The term 'Jharkhand' literally means the land of forests. Geographically known as the Chotanagpur Plateau, the region is often referred to as the 'Rurb of India' and has been described variously as 'Khokhra', 'Nagdesh' or 'Dasharanya' in different periods of history. The political reference of the Jharkhand region go back to the thirteenth century when the king of northern Orissa, Jaysing Deo, declared himself as the 'King of Jharkhand'. The Shiva Temple of Deoghar, one of the oldest in eastern India, is known as the abode of the 'Jharkhand Mahadeo'. Saint Chaitanya, the great 'Bhakti' movement leader, on his historic pilgrimage from Jagannathpuri to Vrindavana in the early sixteenth century, went through 'Jharikhanda'. References of Jharkhand can also be found in 'Akbarnamah' and 'Jahangirnamah' of the medieval period.

The region, which can boast of a long tradition of protest against colonial oppression, is currently witnessing a movement for a separate Jharkhand state within the Indian Union. But this movement is not to be seen as an isolated phenomenon as people from different parts of India today are clamouring for some degree of autonomy to manage their own affairs. In fact, the growth of regional movements all over the country has made it imperative for the researchers to take a fresh look at the functioning of the Indian federal system as a whole. The problem of regionalism is basically a problem of unfulfilled aspirations of the people of a particular region which centres around the issues of Centre-state relations and distribution of power among different
political units. By analysing the Jharkhand movement I hope to pinpoint its root causes and suggest some measures to tackle the problem effectively.

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