By the turn of the present century quite a number of religious institutions and social reform organisations led by some Christian missionaries and enlightened students emerged in the Chotanagpur Plateau with the avowed aim of introducing social reforms and improving the conditions of tribal life in general. These associations not only tried to check the evil effects of different habits and superstitions prevalent in the tribal life but also tried to rescue the poor, illiterate, naive adivasis from the clutches of exploiting mahajans and zamindars. Actually these very associations or 'societies' provided the nucleus for subsequent political movements under the banner of different Jharkhandi outfits.

As early as 1898 an association called the Christian Association was formed by the Lutheran graduates to promote education among the tribals. The association was renamed the Christian College Union in 1918, when the catholics joined it. Another social reform organisation under a religious garb, made its appearance in 1906. Known as the Roman Catholic Cooperative Society, it tried to raise the standard of living of the tribal people. The society sought to 'civilise' the backward tribesmen and help them stand on their own feet to come out of the clutches of the moneylenders.
The first students' organisation in the region, Bihari Students' Conference, composed of students belonging to different tribal communities, was established by Rajendra Prasad in Patna. A Christian Students' Conference was convened at Hazaribagh in the year 1910 to explain the role expected of them. The students, under the influence of the Christian missionaries, were initially guided by some philanthropic ideas, but soon they became concerned about the socio-economic uplift of the tribals.

J. Bartholomew of the Anglican Mission, on his return from a students' conference at Dacca in 1911-12, opened a branch of Dacca Students' Union in 1912. The Union took initiative in raising funds for providing education to poor tribals. Almost during the same time, the Munda-Oraon Education Conference (Siksha Sabha) and the Ranchi Union also worked for promoting education among the tribals, particularly in the urban areas.

Another association, looking for socio-economic uplift as well as unity among the tribals, namely, the Chotanagpur Charitable Association, was formed in 1912 by both the Christian and non-Christian tribals. The main objective, again, was to raise funds for the students. The association sought to bridge the gap between the Christian and non-Christian tribals with an overall objective of forging unity among different sections of the tribal people in Chotanagpur.
However, the first significant contribution in improving the conditions of the tribals was made by the Chotanagpur Umni Samaj, which came into being in 1915. J. Bartholmew, a student of St. Columba's College, Hazaribagh, organised the Christian students to form the Samaj. It was primarily a welfare organisation looking for an overall development of the Chotanagpur region by improving the socio-economic conditions of the tribals. Though not a political organisation the Samaj held regular meetings, panchayats etc. It opened its gate to non-Christian adivasis and thus worked for intra-tribal unity. The Samaj even tried to foster inter-denominational unity of the Lutheran and Anglican (adherents of the reformed Church of England) missions. However, it was basically an urban, elitist organisation with very little influence in the villages. It successfully brought into its fold a large number of educated youth for whom it demanded employment opportunities and sought to secure for them reservations in different services and legislative bodies.

The leadership in the Samaj was provided mainly by the teachers and catechists most of whom were Oraons keeping the Mundas away from the organisation. Theble Oraon, Bandiram Oraon, Paul Dayal and Joel Lakra were some of the key figures in the Samaj who planned to form a 'sub-state of Chotanagpur' joined either to Bengal or Orissa but detached from Bihar.

In 1916 the Samaj expressed concern over the absence of adequate security for the tribals in general and stressed the
need for preserving tribal identity in the face of sweeping reforms taking place in tribal societies. It also suggested measures for the economic advancement of the tribal community. When the Simon Commission arrived in India in 1928, some members of the Unnati Samaj, led by Bishop Van Hoeck and Joel Lakra, met the Commission to submit a memorandum seeking special privileges for the tribals and urging the Commission to consider the demand for a separate administrative unit in the Chotanagpur region. The effort, however, did not meet with success. Thus the first attempt to have a separate tribal administrative zone, made by the Samaj, failed.

The effort of the Unnati Samaj to foster unity among different tribal groups was also shortlived as the Samaj was virtually split into three different factions: the Unnati Samaj, the Chotanagpur Catholic Sabha and the Kisan Sabha. The desire to overcome the urban Christian orientation of the movement was evident in the formation of the Kisan Sabha in 1931. Théble Oraon, a non-Christian, along with Lorentius Birla left the Unnati Samaj to organise the Sabha. It was mostly dominated by the tribals from the Anglican and Lutheran missions but had some non-Christian members as well. The Kisan Sabha, however, could not attain any significant success in improving the conditions of the exploited 'Kisans', as its programme, suitable for the Gangetic Bihar, was not that effective in Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas—regulated by special tenancy Acts. The Catholic Sabha, formed in 1936, was led by Boniface Lakra as its President and Ignes Beck as the Secretary. True to its name the Sabha was mainly confined to the Roman Catholic tribals of the Chotanagpur region.
With the introduction of provincial autonomy by the Government of India Act 1935, Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas were described as 'partially excluded areas' and were put under the special responsibility of the Governor under Section 92 of the Act. The Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj opposed the provision through a number of resolutions and held quite a number of meetings without much success as the Government stuck to the provisions of the reforms scheme. However, when elections were held in January 1937, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, all the candidates fielded by the Unnati Samaj and the Kisan Sabha were defeated, as the Congress swept the polls. Only the Catholic Sabha was able to win two seats in the region.\(^{17}\)

The electoral reverses of the tribal candidates in the 1937 elections led to a change in the attitude of the tribal leaders and an attempt was made to bridge the gap between the Christians and non-Christians among the tribes. The result was the formation of Adivasi Mahasabha in 1938, a monolithic organisation to which the Unnati Samaj, the Kisan Sabha, the Catholic Sabha and the Hor Malto Marang Sabha of Santal Parganas were merged.\(^{18}\) In spite of its name, the Adivasi Mahasabha did allow the non-adivasis of the region to participate in its activities, at least officially. The Bengalis who considered themselves unsafe in Bihar and the Muslim League, planning to build a corridor linking the East and West wings of Pakistan, also provided moral and material support to the Mahasabha.\(^{19}\)
Thus the movement under the Mahasabha commanded a larger political base with participants from different segments of the society. It successfully maintained a delicate balance among the three Christian groups. The Anglicans, the Lutherans as well as the Catholics were not only well represented in the organisation, their interests were also well protected. The Mahasabha was quite particular about placing a Lutheran or Catholic as the Secretary under an Anglican President of the organisation.

The Mahasabha did not confine itself to the tribal problems of Ranchi only, rather it spread its wings even to rural areas. It worked for the creation of a separate state (not a 'sub-state' as was planned by the Ummati Samaj) demanding complete separation from Bihar. The Adivasi Mahasabha was led by some highly educated professional leaders prominent among whom was Jaipal Singh, an Oxford returned Christian tribal, who had successfully led the Indian hockey team to victory in the 1928 Olympics at Amsterdam. Julius Tigga, an honours graduate from the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, was the General Secretary of the organisation. Jaipal with his charismatic qualities came to be known as 'Morang Gomkey' (supreme leader) of the Jharkhandis. He presided over the second session of the Mahasabha in 1939 and gave a call for the creation of a separate province for the tribals. He also demanded an enquiry into the malpractices of the Congress Ministry in Bihar. Later, during the Second World War, when the Congress Ministry in Bihar resigned on October 31, 1939, Jaipal Singh, interestingly, supported the British Government and its war efforts and even helped them recruit soldiers from amongst the tribals of the region.
The Adivasi Mahasabha, initially, was not a political party more or less remained outside the mainstream of nationalist politics. It sought representation in the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee but was refused. Subsequently, it contested the 1946 General Elections on its own and was routed by the Congress at the polls. The defeat was largely because of the emergence of Adim Jati Seva Mandal — a social reform organisation formed by Dr Rajendra Prasad and the Sanatan Adivasi Mahasabha founded by Thebie Oraon, as a counterweight to the Adivasi Mahasabha. The link between the Muslim League and the Adivasi Mahasabha was broken in 1947 and the riots in Calcutta and the partition of Bengal shook the Bengalis, living in Bihar for quite a long time. As a result the Bihari-Bengali controversy lost some of its sting at least for the time being.

The Adim Jati Seva Mandal was a voluntary organisation financed by the Government with the objective of weakening the movement led by the Christian tribals for a separate Jharkhand state. It provided free education and medial aid to the tribals to bring them out of the missionary influence. Gradually, the Seva Mandal came to be identified with the Hindus and soon a convert-non-convert division among the tribals followed, affecting the cause of the Jharkhand movement adversely.

In 1946, the Santals of Midnapur in West Bengal convened a meeting at Kamarbandhi, P.S. Binpur and decided to launch a tribal organisation called Santal Gaonta with Nabin Soren as its President and Dinabandhu Mandi as one of its leaders. It was an organisation
for the uplift of the Santals in particular but it worked for the universalisation of tribal traits.

II

The independence of India ushered in an era of growing consciousness and rising expectations among the tribals. With special protections and guarantees for them under the Constitution they looked forward to a better future. The tribal leaders, by now, also started to realise the need for blending regionalism with ethnicity in order to be successful in the electoral politics of a multi-ethnic society. In such an atmosphere of rising hope and enthusiasm Justin Richard organised the United Jharkhand Party late in 1948. The Party allowed both the tribals and non-tribals as its members. Jaipal Singh joined the new organisation after some initial hesitation. On March 5, 1949, at a conference of the Adivasi Mahasabha, held at Hindisala in Ranchi and attended by some three thousand delegates, the Jharkhand Party (JTP) was formed with Jaipal Singh as its President and Idsen Deba as the Secretary, winding up the Adivasi Mahasabha.

Initially the Jharkhand Party showed four distinct traits: a) urban orientation in thinking and activity and lack of any agrarian programme, b) Christian domination and close links with Churches, c) predominance of the Mundas and Oraons — the two major tribes of Ranchi area and d) sectarian behaviour against the non-tribal population in the name of tribal solidarity. Jaipal did not hesitate to arouse primordial loyalties of the tribals and
even used violent means to put an end to North Bihari domination in the region. The Party, however, failed to impress all the tribal communities in different districts of the region. The Santals, for instance, could not identify themselves with the party in its initial years; as most of the party members belonged to either the Munda or the Oraon community with Christian background, Ranchi being their main centre of activity.

However, ethnicity was gradually replaced by regionalism as the rallying point for the Jharkhand Party. The leaders of the Party were perhaps influenced by the stand taken by the Congress Party that language, not ethnicity, should be the basis for the formation of a province. People from the Congress Socialist Party and quite a few members of the money lending community, identified as dikus, joined the Party during this period. With the assurance of special protection for the tribals under the Fifth and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of free India, the Jharkhand Party decided to contest electorally accordingly. Thus a new phase of constitutional participation based on regional sentiments dawned in the politics of the region.

In the First General Elections of 1952, the Jharkhand Party contested with the call for an 'alag prant' (separate land) and became the largest opposition party in the Bihar Legislative Assembly. The Party won thirty three assembly seats in all, including thirty two seats from South Bihar alone (out of a total of three hundred twenty five seats in Bihar Assembly) and sent three representatives to the Lok Sabha from Bihar. Jaipal Singh himself became an M.P. This electoral success gave a new impetus to the movement in Bihar both within and outside the legislature.
In Orissa, six candidates from the Jharkhand Party were elected to the State Legislative Assembly and helped the Congress to form a ministry with their support. But soon after the elections, Sonaram Soren, the founder of the Party in Orissa, shifted his allegiance to the Nikhil Utkal Adivasi Congress, an adversary of the Jharkhand Party. In West Bengal, though some tribal candidates did take part in the elections from Midnapur and Bankura, they either contested as independents or were backed by different parties like the Congress, the Socialists and the Krishak Majdoor Praja Party, but there was no Jharkhand Party in the electoral fray as yet.

With the formation of the States Re-organisation Commission in 1953, with Justice Fazal Ali as its Chairman, the Jharkhand Party submitted a memorandum to the Commission on the question of the formation of the State of Jharkhand within the national and constitutional framework of India. The memorandum, signed by thirty-four members of the Bihar Legislative Assembly was submitted on April 22, 1954 demanding an area of about 63,859 square miles with a population of 1,63,67,177 to constitute the proposed 'State of Jharkhand'. The area claimed included, apart from some districts of Bihar, a few 'tahsils' of the Mirjapur district in Uttar Pradesh, Surguja district of Madhya Pradesh and Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa. However, it did not include any part of West Bengal.

K. M. Panikkar and H. W. Kunzru, two members of the States Re-organisation Commission, visited the Chotanagpur region from
January 27 to February 10, 1955 and faced big demonstrations by the members of the Jharkhand Party. The Commission in its report, however, did not agree with the idea of carving out a separate Jharkhand state and some of the members of the Commission even supported the claims of Orissa over Seraikela and Kharsawan. Moreover, the Commission granted an area of almost 2,407 square miles of the proposed state to West Bengal, dividing the erstwhile district of Manbhum in the process. Thus while five police station areas of the district, including Dhanbad, stayed with Bihar the rest gave birth to a new district called Purulia in West Bengal.

The main reason cited by the Commission for not granting a separate statehood to Chotanagpur Plateau was lack of viability of the region as a linguistic unit.

In the Second General Elections of 1957, the strength of the Jharkhand Party was marginally reduced to twenty eight seats in the Bihar Legislative Assembly but it still continued to be the major opposition party in Bihar. In Orissa the Party bagged five seats in the state Assembly and held the key to the balance of power in a state marked by political instability. The Congress as the single largest party in the state had to form a government with the support of five Jharkhandi members in the Assembly. In West Bengal, the Adivasi Mahasabha supported quite a number of candidates in Midnapur and Bankura districts against Congress nominees. Contesting with the cock symbol, these candidates, however, had to fight as independents, as there was no state level organisation of the Jharkhand Party in
West Bengal as yet. All of these candidates, however, were not only defeated but lost their security deposits as well. 39

In the mean time, a number of social reform organisations with religious and cultural overtones, made their appearance in the Jharkhand region. The Sarna Dham Samlet, launched among the Santals by Pandit Raghunath Mirmu or the 'Adi Samaj Movement', led by Lakho Bodra among the Hos of Singhbhum, 40 tried to re-establish the traditional tribal culture in its rightful place. The reformers attacked many social institutions and customs in order to bring the tribal society at par with the so-called civilised world.

Almost during the same time, between 1955 and 1961 to be precise, a number of anti-money lender, agrarian struggles were reported from the Santal Parganas. 41 Led by leaders like Satrughna Besra, an M.L.A from Jamtara, the Santal activists of the Jharkhand Party fought against feudal exploitation. The Santals, unlike their Munda and Oraon brethren, showed much more concern for the agrarian problems in the region. The centre of activity during these struggles was naturally shifted from Ranchi to Santal Parganas, the home of the Santals.

In the General Elections of 1962, the strength of the Jharkhand Party in the Bihar Legislative Assembly was further reduced to twenty with only three candidates winning the Lok Sabha seats. The Party had drawn a blank in West Bengal and Orissa in the mid-term elections of 1961. This debacle was largely owing to a Christian non-Christian schism among the tribals, weakening the party from within. The advantages and privileges enjoyed by the educated and missionary-
backed Christians in getting jobs and enjoying other social benefits made the non-Christians unhappy. The urban orientation of the party and the lack of any agrarian programme failed to attract the rural masses towards the Party. Besides, the developmental activities and industrialisation in the Chotanagpur region under the first two Five Year Plans and the participation of the tribal people in those programmes removed them from the path of agitation at least temporarily. All these factors, joined together, affected the performance of the party in the elections adversely.

In the mean time, some new states were created within the Indian Union as a result of movements launched from within the Congress. Success of such movements and the experience of sharing power with the Congress in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa led some of the Jharkhandi leaders to believe that perhaps the tribal interests could be better served by getting closer to the ruling party. Jaipal Singh, facing severe criticism for his dictatorial manners, also sought refuge under the Congress umbrella. The result was a merger of the Jharkhand Party with the Congress in June, 1963.

The merger dealt a severe blow to the movement and ushered in an era of confusion in the politics of the region. Jaipal Singh was elevated to the status of a Minister in the Bihar Cabinet led by Pandit Binodananda Jha, who saw this as an opportunity to penetrate the tribal belt, so far eluding the Congress influence. However, in August 1963 Jha had to resign as the Chief Minister under the Kamraj Plan and his successor K. B. Sahay relieved Jaipal of his post of education Minister and appointed S.K. Bage as a
Jaipal Singh not only lost his Ministerial office in the Bihar Cabinet, but also most of his followers, particularly the senior ones, deserted him. They declared the merger illegal and started reviving the old party. The party spirit, though revived partially, was fragmented and assumed its old ethnic character. The Mundas, Hos and Santals organised themselves once again but under different leaders and failed to put up a united front.

Amidst this political confusion a number of non-political socio-cultural associations emerged in the scene as political activities reached a low ebb in the mid-sixties. The Santal Samaj Sudhar Baisi was one such organisation which though came into being in 1957 made its presence felt around 1963. Backed by the Arya Samaj and the Jana Sangh, the Baisi (association) was mainly dominated by a section of the Sapha Hors (a religious sect who believes in purity of life). The association worked for the spread of Sapha Hors religion and in the process tried to counter the activities of the Christian missionaries.

Santali Lohanti (progressive) Baisi was another such organisation which, however, was dominated by the Christian Santals. Founded around 1967, its main aim was to foster unity among the Christians and promote literary activities among the educated Santals.

The aim of the Santal Samaj Pakap (reform) Baisi was to provide a common platform for the representatives of all the baisis to come together. Since its inception in 1969, this organisation was keen to improve the conditions of the Santals in general and
for that felt the need to evolve a common strategy for all the fraternal organisations.

The most popular and significant among these baisis was the Sido-Kanhu Baisi. Established in 1966, this organisation sought to immortalise the memories of the Santal heroes of the past who had laid down their lives for the cause of the poor tribals. S.G. Hembrom, the Founder - Secretary of the organisation, who was popularly known as the "Buang Guru", laid special emphasis on the spread of literacy, economic and socio-cultural advancement of the Santals. Adult literary centres were opened along with primary schools. Cottage industries got a boost and cooperative "grain-golas" were established. 'Manjhithans' and 'Jaherthans'—the sacred groves were reconstructed with the hope of reviving socio-cultural traditions of the tribal people. Village panchayats were reactivated to settle disputes. Within a few years Sido-Kanhu Baisi mobilised a large number of Santals and soon took the shape of a movement looking for Santal solidarity.

During the Fourth General Elections of 1967, an anti-Congress wave was evident in the Chotanagpur Plateau. The tribal leaders in the Congress, with a Jharkhandi past, fared badly. Jaipal Singh scraped through with a very narrow margin, while S.K. Bage, a Minister in the Bihar Cabinet, forfeited his deposit. Though the symbol of cock allotted to the Jharkhand Party was frozen, those opposed to the merger fought as independents and succeeded in winning eleven seats in all.
In Orissa, none of the seven Jharkhandi candidates from Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts, contesting for the first time as official candidates of the Jharkhand Party, succeeded in impressing the electorate. In the neighbouring state of West Bengal, where the state unit of the party had just made its appearance in 1965, a few candidates figured in the electoral race with the symbol of 'Jora Sakam' (two leaves). Recognised for the first time as Jharkhand Party candidates, they fought with an election manifesto which included, apart from the main demand for a separate Jharkhand state, demands concerning revival of tribal language and culture, opportunities for education, health care and employment and overall economic development of the region in both industrial and agricultural spheres. However, elevation from the status of independents to that of officially recognised party candidates could not alter the fate of the Jharkhandi leaders in the electoral fray.

The poor show continued in the subsequent mid-term elections to the West Bengal Assembly in 1969. The number of Jharkhandi candidates contesting the mid-term poll increased but without any corresponding change in the percentage of votes polled. The maximum a candidate could muster was around fifteen percent of the total votes polled. In Bihar, in the mid-term poll held in the same year, the All India Jharkhand Party (Horo faction) and the Hul Jharkhand Party could send ten and seven representatives respectively, to the Assembly.
In the late sixties Bihar, in fact, was passing through a period of political instability as there were experiments in coalition governments from 1967 to 1972. Lack of any unified political group of the tribals following the merger of the Jharkhand Party with the Congress and the prevalent anti-Congress feelings further added to the confusion. A number of splinter groups like the Birsa Seva Dal, Veer Birsa Dal, Krantikari Mukti Morcha, Chotanagpur Plateau Praja Parishad, Adivasi Chhatra Parishad, Chotanagpur Front and several others claiming to be the real Jharkhand Party, appeared on the scene. None of these groups, backed by Christian organisations overtly or covertly, could, however, further the cause of the suffering tribals as they were infected with mutual bickerings. Thus, unprecedented factionalism marked the post-merger period of the movement weakening it from within.

Meanwhile, Kartick Oraon, a Hindu version of Jaipal Singh, with Western education and experience, emerged as a reaction towards the Christian domination of the tribal scene. He was opposed to the special privileges enjoyed by the Christian tribals under the Constitution of India, as the Christians were in a better position vis-a-vis the non-Christians in educational and other fields. In 1967, Oraon successfully persuaded the Central Government to amend the Constitution to deny those tribals, who had taken up Christianity or Islam, the status of a Scheduled Tribe and the privileges enjoyed by such people. Within a year, in November 1968, Oraon made an appeal to the A.X.Chanda Committee, visiting Ranchi, to divert the money spent on Christian tribals to the welfare of the deprived non-Christian tribals.
The Birsa Seva Dal, which made its appearance in 1967, was the most prominent among the splinter groups. Named after the tribal hero Birsa Munda, it was an urban pressure group mostly active in the industrial areas of Ranchi and Jamshedpur. The Dal was founded by Lalit Kuzur and had Moses Guria as its General Secretary. Christian missionaries as well as the Naxalites — both played significant role in the formation of the Dal. It embraced socialism as its basic economic goal, demanded reservation for the tribals in employment and educational institutions, boycotted the elections and thus gave a new direction to the movement.

The Birsa Seva Dal, in fact, went through two distinct phases in its development. In the early years during its militant phase (1967 – 69) it organised violent attacks on non-tribal landlords and money lenders, sought expulsion of the non-Chotanagpuris from the region, favoured agrarian reforms and led armed demonstrations in the urban areas, clamouring for a separate tribal 'state of Chotanagpur'. Kuzur believed in 'detribalisation' i.e. doing away with their primitive way of life and preferred to call the adivasis or tribals — 'Chotanagpuris' as both the terms were considered to be hateful words.

Later, the Seva Dal gradually came out of the influences of both the missionaries and the Naxalites and preferred peaceful methods of struggle through constitutional means. Violent direct action was given up but internal conflict made the organisation weak, leading ultimately to its dissolution.
On May 19, 1968, David Munzani organised the All India Jharkhand Party. The name 'All India' suggested that the sphere of influence of the party was extended well beyond the boundaries of Bihar and it took the shape of an inter-state organisation. The party declared the merger with Congress in 1963 as unconstitutional as it lacked the approval of the general body. Dominated mostly by the Christians, the organisation could not help resolving the Christian - non-Christian rift within the movement. Bagun Sumbrai was named President and N.E. Horo the General Secretary of the party. It was soon divided in 1969-70 into Bagun faction and Horo faction on ethnic lines. While the former drew its support mostly from the Hos of Singbhum, the Horo faction was backed by the Mundas.

In the mean time, some dissident Santal activists in the Santal Parganas, led by Justin Richard, established yet another party, namely Hul Jharkhand on December 28, 1968. Named after the 'hool' (revolution) of 1855–56 this was, in fact, an expression of a long standing grievance among the Santals that they were being sidelined in the Jharkhand movement by the Mundas and Oraons. Hence, they decided to form their own party, leaving the Chotanagpur tribals behind. Interestingly, the party sought to project a non-ethnic, non-parochial image by appointing non-Santal members as well, in its executive committees at the central level. Christian and non-Christian (including both Hindus and Muslims) Santals as well as representatives from Ranchi and Singbhum districts were taken in the committees.
Apart from demanding a separate Jharkhand state, the Hul Jharkhand party tried to initiate certain socio-economic reforms in the region. It sought to put an end to the use of liquor at marriage feasts and other tribal festivals. It also cautioned the poor tribals from entering into the debt traps of the money lending mahajans. It organised the 'Dhankatiya movement' (forcible harvesting of paddy) not only to restore land to the tribals but also to bring back some confidence among the suffering millions.

Almost during the same period, in 1969 to be precise, another social reform organisation, namely, Sivaji Samaj, spearheaded by the Kurmi - Mahatos of Chotanagpur, appeared on the scene. The Samaj, on the initiative of its leader Sibu Soren, also sought to fight the evils of liquor, money lending etc. Soren was soon joined by Binod Behari Mahato and A.K. Roy, who after being expelled from the Communist Party of India (Marxist), formed a Marxist Coordination Committee.

The Sivaji Samaj soon took the shape of a movement in the region and engulfed a large area, including parts of the Purulia district in West Bengal. The movement touched even remote villages, fought against the exploitation of landlords and started forcible harvesting. 'Grain Golas' were built to help the poor tribals at the time of crisis. Such measures made the movement very popular among the tribals and a large number of landless tribals were mobilised around the Samaj in no time. The leaders even thought of entering into a political alliance with their traditional enemy, the Santals, in order to do away with the backwardness of the Kurmi - Mahatos.
During this period, the agrarian situation in the Chotanagpur region deteriorated further. More and more tribal people were alienated from their ancestral land as rapid industrialisation displaced them in thousands. Besides, the rising aspirations of the newly educated tribal youth seeking employment, met with stiff challenges from the people migrating from other parts of Bihar. The Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulation Act of 1969 put some restrictions on the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals and provided for their restoration. This was an important legislation in preventing further loss of tribal land to the outsiders and in restoring the confidence of the local people to some extent.

The overall frustration of the tribal youth, however, was manifested in the growth of radicalism in the politics of the region. In the late sixties the tribal belt of Bihar came under the influence of some Maoist groups. Such groups, already operating in the Dhanbad region, came close to the fighting Jharkhandis in order to help them to come out of the oppressive economic system. Radicalisation of the movement got a boost when A.K. Roy and Binod Behari Mahato, two hardcore Marxist leaders, joined the movement. Quite a number of cases of forcible harvesting as well as attacks on exploiting diku (outsider) mahajans were reported from the region during this period.

In 1971, some educated Santals organised a society called the Sonot Santal Samaj, which initiated various socio-cultural reforms in the Dhanbad region. The Samaj fought against social evils, sought to revive traditional institutions and practices and tried to promote the Santali language by publishing books, journals etc. In an all India conference of the Santals held at Dhanbad in 1973, the Samaj
adopted a number of resolutions aiming at marriage reforms, promotion and due recognition of Santali language, reservation of jobs, restoration of tribal lands etc. These resolutions were forwarded to the Central Government as well as to the State Governments concerned. The Samaj sincerely tried to improve the conditions of the Santals in the region but not at the expense of their own identity.

Almost during the same time, the Mundas also established their own Horo (Munda) Cultural Society in the early seventies, to preserve and promote their cultural tradition. The Society was a non-political organisation, outside Christian missionary influence, which aimed primarily at the development of the Horo culture.

During the mid-term elections to the West Bengal Assembly in 1971, the Jharkhand Party fielded as many as twenty one candidates in different districts of West Bengal. It put up candidates even in Hooghly and Burdwan districts, besides Midnapur, Purulia and Bankura. This time the candidates used bow and arrow as their election symbol and significantly two of them — Shyam Charan Murmu from Binpur and Babulal Soren from Raipur were elected for the first time to the Assembly. Low turn out of voters as well as factionalism within the Congress and the leftists helped the Jharkhand Party to register its first ever electoral success in West Bengal. Interestingly, both Murmu and Soren were defeated in the Assembly Elections held in the very next year, though both of them improved their percentage of votes. Thus, the Assembly Elections of 1972 saw a total rout of the Jharkhandi candidates in West Bengal. No less than nineteen candidates contested the elections, most of them new faces, but none of them was successful.
In Orissa, during the 1971 elections four out of the fifteen candidates, contesting from the districts of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh and Keonjhar became successful. These four Jharkhandi M.L.A.s joined the coalition government formed by the Swatantra Party and the Utkal Congress and one of them, Siddhalal Mirmu, even became the Minister for Labour, Employment and Housing.

However, this coalition government lost its majority in June 1972, when most of the M.L.A.s of the Swatantra Party - Utkal Congress combine joined the Congress to help the latter to form a new Ministry. The Jharkhand Party High Command decided against the merger and sought to protect their separate identity in the Assembly. Violating the Party High Command's directive, Siddhalal Mirmu joined the Congress 74, but this time he failed to get a berth in the Cabinet.

The Orissa unit of the Jharkhand Party was divided into two factions in 1973 which eventually gave birth to two different political parties: the All-India Jharkhand Party led by Bagun Sumbrai and the Jharkhand Party headed by N.E. Horo. 75 In the subsequent elections held in the state in 1974, these parties fielded some twenty seven candidates in all from twenty three constituencies, with candidates from both these parties facing each other in four constituencies. Factionalism based on the leadership issue weakened the parties considerably and as a result not more than two candidates, Christodas Tugun of the Jharkhand Party and Sashi Bhusan Marandi of the All-India Jharkhand Party came off victorious. 76
In Bihar during the General Elections of 1972 the faction ridden Jharkhandis won only eight seats in the Assembly and could not send more than one representative to Parliament. As far as the Bagun and Horo factions were concerned, the former overtook the latter by sending four of its candidates to the Bihar Legislative Assembly, as against one of the latter. The Hul Jharkhand Party, also divided into two factions, could send one each from both the factions. Undeterred by these reverses in the battle of the ballots, N.E. Horo submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, on March 12, 1973, demanding the creation of a separate state of Jharkhand along the line of the demand voiced by Jaipal Singh before the States Reorganisation Commission in 1954.

III

The Jharkhand movement got a new lease of life when the effort of the Sivaji Samaj to forge unity among the Mahatos and the Santals ultimately led to the emergence of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in 1973, with Binod Behari Mahato as its President and Sibu Soren as the General Secretary of the organisation. The Marxist Coordination Committee of A.K. Roy also lent able support to the Morcha. Some of the Naxalite groups, operating in the Dhanbad area, also provided moral support to the movement. Thus, radicalism found a new expression under the banner of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the movement got transformed significantly on many counts.
Thus far the movement, before the advent of the JMM, was basically an 'adivasi movement' with the non-tribal population being lukewarm in their response to the call of the movement. The Morcha, for the first time, could project some non-tribal leaders like Binod Behari Mahato, A.K.Roy, K.S. Chatterji and others with considerable mass base and thus could shed its exclusively tribal character to some extent. The fact of the Mahatos' coming closer to the Santals gave the JMM an extra-ethnic dimension too. A new definition of the term 'Jharkhandi' was provided to include any 'producer, irrespective of caste, tribe or religion' who resided in the region and shared their culture.

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. It successfully brought in a large number of workers, especially the mining and industrial workers from the Dhanbad and Hazaribagh region, to the movement and tried to develop a close relationship between the workers and the peasants of the region in their fight against 'internal colonial exploitation'. It was hoped that Jharkhand would become the first 'lalkhand' (red state) in India.

The JMM launched a programme to recover alienated tribal lands from money lenders and big peasants in the North Chotanagpur region, an area not known to be a Jharkhandi stronghold. The activists attacked all the usurers, rentiers and land grabbers without any discrimination. More than hundred cases of land riots and violent clashes between the tribals and the mahajans were reported.
Apart from restoring lands to the tribals, collective farming was introduced in lands 'alienated beyond 12 years by money lenders'. Village 'baisis' (assemblies) were entrusted with the job of protecting such lands as individual tribals were incapable of saving their lands through litigation procedures. In all, one hundred twenty five acres of land from five villages were brought under collective farming by 1975. It was decided that the landowners would get half of the produce from these lands, while the actual cultivators would receive 25% leaving the rest 25% to the grain banks for emergencies.

The Morcha also paid attention to reclaim waste lands as well as provide irrigation facilities to the tribal peasants. Vast areas were brought under multiple cropping system. Introduction of high yielding variety seeds as well as use of organic manure and chemical fertiliser brought a sea change in the sphere of agricultural production.

A massive movement of forcible harvesting — 'Dhan Katti Andolan' was organised by the JMM in the Dhanbad and Santal Parganas region. On-tribals joined their tribal brethren, fighting against their common enemy. Tundi, a development block in the Dhanbad district, was the main centre of activity in the initial stages. Gradually the 'andolan' spread to the adjoining rural areas of the Dhanbad district and also to the tribal dominated areas of Giridih and Santal Parganas. Violent clashes with the diku land lords were reported from various places with casualties on both sides. Massive deployment of the Central Reserve Police and indiscriminate arrest of
tribals followed. Attacks on exploiting zamindars, however, declined sharply since 1975, as Sibu Soren, the main spirit behind this movement, realised that on physical liquidation of money lenders or zamindars was not enough to uplift the poor tribals. He was looking for a new social order in which there would be no room for parasites.

Traditional social institutions were revived on the initiative of the Mukti Morcha. They were renamed and their functions adjusted to the changing needs of the time. The ancient practice of tribal self-government was partially revived. 'Kulhidrup', the village council, was renamed 'Atu Baisi'. At the second tier 'Pargana', the inter village council, was named 'Vichar Baisi' which had jurisdiction over ten to twenty villages. 'Lo-Bir-Sendra', the third and final tier of Santal tribal institutions at the community level, came to be known as 'Chetan Baisi'. The JMM created a new institution called 'Palma' which as the supreme council at the apex of the social hierarchy was entrusted with the job of formulating policies and coordinating activities of all the 'baisis' at different levels.

The Morcha's agrarian radicalism was backed by its efforts to effect socio-cultural advancement of the tribal folk. It tried to impose total prohibition on the tribals for whom drinking was an integral part of their religion and culture. According to the tribal faith and belief drinking was essential for propitiating the spirit. The general feeling among them was that the prohibition would lead them to commit religious sacrilege. Naturally, the drive for prohibition had to face stiff resistance from those whose socio-cultural uplift was the main concern for the Morcha.
The JMM was also concerned about the low level of literacy among the tribals. Night schools, popularly known as 'Akil Akharas', were opened in every village to provide education to working men and women, both young and adults. These 'akharas' were able to cater to the needs of the Scheduled caste and backward class people as well and thus played an useful role in social integration.

The Morcha leaders were keen to raise the status of adivasi women and initiated a number of steps to put an end to all sorts of exploitation meted out to the weaker sex. Apart from banning child marriage, the reformists fought against bigamy, polygamy, wife beating and divorce on frivolous grounds. The huge expenses involved in the traditional way of tribal marriage constituted one of the causes of tribal indebtedness leading to land alienation. Besides, the bride's price and expenses relating to the entertainment of the guests during marriage ceremonies proved ruinous to the tribals.

The JMM strove hard to implement marriage reforms and side by side helped establish the Mahila Shilpa Kala Kendra to impart training to elderly women in sewing, knitting and embroidery to rehabilitate them economically.

The Morcha took interest in organising archery tournaments, community programmes of singing and dancing as well as village fairs at regular intervals in order to revive the cultural traditions and instil a sense of national pride among the tribal people. Such programmes were also aimed at providing an alternative way of entertainment to the tribal people brought under prohibition.
The movement leaders felt the need for involving the masses with the movement in order to usher in a new social order free from all sorts of exploitation. On the one hand, they tried not to restrict the movement among the tribals alone. Hence they widened the definition of 'Jharkhandi'. In fact, during the 'Dhan Katti Andolan' non-tribals belonging to Mandal, Kurmi and Scheduled Castes joined the tribals in large numbers. On the other hand, a need for linking the movement of the working peasantry with that of the workers was also felt.

Though the vital role played by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in giving a new lease of life to the faction-ridden movement cannot be denied, the Morcha itself suffered from quite a number of problems, weakening it from within. The organisation operated under the leadership of a triumvirate — Sibu Soren, Binod Behari Mahato and A.K. Roy. While Soren was active among the tribals, Mahato gave leadership to the Kurmis, leaving Roy to look after the interest of the colliery industrial workers. Each of them worked almost autonomously. Sometimes they did coordinate their activities but could hardly forge a united front.

Monopolisation of the decision-making process by Sibu Soren as well as rumours of secret deals with the Congress often created fissures within the party. In 1980, Binod Behari Mahato broke away from the organisation to form the JMM (B) on the question of Sibu Soren's decision to contest the 1980 parliamentary elections from Dumka with Congress (I) support. Mahato, however, returned to the party fold after the killing of the JMM President, Mirmal Mahato, in August 1987, allegedly by Congressmen, and stuck to his anti-Congress (I) stance. The reunion of the two factions was later
formalised at a joint convention held at Dumari, in Giridih district of Bihar on January 7, 1990.

During the J.P. movement in Bihar around 1974, the protagonists of the separate Jharkhand state kept a low profile in spite of Jayaprakash Narayan's known preference for creating smaller states in India. Their staying away from the movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan enabled forces like the Jan Sangh, VHP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to penetrate the area. The anti-missionary zeal of these outfits went against the Jharkhand movement, backed by the Christian missionaries.

A three day All India Adivasi (Santal) Conference was held between February 18 and 20, 1977 at Jhargram, West Bengal. More than ten thousand Santals, including five hundred women from Assam, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh attended the conference and adopted an unanimous resolution demanding the introduction of 'Ol Chiki' as the medium of education among Santals. The resolution stated that 'Ol Chiki' was phonetically more suitable for the Santali language than the Roman script. Appeals were made to the Government to declare holidays on the days of six major festivals of the Santal Community. The foundation stone of a Santali University was laid by Pandit Pagahunath Murmu at Betkundridahi in the district of Midnapur, West Bengal immediately after the conference.

The General Elections of 1977, following the Emergency, brought the Janata government to power, both at the Centre and the state of Bihar. The four splinter groups of the Jharkhandis contesting the elections were virtually routed. Only A. K. Roy of the
Marxist Coordination Committee was returned from the Dhanbad parliamentary constituency and the Bihar assembly was represented by a lone Jharkhandi M.L.A. To make the situation worse, Bagun Sumbrai, the leader of the All India Jharkhand Party, joined the Janata Party.  

In West Bengal the number of Jharkhandi candidates contesting the assembly polls in 1977 came down sharply. Those who were in the electoral fray fared badly. In fact, none of the contestants could poll even ten percent of the votes. Like Sumbrai in Bihar, Dakhin Murmu — a stalwart of the JMM West Bengal unit, joined the newly formed Janata Party just before the elections and contested as a Janata Party candidate making inroads into the Jharkhandi support base. Of the two candidates contesting for a berth in the Lok Sabha none could muster more than 0.5% of the total votes polled.

During the Janata rule in Bihar, interestingly, all the political parties, including the Congress, created their own Jharkhand cell to appeal to the pro-Jharkhand sentiment of the tribals. An all-party Chotanagpur - Santal Parganas Alag Prant Sangharsh Samity was created on October 10, 1977 in which all parties, including the newly formed Janata Dal, came together to demand a separate state for the Chotanagpur - Santal Pargana region. Only the Jharkhand Party remained outside the Samity and demanded a larger area from the adjoining states of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh to be included in the proposed state.
The movement started gaining ground once again since 1978. Sibu Soren by this time emerged as a mass leader in the Dhanbad and Santal Pargana region. During 1978–80 he organised violent rallies and mass demonstrations against money lenders, big land-holders and ‘Mafia’ leaders. The ‘Jungle Banchao (save forest) Andolan,’ 100 centring around the forest areas of Singbhum, also gained ground during this time. Forest godowns were looted, stacks of kentu leaves were burnt, a rest house was forcibly occupied and demonstrations and processions at district and subdivisional headquarters sent signals of tribal discontent. Forcible collection of subscription from contractors was also reported from the Chakradharpur region. A Ranchi ‘Bandh’ was called on May 12, 1978. During this agitation the most active among the militant groups was the Chotanagpur Chhatri Sangharsh Samity, an urban youth organisation, which had the blessings of both the Christians and non-Christians. 101

In its annual conference held at Ranchi on May 21, 1978 the All India Jharkhand Party declared that if a separate Jharkhand state was not granted by August 15, 1978, a non-cooperation movement would be launched to pressurise the government. 102 They threatened to stop paying taxes, repaying the loans, allowing mineral or forest produce to go outside the Chotanagpur region. Panchayat elections, settlement operations as well as construction of dams or any such project would not be allowed to be undertaken in the region, they held.

On September 25, 1978 six political parties, namely, Jharkhand Party, J M M, Rul Jharkhand, Birsa Seva Dal, Akhil Bharatiya Congress and RSP jointly organised at Jamshedpur a Jharkhand Alag Prant Sanjukt Morcha and submitted a memorandum to the Central
Government. The memorandum included demands like a) stopping destruction of Shal trees, Shal not to be replaced by Segun trees, b) Segun to be planted in selective areas, c) Labourers working under the Forest Development Corporation should get appropriate wages, bonus, D.A. and one day's leave per week, d) education in schools and colleges to be imparted through local Ho, Munda etc. languages, e) a separate state of Jharkhand to be formed immediately etc.

In the very next year the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha submitted a memorandum to the Bihar Chief Minister underlining their major demands. The memorandum submitted on September 22, 1979 included demands like a) separation of Jharkhand region from Bihar, b) unemployment allowance for the unemployed, c) prevention of entry of profit-making mahajans in tribal villages, d) withdrawal of the false cases against the 'Jungle Andolan' activists and release of the arrested people.

In January 1980, during the Seventh General Elections for the Lok Sabha, the Congress formed an alliance with Sibu Soren to gain ground in the tribal belt of Chotanagpur. The pattern was followed in the subsequent State Assembly Elections, held in the month of June of the same year. This alliance led to the split in the J M M when Binod Behari Mahato disapproving the unilateral decision of Soren, broke away to form the J M M (B). The Jharkhand Party also remained fragmented. The All India Jharkhand Party, which moved closer to the Janata Party, the Marxist Coordination Committee as well as the Jharkhand Party (Horo) — all won one parliamentary seat each. The Jharkhand Party, however, boycotted the State Assembly poll, as it was denied of its cock symbol by the Election Commission, though its
candidates remained in the field. The J M M as an ally of the Congress emerged as a major political force in the state of Bihar, especially in the industrial belt of Chotanagpur. While it bagged thirteen assembly seats, the other Jharkhandi factions had to be satisfied with only one seat in the Assembly.107

In West Bengal, the Jharkhandi candidates failed to impress once again during the Seventh Lok Sabha Elections. The Jharkhand Party contested four seats in all. But all of their candidates forfeited their security deposits. The best of the lot, Bishnu Pada Soren from Jhargram (ST), could poll a meagre 5.89% of the total votes.

The return of the Congress to power at the Centre as well as in the state of Bihar signalled a virtual end to the militancy of Sibu Soren because of his proximity to the ruling party. He gradually distanced himself from Binod Behari Mahato and A.K. Roy. Bagun Sumbral, an important leader of the 'Ho' faction, with considerable influence in the Singbhum region, who had earlier joined the Janata Party, also entered the Congress (I).108 Another important leader, Kartick Oraon, like both Soren and Sumbral thought it better to fight for the tribals' cause from within the ruling party and therefore decided to join hands with the Congress. Thus, the Jharkhand movement once again reverted back to the days of the early sixties, losing its vitality acquired through persistent struggle.

In May 1980, a Department of Tribal and Regional Languages was opened in the Ranchi University. This brought some sobriety to the movement by bringing in some ideologues and ensuring intellectual
participation so far lacking in the movement. Dr B.P. Kesri, Vice President of the Jharkhand Party (Horo) and a teacher of Hindi in the G.T.A. College, Daltonganj, joined the department. In June 1980, Dr A. K. Dhan, a Western educated Christian tribal, who was serving in the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University. Soon the University, especially its Tribal and Regional Languages department, became the nerve centre of the Jharkhand movement. It gave birth to organisations like the Chotanagpuri Intellectual Forum, Chotanagpuri Teachers' Association etc. The missionary agencies like Bishop Carey Institute, Bangalore and Oxform, provided finances for publications and other activities of the department. Dr Dhan himself patronised missionary institutions like St. Augustine College, Manoharpur; Albert Ekka College, Chainpur; St. Paul's College, Ranchi and B.Ed. colleges at Lohardaga and Jamshedpur which in turn, ensured a steady flow of leaders and activists to the movement.

In 1982, quite a number of educated tribals got appointments as lecturers and Principals in different colleges of the region. Higher posts in the University administration like those of Registrar and Deputy Registrar, Director of Physical Education etc. were also filled up by tribal candidates. The student hostels of the Ranchi University were virtually converted into adivasi hostels, providing shelter to the tribal politicians and activists. During a visit of Chandra Sekhar Singh, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, to Dumka in 1983 raids were conducted on adivasi hostels and, as a result, a number of arms were recovered and large number of activists were arrested.
Meanwhile, the Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana Development Authority was formed in 1981, on the initiative of Kartick Oraon. The Authority, intended to initiate developmental activities in the region, however, failed to implement its resolutions in practice. Thus, it was soon proved to be an eyewash, neither able to take the region to the path of development nor capable of solving the basic problems faced by the tribals over the years.

In the 1982 Assembly Elections in West Bengal the Jharkhand Party (Horo) entered into an understanding with the Congress (I). The JMM though did not enter into any open alliance with the Congress, helped the latter to increase its vote in the region. Such an understanding, however, did not result in any electoral gain for the Jharkhandis who were a divided house. The Jharkhand Party and JMM candidates who had to contest as independents, even opposed each other in some constituencies. Fourteen candidates, most of them backed by the JMM, contested the elections but without a single success. The alliance with the Congress (I), however, helped at least three of the candidates, namely, Narendra Nath Hansda, Manoranjan Mahato and Panchanan Soren to secure between 32% and 20% of the votes.

In the Eighth Lok Sabha Elections of 1984, Sibu Soren and A. K. Foy, two stalwarts of the movement in Bihar, were defeated. The performance of Jharkhandi candidates in West Bengal was no better. The Jharkhand Party and the JMM fielded three and four candidates respectively, but none of them could muster more than 8% of the votes polled. In 1985, the JMM recovered some of its lost prestige by becoming a major opposition party in the Bihar assembly when it won fourteen seats in the legislature.
In 1985, fifty two members of the Bihar Legislative Assembly, representing the Chotanagpur region, sent a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi demanding central administration in the Chotanagpur Plateau. The memorandum, however, failed to attract immediate attention of the Central Government to the problems faced by the people in the region, not to talk of any promise to bring the area under any kind of central rule.

By this time, the tribal students, being totally disillusioned by the politicians, formed the All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU) on June 22, 1986 in line with the All Assam Students' Union of Assam. Prabhakar Tirkey, a student of Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, became the President and Surya Singh Besra, a student of the Tribal and Regional Languages Department, Ranchi University, became the Secretary of the Union.

The formation of the AJSU brought the rift between the Jharkhandi politicians and the students into the open. A conference of students and intellectuals was held at Jamshedpur on October 19-20, 1986 in which N.K.Horo, Ram Dayal Munda (who was elevated to the post of Acting Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University in June 1986) along with other prominent leaders took part. A demand to grant an independent status to the Students' Union was raised in the conference. On December 30-31, of the same year another conference was held at Hazaribagh in which the demand for a separate Jharkhand state was raised once again. The AJSU leadership decided to launch a militant struggle to achieve their long cherished goal.
Bringing in a large number of students under the banner of the AJSU, no doubt, brought some militancy to the movement, but this introduction of fresh blood made the older generation of Jharkhandi leadership apprehensive of losing their influence and popularity. The AJSU gave an ultimatum to the Central Government to concede the demand for a separate Jharkhand State, comprising twenty one districts of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, on or before December 31, 1988. Failing to get any response from the Government, the agitated students called for a 'Jharkhand Bandh' on January 1, 1989 which evoked partial response. They even gave a call for a ninety six hour economic blockade in the region and urged the people to boycott elections during the Lok Sabha Poll of 1989. This call for boycott resulted into further confusion and fragmentation of the movement. The militancy of the AJSU was, however, shortlived as after a change in the leadership of the organisation, effected in its annual convention at Ranchi on January 7, 1990, the new leadership reversed its earlier stand and decided to contest the Assembly Elections of Bihar in 1990 under the JMM banner.

The Assembly Elections in West Bengal held in March, 1987 found some candidates representing the Jharkhand Kranti Dal along with those of the JMM and the Jharkhand Party. However, Santosh Rana — a prominent leader of the Kranti Dal (who later became one of the conveners of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee) could poll only 187 votes out of a total of 77,331 votes polled in the Contai (South) constituency in Midnapur district. The performance
of the Joint Secretary of the JMM, state unit — Manoranjan Mahato and that of the state Secretary of the Jharkhand Party — Narendranath Hansda was, of course, much better. They polled around 7% and 25% of the votes from Jhargram and Binpur (ST) constituencies of the same district, respectively. Even during these elections the Jharkhandi outfits failed to project a semblance of unity among themselves and weakened their prospect by contesting against each other.

The tribals in the Chotanagpur region were provided with another platform to voice their grievances when an Indian Council of Indigenous Tribal People made its appearance in 1987 as a branch of the World Council of Indigenous Tribal People (founded in 1975 on the initiative of the World Council of Churches). The Council, which was used as a common platform by the divergent Jharkhandi groups, sent a delegation to Geneva in the first week of August 1987 to participate in the deliberations of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Population. The delegation included A.K. Kisku, the Secretary General of the Council from West Bengal representing the Santal tribe, Bishop Dr Nirmal Minz from Chotanagpur representing the Oraon tribe and S. Brahma Chowdhury from Assam representing the Bodo tribe. The question of survival of different tribes in the face of various types of exploitation and their demand for the right of self-determination under a separate Jharkhand State were raised in the conference. The Indian Council met once again at Ranchi from 17 to 19 October 1987. One hundred and fifty delegates from eight states attended the conference. It was decided to make a serious effort to bring all the tribal factions in India under one umbrella to fight unitedly for their common cause.
Lack of coordination among the different factions of the Jharkhand movement was a constant source of anxiety for the well-wishers of the movement ever since the eclipse of Jaipal Singh. The idea of coordinating the activities of different factions was mooted several times but without much success. The brutal killing of the President of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Nirmal Mahato at Jamshedpur on August 8, 1987, once again underlined the need for unity and coordination among the different factions of the movement.

A conference to bring different tribal political units, irrespective of their nature and composition, on a common platform and forge unity and solidarity among them was held at Ramgarh from September 11 to 13, 1987. It was attended by some 438 delegates representing about fifty political, cultural, students' and women's organisations of the region. Prominent among the participatory groups were the Jharkhand Party led by N.B. Horo; the Bimod Behari Mahato group of the JMM, two factions of the Jharkhand Kranti Dal led by Santosh Rana and Satyanarayan Sinha respectively; the Indian People's Front, All Jharkhand Students' Union; Jharkhand Liberation Front; MÖSS and others. The Soren faction of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha though stayed away from the Jharkhand Coordination Committee (JCC), later joined it. Dr B.P. Kesri, Head of the Department of Tribal and Regional Languages, Ranchi University, though himself a SAdan (indigenous non-tribal people) became the Convener of the JCC. A twenty three point programme was adopted in the conference to achieve the goal of a separate Jharkhand state, comprising twenty one districts of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.
In a memorandum submitted to the President of India by the end of 1987, the J C C stated that the demand for a Jharkhand state was based on a search for national identity of the indigenous People of the region, including the Sadans. The memorandum criticised the States Reorganisation Commission's observations that there was no link language to bind the tribals spread over a number of states. Moreover, the memorandum contended that language was not the only criterion on the basis of which new states were created. Other factors like ethnicity, administrative convenience were instrumental in giving rise to new state-units in India.

The Coordination Committee decided to set up a parallel government to look after the affairs of the national Jharkhand State. The Centre was given time till December 31, 1987 to concede the major demands which included, apart from the demand for a separate state, stopping of arbitrary industrialisation and urbanisation uprooting the tribals; inclusion of all tribal languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution; reservation of jobs and permanent employment opportunities with adequate wages for the tribals; protection of tribal women from economic and social exploitation; increase in hostel accommodation and scholarships for tribal students; determination of proper prices for agricultural and forest-products and reintroduction of old panchayati system of the tribals with the 'para-patti-manjhi-pargana' system to solve the socio-economic and religious questions.

A number of Jharkhand bandhs, 'rail and rasta roko' agitations were resorted to during 1988 and 1989 under the banner of JCC.
A Jharkhand march was organised in the third week of March, 1983. Some of these agitations even turned violent at times, causing concern for the Central as well as the state governments. However, the major contribution of the JCC towards the movement was its broadening of the base. Under Dr Kesri's leadership, who himself was a sadan, the movement no longer represented tribal chauvinism and gradually brought the so-called sadan population of the Chotanagpur hill areas much closer to the movement. Besides, a new wave of intellectual participation provided the movement with some degree of maturity hitherto lacking. A host of young academics, who not only studied the socio-economic problems of the region in depth but also could analyse the situation scientifically and argued their case quite logically, joined the movement.

However, the Coordination Committee which came into being with the avowed objective of bringing different factions of the movement together on a common platform was, unfortunately, marked by internal cleavages since its very inception. The Soren faction of the JMM which was quite hesitant to join the JCC initially, demanded a reconstitution of the committee after joining it. In a meeting convened by Dr Kesri to chalk out the future strategy of the movement, Sibu Soren stressed two points: first, since the Jharkhand movement is a political one, the JCC should be composed of political parties only. Secondly, if the JCC comprises both political and non-political organisations, half of its members should be taken from the JMM alone, considering its strength in the region. Dr Kesri, however, did not concede any of these demands and stated that all the JCC members were coordinators of the Jharkhand movement,
with equal status. During the third week of August 1989, factionalism resurfaced when the militant AJSU severed its link with the Coordination Committee on the question of participating in the Ninth Lok Sabha Elections. Though a change in the leadership of the students' body ultimately led it to reverse its earlier stand of boycotting elections and it decided to take part in the Assembly Elections of Bihar in 1990, its earlier decision had already caused much damage to the prospect of a united Jharkhand movement.

The experiment with the Jharkhand Coordination Committee to bring a semblance of unity to the faction ridden movement met with little success as internal squabbles mostly arising out of personal ambitions of the tribal elites persisted. Moreover, the JCC attempted to bring divergent elements from some fifty odd organisations, ranging from extreme right to ultra-left, under one umbrella without any constitution of its own to streamline the movement or to regulate the behaviour of different groups.

Issues like participation in the elections or relationship with the Congress often led to controversies within the JCC. The apolitical leadership of the Committee and its eagerness to maintain a safe distance from both the Congress and the National Front during the Lok Sabha Elections of 1989, created dissatisfaction among the ranks. While the JMM openly criticised the apolitical stance taken by Dr Kesri and others, the AJSU also expressed its displeasure regarding the political distastation from mainstream politics. Thus, the experiment with the Jharkhand Coordination Committee failed, as it became a paper coordinator with no ideological bond to hold
different factions together, not to talk of removing their differences for good.

When the Bihar Legislative Assembly began its monsoon session on June 28, 1989, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha M.L.A.s decided to stay away from the session and announced their resignation from the membership of the House to protest against the indifference of the Central Government to their demand for a separate Jharkhand State, comprising twenty one districts from four provinces. This renewed pressure succeeded in persuading the Central Government to set up a 'Committee on Jharkhand Matters' to look into the problems faced by the people of the region and to suggest measures to solve those problems.

Thus in August 1989 an expert Committee on Jharkhand Matters (COJM) came into being with B.S. Lalli, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, as its Convener. The Committee was composed of Jharkhand movement leaders, representatives of both the Central and the Bihar Government and 'experts conversant with the socio-economic background of the region'. However, the AJSU's demand to include representatives from the Jharkhand regions of West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh into the Committee could not materialise as none of the Chief Ministers of these three states attended the meeting held in New Delhi on August 11, 1989.

It was expected that the Committee members would examine and recommend modalities for meeting the just and long cherished aspirations of the people in the region within the Constitutional framework.
The members visited Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa and Jhargram in Midnapur district of West Bengal on September 23 and 24, 1989 respectively to gain first hand knowledge of the prevailing conditions.

Meanwhile, in the Ninth Lok Sabha Elections of November 1989 and the subsequent Assembly Elections of Bihar in February 1990, the JMM emerged as the strongest Jharkhandi group in tribal Bihar. It won three Lok Sabha seats and nineteen Assembly seats out of a total of eighty-one seats in the region. While the Jharkhand Party, AJSU and other splinter groups could manage only five seats in all. But the JMM was relegated to the third place in tribal Bihar, after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress (I), as the BJP quite surprisingly, won twenty one assembly seats from South Bihar alone, out of its tally of thirty nine seats in all.

In West Bengal, the Lok Sabha Elections of 1989 saw an unprecedented rise in the number of Jharkhandi candidates in the electoral fray. There were eight contestants from the Jharkhand Party alone and two from the JMM. However, increase in the number of candidates failed to boost the overall percentage of votes polled by these candidates. While the Jharkhand Party managed 0.65% of the votes, the JMM could poll 0.14% only. Apart from Narendranath Hansda, who polled almost 18% of the votes from the Jhargram (ST) constituency, none of the rest could get even 6% of the votes polled.

In a significant development, the two factions of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, led by Sibu Soren and Binod Behari Mahato respectively, were reunited formally at a joint convention held at Dumari,
the Giridih district of Bihar on January 7, 1990. But instead of going alone, the united JMM decided to join hands with the BJP which gave a good account of its strength in South Bihar, during the Assembly Elections of February 1990. The JMM, with this move, wanted to win over the support of the non-tribals who, by now, outnumbered the tribals in the region. In a major policy shift, the JMM accepted the proposal of the BJP to confine the demand for a separate Jharkhand state to the geographical boundaries of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas of Bihar only. A 'Jharkhand - Vananchal Action Committee' was set up at a meeting held at Patna on July 19, 1990 with Sibu Soren as the Convener of the steering committee, having representatives from even the Communist Party of India, apart from the JMM and the BJP.

During the two-day conference of the Jharkhand Coordination Committee at Ranchi on July 7 and 8, 1990 in a dramatic turn of events, the founder - convener of the JCC, B.P. Kesri moved a resolution to dissolve the umbrella organisation, pleading that it had lost its relevance. This was in reaction to the move by some JCC leaders to launch a new socio-political organisation. Kesri's move, however, was strongly opposed by the other constituents of the JCC like the Jharkhand Party, the Jharkhand Kranti Dal, the All Jharkhand Students' Union etc. But sharp differences among different Jharkhand groups came to the fore once again when the JCC leaders launched virulent attack on the JMM and the AJSU for breaking the Jharkhand unity by unilaterally declaring separate agitational programmes.
In December 1990, Prime Minister Chandrasekhar constituted a Jharkhand Review Committee with Iswari Prasad as its Chairman to expedite the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters. The Review Committee members along with the Union Minister of State for Home, Subodh Kant Sahay, held talks with the members of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters on December 26 and 27, 1990 in New Delhi. The talks broke down as the Centre did not agree to the demand of a separate Jharkhand state and offered an 'autonomous council' for the thirteen districts of Bihar only. The Jharkhand leaders rejected the offer asserting that anything short of a Union Territory for the region was unacceptable to them.

A three-day seminar on 'Development not Destruction' was organised by the Jharkhand Buddhijivi Manch a think-tank of the JMK, from December 27-29, 1990 in the Bokaro Steel City. The seminar, first of its kind in the history of the movement tried to identify the problems faced by the people of this region and to suggest measures to overcome them. Intellectuals from different parts of the country presented over ninety papers on various subjects like the problems of displacement of the local people, their socio-cultural identity, education, health and social environment. At the end of the seminar it was resolved to begin a 'mahasangram' (great struggle) against all injustices meted out to the people of this tribal-dominated region over the years and to launch a sustained campaign through an 'environment brigade' to protect the deteriorating ecological balance of the region.
Denouncing the delaying tactics adopted by the Centre to weaken the movement, both the All Jharkhand Students' Union and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha gave an ultimatum to the Central Government to create a separate Jharkhand state comprising twenty-two districts from four states before January 26, 1991. While the AJSU threatened to call for a seventy-two-hour Jharkhand bandh from January 28, the JMM warned the Centre that it would launch an indefinite agitation from February 7 stopping all activities in the mines and other Central Government establishments and preventing movement of minerals and other industrial goods from the region. Interestingly, the JMM decided to keep the state government establishments outside the purview of the 'economic blockade' as the Bihar government had already responded favourably to the COJM recommendations.

The Union Home Ministry held talks with different Jharkhandi groups and leaders of various national parties from January 15-17, 1991, to find out a solution to the Jharkhand problem before January 26, the deadline set by the AJSU and the JMM. Apart from the Minister of State for Home Affairs, the Prime Minister Chandrasekhar himself took part in the discussion. However, the paper drafted by the Home Ministry on the basis of recommendations made by the Government experts, envisaged an autonomous council comprising thirteen districts of Bihar in the line of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council with specific administrative and executive powers. The proposal failed to satisfy the Jharkhand leaders as the powers to be vested in the council were very limited.
In the mean time a new party called the United Jharkhand Party (UJP) made its appearance with the objective of bringing all the like minded Jharkhandi factions under one umbrella. It denounced the ‘opportunistic’ line adopted by the JMM to share power with the Janata Dal in Bihar and decided to evolve a ‘collective leadership’ for the new organisation. The UJP gave a call for an indefinite ‘loha roko’ agitation stopping the transportation of iron ore from the region from April 20 to press for its demand for a separate Jharkhand state comprising twenty two districts from four states.

But when the question of contesting the Tenth Lok Sabha Elections in Bihar came to the fore the JKP (Horo) and the AJSU decided to contest elections separately. Senior JKP leaders blamed the ‘high handed attitude’ of the AJSU leaders for their leaving the UJP and deciding to contest elections on their own. The AJSU was further accused of thrusting its decisions on the UJP which were unacceptable to senior leaders like N.E.Horo of JKP. Thus the unity efforts of the UJP met with an early death.

Interestingly, the AJSU which had earlier boycotted the Ninth Lok Sabha Elections in 1989, decided to contest the Lok Sabha polls in Bihar in May 1991. The Central Committee of the AJSU reversing its earlier stand fielded six candidates from Ranchi, Singbhum, Junta, Sahebganj, Dumka and Gumla Lok Sabha constituencies.

In the mean time, the JMM faced yet another split as its top leaders differed sharply on important policy matters. The executive committee of the JMM decided to remove Suraj Mandal, Vice-President
of the organisation from the leadership of the JMM Legislature Party in Bihar for his alleged anti-party activities. Thus, the Morcha was once again divided into two rival camps — one led by Shailendra Mahato and Binod Behari Mahato and the other owing allegiance to Suraj Mandal and Sibu Soren. While the former favoured to keep a safe distance from the Bihar government to maintain the radical image of the party, the latter believed in strengthening the party by remaining close to the state government. The rift widened further on the issue of re-inducting Bagun Sumbrai, a former Congress (I) MP and a prominent tribal leader of the region who had left the All India Jharkhand Party to join the Janata Party in 1977, into the JMM once again.

During the Tenth Lok Sabha Elections in May 1991, JMM, a constituent of the National Front, contested eight seats in Bihar and won six of them. Sibu Soren, Suraj Mandal, Simon Marandi, Shailendra Mahato, Binod Behari Mahato, Krishna Mardi — all became MPs. The JMM, though a constituent of the National Front, fielded candidates against the Janata Dal nominees in some constituencies, like in Chaibasa. The spectacular success of the JMM in the polls enabled it to play a much more significant role in New Delhi but all the other Jharkhandi outfits were totally routed. Stalwarts like N.K. Horo, the President of the JKP, Prabhakar Tirkey, Surya Singh Besra, Binod Kumar Bhagat — all from AJSU and even Ram Dayal Munda who contested with a UJP ticket were defeated.

In West Bengal the Jharkhand Party, backed by the Congress (I), contested the Jhargram Lok Sabha seat unsuccessfully and provided
support to the Congress(I) candidates in four other Lok Sabha seats in the Midnapur district to avoid split in the anti-CPI(M) votes. In the Assembly Elections, held simultaneously in the state, the Jharkhand Party (Naren Hansda faction) decided to join hands with the Congress (I) to put up a united front against the ruling CPI(M). The state unit of the JMM also aligned with the Congress(I) in the Midnapur district. But these factions failed to forge unity among themselves. The JKP, the JMM and the Hul Jharkhand Party fielded around twenty five candidates in different districts of West Bengal some of whom even contested each other weakening their chances of victory and confusing the followers in the process. Only Naren Hansda of JKP won from the Binpur (ST) constituency and earned the right to represent the party in the West Bengal Assembly after a gap of twenty years.

The Jharkhand Area Development Council Bill, 1991 was passed by the Bihar Legislative Assembly on August 1, 1991. The Bill envisaged the merger of the regional development authorities of North and South Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas districts into a single administrative unit. The Council would receive development funds from the Bihar Government but would have the right to prepare its own budget. But the Bill empowered the Chief Minister of Bihar to nominate the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Council. It further empowered the state government to dissolve the Council without any prior notice and without assigning any reason.

In a significant departure from its earlier stand demanding creation of a separate Jharkhand state comprising twenty four districts from four states as expressed in its election manifesto, the JMM now
expressed its willingness to accept the Development Council as the first step towards a 'Urdhat Jharkhand Rajya' (Larger Jharkhand state)\textsuperscript{140}. However, the JMM leadership insisted that the Council should be endowed with an independent administrative machinery with powers to prepare an independent budget for the region, with a separate education board and with powers to make all appointments in the region.

On the other hand, the AJSU called a Jharkhand bandh on August 22, in protest against the passage of the Bill to form the 'Jharkhand Vikas Parishad' (Development Council) which it described as a 'total sell out' to the Bihar Chief Minister. Surya Singh Besra, the lone member of the AJSU in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, also resigned from his seat. However, the bandh call was withdrawn quite abruptly by a Central Committee resolution of the AJSU at the initiative of its Working President, Dev Sharan Bhagat. But in spite of the decision of the Central Committee to withdraw the call for a Jharkhand bandh, the activists of the organisation were overenthusiastic to enforce the bandh. It was successful particularly in the Singhbhum district and parts of the Ranchi and Gumla districts of Bihar. This call for a bandh and its subsequent withdrawal resulted into a serious intra-party rivalry and leadership crisis within the AJSU. The organisation was divided into three factions -- the pro-bandh faction was led by Prabhakar Tirkey and Surya Singh Besra; the second faction was led by Dev Sharan Bhagat and a third faction drew inspiration from Binod Kumar Bhagat and Bablu Mirmu.\textsuperscript{141} While Dev Sharan Bhagat suspended both Tirkey and Besra, Binod Kumar Bhagat resigned
from the primary membership of the organisation in protest against
the attitude of Tirkey and Besra, the former President and General
Secretary respectively.

In the meantime a new students' and youth wing of the JMM —
the Jharkhand Chhatra Yuva Morcha (JCYM) made its appearance to
counter the growing popularity of the militant AJSTJ. It was formally
constituted during its first three day convention at Ranchi from
October 30, 1991. The JCYM was conceived to increase JMM's hold
on the youth and the students of the region. However, the infighting
within the JMM once again came into the open when Shailendra Mahato
accused Suraj Mandal of trying to use the organisation to boost his
own image at the cost of the party. 142

In order to restore balance the AJSTJ in an emergency meeting
at Ranchi from November 1 to 3, 1991 declared the formation of a
new political party — Jharkhand People's Party (JPP) to remove the
obstacle in the way of the AJSTJ, basically a students' organisation,
to contest elections. Led by Dr Ram Dayal Munda the JPP thus emerged
as the political wing of the militant student body enabling it to
speak on equal terms with the JMM especially during the elections.

Paradoxically, however, during the Parliamentary and Assembly
By-Elections of Bihar held on November 16, 1991 the AJSTJ decided
to stay away from the polls to protest against the adoption of the
Jharkhand Area Development Council Bill by the Bihar Legislative
Assembly. Inspite of this formal boycott, several AJSTJ and JPP
leaders filed their nomination papers as independents in a number
of constituencies (viz. Ghatsila ST, Seraikela, Tatehar, Sisai etc.).
The intra-party squabbles of the JMM also came to the surface while finalising the list of candidates for the seven Assembly seats of the Chhotanagpur and Santal Pargana region. The Seraikela Assembly constituency in Singbhum West proved to be the bone of contention for the two warring factions led by Suraj Mandal and Shailendra Mahato. Ultimately, the independent candidate Champal Soren, backed by Sibu Soren and Suraj Mandal defeated the official JMM nominee Mrs Moti Mardi in Seraikela. The JMM of course, bagged two other seats as its official candidates got the better of other contestants in Tundi and Poraiahat constituencies. In the Lok Sabha By-Election for the Purulia constituency in West Bengal, held simultaneously, the Jharkhandis neither aligned with the Congress nor could field a common candidate. The JMM and the JKP fought against each other and fared badly.

On December 20, 1991 Home Secretaries of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh met with the Union Home Secretary in New Delhi to discuss among themselves the modalities to arrive at a consensus regarding the vexed problem of Jharkhand. However, nothing tangible emerged out of the meeting. Soon the Home Minister S.B. Chavan himself held talks with the Chief Ministers of Bihar and West Bengal in New Delhi on February 18, 1992 but it also failed to yield any concrete result.

Meanwhile the Jharkhand Peoples' Party along with the AJSU threatened to call a Jharkhand bandh on March 1, 1992 and resort to economic blockade for five days from March 2 in the Jharkhand region if their demand for a separate state was not met by March 1, 1992.
They even threatened to form a parallel government in the region in case of an indifferent attitude on the part of the Centre. However, differences of opinion among the leaders came into the open when a group led by Prabakar Tirkey, the founder President of the AJSU, left the organisation expressing their displeasure with the present leadership and complaining against the lack of 'collective leadership' in the organisation. It was alleged that the agitational programme was 'against the interests of the tribals' and 'designed only to promote the image of Mr Besra'. In spite of such differences among the leaders, the bandh evoked good response in Ranchi, Lohardaga, Palamau and Gumla districts. The activists removed fish-plates, blew railway tracks, threw bombs at a goods train and even set fire to buses. However, its impact was more or less confined to the southern fringe of Chotanagpur Plateau.

The JMM also did not lag behind and called a bandh on March 21, 1992 and also decided to resort to an economic blockade in the region for thirteen days starting from March 22, 1992. The Indian Peoples' Front extended support to the JMM sponsored bandh which turned violent in some places. The economic blockade was backed even by the Communist Party of India. Loading of minerals and their transportation were suspended as armed JMM activists kept a strict vigil over the mining and industrial complexes of the region. Railway tracks were uprooted, fish-plates were removed, lorries and trucks were set on fire and even a parallel system of 'Jharkhand permit' was introduced to allow trucks and private vehicles to move in and out of the region.
A tripartite meeting was held in New Delhi on March 28, 1992 in which the JMM leaders, the officials of the Bihar government and those of the central Home Ministry led by the Home Minister S.B. Chavan himself took part. Organisations like the AJSU and the JPP expressed their dissatisfaction for being ignored during the talks and accused the Centre of trying to create divisions among the tribal groups by inviting them separately. The economic blockade was ultimately lifted by the JMM on the tenth day of the agitation i.e. on March 31, 1992 on the basis of a specific assurance from the Union Home Minister to convene soon a meeting of the Chief Ministers of the concerned states.

Accordingly, S.B. Chavan met with the Bihar Chief Minister and the representatives of the Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh on April 4, 1992. The Chief Minister of Orissa also sent a note to the meeting. Within two days the Home Minister discussed the Jharkhand problem with major political parties viz. the Congress (I), the Janata Dal, the BJP and the CPI. During the meeting both the CPI and the BJP supported the idea of a separate Jharkhand state comprising sixteen districts of South Bihar. The Congress favoured an autonomous council as recommended by the COJM, while the ruling Janata Dal of Bihar urged the Centre to come out clearly with its stand on the Jharkhand issue before entering into any meaningful dialogue with it. Chavan also discussed the problem with four Jharkhandi groups viz. the JMM, the JPP, the JKP and the Sadan Vikash Parishad the very next day i.e. April 7, 1992.
In the meantime, the report of the Committee on Jharkhand Matters—"Model of Autonomy" was tabled in Parliament on March 30, 1992 by M.M. Jacob, the Minister of State for Home Affairs. Some members of the COJM favoured the idea of a separate state but held that the formation of such a state was 'something not to be recommended at this time'. They expressed doubts whether there was enough support for such a state in the areas beyond South Bihar.

It is significant to note that out of the twenty-four COJM members, twelve were representatives of various Jharkhandi outfits whose views were likely to be biased. Yet in its report the members recommended the formation of an autonomous council for the Jharkhand region in Bihar on the pattern of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. The autonomous politico-administrative structure to be known as the 'Jharkhand General Council', with about seventy members, some elected and others nominated, would function as an apex body for the development of the thirteen districts of South Bihar. The executive power of the Council would be vested in an Executive Council comprising eleven Jharkhand General Council members, headed by an elected Chief Executive Councillor. This Executive Council would have jurisdiction over matters like land and land revenue, forest and environment, education, health, small and cottage industries etc.

The COJM report suggested the formation of similar Councils in three other states, subject of course, to their approval. It was further recommended to set up a Jharkhand Advisory Committee consisting of M.P.s and M.L.A.s and M.L.C.s of the region to advise the Jharkhand General Council on administrative matters.
The autonomous council proposal was rejected by the JMM leaders, who in a supplementary note submitted to the COJK held that the council would be 'inadequate' to meet the aspirations of the Jharkhandis. Clarifying later Suraj Mandal, the Vice President of the organisation, said that nothing short of a separate state or a Union Territory would satisfy them.

In a significant development the AJSU and the JPP decided to be satisfied with a separate Jharkhand state comprising the sixteen districts of Bihar only as they felt that under the present circumstances it was impossible to constitute a separate state with twenty five districts from four states. However, they were not giving up the idea of a 'Vrihat Jharkhand' (larger Jharkhand) in future.

The demand for a separate state got a boost when the Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana Regional Congress Committee took up the matter with the party high command in New Delhi and pleaded strongly for a separate tribal state in the region comprising sixteen districts of South Bihar. A twenty two member delegation led by Devendra Nath Champa, Deputy Speaker of the Bihar Legislative Assembly officially met the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister in New Delhi on April 25 and urged them to find an amicable solution to the problem in the interest of the party (Congress -I) in the region. Significantly enough, the Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana Regional Congress (I) Committee was soon renamed as the Jharkhand Congress (I) Committee, delinking itself from the Bihar Pradesh Congress (I) Committee.
The Bihar unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party launched a fortnightly long *yananchal Yatra* in the first week of May, in order to mobilise mass support for the Party's demand for a separate Vananchal state comprising Chotanagpur and Santal Pargana regions. Though the *Yatra* (march) was formally inaugurated at Ranchi by Karia Munda, President of the Party's Vananchal Samity, it originated from Hulihatu, Birsa Munda's birth place in Chotanagpur and Sido - Kanhu's village in Santal Parganas. The rally was aimed at strengthening BJP's hold over the tribal masses in the region by exposing the 'double standards' adopted by the Bihar Chief Minister and his Jharkhandi allies who were never sincere in their efforts to solve the problem.

In the Lok Sabha By-Election in June 1992 Raj Kishore Mahato of JMM won the Giridih parliamentary seat in Bihar. But in West Bengal the Jharkhandis failed to put up a united face during the Assembly By-Election for the Nayagram (ST) seat. This time no alliance was made with the Congress (I) and what is more, four Jharkhandi candidates were in the fray representing four different factions ensuring their own defeat.

A sense of realism descended on the JMM leaders by this time, when they expressed their willingness to accept even an autonomous council provided the body was independent of the Bihar Government and was vested with adequate administrative and financial powers. However, another JMM-split seemed to be imminent when Vice President of the organisation, Suraj Mandal, declared that the party's Central
Executive Committee had decided to break away from the National Front. This was promptly denied by Krishna Mardi M.P. who, supported by two M.P.s and nine M.L.A.s, was firm on continuing its alliance with the National Front and extending support to the Janata Dal government in Bihar. While Mandal accused the rebels of being sold out to the Bihar government, Mardi charged Mandal of amassing huge wealth in the name of the Jharkhand movement and 'bartering away' the cause of statehood by aligning with the Congress (I). The issue of inducting Subodh Kant Sahay, former Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, into the JMM and selecting him as a candidate for a Rajya Sabha seat gave rise to further dissension. The split came into the open when both the factions led by Soren and Mardi convened separate press conferences on July 12, 1992 at Patna and was formalised later on August 9, when the group led by Soren expelled Mardi and fourteen others for alleged anti-party activities.

By this time different Jharkhandi factions declared a series of agitational programmes to achieve their goal. While the JMM (Soren) gave a call for a Jharkhand bandh on September 1 and an indefinite economic blockade from the next day if a separate state was not created by August 30, the JMM (Mardi) proposed to launch an 'Operation Birsa' from November 15. The Jharkhand Party (Hansda) decided to enforce a seven-day economic blockade from September 1 and the AJSU - JPP combine announced a Jharkhand bandh on September 15 followed by a fortnight long economic blockade from September 16. The Union Home Minister S.B. Chavan called a meeting of the prominent Jharkhandi leaders in New Delhi on August 24 to resolve the crisis. While the JMM leaders accepted the invitation, the AJSU, the JPP and the Jharkhand Party leaders stayed away from the talks. Chavan
appealed to the movement leaders to call off their agitational programmes and to have patience. However, the talks remained inconclusive as the Bihar Chief Minister failed to turn up at the last moment for personal reasons. Chavan decided to hold another round of talks on August 28. This time though both the factions of the JMM were present, the AJSU and the JPP stuck to their decision to boycott the talks and, interestingly, the Bihar Chief Minister, Lalu Prasad Yadav, once again failed to reach Delhi in time for 'unavoidable reasons'. The JMM leaders, disgusted with the dilly-dallying attitude of the governments both at the Centre and the state, decided to go ahead with the Jharkhand bandh on September 1. In a third meeting called by the Union Home Minister on August 31, the Bihar Chief Minister, two factions of the JMM and a twelve member delegation from the Bihar Pradesh Congress (I) led by ex-Central Minister Sumati Crason were present. The AJSU, JPP and JKP were not invited to the talks this time. The Bihar Chief Minister, during the discussion, left it entirely to the Centre to decide whether a separate state or a Union Territory would be created.

The JMM (Soren) sponsored bandh on September 1, 1992 evoked partial response. It was successful to some extent in Ranchi, Dumka and adjoining areas but life remained generally unaffected in other districts of South Bihar. The proposed economic blockade was deferred till the middle of September on the basis of a specific assurance on the part of the Centre to arrive at a decision regarding the Jharkhand issue within a fortnight. Meanwhile,
violence erupted in the Jharkhand region in the wake of the JPP - AJSU sponsored bandh on September 15. Rail tracks were blown up, bombs were thrown during the subsequent economic blockade. However, the blockade was lifted on the ninth day of the agitation in order to dispel confusion arising out of the 'unconstitutional and unilateral decision of the Chief Secretary of the JPP, Surya Singh Besra to lift the blockade in view of its failure'. Besra, who called off the blockade on his own on September 16, on the pretext that it had been a flop, was expelled from the JPP.

The JMM (Soren) called an all-party meeting at Ranchi on September 20, 1992 to form a 'Morcha' with like minded parties to achieve their long cherished goal of Jharkhand. While the Congress(I) and the IPF responded to the call, other Jharkhand outfits like the AJSU, JPP and the JMM (Mardi) ignored it. Undaunted by its failure the organisation called another two day convention of all parties on October 1 and 2, 1992. For the second time in succession the effort received a jolt and was turned into an 'all JMM (Soren) affair'. Both the factions of the JKP stayed away. So did the JMM (Mardi), BJP and the CPI(M). The CPI and IPF boycotted the meeting in protest against the unilateral declaration by Suraj Mandal, the JMM (Soren) Vice President, of a 'do or die' agitation from October 11. The Bihar Pradesh Congress (I) had to boycott the meeting on the instructions of the Party High Command in Delhi. The AJSU and the JPP made token representation to the meeting but refrained from taking active part in the proceedings. Their emissaries read out a number of proposals like all the elected representatives from the
region should resign their posts before involving themselves in the movement, as their condition for participating in the joint movement. Though the parties stayed away from the meeting officially, their second line leaders along with the followers lent support to the effort to bring unity among the different factions. November 21 was set as the deadline for the Centre to create a separate state, failing which a Jharkhand bandh on November 25 and an indefinite economic blockade from the next day were threatened. The meeting also constituted a Jharkhand State All-Party Struggle Committee with Sibu Soren as its coordinator. It was a thirteen party coalition aimed at bringing the like minded organisations on a common platform and to strengthen the struggle for a separate state.

Meanwhile the AJSU - JPP combine suggested that all the M.L.A.s and M.P.s from the region should resign their seats as part of a programme of non-cooperation with the government. At the joint Central Committee meeting of the combine at Hazaribagh on October 9, 1992 it was decided to launch a 'no Jharkhand - no tax' agitation from October 15 and to organise a 'Jharkhand padayatra' (march) from Bokaro on November 1 which would culminate in a rally at Ranchi on November 15, 1992.

A series of protest rallies were organised in the region during the month of October by different political parties in support of the demand for a separate state. The Jharkhand party rally on October 13 was an impressive one. This was followed by an even bigger 'Yananchal rally' on October 15 by the Bharatiya Janata
Party. The local Congress men not to be outdone by the BJP, defied their Party High Command to organise yet another Jharkhand rally on October 17. But it was the Janata Dal leaders of the region who ultimately proved themselves to be the biggest champion of the Jharkhand cause when three Ministers from the Laloo Yadav Government in Bihar along with five legislators belonging to the Dal, resigned in quick succession from their posts. They expressed the hope that M.P.s and M.L.A.s of other parties belonging to the region would emulate their feat espousing the cause of a separate Jharkhand state. Thus, the local leaders of both the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal defied their central leadership for their own survival.

While the AJSU - JPP combine held a rally at Ranchi on November 15 on the completion of their fifteen day long 'Jharkhand padayatra' and gave a call for a forty eight hour bandh beginning on November 23, the JMM (Mardi) launched its 'Operation Birsa' from the Mornhabadi Maidan of Ranchi on the same day which was observed as the birth anniversary of the legendary tribal hero Birsa Munda. The leaders of the JMM (Mardi) outlined the programmes to be undertaken as part of the 'Operation Birsa' and apart from plans to prevent the movement of coal from the region and to stop the movement of both passenger and goods trains in the region by uprooting railway tracks, if need be, the leaders even talked of physically eliminating police officials found exploiting the tribals and thought of exposing Sibu Soren and Suraj Mandal who were sacrificing the cause of the Jharkhandis for petty personal gains.
The movement for a separate state of Jharkhand received a shot in the arm when forty-five legislators of the Bihar Legislature, belonging to the region, cutting across party lines, decided to work in unison for the realization of their demand for a separate state. At a meeting in Patna on December 29, they decided to convene a separate 'assembly session' at Ranchi by March 1993 and planned to form a 61-member joint legislature party, comprising members of the Bihar Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council representing the Jharkhand region. Once again the legislators of the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal defied openly the stand taken by their state and central leadership and joined hands with the protagonists of the Jharkhand movement.

Thus, what started as a social reform movement in the early years of the present century gradually transformed itself into a full-fledged political movement in course of time. Participation in the elections, held since independence, marked the beginning of a phase of Constitutional participation. Vacillation of the leadership regarding the relationship with the ruling elite, no doubt, created confusion among the rank and file quite often; their personal ambitions and mutual bickerings made the movement weak every now and then, but the persistent struggle of the exploited masses has at least succeeded to make everyone aware of the immediate need to put an end to all sorts of exploitation and
discrimination in the region, leaving the responsibility of improving the conditions of the people in the region in the hands of the local people, with minimum outside interference.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Followers of Martin Luther who led the Protestant Reformation.
3. Ibid., p 2.
6. Ibid., p 3.
7. Ibid., p 3.
10. Ibid., p 23.


32. Panchbhai S.C., op. cit., p 34.


34. Mahapatra L.K., op. cit., p 68.


37. Ibid., p 30.


43. Lal Manchar, op. cit., p 38.

46. Ibid., p 35.
47. Ibid., p 37.
55. Ibid., p 181.
56. Ibid., p 179.
57. Sharma A.P., op. cit., p 35 but according to Singh K.S., op. cit., p 10, it was formed on December 28, 1967.
60. Ibid., p 23.
61. According to Singh K.S., op. cit., p 10 and Sharma A.P., op. cit., p 66, Hool Jharkhand was established on December 28, 1968, but according to Chakrabarty Satyabrata, op. cit., p 174, it was established in 1969.
64. Ibid., p 37.


68. Ibid., p 43.

69. Ibid., p 43.

70. Hans S.A. B.D., 'Tribal Studies'. Inaugural address at a seminar on Tribal Studies in the Central Tribal Belt of India, Calcutta, October 14 - 16, 1983.


73. Mahapatra L.K., op. cit., p 70.

74. Ibid., p 70.

75. Ibid., p 70.

76. Ibid., p 70.


78. JMM according to Sharma A.P., op. cit., p 66, was founded at Dhanbad on February 4, 1973; Mahato Sailendra, Jharkhand Rajya Aur Upanibeshbad (in Hindi), JMM, Singbhum District Committee, 1985, p 4, also mentions 1973 as the formation year, but Munda R.D., op. cit., p 30 refers to 1972 and Maharaj and Iyer, in Sengupta N. (ed.), op. cit., p 177, mentions 'end of 1972' as the formation year of the JMM.


83. Ibid., p 189.
84. Ibid., p 189.
88. Ibid., p 190.
89. Ibid., p 192.
90. Ibid., p 193.
91. Ibid., p 191.
92. Ibid., p 181.
107. Ibid., see also Datta P.K., op. cit., p 120.
109. Ibid., p 68.
111. *Times of India* (New Delhi), November 19 and 20, 1983.
116. Ibid.
123. Dr. Ram Dayal Munda could not attend the conference as he went to Moscow in connection with the Festival of India.
125. Sharma A.P., op. cit. and Ghosh Arun, op. cit., p 130, have referred to forty eight organisations attending the Conference. But Datta P.K. op. cit., p 121, has given the number as sixty.
two; while both Rajat Ray in *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), Feb. 8, 1989 and Shyamal Sarkar in *The Statesman* (Calcutta), December 18, 1987 have mentioned forty-nine organisations taking part. Murari Mohan Mukherjee in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), July 16, 1989 has talked of fifty-three organisations which participated.


130. Ibid., August 12, 1989.


137. Ibid.


146. Thakur Arun Kumar in *Times of India* (Delhi), April 12, 1992.
161. Ibid.