

# The Historicity of the Jharkhand Movement: A Quest for Identity

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Social movements are generally conceived as the manifestation of collective behaviour. They are often the results of organized group efforts aimed at some reform of the existing social structure or creating a newer one through revolutionary activities. They can also assume the form of counter-group activity for the resistance of such changes in the status quo. In this sense Robert D. Benford defines social movements as 'collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or a group'.<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of their objectives, social movements vary in scale and nature. If the objective of any social movement has some bearing across the whole society then it certainly acquires a larger scale than the one, which has some particular objectives relating to any specific group or segment of a society. The objective of any movement, however, also determines its potential participants who in turn reflect its scale as well as nature. The economic, religious and cultural components of the social movements as well as the structural composition of its participants most clearly classify them as class struggle, religious and cultural. However, from a sociological point of view we should not entertain such a classification just because, as Oomen says, 'Overall features of any system mould the nature of its social movements'.<sup>2</sup> Hence all the institutions of any society along with the values they propagate shape the character of the social movements. Therefore, it may well happen that during a particular period in the long history of any social movement, some institutions become conspicuous but reification of it will be a methodological mistake. This is just an event or we can designate it as a phase in the lifetime of the social movement concerned. The study of this historicity of the social movements is extremely important in order to have an insight into the present structural arrangements of it as well as its

future orientations.

The present paper attempts to study the historicity of the Jharkhand movement, which is going on in the Chotanagpur plateau region covering a large part of central India. Such an attempt is particularly important as it can throw some light on the continuing debate concerning the nature of the Jharkhand movement being an ethnic one. The Jharkhand region, as we all know, is the home of numerous adivasi communities. These adivasis along with their social and cultural attributes come very close to what we mean by an ethnic group. In the movement, these adivasis are undoubtedly a major force to reckon with. Due to this the movement is often designated to be an adivasi movement, hence ethnic. But this is only one side of the argument. There are some scholars who launch a severe criticism against this on the following grounds. Firstly, the imposition of the ethnic status upon the adivasi communities follows from the word 'tribe' which is a colonial construct purposefully applied to convey a sense of inferiority to those indigenous communities who tried to resist the colonial encroachment in India right from its beginning. In the words of K.S. Singh, 'the tribal communities who with a sensitivity born of isolation and with a relatively intact mechanism of social control revolted more often and far more violently than any other community including peasants of India'.<sup>3</sup> This act of resistance of the indigenous communities to protect their autonomy appeared to the colonizers as an act of barbarism and hence they found it appropriate to call them as 'tribe'. But a scholar like Susana B.C. Devalle firmly believes that the attributes which are considered to designate a community as a tribe, like homogeneity, isolation, inherent egalitarianism, autonomy, economic independence, slow change etc. just simply do not hold in case of the communities in Jharkhand. In fact Devalle asserts: 'I will argue that there were no 'tribes' in Jharkhand until the European perception of Indian reality constructed them and colonial authorities gave them their administrative sanction.'<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, although the adivasis are participating in the movement in large numbers non-adivasis are also present in it. Hence it is incorrect to designate it as an ethnic movement. Finally, the objectives of the movement got changed in and through the long history of it. With the passage of time the movement gradually acquired considerable maturity, which can be revealed from its objectives as it enveloped to cover the aspirations of the different

cross-sections of the Jharkhand society.

For the analysis of social movements, this debate, however, has no serious implication simply because social movements encompass, theoretically, a wider space in the society. There is no point in characterizing a social movement on the basis of some of its dimensions exclusively. As a matter of fact, all the social institutions of any given society play their role either actively or passively in the long history of it. Ethnicity which is shaped by the social and cultural institutions of any society, hence, may assume significance in some stages in the life history of a social movement.

The history of the Jharkhand movement should be traced back to the introduction of the British rule in India. It is by no means the colonizers who were the first to subjugate the indigenous adivasi communities of Jharkhand. In fact, it well happened in the pre-British period when the independent native states of this region were converted into tributaries of the Mughal Empire. This resulted in a considerable increase in the economic significance of the region. To cope with the demands of the changing economy the indigenous states required generation of agricultural surpluses and for this they invited people from the plains who with their better agricultural technology could do this. By affecting the economic sphere through the change in the agricultural relations of production and the cultural sphere through the introduction of people from outside the region the Mughal rule prepared the ground for rural class struggle with all of its pre-conditions.

British colonialism made a very excellent use of this situation and added some more dimensions to it. Through the enactment of the Permanent Settlement Regulations Act in 1793 it introduced the concept of private property in land, which was unknown in Indian history. As a result of this most of the erstwhile adivasi rajas or chieftains were converted into zamindars or landlords and the common peasants were transformed into serfs or rayats. Instead of payment of nominal subscription to the Mughal emperors, British rule made the payment of land revenue a compulsion. The responsibility of revenue collection was vested with the zamindars. The burden of this proved to be enormous for the peasants and a large number of them were forced to sell their lands, only to become landless labourers. The moneylenders, liquor vendors and other people from outside the region exploited this situation. Hence a new class of absentee landlords was also created. By undermining the local rajas or the chieftains the British rule for

the first time in Indian history tried to bring this region under its uniform administrative network. The people of this region did not have any such experience of monolithic ruling. This provided a severe blow to their political organization, which was governed more by custom rather than contract.

The land question here required some more attention. The adivasis of this region conceived of themselves as natural owners of the land, which they have reclaimed by extensive labour. Moreover, land and the forest were not merely viewed as means of production in their custom; they were rather, culturally and religiously, associated with the land and forest. In fact land was the primary medium through which, in their view, they were connected to their ancestors. So, they could hardly tolerate their alienation from the land and the forest as created by the British agrarian policies. These, therefore, brought them into the arena of resistance movement for the first time in Indian history. The Jharkhand Movement, as we know it today, definitely has its legacy in these earlier insurrections of the indigenous communities of this region.

Hence, the Jharkhand Movement started through the unfolding of the agrarian movements pitted against the colonial agrarian policy. Then onwards it passed a long course of time to reach its present state. For analytical purpose we can divide it into four discernible phases which are also indicative of the underlying trends of the movement in relation to the social, economic, cultural and political scenario through which it passed and is still passing today:

1. Phase of Agrarian Struggle (1765-1845)
2. Phase of Consolidation (1845-1920)
3. Phase of Confusion (1920-1970)
4. Phase of Elevation to Social Movement (1970 onwards)

#### PHASE OF AGRARIAN MOVEMENT (1765-1845)

In the words of Alvin Johnson, 'True agrarian movements take place whenever urban interest have encroached, in fact, or in seeming, upon vital rural interests.'<sup>15</sup> Hence agrarian movements take place whenever urban penetration occurs in the rural areas. It may be through the influence of urban values, (as for example, interdependence, individualism etc.) or through the acquisition of better lands in the rural area, imposition of land revenue, land

tax and so on. Hence, in any agrarian movement both the culture and economy occupy the center stage. In this phase of the Jharkhand movement all the uprisings bore the evidences of agrarian movement, especially the later ones. The major peasant uprisings of this phase are as detailed below:

1. First Chuar Rebellion (1767)
2. Dhalbhum Rebellion (1769-1774)
3. Tilka Majhi's War (1780-1785)
4. Pahadia Revolt (1788-1791)
5. First Tamar Rebellion (1795)
6. Second Chuar Rebellion (1798-99)
7. Nayek Hangama (1806-1826)
8. Second Tamar Rebellion (1820)
9. Kol Insurrection (1831-32)
10. Ganga Narayan's Movement (1832-33)

Descriptions of these uprisings seem unnecessary at this stage. What is important here is to have an analytical insight into the underlying trend of these uprisings. British encroachment into the Jharkhand region started in the year 1765 after receiving the 'Dewani' of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. At its initial stage colonial administrators were basically interested in collecting land revenues from this region which was quite inaccessible due to its heavy hilly and forest covers. Apart from this the British administrators had to face another difficulty and that was concerning the attitude of the indigenous communities who refused to pay land revenues. Hence payment of land revenue and that too in a compulsory manner, was the basic reason behind the uprisings of this phase especially those prior to 1793, the year in which the Permanent Settlement Regulation Act was enacted. As in all these, solely the land question came into prominence so we cannot say that all the pre-conditions of an agrarian movement were present there. Here we have a mixture of the essences of rural class struggle and agrarian movements. The Permanent Settlement Regulation Act was enacted. As in all these, solely the land question came into prominence so we cannot say that all the pre-conditions of an agrarian movements were present there. Here we have a mixture of the essences of the rural class struggle and agrarian movements. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 brought certain administrative changes which much more directly undermined the traditional customs of the adivasi communities of this region. Firstly,

the payment of land revenue by the cultivators to their chiefs were customarily guided but the Permanent Settlement Act 'tried to suddenly substitute contract for custom' as argued by W.W. Hunter. Secondly, the law and order of this region was maintained by the 'ghatwals' or the pykes under the command of the local chiefs who were well informed of the customs and local cultures of the people. These pykes enjoyed gifts of lands from their chiefs for the service rendered by them. But the Permanent Settlement Act brought these lands also under its purview. Naturally the pykes suffered due to this change and became rebellious. The British administration dispossessed the pykes from their duties and the government took into its hands the law and order system. The indigenous people perceived it as a threat to their traditional system of administration. Thirdly, due to strict revenue assessment most of the local chiefs were found in huge arrears and their estates were auctioned to meet the revenue balances. The indigenous communities had a traditional organic relationship with their chiefs and could not bear the system that eventually led to their extinction. Finally, and most importantly, the estates of the local chiefs in arrears were auctioned and in most of the cases, they were purchased by the outsiders, mostly non-*adivasi* zamindars. This was the final assault to be tolerated by the *adivasis*. They perceived the entry of the non-*adivasis* into region as a severe blow to their cultural distinctiveness.

Therefore, the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 marginalised the peasantry economically and also drove them towards a state of cultural alienation. The traditional economic and political organisations of the indigenous people centering on the autonomous village community were undermined. The entry of the outsiders in this region became associated with a considerable degree of urban encroachment which had its effect felt in the cultural life of the indigenous communities there. This resulted in a value conflict and the all-important issue of collective identity of these communities was facing the crisis of disintegration.

The uprisings after 1793 were, thus, the voices of protest of the indigenous *adivasi* communities to protect their economic self-sufficiency and cultural distinctiveness. The second Chuar Rebellion of 1798-99, later the Kol Insurrection of 1831-32 and the Ganga Narayan's uprising of 1832-33 most prominently showed this trend. In all these the *adivasi* communities especially the *Bhumijis* of the Jungle Mahal and adjacent areas of the Chotanagpur

plateau region participated in large numbers. Economic issues pertaining to the question of land and land revenues were definitely there but the uprisings were more and more directed to protect the culture and custom of the autochthons which were on the verge of submergence due to the onslaught of an alien rule. The magnitude of these rebellions reached such a proportion that led E.T. Dalton to write with a great degree of despair: 'I do not think that the settlement of any one of the Bhumij Jungle Mahals was effected without a fight.'<sup>7</sup>

Hence, all these rebellions, particularly those of the post-1793 period, can be designated as 'agrarian struggles'.

#### PHASE OF CONSOLIDATION (1845-1920)

Agrarian struggles are always indicative of an emerging conflict of values, ideas, beliefs, and, so to speak, cultures of the two polar opposites—the rural and the urban. In the case of underdeveloped economies where the differences between these two are highly pronounced, there the rural communities due its sheer backwardness, grown out of relative isolation, develop kind of hatred towards the townsmen. But we should not blame the backwardness of the rural people for this exclusively. In fact, the urbanites also try to use the backwardness of the rural people and exploit them, their resources. This conflict often turns to be more violent if some other dimensions viz. race, class, region, ethnicity, etc. are added into it. In the case of the Jharkhand movement this happened in its second phase where the conflicts, which were already there in its first phase, assumed some other dimensions, most prominently, ethnicity.

Ethnicity, as we all know it, is primarily a method of group formation in the societies on cultural accounts. It pertains to the individual, or the group, a sense of identity, which only assumes significance in the context of inter-group relations by creating a demarcation between the 'we' and the 'they'.

With the entry of the outsiders into the Jharkhand region, and with the increasing intensity of the agrarian struggles in the first phase, gradually the insider-outsider contradiction became crystallized. In the second phase, this gained momentum, as the insiders were increasingly becoming conscious of their 'adivasi' (original inhabitant) identity in contrast to the outsiders who were largely non-adivasis. These outsiders were mostly the zamindars,

moneylenders, etc. created by the British rule, and they used to exploit the peasantry severally. In this way the identity of 'outsider' became largely conterminous with that of exploiter to the 'insider' adivasis whom the latter designated as 'diku'. Christianity in the second phase of the movement, also played a major role in the process of identity formation of the indigenous communities of Jharkhand. Christianity was introduced into this region in the middle of the nineteenth century. Unlike in some other parts of the globe, Christianity in India never became an agrarian institution. Rather, the main mission of Christianity in India was to prepare a support base for the British rule among the indigenous communities. To attain this they quite successfully utilised the prevailing insider-outsider contradiction, which was there in the socio-cultural mosaic of Indian society. In Jharkhand also, like many other adivasi-inhabited regions of India they appropriated it and tried to consolidate it. In the words of K.S.Singh 'They gave a new sense of self respect to the tribal peasants and sought to create a separate identity for them.'<sup>8</sup>

Although Ganga Narayan's uprising of 1832-33 was the final major uprising of the first phase but the fallout of the combined uprisings continued till the middle of the next decade. In this period the British authority felt the need of separating Chotanagpur from the Calcutta Presidency for its smooth administrative functioning. For this the South West Frontier Agency (SWFA) was established and Captain Wilkinson became the first administrative agent of it. This separation also contributed to the development of ethnic identity of the inhabitants of the Chotanagpur region. This was the major achievement of all the uprisings of the first phase. Hence it was 1845, the year which saw the introduction of Christianity into this region, which should be regarded as the starting point of the second phase.

The major uprisings of the second phase are as under:

1. The Santhal Insurrection (1855)
2. The Sipoy Mutiny (1857)
3. Sardaro Agitation or Mulkui Larai (1858-1895)
4. Kherwar Movement (1874)
5. The Birsa Munda Movement (1895-1900)
6. Tana Bhagat Movement (1914-19)

In all these uprising ethnicity played a major role although we

cannot neglect the general discontent of the masses arising out of the exploitative British agrarian policy. But what we can assert with a great degree of certainty is that all these were the products of an ethnicised socio-political structure where the question of economic inequality was viewed through the lenses of ethnicity.

All these uprisings centered on the adivasi-nonadivasi divide. The adivasis in order to safeguard their distinct cultural identity, which in their view was jeopardized by the nonadivasis, often sought political solution of it in the form of self-determination through self-rule. This was most prominent in the Santhal Insurrection, Kherwar Movement and Birsa Munda Movement. In the first two, the Santhals participated enormously and tried to establish the Santhal Raj while the Birsa Munda Movement went for the Munda Raj under the leadership of Birsa Munda. Religion also proved to be very significant in shaping the ethnic identity of the contending groups. Apart from the Santhal Insurrection, in all the other uprisings religion became a major issue. The Sipoy mutiny of 1857 got a ready support from the Hindu zamindars of the region as they were engaged in struggle against their Christian ryots who were aided by the Christian missionaries. The suppression of the mutiny turned the tide in favour of the Christian ryots to launch severe protest movements against the zamindars, that marked the beginning of the Sardari agitation in which the Munda sardars and the oroons of Chotanagpur region took part in 1858. Just as the Sardari Agitation was influenced by the Christian missionaries so was the Kherward Movement of 1874 by Hinduism. According to S.C.Panchbhair, the leaders of the movement, 'sought to introduce social reforms in the line with the Hindu traditions and adopted many Hindu symbols to mobilise the masses'.<sup>9</sup>

The general aim of the movement was to drive away the British and the Christian missionaries from the country and in, this way, to establish a Santhal 'Raj'. In the Birsa Munda Uprising, the new religion 'Birsaism' preached by 'prophet' Birsa assumed an important role in mobilising the adivasis against all the outsider 'dikus': Indian as well as English. Finally in the Tana Bhagat Movement too religion in the form of Hinduism became crucially important in order to mobilise the oroons. In the words of Sachidananda 'the entire Bhagat movement may be conceived as an attempt to raise the status of its members in the eyes of Hindu neighbours by Sanskritization which also included the inculcation of Hindu beliefs and practices'.<sup>10</sup>

The revivalist, revitalizing, and the messianic characters of these uprisings bring them close to what is perceived as ethnic movements. These were revivalist, revitalizing or to be more precise 'revivalistic nativism' to use Ralph Linton's<sup>11</sup> concept as they tried to revive and revitalize certain chosen moribund elements of adivasi culture like wearing of sacred threads and sacred paste, practice of offering prayers instead of sacrifices to spirits (in case of Birsa Munda's uprising) and insistence of ceremonial purity in food and drink (in case of Tana Bhagat Movement). To have a glimpse of the revivalist nature of these uprisings Mcpherson wrote in the context of Santhal Uprisings of 1855: 'Santhal yearning for independence, a dream of the ancient days when they had no overloads perhaps a memory of the pre-historic times when according to some speculators they were themselves masters of the Gangetic valley and had not yet been driven back by the Aryan invaders.'<sup>12</sup>

These uprisings were also millenarian and messianic in character as in all these the belief was there that they were always supported by the divine power either in the form of God or of any prophet. W.H. Grimley the Esq. Commissioner of Chotanagpur Division in his report on the Birsa Munda Uprising mentions in 1895, that 'Birsa claimed that "he" was a prophet sent by God to preach the coming of a deluge which not only made it unnecessary for the people to cultivate their lands, but would sweep away government.'<sup>13</sup>

Hence, all these major uprisings of the second phase reveal their resemblance with ethnic movements. In fact, the British rule through a very crude interference in the indigenous communities' economic and socio-cultural system created the pre-conditions for ethnic conflict to emerge in the Indian social structure. In any ethnicised social structure all its elements become conscious of their identity and it becomes more vibrant to those who are being pushed into the periphery. In the instances of these peripheral groups deprivation in economic as well as cultural terms conjointly influence the process of collective identity formation. This was the case with the uprisings of the second phase as Swapan Dasgupta writes, 'To the adivasis the loss of land was not merely a matter of economic deprivation, but an affront to their dignity, their *izzat*, a theme recurrent in subaltern perception.'<sup>14</sup>

THE PHASE OF CONFUSION (1920-1970)

All the uprisings prior to this were largely unorganized, though spontaneous in character, but the opposition comprising the landlords, the moneylenders and the British Authority combine was not only well organized but also very systematic. This may be the reason behind the failure of these uprisings. The third phase, which covered a considerable portion of the twentieth century, however, witnessed a significant change in this respect. The need of the organization of the oppressed was felt in the very beginning of this stage. In the words of Susan B.C. Devalle, 'The twentieth century inaugurates the modality of formal politics in Jharkhand'.<sup>15</sup> The central objective of these formal organizations was to turn the unorganized adivasi uprisings into a systematic movement. But their endeavour was not successful, as they became plagued with great dilemma concerning their objectives, structure and the nature of the participants. It was in this phase that mining and industrial activities ranging from small to large scale were introduced in the Jharkhand region. As a result of this, the process of working class formation began here. Industrialisation triggered the process of urbanization also. Some large cities like Jamshedpur, Rourkela, Ranchi, and Bokaro came into being containing a sizeable portion of the middle class whose genesis went hand in hand with the twin process of industrialization and urbanization. A considerable section of the industrial workforce was composed of people from outside. All these made the social composition of the area quite complex. Ethnicity, which emerged as an engine of mass mobilization in the second phase, especially among the adivasis, found itself in a very confusing state, which manifested itself in several dimensions but the centrality of it, in my opinion, was located in the nature of interaction and interrelationship of ethnicity and class.

The major organizations of this phase were:

1. Chotanagpur Improvement Society (Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj).
2. Adivasi Mahasabha, and
3. Jharkhand Party.

The first formal organisations of the adivasis having support of all the core groups was the Chotanagpur Improvement Society formed in the year 1915 under the leadership of some educated Christian adivasis. From the very beginning it was concerned with the issues

of social security and the distinct identity of the adivasis. Although formed in 1915, this organization officially came into existence in the year 1920. The 'Samaj' tried to ameliorate the social, economic and political backwardness of the adivasis of Chotanagpur. To safeguard the identity of the adivasis, the 'samaj' placed a demand before the Simon Commission in 1928 to form a sub-state of Chotanagpur joined either to Bengal or Orissa. This should be regarded as the first demand for the separation of Chotanagpur from Bihar. Its attempt, however, failed to attain the desired objectives because it could not resolve the contradictions regarding its scale and scope of activities. Firstly, it was concentrated only on the educated segments of the adivasi population, but initially it had the goal of the upliftment of the adivasi society in general. Secondly, although there was an effort to extend its range of activities to the rural areas, but in reality it remained confined within the urban areas only. One reason of this may be its orientation towards the middle class that was basically urban in nature. Finally, as only the Christian adivasis dominated it, the large section of the non-Christian adivasis of the region, somehow, remained isolated from it. In fact, this intra-ethnic contradiction centering on the question of Christianity was so fundamental that it led to the division of the 'samaj' into two parts. The non-Christian adivasis formed the Kisan Sabha while the Christian adivasis formed the Chotanagpur Catholic Sabha.

In order to bridge this intra-ethnic gulf the Adivasi Mahasabha was formed in the year 1938 in which all the organisations who had the vision of developing the Chotanagpur region were merged.

The Adivasi Mahasabha tried to respond to the demands, which were there in the then society of Jharkhand. Due to industrialization and urbanisation, as we have mentioned earlier, the area witnessed an influx of outsiders from the neighbouring states which led to a change in the social fabric of the Jharkhand region. To ensure the proper representation of the different cross-sections of this society, the Mahasabha under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, an Oxford educated adivasi, opened itself to all the non-adivasis also despite of its nomenclature. This led to a change in the concept of 'diku' also. Previously all the non-adivasis were regarded as 'dikus'. Hence, the Bengalees who founded their interest unsafe in Bihar, and the Muslims who had some strategic interest in Chotanagpur at that time, stood beside the Mahasabhas, and

were not considered as 'dikus'. The term only signified those outsiders, according to Sinha, Sen and Panchbhai 'who are from North Bihar in particular ... Who earn and send their earnings outside to their homes'.<sup>16</sup>

This type of precision in defining the term 'diku' gave the Adivasi Mahasabha a relatively wider space of operation. But unfortunately, it could not capitalize on this as, with the passage of time, the non-*adivasis* became gradually separated from it, the reasons whereof can be diagnosed from the objectives of the Adivasi Mahasabha as mentioned by B.P. Mohapatra:

... the establishment of a separate province for the aboriginal tribes of Chotanagpur within the framework of the Government of India, the representation of the aboriginal tribe in the state cabinet of Bihar by at least one educated aboriginal, an the introduction of Santhali and other aboriginal languages as the media of instruction in schools.<sup>17</sup>

Hence, just like the intra-ethnic contradictions that had plagued the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj earlier, here in the case of the Adivasi Mahasabha, the inter-ethnic strife centering on the *adivasi*-*nonadivasi* conflict besides other, led to its downfall. But here we should take into account the resilience of the factor of class. In fact, the 'dikus' who were the people of North Bihar, Marwaris etc. were also viewed by the *adivasis* as exploiters. There were plenty of outsiders who were non-*adivasis*, located in the lower stratum of Hindu caste hierarchy, were never regarded as 'dikus'. Therefore, here ethnic identification coincided with that of class. But the Adivasi Mahasabha perhaps failed to grasp this crucially important social reality.

At a specially convened meeting in Jamshedpur in the year 1950, the Adivasi Mahasabha, which was gradually becoming unpopular, was wound up and the 'Jharkhand Party' was formed under the leadership of Jaipal Singh to mobilise all segments of the people of Chotanagpur with the demand of a separate Jharkhand state. Under its auspices, the concept of Jharkhand was enlarged to include all the areas that once formed part of the Chotanagpur administrative division. Thus, some parts of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were included in it. The result of this was quite interesting. Some portion of the non-Bihari moneylending community who otherwise could be regarded as 'dikus' became the members of the 'Jharkhand Party'. This led to the apparent transition of the Jharkhand Movement from the level of ethnicity to regionalism.

Overemphasis on regional solidarity made the Jharkhand Party unable to read the nexus between class and ethnicity, although the formal liberal policies of the party gave it some electoral success in the first two general elections of independent India in 1952 and 1957. At the height of the movement for a separate state the Jharkhand Party submitted a memorandum to the State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) in April 1954 demanding the formation of the Jharkhand state within the national and constitutional framework of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India. The SRC, however, rejected the demand on certain grounds like, the minority status of the adivasis in the Jharkhand region, absence of a viable link language, the Jharkhand Party not having a clear majority of seats in the region and the imbalances between industry and agriculture which such a bifurcation would cause for a residual Bihar state. This refusal of the SRC had a tremendous frustrating impact upon the Jharkhand Movement, and in the general election of 1962 the strength of the Jharkhand Party decreased considerably. Jaipal Singh, thinking that the separate state cannot be achieved by the politics of separatism or isolation, merged the Jharkhand Party with the ruling Congress in 1963 ignoring all the views against it.

Regarding this merger, and the consequent degeneration of the Jharkhand Movement, many a reason can be put forward. But the reason that merits a sociological analysis must concern itself with the internal contradictions prevailing at the level of the then Jharkhandi society. In fact, these contradictions were present there throughout the third phase and none of the organizations could resolve them. Nirmal Sengupta<sup>18</sup> very succinctly summarises the issues of these in his characterisation of the features of both the Adivasi Mahasabha and the Jharkhand Party: 1. Urban orientation in thinking and activity; 2. Christian domination and close links with the Churches; 3. Pre-dominantly Munda-Oraon organization and, 4. Efforts to establish tribal solidarity alone tending to sectarian behaviour against non-tribal autochthons.

Thus despite its advocated policies of liberalism the Jharkhand Party failed to bring the rural agricultural non-Christian adivasis into its fold. Being pre-dominantly a Munda-Oraon organization it also failed to win over the Santhals of the Santhal Pargana region who had a very proud legacy of struggle against the alien rule. Moreover, the non-adivasis who had remained indifferent earlier became rather skeptical towards it. Against this backdrop the

merger of the Jharkhand Party with one of the mainstream nationalist parties, like the Congress, made it very difficult for the future Jharkhandi organizations to reorganize it. As the causes of the deprivation of the people were there, so also the movement, but practically there was no organization to lead it. Some associations were formed particularly in the Santhal Pargana region during this period, which tried to bring together the factors of class and ethnicity into degree of their agenda. During the closing period of the 1960s some degree of radicalization entered into their politics due to the influence of the Naxalite Movement going on in other parts of the country. This paved the way for the emergence of radical politics under the banner of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) led by Shibu Soren and some others, which ushered in a new phase in the history of Jharkhand.

#### 4. PHASE OF ELEVATION TO SOCIAL MOVEMENT (1970 ONWARDS)

This phase witnessed the maturation of those tendency hints of which were apparent in the closing period of the last phase. The agrarian issues, hitherto neglected by all the organizations of the third phase were brought into a sharp focus. Ethnicity, which was considered the primary mobilising agency, lost its exclusive significance. Efforts were being made to blend the ethnic factor and the class factor together, which was really the challenge before all the Jharkhandi organizations in the third phase.

The first organization that tried to accomplish this goal was the 'Shivaji Samaj', a social reform organization established by Binod Bihari Mahato in the year 1971. This organization tried to bring the Kumi-Mahatos of the Jharkhand region close to the adivasis. It also tried to develop the consciousness of the people against the evil of land alienation. Hence it sought to form a kind of pan-ethnic solidarity of the wretched peasantry of Jharkhand to struggle against oppression. In the words of Arvind N. Das 'the leaders of the movement took the stand that any such struggle should be taken up by the people as a whole and not by any particular community'.<sup>19</sup>

But, primarily being a social reform organization, this could not actually lead the people in any political struggle. This led to the birth of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, a radical political organization in the year 1973 under the leadership of Binod Bihari Mahato, A.K. Roy, Sadanand Jha and Shibu Soren. This is the first

time in the history of the Jharkhand Movement that non-*adivasis* became its leaders, as the first three leaders mentioned were non-*adivasis*. Binod Bihari Mahato was the leader of the Mahatos who were basically agriculturists in the Chotanagpur region. A.K. Roy had a considerable influence among the colliery workers of the Dhanbad belt of the region. Sadanand Jha was a militant trade union leader operating among the railway workers at Gomoh and finally Shibu Soren had a wide acceptance among the *adivasis* of the region who called him 'Guruji'. Naturally, the composition of the leadership resulted in the seeming unity of the *adivasis* and the non-*adivasis* on the one hand and the workers with the peasantry on the other. The JMM leadership realized that the problem of the oppression of the Jharkhandi sub-nationality was integrally linked with the class exploitation of the workers and the peasantry of this region by both the private and the bureaucratic state capital. As Arunabha Ghosh says, 'The Morcha projected itself as a radical Marxist party which not only demanded a separate state of Jharkhand with reservation of jobs for the sons of the soil, but also to free that state from class exploitation.'<sup>20</sup>

Hence, the JMM by blending the factor of class and ethnicity widened the social base of the Jharkhand Movement. It also led to a change in the connotation of the term Jharkhandi as well, by signifying, 'a producer, irrespective of caste, tribe or nation, residing in the Jharkhand region'.<sup>21</sup> But the JMM, in spite of having some initial success, failed to achieve its objective in the long run. This failure may be attributed to the complexity that the process of working class formation experienced here due to the intervention of ethnic factors. A large portion of the working class here, as mentioned earlier, was composed of immigrants who considered the 'dikus' as their ethnic brethren. Consequently, there was a split among the working class, and the movement along with the organisations, lost the momentum, which was gained in the initial period of this phase. The immigrant working class gradually distanced itself from the JMM and to achieve political mileage out of this hazy situation almost all the nationalist parties opened their Jharkhand cells here during 1978-1980. The salt was added to the injury when Shibu Soren, like his predecessor Jaipal Singh, decided to fight the seventh Lok Sabha election in 1980 by forming an alliance with the Congress(I). Binod Bihari Mahato in protest left JMM and formed JMM(B) while A.K. Roy also resigned.

The history of the Jharkhand Movement from this point was marked by the evil of narrow electoral politics. Unethical political adjustment,

corrupt practices of the leadership, mushrooming of political organizations devoid of any concrete ideological base, and factionalism, isolated the people from all these. Several organizations like JMM (M), Jharkhand Peoples' Party, All Jharkhand Students' Union and many others came up but all these failed to achieve any noteworthy success. At times there were some efforts at integration of these splinter Jharkhandi groups. These saw the formation of the Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee (JCC) in 1987 but this also disintegrated without making any positive contribution due to the inimical stands taken by different leaders regarding its structure and operation. Basically during the 80s and 90s there was no Jharkhand Movement, despite the fact that there were a number of Jharkhandi organizations. These organizations did not try to organise and mobilise people over the demand of Jharkhand their only intention was to convert it into an 'issue' having considerable electoral value. The game of political understanding and adjustments for electoral benefits resulted in the formation of the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC) in August 1995 which was a powerless and crippled body gifted to the people of this region to ensure their loyalty to the system of electoral politics. The same political arithmetic of electoral profit and loss saw the passing of the Jharkhand Bill by the Indian Parliament on 2 August 2000, which resulted in the formation of a separate Jharkhand state on 15 November 2000. The people of this region, realizing that the formation of the state was a result of political manoeuvring instead of their active struggle, remained indifferent. They were enough conscious to perceive that this could not resolve their contradiction with the 'dikus' both indigenous and outsiders, hence the story of their exploitation would also carry on. The attitude of the common people of Jharkhand towards the new state was well reflected in *The Times of India* reports on 5 August 2000: 'A quick survey of the Santhal Pargana area reveals that it is the dikus who are celebrating the formation of Jharkhand, not the tribals. The reason, they are preparing for the loot of the vast natural resources of the area'.<sup>22</sup>

Although electoral politics occupied the center stage but one should not underestimate the role played by the people, in general. In the later part of the 1970s and almost throughout the 1980s we saw the alienation of the immigrant working class from the movement. But the indigenous working class, however minimum their proportion in the total work force might be, was always there

in the movement. The economic policies of liberalization, privatisation undertaken by the Government of India in the later part of the 1980s and the early 1990s resulted in severe exploitation of the working class. The economic reality of exploitation again brought the immigrant, mostly the non-*adivasi* working class close to their *adivasi* counterparts. This was evident in some of the programmes of *Jharkhand bandh*, days-long economic blockade of the region, organized by the *Jharkhandi* political outfits here, where they participated in large numbers. Therefore, at the societal level the working class, both indigenous and immigrants and the peasantry were on the same track. But unfortunately, there was no political organisation to recognize the merit of this to further the cause of the *Jharkhand* Movement. As a result, this force remained unorganised, rather unutilized too. Even the Communist parties like the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM) perhaps due to their over-allegiance to constitutional politics did not make any serious attempt to mobilise these people. In such a situation of extreme political vacuum, the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), which did not have a very strong base here, realizing the popular mood of frustration, appeared as a saviour with its slogan of '*Vananchal*'. The people knowing fully well that '*Vananchal*' is a Sanskritic version of the word '*Jharkhand*' accepted it hesitantly. Thus, behind the formation of the '*Jharkhand*' state, in no way, can we undermine the role of the people of *Jharkhand*. A.K.Roy summarises it:

The feeling of *Jharkhand* is so strong that no manipulation from the top can control it. Even if all the leaders are bought, the movement is reborn in another form. At present the *Jharkhand* parties are weak but not so the *Jharkhand* sentiment. It is the pressure from the bottom that forced national parties like BJP and Congress to form this new state to survive politically in the area.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, the fourth stage, as the above discussion reveals, is successful in bringing out the movement from the clutches of ethnic particularism. In this period we witness the combined operation of both the cultural and economic variables in terms of ethnicity and class respectively. By exposing the social reality of this combination, this phase, no doubt, contributed in a great deal towards the widening of the social base of the movement although, during some period in this phase the movement became dormant but this should not be regarded as death of it. As a matter of fact,

this will be a great analytical mistake to confuse the objective of the Jharkhand Movement with the issue of statehood only. In the context of Indian social polity the achievement of the statehood status, of course, is a major determinant of nationality but this by no means is the only one. This is equally true in the context of Jharkhand also. Statehood is, undoubtedly, a step towards the achievement of the nationality status of the Jharkhandi sub-nationality but this alone is not enough. The people of Jharkhand have to go many a mile to establish a state and society which is free from all sorts of exploitation, economic, and national, which was the dream of the forerunners of the Jharkhand Movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this sense, the movement in its fourth stage is still continuing. In conclusion, we can mention that the analysis of any social movement should make a thorough study of its historicity. To understand the interrelationship of the society and the movement, the contextualisation of different social factors in the history of the social movement is a necessity. Only through this we can reveal the inner dynamics of any social movement. Without this the analysis tends to be partial and loses its sociological significance. This weakness in methodology is responsible for a great many less systematic and unrevealing understanding of the Jharkhand Movement. The imposition of the ethnic attribute upon the Jharkhand Movement is indeed a result of this. In the long historiography of the movement, as our analysis points out, in some period ethnicity had played a major role, but socio-economic factors also contributed to its reinforcement while in some other period it gave way to other social factors, keeping itself in a dormant position. In the process of group identity formation, ethnic factors, indeed, act hand in hand with other socio-economic and cultural factors. The same is true of the process of identity formation in Jharkhand. The quest for identity of the relatively long history of the movement and for this it is in a process of acquiring a social character.

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