribals.

Certain other questions are also being raised. The Government of India has officially identified 29 tribes as Scheduled Tribes in Bihar. They speak different languages and they have different racial origins. Are these tribes developing into one nationality or remain split into several

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nationalities? Can there be one nationality on the basis of several languages? Or are they merely ethnic-linguistic groups which do not have the characteristics of nationalities, and hence should be dealt with accordingly?

There is yet another tricky question. Are the peoples of the entire plateau region of Bihar which is supposed to constitute the Jharkhand State, or of the 21 districts of four States which are claimed by some to constitute the proposed Jharkhand State—the tribals as also the non-tribals—coalescing into one Jharkhandi nationality?

Our social scientists should find proper answers to the aforementioned questions. But even before that is done, the actual processes that are underway, the developments that are taking place, cannot be ignored. And we have to deal with these problems.

It is said by some that the slogan of the Jharkhand State was a ploy of British imperialism to keep the tribals of the plateau region away from the mainstream of the national movement. Others point to the intriguing fact that during the Second World War the Tatas were toying with the idea of carving out an industrial province comprised of the plateau region of Bihar and Orissa together with the Asansol sub-division of Bengal. The idea was to have a State based on this politically backward region with huge mineral resources under the direct control of the monopolists.

Whatever might have been the original inspiration behind the slogan of the Jharkhand State, the fact remains that on the eve of our Independence the Jharkhand Movement under the leadership of Jaipal Singh had a tempestuous growth. It rallied almost all the tribal peoples of Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas. As a matter of fact the slogan evoked sympathetic response among the tribal peoples even beyond the borders of the Bihar plateau. That is why Jaipal Singh included in his proposed Jharkhand State not only the Chotanagpur division and the Santhal Parganas, but also portions of other districts of Bihar, such as Gaya, Bhagalpur, Mungher and Shahabad and also certain districts of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. These areas were formally claimed by the Jharkhand Party in its memorandum to the States Reorganisation Commission on April 22, 1954. Neither Jaipal Singh nor this memorandum included any part of West Bengal in it. Later the Jharkhand Party revised its claim. On March 12, 1977, in its memorandum to the Government of India, it demanded only the Chotanagpur division and the Santhal Parganas from Bihar, four districts from Orissa (Sundergarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur), three districts from West Bengal (Purulia, Midnapur and Bankura) and two districts from Madhya Pradesh (Raigarh and Surguja). Some stalwarts of the Jharkhand agitation restrict their demand to the Chotnagpur division and the Santhal Parganas district only. It appears that the upholders of the Jharkhand State are not very

clear about the area they want. They are, however, clear on one point: they want a tribal state of their own in the region.

The electrifying effect of the slogan on the tribal peoples of the Bihar plateau was clearly reflected in the first general elections in 1952. The Jharkhand Party bagged 34 seats in the Bihar Assembly, becoming the main party of the Opposition. This feat was repeated by the Jharkhand Party in two subsequent elections, though with lesser success than in 1952.

The decline in the influence of the Jharkhand Party was not due to the waning urge for the Jharkhand State among the tribal peoples, as many had wrongly explained, but due to the sense of frustration as a result of the failure of the Jharkhand Party to secure the Jharkhand State despite repeated electoral successes. The sense of frustration was particularly strong when they failed to get Jharkhand even through the States Reorganisation Commission in 1956.

It is in the background of this frustration that Jaipal Singh decided to merge the Jharkhand Party in the Indian National Congress in the early sixties. He gave up the slogan of a separate Jharkhand State and talked about serving the tribal peoples through the Indian National Congress.

Some people thought that the merger of the Jharkhand Party in the INC reflected the process of assimilation of the tribal peoples in the non-tribal communities, that the tribals instead of developing into distinct nationalities, crystallising into ethno-linguistic entities, were getting merged in the non-tribal peoples. Subsequent developments proved that such assessments were totally unfounded.

The merger move of Jaipal Singh came as a traumatic shock to the tribal peoples. It dazed them for sometime and led to great frustration and confusion. But the urge for a separate tribal state, for self-government of the tribal peoples was so strong that other tribal leaders and parties appeared on the scene and repeatedly raised the banner of the Jharkhand State. Among such parties were the Hul Jharkhand Party, the Birsa Seva Dal, the All-India Jharkhand Party, the Bihar Prant Jharkhand Party, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, etc.

These parties passed through many ups and downs. They had differences among them. Some demanded a Jharkhand State based on the plateau region of Bihar alone, others demanded a Jharkhand State based on 21 districts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. Some talked of a centrally administered territory for the region. Some spoke in a militant language and even organised violent struggles against the 'dikku land-grabbers', the usurers and the Forest Department officers. Some

denounced the leaders as opportunists. Some hobnobbed with the ruling Congress, some with the ruling Janata Party. They had many differences among them. But they had one thing in common. They all put before the tribal peoples the aim of a Jharkhand State which was so dear to the tribal peoples. This deep urge of the tribal peoples for a State of their own was utilised by any number of opportunist, racketeering politicians to prosper by raising the banner of Jharkhand. But despite all this, the tribal peoples remain wedded to the slogan of Jharkhand as strongly as ever before, if not more.

The ruling party has, over the years, taken a number of measures with a view to turning the tribal peoples away from the slogan of a Jharkhand State. In the Constitution they provided for reservation of seats for the tribals in the legislature, and jobs in the Government services. They set up Tribal Advisory Councils for the Scheduled Areas (the tribal majority areas) under the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. These councils function under the guardianship of the State Governor. They set up Multi-Purpose Tribal Development Authorities for Chotanagpur and the Santhal Parganas. These so-called autonomous authorities were constituted in the most undemocratic fashion and lacked real executive and financial powers. The aforesaid measures recognised the need of special measures for the tribal peoples, but scrupulously avoided giving them the essence of self-government.

What lies behind this powerful urge of the tribal peoples for a Jharkhand State, for self-government? Behind it is their intense desire to assert their identity and the right to develop as a specific ethnic community or nationality, and to secure the opportunity to fashion their lives on the basis of their own genius. These tribal peoples have not only retained their languages and culture over thousands of years but they show a strong desire to develop them. The major tribal peoples have been producing written literature as well.

These peoples belong to different tribes, have different racial origin and speak different languages, but they have similar socio-ethnic characteristics. They share a certain common heritage, tradition, culture and ethos which are qualitatively different from those of the non-tribal peoples. Among them the concept of private property, as perceived by the non-tribal peoples, has not developed. Instead, the concept of common, collective or community ownership still prevails. As a matter of fact they have a deep feeling that the flesh, blood and bones of their bodies do not belong to the individuals but to the community. And this influences their attitude towards everything.

For instance, on the issue of rights over land, the tribal peoples do not perceive the concept of ownership as an ability to transmit any right over their territories to other persons. They feel that they are trustees of the territories that they occupy, with a continuity running from their ancestors, through themselves, to future generations. They, therefore, regard their territories to be inalienable.

What is true about their concept of right over land, is also true about rights over the forests.

This peculiar concept of private property, or rather its absence, keeps them tied down to the natural economy, prevents them from engaging in commodity production, particularly production of commodities for the market based on private ownership and enterprise. The spread of commerce and industry based on capitalism has failed to draw the tribal peoples within the system. It has only served to marginalise them and squeeze them out.

It is significant to note that among the tribal peoples of this region no exploiting classes have emerged. There is hardly any landlord or usurer or trader or even a shopkeeper, not to speak of the contractor or the capitalist entrepreneur, among them.

It will not be out of place to refer to a significant fact. The Left Front Government of West Bengal allotted 70 shops to tribals in Jhargram. In less than two years all the shops, barring a tailoring shop closed down! The tribals do not understand the art of purchasing a commodity for selling it at a profit! It is against their culture, against their ethos, against their tradition.

In the sphere of social institutions and social organisation as well the same idea of community consciousness, community ownership prevails. Their *pradhans, mundas* and *mankis* are not merely their representatives, but are organic parts of the tribals. They function on the basis of consensus. They administer and dispense justice on the basis of consensus of the tribes, on the basis of norms and values accepted by all.

When such tribal communities are exposed to the forces of commerce and industry based on capitalism they fail to be absorbed or subsumed in the system. They are crushed and squeezed out. They become helpless victims of rapacious usurers, contractors and other exploiters. Development based on capitalist relations appears before them as a malevolent, destructive force. Hence the development of capitalism, and the growth of industry and commerce do not draw the tribal peoples inside the system, but compel them to resist, combine and assert their identity. They do not integrate them with the non-tribals, rather compel them to get crystallised separately. Their tribal characteristics, instead of getting diluted

under the impact of capitalism, become further consolidated and intensified.

This feature of the tribal peoples is true not only in the plateau region of Bihar but, by and large, all over the world. It will not be out of place to quote the solemn declaration adopted at the founding Conference of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of North America and Europe held in Port Alberney of British Columbia in October 1975.

> We, the Indigenous Peoples of the World, united in this corner of our Mother, the Earth, in a great assembly of men of wisdom, declare to all nations:
>
> We glory in our proud past, when the Earth was our nurturing Mother, when the night sky formed our common roof,
>
> When Sun and Moon were our parents,
>
> When all were brothers and sisters,
>
> When our great civilisations grew under the Sun,
>
> When our chiefs and elders were great leaders,
>
> When justice ruled the Law and its executive.
>
> Then other peoples arrived:
>
> Thirsting for blood, for gold, for land, its wealth,
>
> Carrying the cross and the sword, one in each hand,
>
> Without knowing or waiting to learn the ways of our worlds,
>
> They considered us to be lower than the animals,
>
> They stole our land from us and took us from our lands.
>
> They made slaves of the sons of the Sun,
>
> However, they have never been able to eliminate us,
>
> Nor to erase our memories of what we were,
>
> Because we are the culture of the earth and the sky,
>
> We are of ancient descent and we are millions,
>
> And although our whole universe be ravaged,
>
> Our people will live on for longer than even the kingdom of Death,
>
> Now we come from the four corners of the Earth,
>
> We protest before the concert of nations
>
> That "we are the Indigenous Peoples, we who have a consciousness of culture and peoplehood,
>
> On the edge of each country's borders and marginal to each country's citizenship,
>
> And rising up after centuries of oppression,

Evoking the greatness of our ancestors,

In the Memory of our Indigenous Martyrs,

And in homage to the counsel of our wise elders.

We vow to control again our own destiny and recover our complete humanity and pride in our being Indigenous Peoples".

The above declaration of the first World Conference of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples is not mere poetical rhetoric. It aptly describes the ethos and psyche of the tribal peoples. Their problem cannot be solved by seeking to drag them along the path of bourgeois development. The path of bourgeois development is painful even for the non-tribal peoples, but it leads to some form of development. In the case of the tribal communities, however, this path spells total destruction. Their path of development has to be based on ideas and traditions of collective, community ownership and not private ownership.

Jawaharlal Nehru had an astounding way of perceiving the distinctive characteristic of our tribal peoples and 30 years ago he enunciated five basic principles which he termed Panch Sheel for the development of the tribal peoples. They are as follows:

1. The tribal peoples 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 shall be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up teams of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed but we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.
4. We should not over-administer their 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 the results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of the character that is involved.

The principles enunciated by Nehru can provide the broad guidelines for solving the problems of the tribal peoples. These principles can be effectively implemented if the compact tribal majority areas are constituted as tribal States within the Indian Union.

The tribal peoples in Bihar are not in a majority in the whole plateau region of Bihar. As a matter of fact, they constitute only about one-fourth of the total population. But there are large compact tribal majority areas in

the plateau region of Bihar. These areas can constitute a State where the tribal peoples can develop on the basis of their own genius, their languages, their culture and their social and cultural institutions. They can plan and execute development of their agriculture, industry and commerce by utilising their own institutions based on ownership of the community and cooperative enterprise. In such places where the tribal majority areas are too small to be constituted in a State, they can have the status of Autonomous Regions under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

A question may legitimately be raised. How can the tribal peoples inhabiting the compact tribal majority areas of the Bihar plateau region be constituted in one State, because they belong to 29 tribes, out of which four belong to major tribes, speaking different languages and belonging to different racial origin? But the tribal peoples of this region have developed a large measure of political unity because they have been sharing a common habit in this plateau region for a very long time, because they share the common experience of jointly contending against and administration that has been trampling upon their traditional values, rights and ethos, which has been seeking to undermine and even destroy their institutions and, last but not the least, they belong to a common Jharkhand movement for realising a State of their own. This has helped to cement their unity and make it possible for them to have a common State.

It is unfortunate that many representatives of the tribal peoples demand their Jharkhand State over a territory where the tribals are in a minority. Such a State will defeat the purpose of self-government for the tribal peoples.

For instance, some of them want their Jharkhand State for the whole of the plateau region of Bihar, that is, the whole of the Chotanagpur division and the Santhal Parganas district where the tribals constitute only one-fourth of the total population. Such a State cannot solve the problem of self-government of the tribal peoples.

Some of them want to include three West Bengal districts as well in the Jharkhand State. In these districts the tribal population is only about 10 per cent! In certain small areas where they are in a majority, they may have Autonomous Areas under the Sixth Schedule in the West Bengal State, but not a State of Jharkhand. Such demands are not only wrong but are highly disruptive. Such slogans are cleverly used by reactionary elements to instigate the tribal peoples against a progressive Left-led Government. Efforts are being made to capitalise on the grievances of the local non-tribal peoples to instil in them a false idea that they are also part of the Jharkhand nationality. Such wrong tendencies only serve to alienate the

movement of the tribal peoples for their own tribal State from the Left and democratic forces.

Apart from the problem of self-government for the tribal peoples of the Bihar plateau, who need a State based on compact tribal majority areas, this region faces yet another problem which, in a way, has got intertwined with the problems of the tribal peoples.

Even if the problem of the tribal peoples is solved, the problem of backwardness, underdevelopment and discrimination of the Bihar Government against this plateau region does not end. Three-fourth of the peoples of the plateau region are non-tribals. They do not suffer from the disabilities from which the tribal peoples suffer due to their tribal character. But they have justifiably a deep grievance that the major part of the revenue earned from the plateau region is used to develop the Bihar plains, that development work in all spheres of the plateau region is neglected, that the jobs in the plateau region are monopolised by the people from the plains, thereby aggravating the problem of unemployment. The bitterness of the non-tribal peoples of the plateau region is so great against the Bihar Government that they too are veering round to support the slogan of a Jharkhand State for the whole plateau region! They do not plead for a State based on the tribal majority areas, but for the whole plateau where the non-tribals constitute 75 per cent of the population. But such a course will be harmful for the tribal peoples who will fail to have a State of their own, where they can develop on the basis of their genius. A State, in which the non-tribal people will constitute three-fourth of the population, would enable the capitalists, the landlords, the mahajans-contractors and other exploiters who have emerged among the non-tribal peoples to establish their own rule in the name of the tribals and obstruct the path of development of the tribals on the basis of their own ethos and traditions. The injustice to the people of the backward neglected region has to be solved in other ways.

The democratic movement in the State has to ensure that the people of the plateau get their due share out of the revenues earned in the region and that their legitimate job opportunities are protected. This can be ensured by extending the provisions of Article 371 of the Constitution to guarantee justice to the plateau region of Bihar, in the same way as has been done in respect of the backward regions of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. There is no reason why the interest of the tribal peoples for a State of their own should be sacrificed in order to protect the interests of this backward region. The interests of this region can be protected through the aforementioned constitutional provisions.

It is the sacred duty of all the democratic forces of the State to support the demand of a tribal State based on tribal majority areas, and to demand the end of regional chauvinism of the ruling party which discriminates against the backward plateau region. Such a policy can be followed only by a Left-democratic Government which will overcome the present narrow-mindedness. That along can help to unite all the democratic forces and all the ethnic groups.

BEHIND BJP'S VANANCHAL DEMAND

INDU BHARTI

Straying from its established position of opposition to the division of the existing states, the BJP has raised the demand for a Vananchal state to be carved out of the tribal areas of Bihar. A combination of electoral, religious and ideological calculations lies behind this move.

The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which had been staunchly opposing any further division of the states has now raised a demand for carving out a separate state of 'Vananchal' out of the present state of Bihar. The demand for Vananchal, approved in August 1988 at the BJP's national conference at Jamshedpur and formally announced by the party's national president, L.K. Advani, in November last year at Ranchi, dominated the second annual conference of the Bihar unit of the BJP held at Gaya on December 24 and 25, 1988. The conference decided to intensify the movement for clinching a Vananchal state. Dissenting voices, including those of Kailashpati Mishra, the veteran BJP leader and former state president of the party, were firmly silenced by leaders like Inder Singh Namdhari, the party's present state president, and Samresh Singh, a BJP heavyweight from the Jharkhand region and a staunch Vananchal protagonist.

The BJP's espousal of the cause of a separate state ostensibly for the 'upliftment and welfare' of the 'Vanavasis' (the party's term for the tribals) has to be seen in the context of the facts that the movement for a separate Jharkhand state has once again been gaining momentum and that the elections are round the corner. The Jharkhand state has been conceived of as a political unit to be carved out of the 21 adjoining tribal-dominated districts of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Twelve of these districts will be from Bihar, four from West Bengal, three from Orissa and two from Madhya Pradesh. The Jharkhand state would have an area of 1,87,646 sq.km. On the other hand, the BJP's Vananchal will comprise only the 12 districts of the Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas region of Bihar and will have an area of 79,714 sq. km. Demographically, while the proposed Jharkhand state would have a population of around three and a half crore, BJP's Vananchal would have about two crore people. BJP's demand for Vananchal state thus means a

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smaller Jharkhand state, comprising only the Bihar segment of the proposed Jharkhand.

In its present phase, there are, broadly speaking, five streams in the Jharkhand movement. One stream may be called the Congress Jharkhandis, those who were initially Jharkhandis but are currently Congressmen. This stream has for quite some time now been advocating what the BJP has now termed Vananchal. When S.B. Chavan, the Union Finance Minister, visited the tribal region of Bihar last year, leaders of this stream gave him a memorandum which proposed the creation of a union territory comprising of the tribal region of Bihar. A similar memorandum was also signed by 42 senior Congress leaders from the region, including MPs and MLAs. The second stream in the Jharkhand Movement comprises the church-influenced Jharkhandis, whose primary concern is the development of the church and the protection and extension of missionary activities. The third stream consists of independent Jharkhandis who have turned to the parliamentary path and in the process have blunted the edge of their movement. The fourth strand may be said to be composed of new militant elements influenced by leftism and inspired by the Assam movement. They have organised themselves in the All-Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU) and are reportedly getting some support from the GNLF and the Bodoland Movement. Finally there are the different groups of the CPI(ML) which have become a strong force in the Jharkhand Movement. Recently the CPI has also extended its 'limited and conditional' support to the movement. Other leftist leaders like A. K. Roy continue to support the movement despite their differences with leaders like Shibu Soren and others. Increasing intellectual support has also come from people like Sita Ram Shastri and Ramdayal Munda. With such varied forces in it, the Jharkhand Movement has been once again gaining momentum, despite serious internal differences and the resultant confusion.

The BJP which claims to have a 'strong base' in the Jharkhand region feels threatened by the renewed vigour of the Jharkhand Movement and the increasing influence of leftists in it and it is to counter these developments that it has launched the movement for Vananchal. It is interesting to note that the BJP has all along rejected the term 'Adivasi' and the existence of Adivasis as an equal and integral part of so-called 'Aryan' society. It instead uses the term Vanavasi for the tribals. The BJP claims to have a 'strong base' in the tribal region with as many as 11 of its 15 MLAs coming from the region. But the party's support is actually confined to the urban and semi-urban areas and comes from traders, money-lenders and businessmen—the 'dikus' (the Jharkhandis' term for outsiders and non-tribals) who have been exploiting the tribals and looting the wealth of the tribal region. By patronising these elements the BJP has been cornering a sizeable number of assembly seats from the tribal region. The Jharkhand movement is, of course, directed against these elements

who constitute the base of the BJP. This is one of the reasons why the BJP has been opposed to the Jharkhand movement. With the growing influence of the leftists in the Jharkhand Movement, and of the CPI(ML) groups in particular, who have mobilised the rural population, the BJP with its slender base among the 'dikus' has been all the more alarmed.

Behind the BJP's Vananchal Movement is also a strategy to counter the growing influence of missionary activities in the tribal region. The missionaries have been converting the tribals to Christianity and have been a potent force behind the Jharkhand Movement. Last year's rally where party president Advani announced the campaign for Vananchal as well as the state party conference in December were used by the BJP to demand a ban on the flow of 'foreign money' and foreign missionaries into the region. And simultaneously with the Vananchal campaign, the Vanavasi Kalyan Kendra (VKK), an outfit of the BJP and RSS, has intensified its drive to reconvert the tribals to Hinduism. As a senior BJP leader confided, 'we cannot afford to let these missionaries turn the tribal region into "Churchanchal" hence our movement for Vananchal'. This RSS-BJP inspired Hindu vs Christian tussle may well take an aggressive turn.

The man behind BJP's current enthusiasm over Vananchal is the state party president, Inder Singh Namdhari, who is supported on this issue by Samresh Singh and Ritlal Verma. These leaders have convinced the national leadership that with this slogan it would be possible to considerably increase the party's legislative strength from this region in the next election. More generally also, support for regional autonomy demands seems to be a part of the BJP's new election tactics and the party has extended its support also to the 'Uttarakhand' Movement.

Part of the same election tactics is also the BJP's new-found concern for the rural masses. The economic and political resolution adopted at the last state party conference focussed on the plight of the poor peasants and labourers and the state party president, in course of an interview, even invited the Naxalities to join hands with the BJP. Of late the RSS and the BJP's youth wing, the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), have also been concentrating on the 'Naxal areas' of Bihar. The holding of conferences by the ABVP, the RSS and the BJP at Gaya last year was certainly no coincidence. The RSS has publicly promised to turn the state's 'Lal Kshetra', the Gaya–Jehanabad–Rohtas region, into a 'Kesaria Kshetra' and the ABVP has organised padyatras in the Gaya–Jahanabad region.

JHARKHAND'S ROOTS: TRIBAL IDENTITIES IN INDIAN HISTORY*

ARVIND N. DAS

INTRODUCTION

The inability of the Indian State to cope with tribal movements like the resurgent Jharkhand agitation is historical. Indeed, the problem of the relationship between the tribals and the so-called 'mainstream population' is civilisational in spite of the fact that the development of Indian civilisation and culture is a saga of the intertwining of the tribal and non-tribal strands. Although Indian history has not witnessed the mass extermination or brutal subjugation of indigenous peoples as happened in America or Australia, the tribals have always been considered alien, 'the other', exotic and marginal. The response of the State to them has been conditioned by this.

At the best of times, the subjugation of the tribal has always carried the implicit threat of coercion. Thus even after Priyadarshini Ashok, the Mauryan emperor, had renounced war, his edict addressed to the *atavikas*, the forest-dwellers, forefathers of today's Jharkhandis, grimly reminded them, 'Forget not that the Beloved of the Gods, in addition to being righteous, is also powerful.' The response of the rulers of today, especially in benighted Bihar, to tribal movements is one of sheer coercion.

Outside the State apparatus also, there is no clarity about the content of the Jharkhand Movement. In spite of its professed commitment to decentralisation, the rights of minorities and its oft-repeated assertion that adequate royalties from natural mineral resources should accrue to areas of their location, the CPI(M) sees the Jharkhand Movement as yet another manifestation of separatism which needs to be combated. On the other side of the ideological divide, the BJP sees sinister designs of Christian missionaries and godless extremists instigating what it patronisingly calls simple *banvasis* (forest-dwellers). Such liberal opinion as concerns itself with the issue finds an easy explanation for it as the assertion of ethnic identities.

All these shades are coloured by the picture of the tribal as an unchanging savage, noble or otherwise, and do not recognise the political economy of the movement. The simplified conception of the 'tribe', fostered by colonial

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anthropology and unchallengingly accepted today, leads to a simple and inadequate response to an immensely complex phenomenon.

It is particularly important in any discussion of 'tribes' to note that 'tribe' need not be related to 'race'. A fallacy has often been repeated by ethnographers and anthropologists, who assume that 'tribe' represents a common ancestry and specific genetic characteristics. Such assumptions have facilitated the political, cultural and economic domination of such communities. It is also not merely accidental that in the heyday of colonialism, colonial administrators lablled sections of the subject people as racially defined tribes. Before that 'outsiders' who came into contact with such communities, generally referred to them as 'peoples', 'kingdoms', 'dwellers of certain regions', and so on.

Indeed, in the Indian historical tradition, there is no equivalent of the value-loaded term 'tribe'. The nearest concept is that of the Sanskrit *janah,* which denotes the agglomeration of individuals with a definite territorial, kinship and cultural pattern. Prior to the colonial annexation of parts of India inhabited by such groups, most of the presently designated 'tribes' were either unconscious of their ethno-tribal identities, or merely called themselves 'people' vis-à-vis others. The issue of juxtaposed identity was very important in the demarcation of self-identity, as the latter was neither conceptually autonomous nor, in practical existence, particularly distinguishable.

It was only when the perpetrators of colonialism, who conceived of themselves as racially distinct and superior, faced formidable opposition from 'forest-dwellers', 'primitive groups', etc., compared to the relatively simpler subjugation of the 'mainstream' population, that many of these 'peoples' were termed 'tribes'. Racial characteristics were attributed to them, which were borrowed from the colonial experience in America, Australia and Africa. Further, they were simplistically distinguished from Hindus and Muslims on the assumption that they were animists, whereas the others were not. On the economic scale they were placed as being 'backward', food-gatherers or shifting cultivators. On cultural criteria, obviously artificial and alien, they were described as being 'primitive'. On juridical grounds, since they were difficult to subject, many of them were classified as being 'criminal'. And, in tune with the different phases of colonial administration, they were either brutally suppressed or subjected to special regulations which at best amounted to paternalistic despotism.

Through the systematic fragmentation of the non-racial and composite culture of India, a situation was created where most such 'peoples' have come to be known today by names they did not recognise themselves. Thus, while several widely dispersed masses of people were brought under a blanket nomenclature, a number of cognate groups of people were arbitrarily divided into several communities. In the 1931 Census, attempt was made by the colonial

administration to list the 'primitive tribes'. Shortly thereafter, the Government of India Act of 1935 redesignated them as 'backward tribes'. After independence, special provisions for the administration of these peoples were made, under which they were listed in separate schedules of the Constitution, thus creating the term 'scheduled tribes'.

In short, 'tribe' in India is essentially a politico-administrative category. The eminent sociologist Ramakrishna Mukherjee has asked, 'should the juridical category of scheduled tribes, which may grind a political axe, be our guide to impose the invidious distinction of 'tribals' and others in Indian society?' However, through the ad hoc, unscientific, stereotyped classification geared to administrative ends, a political categorisation of society has been reified into becoming social reality.

A critical analysis requires fresh thinking of stereotypes and tired old images of ethnic identity. It becomes necessary to examine two important aspects: (1) Is the distinction between 'tribe' and other social aggregates like peasantry, caste, class, valid? and (2) What is the contemporary self-perception of the concerned people? Historically this exercise is extremely difficult because the entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused in general society. The idea that tribal society was isolated and insulated is patently false. Indeed some anthropologists have even concluded that it was only through colonialism that the 'isolated' and the 'primitive' was born.

What can certainly be said is that colonialism changed the context and level of tribal, non-tribal social interaction. In the present context a very important aspect is that many of the tribes are settled cultivators, internally stratified and practically indistinguishable from other peasant groups. Critical anthropology has thus had to discard some myths about tribes and come to terms with the fact that the social aggregate, referred to as 'tribe' is merely a concept and, if tribes existed, they did so only in the undefined past. What exist today are 'tribes in transition'.

This realisation of 'tribes in transition' as 'peasants' does away with the perspective of timeless, unchanging, undifferentiated conglomerates eking out a subsistence in a struggle not with other men but with the elemental forces of nature. In contrast to the idyllic tribal stereotype depicted in the Republic Day tableaux, tribes are internally differentiated not only by a ritual hierarchy but also a secular, politico-economic hierarchy based on the devolution of economic and social power. And, change among the tribes, as among other people, has to be analysed through the framework of class.

A creative application of class analysis to change in tribal societies has to relate to the issue of how external forces articulate themselves within the tribal socio-cultural organisation. Ironically, however, a widely accepted theory on the articulation of the external and internal factors in the dynamics of tribal

societies is in fact based on the curious paradox of dis-articulation through physical displacement of tribal groups from their original habitat by non-tribals.

The dis-articulation theorists base themselves on the assumption that the tribes were pushed back into inhospitable terrains by waves of Aryan invaders. Not only does such ethnology ignore that in many respects the Aryans themselves, such as they were, seem to have been constituted of what would appear to be tribal formations but also, given the stage of production, the sparsity of population and large-scale availability of fertile lands in that period, it was neither necessary nor possible to carry out displacement of aboriginal populations.

The answer to the displacement theorists lies in the stages of production of various social groups. The agriculturists and traders inhabited the river banks of western India and coastal outposts, the pastoral people spread out in due course along the lush river valleys eastwards, and the hunters and gatherers lived in the uplands which were suited to their appropriation of subsistence without the necessity of clearing dense forests, a task which would in any case have been impossible without the use of iron.

These separate modes of existence were of course articulated with each other. There were not only commercial, political and cultural contacts but each one also took over aspects of the very production activities from the other. The post-colonial administrator-anthropologist K. Suresh Singh has pointed out that the names of a number of agricultural implements mentioned in Vedic literature, like *langala* or *hala* (plough), *kuddala* (spade), etc., are of Mundari tribal etymological origin. It is also of immense significance that the sources of the most vital element in production for the last two thousand and five hundred years—iron—are largely located in precisely those areas which are the tribal heartland, the region which was called Jharkhand by Akbar's chroniclers.

Ethnicity and Regionalism: The Jharkhand Resurgence

A storm is building up in the geographical heartland of India—twenty-one tribal districts in south Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) and the Jharkhand Samanway Samity (JSS) have given notice of the revival of the popular movement for a new state. Typically reacting to the storm signals, the government or what passes for government in Bihar, the epicentre of the storm, has, in its all too familiar ostrich style, buried its head in the uncertain sands of the law and order machinery, hoping that like the earlier ones, this storm too will pass.

The Jharkhand Movement has indeed seen its ups and downs. The Jharkhand Party, founded in 1937 by Jaipal Singh, has gone through so many twists and turns and factions and fragmentations that even its golden jubilee

has passed unnoticed. But today a situation has arisen where in the Jharkhand Movement the Jharkhand Party has become irrelevant. The movement and the issues that give it momentum transcend party formations and have acquired the vitality of an autonomous, spontaneous upsurge which cannot be wished away.

The issues behind the resurgent Jharkhand Movement are not new. Over centuries, the native population of the districts included within Jharkhand has been oppressed by others. In the last two centuries, the oppression has been compounded by the exploitation of mineral, forest and human resources of the region. The immense mineral wealth of Jharkhand has been used by outsiders without adequate compensation to the people of the region. Coal, iron, manganese, mica, uranium and a variety of other minerals and metals vital for India's economy have been extracted from Jharkhand, without proportionate benefits of development. The ecological balance of the region has been shattered by emissions from heavy industry, massive dams and hydro-electricity projects and commercial exploitation of forest resources. And, worst of all, the indigenous peoples have been subjected to oppression and cultural humiliation. Forced migration, transportation to plantations and industries outside the region, chain-ganging into hazardous work in mines and factories, alienation of land and the conversion of the tribals into bonded or semi-slave agricultural labourers, have been features of the political economy of Jharkhand. This has been matched by a cultural assault on the *adivasis.* Derision of their ways of life on the ground that it is 'primitive', active subordination, or at best callous neglect of their languages and traditions, domination over their religious and social mores through invidious extension of the so-called Great Tradition—all these have represented the attempted cultural conquest of the *adivasis.*

The subjugation of the *adivasis* has been most dramatically demonstrated by their subordinate position vis-à-vis the 'outsiders' or *dikus* whose incursion into the area in positions of power, influence and wealth has unleashed physical terror which compounds economic exploitation and socio-cultural oppression. The mafia of the mines is drawn from the notorious ABC—Arrah, Ballia, Chapra—districts, where cultural backwardness matches *junker* brashness. The aggression of these immigrants is unleashed on tribal workers and peasants. The *dikus* hold sway not only over employment in industry but also monopolise trade and commerce. Till recently, even the middle class, as it existed in the region, was essentially non-tribal.

It is significant that it is the emergence of an enlightened middle class among the *adivasis* which has qualitatively altered the Jharkhand Movement. Indeed tribal resistance to domination and exploitation is legendary, and peasant insurrection against landlordism and usury have taken the form of great upsurges like the *ulgulan*, led by Birsa Munda. Again, the first political

organisation of *adivasis* in a modern polity was begun by the Oxbridge graduate Jaipal Singh, who had led the Indian hockey team to its golden trail in the 1928 Olympic games. In 1937, Jaipal Singh founded the Jharkhand Party.

It is perhaps not only coincidental that it was around the same time that the 'untouchables' (later called scheduled castes) and the 'primitive' forest-dwellers (later classified as scheduled tribes) started asserting themselves under Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Jaipal Singh, respectively. The attempt of both to articulate the grievances of their particular constituencies got inevitably intertwined with the issue of the general polity of the age. Babasaheb Ambedkar's role in the evolution of the Indian Constitution was not divorced from his concern about the social, political and cultural resurgence of the backward class. Jaipal Singh's association with the processes of industrialisation, in particular his closeness with the Tatas, did not stop him from organising the tribals of Jharkhand.

The difference between Ambedkar and Jaipal Singh, however, was that while the former foresaw the deleterious effect of Congress policies on the scheduled castes and disassociated himself from it, Jaipal Singh led the Jharkhand Party into the arms of the Congress. The result of these different courses was that while the scheduled castes retained their autonomy and went through the stages of *achhoot* to *harijan* to *dalit*, the tribals remained passive. The noted administrator-anthropologist, K. Suresh Singh, quotes the perceptive British civil servant, Sir John Hubback, as remarking, 'Jaipal Singh's prowess on the hockey field was not necessarily combined with sound political judgment'. The tribal movement stagnated, with the Jharkhand Party drifting between the Scylla of Congress politics and the Charybdis of the easy venality of its leaders.

The original phase of the Jharkhand Movement had developed on account of several intrinsic and contextual factors. The political and ethnic assertiveness of the tribals, in particular that of the Mundas, had been facilitated by several factors. These were, the politics of the Muslim League which hoped to carve out a tribal corridor between the two segments of Pakistan; Bengali–Behari tensions which made Bengalis seek security and superiority among tribals; and the attempt by a section of capital to carve out a relatively autonomous 'steel state' whose boundaries largely corresponded with the Jharkhand region. With independence and the consolidation of Congress rule, much of the context changed. In order to regain vitality the movement had to respond to altered circumstances.

In the 1960s it was a new general situation which injected vitality into the otherwise moribund Jharkhand Movement. K. Suresh Singh has summarised the elements of the changed scenario. These were the overall radicalisation of the polity expressed in the form of political extremism, agrarian radicalism and the cultural revivalism of the subaltern groups; the rise of urban and industrial

pressure groups occasioned by economic recession, nationalisation of coal mines, etc.; and the growth of the militant trade union movement in response to the institutionalisation of the mafia.

This new situation significantly affected the augmented and factionalised Jharkhand Movement and centred it on concerns like the rights of workers and peasants. A new leadership, this time from outside Munda ranks, and including Santhals, Kurmi Mahatos and even non-tribals, who empathised with the cause of the indigenous peoples, came to the fore. The second phase of the movement was symbolised by the militant and creative Jharkhand Mukti Morcha led by Shibu Soren and supported by the legendary leader of the coal miners, A.K. Roy. The invigorated movement had signal successes in Dhanbad and Santhal Parganas and in addition to fighting *diku* moneylenders, land grabbers and mafia hoodlums, it also brought about social reform and cultural resurgence among the tribals. It transcended ethnicity.

However, the simplistic policies of the tribal leaders and the lure of electoral politics led to the decline of even this phase of the movement. The leadership fell prey to blandishments held out by the establishment and, for a while, it seemed that the story of Jaipal Singh was being repeated. However, the present resurgence of the Jharkhand Movement has demonstrated that this conclusion is premature.

Now a third phase of the Jharkhand Movement has begun. This time it is not only pan-tribal but includes within it non-tribal workers and peasants too. It has a distinct, ideologically motivated leadership of great sophistication and its cadres are not the archetypal, simple forest-dwellers, but students and youth in urban and industrial areas. Much has changed in the political economy of the region since Jaipal Singh founded the Jharkhand Party and the changes are reflected in the movement shifting from issues of ethnicity to regionalism, to class in the broadest sense of the term. Its denouement will also be in the domain of political economy.

Bihar Witiout Jharkhand: There is Life After Death

The reluctance of the political establishment of Bihar to agree to the demands of the tribals for a separate state within the Indian union is understandable. Without the rich mineral, forest and other resources of Jharkhand, Bihar will have little reason to claim an important place in the comity of peoples that is India. What will be left if Jharkhand goes?; calamity-prone subsistence agriculture north of the Ganga, an aggressive but not optimally productive kulak economy in the south Bihar plains, a few processing industries like the refinery at Barauni dependent on the capricious crude supply from Assam, and the humiliating existence of being one of India's poor relations? No wonder then that not only the Government of Bihar but its ruling coalition abhors the idea of the creation of a Jharkhand state.

Jharkhand has provided the life blood of Bihar. From the time when the Magadhan empire grew up on the bedrock of the mineral wealth of the plateau, the area comprising Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas has been the base on which a material culture and a civilisation could be erected. The essential element of that culture and civilisation has been the exploitation of the people known as 'tribals' but that aspect has not created much unease, as it has been taken for granted that, being 'the other', the tribals' natural destiny was to be discriminated against. In the evolution of the culture and economy of Bihar, the expropriation of resources of the tribals was as integral a feature as the Ganga, which bisects the state. From Bimbisara to Bindeshwari Dubey, the rulers of the region have fattened on the wealth of Jharkhand.

Indeed, it can be said that one of the principal factors that distinguishes Bihar, in its present sorry state, from other less unfortunately placed neighbours, is the easy availability of resources with which to subsidise economic, social, political and cultural backwardness. At one time in history, the resources of Jharkhand gave Bihar the forward thrust which enables it to become the heart of India. The minerals, metals and forest materials themselves and the economic surplus generated through their use, provided the wherewithal to erect empires, construct philosophical systems and build elaborate social structures. With time, however, even this natural boon turned into a curse. Instead of becoming a catalytic force for accelerating economic development, the security arising out of control over certain wealth made the body politic flabby.

This characteristic of the resource centres of civilisations becoming their nemesis is not unique to Bihar. When political units cease being integral and get fragmented, with one part becoming the mother country and others merely internal colonies, the result is inevitably decadence and degeneration in the former and poverty and backwardness in the latter. From the decline and fall of the Roman empire to the flabbiness of colonial Britain, history records innumerable cases of this phenomenon. In Bihar the irony is all the more marked because, while Bihar's exploitation of Jharkhand has resulted in a vicarious development of underdevelopment in the state, its own position in the Indian polity is such that it has been itself characterised as an 'internal colony'.

Among many backward regions in the country what distinguishes Bihar's own particular brand of backwardness is its ability to sustain stagnation. The result is the intensification of the process of degeneration to spectacular limits. Thus, while Uttar Pradesh too is not a shining example of the functioning of a modern polity, it has not reached the abysmal depths of brutalising anarchy that Bihar has perfected. The major reason for this is that U.P. still has an integrated economy. The regional differentiation in U.P. is moderated by the fact that production activity in all areas is similar. Western U.P. may have

received the benefits of increased productivity, through the green revolution, earlier than the eastern districts but the fact that agriculture is the primary activity in the latter, as in the former, has ensured that the green revolution has moved inexorably from Muzzafarnagar to Mirzapur, from Bulandshahar to Ballia. And sooner or later, the economy and the polity will get homogenised.

Bihar, on the other hand, has a clearly dualistic economy. The plains are essentially agricultural, whereas the plateau has mining, manufacture and forestry. The only economic link between the two is exploitation through revenue-gathering. The leaders of the Jharkhand agitation have claimed that 75 per cent of the revenues of Bihar are extracted from Jharkhand. Even a cursory look at the major revenue sources of the state—sales tax, excise, electricity duty, royalties on minerals, proceeds from sales of forest produce, etc.—indicate that the major, if not the preponderant, sources of revenue are located in Jharkhand.

The economic dualism of Bihar is matched by cultural and social dualism. Centuries of interaction between the tribals and others have not been able to create an integrated civilisation. The 'mainstream population' has adopted and internalised many aspects of tribal life, but still the 'tribal' remains 'the other', the internal enemy whose existence allows for a certain social consolidation among the rest. Issues within society, which are otherwise near the flash-point, are kept in control under the simulated charade of confronting a permanent enemy. This too is not unique. Colonialism creates an uneasy consensus in the mother-country and what happened in Ranchi recently is not different from the generally applauded show of Britannic force in the Maldives. In this respect at least, Bihar has shown its own brand of primitive Thatcherism.

But all this has an inherent tragic dimension. Delusions of grandeur are ultimately unreal and unless there is a vitality within, the show cannot be maintained for long. Indeed, as the crisis deepens in the 'mother-country', the consensus breaks and support for 'the other' arises from within the ranks of the colonisers themselves. For the colonisers are not uniform. In fact, so divided and oppressive is non-tribal Bihar itself, that the oppressed there may well find allies among the tribals rather than among their own rulers. The symbolic presence of the Dalit Sena in the Jharkhand rally and the more real support extended to the Jharkhand movement by the organisations of the rural poor in non-tribal Bihar are pointers in this regard.

What then will happen to Bihar if Jharkhand were to go out? There will undoubtedly be a serious resource crunch which will most affect the flabby and over-fed bureaucracy which floats like scum in the stagnant pool of social decadence. There will also be a sense of loss and a traumatic break from the past. More than just maps will change. The economy will have to be drastically re-oriented and the whole mental make-up of the state will be shaped afresh.

For a new beginning, Bihar will have to assess its strength: potentially, extremely fertile land and immense manpower. Of necessity, agriculture will have to be made more productive. And for that, land reforms will have to be seriously carried out. A state which does not have access to cheap wealth extracted from a colony cannot afford the luxury of uneconomic landowning patterns. Simultaneously, the agrarian infrastructure will have to be developed for optional production. The reason why Punjab had practically no option but to develop was its traumatic partition. And the emergence of a stable, social democracy in Bengal, albeit agrarian and erected on a relatively poorer base, is not unrelated to its own truncation. Bihar, shorn of Jharkhand, will have to pull up its economic straps and create modern agriculture, agro-based industries and appropriate infrastructure.

A smaller Bihar may not immediately become a more beautiful Bihar but it will become immensely more manageable. Administratively it will still remain gargantuan but at least the problems of society-building will become more uniform. Adversity has a habit of bringing out the best in peoples and, deprived of the easy wealth of Jharkhand, Bihar may just see a cultural resurgence which will manifestly enrich its human resource potential. Agrarian restructuring, inevitable for the sheer survival of the state, will reinvigorate the rural producers, and the middle class will have to shed its attitude of closet colonialism which, while allowing it to lord it over the tribals, also depraves and degenerates it. The separation of Jharkhand from Bihar will prevent the dominant role in the state's politics of fly-by-night operators, like Bindeshwari Dubey of the Congress and Suraj Deo Singh of the Janata, who use their position in the mining areas to acquire legitimacy in non-tribal areas. Politics will not become clean overnight, but the ugly smears of coalfield mafia operations will be restricted.

If Jharkhand were to separate, Bihar will die one death. As it is, it dies every day.

THE CATEGORY OF 'NON-HISTORIC NATIONS' AND TRIBAL IDENTITY IN JHARKHAND

JAVED ALAM

In this paper I want to have a brief look at the reasons for the emergence of nationality consciousness in Jharkhand. My interest in this region is not exactly that of an anthropologist. The transformations in the complex identity situation in the region have serious implications for the theory on national question or, more generally, nationalism. There is a long tradition in the writings on nationalism, going back to Engels, which questions the historical viability of people with a certain type of national make-up. Engels referred to such national groups as 'non-historic nations' such as southern Slavs, Serbs, Scots, Bretons, Basques, who were 'lacking national vitality' and condemned to disappear or prone to be 'denationalised'.[1]

That this did not happen is another problem. But more recently Gellner, the most incisive of the contemporary writers on nationalism, has argued that the tendency towards the disappearance of many a (potential) national group is much more widespread than realised by the protagonists of nationalism. Many of these people with diffused 'cultural pools' or lacking in literary traditions are 'led to the dust heap of history by industrial civilisation.....'[2]

Within the Marxist conception, in the wake of capitalist development, a well-developed language with literary traditions, and the emerging bourgeoisie and its needs for a consolidated market provide the conditions that lead to the crystallisation of national entities. Gellner, on the contrary argues that with the rise of industrialism, and not just capitalism, education-developed high culture effectively universalised in the entire population and deeply internalised, is the minimum necessary condition which can guarantee that national groups will establish themselves as historical entities.

Looked at from either of these alternative conceptions, Jharkhand represents an interesting case for investigating the many-sided and altered effects of contemporary Third World capitalism on national formations. Such an investigation would also provide a clue to directions in which revision of received theories are needed. In this area, none of the necessary historical or political

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conditions for the rise of a national movement seem to prevail. Yet, half a century of political history shows evolution towards such a movement. The underlying tendency has been manifested in shifts from ethnic to trans-ethnic dimensions as seen in social and cultural areas as well as in the diverse Jharkhand political movements. The region is a mosaic of diverse but related[3] tribes like Mundas, Oraons, Santhals and many others, as well as a number of non-tribal ethnic groups, viz. Kurmi-Mahato, Momin (Muslim weavers), scheduled castes and so on. The region is thus an ethnic aggregation of tribal and non-tribal cultures.[4] Most of these tribes and non-tribal groups do not as yet have written languages or a common literary tradition. But they are rich in folklore and around this a common culture and literary tradition is claimed to be taking shape. All these ethnic groups who have belonged to the region, non-tribals as much as the tribes, have suffered the kinds of economic exchanges[5] at the hands of outside exploitative elements, known in local parlance as '*dikus*'. These ethnic groups, the indigenous people as against the *dikus*, have a very undiversified economy with a low-technology productive base, concentrated exclusively in agriculture and primitive manufacture. They have lived in close proximity to the relatively highly developed national groups with superior productive forces, as of cultural and literary traditions. Yet they did not get amalgamated with the adjacent advanced national formations. This belies the predictions of Engels and anthropologists like N.K. Bose,[6] G.S. Ghurye,[7] etc. Decades after these predictions, there is no evidence of this happening; the evidence seems to point away from assimilation towards a differentiated trans-ethnic unity claiming the status of a nationality.[8] The questions to go into, therefore, are: Why is it that these various ethnic groups did not assert their ethnicity? Why did they not get assimilated into the adjacent advanced national formations? And, why is it that ethnic boundaries collapsed and the diverse peoples have demanded recognition as a separate national group with a state of their own?

Jharkhand, from the beginning of the colonial period, witnessed massive popular revolts. The earlier outbursts were led by rajas or chiefs against the British efforts to assess land revenue or evict tribal chiefs from the land. Starting within individual tribes, these outbursts often spread to other groups, becoming general conflagrations. The examples are the Great Kol Rebellions (1819, 1931–32), the Santhal Insurrection (1856) and the Birsa Munda Rebellion (1895). These were directed against the depredations of traders, merchants, money-lenders, landlords and so on and were fuelled by a sense of exasperation and loss of identity. They were inspired by exceptional individuals who sometimes also claimed divinity (Bir Singh Kanhu and Siddhu from the Santhals, and Birsa Munda among the Munda tribe). They identified the enemy as *diku,* the outsider-exploiter. None of these were revivalist, spiritualist, messianic or characterised by upward mobility or inspired by elements of Sanskritisation.[9] They were

agrarian movements seeking emancipation from the rapacious agents of primitive capitalist accumulation.[10] Most of these movements were suppressed by the use of brutal military force.

After a lull, the dominant style of politics changed approximately from 1915 onwards. Neo-literates from amongst the ordinary people were drawn into constitutional politics involving regular meetings, drafting of resolutions, memoranda and petitions submitted to government, coupled with social reform and welfare activities. There is decreasing recourse to religious and community symbols, with organisation and institutional politics replacing 'inspirational' modes. There was greater emphasis on intra-and inter-tribal unity, as well as alliances between tribal and non-tribal forces.[11] This gave rise to trans-ethnic political platforms, indicating that an underlying trans-ethnic unity was in the process of formation.

Evidence from movements and struggles now going on also indicates that people from diverse ethnic groups have moved closer together with a persistent demand for recognition as a distinct group with a national make-up. It is the underlying historical tendencies which first have to be identified. This is more important than simply supporting or opposing a given movement.

Today, it is a curious fact that the people of the region agitate against the construction of major irrigation projects or the setting up of big industries. For them, even the construction of a road means, primarily, opening the area to the *dikus* and the police, i.e., to exploitation and terror. Historically viewed, developmental activities have meant land alienation and pauperisation for the people of Jharkhand. Their opposition is not the misguided opposition of primitives to national development, as it is prone to be portrayed.

In this sense, the predilections, the preferences and demands of the people in Jharkhand cannot be categorised as regionalism as it is generally understood. Regionalism, essentially, is a demand for more and more resources and special privileges for one's region. This distinguishes this region from the other volatile tribal belts of north-east India. It is, therefore, also important not to look at all the turbulence in the tribal areas as of the same kind; such unfortunately has been the tendency. There is no such thing as a single tribal problem.

Both tribals and non-tribals within this region are not 'primitives'. They have been engaged in peasant activities for several hundred years, without the oppression of the caste system. They are ready and eager to cooperate in the development of modern agriculture with its attendant paraphernalia—fertilisers, high-yielding variety seeds, etc. There is nothing traditional or primitive in their outlook. The seemingly contradictory positions taken by them are the result of the type of capitalist penetration into the region, and they have to be understood as such.

For grasping the extent and intensity of this impact and its political implications, it is, I think, very important first of all to grasp the significance of the cultural configuration of these people. The specificity of this configuration also partly explains why the political expression of the present discontent tends be nationalist. The social existence of these diverse indigenous people is marked not simply by the absence of caste divisions, but more so by distinct concepts and practices on a whole range of specific life situations. These together constitute a fundamentally different world-outlook from that of their neighbours. An important feature in this cultural configuration is their conception of the man–nature relationship which is made up of significant notions and practices of harmonising interaction with, and drawal upon, the surrounding world. As an extension of this relationship, these people have peculiar notions of the man–tree and man–animal relationships. In addition, man–woman relations and associated notions of sexuality are quite distinct, as are their ways of relating to children. So also with notions of time, work and activity or labour and leisure. If one were to go into the details of these relationships and their content, there would be elements which are primitive and animistic. But also we could find a great deal that is radical and progressive, similar to the new emancipatory movements in the advanced capitalist world on ecology, women's and children's rights and even questions regarding insanity. Although ethnic divisions among the indigenous people of this region abound, they broadly have an identity of outlook on these and similar questions of social life.

What, however, becomes crucial when these peoples with their inherited divisions are subjected to similar types of sustained stress, is the growth of a sense of community; an inversion of the sense of loss of community. This provides a common psychological ground for structuring response patterns to the pressures of the external world. This cultural configuration, under threat of disintegration, compensates for the absence of a common language, a literary tradition and high culture.[12] These people then begin to define themselves as a non-residuary category in opposition to 'others'—whoever they may be. A self-definition emerges in which all the ethnic groups within a region start by saying: we are not Biharis or Oriyas, or such and such. Different perceptions make for the notion of the 'others'. This harping on and on can generate, over time, a commonness and mutuality. There grows a sense of 'we together' are a different people with a trans-ethnic dimension. This subjectivity—the idea of oneness—exerts a material force in the emerging formation. The Marxist presence and activity among these people, and radical analysis have to be sensitive to this dimension of the problem. We, in the left movement, having recognised the specificity of the 'tribal' as a part of our evolving social formation, have not gone deep enough into an analysis and understanding of the specificity of the indigenous people. Unfortunately, what is specific in life and culture has often been ignored or treated as peripheral grievances. The

totality of their condition, as spelt out, can go into the making of a special type, of a potential 'national make-up' in the pan-Indian situation as it exists today.[13]

Jharkhand is a very heavily industrialised region. It also has a large concentration of extractive and mining industries—the main minerals being coal, iron ore, bauxite, limestone, etc.[14] Some of the most prestigious industries are located in the region: Heavy Engineering Corporation, Bokaro Steel, TISCO, Associated Cement, etc. Consequently, the per capita power consumption is 204.4 KWH as against a national average of 96.3 KWH. However, only a very small percentage of the villages are electrified, far below the national average.

In the nationwide creation of an industrial working class since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a major part has been drawn from the indigenous population; not so in Jharkhand. The tribals of Jharkhand have gained entry into the working class only as lowly paid unskilled workers, on a hire-and-fire basis. Every technologically sophisticated industry has a stable core of highly skilled workers. In Jharkhand this core has mostly been drawn from other regions of the country. The local people or the indigenous inhabitants, both tribal and non-tribal, have been relegated to a very special section of the proletariat: *khalasis*, peons, scavengers, etc. This is especially true of the mining sector, where oral contracts were the rule until the nationalisation of the coal mines in 1971. Thus fewer jobs, poorer wages and inferior working conditions have been the lot of the Jharkhandis. The necessary characteristic of a working class—relative permanence in a socially determined productive process—is lacking in a great majority of local recruits. They are workers in industry but not as yet a stable industrial working class; a kind of ethnically constituted sub-proletariat, like the coloured workers in Europe.

The ethnic sub-proletariat oscillates between work and unemployment and is in constant migratory motion between urban and rural settings, somewhat like proletarian vagabonds. This ethnically based division among working people gives rise to ideological convulsions among the indigenous people and, in the absence of stable left organisations, various political groups with different affinities to state power are able to manipulate them into sectarian political positions.

It cannot be argued that this phenomenon is of recent origin due to sudden and rapid industrialisation. It has indeed been a characteristic feature of the mines which have operated in the region since the late nineteenth century. The State power, both prior to independence and subsequently, has been aware of the conditions resulting from the massive developments but has never taken remedial steps whereby the indigenous people could become partners in development. There are no indications of a better future for the local people. Increasingly, the technical basis of new industry has proportionately more places for the educated and skilled blue and white collar workers than for

unskilled labourers. Thus worsening employment prospects threaten the indigenous people. There is, in fact, evidence of continued pauperisation linked directly to the massive public investment in power, irrigation, industry and mining. Serious pauperisation has been caused by large-scale alienation from land in the case of big public-sector projects.[15] Land alienation had been arrested after the ferocious and bloody nineteenth century revolts but has again increased sharply due to a number of reasons. These include the growth of ancillary industry around the public sector projects, the legal conversion of agricultural to non-agricultural land for the purposes of urbanisation, etc. Land alienation has meant pauperisation because of the utter failure of compensation mechanisms created by the State. These have been characterised as the 'displacement-compensation-displacement continuum.'[16]

In the earlier epoch, what had happened in terms of land alienation and the loss of community identity had been linked in the popular imagination to the depredations of traders, money-lenders and landlords from outside the region. In a curious way, today the State has acquired a status equivalent to the predatory colonial agents. In the popular consciousness there are elements of continuity with the past perceptions of alien authority and State behaviour; the land alienation which persists is a matter of life and death for the people.

Opposition to the outsider-exploiters, the *dikus,* has been one of the primary sources of unification which has cut across ethnic identities between tribals, Kurmi-Mahato peasantry, Muslim weavers, etc. The presence of a tribal shell is now important only for ritual, marriage and social occasions and no longer for political mobilisation; tribalism as a pattern of politics is absent from both popular agrarian struggles as well as reactionary chauvinistic politics. The efforts of reactionary forces towards dividing the people are no longer in terms of tribal groups but rather as Christian 'converts', Hinduisation or such other cleavages. The erosion of ethnicity as a factor in politics is also reflected in the growth of unities or the nature of divisions and political conflicts which have displayed a consistent pattern of cutting across ethnic boundaries.[17] Thus the identity of Jharkhandis is counterpoised against that of the *dikus*. This feature has provided the necessary psychological basis for the national dimension in the growing self-awareness of the people. In influencing this process, the prime factor is the pervasiveness of oppression and the common sense of strangulation amongst the people; not the market needs of the bourgeoisie, as is often the case. Amongst the local inhabitants, there is no bourgeoisie in any sense of the term. At best there are petty retail shopkeepers who cannot even be described as entrepreneurs. Undoubtedly political divisions as well as contradictory ideological postures do prevail.[18] These are essentially born of living in pervasive bourgeois conditions and consist of ideological currents ranging from left extremism to all shades of right reaction. Such currents occasionally acquire organisational form, blending with existing discontents

from time to time. They are contradictory features characteristic of peasant politics in the absence of powerful left organisation.

Just as there is no indigenous bourgeoisie,[19] there is no significant group of rich peasants and landlords either.[20] About 86 per cent of land owners are poor peasants, 10 per cent are middle peasants and only 0.5 per cent can be categorised as rich peasants and/or landlords. About 3.4 per cent who own 10–25 acres cannot be categorised as rich peasants on the basis of landholdings alone, because the productivity of the land is very poor and has not changed in a century.[21] Most of the fertile lands are low lying, and it is here that the *dikus* or landlords from outside the region are concentrated, having successfully driven away the locals to the uplands where the soil is poor and productivity low.

Although land alienation is a common enough phenomenon all over India, here, quite unlike most other regions where exploiter-oppressor and the exploited-oppressed belong to the same region, they belong to people with a different national composition. Outside landlordism, therefore, sets this region apart from most other regions in India. Without a single oppressor nationality, regions like this can come to have all the features of an oppressed national area.

Nearly a century ago, W.W. Hunter had calculated that an ordinary retail shopkeeper or a man earning Rs. 8 per month lived more comfortably than a 5 acre peasant.[22] In fact, to live as comfortably as a peon in government service, the peasant would have to own nearly 9 acres of lowland and 4.5 acres of upland.[23] Even then, Hunter had argued that a 25 acre peasant could not be considered a landlord.[24] Today, 70 per cent of the land is drought-prone and half of this is in extremes.[25] Thus, in effect, most of the people are functionally landless as they have to sell their labour most of the time. Traditionally, a sizeable part of their livelihood used to be sustained by the forests—initially the colonial state legislated away their forest rights, to be followed by the legislations of free India.[26]

Jharkhand represents the development of a mass consciousness still seeking appropriate articulation in order to express the social strangulation of the masses. The assimilation of petit-bourgeois elements in different currents with their own political aspirations does pose conflicts of ideology: the absence of a strong left-democratic movement leads to all kinds of vacillation and a bewildering array of spontaneous and militant forms. In the articulation of discontent it is often the case that spontaneous upsurges among the people are due to self-mobilisation, which is then exploited by various political forces and formations within this region, some of them having political links with the all-India ruling classes.

The many-sided oppression has led to the mass strangulation of almost the entire indigenous population—tribal as well as non-tribal. What intensifies the sense of strangulation is the disintegration of the socio-cultural life, which had provided them with a sense of autonomy, an autonomy strengthened by participatory decision-making in local politics. All this has been weakened and social existence degraded. Now, when socialist ideas have become available, the degenerate bourgeois model cannot be presented as a viable form of modern life. These people, who had remained in relative isolation since the Magadh period, are now suddenly confronted with an unacceptable bourgeois model into which they are being forcibly assimilated. Helplessly enclosed as they are, the idea of a separate state appeals to them as an easy way out of this terrible situation. It is this situation which has provided something of a nationalistic accelerator to the politics of the region, however much the various tendencies are divided by sectarian calculations. Given the class situation in the region, what seems more likely to determine the outcome is the nature of outside intervention; specially, how quickly the organised left forces can resolve their differences and decisively intervene in favour of the people.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See Engels, 'Magyar Struggle' in Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, London, 1973, pp. 221-22; and 'What have the Working Classes to do in Poland?', in Marx, *The First International and After*, London, 1974, pp. 373–88.

2. Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, pp. 43–50.

3. (Col.) B.T. Dalton, *Tribal History of Eastern India*, Cosmos, Delhi, 1973; B.K. Roy Burman, among many others; see his 'Tribal Demography' in K.S. Singh (ed.), *Tribal Situation in India*, Simla, 1971a, and 'Classification of the Tribals for the Development of an Integrated Tribal Policy,' *Inter-Discipline*, Special No. 1978; L.P. Vidyarthi, *Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar*, Calcutta, 1964; Surajit Sinha, 'Tribal-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continuum in Central India', *Man in India*, 16, 2, 1965; G.S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes*, Bombay, 1963; Nirmal Sengupta (ed.), *Fourth World Dynamics*, 1983.

4. Most of the indigenous people who have not been listed as scheduled tribes, as for example the Kurmi-Mahato peasantry, have an economic life which is more or less similar to the main listed tribes in this region. Although said to be slightly better cultivators they are educationally and socially as 'backward' as the others and so less poor. None of them are in IAS or IPS or IFS, etc, or even in the higher levels of civil or judicial service. See Nirmal Sengupta, *Fourth World Dynamics*, op. cit. Ritually also they form a 'drinking cluster' with the tribals and as is the case with the tribals they do not accept food from the Brahmans. See Risley, *Census of India*, 1891, XVI(I).

   In the 1920s they were also listed as the scheduled tribes and were excluded only from 1931 when Hiduisation became very strong among them and all of them declared themselves to be Hindus.

   Now once again there is a strong move among them to get listed in the scheduled tribes and also a counter-culture movement away from Hinduism as reflected in the Gossalyan Movement.

   In 1978 the Kurmi Sabha submitted a memorandum to the Secretary, Lok Sabha for inclusion of Kurmis of Jharkhand in the scheduled tribe list when the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Amendment) Bill 1978 was to be discussed. According to this memorandum they now number 45 lakhs in this region.

   See also the recent series of articles by Nirmal Sengupta 'Reappraising Tribal Movements', in *EPW*, 7 May 1988 to 28 May 1988.

5. About the Momins (Muslims-Julahas) of the region, W.W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Bengal*, op. cit. had noted that 'they are held by the Zamindars as fief-holders for quasi-feudal services' (p. 319). Their position according to Nirmal Sengupta, *Fourth World Dynamics*, op. cit., has not changed much although

legally they are no longer enserfed.

6. N.K. Bose, *Some Indian Problems*, Calcutta, 1972. See especially Ch. 12. 'National Integration and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes'. See also his *Culture and Society in India and Tribal life in India*, New Delhi, 1971.

7. G.S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes*, op. cit.

8. This is something which has been noted by a number of writers. For instance, B.K. Roy Burman has pointed out to this process in a number of his studies over a long period of time. See his 'Basic Concepts of Tribal Welfare and Integration', in L.P. Vidyarthi, *Anthropology in Action*, 1960; 'Some Dimensions of Transformation of Tribal Societies.' *Journal of Social Research*, XI, I, 1968; 'Social Political processes in India and Integration of Tribal Societies' (Paper read at the Seminar on *Urgent Research in Social Anthropology*, at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1969); 'Ethnicity and National Questions in India with special reference to Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes' in S.A.H. Haqqi, *Democracy: Pluralism and Nation-Building*, Delhi, 1984. See also F.G. Bailey, 'Political Change in Kondmals' in K.S. Mathur and B.C. Aggarwal (eds.), *Tribe, Caste and Peasantry*, Lucknow, 1974; or the detailed study of Santhals by Martin Orans, *The Santal: A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition*, Detroit, 1968.

   Students of tribal regions seem to agree that the earlier trend of assimilation (or emulation of) with Hindu caste society has given way to a trans-ethnic consolidation of people living under oppression in these regions, Sengupta, 'Reappraising Tribal Movements'. op. cit.

9. For such characterising of tribal revolts, see for instance, Stephen Fuchs' oft-quoted book, *Rebellious Prophets*, Bombay, 1965; for another view see Kathleen Gough, 'Indian Peasant Uprising', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special No. August 1974; for a third type of characterisation, R.R. Diwakar, *Bihar Through the Ages*, New Delhi, 1959. Some have found the tribal peasants revolts in face of depredations of the colonial State as 'regressive utopia'; see Hans Georg Hrach, 'Regulated Anarchy to Proto-Nationalism: 'The Case of Santals' in *Aspects of Tribal Life in South Asia: Strategy and Survival*, Berno, 1978.

10. See K.L. Sharma, 'Jharkhand Movement in Bihar', *EPW*, 10 June 1976.

11. For an account of the evolution of politics in this region see K.L. Sharma, 'Jharkhand Movement.....'. op. cit. and S. Jha, Tribal leadership in Bihar', *EPW* III, 15, April 13, 1968. See also, L.P. Vidyarthi, *The Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar*, Allahabad, 1976.

12. There are nine dialect languages current in the Jharkhand region: Santhali, Kurukh, Mundari, Kurmali, Ho, Nagpuri, Khadia, Khhota and Panchpergani. Recently two scripts have been developed to write them: *Ol Chiti* invented by Santali scholar, (late) Reghunath Marmu and *Oarong Chiti* invented by the Ho Scholar (late) Lako Badra of Jhinkpuri (Kolhan).

13. Conversations of Jogin Sen Gupta and others.

14. Jharkhand region—Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas together—make up only

2.5 per cent of the geographical area of the Indian State but 25 per cent of the total mineral production is concentrated in this region.

15. N.Y. Naidu, 'Pains of Industrialization', *EPW*, June 5, 1976; M.L. Patel, *Changing Land Problem of Tribal India*, Bhopal, 1974; L.P. Vidyarthi, *Socio-Cultural Implications of Industrialisation in India: A Case Study of Tribal Bihar*, Research Programme Committee, Planning Commission, Delhi, 1970; S.P. Sinha, *The Problem of Land Alienation of Tribals in and Around Ranchi* (1955-1965), Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi, 1968.

16. B.K. Roy Burman, *Social Processes in the Wake of Industrialisation;* Rourkela, Census of India Publication, 1961.

17. The appeals of different political parties and formations and their modes of mobilisation clearly reflect this pattern. See L.P. Vidyarthi, *Dynamics of Tribal Leadership*, op. cit.

18. After the split in the Jharkhand party in the wake of the merger with the Congress Party in 1963, the Jharkhand Party first got split into anti-merger and pro-merger groups. Since then a number of groups have emerged; viz. Jharkhand Prant Dal, Hul Jharkhand, Progressive Hul Jharkhand, Prantiya Jharkhand, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Jharkhand Coordination Committee, etc. In addition there are a number of other groups like Birsa Seva Dal, Adivasi Seva Dal, Chotanagpur Plateau Praja Parishad, Adivasi Maha Sabha, Adivasi Vikas Parishad, which do not contest elections but are aligned with the various political parties or act like the front organisations for some of these. These cover a wide ideological spectrum.

19. Xavier Institute of Social Service, Ranchi, had carried out a project on tribal entrepreneurship. Quoted in Sachchidananda, *The Changing Munda*, New Delhi, 1981, and the author seems to agree with these findings.

20. According to the 'official' classification, as defined under Marginal Farmers Agricultural Land Agency, out of these 95.9 per cent 'small' farmers make up 57.4 per cent and the remaining 28.5 per cent are 'marginal'. The rest except those owning above 25 acres, are considered as viable. See the *All India Debt and Investment Survey* 1971–72, New Delhi.

21. The figures for 1960 have been taken from L.P. Vidyarthi, *Cultural Contours of Tribal Bihar*, Calcutta, 1964.

22. W.W. Hunter, op. cit., pp. 354–55.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. K. Suresh Singh, 'Famine, Scarcity and Economic Development in Tribal Areas' in K. Suresh Singh (ed.), *Tribal Situation in India*, op. cit., pp. 388, 95, has calculated that of 199 districts with sizeable tribal population only 19 districts lie in drought-free zones of assured irrigation. Of these 180 drought-prone districts only 46 lie in drought-prone areas and the remaining 134 districts are in the extreme drought areas. He also says that if famine is episodic, severe scarcity is

a recurring condition. See also R. Saxena, *Tribal Economy in Central India*, Calcutta, 1964.

26. A good, summarised account of the state laws relating to forest and their implications for the tribals is available in Sate Jones, op. cit. In the text I have merely touched upon the importance of forests for the tribals in the most general way. The importance of the forests significantly vary from tribe to tribe. It has been estimated that with Bihar and Maler forest-dwelling tribes, the dependence on forests is as high as 90 per cent of their needs whereas for Munda and Oraon tribes it is around 45 per cent of their needs. See, L.P. Vidyarthi, 'Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development' in Buddhadeb Chaudhury (ed)., *Tribal Development in India*, Calcutta, 1982. The impact of forest laws also varies significantly. Some are being starved into extinction; see L.P. Vidyarthi, 'The Vanishing and Primitive Tribes of Bihar', *Journal of Social Research*, XX, 2, 1977.

IDEOLOGY AND HEGEMONY IN JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

G. ALOYSIUS

The tribal aspiration for autonomy in Jharkhand was first dragged on to a regional platform which enabled the execution of an inverse ideological somersault – the construction of nationality on the basis of region. Today the Jharkhandi nationality question is discussed as if it were part of geography and not of socio–political anthropology.

I

The Jharkhand Movement has acquired the dubious distinction of being one of the oldest movements in the country. Since the formation of Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj in 1920 to the emergence of a so-called United Jharkhand Party in 1991, for the past 70 years the tribals of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas have been struggling for separate statehood within the Indian Union, it appears, without much success. True, the movement has seen ups and downs, has sent several legislators to both the central and State law making bodies, has become more broad based, etc., but still the Jharkhand State seems to be a distant goal. Today, the Jharkhand Movement is divided into several groups and parties and has to struggle hard to maintain its distinct ideology and organisational identity. Such a state of affairs within the movement has often been blamed on the character of the tribal leadership, the divide-and-rule policy of the government, the weak pan-tribal consciousness, etc. While these and similar other reasons are valid, it is still necessary to explain how these situations have been brought about, what the mechanisms and processes are by which the ethnic consciousness of the tribals and the militancy of the movement have been to a large extent successfully neutralised, and finally how this movement of a subaltern group of communities is being co-opted and accommodated within the structure and ideology of the dominant classes and communities.

The present movement of the tribals of the South-Central part of the country for a separate State of Jharkhand is in very many ways a continuation and extension of their heroic tradition of struggle against the British imperialism

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and local feudalism. A series of tribal revolts marked the Jharkhand history in the 18th and 19th centuries — revolt of Tilka Majhi (1780), the Kol revolt (1831), the Santhal Hul (1855) and Birsa revolt (1900) to mention only the very well known ones. It must be mentioned, however, that even prior to the advent of the British the zamindars and the petty rajas of the area tried hard but failed to subdue the tribals. When finally the tribals succumbed to the British, that was not the end of the story. The progressive erosion of the tribal ways of life, values of communal and co-operative systems, the breakup of the land systems and land alienation on the one hand and the imposition of the values and dominance of the non-tribals in collaboration with the British power, provoked the tribals into another series of revolts. This resulted in the acceptance by the British of the distinct culture, life style and economic system ('nationality' in modern parlance) and administrative arrangements were accordingly made granting the tribals a large measure of internal autonomy and protection through a series of measures such as Regulation XIII of 1833 applicable to Chotanagpur and Act 27 of 1855 applilicable to Santhal Parganas. Following independence, however, the substance of the tribal autonomy was more or less eroded, keeping only its shadowy forms through the Schedules V and VI of the Constitution. Once again tribal dissatification gathered momentum; however, its expression could not be any more in the same old form of 'tribal revolt', it now became a movement for a separate State within the Indian Union — the Jharkhand State.

The tribal movement in Jharkhand as with all other tribal movements is a holistic movement in protest against the totality of non-tribal intrusion and dominance at all levels of life. This does not mean, however, that there was no mutuality of sharing or social intercourse at all between the two groups of communities. The movement specifically was and is against the non-tribal dominance which is becoming more and more articulate and aggressive. The great revolts of the past highlighted this protest in the areas of autonomy, protection of land and of honour of their women; but submerged within these is the persistent cry against the exploitative system into which they were increasingly being drawn. It is precisely this all-embracing quality of tribal protest as well as the non–tribal intrusion that has kept the movement alive and continues to evoke sympathetic chords in the hearts of the tribal masses even when the movement often fell into the hands of degenerate leadership. In other words, the Jharkhand movement was and continues to be (though to a lesser extent now) a struggle to resist the imposition of the ideology and dominance of the non–tribal communities and the ruling structure created by them. Here is a classic situation of a subaltern movement against the dominant classes locked up in an ideological struggle for hegemony.

The struggle of the subjugated people towards change in the status quo takes place within the overall dominance of the ideology and control of the ruling groups. This dominant ideology forever tries to maintain its hegemony

by strengthening its 'moral and intellectual dominance' over the rising and struggling subaltern ideology for change: the former opposes the latter by posing as a superior, more acceptable and universal ideology to be received by all sections of the society; the former blunts the militancy of the latter by a number of options open only to it; the former accommodates the latter when it is not possible to suppress it totally into its own discourse and idiom by conceding superficially and partially to the insurrectionist knowledge and ideology; and the former even takes up the causes of the latter naturally in a twisted and selfish manner to thwart the real aims and objectives of the movement. The formation of the subaltern ideology and more particularly its expression takes place in a hesitant and haphazard manner; the process is marked by a simpler level of abstraction and articulation; insights and attitudes are expressed more in concrete and immediate experiences rather than in categories and concepts. This scattered and unorganised state of subaltern ideology provides the dominant groups and their middlemen intellectuals with ample opportunities to penetrate and control it through a process of selection, misrepresentation, sophistication, etc. These and similar other processes have been taking place within the Jharkhand Movement also, needless to say, within the context of overall socio-economic structural changes and the ever shifting class and community alliances.

II

From being a struggle of tribal masses to preserve, strengthen and assert their distinct ethnic culture, idenity, values, history and independence, the Jharkhand Movement in the course of its long existence has slowly but steadily been transformed into a movement for the 'development' of the tribals much along the same path as that of their non-tribal neighbours. This is the first ideological victory of the dominant communities over the tribals within the movement. The earlier tribal revolts were marked by their rejection of the 'saheb' and 'dhiku' ways of life with an implicit sense of superiority in their own collective and co–operative way of life; such an attitude to a large extent informed the earlier years of the Jharkhand Movement also at least among the masses. The escalation of the ideology and practice of development by the ruling circles came with its own intellectual and moral dominance and it had its impact within the movement also. Whenever the movement became militant the government responded in terms of 'development'; it was quick to realise that repression alone was not capable of suppressing the movement (that these developmental exercises did not bring forth any perceivable improvement in the life of the tribals is another story). The onslaught of this developmental discourse within the autonomy movement was and is significant. The tribals are being made to clamour for more and more developmental projects very much like such demands in generally backward areas; and development itself is being understood in the same terms as by the surrounding non-tribals.

Constant comparisons with them has become a preoccupation of the vocal section of the movement — 'We are backward and underdeveloped while they are advanced and developed'. But eroded along with this discourse of development *a la* the dominant communities is the pride in the tribals past and ways of life and attachment to whatever was their own, which gave the tribal a militant edge to their past struggles. Today the most important political discussions within the movement centre around the theme of development – the entitlement of tribals to development, the appropriation by others of the share of benefits due to the tribals, the all-pervasive corruption within the developmental practice, etc. From self-determination based on confident and proud self-identity to imitative development as the goal of the movement is a significant concession on the part of the tribals in the war of positions between the two contending ideologies. This ideological transformation of course did not take place in a vacuum; on the other hand it is rooted in the existential life conditions of the mass' all-pervasive deprivation and dependence, which is why even long cherished goals of independence and identity could be sidetracked.

The ascendancy of 'development' over 'autonomy' of the tribal way of life within the ideology and practice of the Jharkhand Movement has indeed opened up several avenues for penetration by dominant ideological thinking. From the concept of the 'development of the people' to that the the 'development of the area' may seem to be an innocuous and short step. But in the context of Jharkhand where the tribal groups have already become a minority in the 'tribal areas' this shift in concept has in effect become a platform for a major onslaught on the tribal movement. When in 1833, the non-regulation areas were demarcated and Regulation XIII was passed as to where the tribals were to have autonomy from the operation of general laws, the demographic situation was different from what it is now. The 'area' and 'people' were more or less co-extensive then, the tribals were an overwhelming majority and ethnic issues could be addressed from the 'area or territorial' platforms. But since then during the last 150 years, more so during the last 50 years, momentous demographic changes have taken place in Jharkhand though in-migration of non-tribals and out-migration of tribals and the latter form only a minority, though significant, of the total population. Against this vast demographic change, ethnicity and regionalism have become two distinct and different phenomena and to substitute one for the other means certain shift in emhasis and point of view and when considered against the political thrust of the movement towards change, signify again a compromise and concession. Political and developmental discourse within the movement today is mainly in terms of the 'area' rather than of 'communities'; needless to say the beneficiaries of this area concept are first the non-tribals and second those tribals who are in the process of becoming like the non-tribals. Ethnic discourse is discouraged in many ways within the movement; at the intellectual level it is said that the

distiction between the tribals and the non-tribals is but a continuation of the British imperialist strategy; more recently it has been suggested that people could be characterised not in terms of their alleged traits but as inhabitants of certain eco-regions, etc; at the level of political practice it is advised that unity of the people of the entire 'backward area' would strengthen the movement or more directly that the movement would not succeed unless it wins over the support of the non-tribals. Ethnicity is the idiom of the tribals while regionalism is that of the dominant communities and the movement is definitely moving towards the direction of regionalism.

The solution towards containing ethnicity and encouraging regionalism has been formulated in two distinct but related ways: one, which places priority on the 'nationality' question — that but for a handful of exploiters, the entire people of Jharkhand are denied their nationality rights so the unity and mobilisation of all the people of Jharkhand irrespective of their language, caste, tribe, etc, should be encouraged in the struggle. The second formulation would claim to discover a sort of political or proletariat nationality wherein the organised workers of the industrial centres of Jharkhand would combine with the rural massses to form and achieve a socialist Jharkhand which would be a model for the rest of the country. Implicit in both the above formulations is the denial of 'tribal nationality' as a priority within the movement. While the former strives to bring the tribal movement within the broad democartic, progressive movement based on regions, the latter stresses the need for a 'class' framework. Both are two variants of the same phenomenon — reduction of ethnic consciousness and problem into a regional or class consciousness and problem.

The fact that both these formulaions emerge from a spectrum of socialist and liberal thinking itself carries with it considerable moral and intellectual legitimacy. Whatever be the merit of such formulations at the theoretical level in practice they are a denial of tribal nationality; they camouflage the historical as well as the current contradictions at various levels between the tribals and non–tribals ingeneral (not only the mahajan and moneylenders); these formulations preach harmony between unequal and antagonistic partners, thus indirectly strengthening the *status quo*; and finally they seek to confuse and blunt the sharpness of the all-pervasive ethnic exploitation that has given birth to a struggle for freedom and autonomy.

Having dragged the tribal aspiration for autonomy to a regional platform an inverse ideological somersault is performed to reconstruct a nationality on the basis of the region. The concept of Jharkhandi nationality has gained wide currency within the movement. Here the nationality is seen primarily as an attribute of a region instead of a community or a group of communities; the Jharkhandi nationality question is discussed as if it were a part of geography and not of socio-political anthropology. A region is invested with a nationality

partly based on the memories of historical tribal occupation of entire Jharkhand. Here the question of tribals and non-tribal does not arise, instead that of local and outsiders emerges. It is not asked what power or autonomy the tribals will have in the proposed State; on the other hand it is asserted that the Jharkhand Movement is not only for the tribals but for all living within Jharkhand; it is also heard that in Jharkhand everybody will be equal, meaning that *status quo* is assured of continuity. Ethnicity in all its manifestations is shunned and regionalism is encouraged; ethnic exploitation is underplayed and issues of regional development and imblances dominate. Jharkhand culture instead of tribal culture, Jharkhandi identity instead of tribal identity and finally Jharkhandi nationality instead of tribal nationality is supposed to capture and dominate the mood and movement of the masses. The *raison d'etre* of this concept is supposed to be that most of the people living in this area are anyway backward, poor and neglected both by the State and Central governments and hence their existential situation could well be described as a nationality.

From ethnicity via development to regionalism, the Jharkhand Movement has travelled a long distance on the ideological road towards integration and assimilation with the dominant communities. From being a movement of tribal autonomy and identity it has been transformed into a movement for decentralised administration and for redemarcating of State boundaries. This perhaps is the reason why recently the central government has taken note of the movement and is toying with the idea of granting a semblance of autonomy to the region; and this could be the reason also that many of the national parties are speaking in terms of various kinds of state formation in the region. Having sufficiently contained the ethnicity of the movement and having brought it nearer to the idiom and discourse, and thereby the interest, of the dominant communities, the demand of the 'tribals' could now be 'conceded'. This has been expressed lucidly within the framework of the upper caste Hindu ideology by L.K. Advani; Jharkhand, No! Vanachal, Yes!

In order to secure once and for all that ethnicity and tribal militancy does not raise its head ever again, to secure a legitimate place for the dominant non–tribal communities within the tribal areas and to expand their area of influence 'lawfully' in every sphere of the regions socio-political and cultural life, the dominant ideology has seen to it that any form of ethnic assertion and particularly the demand for a tribal state based on ethnicity is understood and accepted by the vocal sections of the movement as meaning 'communal' and consequently rejected by them. The moral and intellectual hegemony of the dominant ideology within the movement is nowhere clearer than in this 'communal' question. The tribal activists learn that one should not divide people on race, caste or ethnic lines (left over of class reductionism); it is secessionist and communal to demand an Adivasi Raj. Communalism in its turn is associated in the public mind with Hindu–Muslim religious communalism. This subtle and not so subtle

equation of the struggle of an oppressed nationality with the politics of religious fundamentalism of the dominant communities has gripped the minds and hearts of the young people in the movement that they do not any more even think of dreaming of an Adivasi or Birsa Raj based on traditional tribal values, ethos and genius. Such is the power and penetration of the dominant ideology presenting itself as superior and universal, controlling and subduing the rising tribal ideology, of a subjugated people struggling for socio-political self-assertion.

A point of interest in this context would be the fact that during its long years of existence the movement itself has not thrown up any important tribal intellectual who could speak for the movement or ideologise the struggles and aspirations of the tribal masses. Several attempts were indeed made by the educated tribals to put down in writing some concrete situation or incident, biographical sketches of heroes like Birsa or Sidu and even to logically present the *raison d'etre* of the movement. These indigenous attempts, unfortunately are too few and are informed by a 'tribal style' of writing that the dominant communities have found it easy and useful to ignore them more or less totally. On the other hand there is a plethora of writings on the different aspects of the movement by the non–tribal intelligentsia. The different Jharkhand Budhijivi Manches also have a heavy dose of non–tribal intellectuals. The role played by the few tribal intellectuals is generally passive. While it is not contended that the non–tribal intellectuals within the inovement have all collectively sworn to thwart the aims and objectives of the movement and that of the tribal masses, it could safely be said of many of them that they have not had the patience to observe or to listen to the hesitant voices emanating from the mass of tribals but have chosen to go ahead verbalising, formulating and propagating what ought to be the ideology, strategy and tactics of the movement. These semi and pseudo–intellectual exercises have taken place unavoidably within a context of ideology and hegemony and often have failed to faithfully interpret the aspirations of the tribal masses. The very presence of these intellectuals within the movement and their relationship with the tribal activists is not devoid of hegemonic overtones and more often than not reflects the ethnic relationship in the larger society.

III

It needs reiteratiori that this struggle between ideologies takes place within the concrete and existential life situation of the people as well as within the overall framework of dominance and exploitative relationship. In the context of Jharkhand conditions favourable to the dominant communities and their ideology existed from the very beginning: the long rule of some kind of Hinduised rajas in the area; the intervention of the British more often then not the side of the zamindar and local rajas; the expansion of industrial, developmental and administrative activities and the attendant large-scale immigration of non-tribals

into the area; economic scarcity and famine leading to equally large-scale emigration of tribals from the area; the overall imitative way of life imposed on the tribals by the advanced communities; spread of education as well as the rise of a new class of tribals who worked as a bridge between the tribal masses and the dominant communities; and above all the compulsions of electoral politics and pressure of economic necessities under the changed conditions, etc. These and similar other factors smoothened the way for the dominant ideology towards hegemony within the movement. The specific function of hegemonic ideology however is to grant legitimacy to domination and cover it up with a sense of the universal and the acceptable.

Correlated to the above mentioned compromises and changes in focus, emphasis and thrust in the ideology of the Jharkhand movement are objective changes within the movement — changes in issues, class composition and alliances, etc.

The Jharkhand Movement is no more a movement of the tribals only: in practice this has meant that a large number of non–tribals have become participants of the movement and thus its base has become widened. But this quantitative expansion has also led to the qualitative dilution of the movement: to begin with, the character of the non-tribal entrants to the movement is in general nothing that the movement could boast of — they are not from the working class of the non-tribal communities as was fondly hoped for by the 'democratic and socialist ideologues'. More often than not they are contractors, moneylenders, and their henchmen, local dadas and other dubious elements. As could be expected these are not content with being simple followers; but have become local leaders and on several occasions have proved to be more powerful than and manipulative of the more prominent tribal leadership. That this 'joining of hands' with the tribals, of the non-tribals within the movement is again in the context of dominance and exploitation, is clear from the several other changes within the movement.

Issues and problems connected with the historical and current ethnic relationship and exploiation–discrimination of tribals in every sphere of socio-political life, continuing and ever increasing tribal land alienation, mahajani exploitation in village bazars, sexual exploitation of tribal women, general looking down on tribal way of life, dominance of regional and national languages and culture over thair that of the tribal, etc., have been almost bene left by the movement. Apart from this, in general a scarcity of issues could be noticed in all the recent programmes of the movement.

The class and community base of the movement has also shifted to a considerable extent. The emergence of Ranchi University students and staff as one of the focal points within the movement (JCC, AJSU, UJP, etc) has meant unfortunately not the addition of a new force, that of the educated and middle

class tribals, to the movement, but a substitution of the traditional rural forces by the urban ones. Even with regard to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha which is the dominant force of the movement, agrarian and jungle-based movements have become things of the past. With the new found urban emphasis, the movement has had to accommodate the aspirations and interests of the non–tribal majority in the towns.

Land, the ever burning problem of the tribal masses is no more the central issue of the movement: in fact it has been observed in several places that the second and third level leadership among the tribals is busy bartering away large chunks of tribal land to their non-tribal counterparts within the movement in return for political and financial support. Even in mass displacement of tribals for developmental projects less and less voices are heard against the projects themselves and more voices for better compensation and employment, indicating a definite trend within the movement — that a small section of vocal and educated tribals whose interests are distinct from that of the masses are on the ascendancy within the movement. It is this emergence of sectional interests among the tribals that has contributed much towards the inclusion of and adjustment with the non-tribal communities. But what is not often noticed, or if noticed not highlighted, is the fact that corresponding to the 'in-migration' of the non-tribals and their interests is the out-migration of the tribal masses and their interests away from the movement. The rural masses of the major Ho, Munda and Santhali tribes are discovering to their dismay that their traditions, aspirations and struggles are not any more the vital force of the movement.

Earlier decades saw the onslaught of the non-tribal exploiters on the tribal land, labour, women and honour and the tribal movement stood for resistance to these depredations. Today while all these continue and increase in many sophisticated ways, a newer form of exploitation is being added to the situation - the whole spectrum of non-tribal interests are making significant inroads within the resistance movement itself, taking the initatve and militancy away from the exploited tribal masses.

The Jharkhand Movement as it today stands more for a regional state formation than for ethnic self-determination of tribal masses; it is concerned more with questions of boundary of the proposed state rather than with the perennial issues of ethnic and class exploitation, it is more and more preoccupied with manipulative politics within urban centres than with mobilising the tribal masses; its strength today 'lies less in mass proud self–confidence and assertion of tribal way of life and more in its leadership's yearning and ability to imitate the mainstream culture and politics. It is no surprise that in this process of gaining acceptability by the dominant communities, the Jharkhand Movement is being irrevocably drawn into the 'pure politics' of our national mainstream in which the masses are less and less interested and involved and in which

lumpenism has become an important ingredient. The dilemma facing the movement today is, whether it has already reached the point of no return or it is still possible to stem the tide!

IV

From the above one might be forced to conclude that in the ideological war of positions as well as in its struggle against dominance the movement has always been a loser. This is not so. Certain significant gains have been made also — recognition of the contribution of tribal struggles to the freedom movement, acceptance of the problem of Jharkhand, limited share of political power, etc. However, considered against the original socio-political trajectory of the movement it has to be admitted that the dominant ideology has by and large succeeded in maintaining its hegemony within the movement. The observations made herein are not conclusive and comments leading to corrections are welcome.

RECENT DEVELOPMMENTS IN THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

RAM DAYAL MUNDA AND BISEHWAR PRASAD KESHARI

The mid-1980s can be said to have set a new trend in the development of the Jharkand Movement. A period of self-search followed the direct action movement launched in 1978 by the Jharkhand Party after it was brutally crushed by the government forces. It was strongly felt that an all-inclusive effort with better planning was needed to launch an uncompromising, independent movement to liberate Jharkhandis from gross exploitation. This involved a series of seminars, symposia, workshops and orientation classes all over the Jharkhand region. It was a coincidence that the Ranchi University opened the Department of Tribal and Regional Languages about that time (1981) to promote teaching and research on the languages, literatures and cultures of the Jharkhand region. This provided a rallying point and continuity to the otherwise disjuncted process. In fact, in the new scheme of things the political movement formed only a small, though significant, part of a greater movement of Jharkhand's cultural reconstruction, which would later provide clues to solving such problems elsewhere in the country.

This self-search gave new insights into the entire historical perspective, the problems, the causes and possible solutions for the Jharkhand Movement. This also laid the foundation for an intellectual base, the lack of which had so far limited the movement to an occasional emotional outburst leading nowhere but to frustration. But since the cause was there, the movement was alive. In this article we will discuss the new developments in the geographical and historical perspective, the problems, the causes and the possible solutions pertaining to the Jharkhand Movement.

Geographically speaking, the position remains unchanged, i.e. the basic criteria for the boundary line is not where the population is predominantly tribal but where the Jharkhandi culture persists. A separate Jharkhand state will comprise the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana areas of South Bihar, Bankura, Purulia and Midnapore districts of Bengal; Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts of Orissa; and Raigarh, Surguja districts of Madhya Pradesh. Taken together, this is an area of nearly 2 lakhs square

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kilometres with a population of about 4 crores. The bases of this culture are provided by the tribal cultures of the region.

Historically as opposed to the generally held view that the Jharkhand movement is about 50 years old (considering that this name was adopted in 1950 before which it was known as the Adivasi Mahasabha), the spirit of the Jharkhand Movement goes as far back as 1769 when the British took possession of the Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana areas of the Jharkhand region. Jharkhand had seen alien aggression before when the Mughals attacked the region as early as 1385 and again in 1616 arresting the then king of Jharkhand (Durjan Sal) and sending him to jail in Gwalior, but the common people's lives had remained basically unchanged. The Mughal presence was never felt beyond an occasional looting and collection of riches from the local 'royal' families. Similarly, the Marathas too attacked the area but their presence was equally temporary. Both the Mughals and the Marathas left as they came, but the British had come to stay for a long period of time. Their presence shaped the history of the Jharkhand area, which could be characterised as follows:

The Period of Resistance: 1769–93

This period can be characterised as the period of passive resistance without much success. The people expected the British to go back as the Mughals and the Marathas had in the past. The decentralised units of the Jharkhand administration, though self sufficient for their internal maintenance, were not prepared for any long-drawn struggle with the enemy. Hence the British made inroad into the entire Jharkhand area without much difficulty. The Jharkhandi chieftains surrendered one after another and agreed to pay revenue/tax to the British administration.

The Period of Open Revolt: 1793–1915

With the imposition of the Bengal Permanent Settlement Regulation Act 1793, land was ssubjected to systematic taxation for the first time in the history of Jharkhand. The respective tribal chiefs after their surrender to the British now became agents of revenue collection for their new masters. This led to internal division and factionalism resulting in a series of uprisings that were initially ethnic in nature but eventually became pan-tribal and regional in character. Thus we have the first Santal revolt of 1793 under the leadership of Tilka Manjhi, the Bhumij revolt of Manbhum in 1798, the Chero uprising of Palamu in 1810 led by Bhukan Singh, the Munda uprising of Tamar in 1819-20 led by Rudu and Konta, the Kol rebellion of 1833 led by Singhrai and Binrai Manki, the second Bhumij revolt of 1834 led by Ganganarayan, the second Santal rebellion of 1855 led by the Santal brothers Sidhu, Kanu, Chand and Bhairao, the Sepoy mutiny of 1857 led by Bisnath Saahi, Ganpat Rai, Sheikh Bhikhari and Bir Budhu Bhagat, the Sardar Movement of 1875–95, the Birsa movement

of 1895–1900 and the Tana Bhagat Movement of 1914 under the leadership of Jatra Bhagat.

The Period of Reformation: 1915–38

The first pan-tribal organisation was started in the form of the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj in 1915. The objectives of the Samaj were to spread education and improve the economic condition of the adivasis. Schools, hospitals and cooperatives were started. They were to later become among the best educational and economic institutions in the region.

The Period of Political Consolidation: 1938–50

The Unnati Samaj was restructured as a political organisation giving it a new name, the Advasi Mahasabha, in 1938 under the leadership of Jaipal Singh who had just returned from England after earning a good name as the leader of the record-making Indian hockey team in the 1928 Olympics. The Mahasabha contested the 1946 general election but failed to make any headway as the Congress Party held a sweeping majority.

The Period of Emergence of the Regional Political Movement: 1950–57

Judging from the 1946 election results and with the intention of broadening its base for better political prospects in the following election, the Adivasi Mahasabha was reconstituted in 1950 as the Jharkhand Party to accommodate the entire Chotanagpur plateau area. The party fought the 1952 General Election, the first in free India, and won 32 seats out of the 325, becoming the major opposition party in the Bihar legislature. It demonstrated an impressive show of strength of a separate State before the State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) when the latter visited the area in 1955. However, the SRC did not recommend separate statehood, the main reason being lack of viability of the area as a linguistic unit. Despite this disappointment, the political strength of the party continued in the following general election in 1957 becoming once again the leading opposition political party with 28 seats in the Legislative Assembly of Bihar.

The Period of Decline and Merger: 1957–67

Non-recognition by the SRC gave some sections of the party an impression that it was fighting a losing battle. This was evidenced by the following (1962) general election when the strength of the party in the Legislative Assembly of Bihar was reduced to only 20 seats. This decline in strength was a major factor in deciding, on the part of the leadership, to fight for a separate state from within the system, and thus the merger of the Jharkhand Party with the Congress came about in 1963.

The Period of Renaissance: 1967–73

The merger, however, did not pay off. Not only was Jaipal Singh divested of his ministership in the Bihar Cabinet, all his followers turned against him for most of them, particularly the senior ones, had been ignored in the process of the merger. Consequently, they declared the merger illegal and started reviving the old party. The revival, however, lacked the central uniting force because of which the party spirit was fragmented. The party reverted to its ethnic character. N.E. Horo was left mostly with his Munda followers, Bagun Sumrui with the Hos and Set Hemrom with the Santals.

From within these ethnic groups there also developed a radical group, Birsa Sewa Dal, which was quite active during 1967-68 particularly in the urban areas of Ranchi and Jamshedpur. Radicalism also found expression with the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha under the leadership of Shibu Soren in 1973. This was yet another significant development on two counts: firstly, it catered to the needs of the mining and industrial labour; and secondly it made a major headway into a non-tribal population, which so far had been lukewarm to the cause of the Jharkhand Movement.

The Period of Expansion: 1973–80

The opening up continued to the extent that with the coming of the Janata government in 1977, all political parties including the congress had their own Jharkhand cell with their respective parties to appeal to the pro-Jharkhand cause. Thus, a seemingly dead political movement started gaining strength from 1978 onwards with the Jungle Andolan centering around the forest areas of Singhbhum.

The Period of Self-Search: 1980–86

With the return to power of the Congress in 1980, it developed a special relationship with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. This relationship continued till the next general election in 1985 when the JMM won 14 seats in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, thus, becoming once again a major opposition party in the state.

The spirit of fighting from within the system was reflected in a major way in the leadership of Kartik Oraon whose efforts helped the Congress Party develop a special character in Chotanagpur. As the most powerful spokesperson of the area he had direct access to the top leadership in the party. It is through his efforts that the Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas Development Authority was formed in 1980 to reinforce the development process of the area. Unfortunately the Authority proved defunct when it came to the implementation of its resolutions. Similar efforts were made by Devendra Nath Champia under whose leadership in 1985 fifty-two members

of the Bihar legislature from the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana area sent a joint memorandum to the Prime Minister for a central administration for the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana area.

While the above account focuses on the activities in the Bihar part of the Chotanagpur plateau, analogous political activities were going on in the adjoining areas of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. These peripheral movements were very much determined by what was happening in the 'main land' Chotanagpur.

Things were, however, still not moving in the direction of negotiations for separate statehood. Pro-Jharkhand political units fighting for the Jharkhand cause, from within or without, had at best a special working relationship with the ruling party, and that was all. The common feeling/fear was that the leaders, once elected, were sold out to the ruling party. The leaders became voiceless or plain 'yes men' once they were elected. Thus began a period of self-search as to what to do in order to enable the pro-Jharkhand leadership to negotiate from a non-compromising position of strength. Several seminars and workshops were held during 1986 to find a way out. The All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) was formed as a partial answer in this process.

The Period of Reconstruction : 1986–Present

The AJSU (1986) and the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) (1987) were formed with the intention of coordinating different factions of the Jharkhand Movement—the lack of which had so far been the one factor responsible for the ineffectiveness and slowing down of the movement. It was felt that since the attack on Jharkhandi culture was multi-pronged, the retaliation also has to be multi-faceted. Hence the JCC called upon all political and non-political organisations working for the betterment of the people in the Jharkhand area. The response was overwhelming. Taken together, 53 organisations comprising intellectuals, labour, women, teachers, students and so on became members of the JCC. The members of the JCC agreed to abide by the 23-point joint declaration, the main points of which are:

- To gear up the age-old movement for the reconstruction of Jharkhand and for the emancipation of her humiliated people.
- To fight for autonomy in the form of a separate Jharkhand state (comprising areas where the Jharkhand culture persists) in accordance with the provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India, for the question of Jharkhand is in essence a question of nationality. The basis of the claim for this politico-geographical territory is in its cultural continuity, geo-physical uniformity and structural oneness of its economic life—all which differ conspicuously from its neighbouring areas.

- To fight internal colonialism supported by international economic colonialism represented by multinational investment in the Jharkhand area, particularly in its large industrial and power projects. This is believed to be the main enemy of Jharkhand and fighting it is not going to be easy, for the enemy is powerful and so far has succeeded in keeping the people divided on the lines of caste and religion. Victory can be achieved by uniting all sections of Jharkhandis and by forging with other movements of the oppressed people of the country and the world who are fighting against these same forces. This unity could be achieved through jointly undertaking programmes of common interest (e.g., demand for recognition of the Jharkhandi languages by their inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, implementation of the policy of reservation for the STs, SCs and OBCs, implementation of the Mandal Commission Report, restoration of the alienated land belonging to Jharkhandis in general and tribal land in particular, implementation of the disbursement of minimum wages, protection against economic deprivation and sexual exploitation of Jharkhand women, absorption of Jharkhandis in government and private undertakings, fixing of just prices for agricultural and forest produce and rescheduling and uniform scheduling of tribes and communities presently having different status in different states). In case of internal contradictions, solutions should be sought in traditional village *panchayats* in the respective areas.
- To organise leadership training workshops and camps from time to time to build a new generation of leaders dedicated to the cause of Jharkhand.
- To publish occasional bulletins to keep its member-organisations informed about the struggles of the people in different areas and to exchange ideas and share experiences.

The formation of the JCC showed instant results. The rally of November 15, 1987 on Birsa Day at Ranchi was an immense success. This was followed by the Calcutta rally of January 31, 1989, the road blockage at Dumri on February 9, the Jharkhand *Bandh* of April 21–23 all in early 1989. This was sufficient to draw the attention of the Central Government. Instructions were sent to the Commissioner, South Chotanagpur to initiate discussions at his level. A talk was held at the Commissioner's residential office in a cordial atmosphere. The delegates threw light on the economic, social, political and cultural problems faced by Jharkhandis. The Commissioner was of the opinion that the basic problems of Jharkhand could be solved by economic development, but the delegates emphasised the importance of the question of the cultural identity and considered granting political autonomy to be the only solution. Another round talks, this time at Patna, on May 31, 1989 resulted in several significant conclusions of which the following five are most important:

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs conceded that the Jharkhand movement stood on a realistic ground, namely that exploitation of Jharkhand continued even after forty years of independence. A remedy is, therefore, urgently needed.
2. The Jharkhand Movement is not just an Adivasi movement. It is the movement of both the Adivasi and the Sadans, and therefore, a movement of everyone belonging to the Jharkhand area.
3. The Jharkhand Movement is not an anti-national movement. An objective solution of the problem is necessary in the interest of the country as a whole. In this sense the problem of Jharkhand is a national problem and the question of Jharkhand is a political question.
4. The Jharkhand Movement is not for economic development alone but also for the protection of its cultural existence and development. The Jharkhand problem has to be solved for the preservation and promotion of the Jharkhandi identity, its languages, cultures and existence.
5. The problem of Jharkhand can be solved by providing the area regional autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. For this it was necessary that the concept of regional autonomy be clarified, for the limits of regional autonomy are expansive in the Indian Constitution. A position paper was preparped as to what the JCC's opinion was in the matter.

So far the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha had been keeping aloof of the talks. Requests from various sources were made that they too should take part in the talks. Dr. Amar Kumar Singh, then Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Psychology Ranchi University (and presently Vice-Chancellor, Ranchi University) played an important role in this connection. The Morcha agreed to participate in the talks at Delhi after intensive discussion between the members of the JCC, Dr. Munda and senior leaders of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. In addition to this there was an agreement between the JCC and the JMM to chalk out a common programme and join hands in the struggle. Against this background the second round of talks at Delhi was convened on August 11, 1989.

The leaders of the JMM too submitted their memorandum in the meeting convened by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Buta Singh. The concept of regional autonomy was explained in great detail in the position paper submitted by the JCC and efforts were made to establish that the Jharkhand area has its own distinctive identity which is reflected in the present 25 districts proposed for the Jharkhand State.

The position paper also refutes the arguments of the State Reorganisation Commission (1954) on the basis of which the government had previously

discarded the demand for a separate state. It has been argued that the demand for Jharkhand is not for the Adivasis alone; it is a demand for everyone living in the Jharkhand region. Therefore it would be wrong to call it a minority demand. Secondly, it would be equally wrong to say that there is no contact language for the people of this region, for apart from the tribal and regional languages, Hindi, Bengali and Oriya are equally understood in the area. Also, the fear that there would be economic imbalance in the neighborhood States if Jharkhand State were created, is baseless and inappropriate. At the same time it was also explained that the area ought to be given the status of a State to protect the investment of the Central Government in the Jharkhand area (in the form of large-scale industries and mining operations) which are currently running at a loss due to the absence of an adequate work culture in the respective States.

The next round of talks on Jharkhand was held on September 4, 1989 at Delhi in which the proposal for the formation of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters was accepted. It was decided that the Committee, in course of studying the Jharkhand problem, would visit Dumka on September 19, Ranchi on September 21, Jashpur on September 22, Rairangpur on September 23 and Jhargram on September 25. Three specialists, Dr. Suresh Kumar Singh, Dr. Bhupendra Singh, and Mr. K.N. Prasad would prepare the draft and the report would be finalised with the consent of the entire Committee. Mr. B.S. Lalli, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, was nominated as the Convener of the Committee. It was also decided that the Committee would submit its report by October 16, 1989.

In the meantime, due to the announcement of elections and with the formation of new governments at the Centre and States, the situation began to change. The Jharkhand people apprehended that it was the end of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters. In order to tide over the situation, negotiations were started again through the newly elected Members of the Parliament and a way out seemed to evolve. Dr. Ram Dayal Munda and Mr. N.E. Horo met the new Home Minister Mr. M.M. Sayeed who assured them that he would discuss the matter with the Prime Minister and complete the unfinished task.

After several ups and downs the Home Minister called a meeting of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters on April 25, 1990. The meeting was convened under the Chairmanship of the Minister of State, Home Affairs, Mr. Subodh Kant Sahay. However, the draft of the report could not be presented at the meeting. It was reported that certain modifications were needed before it could be presented to the meeting. Finally the Committee was called again on May 14, 1990 in which the draft of the report was also presented. The Committee, after a serious discussion. gave the report its final shape and was submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. M.M. Sayeed.

The draft report considered the Jharkhand area as a distinct cultural unit, and has recommended that status of a separate State be given to the area. However, under the present circumstances it would be difficult for the Central Government to give Jharkhand the form of a State or a Union Territory. Experts have proposed that the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana area be given a special status of Jharkhand Council. The experts were of the opinion that such Councils could also be formed in the Jharkhandi cultural areas of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The specialists also recommended a Jharkhand Cultural Development Authority for the entire Jharkhand area. However, all the Jharkhandi organisations including the Members of Parliament from the Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, Janata Dal and others, who were present as observers, broke their political boundaries and recommended separate statehood for the Jharkhand area. It was also unanimously suggested that a committee be formed to determine the exact boundary of the state on the basis of cultural identity. There was a general consensus that the new State be called Jharkhand.

The JCC considers this report a significant step in the direction of attainment of statehood for Jharkhand. The most important fact is that the Committee — formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Central Government, and in which have participated authoritative scholars, all Jharkhandi organisations and Parliament Members of all political parties of the Jharkhand area—has accepted that the Jharkhand area has its own cultural identity and that the responsibility of its preservation and development lies with the country as a whole. The suggestions for the formation of the Jharkhand Cultural Development Authority is specially significant from this point of view. It is a matter of utmost importantance that all representatives of the Jharkhand area were unanimous in demanding separate statehood for the area.

Three governments (of Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh and Chandrashekhar) have changed since the report was finalised. While virtually no progress was made on the Jharkhand issue during the interim Janata governments of V.P. Singh and Chandrashekar, they kept the issue alive by aligning with the pro-Jharkhand political forces to gain and maintain control at the Centre. Along with the other issues of autonomy like the Uttarakhand, Bodoland, Bhil Khand and Gondawana, the Jharkhand issue too was kept alive. However, since the development of a special relationship of power sharing between the Jharkhand leaders and the ruling political power prevented the application of any pressure on the latter, little progress could be expected.

The Jharkhand–Vananchal forces have displayed an impressive strength in the Parliament by winning 10 seats (5 JMM, 5 BJP) from the Jharkhand area. Their occasional Jharkhand *Bandh* calls and action programmes of economic blockade have also been impressive enough to draw the attention of the government. But when it comes to the negotiation table, the Jharkhand

leaders have difficulty in pursuing the matter any further. It only shows that the people are ready but the leaders are not. The recent efforts of raising the Jharkhand issue on the part of the Jharkhand-Vananchal leaders in the Parliament proves that the leaders have not done their homework properly. The single most important task for the Jharkhandi leaders in the Parliament ought to be making public the report of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters. This will help the rest of the required two-third majority (at least 350) members of the Parliament to make up their mind on the issue when the matter comes up for voting. This would obviously require vigorous lobbying, considering that the government at the Centre is fairly weak at this time. The Jharkhand leaders have to learn a great deal at this level of functioning.

The best thing that can be said to have come out of this interim period is inter-regional dialogue and reciprocal reinforcement for these movements to continue to the extent that a third state reorganisation could be demanded so that all problems of autonomy could be addressed together.

By now the movement's echoes have reached the UN. There have been efforts in the past on the part of some factions of the movement to get a hearing on the issue in the World Court in Hague but due to ill-preparedness on the part of its members and the totally unsympathetic attitude of the Government of India, nothing came out of these efforts. However, with the formation of the Indian Council of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in 1987, and its affiliation to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, the Jharkhand issue, among other issues pertaining to the Indian tribal and indigenous peoples found a legitimate forum through the ICITP in the UN Working Group on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. The ICITP has been a regular invitee in the Working Group meetings since 1987. Unfortunately the Government of India's uncooperative attitude still persists. It refuses to accept that there are any indigenous peoples in India and therefore there are no problems to be discussed in the said UN Sub-Committee. This is despite the fact that India is among the first signatories of the ILO Convention of 1957, thus giving recognition to the existence of indigenous and tribal people within its population. By refusing to recognise the indigenous peoples the government has only exposed its double-facedness, for it does recognise its 'tribal' people as a distinct group needing different treatment for their development. Separate provisions have been made for them in the Constitution and there is nothing hidden about it. The government's trying to hide issues pertaining to its people at this international forum only brings out its hypocrisy in the matter.

The UN, however, considered this non-cooperative posture of the Government of India only a transient phenomena. For the purpose of the UN it has recorded India's 60 million tribal population as its indigenous people and is hopeful that sooner or later the Government of India will come round to

accepting the UN position as it prepares to pass a general resolution and declare the year 1993 as the Year of the Indigenous Peoples. For anything having to do with the world's tribal people has to take India's tribal people into account as they form half of the world's tribal population.

One can, of course, understand the Government of India's concern. The main thrust of the proposed resolution to be passed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 is provision of autonomy to all such tribal areas where the respective governments have not been taking care of the tribal/indigenous populations to the extent that they are getting marginalised by the respective dominant societies. Demands of this kind are already echoed all over the world. India is no exception. With an enormous tribal population the prospects of too many autonomous areas would naturally worry the Indian administration. But it is not that the government has not yielded to reasoning. The number of autonomous areas in the form of States has increased from 15 at the time of independence to 25 at present. Six of these States are tribal areas. Provision of autonomy has definitely improved the lot of the tribal people in these areas. Therefore granting of two or three more autonomous areas should not be seen as disruptive to the integrity and unity of the country.

But the government's real worry seems to be about more and more people claiming 'indigenous' status and the strong likelihood of those groups using the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund facilities as leverage to put pressure on the Government of India by the UN. Therefore, The best course, according to the government, is to avoid the issue altogether. This cannot be a long-term policy if India is to take a leader's position among the developing nations in international fora.

While the basic problems (land and forest alienation. job and training deprivation, cultural submergence and unbalanced development) have remained the same, their intensity has increased greatly in recent times.[1] Growth of urban and industrial areas has been phenomenal in the Jharkhand area and along with that the problem of crime and corruption at all levels in administration, government and private undertakings.

Although no new major industry or power projects have been undertaken in recent times in the Jharkhand area, more and more land is being acquired in the name of urban housing and subsidiary industrial development. The number of the jobless/unemployed is increasing by more than one lake per year in Bihar's Jharkhand area alone, and despite the governments claiming otherwise, the decision-making power is reverting more and more back to the respective State capitals.

The recent proposal by the Bihar government for the creation of the Jharkhand Development Council gives nothing new to the people of this area. If approved (by the President) as it is, it will function entirely in accordance

with the wishes of the Chief Minister of the State, and at best will only be a proof of how the Jharkhand leaders can be fooled by clever paperwork by an exploitative government and its bureaucracy. Perhaps in anticipation of the proposed Council, the Bihar government has already announced opening of branch offices at Ranchi for the Secondary School Examination Board, the Intermediate Council and the Board of Selection for non-gazetted officials but their implementation is yet to be seen. In the meantime more and more funds are being allocated for the 'development' of this area, most of which are looted on their way to the real beneficiaries.

As with the issues mentioned above giving rise to the Jharkhand Movement, the cause(s) behind it, remains basically the same as before, i.e. internal colonialism is still regarded as the main cause. However, the realisation that it is joined with the international economic colonial forces, is spreading ever faster. The Jharkhand area is increasingly being viewed as the centre of economic interest in the eyes of all developed nations in the world. We have seen what America can do through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in Subarnarekha and other power projects. We have the examples of Russia's involvement in the heavy engineering plants in Hatia and Bokaro; Germany's in Rourkela steel plant; Japan's in Bhurkunda; Britain's in Gomia explosive factory and glass factory, and so on. A sizeable portion of the country's foreign debt is incurred through mismanagement of public undertakings in collaboration with the above international agencies. Therefore, these involvements must be understood in the correct perspective in order to find a correct remedy. The Jharkhand Movement is developing its international connections accordingly.

The purpose behind trying to look at the Jharkhand Movement from a wider historical perspective is to show that the Jharkhandi culture as a whole has been subjected to gradual disintegration over a period of 200 years particularly since the arrival of the British in the area, and its continuance till today even after independence. Therefore, the aim of the movement has to be reconstruction of the best of that culture which is equally contributive to the great Indian culture. These elements of culture in brief are : balance between nature and culture, accommodative history, egalitarian society, collective economy, democratic political thinking, naturalistic religious pursuits, simple and ethical living, and people oriented art and literature. This reconstruction can be done only though the provision of full autonomy in the form of separate statehood within the framework of the Constitution. It has become even clearer with the submission of the report of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters mentioned above. Setting up of a Jharkhand Council and even the provision of Union Territory status to the area would be in temporary phases towards that final status as a separate State. Even in the matter of separate statehood, while tactically the Bihar part of the Jharkhand cultural area could be the first

unit of the separate Jharkhand State, the process will be completed only after the Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh parts are also joined together. The oppression has lasted for far too long for the people to tolerate their respective State governments any longer.

As to the means of attaining this goal, a broad-based comprehensive mass movement seems to be the most effective weapon in the hands of Jharkhandis. There have been discussions in some circles about the use of armed struggle as a means to attain separate statehood as has happened in the north-eastern parts of the country, but in the final analysis the situation is quite different in the case of Jharkhand. While the hilly and forested nature of the Jharkhandi landscape provides sufficient ground to wage guerilla warfare, lack of an international border makes it impossible to sustain any long-term armed confrontation with the administration. On the other hand, the recent mass movements (the rallies at Ranchi and Calcutta, several programmes of Jharkhand *Bandh* and economic blockade) have proved that this is a surer way of compelling the administration to come to the negotiation table. A real mass movement would involve all sections and levels of the Jharkhandi society, e.g. women, students, teachers, labourers, farmers, intellectuals, lawyers, professors, doctors, and people from business and industry. This would require undertaking programmes of awareness building on a large scale.

Considering the ethnic multiplicity of the Jharkhandi masses, collective leadership would be most effective. One of the reasons of failure of individual leadership has been that given the background of multiplicity, though complementary, no single individual is easily acceptable for the entire Jharkhand area. Jaipal Singh was an exception but not without murmurings against him also. And since no single cultural unit has an overriding dominance over the entire territory, only through a joint effort can this historic task be achieved. Furthermore, for the same reason of accommodating even the least numerous groups in the multiplicity, decision by consensus and power sharing by rotation rather than following the majority-minority rule of voting would be most suitable though it may be time consuming at times.

Past experience of the movement has shown that leaders are often sold out to the ruling political party once they are elected. This has always happened when the Jharkhandi leaders have tried to work through national political parties. They end up being *bandhua majdoors* (bonded labour) to the national leaders for petty gains of post and *paisa.* The new generation of leaders are acutely aware of this and are therefore trying to stand on their own.

The movement must also relate itself to the lives of the masses through constructive programmes which actually fulfill the promises made by the leaders to the people. So far criticising the ruling party and other opponents has been the only massage leaders have for their followers. In order to do this

the leaders have to recognise the genius of the people and give it a creative vent. This may also include making use of the prevailing administrative machinery in favour of the people. The movement has been marked by occasional emotional outbursts but has thus far lacked continuity. Continuity requires planning. The present generation of leadership is showing intellectual maturity, which will eventually provide sustenance. Dissemination of ideas and keeping in touch through occasional publications and news bulletins have become regular features of the Jharkhand Movement.

Keeping in view that the task is massive, particularly when it comes to achieving it through the constitutional means of getting the concerned bill passed through the Parliament, the movement will need friends to push it through. Orgaisations with common goals and programmes can be of help to each other in this matter. Reaching out to friends has been one of the major developments with the movement. On the basis of the preliminary discussions among such like-minded organisations, there is already a possibility of launching a joint movement for a demand for the third round of state reorganisation.

Realisation of the points mentioned above on the part of the new generation of leadership, however, does not mean that things are moving along smoothly. Far from it. Most importantly, despite the fact that joint or collective leadership is uppermost in their mind, the current leadership has not been able to effectively come together in the movement. The people, on the other hand, are ready. They have already given their verdict in favour of a separate State. Whether it is called Jharkhand, Vananchal (as proposed by BJP), Chotanagpur (Congress, CPM, CPI) or Van Pradesh (Janata Dal, SJP) is immaterial now as long as the State is separate. The question of how big or how small can easily be solved by setting up a boundary commission. The main task ahead is that of putting a joint and sustained effort. For this the leaders have to rise above their personal interests. This is the biggest problem for the Jharkhand Movement at this time. Even more so in the face of the 'divide and rule' policy of the anti-Jharkhand vested interest groups.

Similarly the movement needs to be made more broad-based. Currently the movement is mostly felt in the urban areas. Its work force is comprised largely of urban youth. The rural youth and the rural masses are yet to be involved in any significant way. In the urban areas too the middle class and the business community are still uninvolved. Until this happens the movement will suffer from financial problems. No mobility can be achieved without adequate financial backing.

To conclude, the Jharkhand Movement can be said to be on its rise again after suffering a decade-long setback lasting from the mid-sixties to mid-seventies. Behind this rise is a process of re-evaluation and self-examination on the part of the new generation of leadership. This has changed the perspective

of the movement significantly in terms of its history, the problems, the cause(s), the solution and the means to achieve it. Historically the spirit of the movement can be traced as far back as 1769. While the basic issues giving rise to the Jharkhand Movement have been the same, i.e. economic exploitation and cultural submergence, their intensity is felt much more in recent times although no new industrial or power projects have been started in the area during this period.

The perspective on the solution too has changed in that there remains no political party nor any segment of the people in the area which is not in favour of a separate state, and therefore there stands nothing in the way of the Central Government for creating a separate State, the exact size of which could be decided by setting up a boundary commission. The only thing needed is the will of the Central Government. And, finally, as to the means of attaining this solution, a comprehensive, broad-based mass movement sustained by a joint, collective leadership is envisioned as the most effective way.

Analogous to the growing intensity and broader base of the movement, the government too has softened down its attitude in recent times. The movement, once branded as supported by foreign missionaries and therefore anti-national, is seen now as a national problem which obviously must be taken seriously. All national political parties including the ruling Congress have their Jharkhand regional cells supporting the demand for a separate State. The latest press statements by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister are supportive of the demand provided the concerned Chief Ministers are in agreement. But that agreement will never come on its own. No Chief Minister will ever risk his political career by agreeing to give up this part of his State's territory. It would be naivete for the Jharkhand leaders to expect this to ever happen. They must understand that the only constitutional obligation on the part of the Centre towards the concerned State(s) is to ask for their views on the matter. When it comes to the final decision, it must decide what is best in the interest of the nation as a whole. That time is now, when everyone—political or non-political, national or regional (except vested interest groups)—is supportive of the cause.

If the progress made so far is indicative of its future, things look good for the Jharkhand Movement provided the leaders are united and do their homework for their effective follow-up at the respective Assemblies and then at the Parliament.

Notes

Our sincere thanks are due to Mrs. Rashmi Katyayan and Mr Sanjay Basu-Mullick for their critical reading and valuable suggestions.

1. For details see Munda, R.D. "Restrospects and Prospects of the Jharkhand Movement" in *The Journal of Social Change*, Vol.18, No.2, 1988.

2. For details on the cultural identity of Jharkand see *The position Paper Submitted for Discussion at the Talks on the Jharkhand Problem*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, August 11, 1989.

THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY AND SUB-NATIONALITY: A CASE OF JHARKHAND MOVEMENT IN BIHAR

K.L. SHARMA

I

Prior to India's Independence, three factors, namely, (i) the administrative unity of the region, (ii) exploitation of the tribal people and the mineral, material and forest resources by the *dikus* (outsiders), and (iii) ethnic distinctiveness of the adivasis (tribals) were forcefully articulated for the formation of the state of Jharkhand within Indian Union.[1] These three factors continue to be the main ground for the demand of the state of Jharkhand. But the character and complexion of the Jharkhand Movement have undergone a sea-change in terms of leadership, electoral politics, discourse on ethnicity, class and power, inter-tribal ethnic and political linkages, and the question of identity and sub-nationality.

Our analysis is restricted in this paper to the dynamics of the movement in the post-independence period. A mix of ethnicity, class and power has persisted in the management of the Jharkhand Movement right from its inception in 1938 with the formation of the Adivasi Mahasabha by late Jaipal Singh, the great leader of the adivasis until the merger of the Jharkhand Party with the Indian National Congress in 1963. Hindu zamindars and Bengali moneylenders exploited the adivasis of Bihar for a long time. Various tribal movements were launched against these exploiters. The British also joined the ranks of these non-tribal exploiters (dikus). The leadership of various movements prior to Independence hailed from among the tribal people of Bihar. This simple fact brings out the role played by ethnicity, class and power explaining their 'mix' and the inherent contradictions between them.

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[1] K.L. Sharma, Jharkhand Movement in Bihar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XI. No.2. 1976. See also Memorandum submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission by the Members of the Jharkhand Party in Bihar Legislature on the question of the formation of Jharkhand State with Indian Union, April 22, 1954. The points made in this memorandum were reiterated later on in two memoranda submitted to the Prime Minister of India on March 12, 1973 and April 16, 1975.

To elaborate this point further, it would be appropriate to draw heuristic distinctions between class, ethnicity and power. But at the same time from the standpoint of the 'mix' lines demarcating the three get blurred. Leadership of the tribal movements hailed mainly from among the tribals, hence ethnicity and power coexisted. The exploiters were non-tribals, and they were not only economic dominants, but also enjoyed a great deal of patronage by the raj. Thus ethnicity, class and power had two contradictory formations as they were alliances comprising of each other's opponents. It would be worthwhile to analyse the dynamics and dialectics of these contradictory formations in the context of the Jharkhand Movement.

II

The proposed Jharkhand state, if it comes into existence, will comprise of 26 districts, of which 16 fall in Bihar, 4 in Orissa, 4 in Madhya Pradesh, and 2 in West Bengal. It has a population of more than 30 million, of which about 26 per cent are adivasis.[2] Despite geographical contiguity of these 26 districts of the four states, the people of this region do not have a common written or spoken language or dialect. The State's Reorganisation Commission (SRC) in 1955 declined to accept the demand for the formation of the Jharkhand state mainly on the ground that the people of the region did not have a common language. The SRC had recommended the formation and redemarcation of the states on the basis of 'common language' shared by the people living in a particular region.[3]

Thus the number of states largely corresponded with the number of languages recognised as 'national' languages in India's Constitution. Ironically during the last 40 years only one or two languages have been accorded the status of 'national' language, but contrary to this, more than ten new states have been carved out. None of the reasons such as administrative viability, common language, or even aspirations of the people have been considered as the basis of the enlargement of the fleet of states. Political expediency might have been the compelling force behind such a move from time to time.

Jharkhand has not been accepted as a separate state despite remaining a battlefield of uprisings, revolts and rebellions for more than 300 years against the zamindars, money-lenders, dikus, exploiters and the British. Prior to

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[2] See for example a report—'Demand for Jharkhand Genesis,' *Times of India*, May 20 1990, K.L.Sharma, 'Case for Jharkhand', Hindustan Times, December 14, 1989 and 'Genesis and Resurgence, Jharkhand Movement,' *Hindustan Times*, April 27, 1988.

[3] *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission*, Government of India, New Delhi, 1955.

Independence the tribal movements had two distinct features: (i) mobilisation of the masses against the appropriation of native resources such as forests and minerals, and (ii) social and cultural upliftment of the adivasis through various organisations such as Unnati Samaj and Adivasi Mahasabha.[4]

Prior to these reformative efforts the Birsa uprisings at the end of 19th century were most effective, widespread and composite endeavours against the raj. However, more than being upheavals against the alien rule, these revolts proved quite effective in the revival of the lost status of the adivasis, restoration of their aboriginality and identity of the Chotanagpur raj. Use of force and symbols depicting tribal identity and unity was incorporated as the instruments of their goal-attainment.

The net gains of the Birsa uprisings included tribal awakening, realisation of people's power, autonomy and forests as the lifeline of the tribals. It became evident that Chotanagpur was a land of the adivasis, and they were never under the command of alien rulers. Another net gain was the emergence of a synthesis of tribal, Hindu and Christian cultures with pre-eminence of the tribal culture.

However, with the formation of the Unnati Samaj in 1914 the emphasis shifted from tribal autonomy to reformation in terms of abandonment of traditional customs and practices and adoption of education and new values. The Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938 in the form of a socio-cultural movement began with a certain degree of militancy for rejuvenating and revitalising the tribal society. In course of time, it got involved in the power-game through elections. The Adivasi Mahasabha was rechristened as the Jharkhand Party in 1950 by its leader Jaipal Singh. Once Jaipal Singh as the President of the Adivasi Mahasabha spoke to the adivasis as follows:

> Arise and wake up, recognise yourself, you all who had been toiling and sweating under the exploiting wolves for the last hundreds of years.... get this firmly nailed down in your heads that you have not been destined to cut grass and draw water for the dikus all your lives. You have to take your place in the society on the basis of equality with others. So wake up, you are not inferior to any one. Assert yourselves, and fight for your rights.[5]

Exploitation, alienation and identity were the main concerns of Jaipal Singh in this emotional but realistic articulation. Keeping these points in view, he

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[4] K.L. Sharma, op, cit., 1976.

[5] In 1946 for the first time Jaipal Singh declared—"we shall Take Jharkhand". See the *Searchlight*, July 14, 1946. However, this demand was articulated vociferously at the time of the visit to Bihar of the States Reorganisation Commission in 1954.

decided to fight for the cause of the adivasis politically, hence formed the Jharkhand Party.

III

Identity of Jharkhand as a distinct region was recognised as early as 6th century B.C. It was known earlier as 'Khukhra' and 'Chotanagpur'. The latter is still in vogue and it is a part of Bihar's administrative set-up. 'Historical accounts corroborate the claim of administrative independence, cultural and ethnic exclusiveness, and autonomy of the reaion'[6]. Before 6th century B.C., according to B.C. Majumdar, Jharkhand was known as 'Kalkavana'.[7] Majumdar writes: 'I shall merely state here that the Santhal Parganas, Chutia Nagpur, the districts of Sambhalpur and the native states of adjoining Chutia Nagpur fall within Jharkhand.' My own study of the Jharkhand Movement suggests that until 1912 Chotanagpur was with Bengal, and when Bihar was separated from Bengal in 1912, Chotanagpur, Bihar and Orissa were formed as a separate state of Bihar. Further in 1930 Orissa was carved out as a separate state and Chotanagpur remained with Bihar.[8] It is in this way that Jharkhand remains divided into four states, namely, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Thus, a major part of Jharkhand has remained with Bihar due to this intermittent bifurcation and realignment of states.[9]

S.C. Roy and several other scholars have acknowledged the uniqueness of the Jharkhand region and its people.[10] The recent history in terms of various movements, issues (raised) and organisations (formed) in the region also substantiate its claim for separate identity. The name 'khukhra', as I have mentioned earlier, was attributed to Jharkhand before the British conquered India. In 1780 it was designated as the 'Ramgarh Hill Tract,' and in 1833 it was renamed as 'The South-West Frontier Agency'. The years 1811, 1818, 1820, and 1832 were years of uprisings against the raj's atrocities committed on the tribal people. As a result of these upheavals the South-West Frontier Agency was rechristened as the Chotanagpur Division with a view to create a sense of cultural and ethnic identity among the tribal people. Till recently five districts of the Chotanagpur comprised of this Division. With an increase in

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[6] B.C. Majumdar, *Aboriginals of Central India*, quoted from the Memorandum submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission, April 22, 1954.

[7] Ibid.

[8] S.C. Roy, *Mundas and Their Country*, City Bar Library, Calcutta, 1912.

[9] K.L. Sharma. op. cit., 1976.

[10] S.C. Roy. op. cit., and see also K.K. Datta. *The Santhal Insurrection of 1855–57*. University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1940: R.R. Diwakar, *Bihar Through the Ages*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1959.

the number of districts the Chotanagpur Division has been bifurcated for administrative viability into North and South Chotanagpur Divisions. The Santhal Parganas district has remained close to the Chotanagpur both administratively and ethnically; it has maintained its separate identity since 1855—the year in which the famous insurrection shook the British administration.[11]

Ranchi, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Panchkot (Manbhum), Santhal Parganas of Bihar; Keonjhar, Bomai, Bambra, Gangpur and Mayurbhanj of Orissa; Surguja, Jashpur, Udaipur, Korea and Changbharkar of Madhya Pradesh were never fully integrated with Bihar, and they had on the other hand their geographical contiguity, ethnic homogeneity and administrative viability to come together as one State like any other state of Indian Union. All these areas were under the 'Chotanagpur raj' before the British took over India. Constrained by this solidary fact the Simon Commission declared Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas as 'Partially Excluded Areas' in 1930. The President of Independent India declared some areas as 'Scheduled Areas' and set up a Tribal Advisory Council.

The Hindu zamindars, Bengali moneylenders and the British rulers besides being *dikus* also impinged upon the autonomy of the tribal people by affecting adversely their social organisation. The 'forest rules' and 'agricultural taxes' were used not only for oppressing and exploiting the tribal people, they also implied a process of diminishing of the tribal society itself in terms of its identity and exclusivity. Tribals valued their autonomy and freedom more than anything else, hence these movements. Being ruled by the alien people was taken as an attack on their culture, social organisation, polity and economy. Thus most of the tribal movements including the Bisra Uprisings aimed at the restoration and re-establishment of their lost status and identity.[12]

The main reformative revolts were as follows:

1. The Rajas of Dalbhum, 1769–74.
2. The Chuar Tribe of Midnapur, 1799.
3. The Bhumij Chaur of Manbhum, Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas, 1795–1800.
4. The Tana Revolt of 1820.

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[11] K.L. Sharma. op. cit., 1976; and 'Folk Culture of Jharkhand Region in Bihar', Budhadeb Chaudhary (ed.), *Tribal Development in India: Problems and Prospects*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

[12] See K.S. Singh. *The Dust-Storm and the Hanging Mist — A Study of Birsa Munda and his Movement in Chotanagpur* (1874–1901). Firma. K.L. Mukhopadhyay.1966: S.P. Sinha. *Life and Times of Birsa Bhagan* Bihar Tribal Welfare Research Institute, 1964.

5. The Kols, Hos and Mundas of Chotanagpur, 1831–32.
6. The Santhals of Bihar, 1855–56.
7. The Bhokta Uprising and Rai Movement of 1857.
8. Sardari Larai or Mulki Larai, 1857.
9. Kharwar Movement of 1871.
10. The Birsa Uprisings between 1895–1900.
11. The Bhagat Movement of 1902.
12. The Kol Insurrection of 1831–32.[13]

These and several other uprisings and revolts sprang up from a state of 'relative deprivation'. Economic exploitation by an alien, unjust administration under the pretence of the ideal of having just social order became unbearable. And all the movements have exhibited abundantly the ethnic character of the people on the one hand, and by waging wars against their oppressors, a sort of 'class struggle' on the other. Precisely due to such a situation ethnic homogeneity was more or less a replica of the similarity of class background of the tribal people. It was a monolithic structure of ethnicity and class cemented in the same social formation. It was not exploitation and oppression of a few families and individuals, the entire tribal community was subjected to dehumanisation by the dikus. Even steps were taken by some leaders of various movements to discourage conversion of adivasis to Hinduism/Islam/Christianity. Several revivalistic movements emphasising the aboriginality of the tribals were undertaken during 18th and 19th centuries.[14] However, in general, most of the tribal movements aimed at the uplift of the people drawing them away from the foreign yoke. The measures taken over a period of about one hundred years indicate such a 'mix' of issues involved in these tribal movements. The following points may be noted:

- Regulation XIII of 1833, according to which the districts of the Jungle Mahals was dissolved and a new district of Manbhum was formed.
- Regulation XX of 1854, by which the Division of Chotanagpur was constituted under a Commissioner.
- The Chotanagpur Tenure Act, 1869.
- Bengal Act I, 1879.

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[13] K.L. Sharma, op. cit., 1976: See also Ram Dayal Munda. 'The Jharkhand Movement: Retrospect and Prospect. *Social Change*, June 1988. Vol. 18. No.2.

[14] K.S. Singh (ed.) *Tribal Movements in India*. 2 Volumes, Manohar Publications, New Delhi: 1982. See particularly first seven articles in Volume 2. See Also K.S. Singh (ed.) *Tribal Situation in India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, 1972.

- Restoration of the Khuntkattai system after the Birsa uprisings of 1895 and 1898–99.
- Complete survey of land and compilation of record-of-rights.
- Abolition of the Bethbegari system.
- General survey and settlement of Chotanagpur.
- Formation of Gumla sub-division in November 1920.
- Formation of Khunti sub-division in December 1905.
- Mundari Khuntkattai tenancies were established, and restriction was imposed on the sale and transfer of raiyats and other tenancies.
- The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 was passed. This Act was an improvement over the Bengal Tenancy Act as it took local customs and other considerations into account.
- Large-scale conversion to Christianity during the first two decades of the present century.[15]

Obviously the movements prior to the Birsa uprisings highlighted the agrarian problems, need for awakening and politicisation among the tribals, antipathy to conversion to Christianity, and formation of organisations and institutions for the welfare of the people. Birsa, in particular, longed for a Munda raj and projected himself as the *Father* of the World (Dharti-Aba). Even some of the 20th century revivalistic and reformative movements have emphasised eradication of social evils prevalent among the adivasis by emulating laudable habits and practices of other non-tribals. Several efforts were made to educate the adivasis for adopting a new pattern of life on the lines of those who were much ahead of them in Indian society.

IV

The two main objectives set out for the Adivasi Mahasabha, namely, (i) statehood for the Jharkhand region, and (ii) protection of the adivasis from the dikus, could be realised by vocalising them politically as envisaged by Jaipal Singh. These objectives were clearly indicative of the Jharkhand sub-nationality. Jaipal Singh, therefore, decided to form the Jharkhand Party in 1950 replacing the Adivasi Mahasabha. Singh had already unsuccessfully contested elections prior to this in 1946 for a seat in the Provincial Council. Jaipal Singh, though being educated abroad, emerged as a leader, a sort of 'local' autochthon of the tribals of Bihar. He sought co-operation of the non-tribals too in his endeavour to fight for the tribal people. However, the Indian National Congress did not accept several of his demands and branded the Adivasi Mahasabha as a reactionary and Christian-dominated particularistic organisation.

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[15] K.L. Sharma. op. cit., 1976.

After his defeat in 1946 at the hands of a Congress worker, Jaipal Singh roared—'We shall take Jharkhand'. He declared that it was the land of the adivasis, and that the dikus (aliens) had to leave this land. At this initial stage tribal identity was at its peak, emanating mainly from the hatred generated against the non-adivasis. The Christian-tribals in general and the Mundas in particular (Jaipal Singh was a Munda and so was Birsa) created a stir against the Congress Party and the North Biharis labelling the latter as dikus. The Christian missions were not only active instruments of such an upsurge, but they also provided all the material help to the acceleration of the movement. The non-converts while disagreeing with the converts to Christianity preferred to maintain their aboriginal character, and some also leaned towards Hinduism—drifting towards Tana Bhagat Movement.

While analysing the background of the Jharkhand question Nirmal Sengupta deals with the concept of diku at length implying 'outsider-exploiter' as the main cause of the Jharkhand Movement in Bihar and three other neighbouring states of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.[16] The category of the outsider-exploiter comprises of the non-tribal upper class bourgeoisie in the form of zamindars, moneylenders, top-level government officials, industrialists and businessmen. In particular, they are the people of North Bihar who have monopolised most of the lucrative and prestigious jobs and positions in the government and public sectors. In view of such a situation persisting ceaselessly for centuries an identity of the exploited has emerged, particularly over the past one hundred years. It is a *juxtaposed identity* as Sengupta rightly observes with respect to the concept of diku.[17]

Emergence of the self-identity seems to be a difficult task based on exploitation and oppression of the people in this region. However, we have stated earlier that most of the tribal movements have emphasised the need for a regional sub-national self-identity of the adivasis of the region. The Birsa uprisings, Unnati Samaj, Adivasi Mahasabha and the Jharkhand Party have strived for achieving this cherished goal. In recent years, efforts have been made to bring together the adivasis and the Sadans by forging not only a strategic alliance between the two numerically most preponderant segments of the Jharkhand region but also to make them conscious of their similar existential conditions vis-à-vis the North Biharis, Panjabis and Marwaris. However, this kind of unity is only one of the several channels of bridging up the tribals and their non-tribal counterparts.

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[16] Nirmal Sengupta, 'Background of the Jharkhand Question', in *Fourth World Dynamics: Jharkhand*, Nirmal Sengupta (ed.). Shankar Printing Service, Delhi, 1982.

[17] Ibid.

The phenomenon of identity is a complex one. It has not received due attention in scholarly writings. K.S. Singh, in the opening remarks to the *Tribal Movements in India,* Vol.II (ed.) observes: 'The tribal societies in middle India, unlike those in the North-East, were closely integrated with the prevailing colonial system, its economy and administration'.[18] Singh in his writings on the Jharkhand Movement logically, therefore, derives that it is a 'separatist' movement in the sense that the tribals who have been integrated with the mainstream since the reign of the raj are trying to detach themselves, obviously for political gains. This is why he observes that alongside the agrarian struggles, Bhagat Movement and Sanskritisation process have been prominent features of the tribal society in the middle India.[19]

Another observation, rather an inference by Singh calls for a close scrutiny. He writes: 'Studies of these movements (tribal) suggest that tribal unrest assumes an organised character only among the large homogeneous, land-owning tribal communities who have a relatively strong economic base such as the Munda, Santhal, Bhil, Gond etc'.[20] Singh mentions further that literate and politically articulate tribals have taken up the issues concerning land and forestry. A new urban middle class from among the tribals is taking up the issues concerned with reservation of jobs, employment, exploitation, etc.

The leadership of the Jharkhand Movement despite ethnic divide, cultural barriers, political and factional cleavages and intrigues has remained solely confined to the tribals. Birsa, Jaipal Singh, N.E. Horo, Shibu Soren, Bagun Sumbrai, Justin Richard and several others could be mentioned as well-known leaders of the adivasis of Bihar. Only during the past decade or so, with the emergence of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Jharkhand Coordination Committee and All Jharkhand Students Union, people like B.P. Kesari, Santosh Rana, S.S. Besra, S.B. Mullick, M.I. Ansari and some others have joined the movement with a view to bring together the adivasis and the Sadans to rejuvenate the movement with a broad-based secular ideology. However, still the core of the leadership of different political groups belongs to different tribes of the region.

This is not true of the non-tribal peasant movements. AJGAR is a union of agricultural castes. The Bijolia Movement in Rajasthan was led mainly by Brahmins and Banias with some Kshatriyas and Kayasthas. In various Kisan movements in the Jat heartland of Rajasthan leaders were from among several

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[18] See K.S. Singh, op. cit., Vol II. 1983.

[19] See K.S. Singh. op. cit., 1972, and *Tribal Society in India*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1985.

[20] K.S. Singh, op. cit., Vol.II, 1983.

non-Jat communities.[21] Thus to call the Jharkhand Movement a 'separatist movement' in the past and now transforming itself into a 'regional movement' undermines its present-day reality, historicity and the concern for the oppressed of the region. Undue emphasis on the diffusionist perspective for analysing the tribal situation in Jharkhand tantamounts to the underestimation of the tribal pathology created by the colonisers both alien and indigenous.

Despite immigration and emigration in the Jharkhand region, social differentiation and mobility, influences of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, autochthons are not only vividly visible and existent, they continue to suffer at the hands of the exploiters. The foremost among them are the tribal people. Existentially their counterparts are the Sadans—the people of those castes and communities who are not 'scheduled' under the Constitution, but lead more or less a miserable social life comparable with the tribals of Bihar.[22]

It is increasingly realised that due to in-migration and out-migration, social mobility, education and electoral process non-tribal communities and groups have come closer to the tribal people in regard to language, culture and occupation. However, the tribals are much closer to the Sadans than the upper castes, and through forging a unity between these strata 'Jharkhandi identity' could be established. Active participation of the Sadan intellectuals and leaders with their tribal counterparts in the Jharkhand Movement is considered as a step forward towards the Jharkandi identity. Efforts for evolving a common language and common cultural and social patterns by launching teaching and research at the university level are strong indicators of inter-tribal and tribal-Sadan identity in the region. Mahatos, Bhuinyas, Momins (Muslims) share the same existential conditions as are found in the case of Santhals, Mundas, Oraons and Hos. Some of these non-tribal communities have even demanded their inclusion in the Scheduled lists of SCs and STs. Thus, today Jharkhand, as Sengupta observes, is not merely a geographic region, it is a land of depressed people, it is a mass of destitutes. He observes further: 'Jharkhand is developing: but not the Jharkhandis.' Thus the identity is not to be seen in terms of its conventional meaning, namely, homogeneity of ethnicity, language, caste, religion, region, etc. In the Jharkhand region, now the language spoken by the oppressed and the exploited is the basis of their identity formation.[23]

Who are the 'sons of the soil'? Technically, those who have received education for one or two years, or whose parents have served in the state,

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[21] K.L. Sharma, 'Feudalism and Peasant Movements in Rajasthan', *The Journal of Socialogical Studies*, Vol., 5 1986.

[22] See Nirmal Sengupta. op. cit., 1982; and Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil*, Ch 4, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978.

[23] Nirmal Sengupta. op. cit., 1982.

could be considered as 'sons of the soil'. But those who are born and have lived here for generations do not become 'sons of the soil' in the technical sense as they neither have the privilege of going to school or college nor their parents have been in employment of the government. Hence, they remain deprived of the privileged jobs and positions which in fact go to 40 per cent of those people who have settled in the Jharkhand region—the fortunate north Biharis. Precisely due to this reason, bifurcating of the Santhal Parganas district into three districts was opposed by the adivasis as it would benefit only the non-adivasis. Similarly, opening of new developmental programmes and projects was resisted fearing that its dividends would be harvested by the dikus.

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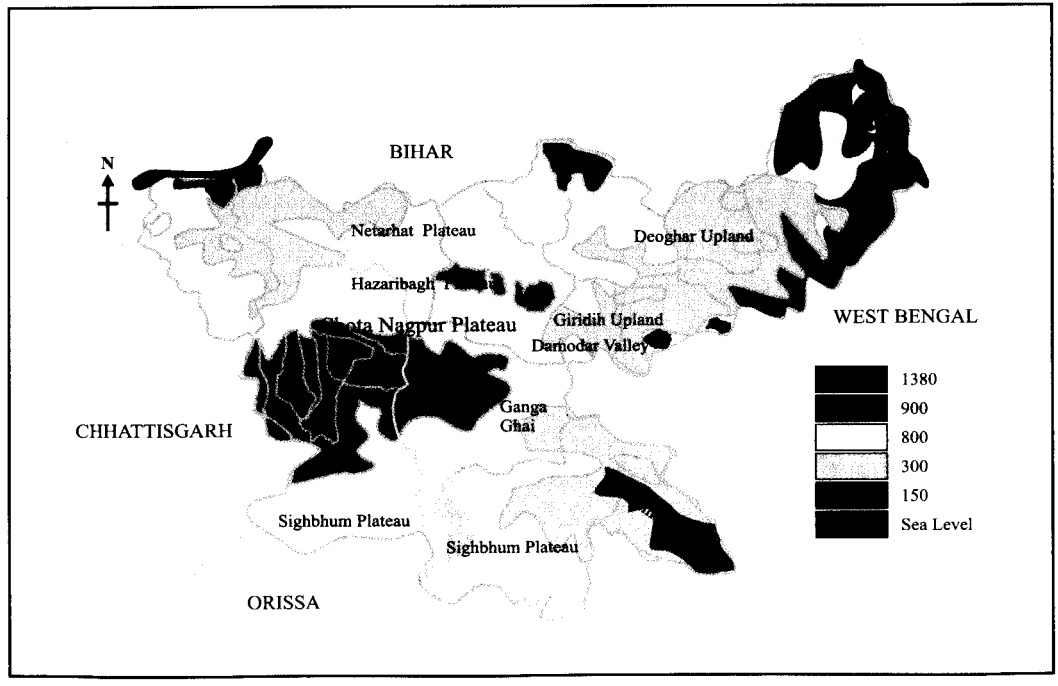
After the formation of the Jharkhand Party in 1950, the party delivered goods electorally and politically in the first three general elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962, and it remained as the main official opposition party in Bihar legislature under the stewardship of Jaipal Singh. The question of Jharkhand state was uppermost in the mind of the leadership during these 15 years after Independence. The leadership was restricted with the Mundas with some Oraons, and from among these communities some converts to Christianity dominated the political leadership. Not only the leadership had close connections with the churches, they even received all the possible support and help from them. Even offices of the party in some cases were housed in the church premises. Thus, it was a period exclusively characterised by tribal leadership under solid command of Jaipal Singh.

Jaipal Singh, however, established contacts with Panjabis and influential Biharis, particularly with those who were not happy with the Congress rule in Bihar. Gopal Munjal, a Panjabi, was Secretary of the party at the time of its merger in 1963 with the Congress. Later on one Juneja (Panjabi) and one Rajgarhia (Marwari) were associated with a party looking after its finances. Raja of Ramgarh and Minoo Masani were not only involved in the affairs of the party prior to its merger with the Congress, they were even elected to Rajya Sabha as candidates of the Jharkhand Party. Jaipal Singh not only annoyed his associates in the party by seeking help from the capitalists, Panjabis, Marwaris, feudal elements, etc., but also distanced from the government of the day due to this 'unholy alliance'. Such an alliance with the influential non-tribal leaders and economic dominants did not help in the formation of the Jharkhandi identity. However, the movement remained confined mainly to the tribal leadership. Concretisation of the Jharkhandi identity and consciousness has become evident more with the upstaging of the JMM, JCC and AJSU. Intellectuals, youth and students in particular, have contributed to the abridgement of the gap between the tribals and the non-tribals in the region.

MINERAL MAP OF JHARKHAND



THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

S. Bosu Mullick

The ongoing politico-cultural movement of the indigenous people of Jharkhand has successfully been able to draw the attention of the people from all quarters of the country. Political parties, social scientists, intellectuals, journalists and even lay people throughout the country have written, commented and reacted exhaustively on this issue in recent years. Particularly during the last five years, beginning from 1986, the movement has emerged as a matter of national concern. The issue has been raised at international forums like the United Nations[1] and the International Labour Organisation.[2] Human rights organisations like the Amnesty International and the Survival International have exposed the issue at the international level. The World Council of Indigenous Peoples and many other related organisations have highlighted the issue through different seminars and meetings all over the world. Even the non-resident Indians in Canada discussed and supported the movement in a convention held parallelly with the summit meeting of the commonwealth countries in Vancouver in 1873.[3] People of different political backgrounds have looked at the movement from different angles and have opined in terms of human rights issue, tribal movement for separate homeland, phenomenon of ethnicity and nationality movement on the one hand, and separatist movement, anti-national secessionist movement, disintegrationist movement led by the degenerate Marxists, communal movement dominated by tribal parochialism and so on, on the other. Some people have even found the spectre of foreign hands in it. Opinions are thus polarised and, therefore, demand a national debate on the issue. This has become all the more necessary in view of the recognition of the movement by

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[1] I.C.I.T.P delegation to the UN and Amnesty International.

[2] I.C.I.T.P. delegation to the ILO.

[3] 'That the legitimate aspirations of the tribal people in the Jharkhand region and Gorkha people in northern Bengal for statehood and autonomy be met in a proper political manner, instead of branding them as anti-national or anti-India'. One of the resolutions adopted at the Conference on centralised state power and the threat to Minorities in India. October 17, 1987, Chalmers United Church, Vancouver, Canada. The conference was held parallel to the Commonwealth Summit held in the same city.

the Central Government of India by initiating a process of dialogue with the representatives of the movement to clinch the issue in 1989. The institution of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters by the Central Government and the rejection of its earlier position of treating the movement as an anti-national activity has now opened up the door for negotiation with a new perspective which was closed in 1956 when the State Reorganisation Committee sealed the fate of the Jharkhandis by rejecting arbitrarily their legitimate demand for a separate Jharkhand state. The purpose of this paper is to present an insider's point of view on the aspiration of the people and the character of their movement aiming at its fulfillment.

Historical Analysis of the Jharkhand Movement

The present Jharkhand Movement is the latest phase of the protracted struggle of the indigenous peoples of the region, known widely as Jharkhand since the Mughal period,[4] against colonialism. It is the continuation of the history of the peoples' stubborn resistance to the colonial onslaught of the Aryans and the Brahminical Hindu states, Muslim invaders and the Mughal empire, East India Company and the British imperialism and finally of the advanced nationalities and the 'internal-colonialism' of the modern Indian state.[5] In spirit it is an extension of the long drawn movement of the autochthonus people of the region to regain the right to self-determination. It is at once the culmination of the persistent effort of the people to preserve their cultural identities and get them recognised by the state as well as by other cultural groups in the country. It is a new form of the same age-old tradition of protest movement against the alienation of the part of the Mother Earth their foreparents made habitable and established usufructuary right over. It contains the ancient cry of condemnation of every attempt to sever the human from nature. It is the last act of the living drama of the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand which refuses to be tragic, let along squalid.

The remarkable aspect of the present movement is its being a united struggle of all the permanent settlers of the region with the clear purpose of achieving regional autonomy and a vision of reconstructing their dilapidated social structure as a future programme.[6] Through ages of struggle against the common alien forces of colonialism they have evolved this political unity on the basis of a common cultural heritage. Characterisation of this unity is a debatable subject. But the pan-ethnic nature of the solidarity of the movement with a strong peasant forest dweller and artisan support base cannot be denied.

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[4] The Declaration of Jharkhand Coordination Committee. Ranchi, 1987.

[5] Ibid.

[6] K.S. Singh. *Tribal Society in India*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 282–83.

The Jharkhand Movement has, therefore, a strong root in the past. Through time the forms and the frontal issues have changed, but the continuity of the movement in spirit and content has given it an identity of its own. The pristine social values, though eroding continuously with changing social situations, are still cherished by the people. The traditional political system, in spite of its being dislodged by the modern state structure, is still held in high esteem. Sanskritisation has been proved to be superficial and Christianity has been going through a process of localisation and reinterpretation to become compatible with the traditional way of life of the people.[7] The archaic collective psyche has still been preventing class formation. Therefore, in spite of the presence of the elements of the peasant and the working class movements, the Jharkhand Movement has remained different in character. To call it a nationality movement at this stage is also controversial because of the absence of even a politically powerful elite, let alone a national bourgeoisie.

Thus one should take a holistic approach for understanding the nature of the movement. Present aspirations of the people can be understood best by looking at the continuity and change of the movement with a historical perspective. A spatial analysis of the movement, on the other hand, requires an understanding of the dynamics of the changing strategies in compatibility with the changing objective conditions and the subjective preparations of the people. The commonly adopted approach of analysing the movement only since it acquired the name of the Jharkhand movement, in isolation from its previous forms, is misleading and fallacious.

The historical analysis of the movement reveals certain patterns of responses on the part of the peoples to the forces of economic dispossession and cultural subjugation. These are: 'retaliation and retreat' and 'conflict and compromise.' The outcome of these responses is concretely manifested in geographical 'displacement and resettlement' and cultural 'rejection and accommodation'.

'Retaliation' stands for a strategy of 'tit for tat,' a situation of physical opposition to the forces of colonisation and a collective response to the threat to the social-political existence of a group as a people. The failure of this strategy, resulting in a social defeat in the face of superior forces, begets the response of 'retreat'. 'Retreat' is the consequence of physical displacement of a people from a geographical location and implies migration to another location, far from the place of the colonising forces, preferably virgin and fit for a new settlement. Thus, 'retaliation' is followed by 'displacement' of the people from one geographical region and 'retreat' culminates into 'resettlement' in another, where the old social system is broadly revived.

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[7] C. Lakra. 'Christianity and Tribal Identity', *Religion and Society*, Vol.XXXVI. No. 2. pp. 31. June, 1989, Bangalore.

'Conflict' as a response arises in a situation, on the other hand, when 'retreat' ceases to be a solution to easing out the tension, arising out of a defeat, owing to the lack or absence of any hinterland to fall back upon. It is a response to a crisis of survival of a people marked by the spirit of desparation and preceded by extreme social stress and strain under the pressure of the alien forces. It gives a war cry of 'do or die' in an attempt to save the disintegrating social organisation and weakening popular grip over the means of production. It also implies the dream of recovering the social loss, the popular aspiration of the reconstruction of the fast eroding indigenous social system. It is a physical opposition to the forces of aggression by the people setting their backs to the wall. 'Compromise' is a submissive response to the result of a lost battle. It is an endeavour to settle things with the victorious forces on the basis of mutual concessions, a strategy of the loosing side. It implies a compulsion of coexistence with the opposing forces and of the evolution of a symbiotic relationship with them under duress on the part of the people. At times it even ends up with a complete surrender to the alien order. 'Rejection' of and 'accommodation' with the alien system go hand in hand with the response of the 'conflict and compromise'.

In the situation of compulsive co-existence with the oppressive system the response of 'conflict' evokes the trend of total rejection of the system and going back to the roots of tradition with a view to reconstruct the indigenous system according to the changed situation. But as a consequence of the response of 'compromise' the indigenous communities accommodate certain elements of the organisational and meaning systems of the alien society. The accommodative history of the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand reveals that only those alien elements are accommodated which are compatible with the central value system of their societies. This accommodative principle signifies the dynamism of the indigenous society. Though incompatible elements are also admitted in this situation of 'compromise' they always remain superficial in nature and are readily rejected during the phase of 'conflict'. Thus the principle aspect of 'accommodation' is cultural incorporation. Only when an indigenous people loses permanently the strength of reorganising themselves for a phase of 'conflict' do they become the victim of cultural assimilation. The parallel history of 'rejection', on the other hand signifies the inherent urge of the people to maintain their social identity. In the history of the peoples' movement in Jharkhand thus we find not only the occurrence of the rejection of those social elements intruding from outside but also those emerged from within. The incessant repulsion of the formation of state out of both non-indigenous and indigenous matrices in the past and the rejection of alien political ideologies and forms of organisations in the modern times are the most glaring examples of this principle of rejection. The principles of accommodation and

rejection have been the real social mechanism behind the continuity and change in the movement of the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand.

In both the cases of 'retaliation and retreat' and 'conflict and compromise' the indigenous peoples were at the losing end. In the case of 'retreat' the loss was more economic than social. The basic source of livelihood, the cultivable land prepared though ages, was lost. And reclamation of land in more and more inhospitable geographical region, as a consequence of every 'retreat', required tremendous hardship and collective efforts. Since land thus acquired was much less fertile than in the plains, other sources of livelihood were to be searched for. This led to dependency on forest. Practice of fishing lost its earlier importance. People depended more on hunting and gathering. Terrace cultivation was either invented or adopted as a new technology of cultivation in the hilly areas. Though the people were originally wet rice cultivators in the new environment, however, they took to the practice of dry farming in the uplands. The peoples who were forced to retreat to the highest parts of the plateau (the Pat) adopted 'slash and burn' or shifting cultivation. These changes led to the economic degradation of the people. The changes in the economic structure naturally left its impact on the other structures of the society but not to the extent of any qualitative change in them. The earlier social system was revived in spirit. Egalitarian social system with communal rights over the means of production, collective leadership and the principle of consensus in the decision making process, ethical living and the naturalistic religion and equitable status for men and women were some of the salient features of that system.

In the case of 'compromise', however, the loss was both economic and social. The tension arising out of conflict could only be eased out temporarily by making compromise with the colonising forces. In the economic sphere dispossession of the means of production in terms of alienation of rights over the land and the forest was followed by changes in the relations of production. Particularly in the most exposed areas the dispossessed indigenous people were turned into rayats and in extreme cases into bonded labourers. In the less exposed areas the compulsion of the payment of tribute, even if paid irregularly, initiated changes in the traditional subsistence economy for surplus was to be generated to meet this demand. With every instance of compromise the exposure to the alien system increased with following increase in the economic impoverishment of the people. Peasantisation of the people initiated since the medieval period and their transformation into sweat-labourers in the modern times can be seen as the continuation of the same process. In the social domain the power distributed to the chiefs of the indigenous communities by the state, who otherwise enjoyed no special power in the indigenous system, created a chasm between them and the rest of the people. This sharing of limited power, was, however, withdrawn gradually by the state and finally the people were made absolutely powerless. Imposition of the state language, in

some cases by force (in Biru the Raja prohibited the use of Kurukh, the mother tongue of the Uraons), and propagation of the state religions made deep impact on the cultural life of the people.

Retaliation and Retreat

In the main the history of the Jharkhand Movement has been the history of conflict between the two different social systems. It has been the struggle for existence of the non-state lineage communities against the state societies. The history of the struggle of these people thus can be traced back to the period when the phenomenon of state-formation began to take place in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab region in the mid-first millennium B.C.[8] In the face of the growing states and their ever expanding territories different indigenous lineage communities either got submerged into the Varna/caste hierarchy of the new system or left their homes and hearths after initial resistance and consequent defeat. They retreated towards the frontiers of the states into more inhospitable geographical regions. The migrating communities reclaimed land, founded settlements and reproduced the structure and organisation of their earlier society in the new locale.[9] And this process continued: displacement–settlement–displacement with the growth of states and their ever-expanding space of authority. There was, however, a temporary phase of termination of this process when the non-compromising communities were finally pushed into the rocky, densely wooded central Indian plateau region. The ancestors of the present major lineage communities of Jharkhand migrated to this part of the plateau at different periods of time in the 'hoary past' as their folklore tells us and linguistic studies confirm.[10] Here in relative isolation of the invading states of the plains, they, in the lap of virgin forest, founded several settlements.The new

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[8] Romila Thapar. *From Lineage to State.* Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1980. p.10.

[9] ibid. pp.157

[10] N.H. Zide, and A.R.K. Zide (1973). Semantic Reconstruction in Proto-Munda Cultural Vocabulary 1. *Indian Linguistics.* Vol. 34, No.1, pp. 1–24 (1976) 'Proto-Munda Cultural Vocabulary: Evidence for Early Agriculture, *Austroasiatic Studies*, Part II, Eds. P.N. Jeuner, L.C. Thompson, and S. Slarosta, pp. 1295–1334. University of Hawaii Press.

'It appears that the so-called aboriginal tribes passed through a phase of violent confrontation with the Aryans which initially resulted in their partial absorption with the dominant immigrants at the lowest social level and partial retreat from the plains into the relatively inaccessible hilly and forest tracks. In this process of retreat, it is quite possible that many of the ancient tribes passed through a phase of devolution as secondary primitivasation from a higher socio-cultural level'. Surajit Sinha. 'Tribal Solidarity Movements in India' in K.S. Singh (ed.). *Tribal Situation in India,* IIAS, Shimla, 1972, p.412.

environment left a long lasting impact on their collective psyche. They developed human relationship with the physical nature and the animal kingdom. Their religious system as well as cultural and material life were greatly moulded by it. In later periods they were joined by similar groups of people from both east and south with the formation of states in the plains of Bengal and Orissa. They together evolved an integrated way of life and prospered in peace. Since their isolation was not absolute their communication with the plains was not completely broken. Remaining out of the pale of the caste or jati society of the plains these Jana societies, as opposed to the Jatis, continued to have commercial transactions and social interactions with the people of the plains.

This situation was, however, shortlived. Expanding frontiers of the states compelled them to retreat farther, after an initial retaliation, into the interior parts of Jharkhand. In spite of the heroic sacrifice of the people to preserve their political autonomy and cultural identity every retaliation in the end turned into retreat in the face of the stronger forces of colonisation. Eventually a time arrived when the retreating people had very little place left to fall back upon. Overwhelming majority of them were under seize from all directions. The weakest ones took shelter in the most inhospitable uplands of the plateau.

Colonial forces never aggressed on the indigenous peoples' society as a whole at a time, because there had always been diversities in economic conditions and consequent social formations. Since the geographical situation of Jharkhand was not homogeneous people settled in different parts of the plateau. Whereas Damodar valley region was more fertile than the Ranchi central plateau the Pat regions were far less fertile. People settled in the most fertile regions were naturally economically better off than the rest and thus were the immediate pray of the colonising forces. The second factor was the accessibility of the region. Since Jharkhand was dotted with hills and terrains, with dense vegitation its every corner was not easily approachable from outside. Thus the valleys of the river Son and the river North Koel proved to be the most suitable areas for colonising forces to extend its grip into Jharkhand from the point of view of both the factors, and the indigenous people received the first jolt in that region. The exposure of this area to the state society was followed by the areas of Ranchi central plateau and the Damodar valley. Subarnarekha valley was exposed in a later period. Thus there had been three categories of areas from the point of view of their exposure to the aggressing state society, e.g., exposed, partially exposed and least exposed areas. The strength of the indigenous people's society, therefore, varied accordingly. Since in the more fertile areas the indigenous communities were relatively much strong, they, therefore, could resist the colonial forces of the states much more steadily and fiercely than the rest of the people.

Thus the early Kherowars, who occupied the Sone-North Koel valley, were forced to retreat southward. On their way to the promised land they got divided into two groups, presently known as the Santhals and the Mundas, and settled in Chai-Champa (Damodar valley) and the central plateau of Ranchi (Kokhra, Doesa and Sutiambe). In their new settlements they prospered and proliferated and thus could develop a long standing tradition of countering the efforts of state formation and, in later periods combating state aggression. The Kurmis who occupied the Subarnarekha valley, though developed links with the state in Shikharbhum in late medieval period, followed suit. The first group of the Uraons (Kurukhs) who migrated in the central plateau of Ranchi in a later period and received the hospitality of the Mundas, reacted jointly to the process of the proto-state formation and retreated along with the Mundas to the southern hilly boundaries of the plateau and also in the lower plateau of the five parganas (panchpargana). The later migrants of the Uraons, though they evolved a symbiotic relationship with the state (formed by the Nagbanshis)[11] in the exposed areas, fought relentlessly against the colonial aggression of the state with similar spirit.

The formation of state by the Nagbanshis[12] in the very heart of the region proved to be a great blow to the indigenous social organisations. The Nagbanshis developed relationships with kingdoms of the plains and invited similar adventures to form subordinate states in Jharkhand and thus consolidated their positions in the face of the opposition of the indigenous communities. This phenomenon of state formation in Jharkhand out of non-indigenous matrix initiated another spell of retreat on the part of the most orthodox section of the people towards further south and south-west in Singhbhum first and then to Tamar and Khunti in the present Ranchi district. Complete exposure to the state system and consequent acculturation inspired a small section of the indigenous peoples to form primary states.[13] The new state system.....jettisoned the base of tribal production by instituting a new set of production relations.[14] But in spite of this tremendous pressure from without as well as from within the indigenous peoples refused to become non-historic. Their strong resistance to the attempts

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[11] S. Bosu Mullick, 'The Concept of the Supreme Being in the Sama System of Religion. *Chotanagpur: Unity in Diversity* (Edited by him). Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

[12] K.S. Singh, The Chotanagapur Raj: Mythology in Surajit Sinha, (ed.) *Tribal Politics and State System* in *Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta. 1987. pp. 62–63.

[13] The endogenous model of state formation, K.S. Singh, *Tribal Society in India*, op. cit. pp. 27–28 and 36–38.

[14] K.S. Singh, '*Chotanagpur Raj*', op. cit. p. 61.

at imposing the state system on them restrained the emerging Rajas within the pockets of their influence and even made the Nagbanshi Maharajas shift their seat of reign from one place to another repeatedly.[15] Further the refusal to pay tax on the part of the people checked the pace of consolidation of the states. Therefore, the compulsion of surplus generation for the survival of the states caused the in-migration of the marginalised peasants and artisan castes under the auspices of the Rajas and the aristocracy. A section of the indigenous communities, farely exposed to the state culture, was also compelled to become a part of the new system, albeit superficially. The newly arrived peasant communities were initially made to settle in the lands usurped from the original indigenous settlers and then encouraged to reclaim lands for the expansion of agriculture in the interest of the states. These people also occupied land left by the indigenous communities under the pressure created by them and the state power. But eventually the peasants and the artisans arrived at a symbiotic relationship with the indigenous peoples. Their existence as neighbours supplemented the growth of the latter's material culture and also influenced their art and belief system. On the other hand, the mores of life of the peasants and the artisans were also influenced remarkably by the culture of the indigenous communities. But in those places where adjustment was not possible people continued to retreat. For instance, in Palamu one section of the Kherowars (those who have retained that generic name till now) and their another sub-group, the Korwas, the Asurs and the Nagesias were marginalised under the Chero state, and retreated to the frontier regions. A great many of them even got acculturated and assimilated into the state culture. The Malto language speaking sub-group of the Kurukhs (the Uraons) migrated into the remote Rajmahal hills. A large section of the Kurukhs and the Mundas along with other small communities retreated to the still unreclaimed parts of the south Palamu. In Chai-Champa a large section of the Santhals were displaced from their ancestral land by one Mando Singh who later on became the Raja of the Area. The retreating Santhals were then on the move for a long time and settled gradually in both north and south Rarh, Dhalbhum and Mayurbhanj. From the central plateau a large number of the Kurukhs migrated to the interior parts of the adjoining Raigarh and Surguja where they witnessed the rise of state power under the relatives the Nagbanshi Rajas of the Central Plateau of Ranchi. This event led to their further migration to the south in the present Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Keonjhar districts of Orissa.[16]

Under these circumstances when there was almost no other alternative left but to co-exist with the state society the earlier pattern of response to the aggression of the states, i.e. 'retaliation and retreat' on the part of the indigenous

[15] Ibid. p. 65

[16] L.K. Mahapatra, 'Ex-princely States of Orissa', Surajit Sinha (ed) 1987. op.cit.

communities changed in most of the cases. Though 'retreat' still continued in a small way there evolved a new pattern of response: 'conflict and compromise'.

Conflict and Compromise

With a view to defuse the growing tension arising out of the conflict between the state and the indigenous communities, who still retained control over land under the traditional village organisations, a situation of *status quo* was arrived at. The medieval state system sought to preserve tribal autonomy.[17] 'The heads of these principalities were cautious about not disturbing the norms of self regulation of the endogenous tribals and other ethnic groups from whom they only accepted token tributes'.[18] 'In none of the kingdoms or states, economic and political dominance alone was adequate for firmly establishing political control of the Head. The kings, princes or chiefs had to present themselves as heads of polity, society, religion and culture. They had to combine economic role of surplus extraction and exploitation with redistribution of wealth for public good. The royal cults had to combine exogenous Brahminic ... traditions with varieties of endogenous ethnic traditions'.[19] ...The Mundas and the Nagbanshi rulers established a ritual relationship'.[20] Folklore confirms social interaction between the Nagbanshis and the indigenous communities in different walks of life, even to the extent of martial relationship.[21] On the other hand, indigenous communities had accepted various elements of the ruling culture and organisational system in different degrees depending on the extent of exposure to the same. 'Linguistic colonialism' of the states, which continued in the later periods on a much greater scale, dispossessed the people of their languages to a great extent within the area under the states' direct control. In the central plateau the Bhumij, and beyond, the 'pats' (northern highland) in Palamu, the Kherowars. Cheros and Korwas lost their tongues almost completely. The Mundas in Sutiambe-Korambe and the Kurukhs in Biru met the same fate. In Panchparagana the Mundari and in Simdega the Kharia languages were 'heavily' corrupted by the state languages. The languages of the minor communities such as the Bhuias, Asural; and a section of the Paharias, were also partially, and in some cases fully, damaged. In performing arts and literature many 'heavy' (Hambal, as the Mundas call it) non-indigenous elements were accommodated by the people. The Surya cult of the state religion and in later

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[17] K.S. Singh, 'Tribal Society in India', op. cit. p. 124.

[18] Surajit Sinha, Introduction, *Tribal Politics and State System*, op. cit. p.xvii.

[19] Ibid. p. xxiii

[20] K.S. Singh, Chotanagpur Raj, op. cit. p.60.

[21] Sem Topno, *Kursinama*. Anthropological Survey of India, 1982.

periods elements of the Shaivism and the Rama and Krishna cults were absorbed in their belief system.[22]

The process of colonialisation of the indigenous peoples of Jharkhand initiated by the Brahminical Hindu states with its unique stratifying mechanism of the caste system got strengthened during the Mughal period. The prior adjustment between the states, which were comparatively weak without any regular army, and the indigenous social organisations broke down. The state became tributary to the Mughal empire. The Rajas were forced to extract more surplus from their subjects. The independent indigenous communities, which came to an agreement earlier with the state with a promise of the payment of a nominal subscription (*chanda)* were now forced to pay regular tax *(malgujari).* During this period the ideological base of the states became stronger by the presence of the Brahmins who were invited to Jharkhand by the Rajas. Thus the pre-British Jharkhand witnessed the imposition of feudal superstructure on the indigenous peoples' society which as a consequence led to 'its breakdown and fragmentation in distinct social strata based on corresponding distribution of power and economic interest in land defined in terms of ritual status. The new state acted as agents of sanskritisation'.[23]

The Muslims never ruled Jharkhand directly. Their presence in the periphery, however, was quite strong.[24] They developed trade and military routes through this region, along which emerged zones of their influence. The urge of protest against the oppression of the state, in the heart of a section of dispossessed indigenous communities found its expression in their conversion into Islam.

British Period

The British colonialism bore harshly on the indigenous peoples and changed many early equations between the state and the people thoroughly with gradual consolidation of its grip over the region. In the initial phase, however, it followed the pattern of aggression of the earlier colonisers. It proceeded into Jharkhand through the exposed areas of the north and the east, gradually entered into the central plateau of Ranchi and finally extended its hegemony over the rest of the region. In the beginning it turned the existing feudal states into tributaries as

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[22] S. Bosu Mullick, The Concept of Supreme Being in the Sama System of Religion. op. cit. K.S. Singh, 'The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist', Fima K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1976. pp.12–13.

[23] K.S. Singh, 'Colonial Transform of Tribal Society in Middle India', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 1978, Vol.13. No. 30. p.1225.

[24] Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of Mughal India*, 1982, Sarguja. p.35; Kokhra, Jharkhand, Hindu and two other parganas p.40; Keonjhar. p.50.

did the Mughals but unlike the latter transformed this arrangement into direct rule very soon. British colonialism was characteristically different from the previous ones faced by the indigenous communities in Jharkhand. It was the outcome of a society which passed through the bourgeois democratic revolution and reached the stage of imperialism. They brought in a radical change in the mode of production of turning land into private property through the permanent Settlement Act (1793) and thus treating the Rajas as feudal lords/zamindars and both peasants and indigenous peoples as serfs/rayats. For the first time the whole of Jharkhand was brought under one state power with a regular army and prisons. A uniform administrative machinery was introduced. The whole region was opened first to mercantile and then to industrial capitalistic exploitation. Thus in the later period of British colonialism the earlier pattern of state aggression, on the exposed regions first, followed by the semi-exposed and the least exposed ones on the consideration of the fertility of land and accessibility of the areas, was changed. Commercialisation of forest, mining activities and industrialisation brought the British to the most unexposed areas of Jharkhand. An altogether new set of production relations was introduced. Imposition of various kinds of, some even unheard of taxtation and forced labour, introduction of ruthless tax collectors, a new class of contractors, bureaucracy and police (1809) brought the region to the point of absolute disaster. The indigenous peoples 'with a sensitivity born of isolation and with a relatively intact mechanism of social control revolted more often and far more violently than other communities including the peasants in India'.[25] The revolts often involved the entire indigenous society. 'The reason was the indistinctive economic organisation and distribution of power.....The crucial feature of typical village organisation here was of communal collective nature. Its solidarity was, what Durkheim called 'mechanical', resulting from the absence of social stratification and of related social strifes.....The other most important factor was the sense of belonging to a distinct linguistic group. In such a social organisation, intrusion by hostile aliens had communal implication and mostly resulted in revolt, because the assaults by the aliens were mostly directed against the communal institutions', [26] and so inevitably set in motion the 'break up of tribal solidarity and disintegration of the village community'.[27]

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[25] K.S. Singh, 'Colonial Transformation of Tribal Society in Middle India. op. cit. p.122.

[26] Binay Bhusan Chaudhuri, *Peasant Movement in Eastern India during British Rule*, Samar Sen Memorial Lecture, 1989.

Reproduced by Anil Acharya on the basis of the synopsis of the paper in the *Economic and Political Weekly of India* Vol.25. No.14. 1990. p.708.

[27] J.H. Hutton, *Primitive Tribes, Modern India and the West*, 419 as quoted in J.C. Jha, *Kol Insurrection in Chota Nagpur*, Thacker Spink and Co., Calcutta.1964.

The initial response of the indigenous peoples to British colonialism, initiated by the East India Company in 1765, was that of the traditional 'retaliation' followed by 'retreat.' The first resistance was put up by the Kurmis and the Santhals supported by other smaller communities, commonly known as the Chuar (a derogatory term) rebellion in the eastern frontier of Jharkhand. They were later joined by the Bhumijs and the Mundas. 'Although the Chuar sardars started putting up resistance to the colonial system from before, the Chuar rebellion was at its peak from 1795 to 1800...and continued to be reported till 1816.... They killed the agents of the East India company, plundered the 'alien' zamindars, robbed the 'Bengali and Hindu' (the Hindi speaking people) who had come to the jungle Mahal, as purchasers of land'.[28] The Santhal retreated to Birbhum and a large section of the Kurmis migrated to Mayurbhanj adjoining their homeland Manbhum. A section of the Bhumijs followed the Kurmis and the rest retreated to the west close to their kin, the Mundas. On the northern front, in the Bhagalpur region, the Santhals under Baba Tilka Manjhi revolted in 1781, and the rebellion continued till he was hanged in 1784. The Santhals partially retreated to Purnia after the defeat. The Munda uprisings from 1789 to 1820 in Panchpargana witnessed the armed attack of the people against the Raja and the landlords. 'Driven out of the plains of Panchpargana, the Mundas retreated into the hills of southern Khunti and eastern Tamar'.[29] Some parts of the present Santhal Parganas, previously known as Damin-i-koh were already brought under the state system in Mughal period and the Mal Paharias and the Sauria Paharias were in the situation of conflict. As a consequence of the British intrusion in the region their response to the new system changed into 'retaliation' followed by 'retreat' into more inaccessible parts of the Rajmahal Hills. Their resistance to the colonial onslaught continued throughout the 1770s.[30] Similarly the Santhals in the region of Birbhum and erstwhile Hazaribagh were under pressure owning to the introduction of a new set of landlords as a result of the Zamindari Settlement by the East India Company in 1793. Though no big uprising by them is reported at that time their migration to the adjoining forest land of the Damin-i-koh should be called a 'retreat' because they revived their traditional social organisation in the new settlement. The denudation of forest in their previous settlements was also a reason for this retreat.[31]

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[28] K.S. Singh. Tribal Movement in India, op. cit. 121.

[29] K.S. Singh 'Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist', op. cit. p.25 and 'Tribal Society in India', op.cit. pp.122–23.

[30] K.S. Singh, Tribal Society in India. op. cit. p.120.

[31] Troisi, *Tribal Religion*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1978. p.33.

Conflict and Compromise

The following response of the indigenous peoples to the ever intensifying aggression of the British colonialism with its intermittent phase of 'conflict' and 'compromise' continued till the end of the Raj in India. The loss of the indigenous society and culture took place at an unprecedented pace during this period. Along with the breakdown of the traditional organisational system, changes occurred in the ideology, organisational forms and leadership of the movement against colonialism. These changes were not, however, radical in nature. They were all rooted in the yearning of the people to restore the lost right to self-determination. To meet this end all kinds of trials and errors were made which finally resulted in the emergence of a consciousness of pan-ethnic solidarity within a federal structure.

The interaction between the Britishers and the people was not direct, except in the frontiers as mentioned above, till the beginning of the third decade of the 18th century. The British rule was imposed in Jharkhand through the mechanism of the previous state power in the beginning. Thus for the people it was the same 'dikus' and the 'suds' who appeared as the enemies. Therefore, the three great confrontations, e.g. the Kol insurrection (1830-31), the Bhumij rebellion (1832) and the Santal Hul (1855-57), were directed against the Rajas, the old Jagirdars now turned into landlords, newly arrived zamindars, mahajans (money lenders and traders), thikadars, petty officials and the police. The initial success of the revolts brought in the British army and officials in the heart of the country. The British administrators blamed their native representatives of indulging in excesses thus causing the disturbances.[32] The continuation of the revolt and its spread throughout the country paralising the new order compelled the East India Company to come to an agreement with the indigenous peoples. Wilkinson Rules were framed to prevent further alienation of their land in some parts of Chotanagpur and Mayurbhanj in 1833. In 1834 it was decided to put an end to the indirect administration by the East India Company in Chotanagpur and to introduce a new administration. The South West Frontier Agency was formed which embodied the concept of a non-regulation administrative system under a benign, paternalistic agent. The provision against usury appeared in the Santal Pargans Regulation of 1873. The intention of these steps on the part of the colonisers was certainly not to help the aboriginals as was believed by some writers,[33] but to pacify the movement for the time being. These were the steps to prepare the ground for direct rule that was to follow. The purpose was to bring an order in the country for the smooth functioning of the colonial administration and for that it was necessary to curb

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[32] Fidelis de Sa, *Crisis in Chotanagpur*. A Redemptorist Publication. Bangalore, 1975, p. 47.

the unrestricted offensive of the native lackeys on the indigenous peoples without, however, damaging the interests of the Company.

Under the Wilkinson Rules the Mundas and the Mankis were treated as landlords. 'This caused confusion and ill-feeling in the villages among Mundas and the Uraons. Quarrels were common'.[34] The complementary social functions of the head-man and the 'sacrificer' of the village were broken. The 'sacrificer' (Pahan) lost his authority and often got the villages to refuse to pay a contribution to the 'head-man' (Munda).[35] This resulted in court cases filed by the alien landlords and finally alienation of land in favour of them.

This led to a change in the leadership pattern. The traditional leadership of the 'heads' of the patti/parha confederacy and the village headmen was disowned and leaders from the common people emerged. This rift in the economic and political structures of the past left a strong impact on the very system leading to the fast erosion of social cohesiveness. The traditional mechanism of maintaining equality in society, e.g., 'hisinga'[36] and 'bitlaha' (ostracism) and the practice of 'madaiti' (cooperation) and 'mehmani'[37] lost their relevance in the situation of weakening traditional production-relations in spite of the peoples' wish and attempt to reinforce them. 'The breakdown of the Mundari agrarian system was not a mere agrarian event. It shook the old society to its roots... The old way of life gave place to a strange new order:

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[33] *Ibid.* footnote 12. p.47. quotes S.C. Roy, J.B. Hoffman, *Encylopaedia Mundarica,* 1950 Government Printing Press, Patna. Vol.II. p. 513.

It would be an instance of fallacious historical analysis to say that 'the British unintentionally and unwittingly' helped in transforming the communal ownership in favour of the landlords. And yet the British administers were, as a rule, similarly misleading to look for an answer of the riddle of 'all the measures taken (by the Britishers) invariantly failed of the intended effect' into the ethnocentralism of the 'two entirely different civilisations'. This observation may be partially true but is devoid of the understanding of the nature of the 'two entirely different civilisations' and their historical incompatibility. The well wishes of a few individuals cannot change the course of historical developments of a social process. In this case it was the process of colonisation of the indigenous peoples by the British imperialism.

[34] Fields de Sa. *Crisis in Chotanagpur* op. cit. p.51.

[35] *Ibid.* Footnote. p.51.

[36] Hilary Standing, *Envy and Equality*: *Some Aspects of Hunda Value* 1981. Culture and Morality. Ed. Adrian C. Mayer. Oxford University Press. Delhi 1981.

[37] Mehmani: Social custom of offering hospitality and becoming guests to consume surplus food together.

the village, family, and morals of the race were shaken up and their ties were loosend'.[38] Before this devastation the people were at a loss.

Moreover, the agreements reached at between the colonial system and the indigenous peoples covered only the areas which were still under the latter's control and as compared to the whole region were insignificant. Secondly, the agreements were also superficial in nature. The autonomy that was promised under them proved to be false in reality. Thus the process of alienation of land and forest continued unabated. In spite of the administrative changes in the following years, such as the introduction of the Commissionership in Chotanagpur replacing the South West Frontier Agency and passing of the Chotanagpur Tenures Act of 1869 (Act II) the dominance of the 'dikus' and the 'suds' could not be curbed, administration stubbornly lodged themselves in the body politic of the people and they prospered and multiplied.

This phase of 'compromise' marked the deepening ideological crisis among the indigenous communities. They tried to find out the cause of their political defeat in their social ideology based on the traditional belief system. At the end of a collective introspection and heart-searching they found that the traditional belief system was incapable of holding the society together by providing the necessary ideological strength. On the other hand, they viewed Hinduism and Christianity, the religions of the 'dikus' and the 'sahibs' respectively, as more powerful belief systems, working behind the fast growth of power of their followers. The growing belief in the 'superiority' of the alien religions among the people gave birth to a trend of making use of that 'superior ideology' in favour of their struggle to protect their economic rights.

Thus the compromising responses of the indigenous peoples at this stage of social change took the form of 'tactical prosylitisation' to Hinduism and Christianity. This response came up chiefly from the partially exposed sections of the people who were still in a position of making compromise with the colonial forces unlike the thoroughly exposed section of their kin who were compelled to surrender themselves to the new order of the day and thus became the prey of the culture of silence. A small section of the people, who were still living in symbiosis with the earlier native state system in the princely states of Mayurbhanj, Jashpur and Surguja and some parts of Sundargarh and adjoining 'pirs' of Kolhan, were not under the direct control of the British colonialism. They still had a somewhat better control over the means of production and thus did not have to come under the compromising situation like their semi-exposed kin.

The compromise with the native Hindu system for relief led the people to the partial absorption into its popular forms, particularly those of the Bhakti

[38] K.S. Singh. 'The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist', op. cit. p.7.

cults patronised by the native forces of colonialism. Similarly the conversion to Christianity was admittedly aspiritual in this period. The early converts accepted the new faith superficially only with a promise of restoration of their lost land made by the Christian Missionaries. The non-partisan attitude of the people during the Sipoy Mutiny (1857) proved this fact. The 'tactical prosylitisation' encouraged the Kherowar Movement (1872–79) among the Santhals and the Bhagat Movement among the Uraons (prior to the Tana Bhagat Movement of the early 20th century). Both emerged out of the Hindu fold and were overtly anti-British. The Mundas who came under the pale of Vaishsnavism in the Panchpargana region did not, however, express their anti-British feeling in the form of a movement immediately but did so in the next phase of 'conflict' during the 'ulgulan' (the great tumult) under Birsa Munda. The Christian converts from among the Mundas, the Uraons and the Kharias initiated a prolonged struggle known as the Muluki Larai or the Sardari agitation (1858–95) to recover their lost land from the native zamindars and other land-grabbers. They sought to take advantage of the British legal system with the active support of the Missionaries and did not challenge the British rule. The situation of 'compromise' was so compelling that at one time the sardars even 'accepted the existence of the Dikus but objected to their terms for access to land'.[39] But the end of this phase of 'compromise', during the 1880s, according to an official the Sardar petition, became 'more political'. Indeed, comparing to petitions submitted in 1865 and 1881, we see that the later petitions dwelled more on adivasis' basic rights and less on their current agrarian complaints'.[40] Among the Kherwars, similarly, we find some indications of strong hatred for the Dikus and less opposition to the Englishmen.[41] There is also 'no evidence that the Christian Santhals were active in the agrarian, religious or political movements'.[42]

However, the ideology of the movements of this period was basically not different from the previous movements, only their tactics were different. One group wanted to throw away the yoke of the British rule by making an attempt to compromise with the native elements of the earlier state system, whereas the other group aimed at getting rid of the native aliens with the help of the British rulers. The missionaries of both Hinduism and Christianity acted as the mediators. Though this tactic failed, the interaction with these two non-indigenous religions gave rise to a new level of consciousness. The human side of these religions influenced deeply the minds of the people. The leaders of both the groups realised the need of reconstruction of the moral and cultural

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[39] John MacDougall, *Hand of Religion*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1985 p.61.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] *Ibid.*pp.75–76.

[42] *Ibid* p.83

basis of their society. This awareness gradually got consolidated and was concretely manifested during the formative state of the next phase of 'conflict.' Safa Hors, Birsa Bagawan, Tana Bhagat, all refused to accept some of the prevailing tribal socio-cultural and religious values. So they broke away from a tradition-bound way of thought and they spearheaded the revolution against the unjust structures of their day; these oppressive structures were social, political, economic, and religious. Yet these men were of the very essence of Tribal personality'.[43] The deviation was also marked in the form of leadership. In the first of this phase the leaders were mostly influential persons of the society and not necessarily the office bearers of the traditional village structure. In the last part even common men emerged as leaders. In the leadership the elements of personal charisma and the leaders' claim to be the medium of the divine message acted as vital motivating factors. Overall, the movements were peaceful in this phase and their gains were not of much significance except for the restoration of some land through court cases. But the movements were successful in mobilising the people and elevating their level of socio-political consciousness and led the masses to the threshold of the next phase of 'conflict'.

This period is also marked by the beginning of a so far unknown phenomenon of out-migration of the indigenous peoples to far away places. This response, on the part of the most exposed sections of the people, arose out of a situation of absolute dispossession coupled with prolonged drought conditions. They fell prey to the colonial design of using them as sweat-labourers in the tea gardens of Assam and North Bengal. Many people migrated to the neighbouring plains of Bengal as agricultural labourers. Some were taken to the Sundarban to clear the dense forest and to prepare cultivable land. The number of emigrants from Chotanagpur alone in the four years from 1864 to 1867 was 12,369.[44] This trend continuted in the next compromising phases with rising numbers, such as, 3,30,000 in 1891, 2,82,000 in 1901, 7,07,000 in 1911 and 9,47,000 in 1921.[45] We will not call this form of migration 'retreat', because the purpose of it was not to revive the old social system in the new settlements. The outcome of it was social degradation and enslavement.

The period of 'compromise' terminated with the slogan of Birsa Munda. *Saheb, saheb ek topi hai* (All white, the British and the missionaries, wear the same cap)[46] and his followers shout, *hende ramra keche keche, pundi ramra*

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[43] Nirmal Minz, 'Meaning of Tribal Consciousness', *Religion and Society*, op.cit. pp.22.

[44] *Ibid.* p.8.

[45] K.S. Singh, 'Tribal Society of India', op. cit. p.13.

[46] K.S. Singh, 'The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist', op. cit. p. 35.

keche keche (chop the black, chop the white),[47] identifying both the native and foreign forces of colonisation as well as the Christian missionaries as the enemies of the society. As the Sardari agitation transformed into the 'ulgulan' of Birsa (1874-1901) the Bhagat movement also went through a metamorphosis leading to the emergence of Tana movement (1914-1919). It was in fact a continuation of the Ulgulan of Birsa embracing all the socio-political and cultural elements of the latter. Jatra Uraon's attack on the belief in spirits, insistence on ceremonial purity in food and drink, the agrarian and anti-government stance reminds one of the Birsa movement.[48] The political core of the movement was quite explicit in the call of non-cooperation with the government, in the demand 'from the local ruler (of the Surguja state in Madhya Pradesh, erstwhile Central Province) the grant of self-government, the abolition of kingship and rent.....(this led to a revolt which was suppressed by military force in 1918)'[49] and in the praise of the Germans (the 'German baba' as the Tana incantation said) for their victory over the Englishmen in the First World War.

The elements of revitalisation in the previous phase of 'compromise' for the reconstruction of the moral and cultural basis of the society grew into their fully matured forms in these movements. The motivation and the ideological basis of the revitalisation movement contradict the interpretation of the tribal revolts as 'revivalistic' or 'nativistic'. The readiness of the tribals to accept the diversion from their tradition which the revitalisation programme necessitated was motivated by the vision of recreating the blissful polity which they believed they once possessed in the past and it was not just nativism'.[50] The reinterpretation of the traditional belief system, reforms in social life and the development of a better understanding of the nature of the forces of colonialism brought the two streams of 'tactical prosylitisation', one into Hinduism and the other into Christianity, back into one fold. 'In Birsa we find a "Tribal" consciousness which is a combination of the inner consciousness of the 'tribal', the Vaisnava, and the Christian stream of human consciousness'.[51] On the other hand, the Tana leaders 'believed that the status of the entire tribe could be raised by the worship of the only God, Dharmes (the supreme being in the

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[47] *Ibid.* p.98

[48] Sachchidananda. 'The Bhagat Movement in Chota Nagpur'. *Indian Movements: Some Aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reforms.* S.C. Malik (ed.). Indian Institute of Advanced Studies Shimla, 1978, p.168.

[49] *Ibid.* pp.169–70.

[50] Binay Bhusan Chaudhuri, 'Peasant Movement in Eastern India during British Rule'. op.cit., p. 710.

[51] N. Minz, 'Meaning of Tribal Consciousness', op. cit. p. 18

Uraon belief system); that they need not become either Hindus or Christians'.[52] And they borrowed heavily from the Hindu and Christian ideas of simplicity and piety'.[53]

The most striking phenomenon of this period was the growing trend among the peasant and the artisan communities of taking side with the indigenous peoples in their movements. The resulting integration culminated into a strong unity during the 'hul', the 'ulgulan' and the 'Tana movement'. In the future course of the movement this popular unity played a vital role in mobilising the exploited people of Jharkhand irrespective of their different historical backgrounds, religious diversities and ultimate aspirations.

In this phase of 'conflict' we have revolts like the 'meli' (Santal disturbance) of 1917 in Mayurbhanj[54] and the anti-census movement in the Santal parganas along with a short-lived revival of the Kherowar Movement (1880–1895). All these movements were directed to overthrow the colonial force both foreign and native. The ruthless suppression of them followed a long spell of 'compromise' which lasted till the end of the British rule in India.

The immediate gain of the 'ulgulan' and the 'Tana Movement' in Chotanagpur and the 'Kherowar' Movement in the Santal Pargana was the enactment of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) and the Santhalpargana Tenure Act (1912). But the defeat of these movements made a tremendous loss. Already 'by the end to the 19th Century, out of 7052 square miles of Chotanagpur estate (covering only approximately the erstwhile Ranchi district where the concentration of the indigenous peoples was highest as compared to other areas), for instance, only 96.94 square miles were in the possession of (the) Bhuinhars (the original settlers).....'[55] The C.N.T. Act registered only 156 villages as coming under full Khuntkatti rights. Even if to these we add the so-called broken Khuntkatti villages and the 203 square miles of Bhuinhari fields, we find that out of the 3,614 square miles of cultivated land only 405 square miles were recognised as ancestral land.[56] In the Acts there was no provision of further recovery of land and thus officially the country was lost to its real inheritors. The Acts sealed the fate of the people from any further claim over the rest of the land. As a result of this, communal usufructuary rights over the land broke down virtually throughout the country. The loss of traditional rights over the forest worsened the situation further. Privatisation

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[52] Sachchidananda. 'The Bhagat Movement in Chota Nagpur' op. cit. p. 167

[53] *Ibid.* p.187.

[54] K.S. Singh. 'Tribal Society in India'. op. cit. pp.134–35.

[55] Sachchidananda. 1978. op.cit., p.162.

[56] Hoffman. Enc. Mund. p. 2402.

of the means of production on a massive scale, monetisation of the economy and commercialisation of forest together shattered the very base of the traditional meaning system. The traditional relationship between human and nature, equality between human beings, and compatibility between different structures of the society disintegrated rapidly. The gory defeat of the struggle to restore social cohesiveness on a reformed and broader level of consciousness caused an unprecedented social frustration. Disintegration of the tradition paved the way for dissociation from it which went parallel to 'real prosylitisation'. The tragic end of the last phase of 'conflict' in this period left the people in a deep socio-political crisis. The long period of lull that followed witnessed a persistent effort on the part of the people to fill in the vacuum created in the domains of ideology, form of organisation and leadership of the movement.

The phase of 'conflict' which began with the 'ulgulan' ended up by the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century with the decay in the 'Tana' and the 'Kherowar' movements. The unity that was forged between the trends of taking side of either the British or the native colonial forces in the previous phase of 'conflict' now fell apart in this phase of 'compromise'. They parted their ways in the major walks of life with a revived and stronger conviction. In the religious life this phenomenon was manifested in the transformation of the previous 'tactical prosylitisation' into the 'real prosylitisation'. The cleavage in the political life became apparent when one group joined the 'nationalist' movement and the other took the side of the British. The introduction of the national political organisations and the growth of the regional socio-political organisations also took place along the same two distinct lines. Though a large number of people remained outside the pale of this development in the beginning, broadly speaking, these two trends became progressively dominant in the active social life till the emergence of the Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938. The formation of the Mahasabha signifies an attempt to bring the two diverse trends into one broad forum and indicates the beginning of the preparation of a new phase of 'conflict'.

Mass conversion into Christianity had its parallel trend in the massive emulation of the Hindu norms. The basic difference between the earlier spirit of 'missionisation' and 'sanskritisation' and their present nature was that no Birsa in future could permanently bridge the gap between these two mutually exclusive socio-religious ideologies. Thus the society started changing in two opposite directions, in the domains of the meaning system, leaving the traditional society at a loss and far behind.

The defeated Kurmis (who stood against the British in the first part of the nineteenth century) now demanded Kshatriya status and a large section of them formally accepted Hinduism in 1929. The Sapha Hors among the Santhals and the Uraon Bhagats left the ideology of the 'Kherowar' and the 'Tana'

movements of upholding the reconstructed traditional faith with broken hearts and went back to the process of emulation of the Hindu norms. This swing towards Hinduism was also observed among the major lineage groups like the Mundas and the Hos. In the case of the smaller groups this pro-Hindu tilt was more obvious.

In the political field the pro-Hindu section of the people joined the 'nationalist movement led by the All India National Congress. The Tana Bhagats and the Sapha Hors showed the way. They were, because of their past exposure to the Hindu way of life, more receptive to the largely Hindu Gandhian ideology'. 'Perhaps too the Sapha Hors and Tana Bhagats willingly joined the nationalist movements because they had strong collective memories of direct opposition to the British'.[57] Though the 'nationalist' movement its following in all the indigenous communities, it was largest among the Kurmis. The peasants and the artisans also subscribed to the 'nationalist' ideology. 'Other adivasis were neutral or hostile towards the nationalist movement. Partly no doubt this was because they considered the national movement a "diku" or at least a Hindu movement of no benefit to them.'[58] Actually the 'nationalist' movement in Jharkhand had its root in the uprising of the Hindu landlords during the mutiny of 1857. Since the indigenous people looked at the uprising as a conflict between the colonising forces they did not support either side. Secondly, the Christian converts, who regained rights over some land during the previous years through court cases with the help of the Christian missionaries, were heavily harassed by the landlords during the initial phase of victory of the mutiny. This lingered in the minds of the people. Thus the present 'nationalist' movement appeared before them as a renewed conflict between the two same old enemies of their ancestors. This was proved further by the fact that the leadership of the 'nationalist' movement remained at the hands of the native landlords (zamindars) and the newly arrived trading communities. Therefore, their response to it was generally negative. Thus in spite of the absence of the indigenous peoples' basic demand of recovering their right to self-determination in the programme of the 'nationalist' movement its popularity chiefly depended on its anti-British stance.

On the other hand, Christianity provided a political ideology of Biblical egalitarianism to the indigenous people. The missionaries promoted the idea of self-respect and basic rights of the people over land. They also interpreted the meaning system of the traditional society in Christian terms. Their presentation of a new 'theology of liberation' from the age-old bondage of an oppressive social system attracted a large number of indigenous persons in Jharkhand. 'A

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[57] Troisi. 1976. As quoted by Macdugall. ibid.

[58] John Macdugall. *Land or Religion*. 1985. p.245.

new sense of belonging and identity was given to them by Christianity which could not have been gained by any other means.'[59] During this phase of a deep social frustration when dissociation from the tradition became a powerful trend among the people Christianity appeared as the only way out to achieve at least some degree of human dignity. At the same time the Christian missions rationalised the Raj and brought the converts closer to it as the only protective institution available to them. Thus during both the World Wars the converts took the side of the Raj and joined hands in the pro-war efforts. In the meantime in the domain of the economic system the process of capitalistic mode of production was initiated in Jharkhand by the newly born compradore bourgeoisie under the auspices of the British colonialism. In 1856 coal mining was developed in Dhanbad region and in 1906 the Tata Iron and Steel Company was established in Jamshedpur. In the following years the 'monster' of capital made the indigenous peoples its greatest prey. The mission (and also the 'nationalist' movement) never opposed the onslaught of 'capital' and thus offered in ideology to be practised in the real life which was more akin to the presentation of the 'Sermon on the Mount' by Matthew than that of Luke and which prescribed Colossians (3.18) as a moral code. Thus the church in Jharkhand promoted a demand of a kind of paternalistic protection with a limited power of autonomy for the indigenous people without challenging the root causes of the misery of the people. The church, through the propagation of modern education, also prepared a set of people, well exposed to the modern world, to give leadership to achieve this demand. As a result of these efforts organisations like the Catholic Students Union, Catholic Sabha and Unnati Samaj (1920) came up. The leaders of the Unnati Samaj met the much condemned Simon Commission in 1928 when it paid a visit to Ranchi. The demand of self government and the programme of social reform brought the Unnati Samaj closer to the Kisan Sabha, an organisation of the non-Christian indigenous persons. On the basis of their common aims they later merged into one broad forum, the Adivasi Mahasabha (1938), with the formation of which the demand of the people to enjoy political autonomy, even if limited, surfaced in the political scene of Jharkhand with a popular support and mobilisation. The Mahasabha was primarily a social organisation. It interfered in every walk of life of the people except that of religion. It promoted a collective leadership of a group of well educated people.

The political situation of the country largely changed with the end of the Raj in 1947. In Jharkhand the political movement for the achievement of a limited autonomy took a different turn and a demand of a sovereign Jharkhand

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[59] Nirmal Minz, '*Effects of Christianity on the Tribals*', *The Passing Scene in Chotanagpur,* Sarat Chandra Roy Commemorable Volume, P. Dash Sharma (Ed.), Maitryee Publications, Ranchi, 1978. p.76

surfaced suddenly.[60] It was, however, short-lived and very soon the leaders of the Adivasi Mahasabha realised that it is only under the framework of the new constitution that they could demand the long cherished autonomy. As a logical consequence of all the developments during this phase of 'compromise' taken together the leadership demanded a separate statehood within the constitutional framework, adopted the structure of the bourgeois political party and accepted bourgeois democracy as the guiding ideology. And the Jharkhand Party was formed in 1950. But all these steps went against the popular aspiration of the recovery of the right to self determination. Therefore, the leaders took resort to lies to mobilise the people under the banner of their new political organisation. It is said that the most charismatic leader of the party, Mr. Jaipal Singh, in his speeches delivered in the countryside used to talk about the glorious Hul and Ulguland and promised to fulfill the dreams of the people of establishing their own 'raj'. People believed in this and in the first general elections Jharkhand Party had a landslide victory. The movement apparently reached another phase of 'conflict' and was about to become really so but the leadership was neither ideologically nor morally prepared for it. Actually since 1930s 'tribal' politics shifted from 'millenarian, messianic' movements based in the countryside, to party politics based on a more urbanised leadership. It changed from violent upheavals to electoral struggles, and from a politics that looked wholly inward and was exclusively 'tribal' to a politics of coalitions with 'tribal' leaders seeking political allies.[61] The political opportunism of the leadership reached its height when nobody bothered to face the State Reorganisation Commission during its visit to Ranchi in 1956. The formation of the Jharkhand Party was actually the beginning of a process of political assimilation of the leadership into the dominant system which reached its climax in the event of its merger with the Congress in 1962 With this was forfeited the political leadership of the church and the educated elites of the broken society.

After the fall of the Jharkhand Party attempts were made to revive it on the same ideological and organisational foundations. The same history was repeated in the Hul Jharkhand, the All India Jharkhand Party and the Jharkhand Party. All of them failed in their mission of mobilising the people and continuing the movement. Thus another long period of ideological and organisational crisis in the movement followed.

During the long period of lull from the early 60s till the beginning of the 70s the cleavage between the above mentioned two trends on the line of religious bifurcation deepened. The internal conflict in the society surfaced into an over

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[60] Hazel Lutz, and Ram Dayal Munda. 'Tribal Change and Development in India' 1980. *The passing Scene in Chotanagpur.* op. cit., p.115.

[61] Weiner Myron. *Sons of the Soil.* p.120.

enthusiastic repudiation of the Christians by the followers of the traditional belief system (sarna) in every walk of life. Even the Christian converts were challenged in the Parliament on the question of their right to remain in the scheduled tribe list by their non-Christian kin. The non-Christian overwhelmingly took the side of the ruling Congress Party and a small section of them even joined the Janasangha (the party of the Hindu fundamentalists) on the other hand, whereas one section of the Church (particularly the Roman Catholic) supported the establishment, and thus countered the attack of the non-Christians, the rest, especially the German Lutheran Mission, remained loyal to the Jharkhand Party. There was thus a deep-seated vacuum in the domain of ideology and also in leadership in the Jharkhand movement. Ethnic rivalry, religious conflicts and inter-party competition (among the Congress, the Janasangh and the Jharkhand parties) absolutely disrupted the mobilisation of the people and invited pessimism and degradation for them. Apparently the long tradition of peoples' movement for the recovery of their lost right of self-determination died down and the phase of 'compromise' was about to reach its lowest rung of 'social surrender'.

The next phase of 'conflict' arose with the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (1973). It was a people's forum forged out of the convergence of the left trade union movements in the coal-fields of the Dhanbad region, the agrarian movement of the Santhals and the 'status' movement of the Kurmis of the same region. In the formative stage of the organisation it was heavily influenced by the working class ideology of the Marxist Coordination Committee. A few individuals of the Naxalite Movement background were also involved in it soon. These trade unionists were not of a tribe who followed the beaten track. They accorded priority to scheduled caste and tribal miners in their fight against injustice meted out to colliery workers. They were, however, deeply conscious of the fact that the mine workers would not succeed in their objectives unless they coordinated their activities with the working peasantry in the hinterland which consisted overwhelmingly of the economically and socially under-privileged strata. They as such strove to involve each in the struggle of the other.[62] The J.M.M., unlike previous Jharkhand parties, included in its programme extensive social reforms, economic and agrarian issues, and the political objective of the creation of an autonomous Jharkhand state. The traditional Marxist approach to the nationality question was associated with the movement seriously.

The movement flared up very soon in Dhanbad, Giridih, Santhal Pargana and Hazaribagh districts. All indigenous communities, the peasants and the artisans and the workers including the migrant labourers of non-Jharkhandi

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[62] R.N. Maharaja, and K.G. Iyer, Agrarian Movement in Dhanbad, 1982. *Fourth World Dynamics: Jharkhand.* Nirmal Sengupta (ed.), p. 177.

origin joined hands. The red and the green flags were unfurled together. The 'conflict' was at its peak. But before the newly emerging ideology could crystalise and take an acceptable shape the two-pronged tactics of the state, e.g., terrorism and domestication of the leaders, broke its backbone. 'Green' and 'red' parted their ways. The 'green' gradually surrendered itself to the establishment and the 'red' went back to its earlier position of *status quo*. The society paid the cost in terms of human lives, killed in police firings, and loss of the gains of the movement to a large extent. The colonising forces gained back their dominance. Both the set of leaders, 'green' and 'red' were rejected by the people. The 'domesticated' 'green' and the defeated 'red' blamed each other and later both blamed the people for their failure.

Conclusion

The indigenous people's movement in Jharkhand is basically a social movement, with a marked political overtone against colonialism. The historical analysis of the movement exposes certain important facts. Firstly, the movement has been proved to be indomitable as long as the people manage to avoid becoming the prey of the 'culture of silence', which is the last phase of the vicious cycle of dispossession, powerlessness and cultural degradation. The majority of the people have so far been able to do so. They have successfully nullified the predictions of both the bourgeois and classical Marxist schools of thought that 'the aboriginal's last act will be squalid, instead of being tragic. What will be seen with most regret will be, not his disappearance, but his enslavement and degradation'[63] and that 'such national groups (are) non-historic....who were 'lacking national vitality and condemned to disappear or prone to be denationalised'.[64] They have also proved it to be an a-historic proposition that 'the outcome of the movement is likely to be determined by the outside intervention 'especially, how quickly the organised left forces can resolve their differences and decisively by intervening in favour of the people'.[65] The peoples of Jharkhand did so by retaliating and then retreating in the first phase of the movement, and in the second phase, when the collective response to colonial aggression shifted to 'conflict and compromise', by the mechanism of handling the two sets of principles of 'accommodation and rejection'. It has been

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[63] N.C. Chaudhuri, The Continent of Circe. As quoted in Haimendorf. 1982:313

[64] F. Engles, 'Magyar Struggle' in Marx. *The Revolutions of 1848*. London, and 'What have the Working Classes to do in Poland?' in Marx, *The First International and After*, London. 974, pp. 373–88. As quoted in Javed Alam 'The Category of 'Non-Historic Nations' and Tribal Identity in Jharkhand' in P.C. Chatterji (ed.) *Self-Images, Identity and Nationality*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla,1989, p.153.

[65] *Ibid.* p.162.

observed that during the time of 'compromise' these contradictory principles are kept in equilibrium by the popular wisdom and thus save the society from total disintegration. On the contrary, the moment the peoples could gather enough strength by reaching a higher level of consciousness and by elevating the society to a higher level of mobilisation the equilibrium is given up in favour of the side of 'rejection'. The dominance of 'rejection' leads the society to the phase of 'conflict'. It has also been observed in this context that the trend of absolute repudiation of the side of 'accommodation' leads the movement to a tragic end, particularly in the face of a much stronger enemy. And in a reverse case the trend of absolute surrender of the side of 'reaction' is resulted into total degradation/enslavement or acculturation/assimilation. Through thousand years of struggle against different forms of colonial forces the peoples have experienced all the three options: negation—isolation—tragedy, surrender—assimilation—squalid and equilibrium of 'rejection—accommodation—symbiosis—integration. There has been a gradual evolution of a consciousness that the society has to find a way out between the tragic and the squalid designations for its survival, and that has to be evolved on the basis of their only option, i.e., integration (symbiotic relationship) with the dominant system with a non-absolute right to self-determination. And this reflected in their political aspiration voiced concretely in the first Parliament session of the independent India. The society has traversed a long way from the time of their opposition to the formation of states to the time of demanding a state of their own. But the demand of a separate Jharkhand state does not presuppose the stratification of the indigenous people's society. Handling of this contradiction depends largely upon the will of the people to retain their egalitarian social character. Secondly, the indigenous peoples society, contrary to many peoples mistaken notion, is not at all a stagnant one. That is why in spite of many social scientists' prediction it has remained alive. 'What is truly responsible for their distress is not 'modernisation' but the subordination to the rationale of the dominant system in the modern world'.[66] The people have always remained open to the 'direct change' but what they have opposed is assimilation. Thus their survival amongst the non-indigenous people is possible only in a federal structure of polity where they will enjoy equal status and power. They have consistently rejected both of mechanical and mathematical approaches of integration. Their age-old wisdom, manifested in their daily practices even today, upholds the human approach of integration with the other peoples within the same political and social framework. Thus integration with other peoples for them stands for 'solidarity'.

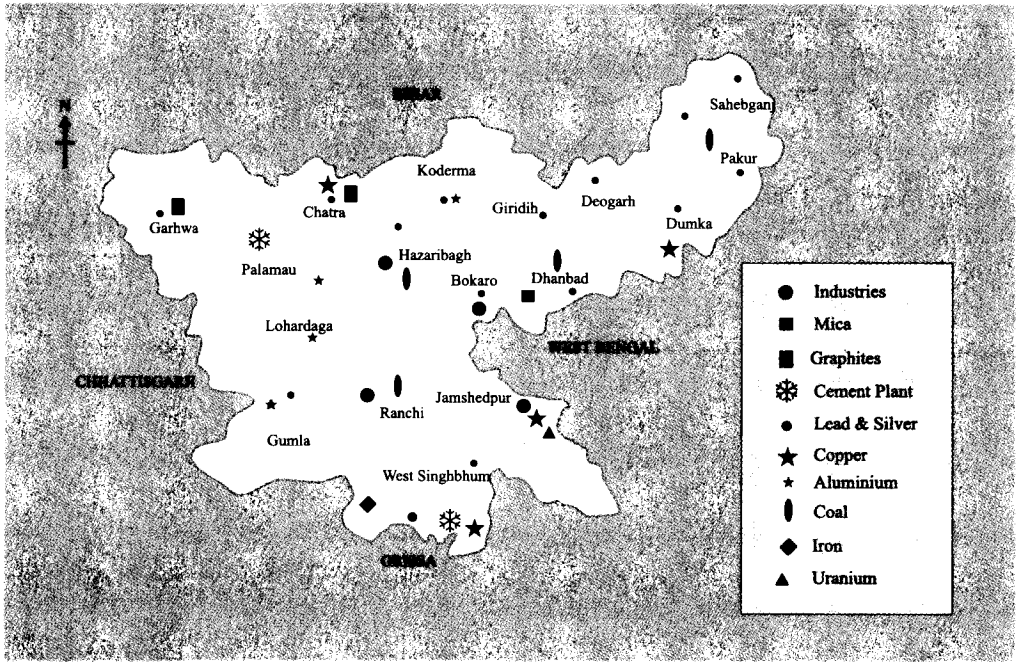
Thirdly, through time, in the process of confronting different forms of colonial oppression, the forms of mobilisation and leadership pattern went

[66] Sengupta, Nirmal, Introduction, op. cit., p. xvii.

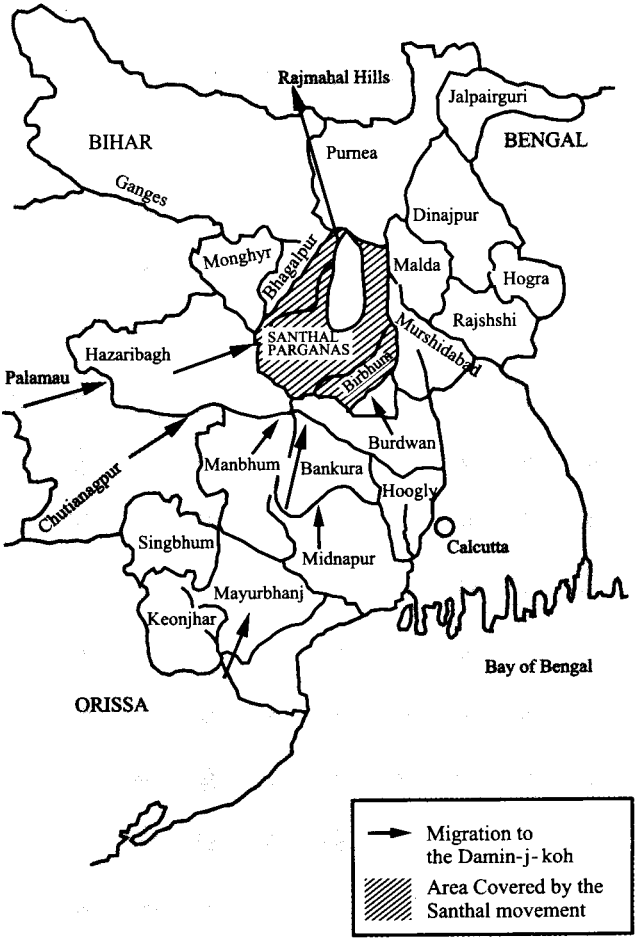
through certain changes. In the early days every lineage group separately fought against the alien forces. Later on different combinations of joint effort emerged and very soon there evolved a pan-indigenous unity. And finally a broad- based unity of the indigenous peoples, peasantry and artisan communities was reached at. Even in the recent past all these Jharkhandi communities forged a unity with the working class of non-Jharkhandi origin. However, they also endeavoured to join hands with all shades of democratic and left forces as well as with different struggles of identities all over the country. Thus the emerging idea was that the ultimate liberation of the Jharkhandis was possible only with the liberation of the toiling masses of the country.

Before the advent of the British colonialism the form of organisation was the traditional one, i.e. the council of the village brotherhood and the leaderships was provided by the collective authority of the 'elders among the equals'. In the later phase the leadership was took over by the influential persons of the village and it was not necessary that the whole village would be mobilised under him. In a much later period during the British rule even men from common masses emerged as charismatic leaders and on the basis of their reinterpretation of the traditional social norms and values, people got mobilised. By the end of the 'Raj' educated elites took over the leaderships and associational organisations came up in the form of social forums. Post-British period saw the emergence of bourgeois political parties and elitistic charismatic leaders. In the recent past, however, these forms of organisations and pattern of authoritarian leadership was negated and efforts were made to evolve an organisational structure which would be compatible with the traditional form of organisation which would cover not only the political aspect of the movement but also include cultural and literary movements, with a collective pattern of leadership. The principle of 'consensus' would guide the process of decision-making in it.

MINERAL MAP OF JHARKHAND



AREA OF SANTHAL REBELLION



JHARKHANDER KATHA: SWADESHI COLONIALISATION*

AMAR KUMAR SINGH**

The historical development of Jharkhand region as a cultural, political and administrative unit has been discussed. The exploitation of Jharkhand by North Bihar and Government of India is similar to the exploitation of India by the British. The exploitation of Jharkhand has increased in post-Independence India due to developmental projects benefitting migrants from North Bihar. Political responses of the Jharkhand people against their exploitation have been discussed with reference to State Re-organisation Commission (SRC), Committee on Jharkhand Matter (COJM), Jharkhand Area Development Council Bill (JADC) 1991, and Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) Bill 1994. The permanent solution of the Jharkhand problem is creation of a separate state within the Union of India.

1.1. British Colonialisation of India

The economic exploitation of India had been one of the strongest *raison d'etre* against the British raj and the *leitmotiv* of Indian nationalism and freedom movement. The economic exploitation of India has been well-documented (Deoshkar 1908/1987; Dutt, 1940/1986; Habib, 1985; Naoroji, 1901; Sen, 1992; Tomlinson, 1993). India was the foundation stone of the British Empire. Lord Curzon had written in 1894:

> Just as De Tocqueville remarked that the conquest and government of India are really the achievements which have given to England her place in the opinion of the world, so the prestige and the wealth arising from her Asiatic position are the foundation stones of the British Empire.

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Again in 1989 he wrote:

> India is the pivot of our Empire. If the Empire loses any other part of its Dominion we can survive, but if we lose India, the sun of our Empire will have set.
>
> *Quoted in Dutt R.P. (1940/1986, p.9)*

The economic condition of India upto the eighteenth century was quite advanced, there was arrested economic development upto the end of the ninteenth century (Anstey, 1911). Dutt has described in detail 'The Plunder of India' (1940/86 pp. 98-116). Habib (1985) has calculated that the drain from India in 1882 amounted to Rs.1,355 million (in 1946–7 prices), which was more than four per cent of national income that year. The drain was around 18 million pounds out of an estimated total national income of 120 million pounds in 1900 (Goldsmith, 1983). Nehru (1946/94) had argued that the industrial revolution in England was based on the plunder of Bengal and the British raj caused destruction of India's industry and decay of its agriculture (*The Discovery of India,* pp. 295–302).

1.2 Jharkhander Katha: Swadeshi Colonialisation

What has been written about the colonialisation of India by the British applies fully to the colonialisation of Jharkhand by India and particularly by North Bihar (Gyanranjan and Sinha 1993; Mahto, S., 1989; Roy, A.K., 1982 a, b; Singh, R.N. 156; Sen Gupta, 1982). It is more hypocritical because it is *swadeshi.* The book in Bengali by Sakharam Ganesh Deoshkar *Desher Katha* was banned by the British by Political Notification No.2840 PD dated 22 Sepember 1910 because it had 'tendency to excite disaffection toward His Majesty or the Government by law in British India'. *Desher Katha* described the economic exploitation of India by the British. It had quoted a British source:

> It is literally true that at the present moment out of the fifty millions of net revenue of India, half comes to England to pay the Home Charges, while probably another third is spent on the army, which is mainly employed in guarding the frontier. Very little of the Indian revenue is spent in fact in India at all.
>
> *Deoshkar (1908/87 p.203)*

The Maharashtrian family of Deoshkar had settled in village Karongram of Deogarh district of Jharkhand where he was born on 17 December 1869 making him a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi. *Desher Katha* was first published in 1904 and it quickly had five editions which was banned by the British in 1910. Today, the writer of *Desher Katha* would have written *Jharkhander Katha* which would have described the economic exploitation of Jharkhand by North Bihar. *Jharkhander Katha* would have referred to the following facts:

1.2.1. Wealth and poverty/ Backwardness of Jharkhand *vis-a-vis* Bihar

The Jharkhand region of Bihar produces 27.77 per cent of total minerals of India compared to 0.47 per cent by the rest of Bihar (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Production of Minerals 1970 (in value)

Sl. No.	Name of Mineral	All India Value (Rs. Lakhs)	Total Prdn. as % of Total Mineral Prdn.	Per cent Jharkhand	Production at rest of Bihar
1.	Copper	374.8	0.77	100.0	Nil
2.	Kyanite	261.1	0.54	85.0	Nil
3.	Quartzite	16.0	0.03	60.5	5.3
4.	Mica (Crude)	202.4	0.41	58.5	Neg.
5.	Asbestos	21.4	0.04	53.0	Nil
6.	Apatite	9.8	0.02	48.6	Nil
7.	Coal	29292.7	54.27	44.5	Nil
8.	Sand	10.4	0.02	37.3	Nil
9.	Fireclay	44.8	0.09	33.0	Neg.
10.	Chinaclay (processed)	84.1	0.17	28.7	Nil
11.	Bauxite	174.6	0.36	32.4	Nil
12.	Iron Ore	3680.1	7.59	22.4	Nil
13.	Limestone	2302.3	4.75	3.7	7.5
14.	Manganese Ore	771.9	1.59	0.6	Nil
15.	Pyrite	56.3	0.12	Nil	100.0
16.	Other Minerals	12733.9	26.28	4.37	Nil
	Total	**48447.6**	**100.00**	**27.77***	**0.47***

** Figures exclude value worth 1.15 per cent accountable by other minerals produced in Bihar for which the distribution between Jharkhand and the rest of Bihar is not readily available.*

Source : Indian Minerals Year Book, 1970. Quoted in : Das V. (1992): *Jharkhand: Castle Over the Graves.*

TABLE 2

Imbalanced Development of Jharkhand *versus* Rest of Bihar

	Major Items	Chotanagpaur	Rest of State
(i)	Contribution to revenue	70%	30%
(ii)	Expenditure of revenue in	20%	80%
(iii)	Irrigated land of the total	5%	50%
(iv)	Rural electrification	5%	40%
(v)	Paved road per 1000 KM	5 KM	20 KM

Source : Munda, R.D. (1988): The Jharkhand Movement: Retrospect and Prospect, *Social Change*, 8; 2, 28-58, p.34.

1.2.2. Imbalanced Development of Jharkhand and North Bihar

Jharkhand contributes seventy per cent of the total revenue of Bihar, but only twenty per cent of the total state expenditure is incurred in Bihar. The disparity in development between Jharkhand and rest of Bihar is glaring. Jharkhand produces almost the entire electricity for Bihar but rural electrification in Jharkhand is a meager five per cent compared to 40 per cent of rest of Bihar. Most of Jharkhand is not covered by railways and therefore, it depends mainly on roads. Dumka, the headquarter of Santhal Pargana Division, and Hazaribag, the headquarter of North Chotanagpur Division, are not connected by rail. Yet, the percentage of paved road in Jharkhand is only 5 km per 1000 km compared to 20 km in rest of Bihar (Table 2).

The slogan (coined by the author) describing this fact has evinced great mass appeal from the people of Jharkhand: *Har rupaya ka sattar paise/ Jharkhand ki den hai/ Milta usko bis hi lekin/ Kaisa yeh andher hai/ Es tukra ko hai dhikar/ Jharkhand ki hai lalkar.* (To every hundred paise (of Bihar Government) Jharkhand contributes seventy. But in return, it gets only twenty. What an injustice! Fie on this crumb. This is the challenge of Jharkhand.

1.2.3. Ranking of Districts of Bihar on Development

The thirtynine districts of Bihar were ranked in 1990 on nine parameters of development by the Bihar Government. The data was made available to the Committee on Jharkhand Matters (COJM). The parameters were: (i) agriculture production, (ii) irrigation, (iii) godown storage capacity, (iv) rural electrification, (v) bank branches, (vi) literacy, (vii) health services, (viii) road length and (ix) population. The COJM in its Report had noted that:

> It is significant that the Govt. of Bihar has, picking up the nine parameters.....ranked the.....districts included in the demand for

Jharkhand state among the lowest in state in the rank and order.

GOI 1990 : Report of COJM,
Chapter IV, p.22

The complete date on all the districts have been reported elsewhere (Singh, A.K. 1990a). The Development Score of the districts range from 1 (lowest) to 39 (highest). The districts of Central Bihar, consisting of Patna, the capital of Bihar, and its neighbourhood are the most developed ones, whereas the districts of Jharkhand (Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana) are the least developed. Even the district scoring the highest (19), (Dhanbad) in Jharkhand has lower score than the districts of Central Bihar (Table 3).

TABLE 3

Ranking of districts of Jharhand (Chotanagpur/ Santhal Pargana) and Central Bihar

JHARKHAND		CENTRAL BIHAR	
Name of District	Development Score	Name of District	Development Score
Sahebganj	1(Lowest)	Jahanabad	21
Palamau	2	Munger	22
Dumka	3	Aurangabad	25
Godda	4	Nawada	26
Giridih	5	Bhagalpur	30
Hazaribagh	6	Rohtas	31
Gumla	7	Gaya	35
Deoghar	8	Bhojpur	36
Ranchi	11	Nalanda	38
Lohardaga	12	Patna	39
Singhbhum	13		
Dhanbad	19		

Source : Singh, A.K. (1990 a): Committee on Jharkhand Matters: A critique, Ranchi, Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee.

1.2.4. Development, Displacement and Deprivation

Nehru accepted the western model of development. The Second Five Year Plan advocated rapid industrialisation. The factories were called the *temples of modern India* by Nehru. Big developmental projects in the forms of factories,

dams and mines were located all over India, mostly on tribal lands, making the tribals victims and refugees of development (Singh and Jabbi, 1995).

At least 185 lakh persons have been displaced between 1951 and 1990, constituting about 2 per cent of the total Indian population in 1991, most of them tribals, who constitute about 8 per cent of the national population, but more than 40 per cent of the displaced persons (Fernandes, 1993). Thus, ironically the *National Development* and *Tribal Deprivation* has become synonymous (Fernandes, 1992).

The post-Independence development in Jharkhand region is reflected correctly and sadly in the title of the book by Victor Das, *Jharkhand: Castle Over the Graves* (1992). With industrialisation of India, the tribals perish; with the development of India the tribals decay (Iyer, 1992, p.7). The innocent, powerless tribals have been sacrificed at the altar of the 'Development God that Failed'. The cynical nightmare of Nirad Chaudhuri has proved prophetic:

> All the large industrial undertakings of India after Independence are growing up, not in Chotanagpur alone, but elsewhere as well, in areas which are in the occupation of the aboriginals. For me, therefore, the pioneer iron and steel factory at Jamshedpur has become a symbol, which it might also for others. As one travels by train at night, from quite a long distance, its blast furnace can be seen shooting up flames. As immense glow lights up the sky, and that red glare seems to rise from the gigantic unquenchable funeral pyre of the primitive.
>
> Nobody knows better than I how pointless it is to regret this. I would say it is almost foolish to denounce it. The motives, ideas and forces which are ranged behind the modern onslaught on the aboriginals belong to an amoral world, where neither ethics nor aesthetics has any say. In an industrialised India, the destruction of the aboriginals' life is as inevitable as the submergence of the Egyptian temples caused by the dams of the Nile.
>
> *Chaudhuri, N.C. (1965, p.80)*

TABLE 4

Displacement and Rehabilitation by Coal Mines, 1981–85

S. No.	Name of the Company	No. of persons displaced	Number of jobs provided to one member of the family and (% of displaced families)	
1.	Eastern Coal Fields Ltd.	81,100	4,195	(33.32%)
2.	Central Coal Fields Ltd.	43,600	3,984	(50.25%)
3.	Western Coal Fields Ltd.	34,300	2,250	(36.10%)
4.	Bharat Coking Coal Ltd.	21,100	752	(19.58%)
	Total	**1,80,000**	**11,901**	**(36.34%)**

Source : Govt. of India 1985, Quoted in Fernandes, W., and Thukral, E.G. (Ed.)(1989): *Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation,* New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.

According to a Government of India estimate, which is always an underestimate, between 1981–85 the coal mines alone had displaced 1,80,000 persons and only 36.34 per cent of the displaced families were given one job per family (Table 4).

An estimate prepared by *Vikasman*, Journal of Tribal Resource Research and Training Centre, Ranchi, reveals that overwhelmingly large majority of the displaced persons by developmental projects in Jharkhand are tribals, ranging from 72% to 90% (Table 5).

TABLE 5

Projects in Jharkhand

Name of the Project	Area Covered	Number of Displaced Persons	% of Tribal in Displaced Persons
Icha (Kharkai river)	4,268.29 (hec)	30,800	80.00
Chandil (Swanrekha river)	17,683.00 (hec)	37,600	87.92
Netarhat Field Firing Range	(245 villages) 4,368.17	1,50,000	90.00
North Koel Palamau	20,000	6,000	72.00

Source : Vikasman (undated), Bulletin Number 2, Tribal Resource Research and Training Centre, Ranchi.

TABLE 6

Households population and Land use of Piparwar and Ashoka Mines 1981

	Piparwar Mine	Ashoka Mine
1. Number of Household	909	1293
2. % Population SC	33.8	28.1
3. % Population ST	31.0	42.2
4. Land Area (Ha)		
Forest	1593 (38%)	4364 (50%)
Irrigated	1440 (34%)	1631 (18%)
Waste	1179 (28%)	2795 (32%)
Total	4223 (100%)	8790 (100%)

Source : District Census Handbook 1981, Quoted by Roy, P. (1992)

The Piparwar and Ashoka coal mines in Hazaribag have affected the SCs and STs most and have taken away substantially large forest and irrigated land (Table 6). It has been estimated that the proposed mines in the upper Damodar valley will affect 269 villages and endanger 61,804 hectares of forest land (Roy, P., 1992)

The land alienation of the tribals because of the modern development projects had started from 1907 with the establishment of the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur in Singhbhum which took away 3564 acres of tribal land. The Rourkela Steel Plant (1956) took over 32 villages displacing 2465 families. The Heavy Engineering Corporation (1958) covered 9200 areas, covering 25 villages and uprooting 12,990 tribals. The Bokaro Steel Plant took away 46 villages displacing 12,487 tribals. A very large number of tribals have been uprooted by coal mining. About 32,709 tribal families were displaced by coal mining between 1981–85. During this period the CCI-ICL took away 1,50,300 acres of land, mostly from the tribals. The irrigation projects have been another source of displacement of the tribals. The Koel-Karo Project will displace 16, 350 families, of which 70% are tribals. Netarhat Firing Range will displace 2,24,900 persons, with 78% tribals (Table 7). The project has been fiercely resisted and has been successful in preventing it so far, but the Government of Bihar and India are determined to complete it. If this is done, it will displace 2.35 lakh people affecting 245 villages.

> Of the hundreds projects that have been started in the region, none could match the Pilot Project Netarhat Firing Range regarding the scale of displacement. No major project in the past would stand anywhere in comparison to above Project in affecting the people in such ruthless and brutal manner. To illustrate, Tata Iron and Steel

Industry had displaced only 4 villages when it got started in 1907. As against this, Rourkela Steel Plant started in 1956 displacing 2,645 families from 32 villages, Heavy Engineering Corporation, Hatia, displaced 12,990 families from 25 villages and Bokaro Steel Plant displaced 12,487 families from 46 villages. In comparison, the Pilot Project Netarhat Field Firing Range is expected to displace 245 villages with a population of over 2 lakh people most of whom are adivasis. .....At one single blow this would be the biggest displacement to take place in recent years.

Source : Adivasi Yuva Sangh (1994). *Ethnocide of tribals in Chotanagpur*, New Delhi, Letter dated 25th March 1994 by Khakha, C. and Lakra, R.

Significantly, this Project was originally to be located at Gaya in North Bihar and not in Jharkhand. But Gaya, being closer to the Government at Patna, got it shifted to Netarhat.

TABLE 7

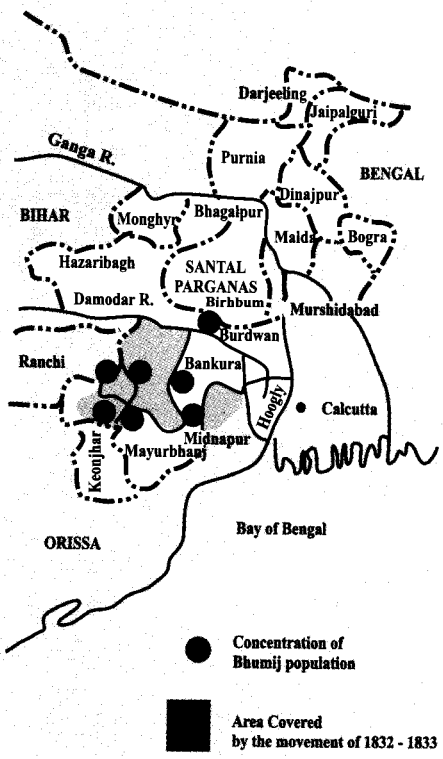
Magnitude of Displacement by Developmental Projects

	Name of the Project	Magnitude of Displacement
1.	TISCO (1907)	3,564 acres of tribal land
2.	Rourkela Steel Plant (1956)	32 villages and 2,465 families
3.	Heavy Engineering Corporation, Ranchi (1958)	9200 acres, 25 villages and 12,990 tribal
4.	Bokaro Steel Plant	46 villages and 12,487 tribals
5.	Coal Mining (1981–85)	32,709 tribal families
6.	CCL-ICL (1981–85)	1,50,300 acres
*7.	Icha Dam	21,000 acres in Bihar 10,500 acres in Orissa 5,600 families
*8.	Chandil Dam	43,495 acres 6,773 families
*9.	Koel Karo	16,350 families (70% of tribals)
*10.	Jambir/Baura dams and expansion of Haldia	5,980 acres submerged, 50 villages, 3,450 families
*11.	Netarhat Firing Range	2,24,900 (78% tribals)

**Recent projects 1990s*

Source : Adivasi Yuva Sangh (1994). *Update from Delhi:* Issue No.74, (April 1994), New Delhi, *Update Collective.*

AREA OF BHUMIJ REVOLT



Source for the data on population : S.C. Sinha, "Some Aspects of Change in Bhumij Religion in South Manbhum, Bihar" Man in India, Vol. 33. No. 2, 1953.

1.2.5 Presentation by the Indigenous Tribal People of India to the United Nations

The representatives of the indigenous tribal people of India had stated in the Working Group Meeting on Indigenous Populations of United Nations at Geneva on 3–7 August 1987:

> The land rights and ownership introduced by the British colonial power and adopted and implemented by the National Government after Independence, the forest laws, making land and forests as commodities for sale and purchase under the money economy and marketing system have enabled outsiders, money-lenders and the Government to grab Adivasi (Original Inhabitants) land by fair or foul means. Establishments of heavy industries like steel factory at Jamshedpur, Rourkela, Bokaro and Hatia and mining operations at the very heart of Adivasi area in central India and rapid industrialisation have accentuated the process of land alienation. Heavy dam constructions for irrigation and hydro-electrical projects have displaced millions of Adivasis and many of them have become landless labourers. Debarred from access to forests and displaced from their land, masses of Adivasis have been driven to abject poverty and many of them have taken to begging which was completely unknown to our people 25-30 years ago. Even the inalienable lands – the Khutkatti and Bhuinhari lands of the Adivasis of Jharkhand, lands within tribal belts and blocks of the Plains of Assam and in other areas as well are grabbed and snatched away by the Government under the plea of 'overriding national interests'.
>
> *Quoted in Social Change (1988) 18(2), p.79*

1.2.6 Gradual Genocide

Devalle (1992) has argued that there has been and is happening a gradual genocide of the tribals in Jharkhand:

> This is not the result of any official policy but of working out of a social and economic forces and of administrative negligence. Gradual *genocide* of the adivasis takes place by means of starvation and illnesses arising from growing pauperisation caused by the decline in land production due to the effects of industrial waste, the neglect of irrigation, and the curtailment of alternative sources of subsistence like forests.
>
> *Devalle (1992, p.98)*

The tribals of Jharkhand were identified by the British as 'surplus labour' to be recruited for the plantations in Assam and Bengal. The tribals needed work and livelihood, they were hardworking and acclimatised to the hill areas. The recruitment of the tribals from Jharkhand, mainly the Santhals of Santhal Pargana and the Mundas of Chotanagpur (Ranchi and Hazaribag), began in the middle of the nineteenth century and by 1891 there were 1,90,000 tribals in Assam and nearly 70,000 in Bengal. The emigration of the tribals continued in the twentieth century and in 1921 the total number of tribals emigrating from Jharkhand rose to 9,47,000 (Weiner, 1978: pp.160-161). The development of modern industries in Jharkhand did not help the tribals. The modern industries required skilled labour. Therefore, the tribals, who constituted 'labour pool' for the tea plantations became redundant in Jharkhand. When there was no development in Jharkhand, the tribals had to go out seeking jobs. When development came to Jharkhand in the shape of modern industries, the skilled labour from North Bihar, mainly from ABCD (Arrah, Balia, Chhapra and Darbhanga), grabbed all the jobs.

> It was migrants, not local people, who primarily gained from the development of Chotanagpur region. Migrants from North Bihar and Bengal entered the colleges and university; migrants occupied most of the positions in state and administrative services; migrants acquired most of the skilled positions created in the new mining, industrial, and commercial activities.
>
> *Weiner (1978, p.149)*

Vidyarthy (1970) had reported that there were only 335 tribal workers in the Heavy Engineering Corportion (HEC), Hatia, Ranchi, out of a total of 4,284. And, HEC was established on tribal villages. With the establishment of HEC in 1961, there was heavy migration (about 32,500 persons) to the Hatia region. The higher posts of the new industries were occupied by persons from North Bihar. They had the power of recruitment. They appointed even unskilled labour from North Bihar, in many cases their relations. I had asked the representative of the HEC who had appeared before the COJM to explain why the tribals were not employed by the HEC. He told the Committee that the candidates were selected from the list obtained from the Employment Exchange, cleverly omitting the fact that the illiterate tribals did not know how to register themselves in the Employment Exchange and the North Bihari Personnel Officer did not help them register; instead, got the migrants from North Bihar registered in the Employment Exchange! The HEC has turned out to be a complete failure accumulating a cumulative loss of several hundred crores, forcing the management to ask the employees to get premature retirement with 'golden handshake'. It has been estimated that if the HEC was closed and all its employees were paid their full salaries at home, it would make some 'saving'!

> HEC, at Ranchi,...never achieved its optimum production capacity and has accumulated a cumulative loss of hundreds of crores. The tribals have lost their land and the nation has gained nothing; the gain has been of the officers and contractors.
>
> *Singh, A.K., (1990 b, p.26)*

The development game played by the Governments of Bihar and India in Jharkhand region have benefited them and their relations forcing the poor illiterate rural tribals of Jharkhand to gradual genocide:

> Since adivasi workers are not given skills to satisfy the demand, they tend to become redundant in certain sectors, an unwanted labour force which is expelled back to the countryside where its chances for survival are minimal. **Thus, the village communities may pass being the cradle of a reserve of labour to become the graveyard of the unwanted adivasi worker.**
>
> *Devalle (1992, p.98), emphasis added.*

1.2.7 Universities of Jharkhand and the Government of Bihar

These facts are enough for ***Jharkhander Katha*** which Sakharam Ganesh Deoshkar would have written with anger and pain. Let me add to this long list of discrimination and injustice, my personal experiences in the two universities in Jharkhand. The universities of Jharkhand region have also been used to provide jobs for the North Bihar, not only in the teaching category but also in the Class III nd IV categories depriving the legitimate claims of the permanent residents of Jharkhand. Most of the principals and the teachers of the colleges in Jharkhand region are from North Bihar. The Vice-Chancellors and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors have also been from North Bihar, appointed by the Chancellor on the recommendation of the Government of Bihar.

1.2.7.1 The Case of Ranchi University

The exception was Dr. Ram Dayal Munda, Professor and Head of the Post-Graduate Department, Tribal and Regional Languages of Ranchi University, a supporter of Jharkhand Movement. He was not allowed to complete his full tenure of three years. His resignation was demanded by the Chancellor, acting on the wishes of the Government. When Dr. Munda refused to resign, he was 'dismissed' because the Vice-Chancellors of the universities of Bihar hold their office at the pleasure of the Chancellor and his pleasure, *de facto*, is the pleasure of the Government. The successors of Munda came, as usual, from North Bihar. Another exception was made in appointing me as Vice-Chancellor of Ranchi University, with a motive, as in the case of Munda, to pacify the growing Jharkhand Movement. Numerous representations were sent to the Chancellor against my appointment pointing out that I supported the separation of

Jharkhand from Bihar, which I accepted without any ambiguity. Just before my appointment the previous Vice-Chancellor, again from North Bihar, had made several hundred fake 'appointments' in Class III and IV posts. The Government of Bihar had signed on agreement on 26.4.89 with the Association of Bihar State Universities and Colleges' Non-Teaching Employees that the services of all employees will be 'regularised' who were working on 26.4.89 against vacant posts or posts to be created in future. The principals of the colleges sent the list of employees appointed before 26.4.89, including of names of such persons who had never actually worked. The university accepted the lists of the Principals immediately, without any examination, and issued notifications, in most instances, on the next day after receiving the lists from the Principals. The official residence of the Vice-Chancellor was virtually a humming bazaar and money changed hands openly. As a senior teacher of the University I had protested against this. Little did I know that I was going to be appointed Vice-Chancellor soon after this sordid event. I asked the Principals of the colleges to furnish proofs to support the fact that the candidates in their lists were working as on 26.4.89. The Principals had no proofs of the 'fake' candidates. There was no advertisement, no interview, no payment either by cheque or cash, no record in the Acquittance Register, etc. The Principals just ignored the letter and reminders. Their offices were raided by Magistrates and records were seized. Several of them were suspended. A Committee of the University headed by Professor Ram Dayal Munda examined the records and confirmed the 'fake' names in the lists of the Principals. I discovered how difficult it was to terminate the service of an employee even though appointed illegally. The judicial decisions, including those of The Supreme Court, were contradictory on this matter. Some decisions argue that an illegal appointment cannot be legalised by lapse of time. Others argue that an illegally appointed employee has a right of natural justice and must be served with a show cause notice. It was not practical for me to serve show cause notices to hundreds of persons. I was also advised that each individual should be given a separate notice, because if the court decides to cancel the order of the University in relation to any one case, the entire notification will become null and void. I argued that it was not a case of termination of services of persons because these persons were never appointed. There was no proof that they had worked. Instead of 'terminating' their services, I declared them *persona non grata* for the University, and stopped their payments. Even this first cautious decision affected about a thousand persons. Expectedly, there were *dharnas, gheraos,* bomb explosions and ultimately High Court case in Ranchi. They lost and went to the Supreme Court, which upheld the right of the University to terminate the services of its employees and ordered it to regularise the services of the employees who were, in fact, working. (Reference: W.P.C. No.409/91). I carefully prepared the list of such candidates, certified by the Principals concerned, Finance Officer, Registrar and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and

submitted it to the Bihar Government with my recommendations. After I left the University, the new Vice-Chancellor was asked to prepare another list. He was a member of the Committee during my tenure which had examined the papers. The Education Department of the Government of Bihar ignored the lists sent by me and my successor Vice-Chancellor Dr. K.K. Nag. They sent an entirely new list of 955 persons which included the names of persons who were not even in the original lists of the Principals! (Reference: Letter No.1187 to 1202 dated 25.8.93). This was only the first list which did not include several colleges, post-graduate departments and the main university office. The second list was to include 1272 more names. The list of 955 persons was sent to the Principals directly and persons from North Bihar came to the colleges of Ranchi University for the first time in their lives to 'rejoin' their services. They did not even know the locations of the colleges. These 'appointments' were made by sacrificing many old employees working in the colleges for several years. These included local tribals. The 'newcomers' were beaten up. Even though a Vice-Chancellor of another university under the Government of Bihar at the time, I criticised the decision of the Bihar Government suggesting that the decision invited contempt of Supreme Court. The present Vice-Chancellor, a person belonging to Jharkhand region, boldly opposed the decision of the Government and refused to obey it. He pointed out that majority of the persons in the list sent by the Government of Bihar had never worked in Ranchi University. On the cut-off date of 26.4.89 someone was a student, someone was a lawyer, someone was doing business, and others were unemployed. Thirty-six persons in one college alone (Ghatshila) in this list had their addresses care Shri B.P. Choudhary IAS, Additional Secretary, Human Resource Development Department, Government of Bihar, Patna! The Chief Minister cancelled the Notification containing the new list (Reference: Letter No.1324 dated 13.9.93). But he did not take any action against the erring officer. It is alleged that each candidate had paid a sum of about rupees thirty to fifty thousand, from each according to his capacity! It is difficult to prove this allegation. But it is also very difficult to understand why these 'fake' names were included, if there was no bribe involved. It is also very surprising that the Chief Minister, who is known for making quick suspensions of 'corrupt and inefficient' officials did not take any action against this officer. This incident illustrates the fact that a North Bihari Officer sitting at the Patna Secretariat can take a decision like this ignoring the growing political consciousness and resentment in Jharkhand. He had, in one stroke nullified the hard work I had done for about two and half years under great strain. He had the courage to ignore and misinterpret the decision of the Supreme Court. This case also demonstrated the linkages between the officials at different levels, including Ranchi University, leading up to the Patna Secretariat. And these included some tribals also.

1.2.7.2 The Case of Siddhu Kanhu University

Siddhu-Kanhu University was established as an Act of State Legislation. Dr. Jagannath Mishra, the then Congress Chief Minister, had named it after its geographical territory, that is, Santhal Paragana Division. However, it remained inoperative. The Janta Dal Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, conceding the demands of Jharkhand leaders, re-named it to honour the leaders of 1855 Santhal rebellions, Siddhu and Kanhu, who were hanged by the British. To please the tribal sentiments he also added the name of Tilaka Manjhi to the neighbouring University of Bhagalpur. Tilaka Manjhi was a Santhal tribal who had revolted against the British Raj (1780–85) and had killed Cleveland by his poisoned arrow. I was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor of Siddhu Kanhu University in February 1992, again as an act of concession to the Jharkhand Movement. I belonged to this region. Though the University was established, the Government of Bihar did not give it any fund as seed money, though a grant of one crore was given to Jai Prakash University, another newly created University, in North Bihar in the area of the Chief Minister. With great efforts I got a sum of ninety lakhs sancationed. Another ten lakhs were sanctioned to Ranchi and Siddhu Kanhu Universities for tribal languages.This was communicated to me by the Education Secretary at Patna and confirmed by the Regional Commissioner at Ranchi (Reference: Letter No. 8 dated 27 Jan. 94). But only a few days later on 10 February 94, I was told that only 19.40 lakhs were available, and the remaining amount had been diverted. I learnt that it was diverted to the Minor Irrigation Department by a Committee consisting of three Ministers, all from North Bihar. I also learnt that the real reason was, what is called 'March Loot', that is, hurried fake expenditure before the closure of the financial year on 31 March. It was possible to get a 'cut' from the contractors of the Minor Irrigation Department. So, the poor new university could wait. The University protested against this diversion, appealed to the Chancellor, and Chief Minister. Nothing happened. The University then wrote to all the legislators of the region belonging to all political parties. The Minister of State, Higher Education, in reply to the questions of Dr. Diwakar Prasad Singh, admitted the facts that the amount was sanctioned and diverted and assured that the amount would be made available to the University (Reference: 116 session of Bihar Legislative Council, Question No.22). Incidentally, Dr. Diwakar Prasad Singh was the Minister of Higher Education, who was dropped due to differences with the Chief Minister. But he still continued to be member of the ruling party. Resentment against this injustice grew in Jharkhand region. It was mentioned in all public meetings in Jharkhand region, including those in which the chief guest was a cabinet minister. It was mentioned in the New Year card of the University sent by me. This became too much for the high office of the Regional Development Commissioner, which alleged that the grant was not released because of the inadequacies in the application of the University.

The university was asked to give information about availability of land and its building. These informat on were already with the RDC office. But it could not be more imaginative. They were furious when I wrote back that it had taken them ten full months to write to the University asking for these information, which was meant to cover up the absolutely unjustified and immoral diversion of the funds allotted to a newly created University in a backward tribal region. This was a classic example of blaming the victim. Ironically, the three senior-most officials in RDC office were tribals, made powerless by their North Bihar political masters. Or, did they also join the 'March-Loot'? One can only speculate.

1.2.8. 'The Malaise of Jharkhand'

The Committee on Jharkhand Matters (COJM) had listed fifteen important issues indicated in the 140 memoranda and representations submitted to it. The COJM Report discussed these in its Chapter IV entitled: 'The Malaise of Jharkhand'. The fifteen issues are:

i) The Jharkhand region is a neglected backward area;
ii) The indigenous population, (i.e. excluding *dikkus* or alien people) has been subject to exploitation, oppression, etc.
iii) Tribal land has been alienated from them in various ways;
iv) Deforestation has affected the tribal and non-tribal people very badly socio-economically denying them forest-land and its produce;
v) Scanty minor irrigation facilities have been created, particularly after Independence;
vi) Poor transportation and communication facilities;
vii) Low levels of nutrition in tribal areas;
viii) Dearth of hygienic drinking water supply;
ix) Unsatisfactory rehabilitation of displaced persons;
x) Exploitation by liquor vendors and money-lenders;
xi) Disruption of the traditional system of village headmen;
xii) Culturally, the indigenous people have been smothered. Their languages have not been developed;
xiii) They have been discriminated against in the matter of employment in government, public and private sector;
xiv) Funds for tribal development have been diverted or siphoned off elsewhere;
xv) Inept functioning of the Tribal Advisory Council and Regional Development Authorities (COJM p.21).

We have already documented the statistics and facts in most of these except health-related points number vii and viii concerned with health and nutrition. We are describing briefly the health status in Jharkhand.

1.2.8.1 Health Status in Jharkhand

Eleven surveys covering a total sample of 6051 cases have reported low level of health, nutrition status in the tribals of Jharkhand, Bihar (Arora and Choudhury, 1993; Jayaswal 1985, Jayaswal and Singh 1989; Rajalakshmi, 1991–92; Sahay,1993; Sahay and Singh 1989, Singh A.K. et al., 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1991 a,b). A summary of these studies have been reported in the paper entitled: *Health Modernity in the Tribals of Jharkhand, Bihar* (Singh and Jayaswal 1994). The health surveys measured the extent of scientific knowledge, attitudes and practice in relation to physical and mental health, diet and nutrition, family planning and child care, breast-feeding, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, cleanliness of body, food, water, and home and village. The data on health and nutrition in two tribal blocks in Ranchi district explode *The Myth of the Health Tribal* (Singh, A.K. et al., 1987a). Less than 8% of the children were immunised and two-thirds of the children under five were malnourished, 44% having severe malnutrition. A large majority consumed *haria* (89%) a home-brewed rice-beer, and took tobacco (71%) in the form of raw leaves of *Khaini.* Less than 40% had scientifically correct knowledge of and attitude to health, nutrition and population related issues Not only the health status but educational and employment status of the tribals are lower than other social groups in India (Singh and Jabbi, forthcoming).

2. Historical Background of Jharkhand

We have discussed the colonialisation of Jharkhand by the Government of India, and more particularly by the Government of Bihar dominated by North Bihar. It seems proper to describe briefly the historical background of Jharkhand before discussing the response of Jharkhand people to their colonialisation, the Jharkhand Movement, the demand of a separate state and the responses of the Governments of India and Bihar.

2.1 Early Mention of the Word 'Jharkhand'

The word Jharkhand was mentioned in ancient Sanskrit scriptures of India. Jharkhand was described, in an undated Sanskrit *Sloka*, as a place where people drank from metal vessel, ate from sal leaves, slept on mat made of date-palm leaves. (Aah patra payam panam, Sal patra ch bhojnam, sayanam kharjure patra, Jharkhand vidiyate). The seventeenth canto of *Shri Chaityna Charitamrit* has recorded that Chaityna, had come to Jharkhand in 1485 en route to Mathura, and had preached his faith, which was accepted by many.

2.2 Jharkhand in *Ain-i-Akbari* (1601)

The 1601 map of the Mughal Empire in *Ain-I-Akbari* by Abul Fazl shows Jharkhand spread over areas of present Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar. The Mughals had attacked the Jharkhand region in 1385 and again in 1616. They

had arrested the king of Jharkhand, Durjan Sal, and had kept him imprisoned in Gwalior. The Marathas had also attacked the Jharkhand region. The Mughals and the Marathas had stayed in Jharkhand for brief periods. Their aim was collection of wealth, mainly from the local feudal chiefs.

2.3 The Grant of Diwani to East India Company

In 1765, the East India Company was granted *Diwani* of Bihar, Orissa and Bengal, empowering it to collect revenues. The Permanent Settlement of 1796 strengthened the grip of the Company on Jharkhand. In 1858, there was transfer of power from the Company to the Crown.

2.4 The Period of Open Revolt: 1793–1915

During the period 1793 to 1915, there were intermittent tribal rebellions in Jharkhand in which the non-tribals also joined. (Munda, 1988, Munda and Keshari, 1992). The rebellions were against the changes in the land system and change from collective ownership to individual ownership. They were against the British, their agents and money-lenders. These had started much earlier than the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 which has been described as the first war of Independence. Sepoy Mutiny had a much larger coverage than the pre-1857 tribal rebellions in Jharkhand. The Sepoy Mutiny was led by several feudal chiefs whereas the tribal rebellions were led by leaders who were ordinary peasants. There was much greater mass mobilisation in the pre-1857 tribals revolts (Ghanshyam 1987). Even the Indian historians have not given due recognition to pre-1857 tribal revolts as harbingers of the Indian Independence Movement. The major revolts in Jharkhand were:

1793	:	First Santhal Revolt under the leadership of Tilak Manjhi
1798	:	The Bhumij Revolt
1810	:	The Chero uprising of Palamu led by Bhukan Singh
1819–20	:	Munda uprising of Tamar led by Rudu and Konta 1833
	:	Kol Rebellion led by Singhrai and Binrai Manki
1834	:	The second Bhumij Revolt led by Ganganarain
1855	:	The second Santhal Rebellion led by Siddhu and Kanhu
1857	:	Sepoy Mutiny led by Biswanath Saahi, Ganpat Rai, Sheikh Bhikari and Bir Budhu Bhagat
1875-95	:	Sardar Movement
1895–1900	:	Tana Bhagat Movement under the leadership of Jatra Bhagat

(Munda and Keshri, 1992, p.7)

2.5 The Jharkhand Movement

The Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj established in 1915, was the first pan-tribal organisation for the economic and educational welfare of the tribals. The Samaj changed into Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938 under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, an Oxford-educated person, who had led the India hockey team to victory in 1928 Olympics. The Adivasi Mahasabha was named as Jharkhand Party in 1950, which won 32 seats in the Bihar Assembly in the first General Election in 1952. It submitted a Memorandum to the State Reorganisation Commission in 1955, which was rejected. The Jharkhand Party won 28 seats to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1957 election. The Jharkhand Party could win only 20 seats in 1962 to the Bihar Legislative Assembly. Disappointed by the gradual reduction of Assembly seats, total rejection of its demand for a Jharkhand State by SRC. Jaipal Singh was lured to merge the Jharkhand Party with Congress in 1963, gaining a berth in the cabinet of Bihar Ministry which, alas, was for only a few months. This was a major setback for the Jharkhand Movement. But, slowly the movement again picked up. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) was formed under the leadership of Shibu Soren in 1973, which own 13 seats to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1985. The Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) was formed in 1986 and the Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee (JCC) in 1987.

3. The Demand of Separate Jharkhand State

3.1 Simon Commission

Several Memoranda were submitted to the Simon Commission which visited Chotanagpur in 1929. Mr. S.C. Roy, a lawyer turned anthropologist, author of several important books on the tribals of Jharkhand, had pleaded for separation of the area from Bihar to be merged with the proposed Orissa. Lutherans and Anglicans had demanded greater Chotanagpur. The demand was rejected. However, the Commission had noted the marked differences between Bihar, Chotnagpur and Orissa:

> The province of Bihar and Orissa, which was constituted in 1912, is the most artificial unit of all the Indian provinces. It was formed by bringing under a single administration three areas, which differ markedly not only in physical features, but in many racial, linguistic and cultural characteristics.
>
> *Quoted in Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh (1954a)*

3.2 State Re-organisation Commission (SRC)

3.2.1 Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangha

The State Re-organisation Commission was constituted in 1953. Several memoranda were submitted to it demanding separation of Jharkhand from

Bihar. The Jharkhand Party led by Jaipal Singh had, of course, submitted one. But the most well-argued memorandum was submitted by *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh* led by Mr. Ram Narayan Singh, Member Parliament. It may be noted that the Jharkhand Party was led by a tribal, while the *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh* by a non-tribal. The aims and objects of *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh, inter alia,* included:

> To safeguard and promote the general interests and well-being of the people of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas, irrespective of caste, creed or community and to strive for the all round development of these most neglected parts of the country.

The demand of Jharkhand State was made by not only the tribals, but by all communities. The main arguments of the Memorandum of the Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh for a separate Jharkhand State may be summarised as follows.

3.2.2. The Report of the Thakkar Tribal Sub-Committee

The Constituent Assembly of India had appointed one Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal Areas with Vallabhbhai Patel as its Chairman. A.V. Thakkar was nominated as the Chairman of Tribal Sub-Committee excluding Assam for which another sub-committee was chaired by G.N. Bardoloi. The two Sub-Committees in their Joint Report issued on 25 August 1947 had observed:

> The extreme expression of the discontent prevalent in Chotanagpur is the Separatist Movement which demands formation of a *'New Province of Jharkhand'*.....The movement is sponsored at present by the Adivasi Mahasabha, containing a very large advanced Christian element. *Unmistakably also the movement is gaining sympathy by among the non-aboriginals*.....the separation movement.....seems to be gaining strength as a symptom of the discontent which is simmering in varying intensity among all sections of the Chotanagpur population.....the feeling common among educated tribals and shared by non-tribals in considerable measure (is) that Chotanagpur has little share in the Administration commensurate with its area, population and industrial importance and is being neglected by the Government, which is made up of the elements interested mostly in the rest of Bihar.
>
> *Quoted in Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh (1954a)*

3.2.2.1 Memorandum of Dr. Sachchidananda to Thakkar Sub-Committee

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, acknowldeged as one of the important leaders of modern Bihar, and one opposed to the creation of Jharkhand State, had also

admitted to the Thakker Committee that 'all sections of almost all classes and communities in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas' share a feeling in injustice against North Bihar.

Finally, I may add that in stating what I have done, I have not expressed my individual opinions so much as the opinion of the thinking sections of almost all classes and communities in Chotanagpur and Santhal Paraganas which has found expression from time to time in the local press at Ranchi. *The grievance, in my opinion, is just and well-founded and should be seriously tackled and redressed at as early a date as possible*

Quoted in Chotanagapur Sanjukta Sangh (1954a, p.6).

3.2.2.2 Historical Geo-Political Map of Jharkhand

The Memorandum had described the history of the administrative areas under Chotanagpur in four periods. In the first period (1780–83) Ramgarh Hill Tract administered an area of nearly 18,000 square miles with headquarters at Ramgarh near Ranchi. In the second period (1833–1854), the Ramgarh Hill Tract Area was changed to South West Frontier Agency, which unlike Ramgarh Hill Tract Area, was, for the first time, a 'Non-Regulation' province, rather than a district. In the third period (1854–1912) the South West Frontier Agency was abolished and CHUTIANAGPUR DIVISION was created. The Commissioner of the Chutianagpur Division worked directly under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. Responding to the 'Santhal Rebellion' of 1855, 'Santhal Paraganas' district was created as a 'Non-Regulation District' to be administered by officer/s under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Thus, the Memorandum points out:

> Historically, therefore, both Chutianagpur Division and the District of Santhal Paraganas were in 1854 under the direct administration of the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and had no connection with Bihar or the Company's authorities in Patna.
>
> *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh (1954a, p.6).*

The Royal Proclamation declared at the time of Delhi Coronation Darbar held on 12 December 1911 granted separate status from Bengal to Bihar, Chotanagpur and Orissa. The three areas were distinctly mentioned. Chotanagpur was linked with Bihar and Orissa in 1912 for administrative purposed. The fourth period in the Jharkhand region covered the years from 1912 to 1954. The creation of separate states of Bihar and Orissa in 1912 took away large areas from Chutianagpur Division and attached them to Orissa (Gangpur and Bonai) and Central Provinces (Jashpur, Surguja, Udaipur, Korea and Changbhakar) (Sharma, A.P. 1993, p.13). The map of Chutianagpur Division prepared by Surveyor General of India, Colonel H.L. Thuillier in January 1877, had included the districts of Lohardaga, Hazaribagh, Manbhum and Singhbhum and the

Tributary states of Changbhakar, Korea, Surguja, Jashpur, Udaipur, Gangpur and Bonai. The Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangha had made this map its basis for the demand for Autonomous Chotanagpur State or the Jharkhand State.

> The AUTONOMOUS CHOTANAGPUR STATE shall comprise the five districts of Chotanagpur Division (Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Manbhum and Singhbhum), the Discrict of Santhal Paraganas, and the old Tributary States of CHOTANAGPUR DIVISION, that is, Changbhakar, Korea, Udaipur, Sarguja and Jashpur, Gangpur and Bonai (at present amalgamated with Madhya Pradesh and Orissa) against the will and general interests of the people of these areas. It shall also comprise the eastern border portions of the old Manbhum district, that is, 'Supur' and 'Raipur' areas already annexed to the districts of Bankura in West Bengal. In this way the area of our proposed Chotanagpur state is based upon irrefutable historical and geographical facts.
>
> *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh, 1954a, p.26*

According to the Memorandum, the Chutianagpur Division created in 1854 and renamed as Chotanagpur Division, continues today only in name, with its territorial jurisdiction reduced from time to time to suit the political interests of the ruling groups.

3.2.2.3 Eligibility of Autonomous Chotanagpur State

The Memorandum of the ***Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangha*** has very carefully and in great detail discussed the eligibility and viability of the Chotanagpur State in relation to size (48,520 sq. miles) and population 12,552,146 (1951 census). It has argued that it will be 'a fully viable state' (Part Four).

3.2.2.4 The 'Deficit Theory' about Chotanagpur

Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha, the first Chief Minister of Bihar and Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha a loyal supporter of north Bihar upper-caste-dominated Bihar Government, had argued that the Chotanagpur State will be financially deficit. The financial considerations, Sri Krishna Sinha had declared, was 'an unsurmountable hurdle against the constitution of this area into a separate Province (Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh, 1954, p.34). In his Memorandum to the SRC Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha had argued that Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas were 'deficit areas'. They had a deficit of Rs.71,26000 in 1943–44, of Rs.90,02,00 in 1944–45 and 84,5800 in 1945–46. In calculating these deficits Dr. Sinha had excluded the income by Excise Revenue and proportionate allotment of the share of Income Tax to this area because these were 'likely to disappear in the near future'. The Memorandum of the Sangha had proved, by relevant statistics, that these assumptions were incorrect and Chotanagpur and Santhal

Parganas had a 'clear surplus balance' of 240,63000 in 1945–46. The Memorandum alleged that the leaders and administrators of 'Bihar Proper' purposively manipulated the Revenue figures to show actually surplus areas of Chotanagpur and Santhal Paraganas as deficit to serve their own selfish end (p.42). The Memorandum, by calculating the share of Central grant to Chotanagpur and Santhal pargana on the basis of population, that is, 2/7th part of total grant of Bihar. The figures of Finance Commission for the year 1954–55 showed a sum of Rs.529 lakh as share of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana. Thus, what Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha had assumed as unstable income 'likely to disappear in the near future', in fact, increased to the amount of Rs.529 lakhs, which was more than the total revenue of State of Bihar in 1938–39 (p.48). The Memorandum had also demonstrated that the 'Residual Bihar' will also be viable after the separation of Chotanagpur and Santhal Paragana (pp.56–57).

3.2.2.5 Cultural and linguistic unity of Chotanagpur Plateau

The Memorandum discusses the cultural and linguistic unity of Chotanagpur Plateau (Part five pp.63-78), which has developed historically a multi-lingual and multi-racial synthetic culture, similar to Switzerland. Hindi is the common language which is spoken and understood in its local variation known as 'Nagpuria' or 'rustic Hindi' or 'Nagpuria-Hindi'. The area retains distinctive local socio-political institutions of tribal communities such as *Parha Punch, Praganait and the Manki System*, which are also in the adjoining states of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal, but not in North Bihar. The tribal and non-tribal cultures do not only co-exist, but they have interacted with each other and now they share characteristics of both. The Constitution of *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh* has accepted and emphasised the composite culture of Chotanagpur.

> By the word 'Chotanagpur' is meant the people of all communities (i.e. the Adivasis, Biharis, Bengalees, Oriyas and others) who reside in any part of Chotanagpur Plateau and who have permanently settled or want to permanently settle here having merged their interests with those of the people of this region, but the same must be consistent with interest of the nation as a whole.
>
> *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh* (1954a, p.65).

3.2.3. Rejection of Jharkhand Demand by SRC

The demand for a separate Jharkhand state or Chotanagpur State was rejected by State Re-organisation Committee. The Governmental Committees usually consist of respectable persons, who, after a great deal of show and camouflage, substantiate with 'facts', the conclusions the Government want. This was also the case with SRC. It did not consider the division of the largest state of

India, Uttar Pradesh (because the Prime Minister came from there), but did recommend the division of smaller States! It was also unfair and unjust to the legitimate demand for a separate State of Jharkhand and its decision was political.

3.2.4 SRC's Reasons for the Rejection of Demand for Jharkhand State

The reasons given by the SRC for rejection of the demand for Jharkhand have been fully refuted (Singh, R.N. 1956, GOI, COJM report 1990). Let us examine the important reasons given by the SRC for the rejection of the demand for a separate Jharkhand or Chotanagpur state.

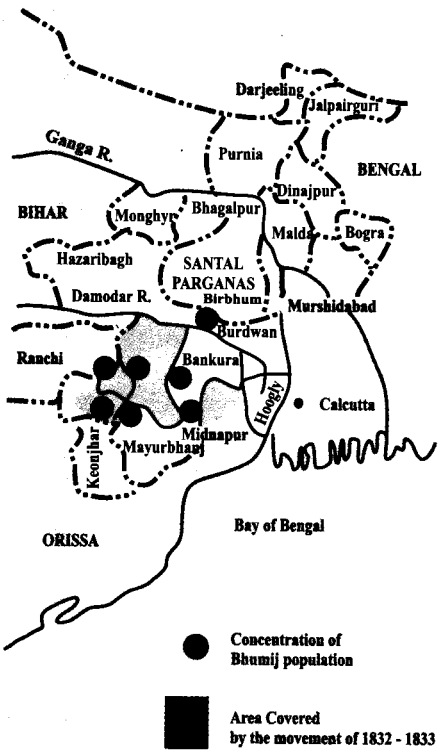
3.2.4.1 Public Opinion Outside South Bihar

The SRC had stated that the public opinion outside South Bihar did not favour the division of Bihar. It observed:

> We need hardly add that public opinion outside south Bihar is not in favour of dividing the state. Even in south Bihar, parties other than the Jharkhand Party were, in general, opposed to a division.
>
> *Quoted in Singh, R.N. (1956, p.4)*

The above observation has two parts. In the first, SRC states that North Bihar is opposed to the division of the State. In the second part, it states that the demand does not have support from other parties except Jharkhand in South Bihar. The first point is undemocratic, and opposed to the very philosophy and objectives of the SRC. The wishes of the people of North Bihar cannot be considered for a political administrative arrangement covering the territorial jurisdiction of Jharkhand region. The second point, that there was opposition of creation of a new State even in South Bihar was factually incorrect. We have already quoted from the Thakkar Report the formation of 'New Province of Jharkhand' was supported by tribals as well as non-tribals. At the time of the visit of SRC there were four important political parties in this region: the Congress Party, the Jharkhand Party, the Janta Party and the Lok Sevak Sangh. Except the Congress Party, all other parties had supported the creation of Jharkhand state and their elected representatives had declared this on the floor of the Bihar Assembly. Now, after four decades of the SRC Report, all political parties in Bihar (North and South) are in support of greater effective autonomy to Jharkhand or the creation of a separate State. The only opposition now is from the ruling Janta Dal which, in principle, favours creation of smaller States. The main inspiration of Janta Dal in Bihar, Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan had favoured the creation of Jharkhand. Ambedkar had also favoured the creation of Jharkhand state.

AREA OF MUNDA UPPRISING



Source for the data on population : S.C. Sinha, "Some Aspects of Change in Bhumij Religion in South Manbhum, Bihar" Man in India, Vol. 33. No. 2, 1953.

3.2.4.2 Demand for separation was by a minority group in South Bihar, namely the Tribals only

The SRC had taken the view that the demand for the separation from Bihar was supported by only the tribals of Jharkhand region, who constituted a minority group. The SRC had written:

> If the Chotanagpur division and Santhal Paragana are taken together, the tribal population is only a little more than one third of the total population and divided into several language groups. Even if it is assumed that Adivasis are solidly in favour of the formation of Jharkhand State, a major issue of this kind cannot in our opinion, be decided on the basis.
>
> *Quoted in Singh R.N. (1956, p.6)*

These observations of the SRC were factually wrong. It is true that the Adivasi supported Jharkhand. The initiative of the separation from Bihar was first taken by the tribals. Bishop Van Hocck and Juel Lakra of Unnati Samaj had submitted a Memorandum for creation of an administrative unit for Chotanagpur to the Simon Commission. It is also true that the Memorandum submitted to the SRC by the Jharkhand Party was signed by 34 Members of Legislative Assembly, all tribals. But the *Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh* under Mr. R.N. Singh, Member Parliament, a non-tribal, had also submitted a Memorandum, in author's opinion, the most well-argued. On the eve of the visit of SRC the District Bar Associations of Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Daltonganj (Palamu) and the sub-divisional Bar Association of Khunti had passed resolutions supporting the creation of a separate Jharkhand State. The Bar Associations had a very negligible number of tribal membership. Thakkar Tribal Sub-Committee Report in 1947 had found that the demand of separate State had the support of tribals as well as the non-tribals.

3.2.4.3 Economic dislocation in Bihar due to separation

SRC had argued that the industries of Chotanagpur and the agriculture of North Bihar were complementary and feared that the separation of Chotanagpur will disrupt the entire economy of Bihar. The SRC had observed:

> The separation of South Bihar will affect the entire economy of the existing State. The plains are predominantly agricultural and the Chotanagpur Plateau provides an industrial balance. The sugar factories of the state are situated outside the Chotanagpur division, but the coal-bearing areas and the major industrial zones are in South Bihar. Bihar's biggest thermal power station is also located at Bokaro in the Jharkhand area. The residual area can hardly afford to lose the benefits derived from this station.
>
> *Para 619 Quoted in Singh R.N. (1956, p.9)*

The naïve argument of the SRC has been rebutted by pointing out that the new State will continue to be a part of the Indian Union and the economy of India depends upon contributions from all parts.

Practically speaking, Bombay has no sugar factory, while Bihar has no textile mills. Therefore, does it mean that people of Bombay are going without sugar and those of Bihar without clothes? If the separation of the Chotanagpur Plateau from the State of Bihar is effected, it will in no way hamper or stop the coal supply to the sugar factories of 'Bihar Proper' (or 'North Bihar'), nor the people of South Bihar will be deprived of its sugar supply from Bihar proper.

Singh R.N. (1956, p.9)

R.N. Singh has also pointed out that the plains of Bihar have important industries. There are 28 sugar factories, more than 140 rice-mills; the entire jute industry, cement and paper factories at Dalmia Nagar; Cotton mills at Gaya and Phulwarishariff, Bhagalpur, Katihar; Roller floor mill and shoe factory at Patna, glass factory at Colgong; tea factory at Purnea; silk industry at Bhagalpur; button factories at Champaran; gun factories at Munger; Locomotive and coach repairing factory and cigarette factory at Jamalpur.

3.2.4.4 Viability of Chotanagpur and Rest of Bihar States

He has further argued that Chotanagpur as well as the Rest of Bihar are both viable in the same way as Assam and Orissa are (Table 8).

TABLE 8

Viability of Chotanagpur State and Rest of Bihar

States	Area Sq.Mile	Population	Average Yearly Revenue*
1. Assam	54,084	90,43,707	Rs.11.31 lakhs
2. Orissa	60,136	146,45,946	Rs.11.95 lakhs
3. Chotanagpur State (six districts only)	33,160	108,66,351	Rs.13.00 lakhs
4. Residual Bihar	37,170	293,59,596	Rs.23.60 lakhs

*Average of three financial year, viz. 1950–51, 1951–52 and 1952–53.

Source : Singh R.N. (1956): An Appeal to the Government of India and the Members of Parliament: Factual analysis of the State Re-organisation Commission's Report with regard to the Jharkhand Area, Ranchi, Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangha, p.12.

The SRC had been very unfair to reject the demand of Jharkhand State and recommend statehood to Kerala, Vidarbha and Telengana. Disappointed, deceived and angry with the unfair decision of the SRC, Singh wrote:

> The fire of wide and deep discontent, simmering in the hearts of the people of this Chotanagpur Plateau, cannot be quenched or suppressed for long, by any amount of legal casuistry and political sophistry or ingenuity whatsoever. This right of self-determination of the people of Chotanagpur region must have to be recognised sooner or later.
>
> *Singh R.N. (1956 p.27)*

After more than three decades, in 1990, the Committee on Jharkhand Matters Quoted these lines describing them as 'prophetic' (p.95).

4. Committee on Jharkhand Matters (COJM)

The Committee on Jharkhand Matters (COJM) was formed by the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs on 23 august 1989. The COJM consisted of representatives of Jharkhand Movement, including the author of this paper, representatives from the Central and State Governments, Experts, and representatives of Sadan Vikas Parishad. The Members of Parliament representing Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana were made Observers. The COJM visited the four States of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. It submitted its Report in May 1990. The main highlights of COJM Report are:

4.1 Widening Social Base of Jharkhand

Unlike SRC, the COJM found that the demand of Jharkhand State was not limited only to the tribal population but was also supported by other social groups.

> It is commonly assumed that Jharkhand is the demand only of the tribal population of the Chotanagpur plateau. Indeed, this has been the case for well over three or four decades.....In its latest phase it has acquired a broader base in as much as large section of the non-tribal population is in sympathy with the demand for autonomy or a separate state. As such, it calls for treatment as a regional problem and not as a caste, communal and even merely ethnic problem.
>
> *(GOI 1990, para 12, p.34)*

One of the Experts of COJM Dr. Kumar Suresh Singh, an eminent scholar, had earlier written about the journey of Jharkhand Movement 'From Ethnicity to Regionalism' (Singh, K.S. 1977). The COJM recorded its disagreement on the assessment of SRC that Jharkhand demand was not supported by the non-tribals. COJM felt that SRC had ignored the facts that Jharkhand demand was

supported by Janta Party, and Lok Sevak Sangh, both predominantly non-tribal. These parties together with Jharkhand party and some sections of the Congress 'did represent majority opinion of the region' (p.15).

The COJM Report also noted the fact that there has been a decline in the tribal population in Jharkhand region because of migration of tribal from Jharkhand in search of jobs and, on the other hand, immigration of non-tribals to take up the new jobs created by the development projects. The tribal population declined to 30.26 per cent in 1981 from 36.81 in 1951 (17). It further declined to 27.67 in 1991. However, despite this decline if the Kurmi-Mahatos, who constitute about fifty per cent of the total population of Jharkhand, are added to the tribal population, they clearly constitute a majority (p.33). The Kurmi-Mahato were considered Scheduled Tribes till the census of 1931, after which they were de-scheduled hurriedly as a political decision to decrease the tribal percentage in the population. The Kurmi-Mahatos have been agitating to regain their tribal status (Mahto B.D. undated; Mahto, P., 1994).

4.2 Political Support for Jharkhand Autonomy in Bihar

COJM recorded the opinions of political parties organisations supporting or opposing the creation of Jharkhand State (Table 9).

4.3 Jharkhand Cultural Region

The COJM supported that the Jharkhand Cultural Region covers the four States of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. Despite political and administrative divisions, this region has developed a distinct cultural identity.

> It is, therefore, suggested that there should be an overall cultural development authority for the development of Jharkhand as a cultural region. The authority may have its autonomous councils in the four States comprising the areas with preponderant or sizeable tribal/ non-tribal populations who are linked to Chotanagpur.
>
> *GOI 1990, para 31, p.19*

Model of Autonomy

The *sarkari* Experts, though sympathetic to the demand of Autonomy for Jharkhand area, rejected the award of a separate State or a Union Territory, and recommended formation of Jharkhand General Council (JGC) with limited powers on certain subjects, as per the wishes of Government of India. The representatives of Jharkhand Movement did not accept it and gave a Note of Dissent. The signatories include the author of this paper.

TABLE 9
Support for Jharkhand Autonomy

Supported a Separate State	Opposed a Separate State	Supported Autonomy
1. Jharkhand Party	1. Congress (I)	1. Sadan Vikas Parishad
2. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha	2. Ranchi Zila Congress (I) Committee (but favoured decentralisation of power)	2. CPM
3. Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee	3. Janata Dal	
4. All Jharkhand Students Union	4. CPM (but favoured autonomy and application of Sixth schedule)	
5. Jharkhand Kranti Dal		
6. Hul Jharkhand		
7. Communist Party of India		
8. Bhartiya Janta Party (in the name of Vananchal) (see Singh A.K. 1990c)		
9. Adivasi Kurmi Samaj		
10. Akhil Bhartiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad		
11. Youth Movement Conference Central Committee, Kanke		
12. Chotanagpur Alapsankhyak Bengali Samiti		
13. Hatia Visthapit Praphavit Janta Morcha, Hatia, Ranchi.		
14. District Lok Dal, Ranchi		

GOI 1990, pp.34-35

> We the representatives of the Jharkhand movement hold the opinion that the whole Jharkhand cultural region should be brought under a single political administrative unit in the form of a Jharkhand State constituted under Article 3 of the Constitution. We are of the view, that anything less than full statehood will not be adequate to fulfil the aspirations of the people.
>
> *GOI 1990, p.50*

5. Post COJM Development

Despite the stalemate, the COJM Report remains an important landmark in the chequered history of Jharkhand Movement with many ups and downs. COJM has recognised the wider social base of Jharkhand Movement and its intensity in Bihar, and in some lesser degree in West Bengal and Orissa. It has recognised the Jharkhand Cultural Region spreading over the four States of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. It has accepted the neglect of this region, its exploitation and adverse consequences of big development projects in post-Independence India.

5.1 The Response of Government of Bihar

The Government of Bihar had sent its comments on the recommendations of the COJM. Mr. Kamla Prasad, the then Chief Secretary had written to Shri Naresh Chandra, Secretary, Home Ministry vide his letter No.2355 dated 29 NOV 1990 marked ***Param Gupta (Top Secret)***, but it was hardly any secret as its copies were available to persons associated with Jharkhand Movement. The last paragraph of the letter of Shri Kamla Prasad was intriguing as it stated that according to the State Government the Central Government alone can take a decision on formation of a separate State after considering all facts and circumstances; the State Government will render to the Government of India any assistance required in taking this decision. Was it an implicit consent for the formation of separate Jharkhand State? Perhaps NOT. It was only one of the many misleading statements by Government of Bihar and its officers. In his letter the Chief Secretary had conveyed the acceptance of several recommendations of COJM which were development-oriented such as establishment of Rural Self Employment Training Institute, Jharkhand Culture Academy and Vidyasagar Women Education Institute at Vidyasagar. Nothing was done on any of them.

5.2 Jharkhand Area Development Council Bill 1991

The Jharkhand Area Development Council Bill 1991 was passed in Bihar Assembly and was sent to the Central Government for approval, who sent its comments on each item of the Bill. The Jharkhand Mukti Mortha had surprisingly voted in favour of this Bill. At that time they were supporting the Bihar government. They were led up the garden path by the crafty Chief Minister, who had provided them with all official facilities. The JADC Bill was an apology for Autonomy. The Chairman of the Council was to be nominated by the Chief Minister. So also the Vice-Chairman. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman were to serve at the pleasure of the State Government. The State Government had the power to dissolve the Council. Expectedly, it was fiercely opposed by the supporters of Jharkhand Movement.

5.3 Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) Bill (1994)

The Government of India, after several consultations with the Government of Bihar and Jharkhand leaders, advised modification of Jharkhand Area Development Bill. An "Agreed statement on the formation of Jharkhand Autonomous Council" was signed on 26 September 1994 by Mr. Rajesh Pilot, Minister of State, Government of India; Mr. Laloo Prasad, Chief Minister of Bihar, and Jharkhand Leaders, including Mr. Shibu Soren and Mr. Suraj Mandal of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. The Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) Bill was prepared on the basis of this Agrement, though modifying it somewhat. The JAAC Bill was adopted by the Bihar Legislative Assembly on 20 August 1994.

The JAAC covers the 18 districts of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana with an area of 79714 square km and a population of 21843911. The size and population of JAAC is more than several nation states of the United Nations. It is more than that of Sri Lanka and is almost equal to that of Nepal. Even the tribal population alone of JAAC (6,044,010) is more than five times that of Mauritius, four times that of Bhutan, thrice that of Kuwait, twice that of Lebanon or Singapore and more than the population of Israel and Jordan.

The JAAC will have 162 directly elected members and 18 nominated members. The State Election Commission shall divide each Assembly Constituency in the area in two almost equal parts. There will be reservation for the SCs and the STs. The Chairman of JAAC will be a person of the Scheduled Tribe elected by its members. The Chairman will nominate the Vice-Chairman and 19 members to the Executive Council giving adequate representations to the SCs, STs, Backward Castes, Minorities and Women. The tenure of JAAC will be for five years. However, the Governor will have the powers to dissolve the Council and hold fresh elections within six months of the dissolution.

The JAAC has been given 42 subjects which, in fact, are mere sub-divisions of the main subject. The main subjects under JAAC are:

- ***Rural Development and allied subjects:*** Agriculture, minor irrigation, animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, bee-keeping, sericulture, small and cottage industries, village markets and fares, rural roads, cattle pound, flood control for protection of villages, and forest (excluding settlement).
- ***Local self-Government and allied subjects:*** Panchayats, municipal corporation, improvement trust and district board, local transport.
- ***School Education and allied subjects:*** primary and secondary education, plus-two education, vocational education.
- ***Cultural Affairs and allied subjects:*** Youth welfare, sports, theatre and drama.

- ***Public Health and allied subjects:*** Hospitals, dispensaries, training of nurses, PHED and sanitation.
- ***Welfare and allied subjects:*** Tribal welfare, tribal sub-plan and welfare, all programmes of Welfare Department, and all programmes related to urban development.
- ***Miscellaneous:*** Implementation of external-aided projects, PWD, tourism, minor minerals, food and civic supplies, vital statistics, weights and measures, cremation grounds and graveyards, etc.

The functions and powers of JAAC include, *inter alia*, preparation and implementation of long-term and short-term plans for the development of the region, creation and appointment of Class III and IV posts, and levying and collection of taxes on certain specified items. There will be a JAAC Fund. The JAAC will receive at least 25 per cent of the annual budget of the Government of Bihar.

The creation of JAAC has elicited mixed reactions. It has been perceived as only a first step to the creation of a full State. A.K. Roy, a former Member of Parliament and a noted trade union leader, is apprehensive that with inherent seeds of discord JAAC may turn Jharkhand into *Jhagrakhand* (Roy, A.K. 1995a,b). Roy has argued that allocation of only 25 per cent of the budget of Bihar to Jharkhand which contributes 70 per cent to its total revenue is unjust. Besides, JAAC will have no say on the non-plan allocations of the Bihar Government which have been shrinking steadily. It has been reduced to 10 per cent in 1991 from 35 in 1981. Without controlling the State resources, the development of JAAC will not be possible.

The JAAC has been described as a poor version of Dyarchy, a system of Government established in the British Indian provinces under the Government of India Act 1919. Even the meagre 25 per cent of the State budget allocated to JAAC may not be released in time paralysing the functioning of the JAAC. The provisions of JAAC are even weaker than those of Bodoland Autonomous Council, (BAC). The BAC has powers to frame Rules and Bylaws, whereas the JAAC can only make recommendations to the Bihar Government. BAC will receive revenues from the tea-gardens collected by the State government, but JAAC will not get any share from its minerals from the Government of India and/or Bihar. 'The JAAC is only a Lollypop' (Singh, B.N., forthcoming).

The powers given to JAAC are extremely inadequate for solving the economic problems of the Jharkhand region, which broadly can be classified into four categories: (i) stagnant rural economy, (ii) limited access to and gains from development projects, (iii) dispossession of the common and private property resources, and (iv) environmental degrdation. The earlier experiments of limited autonomy in the Jharkhand region in the shape of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas Authorities were dismal failures. JAAC is not the ultimate

solution to the problems and aspirations of the people, it can only be a half way house (Sharan, R., forthcoming).

The above-mentioned constraints and obstacles are serious ones and these may indeed be difficult to cope with by the JAAC. The situation is made more difficult by a few other factors. These are wider socio-psychological attitudes deeply entrenched in the Indian personality and character not only in Bihar and Jharkhand, but in the Indian society at large. The most important is the persistence of feudal and undemocratic authoritarian attitudes not only in the upper castes but also in the low and backward castes which have now captured political power. Many elected representatives of the people are devoid of humane and democratic attitudes in the same way as most *zamindars* and *rajas* were. Because of these attitudes, the leaders of North Bihar will never accept the democratic aspirations of the people of Jharkhand. Even the limited autonomy in the form of JAAC is a political expediency and is not motivated by the genuine sympathy for the people. Even the Jharkhand leaders perceive the limited powers as a means of amassing money or capturing more power. There is a total absence of revolutionary idealism for building a new, just and humane society. India, Bihar and Jharkhand, despite their seeming differences, share the common weakness for sycophancy and petty egoism. Merit and honesty have been completely side-tracked and there has been the rise of mediocrity. The genuine agonised search for social justice and social equality has been vitiated by the feudal and autocratic personality traits. The tribal and backward leaders, like the upper caste ones, patronise not merit but flattery. Instead of encouraging and helping the meritorious and talented tribals and backward persons, they only help the incompetent *darbari* ones. A modern society cannot be built by such 'unmodern' attitudes. The great potentialities of Jharkhand for development cannot fruitify in this psychological ethos.The pervasive malaise of corruption is a by–product of this psyche. The Jharkhand political culture is qualitatively no different from that of Bihar and India; it is only more so.

The second important obstacle to the development of a Jharkhand identity is the tribal, non-tribal divide. Whatever may have been the historical reasons, the demographic fact today is that the non-tribals constitute an overwhelming majority (72%). Admittedly, the tribals have been the most disadvantaged, and exploited and deprived group. They are the soul of Jharkhand. But, it is also true that some of the Noble Savages have turned into political criminals. Dr. K.K. Sinha, the most valuable citizen of Ranchi, was assaulted by the student leaders of the AJSU because he had refused to give them donation (*chanda*). They were drunk in the morning hours. As the bleeding doctor was taken inside his house, the enraged mob lynched the attackers. One was Vice-President of AJSU. None of the Jharkhand and tribal leaders condemned the attack on Dr. Sinha. Despite an assault on him Dr. Sinha agreed to treat his attackers; whom he described as 'patients'. The Jharkhand leaders have given respects

to Birsa Munda and Siddhu and Kanhu, who, of course, deserve the deepest gratitude of the people of Jharkhand. But, Sakharam Ganesh Deoshkar also belongs to Jharkhand whose Book *Desher Katha* had contributed significantly to the freedom movement. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar also belonged to Jharkhand where he had purchased a house, which still remains, and had lived for more than two decades, and had written some of his famous books and had started the first ever adult literacy classes in India.

Though the JAAC experiment is doomed to fail yet it is a significaant milestone in the Jharkhand Movement. It has given Jharkhand a legitimacy. It was a dirty nine letter word in the vocabulary of the Government of Bihar and India. The first train from Ranchi to Delhi was to be named *Jharkhand Express*, but at the last moment only a few hours before the inauguration, the name was dropped because of political reasons lest it encourages Jharkhand Movement. This was despite the fact that 'Jharkhand' was indicated in GOI map of 1960. After great hesitation, the Government of India had agreed to use the world "Jharkhand" for the Committee on Jharkhand Matters. Even, the University of Ranchi had refused a Ph.D. candidate, Shri Bankim Chandra Mahto, to use the word 'Jharkhand' for his thesis on folk literature of Jharkhand. He was asked to use the nomenclature 'some areas of Chotanagpur and adjacent West Bengal'! (Ref: letter No.B/RP/Ph.D./61/P/2465 dated 07 March 1973 of the Deputy Registrar). The Bhartiya Janta Party prefers the name of *Vananchal* which can be anywhere in India, but Jharkhand can only be located in Jharkhand (Singh A.K. 1990c).

With the creation of JAAC, Jharkhand has achieved legitimacy and identity (Singh A.K. 1995). The failure of JAAC will give greater strength to the Jharkhand Movement for a separate State. However, during the interval between JAAC and the State of Jharkhand, the limited autonomy may be used for human development in Jharkhand. Significantly, JAAC has got school education, vocational education, public health and rural development, all important pre-requisites of Human Development. The UNDP Human Development Index consists of literacy/schooling, life expectancy and income (UNDP 1994).

6. Resolving Jharkhand Demand

6.1 Resolution in three phases

The experiment of Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) is destined to fail unless the Governments of Bihar and India give it more effective powers. The JAAC could have been an agent of change and development in Jharkhand, despite its limited autonomy. But it will not be effective because of three main reasons. First, the Government of North Bihar will not cooperate, because it has no empathy with the aspirations of the people of Jharkhand. Even a saintly politician like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India was opposed to opening of a University at Ranchi 'University education did not serve much

useful purpose'. He was opposed to establishment of a High Court at Ranchi because 'Nearness to High Court increases litigation' (Chotanagpur Sanjukta Sangh, 1954b). Secondly, the making of a new society requires a revolutionary idealism, which Jharkhand leadership, cutting across party lines, lack. Thirdly, the officers of JAAC lack commitment to the development of this area. The JAAC is a product of immediate political compulsions. The Janta Dal and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Soren Group) have joined hands to fight the growing popularity of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) in Jharkhand. In the present Bihar Assembly, the BJP has won the highest number of seats from Jharkhand (21) equal to all the fighting Jharkhand parties taken together (JMM(S) 16, JMM(M) 3, JPP 1 and JP 1=21), followed by Janta Dal (13) and Congress (I) (14). The Congress is understandably unhappy with this alliance as they had expected the JMM to be with the Congress. The Congress had given JAAC when the Jharkhand movement was at its lowest ebb and the State Minister of Home had announced JAAC in a public meeting organised by JMM at Ranchi, despite protests from local Congressmen. The JMM has been wavering between Congress and Janta Dal and in the process of wooing both is losing its credibility. The JMM can obtain favours from the Central Government by its alliance with Congress Party but cannot win elections in Jharkhand. Thus, they want to keep their options open. The clarity on the future of JAAC will emerge only after the parliamentary elections in 1996.

Jharkhand fully deserves to be a State which can be achieved in three phases listed below:

6.1.1 Phase I: UT Status for Greater Jharkhand Region

The JAAC should be immediately changed to Union Territory status. It is argued that the size and population of JAAC is too big for UT. It is true that JAAC has the size and population of more than many nation states of United Nations (Table 10). But, a large part of JAAC is already under central administration. Numerous industries, mines, dams, research institutes are under Government of India. These include HEC, MECON, CMPDI, CCL, Lac Research Institute, Silk Research Institute, and Bokaro Steel Factory, to name only a few. The difficulties in the functioning of these organisations are important because of the Bihari ethos. The Jharkhandi ethos will be no different. The wealth of Jharkhand is the wealth of the nation. The Central Government has much greater stake in this region than any other region in India. In near future the same political party is not likely to capture power in Bihar and India. The tug-of-war between Patna and Delhi is not conducive to Jharkhand which is made a pawn by both.

Along with the UT Status of JAAC, Jharkhand Cultural Academy for Greater Jharkhand region covering Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal be constituted. This was one of the important recommendations of COJM.

TABLE 10

Demography of Districts of Jharkhand, Bihar (1991)

	Total population	Total ST population	% of ST to Gen. population	%of ST to total Rural population	% of ST to ST to ST population	LT* Rural Gen. population	LT* Rate Genl. population Female	LT* General Rural Female	LT* Tribal Population	LT* Tribal Female	LT* ST Rural
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Godda	861182	216047	25.09	25.66	99.49	34.02	18.00	16.84	20.92	9.74	9.63
2. Sahibganj	1301088	507321	38.99	41.80	99.37	27.03	16.32	13.15	16.66	8.61	8.32
3. Dumka	1495709	621484	41.55	43.88	99.19	34.02	17.91	15.31	19.97	9.59	9.37
4. Deoghar	933113	119085	12.76	14.40	97.72	37.92	19.74	13.20	20.41	7.76	4.97
5. Dhanbad	2674651	225282	8.42	13.40	77.55	55.47	37.88	20.17	24.05	4.34	6.46
6. Girdih	2225480	271924	12.22	13.68	94.64	35.96	17.65	11.83	16.74	5.82	4.44
7. Hazaribag	2843544	250586	8.81	8.83	82.08	38.00	21.24	14.49	23.07	11.09	7.56
8. Palamu	2451191	443266	18.08	18.85	98.67	31.10	16.15	13.91	21.74	11.26	10.26
9. Lohardaga	288886	162964	56.41	61.34	96.78	40.79	26.11	20.41	32.45	20.08	16.76
10. Gumia	1153976	816988	70.80	72.40	97.64	39.67	27.48	25.59	37.33	27.07	26.10
11. Ranchi	2214048	964422	43.56	54.65	84.05	51.52	36.57	20.65	34.61	22.19	17.39

12. Purbi Singhbhum	1613088	466572	28.92	51.00	83.42	59.05	45.50	21.36	31.14	16.97	12.33
13. Paschimi "	1787955	978069	54.70	61.24	94.27	38.92	22.44	15.68	27.91	13.62	12.11
Jharkhand	21843911	6044010	27.67	32.58	92.72	41.39	25.52	216.38	27.52	15.41	13.40
Bihar	86374465	6616914	7.66	8.20	93.00	38.48	22.89	17.95	26.55	14.75	12.70
India	838583988	67758380	8.08	9.95	92.61	52.21	39.29	30.62	29.60	18.19	16.02

Source: (i) Census of India (1991)

Note: 1. The figures for India exclude those of Jammu and Kashmir as the 1991 census was not held there.

2. Five new districts have been created after the 1991 census: Garwa (Palamu), Chatra and Koderma (Hazaribagh), Bokaro (Dhanbad) and Pakur (Sahibganj).

*LT - Literacy

6.1.2 Phase II: Full statehood to JAAC

The UT Status of JAAC be changed to full statehood in the next five years. The JAAC is fully eligible for statehood. The separation of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana from Bihar is also justified on geo-ecological features which are markedly different in the two regions.

6.1.3 Phase III: Full statehood to Greater Jharkhand region

The demand of Greater Jharkhand is basically a demand for restoration of the original area of the Chotanagpur Division, and Santhal pargana. The demand of Greater Jharkhand is based on cultural identity. In course of several centuries the people of Greater Jharkhand have evolved a cultural identity shared by the tribals, non-tribals, the Backward Castes, the Scheduled Castes, the Muslims, the Sadans and the Kurmis. The unique Jharkhandi culture is based on history, geography, language and culture (Keshri, B.P. 1991: Sharma, K.L. 1993).

6.2 Continuation of *Swadeshi* Colonialisation of Jharkhand

The ***swadeshi*** colonialisation of Jharkhand by the Government of India and Bihar continues. They have been using the 'divide and rule policy' of the British imperialists, creating cleavages between the tribals and non-tribals, between the political parties of the State and the Jharkhand parties. Patna and Delhi alternatively encourage the movement under election compulsions 'but pooh-pooh and crush it to insure revenue collections: a variant of the old colonial game' (Sharma, A.P. 1993, p.19). The Home Minsiter of India Mr. S.B. Chavan on 08 Sept. 1992 declared that Jharkhand problem can be solved by granting it UT status or statehood. Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, Chief Minister of Bihar, reacted, echoing Churchill, that Jharkhand will be created on his dead body. Yadav opposed Jharkhand because without Jharkhand Bihar will be left with "flood, famine and sand". The "deficit theory" of the Bihar Government presented by the then Chief Minister to the SRC and accepted by it has now completely changed making Jharkhand the economic backbone of and a *Kamdhenu* for North Bihar. Dr. Jagannath Mishra, former Congress (I) Chief Minsiter supported Laloo Yadav in his opposition to the creation of Jharkhand. With increasing political consciousness and unanimity of all political parties in Jharkhand region, including the Congress (I), the creation of Jharkhand cannot be delayed long. Any delay will lead to violent confrontation. The RDX has already reached Jharkhand. The Jharkhand Movement has been relatively peaceful so far. But violence is inevitable out of frustration and feeling of powerlessness against the brute force of North Bihar raj (Singh, 1990a). The conspiracy theory about the Jharkhand movement being instigated by the CIA and Christian missionaries (Sharma, A.P. 1988, 1991, 1993) is too weak against the exploitation and developmental theories (Singh, A.K. 1988). Development in education, and industrial-urban-mass-media exposures have increased the sense of relative deprivation and hurt of exploitation.

All arguments against the creation of Jharkhand State have been exposed hollow. The demand is supported by one and all. There is no tribal and non-tribal divide, nor between the tribes on this demand. The exploitation of Jharkhand is fully documented by government statistics. The viability of Jharkhand State as well as the 'Rest of Bihar' has been proved. The only opposition against the creation of Jharkhand State is the imperialist attitudes of North Bihar supported by the Government of India. The alleged corruption and inefficiency of the Jharkhand leaders are also used as arguments. Jharkhand leaders have been lured by the Congress from the days of Jaipal Singh. It still continues. The present Congress Government of Mr. Rao was saved by the votes of MPs from Jharkhand, allegedly for a consideration. Admittedly, Jaipal Singh had made a mistake of merging the Jharkhand Party with the Congress. It is also true that he had given Jharkhand Party tickets to 'outsiders', allegedly for money. But to whom? To the reputed socialist leader Minoo Masani. Masani came to Ranchi for his election campaign and stayed in the Eastern Railway Hotel, the only good hotel in town at that time. He came to Ranchi College to give a lecture on Five Year Plan of India. As a young lecturer at that time, the author had asked him, if he felt morally justified to contest elections from Ranchi only by staying a few days in the comfortable Railway Hotel; after all, he was the author of *Our India*, we had read in our school days and were inspired by it? His reply was that he had come to speak on Five Year Plan and, therefore, the question was irrelevant. The allegations of inefficiency of Jharkhand leaders is similar to that being levelled by the British imperialists against leaders of Indian Independence Movement. Of course, there was no allegation of corruption at that time, which has now become very important in the land of Bofors, Sugar Scam and Bank Scam. It is possible to argue that the Indian leaders have become corrupt and inefficient after Independence. But it cannot be argued that India does not deserve democracy because of corruption in its political elite. Therefore, whether corrupt and inefficient or not, the people of Jharkhand have a right to elect their own representatives and be governed by them. In fact, the leaders of Jharkhand, cutting across party lines, is not any way different from rest of the country. The human resource in Jharkhand in the form of professional scientific skill is superior to many States in India. Jharkhand has the potentiality to become one of the most important State in India. The political parties, who are using the aspirations of Jharkhand people, for their political gain, will be left behind by the Jharkhand Movement which is destined to achieve its goal of full Statehood.

> Swaraj can have no meaning nor any chance for the people of Chotanagpur, if they are not allowed self-rule, even after the liberation of India.
>
> *Singh R.N. 1956, p.28*

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JHARKHAND AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL



WHITHER JHARKHAND?

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'Jharkhandis realise dream of self-rule' and 'Jharkhandis gearing up for the D-Day', ran the headlines of *Indian Express* (September 29, 1994) and the *Hindustan Times* (May 7, 1995) at the signing of the Jharkhand Accord at Delhi and later at its launching at Ranchi respectively. Indeed, after 56 years of political mobilisation, the Jharkhand Accord was signed by Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Chief Minister of Bihar and Rajesh Pilot, the Minister of State for Internal Security, on September 27, 1994. Then on December 20,1994 the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) Bill was passed in the Bihar Assembly and the Council was eventually inaugurated on August 9,1995.

There were mixed reactions to the pact on the Jharkhand Council by different political parties, said *The Telegraph* (September 29, 1994). While the Chotanagpur Santhal Pargana Regional Congress (I) Committee (CSPRCC-I) claimed credit for JAAC (*The Hindustan Times*, October 5, 1994), the All India Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU) and its political wing, Jharkhand People's Party (JPP) rejected it (*The Hindustan Times*, September 30, 1994) along with Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-Mardi (JMM-M) (*The Statesman*, September 27,1994). The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-Soren (JMM-S) cadres were conspicuous by their silence and the trade and industry circles in South Bihar expressed satisfaction over the creation of JAAC (*The Telegraph*, September 29, 1994). The fact that there were no victory-marches (ibid) showed the people's cool reaction to the Accord.

More than six months have passed since the inauguration of the JAAC but no elections to the Jharkhand Council has taken place as yet and the interim council carries on the work. The disaffection among various groups was seen even at the composition of the interim council. Of the 90 nominated members in it, 41 are from JMM (S), including the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, and 31 others from the Janata Dal. Other parties connected with the Jharkhand movement like the Jharkhand Party (JP), JPP and JMM (M) have been ignored (Roy, A.K. 1995). The Jharkhand leaders expressed great apprehension already at the signing of the Accord as they were kept out of the final rounds of

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discussion between the Bihar and the Central Governments. Even the Congressmen of the region, after the initial euphoria, expressed dissatisfaction later when they found the provisions of the Council to be superficial.

Amidst a confusing scenario following the 'historic settlement' one does not know what to conclude from it. Is it really a dream come true for the Jharkhandis? Or is it a political sabotage and a set back to the Jharkhand Movement? Or still, is the move one step forward or two steps backward on the way to Jharkhand? Examining the political fallout at this stage becomes necessary to understand various forces at work, either to make the movement or to break it and to propose measures to deal with them. This paper, therefore, studies the entire process of the making of the JAAC and its content and tries to assess its outcome in the light of the objectives the movement had set for itself. In the discussion ahead some divisive forces of the Jharkhand region are identified and counter measures are proposed. Finally a short agenda for the task ahead concludes the discussion.

Earlier Pacifying Measures

It was in the late 80s that concrete steps were taken towards political autonomy for the Jharkhand region, unlike the pacifying measures adopted in the past. The formation of the Santhal Pargana district and the Santhal Pargana Settlement Regulation 1872 followed the Santhal Insurrection of 1855. The formation of the Chotanagpur Tenures Act 1869 and Chotanagpur Landlord and Tenant Procedures Act 1870 came after the Sardar Movement of 1859–65 and the original Survey Settlement of 1901 and the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908 was the outcome of the Birsa Movement between 1895–1900. Similarly the Scheduled Area Order of 1950 was the result of the Adivasi Mahasabha Movement from 1939–50. The Bihar Scheduled Area Regulation 1969, the Bihar Tribes Advisory Council 1951 and the Chotanagpur Santhal Pargana Autonomous Development Authority 1981 were caused by the Jharkhand Movement from 1950–70. And finally the Tribal Sub-plan 1972 and the revival of the defunct Bihar Tribes Advisory Council in 1984 were the consequences of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha Movement from 1972–86 (Munda, R.D. 1988: 35–36).

Political Dialogue and Negotiation

The reconstruction of the movement and political dialogue was ushered in with the formation of AJSU in 1986 and the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) in 1987. The first gave a new militancy and the second, a coordinated thrust to the Jharkhand Movement. As such, rallies (Birsa Day on Nov. 15, 1987 at Ranchi; January 31, 1989 at Calcutta), blockades (Feb. 9, 1989 at Dumri) and Bandhs (April 21–23, 1989) were intensified in the Jharkhand region. As a result, the Commissioner South Chotanagpur intervened on behalf

of the Central Government and soon the AJSU leaders were invited to Delhi by the Home Minister and were told that the matter had to be discussed first with the Bihar Government. In a tripartite talk on May 31,1989 between the Bihar and the Central governments and the JCC members, it was agreed that the matter be referred to the Centre as the constitutional power for autonomy lay with the Centre. In a series of talks in Delhi from June 1, 1989, the position paper of JCC was discussed and some significant conclusions were arrived at. These were: a) that the Jharkhand Movement stood on a realistic ground; b) that the Movement pertained to all who inhabited the area; c) that the Movement was not anti-national; and d) that the Movement was for self-rule, economic development as well as for cultural resurgence. And to achieve all this, regional autonomy was a must.

In the second round of talks on August 11, 1989, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha also became an ally of the JCC. In the position paper, prepared by Ram Dayal Munda, the concept of regional autonomy was explained and the 25 tribal districts of South Bihar along with its contiguous districts of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were proposed for the Jharkhand State. The paper also refuted the arguments of the State Reorganisation Committee (SRC) of 1956, which denied statehood to Jharkhand on the grounds of the minority status of the tribal population of the area, its linguistic heterogeneity and the apprehension of regional imbalance. The paper further contended that the demand for Jharkhand was not for tribals alone, that the linguistic hurdle was absurd in the Indian context and that the fear of regional imbalance was motivated and served the vested interests of the centre and North Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh at the cost of the local populace and the greater national interest at large.

In the next round of talks at Delhi from September 4, 1989, the proposal for the formation of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters (COJM) was accepted. Thus a 24-member body was constituted of whom 12 represented the movement, including two academicians — R.D. Munda and Amar Kumar Singh; 7 represented the Centre and Bihar (4 and 3 respectively) 2 represented the Sadan Vikas Parishad. The rest three, Bhupinder Singh, IAS (Rtd), M.K. Prasad and Kumar Suresh Singh, IAS, were experts. B.S. Lally, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, was nominated as the convenor of the committee.

COJM had several meetings and it visited Bihar (Patna, Dumka and Ranchi), Madhya Pradesh (Jashpur), Orissa (Bhubaneswar) and West Bengal (Calcutta) in late September 1989. The Governments of the last two States did not agree to the field visit of COJM to the districts claimed in the proposed Jharkhand State. As regards the districts lying in M.P. the popular mood perceived at Jashpur was against the inclusion of any portion of the State in the proposed Jharkhand State (Ranade 1992). However, COJM was

overwhelmed by the support for Jharkhand movement in Bihar, where the majority of political and social organisations supported a separate State/Union Territory or Regional Autonomy in Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana (Singh 1990). It should be noted here that though Munda and Singh were nominated to be in the drafting sub-committee along with the three government experts, the former were not invited to the meetings of the sub-committee.

The COJM Report submitted to the Home Minister on May 18, 1990 came out with three alternate solutions to the Jharkhand problem: 1) full Statehood; 2) Union Territory; and 3) Jharkhand General Council. Other important recommendations were the creation of: 1) Chotanagpur Santhal Pargana Rural Self-employment Institute; 2) Sidhu-Kanhu Santhal Pargana University; and 3) Vidya Sagar Institute of Adult Education and Women Development. The Bihar Chief Minister was averse to the first two options and the non-governmental members were opposed to the third alternative, as it had narrowed the scope of autonomy.

Constitutional Approach

After the COJM Report was submitted nothing substantial was done on the Jharkhand issues by the successive governments of Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar. But when the agitation intensified, the Bihar Chief Minister, keen only to give functional powers to the Jharkhand leaders, got the Jharkhand Development Council (JDC) Bill passed in the Bihar Assembly in July 1991. The JDC was nothing but putting together the three defunct authorities of North Chotanagpur, South Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana set up in 1981 under the leadership of late Kartick Oraon. The specific responsibility of JDC was to implement the recommendations of the Bihar Tribes Advisory Council. But the development authority, devoid of any real powers, was totally ineffective. The Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, described the JDC as something, which 'did not deserve consideration' (Das 1992) and gave the Centre's option of a Union Territory status to Jharkhand in South Bihar by September 15, 1992. This was, however, only a short term ploy of the Congress and even detrimental to itself as the party would fragment in Bihar over the Jharkhand issue. The Union Territory status to Jharkhand would have ended North Bihar's hegemony over South Bihar, but would have rendered the Bihar Assembly null and void; and the arbitrary decision of the Centre on Jharkhand matters would have made the issue more volatile.

On Independence day in 1994, the Union Minister of State for Internal Security, Rajesh Pilot, participating in the Lok Sansad sponsored by JMM (S) at Ranchi, threatened to unilaterally grant autonomy to South Bihar if the State Government failed to act on its promise (*The Telegraph*, August 13, 1994) to bring a fresh bill in the Assembly on the Jharkhand issue by September 11, 1994 (*The Indian Express*, August 18, 1994). This time the Bihar Chief Minister

relented and withdrew the JADC Bill sent for the President's approval and promised to introduce a new Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council Bill soon. His promise averted JMM (S)'s threat of declaring statehood for Jharkhand on August 15, 1994 and the 1000-hour bandh call of AJSU and JPP. Soon the Bihar Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, and Rajesh Pilot, ignoring the Jharkhandi leaders, brought out the Jharkhand Accord on September 27, 1994 and JAAC was given a legal status in less than three months.

The Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council, 1994 (JAAC)

In order to accelerate all round development of the Jharkhand area, the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council Act, 1994 (Bihar Act 13,1994) was passed by the Bihar Assembly and was given assent by the Bihar Governor on December 24,1994. JAAC covers 18 districts of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana. These are: West Singhbhum, East Singhbhum, Ranchi, Gumla, Lohardagga, Palamau, Garhwa, Hazaribagh, Chatra, Giridih, Koderma, Dhanbad, Bokaro, Dumka, Sahebganj, Godda, Pakur and Deoghar. Of the total 180 elected Council members, 162 will be directly elected and 18 nominated. The Chairman of the Council will be a tribal and will be elected by the Council members and the Vice-Chairman will be nominated from among the members. The two shall be the ex-officio Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) and Vice-Chief Executive Councillor respectively. For the Interim Council and Executive Council members, 50 per cent shall be MPs and MLAs of the area and the rest from among the persons inhabiting the area and those who are interested in the development of the area. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman shall be nominated by the State Government and the former shall be a tribal. The Interim Council shall be for 6 months. The Headquarters of the Council will be at Ranchi.

The Council is mainly vested with powers relating to administration and development of the area, besides supervisory powers on bodies like Municipal Corporations, District Boards and Panchayat Samitis. The power to levy taxes and fees is limited to metalled roads and bridges. Besides the grants it receives from the State Government, the Council is to raise its own funds for the payment of salaries and allowances of the office holders of the Council. About 25 per cent of the State annual plan is to be allocated for the area of the Council.

The final JAAC provisions differ from the draft proposal prepared by the Jharkhand leaders and discussed in the COJM in 1987. First of all, the new entity was to be named *'Jharkhand Swayatta-Shasi Kshetra'* (JSSK) (Jharkhand Autonomous Territory) and the Council, the 'Jharkhand General Council'. Subjects listed under the JSSK draft, like land management and revenue, soil conservation, higher education (including medical and engineering) urban development, minerals, taxes and royalty on minerals including coal, and law and order and police are conspicuously missing from the JAAC list. Also JAAC

does not mention the exclusive financial and administrative autonomy given to the General Council of COJM. Other provisions not mentioned in JAAC are the Chief Executive Officer at the Secretariat to be of the Rank of Additional Chief Secretary, the Public Service Commission to have a branch in Ranchi, a separate major head in the state budget to be operated exclusively by the Jharkhand Administration, a Jharkhand Bench of Patna High Court in Ranchi and a separate Tribes Advisory Council in accordance with para 4 of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.

The present Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council is only a truncated form of the Jharkhand Area Council of COJM. Comparing JAAC with the autonomous councils of Gorkhaland and Bodoland and JAC of COJM, it is found that all the three were conceived in the same vein with the provision of election. The limited rights to spend on the subjects were also the same. Moreover, the accords on Gorkhaland and Bodoland were signed at the height of the movement but JAAC came after the blockade had fizzled out.

It may be noted that with 70 per cent of the revenue of the state coming from this Jharkhand area, the allotment of 25 per cent of the plan budget is no favour when its population constitutes 24.8 per cent of the state and about the same amount is already spent now without JAAC. Without any control over the non-plan expenditure, it will have still less meaning as the real cause of Bihar's poor development is the draining of the resources leaving only 10 per cent for development.

The problem of Jharkhand is not only economic but identity as well. Over the years the percentage of tribal population has decreased from 44.57 per cent in 1951 to 31.31 per cent in 1991 in Santhal Pargana, 15.33 per cent to 11.90 per cent in North Chotanagpur and 52.25 per cent to 48.49 per cent in South Chotanagpur (Roy, A.K. (a) 1995). The political weakness of the Jharkhandi parties is also reflected in the recent election results. In the Jharkhand region out of 80 Assembly seats only 16 were won by JMM (S), 3 by JMM (M), one each by JP and JPP, while the BJP alone bagged 21 seats, Janata Dal 13, the Left 5 and the Congress (I) 14.

Whither Jharkhand?

After examining what JAAC is all about, one still asks whether JAAC is one step forward or two steps backward on its way to full statehood. Some opine that the answer is neither (Roy, A.K. (b) 1995). It does not mean, however, that the status quo prior to JAAC in the Jharkhand Movement is maintained. It means that there are both positive and negative elements in this political settlement. The agreement certainly denotes, first of all, the triumph of realism. The governments of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh not being party to the Accord, it was but natural that JAAC comprised the districts of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana. A rejection of the offer would have subjected

the people of Jharkhand to another bout of fruitless agitation. Secondly, the provision of election and economic autonomy, however limited, cannot be scoffed at. Thirdly, it is not for no reason that the Centre–State agreement has made it mandatory to have a tribal as the Chairman of the Council. This provision certainly protects the coveted post from the non-tribal power brokers of the area.

Nevertheless, the legislative, administrative and financial provisions are narrow and the role of the leadership is a matter of concern. Apprehensions have been expressed that the taste of power and comfort would derail the Jharkhand leaders from the path of further struggle. Everything depends on character. These are the tests through which the leaders are to pass before reaching the final goal. Also the Jharkhandis need to be vigilant against being led up the garden path. Is there someone in the Jharkhand like Subhash Ghising, queries the columnist, A. J. Philip (*Indian Express*, October 14, 1994), who is able to brow-beat the West Bengal government into submission every now and then because of the unstinted support he enjoys among the people of Darjeeling hills? Mizoram was once a district before it got statehood. But it does not mean that JAAC is a prelude to statehood. The Jharkhandis have to willy-nilly prove their ability to run such a body. The past experience does not guarantee this. Therefore, unless Jharkhand leaders insulate themselves against political and administrative machinations, even the limited autonomy that has been grudgingly granted will remain elusive (ibid).

Struggles Beyond JAAC

The creation of JAAC is but a political solution to the Jharkhand problem. Only time will reveal how far it is able to render political justice to its people. What remains to be discussed further is the socio-economic environment into which JAAC in particular, and the Jharkhand Movement in general, is going to survive. Judging from the past experience and looking at the present situation, one is alarmed at the quality of public life. Besides, there are some divisive and disruptive forces at work that threaten the Jharkhand cause. The Jharkhandi people, therefore, have effectively deal with these forces to realise their dream of economic emancipation, cultural resurgence and political self-determination. The three main issues to be discussed here are: 1) increasing hold of the multinationals; 2) increasing tensions in the tribal solidarity; and 3) increasing corruption in public life.

1. Increasing Hold of the Multinationals

Plundering of the natural resources by outsiders and the impoverishment of the tribal people continues today more than ever in the Jharkhand region. The process has taken a new turn after the return of the Janata Dal government to power in 1995. Following the dictates of the New Economic Policy and the

globalisation of the market, the Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav went to Thailand and Singapore in July 1995 and invited foreign investors and NRIs to bring technology arid investment infrastructure to 'Bihar which is a God gifted state' and which, according to J.J. Irani, the leader of the 20-member delegation accompanying the Chief Minister, 'had a stable government, rich in mineral and water resources and no industrial strikes'. Besides, Irani said that the people of Bihar welcomed investment and did not care if it came from a multinational as long as new technology and money came in and their standard of living improved (Chaudhury 1995: 42–43).

During his 6-day visit abroad, eight Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) were signed between the Government of Bihar and five companies based in the two countries. Of these, one Singapore-based L & M Properties Ltd. will set up an Industrial Park at Jamshedpur. The government will ensure that water, land and power are available to export-oriented units. Under Bihar's New Industrial Policy the lease period of land use for industries is extended from 30 to 90 years. There is a scope of 10-year deferred payment of sales tax for new industries, industrialists may install generators up to 500 KVA without prior approval from the state electricity board and set up captive power plants up to 25 MW without any payment of electricity duty (ibid). Under such facilities the Industrial Development Corporation has identified 20 thrust areas for development, including mining, mineral based industries agro-based industries.

Other Multinational Corporations

According to the 1993 National Mineral Policy of the Government of India, foreign companies will be allowed 100 per cent participation in mining projects and restrictions will be removed on 13 minerals previously reserved for the state sector. Jharkhand, which has 48 per cent of the country's coal, 48 per cent of Bauxite, 45 per cent of Mica, 100 per cent of Kaynite and 90 per cent of Apatite, to mention a few (Areeparampil, 1989: 14), is attracting a large number of foreign companies. The white Industries of Australia, in collaboration with Coal India Limited (CIL) at Piparwar, is investing a total of Rs. 542.43 crores of which the Australian aid component will be A$ 206 million bringing them a profit of more than A$ 150 million (Areeparampil 1995: 36-38).

B.D. Sharma observes five important features of the tribal scene at the beginning of the new era marked by globalisation and free market. These are: 1) the virtual rejection of the tribal sub-system; 2) the suppression of habitat and community concepts; 3) the superimposition of the concept of individual rights per se, in total disregard of the concept of the community and the suppression of oral tradition by the written word; 4) the frontier spirit of loot, plunder and genocide and 5) the state's support to the frontier spirit (Sharma 1995: 24–27).

2. Increasing Tensions in Tribal Solidarity

After the initial periods of resistance (1769–1793) and open revolts (1793–1915) led by respective tribal leaders, the ethnic, pan-tribal and later the regional character of the movement till 1940s, some tensions and divisions began to occur in the Jharkhand Movement. The first rift between the Christian tribals and non-Christian tribals was seen around 1947–48 when having observed the burgeoning influence of the Christian Mission in Chotanagpur, the non-Christian tribals too felt the need of forming some organisations with the motive to curb the growing influence of the churches over the people of Jharkhand as a whole and, at the same time, spread and revive their *'Adi-Dharam'* — the indigenous religion. As such non-Christian tribal leaders like Somnath Oraon, Theble Oraon and others started a *'Sudhar Sabha'* and a Hindi Weekly, *Parha*. A more prominent leader and MP, Kartick Oraon even introduced a bill in Parliament in 1968 to de-schedule the Christian tribals. However, nothing came out of it (Das 1992: 101-109). Concerning the Jharkhand Movement also there occurred a split in the 50s between the advanced Christians and relatively backward non-Christian tribals who began to look mainly towards the Congress or the Jan Sangh for support (Singh 1983: 6).

Since the 1960s the Jan Sangh, together with its ally the RSS, started making inroads into Chotanagpur to forestall the growing influence of Christians in the area. The relief work of the RSS during the famine of 1966–67 strengthened them and they won five Assembly seats in Ranchi and Singhbhum in the 1967 elections. They also gained from the communal riots of 1964 in Jamshedpur and of 1967 in Ranchi and from the propaganda of re-conversion of tribal Christians to Hinduism carried out by 'Arya Samaj' (Topno, 1990).

Concerning regional autonomy, the BJP does not want 'Jharkhand' but 'Vananchal', which comprises the districts of Chotanagpur and Santa! Pargana. The BJP is of the opinion that the Jharkhand Movement is supported by foreign missionaries and foreign money (Sharma, Krishnan Lal, in *The Telegraph*, May 20, 1989). The business and the trading community, mostly coming from outside, supports the BJP. That is why the people say that the BJP's demand of 'Vananchal' is a demand for 'Banianchal' (cf. *Parabhat Khabar*, April 6, 1990).

Ten years ago, in 1986, there was another communal tension regarding the famous (infamous) well-poisoning case in the Simdega area of Gumla district in Bihar. The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in its report stated that though no poison was used and no attempt was made to cause any physical injury, there was an organised attempt to create a sense of terror, confusion and insecurity in the minds of the Christian tribals (PUCL 1986:24).

The PUCL further observed that in the wake of the Jharkhand Movement, the incident was a highly dangerous development and it deserved the most serious attention of the nation. While the missionaries revolutionalised the lives

of the exploited tribals and have turned them into proud men and women, more prepared to challenge the contempt or arrogance of the non-tribals, the RSS and various other diehard communal Hindu organisations have entered the arena with a view to fight the influence of the Christian missionaries (ibid: 32–33). The report was also strong on the missionaries for their retaliatory reaction to the incident through the editorials in *Nishkalanka* (A Hindi Monthly from Ranchi) of May and July 1986, which were irrefutable evidences of 'tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye' approach towards their adversaries (ibid: 33).

The Karondabera murder of two priests and a brother in the Gumla district of Bihar on September 1, 1994 also created a lot of communal tension in the area. Thus the Jharkhandi society, which is already crumbling under economic exploitation and political domination, is suffering from communal tensions from time to time.

3. Increasing Corruption in Public Life

The latest shock the people of Bihar, and especially the Jharkhandis, have got is the mega scam in the Animal Husbandry Department in the Jharkhand area. A massive amount of Rs.2000 crores, swindled during the last 15 years, is a chilling tale of a corrupt bureaucracy and a decaying polity. This is but the tip of the iceberg. Corruption is entrenched in all the government departments and offices, be it a department of health, education, agriculture, irrigation, transport or road construction. Corruption is one of the main reasons for the state's backwardness, or else how can it be explained that despite six decades of development programmes the Jharkhand area has just 6.1 per cent of the state's agricultural production, 9.49 per cent of irrigated land and 26 per cent of rural electrification even after being the mother of big dams and power generation units, to mention just a few (Roy (d) 1995). 'The extent of corruption has a direct bearing on the stability of South Asian governments', says Gunnar Myrdal (1968: 938) and it applies both to the Central as well as the State Government in India and now to JAAC and its leaders in the Jharkhand. Corruption, like communalism, is affecting society dangerously.

Summing Up and Follow Up

The creation of the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council is a significant landmark in the history of the Jharkhand Movement. It has passed through the ethnic, pan-tribal, extra-ethnic and regional phases and has transcended its initial socio-economic and developmental campaign to the more radical demand of political self-rule. At the same time, it is true that the semblance of autonomy achieved in JAAC is small as compared to the six decades of organised struggle and almost 150 years of several revolts prior to this. However, neither being daunted nor contended about JAAC, one needs to rethink and work ahead

towards greater autonomy, self-reliance and socio-cultural resurgence in Jharkhand. The following are some suggestions for the agenda for the tasks ahead.

1. Greater Autonomy

Examining the political stalemate of this struggle, what stands out is the weakness of the movement to create public opinion and collective leadership, especially in the tribal districts of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Secondly, the political battle of the Jharkhandis against five states and governments has almost deterred and outwitted them. Learning from the past experience one needs to plan and work afresh towards achieving greater autonomy.

2. Political Programme

JAAC does not reflect the type of political autonomy the Jharkhandis want. Hence apart from equipping the legislative, executive and administrative bodies of the Council with greater powers and functions, the very framework of self-rule ought to be Jharkhandi in its rationale, approach and content. When public opinion is being created towards tribal self-rule in the ensuing panchayat system in the country, the Jharkhandis should seize the opportunity to promote their pattern of self-governance.

3. Economic Programme

The Jharkhand Movement has so far failed to develop an economic programme that is best suited to the economic development of the region. The economic programme in the Jharkhand must take into account the vast potential of the natural resources as well as the massive poverty in the region. The economic programme in Jharkhand must move in the direction of sustainable development.

4. The Body Polity

The malady of the 'soft' state is too entrenched in the entire body polity of the country in general and in Bihar and Jharkhand in particular. Corruption in high (and low) places has become the norm of the day. This calls for a moral revolution and it is everybody's task, leaders and the people.

5. Cultural Resurgence

The Jharkhand Movement is not only for political autonomy but also for socio-cultural resurgence in the area. The movement has also to involve in the various cultural, social and literary campaigns. Over the years Jharkhand has become a home of many cultures and traditions, and so a Jharkhandi nationality has to be developed just as there is an Indian nationality in the midst of many nationalities and peoples in the country. What gives the Jharkhandis a common identity is the geographical contiguity, historical continuity, a unique socio-cultural and political tradition and a rich cultural heritage.

6. Jharkhandi Solidarity

Groupism and factionalism on communal and sectarian lines has been the curse of the Jharkhand Movement and its future looks bleak if they fail to forge a strong solidarity. Forgetting the narrow and immediate gains on the basis of class and religious interests, the work of building up the Jharkhandi solidarity must continue.

7. Women's Participation

Despite the presence of greater social mobility of women in the tribal society, they have not been part and parcel of the Jharkhand Movement. So far their participation in the movement has been limited to rallies, dharnas and demonstrations. They are not in the planning and decision-making bodies, let alone taking up leadership roles. It is high time to educate the people in this regard and make concerted efforts for a greater participation of women in the Jharkhand movement.

8. A Jharkhandi Ideology

An ideology gives meaning and direction to a society. The Jharkhandi ideology should be based on the values of consensus as against the majority decisions, need-based production as against consumerism, collective enterprise as against individualism, monopolism and competition, active common participation in art and culture as against passive observation and an egalitarian community as against a stratified society. The challenge before the Jharkhandi ideologues is to come out with an ideology, which is holistic, simple and practical.

9. Need for Coordination

The creation of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC) 1987 was timely and it did spearhead the movement deftly in the crucial days of political negotiations. It, however, came to a standstill and was fragmented due to ideological and tactical differences among the members on various issues. Also many members could not withstand a prolonged police repression and brutality while enforcing bandhs and blockades in the region. Today there is a rethinking among the Jharkhand leaders to revitalise the JCC. After a decade's experience it must come alive strengthened and optimistic.

10. Joining Hands with Other Movements

It is expedient for the Jharkhand Movement to align with other autonomy movements in the country and with the Non-Governmental (NGO) forum called the Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ICITP), which voices the concerns of the tribals at the international bodies like UNO and ILO.

Each generation has contributed something to the cause of the Jharkhand Movement. The question is what can this generation do to bring about greater socio-economic justice and politico-cultural freedom to the people of Jharkhand.

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JHARKHAND MOVEMENT & TRIBAL IDENTITY

NIRMAL SENGUPTA

A Myth in the Making

> 'The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition' he said. 'We are getting the language into its final shape—the shape it is going to have when nobody speaks anything else... In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it ... Even now, of course, there is no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It is merely a question of self-discipline, reality control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect!'
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> *(from George Orwell, 1984)*

Till late eighteenth century, travel accounts like that of Bernier (1620–1688) were the only source of European understanding of the Indians. With the beginning of the colonial administration the need to collect detailed knowledge about the people of India and their social systems became imperative. Along with the inquiries into revenue systems from late eighteenth century, ethnographic inquiries too had begun. In 1807 the Court of Directors of the East India Company made a formal decision that such knowledge would be 'of great use in the future administration of the country' (Vidyarthi, 1968, ii). To this effect Francis Buchanan was appointed by the government to inquire into the conditions of people in India. Although his writings were not so well known in Europe, those of other administrators were. Based on such scanty knowledge from India and elsewhere the first grand theories like those of Maine (1822–88), Morgan (1818–81), Tylor (1832–1917) were developed, just as were the writings of Marx on precapitalist systems.

Bernier relieved European writing from the universal use of the Biblical streams of human migration in differentiation of human societies. Race emerged as a concept. But the objective approach was soon subsumed by theories which developed in the context of colonisation of the world by the Europeans, the white races. Innocuous categories became explanatory variables for the

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theories of 'progressionism' and 'evolutionism'.The popular notion that developmental and cultural achievements were determined by the racial origins of people found support, in some form or other, in the theories of Darwin (1731–1802), Lamarck (1744 –1802) and particularly of Herbert Spencer (1820 –1903). Its reflection is found in later ethnographic inquiries. Unlike the Court of Directors of the Company in 1807 the Asiatic Society in 1866 asked the government to furnish the list of races in India. For Buchanan the term 'tribe' was only an English word for groups with common ancestry, to be used as 'regal tribe' to describe kshatriyas or as 'chauhana tribe' to introduce a subgroup of rajput caste. But in the use by Dalton (1872) of expressions like 'wild tribes', 'pastoral tribes', 'agricultural tribes' or 'mixed and imperfect tribes' along with such terms as 'aborigines', 'primitives' there is a markedly noticeable evolutionary categorisation. The evolutionary race theories, which in Europe were used to justify the supremacy of the white races, were extended through these efforts to introduce a notion of differential evolutionary achievements even among the colonised people.

Two other developments had contributed significantly to this development. The invention of the camera added a visual dimension to racial categorisation enabling detailed comparison of physical traits even from a distance. For an elaborate scheme of racial categorisation the colour of the skin alone was not sufficient. Already other criteria were being developed which finally found their scientific pretensions in anthropometry. In 1879, Baron Ujfalvy initiated anthropometric researches in India. Later Risley, Thurston, etc. undertook the exercise and in the 1931 Census the work was done on a very large scale.

In the Indian context however, physical traits soon gave way to another criterion. The readily noticeable indigenous criteria of differentiation in terms of religion and castes were more appealing than races to administrators, interested in collecting 'useful' information. From the beginning of the Census operations opinion was divided whether to collect information on castes. Presumably, the more scholarly administrators favoured the use of only the more 'scientific' category — the races. However, practical sense prevailed and the scientific 'racial' bases were given to caste distinctions by establishing correlations between the two in various ways. The distinctive Indian connotation of the term 'tribe' emerged in this context. It was used to meet the contingency that arose when all the communities could not be fitted into the major religion and caste diversity. Rationally speaking, the existence of such unclassifiable categories only mean that not everyone in India embraced the major religions or the caste system, for whatever reason. But under the influence of the caste-race equation and the dominance of progressionism and evolutionary paradigm in the intellectual atmosphere of that era, the non-conformism with the identifiable mainstreams could only be explained as savage behaviour. This was the beginning of internal racism in India.

With respect to castes the term 'tribe' became well-defined. Gone were the days of Dalton when agriculturists and pastoralists too could be called tribes. But at the same time, the pretension of rigorousness assumed hereafter in the use of the term impressed others towards universal comparability. In socio–cultural achievements Indians who did not accept the caste system were placed not only at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder within India but also were considered at par with others marked as 'tribes' all over the world. Internally, it gave a moral ascendancy to Hinduism/caste-system/Brahminism over the non-conformists. In the imagined indigenous evolutionary scheme acceptance of major religions or the caste-system was identical with absolute progress; the non-conformists were robbed of the pride with which many might have resisted the advent of the obnoxious caste system in the past centuries. Indeed, caste theorists like Nesfield and Ibbetson produced whole histories of Indian civilisation out of the blue with deviousness and success enviable to Brahmin preacher of the past.

Simultaneously, another indigenous dimension was being added to the concept. The philological similarities between Sanskrit and European languages noted by W. Jones in late eighteenth century was quickly appropriated by the racial theories. By the early nineteenth century the existence of an 'Indo-European' race was postulated. A migration story helped explanation of Vedic literature as a glimpse into early Indian history. But a more significant contribution was in bolstering the ego of Indian intellectuals. What great pride it was to be distinct from other colonised people and sharing a common ancestry with the great white races of Europe. They too felt like accepting a bit of the white man's burden, be it within the confines of their subcontinent. The problem was to identify the downtrodden who needed the helping hand. The superiority of the Aryans claimed in the Vedic literature had already given rise to movements like the Arya Samaj. But with them Arya was a culture, not a race. The identification of Anaryans came in a roundabout way, through 'scientific' discourse inspired by the West. At the insistence of Max Mueller (1861) Indo-European was equated to Aryan. Lassen (1876) produced a workable format for the races in India basing on the hypothetical migration of the Aryan race, while Dalton (1871) used the Aryan-Nishad dichotomy of ancient Sanskrit literature to identify Nishads as forest tribes residing there since the remote past till his day. Dalton's historical context was a continuous conflict between aborigines and pastoral agricultural tribes in India. Risley rejected it with a monochromatic view of Aryan immigration and expansion. In addition, the exhaustive nature of Risley's work under the Census along with his anthropometric exercise paved the way for 'scientific' identification of the non-Aryans. If there was any deficiency in the caste theories in ascribing superior genes to the mainstream (as emerged from these exercises) of the Indian population, the Aryan race theory succeeded in recovering that.

Thus by the beginning of the twentieth century the term 'tribe' had come to imbibe many different ideas most of which are condemned and controversial today. Spencerism, Lamarckism, Social Darwinism as well as Aryanism may survive today, but only in clandestine organisations (or in South Africa) after its fangs were exposed through Nazism. The Risleyian theory has been repeatedly disproved by archaeological discoveries beginning with the Mohenjodaro excavation, latest being the discovery of the existence of rice cultivation in Nagaland, millenia before any possible Aryan immigration. Because of the dearth of evidence even after so much of explorations, Indian historians today are divided over the factual basis of Aryan migration theory. The vague nature of the boundary between recognised tribes and castes has repeatedly been indicated by anthropologists themselves (e.g., Ghurye, 1943) while some other anthropologists (e.g., Singh, 1985) have lately mustered evidence to show that social evolution in India has at times taken the course of 'tribalisation' from Hindu/Brahminic norms. The assumption of immutability which formed the basis of anthropometry is now open to question. Nevertheless the whole set of theories still survive with vigour and deeply strain the image of 'tribe', as we shall show later.

The next thirty years or so can be characterised as the period of identification. Exhaustive listing had begun in 1866, in compliance with the request made by the Asiatic Society. The Census was the culmination of that effort. As one may expect in case of categorisation with patently false criteria, individual communities were included and omitted from one Census to another. In between, government notifications and popular demands added further confusion. The logical outcome of this vain effort should have been rejection of the criteria. But circumstances pushed it to the other extreme. In granting provincial autonomy in 1935 the British also included them among the depressed communities requiring special protection. In view of the ensuing election, the provincial assemblies had to release in a hurry the list of 'backward tribes' in each province. The controversies about enlistment were set aside to meet the political contingency. Not only the term but the identities of the people were constitutionalised after independence when a Scheduled Tribes list was issued in 1950 without very substantial change of the 1936 list.

History has always been written with the preoccupations of the later period. Tribal movements of nineteenth century were identified as 'tribal' long after their occurrences only when the term 'tribe' came into existence. In the Santhal Rebellion or in the Birsa Movement some other communities too had joined hands with the tribals, write current historians. If Santhal and Munda had not been differentiated in a hundred years of sustained colonial effort the same rebellions would have been depicted as regional peasant revolts, in which some numerous communities predominated, as is true in the case of any peasant movement.

It was the enlightened national mainstream leaders who were more familiar with the divisive propaganda recorded above. Far more than the tribals themselves, the national leaders were conditioned to accept the apparently scientific theories. Till the thirties, political developments among the tribes were in no way different from those in the rest of the country. The Christian Students Association of Chotanagpur, the forerunner of the Jharkhand Party, was formed in response to a wave which had led Rajendra Prasad to form Bihari Students Association a few years earlier. The members of Naga Club did favour the British administration, not just because tribals have been historically different but because there was also such a current in India which helped the Simon Commission to collect more than this lone favourable review. Among the tribals, however, there were more of Gaidinlius, Tana Bhagats and followers of Alluri Sitarama Raju in the years preceding the Backward Tribe notification. Suddenly they learnt that they were never integrated/assimilated with the rest of Indians. It is only after this period that overtly ethnic tribal organisations began to emerge in India. The regional name, Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj, was changed to Adivasi Mahasabha only in 1936, 'Adivasi' being an overtly ethnic term.

There is more to it. While renaming the organisation the regional name Jharkhand too was coined. But under the influence of the pseudo-histories, the Jharkhandis—they too had intellectuals—chose the name 'Adivasi Mahasabha'. Only after about ten years the name was dropped in favour of a regional name for the party.

Legitimisation and Spread

In this century the mass propagators—Christian missionaries, social workers and political activists—took the term, and along with that the prejudices and the conjectures, to the masses. It is by them that the indigenous terms 'adivasi', 'adimjati', 'vanavasi', 'girijan', 'paharia', etc. were created. Although most of these terms are of Sanskrit etymology, as yet none of these have been found in any previous record. The first two terms relate to the concept of 'tribe' through the Aryan myth while the others are ecological. Nevertheless, they don't mean all the hill people or forest dwellers, but only those enlisted in the scheduled tribes list, no matter that many of the 'girijans' live in the plains. Pejoratives like 'junglee' or 'kaliparaj' might have been old folk terms. But these were more adjectives than ethnic terms.

Of these, the term 'adivasi', deserves special attention. If not the only one, this certainly is one of the terms invented and used by the members themselves for their self-identity. It is also used in officialdom and research studies as equivalent to scheduled tribes. In the adivasis' own use, however, it reflects their concept of their history and identity. Besides, being supported by political movements—adivasi Mahasabha was the name of the organisation

which preceded the Jharkhand Party—it also includes a sense of pride as against the lowly image imparted by the evolutionary terms. We shall show in due course that the Jharkhand Movement has seen a struggle between these two images—the officially sponsored one and the concept of the adivasis themselves.

In officialdom the twentieth century begins with rigorous works on identification of the tribes. In situations where different communities have lived side by side for hundreds of years developing comparable social practices, noticeably distinct regional practices appearing exotic to people of other regions may emerge in due course. But how to demarcate between them internally in sharp divisions like caste and tribe? Faced with this complexity, the administrative and Census officials produced drastically different lists in different years declaring some as tribes only to exclude them in the next period and then revising the revision again. They also adapted themselves to the reality by permitting differences in evolutionary achievements even among the lowest in the evolutionary ladder. Numerous categories like 'aboriginal tribe', 'aboriginal', 'forest and gipsy tribe', 'backward tribe', 'primitive tribe', 'forest tribe', 'forest and hill tribe', 'indigenous tribe', 'Hindu primitive tribe', 'forest and primitive tribe', etc., were devised for this purpose with ever-changing status of individual communities. All these incomplete exercises and complicated sub-categories had to be bulldozed when a list had to be produced in a hurry to meet the political necessities. 'Yet in 1936 apparently only the backwards among the tribes were enlisted in the order. In independent India the 'backward tribes' became scheduled tribes or simply, the tribes in day-to-day use. Although there were some changes in 1950 and also in 1956 and 1976 there has not been any substantial change. It needs a gigantic effort to effect any change in the list. The president of India alone has the constitutional power to declare communities as scheduled tribes. Even the state governments are not able to effect any change being guided by local experience.

In the Chotanagpur area Bauri, Ghasi, Bhogta, Rajwar and Turi, scheduled castes at present, declared 'indigenous tribes' in the 1931 Census. Another community called Bhuiya noted as a 'primitive tribe' in 1931. Even in 1936 all these communities were declared 'backward tribes'. Kamar and Koli, declared 'backward tribes' in 1936, have been dropped altogether from the two schedules. There are communities who have symbiotic social relations with the major scheduled tribes. Lohars and Gorait from among them have been declared scheduled tribes, but not Gareri.

Most fascinating is the identification of Mahatos, the most numerous single community in Chotanagpur. Presently a middle caste, the Mahatos call themselves Kurmi, Koiri, Gowala or Ahir. Dalton in 1872 declared them as unquestionably Aryans. A few years later Risley took a diametrically opposite

view, declaring that they resemble the tribes around them and supporting his view by a local tradition that said that Kurmi Mahato and Santhal were half-brothers. Till the thirties there were several cases in the civil courts over the division of property of Kurmi Mahato families in which disputes arose whether their inheritance should be judged by the Hindu code or by special tribal customs. There is also a numerous middle caste called Kurmi in Gangetic Bihar. Grierson in his Linguistic Survey had opined that the Kurmis of Chotanagpur were an 'aboriginal tribe of Dravidian stock and should be distinguished from the Kurmis of Bihar'—Coupland (1910) had taken the same position in his Gazetteer. The Kurmis of Bihar had set up the All-India Kurmi Kshatriya Mahasabha in 1894 to bring all parallel castes in the whole country on one platform. They searched for brotherly castes from as far as Gujarat and Andhra but did not admit the Kurmi Mahato neighbours till 1924. During this time the Congress social reformers too began the Kshatriyasation Movement among the Kurmi Mahatos (Mehta, 1982). But simultaneously a Gossaiyan Movement began among the Kurmi Mahatos to prevent their assimilation with an alien culture.

Even with regard to the upper castes one finds similar views. In 1872, in his report on the Ryotwari Settlement in Palamau, Forbes stated that the Rajputs of Chotanagpur, particularly of Palamau, had very much degenerated through inter-marriage.

Together with the scheduled tribes these communities may account for about 90 per cent of the autochthonous population of Chotanagpur. These are only the list of communities who were pointedly called tribe by someone or the other. For other autochthonous communities either there was no investigation reported or the findings were inconclusive. No such report can be available for Muslim communities, among whom too the socially downgraded like Momins closely resemble the major tribes in features and customs.

The popular local concept of 'adivasi' had grown out of this experience. Jaipal Singh used to mention in his earlier lectures that 90 per cent of the people of Jharkhand were adivasis. It seems a political stunt today. Instead, one should look at the context and sympathise with the befooled leader who discovered in later years that he had been cheated out of half of his base. Even in the 1936 order, the later day scheduled tribe communities were 'backward tribes', not all the tribes. The name 'Jharkhand' was coined in 1936 during the formation of the Adivasi Mahasabha. Only later, after the government-sponsored dichotomy spread widely, the leaders discovered that 'adivasi' did not mean all Jharkhandis any more. Thereafter they changed the name to Jharkhand Party.

It is difficult to understand why, in extending the protective provisions in the constitution, a need was felt to categorise them also as caste and tribe. A schedule enlisting the communities would have been sufficient for that purpose

and would also have been justified since neither the constitution nor the government did ever define the terms caste or tribe. The inclusion of these spurious categories, not the protective provisions, have retained the ground for racial distinctions introduced in nineteenth century and modified since then. To exemplify that one can quote a post-facto definition given by a person no less than the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In his report for the year 1952 he noted eight common features of scheduled tribes: (i) dwelling condition—they live in forests and hills; (ii) ethnic origins—from Negritos, Australoids or Mongoloids; (iii) language—tribal language; (iv) religion—'animists' worshipping ghosts and spirits; (v) mode of production—primitive, hunters, forest-gatherers, etc; (vi)—carnivorous in food habits; (vii) naked or semi-naked; and (viii) fond of drink and dance. Not even a fifth part of the notified scheduled tribe population would fit these criteria. Mathur (1969) termed it a 'typical case of fiction-creation by the government officers'. 'Perhaps in a romantic mood, the exotic aspects of tribal culture were magnified... The most important and conscious tribal groups in the country today... in fact present an altogether different picture. Christianised Khasi, Mizo or Munda are heavily modernised and many of them would consider their non-tribal neighbours as primitives'.

Not only Mathur but many anthropologists—the community of scholars who have first-hand knowledge of the scheduled tribes—have noted the discrepancies. But many more have succumbed and have been apologetic, even defenders of the concept. Roy Burman (1966) justified the selection process as being guided by the 'historical images' of the communities in question. Really! Recall the discussion above about communities in Chotanagpur. Whose perception, among these conflicting images of the same communities, was the historical image that Roy Burman mentions?

Indeed, it is the other way round. It is the scheduled tribes list which creates a certain historical image, which in turn lends strength to the enlistment exercise. To that the anthropologists have their not-so-modest contributions, followed by historians, social scientists and administrators opting to write or comment on the tribes. Niharranjan Ray (1972) with his remarkable power of observation had noted, '.... in the whole body of historical data at our disposal there is hardly anything to suggest that these communities of people (presently scheduled tribes and non-tribes) belonged to different social and ethnic categories altogether'. And yet, to qualify it for an Introductory Address to a seminar on 'The Tribal Situation in India' he had to exert himself to develop a theory of the emergence of the distinction, through Aryan invasion and the jati system. The opening line of the presidential address to the Indian Anthropological Society by H. K. Rakshit runs, 'The descendants of the early inhabitants of India are largely included in the population of scheduled tribes in the country (Rakshit, 1980:97).' When the United Nations Working Group on

Indigenous Populations proposed that the scheduled tribes in India be considered as one section of 'indigenous people' the Government of India categorically opposed that on the ground that the 'scheduled tribes are not the only descendants of the original inhabitants of India'. Sure, many will agree. But Rakshit's statement too will be summoned as an authority whenever it suits the government.

The anthropologists often take a defensive stand that every definition in any science has limitations. True, but how scientific is a definition which drags even such scholars as those mentioned above into pitfalls. The superbly knit trap complete with physical traits, cultural achievements, fictitious history and mythical isolation is so very effective that one way or the other everyone falls victim to it. I have purposefully presented here excerpts from only the best of our scholars. If they were not able to escape the trap the condition of others less careful can be imagined. In less than a century social scientists have incubated the racial theory laid by colonial administrators to a gigantic monster. Today the thought-process of every Indian is swallowed by it. All over the country school children learn about the head hunting culture of the Nagas and the high level of education for Keralites. 'In Damodar Valley there are some groups of people who live in the hills hunting and gathering food. They are called tribals' (from a book for standard III). The first introduction only multiplies and is never corrected. Even at a much later stage no less an authority than D. D. Kosambi will inform them that Ho, Oraon and Santhal tribes of the same region practised slash-and-burn cultivation (Kosambi, 1970: 43–44). Faced with such challenges can the lightweight critics ever hope to make their points accepted?

And how many of these myths can one counter? With every passing day misinformation and false conclusions are being accumulated with contributions from one or the other of the prominent authorities, leave alone the more numerous lesser scholars. While a critic questions one, three more develop meanwhile substantiating the myth. Even the finest scholars lose their analytical inclinations when they deal with the tribes. Kosambi was aware that many slash-and-burn cultivators also knew and practised settled agriculture in parts of their land. But he did not even feel the necessity to consider a possible rationale in favour of the co-existence, concluding straightaway that primitiveness was the reason for persistence of shifting cultivation. Romila Thapar (1978: 217) knew that Vedic literature contained words for technology which are of non-Indo Aryan origin. "Thus', she writes, 'the most frequently used word for plough is langala which is of Munda origin'. After just three pages (p. 221) she records, 'The Munda-speaking groups until recently were hunters and pastoralists with, at most, digging stick agriculture... Were the Sudra tribes those who in the initial stages did not accept the new agricultural technology or did not apply it?' Students of Thapar would become

administrators and social workers for tribal areas—in all likelihood efficient and committed ones. At the root, however, they will have a distorted appreciation of the technological abilities of 'tribes' and accept the new white man's burden.

Moral and intellectual leadership, said Gramsci, is a more effective form of domination. In the tribal belt, particularly in the Jharkhand area where the protests are most developed, this is clearly noted. No one suspects that the committed scientists have any vested interests. No one feels that the protective policy has been vitiated by spurious characterisation. The intellectual leadership is accepted even within Jharkhand. Under its influence the non-scheduled tribe autochthones imagine that their ancestors had come to Jharkhand in some recent past; the scheduled tribes tend to think that anyone out of the list are 'dikus'. The anthropologists exaggerate the difference between neighbouring communities. It is adapted in revivalism among the tribes in course of self-assertion and the reverse among the rest for acculturation. The Adivasi Mahasabha suddenly finds that half of the people they have been fighting for are not adivasis any more. Later historians will discover when the Unnati Samaj or Adivasi Mahasabha had 'opened their gates' to the non-tribals. From within the jumble of authoritative descriptions the present generation of adivasis will not know that their predecessors had never practised any such closed-door policy. It was governmental diplomacy in collusion with the social scientists that forced the earlier leaders to make an explicit statement.

Moral and intellectual domination, unlike political suppression, relies on the willing acceptance of suppressive ideas by the people themselves. It does not appear as a domination at all, but as 'leadership'. It becomes far more difficult to discern the oppressive scheme. But still, with growing experience of struggle, people come to the realisation. In the present phase of the Jharkhand movement there is a clear challenge to the existing racial, moral and intellectual leadership. In course of their struggle over the last fifty years the Jharkhandis have partly succeeded in understanding the vicious nature of the dominance.

Current Situation

The scheduled tribe population is distributed around the hilly regions of the country. These regions include hills, but more of valleys and peneplains which permit cultivation. However, the proportion of arable land here is less in comparison to the plains proper, the major river valleys and deltas, the abode of the so-called mainstream of the Indian population. Because of the rocky and undulating nature of the terrain even land preparation for sowing demands greater effort, leave alone reclamation. These are some of the difficulties which cannot be overcome by knowledge of the techniques used elsewhere, like in the plains. Anyone open-minded enough should, therefore, ask whether

the differences in technology occurred because of the above reasons or because of a hypothetical isolation and psychological blockade against progress.

Available evidence belies the isolationist theory. The early appearance of rice in Nagaland or the Mundari origin of the word for plough would rather support the beginning of agriculture in these areas as well as an exchange of technology and culture, from the very ancient period. Limited acceptance could occur in such circumstances because of a need to adapt to two different types of environment. While agriculture was a difficult proposition, the hilly areas also provided some very rich alternatives. The uncultivable lands were forests and grazing grounds. Indeed, the scheduled tribes rarely practise a single occupation; some of them have several subsidiary occupations. As a result, not only are some of the agricultural techniques different but even the importance of agriculture is different.

If anything, it is the economic bases which provide for the emergence and perpetuation of a relative distinction between the people of the two types of regions. The distinct ecologies necessitated distinct modes of adaptation. In turn, the social systems that developed in each area lent support to the economic base and became different. To be more specific, forests and grazing grounds can be managed only as common property. The relative importance of common property resources in the economies of the hilly regions necessitated retention (and evolution) of communal bonds among them. This explains their characteristic social structure and also the limited success of exploitative ethics like the caste system in converting them. What is significant is that all the communities in the hilly regions must have shared the distinctiveness in technology and supporting culture, varying in degrees among themselves, but being more distinct from the mainstream. This explains why, in the early years, all ethnographers detected more of the 'tribes' in hilly areas but could not agree amongst themselves on the labelling of the neighbouring communities. All the communities were participants in a local culture.

The distinct ecologies of the hill regions, like those of the coasts and deserts, necessitated distinctive adaptations from those of a mainstream dominated by the people of valleys and plains. Each of them accepted from the others only those which suited them and each group considered their own technology and culture superior to the others'.The dependence of the hill people on the forest earned them the contemptuous name 'junglee'. In all likelihood, the 'junglees' were indeed proud of that association and hated the monotonous existence and unhealthy living conditions people faced in the lower plains. Both of them were proud of their distinctive ways, until the racial-colonial theories came to adjudge one of them as superior. That was more than just an evaluation; it paved the way for a massive devastation by undermining the viability of one technology and culture. It also helped the rise of a patronage

which holds that the scheduled tribes, like the scheduled castes, have been exploited for thousands of years. Never. The regional exploitation began with Capitalism.

We will not enter into the details of this destruction process. In a nutshell, every avenue of reproduction available to the scheduled tribes in the past has been partially blocked. Land alienation by private parties has assumed staggering proportions. And yet some writers (e.g., Patel, 1974) think that the acquisition by the government for industrial purposes dwarf the efforts of the private parties. Forests and grazing fields have been reduced in area. Access to whatever is left is highly restricted. Less known is the fact that traditional irrigation facilities in almost all these areas have largely collapsed (e.g., Sengupta, 1982: 23). The destruction has often been understood as the eventual fate of any 'primitive' economy. This being far from the truth, better alternatives have been rarely available. In consequence, meaningful developmental programmes are rare to come across in these distinctive eco-regions. Shifting cultivation is discouraged without any appropriate alternative scheme. Irrigation development for the benefit of these areas has not made any recognisable impact. Little progress has been made in land reclamation or in checking soil erosion. The cost of transportation into the less accessible, thinly populated areas restricts the extension of improved seeds and fertilisers. Non-agricultural activities like forestry and grazing need no discussion under this head for developmental programmes here do not even purport to benefit the traditional beneficiaries. Special Development Programmes have not been imaginative enough to even perceive the requirements of the target groups. In consequence, the people of these regions have been marginalised. To compensate for the partial loss of sources of livelihood they have been forced to explore alternative avenues of engagement. They migrate, to many different parts of India supplying cheap labour for rich farmers in Punjab, road contractors in Himachal, brick kilns in UP, the metro-rail in Calcutta and contract labour in mines and factories all over.

With the advent of capitalism access became easier to both hills and plains. This opened up the possibility of large scale exchange. The distinctive eco-regions were rich in resources not available in the plains and valleys. In addition, some of these regions were discovered to be rich in mineral resources too. Above 80 per cent of total mineral resources in the country, for example, comes from the southeast resource region alone. Lakhs of families have been uprooted to make room for industries, mines and river valley projects; millions have been deprived of their subsistence with the denudation of forests. The benefits of these developmental projects have accrued to others. Steel, coal and forest products brought prosperity to the rest of the country. Irrigations and power projects benefited areas downstream. Even in employment the locals have been highly discriminated against.

This is the well known economic background of tribal unrest. It is important to note the regional nature of the problems. Not only the scheduled tribes but also their neighbouring communities in the concerned regions have been affected in the same way. Traditional avenues of survival are closed to them too. Inappropriate development strategies have not brought any relief to them either. They too have been uprooted in the course of industrial expansion and have been discriminated against in job opportunities. They are just as much interested as the scheduled tribes in properly defining the 'sons of the soil' so that jobs reserved for this category are not taken away by immigrants from other parts of the state of location. They know better that Karnataka, being a state could defend its water rights over Kaveri, which was earlier catering only to the needs of the downstream in Tamil Nadu. The locals, scheduled tribes and others alike, are concerned that all their water resources are being committed to the people downstream on a long term basis and, lacking a political identity, they are unable to defend their rights through the legitimate forums.

Many of the problems identified today as 'tribal problems' are indeed problems specific to some badly exploited eco-regions. Adversely affected are all the people there and these are fertile grounds for regional self-determination movements. But sporadic mass protests have rarely taken any persistent shape in the last fifty years which can be alluded to the divisive propaganda. The movements in the north-east, though they command only a small number of people have succeeded in achieving regional autonomy. In other parts, in spite of the numerical strength and long tradition, very little has been achieved as yet. Of the major communities none is concentrated in a single state. The affected population has been divided as 'scheduled tribes' and non-tribals. The mythical historic identities divide them in their interests. The north–east regions did not face this problem. In Nagaland and Mizoram about ninety per cent of the population have been enlisted as scheduled tribes which did not divide their rank.

In middle India the Jharkhand region combines several features which gave it a place of the foremost importance in regional movements. It has suffered the worst disaster from industrial expansion and the least from the divisive policies. Half of the region was retained in a single state, Bihar; a greater proportion of local people were marked scheduled tribes. In addition, Jharkhand is also well-advanced in literacy and education. It is in this area therefore, that the complex nature of dominance has been best understood. By now they have been able to develop a programme which rejects the weakening factors.

The programme is the outcome of long years of struggle on various fronts. Some important landmarks in the struggle are: Mayurbhani agitation

for merger with Bihar in 1949, the displaced persons movement, that began with the Damodar Valley Project and Bokaro Steel factory and matured in the seventies to resistance struggles at Subarnarekha and Koel-Karo projects. These brought all the local people together. The worker-peasant movement of 1973-74 in the formative period of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was another landmark. In the post-emergency phase of broad democratic movements all the political parties came together in 1977 to form an All Party Sangharsh Samiti. None of these fronts on economic and political issues persisted for long, being vulnerable to the divisive propaganda. But the foundation for a lasting unity has been laid meanwhile by the literary and cultural movements.

After reviewing the whole history of Chotanagpur certain points become clear. This area was never isolated from the rest of the country. In some way or the other it has always been connected with the latter. Secondly, it was not inhabited by savage forest-dwellers as is universally accepted. It has always had a life of its own. In the national arena it has played a glorious role. There are many Jharkhandi intellectuals who are trying to discover these facts. Their contributions do not always meet the highest methodological standards. Nevertheless, in the basics they often exhibit more scientific insights and consistency than the established authorities. This won't seem an exaggeration should one recall the citations I gave earlier from Rakshit, Kosambi and Romila Thapar.

For the activists this is a gruelling task. If only the concerned social scientists would have been a bit more factual and scientific, the myths would not have developed to such proportions. If at least some of them would have come forward to clear the rubbish, the work would have been much simpler. Thereby they would have helped not only the regional movements but also the overdue task of correcting Indian history, relieving it of its racial intonations.

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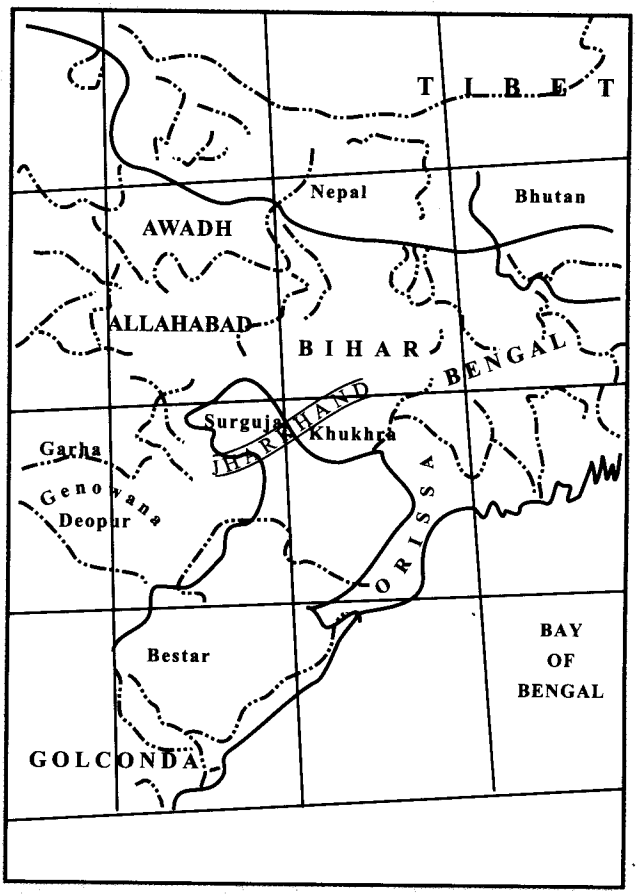
JHARKHAND UNDER THE MUGHAL EMPIRE



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HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE NAME 'JHARKHAND'

MATHEW AREEPARAMPIL
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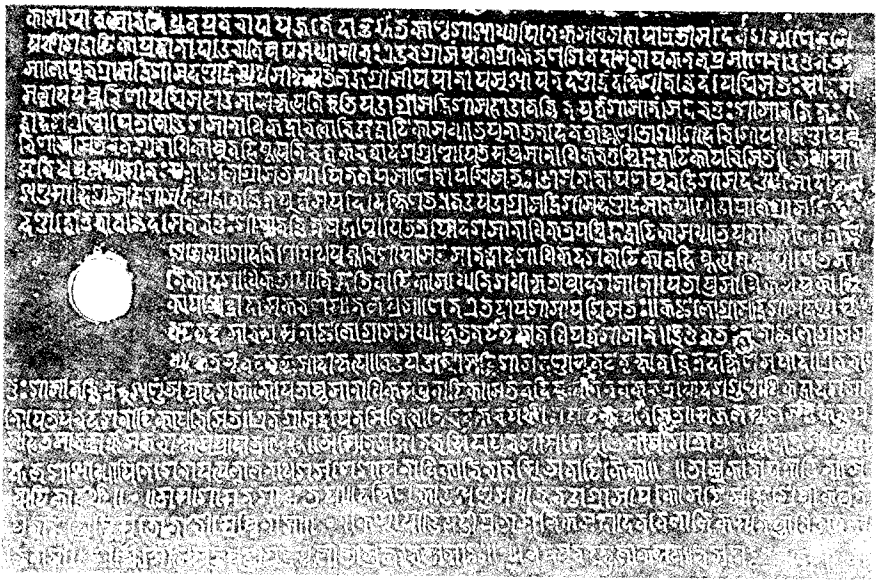
The *Bihar State Reorganisation Bill 2000* has been recently sent by the President of India to the State Legislature for approval. At present a controversy is going on as to what name should be given to the new State—*Vananchal* or *Jharkhand*. Here we shall try to look into the historical basis of the name 'Jharkhand'.

Jharkhand meaning 'forest tract' is the ancient name given, as a whole, to the forested upland geographically known as the Chota Nagpur Plateau forming the north-eastern portion of the Peninsular Plateaus of India. It is a region of great unevenness consisting of a succession of plateaus, hills and valleys, drained by several large rivers such as the Damodar, Barakar, Subarnarekha, Brahmani, Baitarani and Mahanadi. In its physical features, in its geological formation, in its botanical products and in its mineral wealth, in its ethnological peculiarities, in its social and political history, this area presents a striking contrast to the rest of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, of which it forms a part.

The whole (sometimes part) of the Chota Nagpur Plateau was called *Jharkhand* by the Aryans and later by the Muslim chroniclers. However, we are unable to ascertain exactly when this area was first named Jharkhand. The first recorded reference to Jharkhand could be traced as far back as the thirteenth century. A copper-plate inscription (see below) of Nrisingha-deva II of Orissa found at Kendrapada mentions a village *(T)ucada* in the middle of South Jhadakhanda. This copper-plate was a grant of Nrisingha-deva II, king of Utkala, given to certain pious Brahmins in the 21st year of his reign and is dated the 'sixth day of the bright fortnight of Simha (Leo) month, in the Caka year 1217'=Monday, 19th September, 1295 A.D. (See *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol.LXV, 1896, pp. 229–71.



A Copper plate Inscription

The 19-20th lines of this plate where the word *Jharkhand* occurs are given below:-

L. 19. वाटिकार्द्धञ्च ॥ ० ॥ अस्य शासनशा'ङ्कत या । दक्षिण
झाडखण्डमध्य तु(?)चडाग्रामीय कोमटि माङ्कु श्रेष्ठीकपुत्र

L. 20. पुराइ खे'ष्ठिसुते नोरी खे'ष्ठिनामा ॥ ० ॥ कण्टपडिहट्टीय

One Jaysingh Deo, a king of northern Orissa, also of the 13th century, is said to have declared himself to be the king of Jharkhand. Abhayakara Gupta, an illustrious Buddhist monk, a contemporary of Rampala and a glory of Vikramsila in its last days, is said in different anecdotes to have been born in Gauda or in Jharkhand of Orissa (cf. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *The History and Culture of Indian People, The Struggle for Empire,* 1957: 418). The interpolated

section of ***Bhavishya Purana*** (around 1200 A.D.) mentions ***Jharikhanda*** as one of the seven ***desas*** forming the ***Pundra Desa***. Jharkhand in this instance could have meant the modern Santhal Parganas district (cf.Sircar, D.C. *Studies in the Geography of Ancient & Medieval India*, 1960: 98 &114). The ***Maha-Lingeswara Tantram*** mentions Baidyanath and Bakreswara being in Jharkhand. The Lilly tracts from Baidyanath to Jagannathpuri was also referred to as Jharkhand (cf. Shyamsunderdas, *Hindi Sabdasagar*, Vol.IV, 1968: 1842). The great Vaisnav reformer Chaitanya on his way from Nilachal to Mathura in the 15th century also refers to the region of Chota Nagpur as Jharkhand.

Throughout the Muslim rule the word 'Jharkhand' appears to have survived although the word 'Kokrah' became a common epithet for this region. *Tarikh-i-Firuz-Shahi* of Shams-i-Siraj tells us that the Sultan Firuz Tughlaq, after his second campaign against Bengal (1359-1360 A.D.), marched from Jaunpur against the Rai of Jajnagar (modern Orissa) and after making peace with him returned by some route through Jharkhand (cf. *Singhbhum Distinct Gazetteer*, 1958: 71). In the ***Akbarnama*** the whole tract from Birbhum and Pachet to Ratanpur in Central India and from Rohtasgarh in South Bihar to the frontier of Orissa was called Jharkhand or 'jungle land'.

> To the NE, Jharkhand extended as far as the Ganga through the Rajmahal Hills.... Its limits similarly extended to the W., embracing the principality of Ratanpur, its borders matching with E. limits of Gondwana... From the fact that Gondwana was distinguished from it (though the visible geographical aspects were similar), it would appear that its limits took into account a political factor also, viz. rule by Rajput chiefs. Jharkhand was divided among the three *subhas* of Bihar, Allahabad and Orissa (cf. Habib, Irfan, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, 1982:40).

On the basis of linguistic evidence, Santhal traditions and Blochman's analysis of the geographic boundaries of Muslism Bengal, Sankarananda Mukherji argues that the Jharkhand of the Muslim historians probably covered the entire territory of Chotanagpur, Birbhum and western Burdwan (cf. *Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute*, Vol.XI, 1975: 20–24).

Thus the term 'Jharkhand' in its widest historical denotation comprised the entire Chota Nagpur Plateau. We may call it the *Greater Jharkhand.* Jharkhand had thus emerged as a distinct geographical region in the early medieval period and was mentioned as such in contemporary textual and epigraphic sources. On the basis of such historical evidences it is fitting and proper that the new State be named as *Jharkhand.*

MEMORANDUM TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Jharkhand Party

Sub: Formation on Jharkhand State with 21 Districts of the Jharkhand Area.

Hon'ble Sir,

For a long time, the inhabitants of the Jharkhand region have been conducting movements with the demand for the formation of Jharkhand state. On 11-13 September 1987, some 49 organisations supporting Jharkhand state have repeated this demand at Ramgarh, Hazaribagh, under the banner of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC). The success of the 'unity rally' at Ranchi on November 15, on the occasion of Birsa's birth anniversary, defying the total 'nakabandi' of Ranchi by the administration, and the total success of 'Jharkhand Bandh' on November 19, 1987 have proved beyond doubt that the demands raised by the JCC enjoy enormous mass support. Instructed by the JCC, we submit this memorandum to you and request you to take steps for the formation of a Jharkhand State in accordance with the provisions of Art. 2 and 3 of the Constitution of India. We place the following facts as background regarding the suitability of the demand of a Jharkhand state for your kind consideration.

Background of the Demand for Jharkhand State

The north-eastern hill region of Gondwanaland, which was famous in ancient history as Ark-khand, Jharkhand, etc., remained an independent 'Janpad' for a long time. The people of the region lived a happy life under autonomous rule. This region engulfs 12 districts of present Bihar (i.e., Singhbhum, Gridih, Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Dumka, Godda, Deoghar and Sahebganj); 4 districts of present Orissa (i.e., Mayurhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur and Sundargharh); 3 districts of present West Bengal (i.e., Midnapur, Bankura, and Purulia); and 2 districts of present (i.e., Surguja and Raighar); altogether 21 districts. Its area is nearly 1,87,646 sq. kms and the population, according to the 1971 Census is 3,05,98,791. This region has its specific

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True copy of the Memorandum submitted to the President of India on behalf of the oppressed Jharkhandi people by the Jharkhand Coordination Committee on the 10th of December, 1987.

identity, it being a cultural unity in itself. Till the British occupation, the political-cultural identity of the region remained unimpaired. Its autonomy was destroyed for the first time during British rule. The people of Jharkhand waged relentless struggles to defend their traditional autonomy and self-rule. But these heroic struggles were defeated by the manoeuvrings and superior armed force of the British Raj. Ultimately the Jharkhand region was split up between four states. The Jarkhand nationality, divided between the four states, became a victim of political, economic and cultural colonialism and this oppression led to the erosion of their identity.

The people of the region have been launching relentless struggles since 1769 against this political economic and cultural exploitation and the resulting disintegration. Lakhs of Jharkhandis have sacrificed their lives for their autonomy and identity. But the Jharkhand region could not achieve its liberation from colonial rule and exploitation, through many heroes of the Jharkhand region like Konta Munda (1820); Singrai-Bindrai Manki (1831); Tilka Majhi, Sidhu, Kanu, Chand, Bhairav (1856); Biswanath, Sahdev, Ganpat Rai, Sheikh Bhikhari, Kurban Ali, Nilambar, Pitambar, (1857); Birsa Munda, Bharuri Munda (1900); Jatra Bhagat (1915); etc. As a continuation of this struggle, the movements of Unnati Samaj (1916), Adivasi Mahasabha (1930) and Jharkhand Party (1950) were started.

The people of Jharkhand region had expected that their identity and autonomy would be recognised in independent India. This region, full of mineral wealth, occupies a pride of place in India from the cultural viewpoint, too. Three great cultures of India-Aryan, Dravidian and Austric, have co-existed and intracted with each other for a long time in this region. In this way, this region has preserved the precious elements of Indian history and culture from destruction. After independence large-scale industrialisation of the region created an unfavourable situation for the Jharkhand identity. Nearly 50 lakhs of outsiders were brought into the region, while the people of the region were evicted in large numbers. Today, the whole of big business, industry and employment are in the hands of outsiders. The people of Jharkhand are treated like foreigners in their own homeland. Majority of them have to leave their villages and travel long distances in search of a meagre living. The outsiders grab all the fruits of development, while the Jharkhandis remain in a condition of acute distress. Their wealth, honour, religion, language and literature and music are being systematically looted and destroyed. Under such circumstances, the people of Jharkhand are demanding a separate state within the Indian Union for the protection and development of their identity. They believe that their identity will not be protected and developed unless they get state-power in their own hands. With this purpose, the people of Jharkhand have been drawing the attention of the Central Government through a political movement. Earlier, different organisations of Jharkhand had submitted their own memoranda to

the Central Government. But the Jharkhandis have not yet got any redressal of their miserable plight.

In this background, the people of Jharkhand have become restless. They have brought together nearly all organisations fighting for the cause of Jharkhand and have formed the Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee to fulfill the dream of separate Jharkhand state. We, on behalf of this Co-ordination Committee, request you to take steps for the formation of a Jharkhand state and thus clear the way for the protection and development of Jharkhandis.

Justification of the Demand for Jharkhand State

The States' Re-organisation Committee's verdict against the formation of Jharkhand state was based mainly on three grounds.

The SRC noted:

1. The tribes are a minority in the Jharkhand region;
2. There is no specific link language in Jharkhand; and
3. The economic balance of the neighbouring states will be disturbed if Jharkhand state is formed.

Later on, the Government reached the understanding that the problem of Jharkhand is a problem of development alone and that the people would be satisified if development projects were taken up.

The considered opinion of the JCC on this issue is that the viewpoint of the government is not based on facts and that is the reason why the movement is considered secessionist and anti-national. Sometimes the government has tried to discredit the movement by saying that it is 'instigated' by Christian missionaries. But it should be noted that the Jharkhand movement has withstood severe repression and each time has emerged mightier than before. Now, the government should seriously consider this demand with sympathy.

The fact is that the Jharkhand Movement is one for the protection and development of Jharkhandi nationality. Till now, the nationality question has not been seriously considered in our country and states have been formed arbitrarily on the basis of convenience. Sometimes it is based on language, sometimes on administrative convenience and in some cases it is based on ethnicity. We think that nationality is the only scientific basis for the formation of states. In the Soviet Union, the states were reorganised on this basis and the people got a happy road for development. In a multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like India, the unity and integrity of the country can be preserved and strengthened by awarding all nationalities equal rights for their protection and development. This right can be guaranteed by the formation of a separate state.

Considered from this viewpoint, all the conditions necessary for the formation of a state are present in Jharkhand. It consists of a specific geographic region which is different from the neighbouring states. It has its own history. It has its own economic and social formation and consequently, a distinct culture. The tribes and the Sadans living in Jharkhand region constitute inseparable parts of this cultural tradition. According to 1971 Census they constitute 85% of the population. If they get autonomy, they can present a model of democracy. On the contrary, if this is not given, and the present process of disintegration through industralisation goes on, then the people of Jharkhand will meet the same fate as the Red Indians in American democracy.

The problem of Jharkhand region is not the problem of development alone. In the name of development, the wealth and the cheap labour-power of Jharkhand have been looted. Millions of rupees of foreign capital have flown into Jharkhand, but has it really brought any benefit to the people of Jharkhand or, for the matter, to the people of India? Due to plunder, all public sector enterprises are running at a loss. The profits earned by the private sector are utilised in the interest of neither the Jharkhandis nor the country. Corruption, nepotism, bribery and goondaism and unemployment are now common features of the region. Mafia groups are ruling the areas surrounding the mines and industries. It is loot and plunder that is going on in the name of development.

In this situation, the question is being raised whether any country or society can acquire a glorious life without self-reliance. This is the condition of Jharkhand. Real development in Jharkhand will take place only when the people of the region will be masters of their wealth and sweat. They will not be able to move on to a path of self-reliant development unless they get the power to take decisions.

The JCC holds that the formation of Jharkhand state will be beneficial to the neighbouring states as well as to the country. In order to put an end to parasitic culture and to develop on the path of self-reliance, the formation of Jharkhand state will advance the democratic revolution in India. From this viewpoint, the demand for the formation of Jharkhand state is constitutional and is in the interest of the country. It is a natural aspiration of the people based on democratic values.

The Jharkhand region is the store-house of forest and mineral wealth, water resources and a huge labour power. Jharkhand is the soul of India. The semi-colonial slavery of Jharkhand should be done away with in the interest of India and the world. Even if somebody insists on a link-language, it should be considered that the people of Jharkhand are now using Hindi more or less all over the region. If Hindi-speaking states like M.P. and U.P. can be formed, then what is the objection to the formation of Jharkhand with Hindi as the link-language?

Looking at all the facts, it seems that the government, either consciously or unconsciously, is acting in a manner leading to the destruction of the oppressed Jharkhandi masses.

The enclosed memorandum is intended to draw your attention to the demand for Jharkhand state. If needed, we shall furnish further facts about our miserable condition and the justifications for the formation of Jharkhand state.

We hope that the Government of India will take note of the above points and will seriously ponder upon the problem and fulfil the aspirations of the tribal and non-tribal masses of Jharkhand through the formation of Jharkhand state and thus take immediate steps for the protection of their existence and identity.

Yours sincerely
Members of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee

Preamble

Jharkhand is a geographical, historical, socio-economic, cultural and political reality in India. The Adivasis and Sadans are the indigenous people of this region. They have traditionally maintained a distinctively different identity of their own in relation to their neighbours.

Kings and rulers have come and gone in Jharkhand, but the people here have maintained their unique socio-cultural identity in the midst of changing historical circumstances. Many socio-economic and political factors and forces have tried to destroy the Jharkhand cultural ethics, but the Jharkhandi people have successfully resisted them. These resistance movements have been well recorded and documented by the colonial and native administrators and social scientists.

Jharkhand movement is essentially a struggle of exploited and oppressed people against prevailing unjust socio-economic and political structures. It is a struggle for their liberation. It is a movement in search of an alternative to the present socio-economic and political structures undergirded by greed for wealth and power, at the cost of peoples welfare and human dignity. This movement is aimed at creation of the Jharkhand State within Indian Union by peaceful and constitutional means. The Jharkhandi people's movement for creation of the Jharkhand State has been misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented by vested interests within Jharkhand region and outside it. Therefore, the aims and purpose of Jharkhand movement for the creation of Jharkhand State is presented here with all supporting facts for a sympathetic consideration and favourable action by the Government of India.

1. Jharkhandi Identity

A people's identity is integrally bound up with the space (geography) they occupy and time (history) they live through. Without the proper knowledge of a people's geographical location and historical background their socio-economic, cultural and political identity cannot be understood.

1.1. Geographical Contiguity

Jharkhand is a hilly mountainous and plateau region extending in the East from Bankura district of West Bengal to Surguja district of Madhya Pradesh on the West and former Santhal Parganas of Bihar in the North and Sambalpur district of Orissa in the South. It includes 12 districts of South Bihar, 4 districts of North Orissa, 3 districts of West Bengal, and 2 districts of M.P. (altogether 21 districts) within its contiguous geographical region. The area of Jharkhand is approximately 1,87,646 square kilometres. It has a population of 35, 098,991 people within its boundary.

In the opinion of geographers Jharkhand contiguous region consists of 'Dharwar rocks' which includes the Archaen granites with some sedimentary deposits. The plateau begins with about 500 ft. above sea level and gradually goes up through Ranchi plateau with 2000 ft. to 3000 ft. high and finally reaches to the pat of Netarhat and some hills south of Singhbhum with an altitude of more than 4000 ft. from the sea level. The geological formation of Jharkhand region provides it with rich mineral resources like coal, iron, copper, mica, gold, limestone, bauxite, etc. India's major mineral resources are located in Jharkhand.

This hill, mountainous and plateau region is blessed with rich varieties of roots, plants and trees. Maximum varieties of fruit, flowers, leaves and roots are used ass nutritious food by the Adivasis and Sadans of Jharkhand. Sal, Karam, Mahua, Kendu, Kusum, Palas, Gamhar, Bija, etc., are the main trees of Jharkhand. Bamboos and Sawai are still found here in abundance. Char, Pithor, etc., are famous even for commercial purpose. The extent of Jharkhand geographical contiguity could be determined to a great extent by the presence of sal trees in its hills and valleys.

A great number of zoological species also are found in Jharkhand. From elephant to various kinds of creeping animals and worms are found in this region. One finds peacock to smallest birds here. The Jharkhand plateau with its varying altitudes, and with a fair amount of rainfall, has a number of rivers like Damodar, Subarnarekha, North and South Koels, Sankh, Karkari, Kanchi, Karo, etc. These rivers have their natural water falls. The flora and fauna of Jharkhand make it a beautiful region of India.

1.2. Historical Continuity

Recent archaeological findings in Jharkhand area throw much light on the pre-history and ancient history of this region. Archaelogists and historians maintain that there is trace of human habitations from about the 10,000 B.C. – 8000 B.C. The Mundari speaking Asurs, Bhumij, Kharias, Mundas, Hos, Santhals, etc. are accepted as the first setters of Jharkhand. Then the Kurukhs (Uraons) and various Sadan communities joined them. Many others have moved into Jharkhand in more recent times.

Ancient literature and travel documents written by foreign travellers mention about the unknown hilly tract of Jharkhand. The Mughal historians made special mention of 'Jharkhand' in fourteenth century. The British colonial rulers finally explored Jharkhand country inhabitated by the Adivasis and Sadan including the Maharaja, rajas and Zamindars. The British identified Jharkhand by many names serving their administrative and economic purposes. It has been known as 'Ramgarh hill tracts', 'South Western Frontier Agency', 'Chutianagpur', and 'Chotanagpur Division'. Each political change in the former

Bengal Presidency brought an adverse effect on the political identity of Jharkhand. When Bihar was separated from Bengal a portion of Jharkhand was sliced off from the original area and was annexed to Bengal. When Orissa was separated from Bihar a big chunk of Jharkhand (Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar) was again taken away and kept with Orissa. During the same period and after, Raigarh and Surguja districts were tagged up with Madhya Pradesh.

The political identity of Jharkhand has been damaged by the colonial rule of the British. But unfortunately even the national government after independence has continued to support and act on the foreign colonial principle of divide and rule with respect to the geography, history and political identity of the Jharkhandis. Though politically and administratively Jharkhand is at present divided into four states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh the socio-cultural unity of the people in Jharkhand is still maintained as one. There is a Jharkhandi cultural ethics which binds people together, cutting across the artificial boundaries existing today.

Political history of Jharkhand has undergone changes but there is a historical continuity of the people of Jharkhand. This history can be discerned in the socio-cultural life of Jharkhandi people. Many common themes like migration from one place to another and finally to the present settlement here are found in the folklore of the Adivasis and the Sadans. Common themes of exploitation and oppression by greedy outsiders run through the prose and poetry written in Mundari, Santhali, Kurukh (Uraon), Kharia, Ho aud Sadani literature. The past, present and future life conditions of the people of Jharkhand are sung in AKHRA (dancing group) of Adivasi villages. Many rajas and rulers (foreign and native) have come and gone, but the Jharkhandi people continue to remain here keeping the historical continuity of their unique identity as against their neighbours.

1.3. Socio-economic and political tradition

Jharkhandi society is basically community based, classless, egalitarian and close to nature. Until the advent of the British colonial rule a primal socialism was practised in Jharkhand. In Jharkhandi community individual interest and welfare had always remained subordinate to the collective interest and welfare. Though patrilined and patrilocal principles were observed in customary laws of inheritance, the economic interests of womenfolk were well protected.

Land, forest and water were trusteeship of the community (one lineage at one place or several places). Everyone's labour was creatively used for production of food and all other goods and services. Production was carried on in and by the community with the cooperation of all. Literal physical labour became the means of cooperating with others in the community. Produce of

goods and services was used for the good of all, and not for any individual selfish purpose. Sharing with others, goods and services, was the dominnant motive for human interpersonal and community relations. Greed and grabbing for one's selfish ends were completely unknown in Jharkhandi socio-economic structures. Therefore, exploitation and oppression of one by another were unknown in Jharkhandi socio-economic tradition.

Panch-Parha political system governed the Jharkhandi life in general. Panch had socio-political power to regulate life in the villages. Parha-patti were the bigger panches which included as may as 22 villages. Every adult was member of the village panch and so all members of 22 villages formed the Parha. Leadership was exercised by a group of elders in the village, though there were the village Munda, Mahto, Manjhi and Parha Raja in Jharkhandi tradition. Decisions in panch and parha-patti were taken in such a way that with very little chance of injustice, dissention and friction in the Jharkhandi socio-political life, society was able to maintain its socio-economic and political identity with complete solidarity.

1.4. Cultural Heritage

Land is life in Jharkhandi cultural heritage. Land means the cultivable and uncultivable pieces of land including forest and bodies of water in and around a village. Land is given by God and the Jharkhandi has cleared and made it habitable and therefore, Jharkhandi people have inalienable rights on the land and forests, hills and mountains of Jharkhand. The privatisation of property introduced by the colonial rules in Jharkhand initiated a process of erosion of this traditional concept of land and it has been augmented in recent years. Nature, ancestor, and human are integral part of reality understood by the Jharkjhandis. Men and Women are treated as equals and there is no sharp differentiation of high and low in the Jharkhandi society. Common ownership of properties make equality more equal in human relationships. Dignity of labour is high social and human value among the Jharkhandis. 'No labour no food' and hence begging was unknown in this region till very recent times.

Words carried weight and meaning among the people here. Honesty and integrity were cherished and practiced in the society. Strangers are always welcomed and accommodated in Jharkhand with a genuine human spirit. They are given shelter and share in the means of production and use of the produce. The attitude of sharing rather than grabbing land and money is a great human value among the Jharkandis. Such human values are pushed at the corner today and therefore, Jharkhandis are at a loss. They do not know how to relate themselves with the presently dominant opposite and in human values. Others are taking undue advantage of the Jharkhandis, treating them as ignorant people.

Life has stresses and strains in Jharkhand also. But the Jharkhandis have learnt to face life's situation with collective participation in songs and dance.

Joy in singing and dancing has kept the Jharkhandi people alive even today. Without this cultural value they could have been crushed under the present exploitative and oppressive system imposed on their economic and socio-political structure.

The creation of Jharkhand state as an instrument of socio-economic and political power enabling the Jharkhadis to preserve, promote, and share their cultural values with the rest of India is an urgent need today. An analysis of their present socio-economic and political situations is required here to see the demand of separate state of Jharkhand in its proper perspective.

2. Process of Erosion of Jharkhandi Identity

The Jharkhandi character distinguishes the people of Jharkhand from the dominant national society. The Jharkhandis consider their society as basically community-based, classless, egalitarian and close to nature. They are labour-oriented and they know to eat only out of their labour. They see the dominant society around them as highly exploitative, stratified, individualistic, anti-nature and highly secular.

Throughout the history Jharkhand systematic and constant attempts have been made by vested interests to destroy this Jharkhandi character and to bring the Jharkhandis under the control of the exploitative structure of the dominant society. The history of Jharkhand is the history of resistance to these various attempts as conquest and assimilation of the Jharkhandis and their culture by the supposedly 'superior culture' of the dominant society.

The basic phenomenon that characterises the present situation of the Jharkhandis is the phenomenon of dispossession. The Jharkhandis are systematically and methodically being dispossessed of the ownership of their means of production, of the product of their labour and of the very means of human existence. They are dispossessed of their political autonomy and their communities are being broken up in the name of 'progress' and 'national interest'. They are dispossessed of their culture, their values, and their very identity through well-planned policies, such as the policies of integration and assimilation to bring them to the so-called 'national mainstream'. The process of dispossession of Jharkhandis started when colonisation in search of resources began penetrating their areas. Jharkhand with its vast reserves of mineral, forest and cheap human resources became an important strategic area in the colonialist scheme of things. The guiding principle behind British colonial rule in Jharkhand was the strategic interest of British imperialism. With the departing of the British Raj external colonialism in Jharkhand ended. But the process of colonial exploitation of Jharkhandis did not stop with Independence. In the name of 'progress' a new type of colonialism, internal colonialism, has been unleashed on them by the ruling classes of the country.

The dispossession of Jharkhandis continues unabated. Let us now see how this dispossession takes place in the various spheres of their life: economic, social, political and cultural.

2.1 Economic Sphere

2.1.1. Privatisation of common property resources

The Jharkhandis have a special relationship with the land they occupy. For them land is life (not simply a factor of production as for other peoples, but a source of spirituality as well). The traditional land base holds important symbolic and emotional meaning for them as the repository for ancestral remains, clan origin sites and other sacred features important in their religious system. Regarding ownership of land the Jharkhandis have different concepts often incomrehensible to outsiders. Ownership of land is vested in the community. No individual has the right to permanently alienate the land from the community. The community is the trustee of the land it occupies. The community includes not only the living member but also the ancestors and future generations. That is why for the Jharkhandis land and blood are homologous. Their society, culture, religion, identity and their very existence are intimately linked to the land they hold. To separate them from their lands is tantamount to tearing them apart from their life-giving sources. But colonial exploitation of their territories has meant precisely that for the Jharkhandis.

The major way of dispossessing the Jharkhandis of their territories is through the process of privatisation of common property resources. This process was started by the British around 1865 and thereafter by making numerous permanent settlements of common property lands. Many areas were declared 'reserved forests', 'protected forests' and 'revenue land' and were made into State property. As a result the Jharkhandis lost their right for shifting cultivation, their food gathering, grazing and other rights in most of the common property lands. Further, as against the collective ownership of land by the community existing among them, the British introduced the institution of private property holding right in land. This brought in aliens like zamindars, thikedars, money-lenders, traders and others and made way for a gradual process of land alienation. The forest policies in Jharkhand show that the most important characteristic of both colonial and post-colonial forest policies has been the increasing assertion of state monopoly rights over forests at the expense of Jharkhadi communities. The forest policy statement of both 1894 and 1952 ligitimised this exclusion in the name of 'national interest', which serves the interest of the dominant classes who control everything for their own benefit.

The progressive assertion of state monopoly rights over large areas of forests by turning them into 'reserves' has resulted in the eviction and uprooting

of many Jharkhand villages. It also cut off the Jharkhandis from their life-supporting system. Further, many forestry projects were started which changed the character of the forest itself in such a way that they served exclusively commercial interests and no longer benefitted the Jharkhandis. Natural mixed forests on which they depended for their livelihood are being clear felled and replaced by plantations of teak, eucalyptus and various coniferous trees for commercial purposes. The large scale commercial exploitation of forests has not only destroyed the source of livelihood for the Jharkhandis but also adversely affected the ecology of Jharkhand area.

2.1.2 Industrialisation and Modernisation

After Independence the Government of India has launched a gigantic programme of industrialisation and modernisation. The effect of this programme is very much felt in Jharkhand because of its vast mineral and other natural resources. As a result many giant industries, mines, hydroelectric and irrigation projects are being built in Jharkhand area. Private industries are also given incentives to set up plants in this area. This has led to large scale alienation, both legal and illegal, of lands belonging to the Jharkhandis. All over Jharkhand this has not only meant a further dispossession of sustainable resources from its people, it has also meant their brutal displacement, and pollution and degradation of their environment. The displaced Jharkhandis are neither properly rehabilitated nor given adequate compensation for their land and other property. The various benefits such as administrative, managerial and skilled jobs, arising out of these projects are taken by outsiders while the displaced persons are given unskilled and exploitative jobs. The Jharkhandis are being sacrificed on the alter of India's industrialisation and modernisation.

2.1.3 Introduction of exploitative capitalist market system

The introduction of money and the onslaught of market forces further deteriorated the condition of Jharkhandis by dispossessing them of the product of their labour. Their self-sufficient and subsistent economy is shattered by converting it into a market-oriented economy. Thousands of rapacious traders, money-lenders, etc., flooded their areas and snatched away their products at throw-away prices. They are unable to compete with these well organised capital intensive and highly exploitative market forces.

2.2. Social Sphere

As a result of the new forces that are being introduced among them and the rapid changes that are taking place in their economic condition, the social structure of the Jharkhandis also has begun to break down. Their family life is getting disrupted. Their social controls are lost. Social tension is increasing among them. They are gradually becoming vulnerable to various diseases and emotional disorders. Many indicators of social anomie such as alcoholism,

crime, suicide, delinquency and despair have suddenly begun to increase among them. Further, confronted with development and modernisation they often experience a loss of self-esteem. They are feeling a deprivation of their sense of personal worth and devaluation of their social identity. This feeling is further aggravated by the negative attitude and approach of the dominant society towards Jharkhandi culture. As a result of this continual and systematic process of dispossession and disruption of their society the Jharkhandis are reduced to a sub-human level of existence.

2.3. Political Sphere

In the political sphere the dispossession of Jharkhandis has taken place through a process of their political integration into the national government. Their traditional political organisations are destroyed. They are incorporated into the state and they have to conform to and become integrated with the political institutions of the dominant society. In order to achieve their complete integration into the national polity, political authorities belonging to the dominant society are appointed over them. As a result they have become politically powerless and are marginalised and exploited by the dominant society.

2.4. Cultural Sphere

Up to now we have seen how in the name of 'progress' and 'national interest' the Jharkhandis are increasingly being dispossessed of their land and how their social institutions and political autonomy are being destroyed by the state controlled by the dominant society. These actions in themselves are causing the gradual disintegration of their culture. This process of disintegration of Jharkhandi culture is further accelerated by deliberate programmes of forced cultural modification designed and executed by the state and its agencies. The policies of 'integration' and 'assimilation' followed by the Government to bring the Jharkhandis to the so-called 'national mainstream' have led to the dispossession of their cultural autonomy and to the loss of their very identity. The spread of modern urban value-based education has speeded up the process of disintegration of their culture. Every area of their life, from language to marriage, customs, and religion has come under attack. Language is the main cementing factor which expresses the identity of a given community. There is a non-declared policy to suppress the language of the Jharkhandis and to impose on them the dominant Hindi language.

2.5. The Consequences of Dispossession

As a result of this systematic dispossession the Jharkhandis are reduced to a situation of extreme poverty. Majority of them live in a situation of starvation, squalour and disease. Further, the large-scale capitalist exploitation of the wealth of Jharkhand required a vast army of cheap casual labour. The Jharkhandis who are reduced to destitution are forced to accept this role of casual wage

labour in industries, mining, forestry and other operation. The capitalist development and exploitation of Jharkhand has thus operated in a vicious circle for the Jharkhandis. On the other hand it has rendered an ever increasing number of them destitute through eviction of the sources of their livelihood, etc., and on the other hand it has utilised their destitute condition to employ them for a specific role in this process, viz. that of sweet labour or sub-proletariat.

Deprived of economic power the masses of Jharkhand have become powerless in the political sphere also because in the present society economic power is synonymous with political power, money power gives the rich the power to control the lives of others. As a result of their powerlessness the Jharkhandis are reduced to amorphous objects for the use and abuse of the exploiter class. They have become victims of exploitation. The exploitation that takes place is systematic, methodical and purposeful. It is structured and rooted in the entire existing system.

For the process of exploitation to continue for a long time **opression** of the masses is required. If the masses try to organise themselves against the exploitation they undergo, then they are suppressed with a heavy hand. Killing of the Jharkhandis by police firing, burning of their houses and rape of their women folk have become common phenomena which have continuously been reported in the media.

No economic exploitation and dispossession is possible on a continued basis unless it is supported by another process that is purposefully initiated and methodically carried out by the oppressor class on the oppressed. This process is called **dehumanisation.** As a result the masses are reduced to impotent beings incapable of thinking differently or acting contrary to the will of the oppressor. Immersed in this state they are incapable of being historical persons, because they have been marginalised from the flow of history. The reduction of the oppressed to this state is a **sine qua non** for exploitation to continue. The oppressed are immersed. so to say, in a **culture of silence** a cultural that debilitates and destroys not only their personality but through it, their humanness. The culture of silence is the culmination of the process of exploitation, oppression and dehumanisation.

3. The Jharkhandi People's Struggle for Protecting their Identity

There have been countless revolts and liberation movements led by the people of Jharkhand to preserve and protect their identity. The series of grim battles fought by the Jharkhandis since **early 19th century form part of the heritage of** the Indian people's struggle against domination, slavery and exploitation. Some of these movements like the Maler revolt (1772), Tilka Manjhi's revolt (1784), Tamar revolt (1798), Kol Insurrection (1820), Ho revolt

(1820), Great Kol Insurrection (1832), Ganganarain revolt (1832), Santhal Hul (1855-57), Sardar Larai (1859-95), Birsa andolan (1895-1900), Jharkhand andolan, etc., are revolts and solidarity movements.

These movements protest against oppression by alien exploiters like the thikedars, jagidars, the British, mahajans, merchants and money-lenders. These movements centred round land and forest rights. Each of **these uprisings expressed the desperation of the Jharkhandis and invariably they were ruthlessly suppressed**. Following these rebellions, and in certain cases even without such precedents a number of reformative and revitalisation movements were started by the Jharkhandis with the idea of constructing a more satisfying culture. The following movements were of this type: Sapha Hor, Tana Bhagat, Birsa movement in the earlier stage, Bhumji Kshatriya movement, Haribaba movement, Kripa Sindhu, etc. These movements were mostly socio-religious and cultural in character and took different forms in different situations.

The two kinds of resistance and reformatory people's movements clearly show that Jharkhandis never accepted the colonial and are reacting against the post independence internal colonial socio-economic and political structures. They have resisted against them, even though they have been suppressed by military and money powers. The people's move against unjust socio-economic and political structures is a sign of their search for an alternative to the prevailing ones. Jharkhand movement is, therefore, just the continuation and extension of the movement for the Jharkhandi's emancipation. Their demand for a separate Jharkhand state within the Indian union is a major step to achieve the just socio-economic, and political structure based on human values already found in their own traditional cultures. It is a movement for emancipation from internal colonisation and to preserve and promote the Jharkhandi identity through the socio-economic and political instruments of proposed state of Jharkhand.

4. Justification for the Creation of Jharkhand State

4.1 A Critique of the State Reorganising Commission's Reports

The age-old demand for the creation of a separate Jharkhand State within the Indian Union, to be carved out of the four states, e.g., Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, has so far been misinterpreted as the demand of particular group of people, bracketed by the Government of India as the Scheduled Tribes, the inhabiting indigenous people, of which certainly the scheduled tribes constitute a major part, of the land historically known as Jharkhand. The Union Government turned down this popular demand 30 years ago unjustifiably and undemocratically on the basis of the faulty information and wrong interpretation of the situation put forward by the State Reorganisation Commission in 1956. The S. R. Commission looked at the questions of granting statehood to people of Jharkhand from an altogether faulty premise which served better the vested

interest of the then ruling cliques and people wielding dominance in the soico-economic power structure of the four concerned states. The passing time has, however, proved that humiliated souls of Jharkhand have remained far from being convinced of the decision taken by the Union Government on that score and their struggle to achieve the just demand of self-determination in the form of statehood has gained unprecedented momentum in recent years inspite of the inhuman suppression unleashed by the concerned state governments.

To substantiate the above observation a close look at the 'rationale' propounded by the Union Government on the basis of the S.R. Commission Report rejecting the demand of a separate Jharkhand State is necessary. The State Reorganising Commission, formed on the 26th of December, 1953 (with the recommendation of the Home Ministry, vide, No. 53/69/53 public) looked into the justification of the demand of a separate Jharkhand State and prepared its Report in 1956. The Report negated the demand on the following grounds:

1. It is the demand of the scheduled tribes consisting of only a little more than one third of the total population of the proposed area. (para: 618)
2. These tribes have no common language. (para: 618)
3. The majority of the population is not in favour of this demand. (para: 617)
4. The people outside the proposed region is opposed to this demand.
5. The creation of this state will usher in an economic imbalance between it and the residual state of Bihar. (para: 619 & 620)
6. The problem is basically a problem of under-development of the people concerned and its solution lies not in the formation of a separate state but in the allocation of necessary funds for development projects and proper administration of the area so that tribes inhabiting Scheduled areas (under 5th schedule of the Constitution) can integrate themselves in the general administrative system as soon as possible. (para: 621 & 622)

Obviously these biased observations of the S. R. Commission were based on the informations fed by the concerned state governments, particularly the state government of Bihar, to safeguard the economic and political interests of the people other than the Jharkhandis.

The report of the S.R. Commission was challenged on the floors of Parliament and the assembly of Bihar by the elected representatives of the people.

The demand for the certain of a separate Jharkhand state was never the demand of only a minority section of the population of the region i.e. the scheduled tribes. To establish this naked lie the Commission had gone to the extent of suppressing the fact. While the commission said that the S.T.

population consisted of 'little more than the one third of the total population of the area, the Census report of 1951 showed that the S.T. population was 29,29,108 out of the total population of 52,57,528 in Chotanagpur and Santhal pargana, i.e. 55.71%. However the demand was voiced by the overwhelming majority of the population who wanted to be recognised as one people as opposed to the policy of the colonial rulers to divide them on caste and tribe lines. This aspect was aptly observed by the Thakkar Tribal Subcommittee in the Final Report (September, 1947) when it says, 'The striking feature of this area is the feeling common among educated tribals and shared by non-tribals in considerable measure that Chotanagpur has little share in the administration, commensurate with its area, population and industrial importance and is being neglected by the Government, which is made up of elements, interested mostly in the rest of Bihar'. It further observes, 'unmistakably also, the movement (which demands the formation of a "New Province of Jharkhand" is gaining sympathy among the non-aboriginals.... The separation movement...seems to be gaining strength as a symptom of discontent which is simmering in varying intensity among all sections of the Chotanagpur population'. Moreover, the Jharkhand party alone won 33 seats in Bihar Assembly in the 1952 election who received support of many non-Congress MLAs on the floor of Assembly itself on this question.

One of the major faulty considerations of the S.R. Commission was to stand for the formation of 'linguistic' states. In the case of Jharkhand this factor was given undue importance in the Report. It had been highlighted that there was the existence of many languages in the region with the total suppression of the fact that there emerged a *lingua franca* in the region even before the advent of the East India Company's rule. Furthermore, while giving total attention to the question of language the Commission ignored other factors, more important than the language, which lay beneath the aspiration of the Jharkhandis to be recognised as one people, such as their congruous geographical territory of habitation, common cultural heritage, similar historical background, uniform psychological make up and the unique value system.

Fortunately, however, this folly has now been recognised. The opinion of the world community has already challenged the theory of 'one people, one nation'. A nation and even a nationality may have more than one language. Thus language cannot be considered as the only determining factor in identifying a people. Experience in other countries also shows that from the administrative point of view the multi-lingual situation of a region cannot be considered as an unsurpassable drawback. The formation of some newly emerged states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal, clearly shows the shifting of prior position on this issue on the part of the Government of India.

One of the basic flaws in the understanding of the S.R.C. was to wise up the question of 'Statehood' with that of 'Development'. The S.R.C. obviously

failed to understand that the real development of a people could not be possible unless its role in political decision making process is ensured. The experience of last 30 years has thus proved the futility of allocating huge funds for the development of the people of Jharkhand, who have been the object of development, the executors of it. Since the decision making power remained at the hands of the other people the funds have been misused and misappropriated and have fattened the pockets of the executors. The suffering of the people in this process multiplied. Thus in the absence of political power at the hands of the Jharkhandis the forces of 'development' have turned to be that of 'destruction' for them.

The S.R.C. report anticipated economic imbalance between the Residual state of Bihar and Jharkhand if it was granted. The facts as have emerged during last 30 years defeated S.R.C. position thoroughly. The industrial potentialities of Jharkhand, on the one hand, have been exploited ruthlessly and, on the other, her backward agriculture, the only source of livelihood of her majority of the population, has been neglected unpardonably. As a result of that, migration of the Jharkhandi to other states has phenomenally increased. The Jharkhandis have become much poorer than they were 30 years ago. But the economic growth of North Bihar has remained steady during these 3 decades. This is also true in the cases of other three states of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

The report of the S.R.C. thus not only suppressed the facts and propagated misconceptions but also played at the hands of the vested interests dominant in the political power structure of the four concerned states of its days by giving importance to the so called 'Public Opinion outside South Bihar' disfavouring the creation of Jharkhand. It was a case of clear self-contradiction. In the paras 55, 62, 79 and 229 of the same Report the commission quotes authorities of the Nehru Committee Report, the J.V.P. Committee Report and the Dar Committee Report and concedes the principle that the wishes of the people concerned should be the main consideration in readjusting the territories of the State.

Therefore, the Jharkhandis were denied justice chiefly becasue of the wrong premises the S.R.C. chose to stand on while looking into the matter.

4.2. The Question of Nationality: The Right Premise of determining the question of statehood.

India is a nation state consisting of many peoples with distinct cultural identities. There is no denying the fact that inspite of the presence of cultural commonness there is a marked cultural diversity among the masses of the country. It cannot also be denied that along with the process of nation building a parallel process of identity fulfillment on the part of the cultural units, which may be termed as nationalities, has been going on in pluralistic Indian society.

The process of nationality formation in the cultural mosaic of the country began long before the colonial period. During the Mughal and the following colonial periods owing to several favourable socio-economic factors some nationalities could consolidate their position and achieved share in Indian Polity. But the rest failed to complete their process of nationality formation. During the independence movement and consequent development of Indian nationalism both of these groups got involved in a greater cause of anti-colonial struggle. Regional identities remained, nevertheless, a reality though secondary to the question of great national or Indian identity. After the independence, however, question of identity of these people surfaced again. The former group achieved political and cultural recognition in the federation of India with statehood. But the other groups failed to do so. The quest for identity fulfillment on their part was, however, misunderstood by the national leaders and thus they were left out of the focus while S.R.C. was formed and guiding principles were laid for it. The former group of people was naturally benefitted by the adoption of the concept of 'linguistic state'. But those whose process of nationality formation was still to be completed could not make any profit out of the S.R.C. and thus their cause was blatantly defeated.

Now since the aspirations of these peoples to whom justice was denied could not be suppressed and moreover under a situation of political and economic discrimination their consolidation became ever more strong.The Government of India had to concede to their demands. As a consequence a number of new states emerged during the last few decades. The Government has in fact already rejected the premiss of the S.R.C. without naming it.

For the larger interest of the nation it is very urgently needed that the Government should spell out its guiding principles in recognising politico-cultural identity of the so far undermined peoples.

The Jharkhandis certainly constituted a nationality, practising a distinct way of life as compared to their neighbouring nationalities such as the Bengalis, the Orias and the Biharis. Even during the Mughal period Jharkhandi people received socio-political recognition from the Delhi Sultanate. The British Raj also accepted the separate identity of the people and the region in the forms of Chutianagpur Province (Raj) quite distinct from Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. Previously these four provinces were administratively united as Bengal. The Royal Proclamation of 12th December 1911 granted the people of Bihar, Chutianagpur and Orissa separate status from Bengal. Subsequently, Orissa was separated from Bihar and Chutianagpur in 1936. In the same logical consequence 'British Chotanagar' should have been separated from Bihar. But unfortunately Chotanagpur Raj and its tributary princely states were forced to remain with Bihar even after independence and on the basis of the faulty and motivated State Reorganising Commission Report, the Government of India put an end to this question.

4. 3. Formation of a separate Jharkhand State will serve national interest better.

Jharkhand has become an alluring grazing ground for the selfish exploiters belonging to the neighbouring nationalities. By grabbing the overwhelmingly major portion of job opportunities of the area the vested interests of these nationalities have created a social base to perpetuate its economic plunder and loot. They do not consider this region as their own country. The utterly corrupt administrative system run by them has created a counter-productive situation and atmosphere in Jharkhand. The children of the soil have been put out of the focus of all developmental activities. Their participation in the nation building process in the region has been intentionally debarred to further the selfish ends of the people enjoying socio-economic and political power. The Jharkhandis have thus continually been marginalised. As a result of this, all the developmental activities and productive forces have been virtually stranded despite the investment of a huge sum of money and energy. The planned way of deprivation of the Jharkhandis in various ways including systematic change in demographic pattern by inviting people from outside the region en mass and forcing the children of the soil to out-migrate have been adding fuel to the fire of people's wrath which will, as a natural consequence, along with being self-destructive, halt the wheel of progress in the region.

The people of Jharkhand are basically honest and simple. They are hard working. They know to eat out of their own labour. For the progress of any country these are the key qualities required on the part of its population. Once the rich natural and human resources of Jharkhand are combined and, the so far locked doors of self-initiative of the people of Jharkhand are opened free Jharkhand will become the nerve centre of both economic and spiritual progress of the country.

Creation of Jharkhand will also help the development of the neighbouring nationalities. The feudal aristocracy and corrupt administrative officials getting fattened on the easy source of black money will crumble down. The luxury of maintaining uneconomic land holding pattern with absentee landlords will have to be given up. Land reform will become absolutely necessary and thus the unproductive poverty stricken millions will become productive and the widening gap between powerless majority and powerful minority will start decreasing.

Creation of Jharkhand State will thus not only enhance the Jharkhandis' faith in the democratic structure of Indian polity by fulfilling their sense of identity but also help the nation march ahead to the doorstep of the 21st century by the Jharkhandis' vigorous participation in the mechanism of economic progress of the country.

5. Precedents and constitutional provisions, area and population

5.1. Jharkhand is a constitutional demand under the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The Jharkhandis have constitutional right to place this demand and to carry on peaceful struggle for achieving this goal.

The parliament has power to create a new state and pass the bill for the same under article 2 of the Indian constitution. Under this constitutional provision the 1953 Andhra Act for creation of Andhra Pradesh, 1966; Bomaby Reorgaisation Act for creation of Bombay state, 1966; Punjab Reorganisation Act for creation of Punjab state, 1962 and Nagaland Act for creation of Nagaland were passed, and many other states have been created under the same article. Under article 2(a), (b), (c), and article 3, parliament is empowered to exclude a portion of land from a state, to add to the area or a state, to reduce the area or name of a state. Parliament has used such powers vested in it in the creation of new states by making necessary changes, additions, and reorganising states. And required amendments have been made in schedule 1 and 4. Under the circumstances mentioned above the demand for the creation of Jharkhand state comprising 21 districts by adding (annexing) few districts from Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh to Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana is neither unconstitutional nor impractical, because adequate (step) provisions have already been made for such actions in the constitution itself.

As it is required to take opinions only of state assemblies of affected states, and if the Central Government accepts the genuinness of separate state of Jharkhand, the Central Government has the power to take steps for the creation of state of Jharkhand inspite of the adverse opinions of Bengal, Orissa ad Madhya Pradesh state Governments.

In the light of clear constitutional provisions stated above the demand of separate state of Jharkhand constituted of 21 districts is quite constitutional and fulfils all the requirements for the creation of new states within the Indian Union.

A few years ago the Government of Bihar created smaller commissionaries, districts, subdivisions, blocks and panchayats out of bigger ones in view of administration and development. In such situations, creation of Jharkhand state out of a big Bihar state would be in line with the policy of the Government. This would facilitate solving administrative and development problems. Therefore, the demand of separate Jharkhand state is quite constitutional and necessary in the light of accepted policy of divisions into smaller units of existing administrative units. Besides, even in the light of fundamental human rights granted in the constitution, creation of Jharkhand state is genuine as it is still backward in economic, social, political and educational spheres. The Central and State Governments have admitted this fact again and again. Under the given circumstances the Jharkhandis should be given the right to develop

themselves according to their own hopes and aspirations by creating the separate state of Jharkhand. When creation of smaller state gives an opportunity to the oppressed, exploited and backward people of this region to develop themselves, then it should be welcomed from the point of view of national development also.

Tragedy is that the demand of separate state of Jharkhand has been made time and again even after independence supported by all democratic way and means, yet the Government has been ignoring and sidetracking the issue. Moreover the Government has turned this demand into a law and order problem and has tried to put down the democratic movements of Jharkhandis by using all kinds of repressive measures against them. As the Government itself is using repressive and violent methods and policy and trying to suppress the just movements of the people, then it is quite clear that Government policy itself is unconstitutional and undemocratic. Such wrong policy of the Government and violation of law and order, and democratic principles have created great indignation and ill feeling towards the Government among the Jharkhandis. A growing feeling in Jharkhandis slowly building up is that the Government which so lauds the democratic principles is not going to yield to the demand of separate state of Jharkhand by peaceful and constitutional means. Thus the Government is compelling the Jharkhandis to adopt undemocratic methods for which the Government itself will be held responsible.

The process of Jharkhand movement is self-evident truth because people's aspirations, supressed for centuries, are now taking shape as people's movement. Jharkhand Coordination Committee (J.C.C.) is promoting its programme according to the people's aspirations and therefore, mass support to it is quite natural. The all pervasive corruption in administration, loot in the name of development, open dacoity of forest products, land alienation and displacement of innocent people, grave political exploitation, deprivation of human rights, and rejection of the constitutional demand for separate state of Jharkhand and thereby suppressing the democratic people's movement by state power are symptoms of the general failure of the Government. Moreover, the Government is trying to save its face by destroying the democratic people's movement in the name of law and order and thereby creating disturbance in a peaceful region like Jharkhand which is not healthy for the state and is detrimental to the peace and unity of the whole country.

It can be said that concerned state Governments have always kept the central Government in the dark in this matter. And to save its face from failure it has adopted the policy of hiding facts. If the Central Government was sincerely informed about real situation in Jharkhand, the problem would have been solved long ago. The negative attitude of the state governments and their anti-people measures have pushed the people to the extreme, making them react against it, and it has begun to be explosive here and there. Now particularly the government

of Bihar is in panic and trying to give the impression to the Central Government that Jharkhand movement is being dominated by extremist elements and it is adopting violent policy and therefore deployment of military is essential to meet the growing unrest here. This logic of the Government of Bihar is completely wrong and baseless, on the contrary, the truth is that due to a total neglect of the age old Jharkhand movement and attempts to suppress it either by military power or by adopting the policy of divide and rule instead of trying to solve this problem across the table by negotiation and discussion using democratic means, people have lost faith in the good will of the state government. Now all Jharhandi people are united under the banner of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (J.C.C.) and are ready to take the movement to its local consequence in solidarity with people of good will all over the country. The Central Government should know it for sure the reality of the situation and it should consider the long pending demand for creation of Jharkhand state with all seriousness

Jharkhand has always remained a peaceful region and still is. The state governments are responsible for making it a disturbed region. If the representatives of Jharkhand are given a chance to appear before the Central Government and present the attitudes and activities of state Governments then the entire situation will become clear that the peaceful Jharkhand region is being turned into a battle ground by the concerned state Governments.

5.2. Political and geographical boundary of Jharkhand State

21 districts are included in the proposed map of Jharkhand which are as follows

(1)	Ranchi	(2)	Lohardaga	(3)	Gumla
(4)	Singbhum	(5)	Palamu	(6)	Giridih
(7)	Hazaribagh	(8)	Dhanbad	(9)	Dumka
(10)	Godda	(11)	Deoghar	(12)	Sahebganj
(13)	Keonjhar	(14)	Mayurbhanj	(15)	Sundergarh
(16)	Sambalpur	(17)	Surguja	(18)	Raigarh
(19)	Purulia	(20)	Bankura	(21)	Midnapur.

These 21 districts are geographically, historically, sociologically and culturally the integral part of Jharkhand.

According to 1971 Census the total area of Jharkhand (21 districts) is 1,87,646 square kilometres and population, 3,05,98,991 of which 92 lakhs are Advasis and the remaining are Sadans of all communities. 85% people consist of Adivasis and Sadans (schedules castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, etc.)

The above statistics—area and population of Jharkhand—prove the proposed separate state of Jharkhand quite viable and strong.

DECLERATION OF JHARKHAND CO-ORDIATION COMMITTEE

PREAMBLE

1. It is the demand of the Jharkhand people that every organisation, be it political, social, cultural or literary in nature, supporting the demand of a separate Jharkhand state should come together, without further delay to form a joint forum. And on the basis of a common minimum programme they should immediately gear up the age old movement for the reconstruction of Jharkhand and emancipation of her humiliated people.

2. The strong voice of the people of Jharkhand in support of this demand is being heard throughout the land in different seminars, conventions and meetings. Particularly the convention held at Jamshedpur (20-21 October, 1986) and at Hazaribagh (30-31 December, 1986) emerged as the most representative forums, participated by all the prominent social and political representatives of the people, to put forward this demand on the logical ground of a historical analysis of the movement.

3. Summing up the experiences of the half a century old Jharkhand movement the activists and the intellectuals unanimously declared through the aforesaid forums that the Jharkhand question is in essence a nationality question and the problems of the Jharkhandis cannot be solved without securing autonomy in the form of a separate Jharkhand state in accordance with the provisions enshrined in the constitution of India.

   This would, however only initiate the process of democratisation of Jharkhand and reconstruction of Jharkhandi identity, and, therefore, would be the first step towards the achievement of the final objective of the movement the dreams of the Jharkhandi martyrs, of building a new Jharkhand where there would be no exploitation.

4. To explore the possibilities of the formation of a coordination committee on the basis of a common minimum programme, the Jharkhand Intellectuals' Forum convened a Delegate Conference of all organisations supporting the cause of Jharkhand at Ranchi on 27-28 June 1987. The represenatives of 21 organisations attended the conference and after a threadbare discussion agreed to the proposals of the Forum. Accordingly an ad-hoc co-ordination committee was formed with 25 representatives

of the participating organisations. Dr. B.P. Kesari was nominated as the convenor of the same.

5. In the delegate meeting a strong opinion emerged in favour of adopting a logical point of view with regard to the nature of the Jharkhand movement by analysing different and even contradictory positions of various organistions on this question. Thus a 'Draft Committee' was formed to carry on the responsibility in the meeting.

   The ad-hoc Co-ordination Committee in its meeting held on 23rd July 1987, accepted the 'Draft Declaration of the Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee' prepared by the 'Draft Committee' with some modifications. The Committee also decided to circulate the 'Draft Declaration' among different organisations supporting the cause of Jharkhand so that they could reflect on it seriously and later on the final shape could be given to it on the basis of unanimity and thus initiatives could be taken for the formal constitution of the Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee. In accordance with this decision a conference was organised in Ramgarh from 11th till 13th September 1987. It was attended by 439 registered participants representing 49 organisations. The participants discussed the draft declaration in detail and made certain modifications. Finally it was adopted unanimously by them with great enthusiasm.

   The text of the declaration, adopted in the Ramgarh Conference and presented in the meeting of the Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee held on 4th October 1987 after giving final shape to it, is as follows.

6. After reviewing different proposals on the questions of the nature of the demanded autonomy of Jharkhand and its politico-geographical boundary the Co-ordination Committee agrees upon the popular demand of the statehood for Jharkhand comprising the present 21 districts of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal (i.e. Singhbhum, Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla, Palamau, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Dumka, Godda, Deoghar, Sahebganj, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Surguja, Raigarh, Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur.

7. The foundation of the claim of this politico-geographical territory is its cultural unity, geo-physical uniformity and structural oneness of economic life, which differ conspicuously from its neighbouring areas. Since all the 21 districts form the integral part of this cultural unit having the same historical background and tradition, any proposal which narrows down the proposed territory is bound to be anti-people because its disregards the aspirations of the people, divides them and is unable to solve their basic problems.

With this unanimously accepted understanding the Co-ordination Committee finds the proposal of demanding a union territory comprising Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas alone in the name of Jharkhand as unacceptable. The Co-ordination Committee turns down other similar proposals too, such as, the areas under South West Frontier Agency or erstwhile Chotanagpur province.

8. Jharkhand has become a grazing ground, the most alluring of the country, of not only national capital belonging to the nationalities other than the Jhrkhandis but more of the big monopoly capital of which major portion belongs to the multinational foreign companies capitals invested in the companies of the Tatas and Birlas. Heavy Engineering Corporation of Hatia, Steel Industries of Bokaro and Rourkela, Suvarnarekha Multipurpose Project, Koel-Karo Hydro-electric Project, Dams of Kutku and Hirakund, different Tiger Projects, etc., are of this nature. The formation of separate Jharkhand state goes directly against the interest of these monsters because that will curb the unhindered exploitation of the natural resources and cheap labour power of Jharkhand. Secondly, it will also go against the interest of the ruling classes of neighbouring nationalities and their political parties because the shifting of political power from them to the people of Jharkhand will immediately put a strong check to their national and class oppression on the latter. And finally it goes against the interest of the central government too, which represents a corrupt, anti-people and oppressive state power serving the interest of capitalism, feudalism and the super powers. Therefore, all these forces are to be fought against to achieve the just demand of the Jharkhandis. The Co-ordination Committee declares these forces as the real enemies of the Jharkhand movement.

9. Though the Jharkhand movement faces powerful opponents, still it can achieve victory if it unites all sections of the Jharkhandis and forges unity with movements of all oppressed people of the country fighting for identity, equality, democracy and justice, the people who are fighting against the capitalist, feudal and imperialist exploitations, against cast and sex discrimination, against national oppression and against denial of constitutional safeguards.

10. The Co-ordination Committee categorically declares that all the sons of the soil, both the tribes, the Sadans and others who share a common history and cultural heritage and practise a common value system of Jharkhand do constitute the Jharkhandi population. Therefore, Jharkhand movement is the movement for the emancipation of these people and every attempt to divide them in the line of 'tribes' and 'Sadans', 'Christians' and 'Hindus' or 'Sarnaits' and 'Muslims' are to be repelled with iron hands.

11. A considerable section of people belonging to other nationalities and identities, such as Biharis, Marwaris, Bengalis, Orias, etc., are living in the Jharkhand region. The Co-ordination Committee feels that their co-operation should be sought to strengthen the Movement. Jharkhandis should unite with them on the basis of fraternal relationship. What they should oppose is the present state of affairs in which the outsides are exercising hegemony over the Jharkhandis. An attempt should be made to isolate those outsiders who belong to working class from those who are exploiters. The movement should always be spearheaded against the latter.

12. Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee feels that the Jharkhand Movement should not be kept confined within the level of politics alone but should also involve social, cultural and literary movements which also reflect the aspirations of the Jharkhandi people. To intensify the movement, J.C.C. resolves that a strong unity among the workers, peasants, petty trades, students, women, intellectuals and people engaged in services should be forged immediately on the basis of equal status for all the communities, such as The Mundas, Santals, Hos, Uraons, Kurmis, Kharias, Paharias, Sadans, etc., and for all religious faiths, e.g. Sarna Dharam, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, etc. The C.C. further declares that in the proposed Jharkhand state equal rights of all the minority groups in the process of decision making would be guaranteed.

13. Along with the struggle for the achievement of the Jharkhand state, J.C.C. feels the importance of launching a united struggle against the forces which have been devastating the Jharkhandi people and their land, such as the fast moving strides of the anti-people industrialisation and urbanisation, denudation of forest and construction of big dams, alienation of lands and displacement of Jharkhandis in the name of 'development'. The member organisations should take up also some other important issues, such as, the demand for the recognition of Jharkhandi languages by putting them in the 8th Schedule of the constitution of India, the construction of adequate hostels, release of hostel grants and proper implementation of reservation of STs, SCs, and OBCs, the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report, economic deprivation and sex exploitation of Jharkhandi women, the restoration of alienated land belonging to the Jharkhandis in general and tribal land in particular, the implementation of the disbursement of minimum wages, the practice of engaging Jharkhandis as contract labourers, the absorption of the Jharkhandis in both government and private factories and establishments, fixing up of just prices for agricultural and forest produces, rescheduling of tribes descheduled in 1931, acceptance of the policy of uniform schedule-status to communities presently having different status in

different states of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, police atrocities. corruption in administration, practice of bribery, etc.

To solve the contradictions among the people, such as, litigations related to land and forest, conflicts on social issues, disputes on religious questions, etc., J.C.C. emphasis is on the activation of traditional village panchayats and Manki Munda Parha-patti-Manjhi-pargana system of the past.

14. The Jharkhandis are peace-loving people and they prefer a peaceful solution of their problems. However, as experience shows, the exploiters of Jharkhand have always imposed violent repression on the Jharkhandis. The people have no way but to resist this brutality if they want to carry on the struggle forward.

15. The organisation enrolling themselves as members of J.C.C. will maintain their own independent status and organisational setup. But all of them will implement the common programme as will be decided by J.C.C. from time to time.

16. In view of the contradictory views prevailing among the member organisations regarding participation in the assembly and parliamentary elections the J.C.C. decided to conduct debate and discussions on this subject to achieve unanimity on this issue, and agreed that until a broad consensus was achieved the member organisations might follow their own policies in this respect.

17. J.C.C. resolves to organise leadership training camps from time to time to educate the activists of the member orgaisations. A training institute will be established in an opportune time.

18. With a view to keep the member organisations informed about the struggles of the people in different areas and to exchange views and experiences the CC would publish occasional bulletins.

19. To advance the literary and cultural movements the CC would help reorganise and activate the Jharkhand Sahitya Academy, presently known as Tribal and Regional Languages Academy.

20. Millions of Jharkhandis have been living a wretched life outside Jharkhand. In Assam, for instance, they are recognised neither as STs nor as SCs and thus denied any facilities of education and reservation in jobs. They have no identity of their own except for the derogatory identity of the 'coolies'. There is a systematic attempt to destroy their cultural tradition. The situation is no better in the tea gardens of North Bengal. The CC decides to fight in solidarity with these diaspora Jharkhandis in their struggle for identity and against discrimination.

21. The financial burden of the CC would be borne by the member organisations in the form of monthly subscriptions.

22. The CC would take initiative to form its branches in the district levels too.

23. The CC is placing this declaration on behalf of the member organisations before the people of Jharkhand and calls them up to rise like a mighty storm to destroy all the forces of national oppression, discrimination and economic exploitation and to materialise the dreams of the hundred-martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of Jharkhand.

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The volume contains the most significant articles and documents of the Jharkhand Movement, the oldest of the autonomy movements in India, which as recently resulted in the formation of a separate state by that name. The basic line of inquiry concerning the issues (dispossession from life supporting resources of land, forest, water and identity), the main cause (internal colonialism) and the remedy (provision of autonomy), has been discussed from different angles by leading social scientists and activists. In the process can be seen emerging a development critique with an alternative provided by the tribal/indegenous perspective aimed at reconstructing a society based on equality; economy based on cooperation, caring - sharing, conservation, subsistence and decentralization; a policy based on conscience democracy and art based on collective participation and enjoyment. Analogous to the complexities of the Jharkhand Cultural Area and the varying ideological backgrounds of the authors concerned the insights projected are constructive.

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