Tribal groups in India, like so many backward castes, used to accept their unequal economic positions without much hue and cry even a couple of decades ago. But today, with the spread of education and growing consciousness, they have come forward to challenge the fatalistic theory of deprivation, put forward by the privileged sections of the society to keep them in perpetual subjugation. The result is an outgrowth of large scale discontent among different ethnic and regional groups all over the country.

Generally speaking, three kinds of explanations are provided by the scholars while trying to analyse the problems faced by various ethnic groups and the resultant movements in India. First, the 'conspiracy theory' hints at the possible role of imperialist powers, interested to destabilise India, behind such movements. According to this theory, Western capitalist nations, in their own economic and political interests, prefer small and weak States. Naturally, they would like to see India disintegrating, giving birth to numerous small States, dependent on the developed nations. Even the smaller neighbours of India would feel much more secure to have smaller nations around them in place of their 'big brother', India. The 'Operation Brahmaputra', allegedly masterminded by the CIA to destabilise the tribal areas of north-east and middle India, is no longer a secret today. The fact of the Naga insurgent leader...
Phizo getting political asylum in England is also known to all. The role of Pakistan in aiding and abetting Khalistani and Kashmiri militants is not difficult to prove either. But applying this 'conspiracy theory' to the case of Jharkhand is little difficult on account of its geographical location. One may question the role played by the Christian missionaries in the region since the middle of the nineteenth century; one may also legitimately express doubts about the source of the money spent by these missionaries and the ulterior motive behind their social reform programmes; but it is one thing to express doubt or apprehension regarding the involvement of foreign powers in a particular movement and it is totally different to prove beyond doubt such involvement. However, this is not to rule out the possibility of some external forces taking undue interest in the internal affairs of India. Even by provoking the people to claim a separate state within India and by instigating violence to achieve their goal, an imperialist power may very well succeed to put pressure on the Indian Government internally, forcing it to combat internal disturbances at the expense of development.

The second theory, namely, the 'Developmental theory', tries to explain ethnic discontent as a natural fall out of the development measures taken in the backward regions of our country. According to this theory, the tribal unrest in South Bihar is a result of a combination of several factors like the spread of education, rising aspirations, growing industrial and urban exposure, socio-political modernity and greater political participation of the people in the region. Thus, A.K. Singh has observed, 'Political
discontent and dissent are symptoms of growing political consciousness, rejection of economic exploitation and demand for democratic and human rights. In his opinion, increase in the levels of education and greater industrial or urban exposure lead to socio-political modernity which in its turn results in political discontent. This developmental theory underlines the homogenising effect of industrial and urban exposures as well as that of education on the tribals, helping them to unite for a common cause and ignoring in the process the differences that exist among various tribal groups.

But what is considered to be development of the region by successive governments both at the centre and state levels, has in fact, put the tribals under enormous pressure threatening their traditional economy and culture alike. They are not only turned into minorities in their own land but are deprived of whatever little benefits that accrue from these developmental measures.

Thirdly, some people have pointed towards economic exploitation as the root cause of tribal discontent. This 'exploitation theory', put forward by scholars like Ram Dayal Munda cites deprivation and backwardness of the tribal region vis-a-vis the developed areas in the neighbourhood as the main irritant in the tribal psyche. These theorists explain tribal unrest in terms of lack of developmental work in the fields of irrigation, electrification, road construction etc. and also emphasise issues like land alienation, job deprivation and atrocities on tribals as major factors leading to dissatisfaction. While no one can actually deny
the exploitation of the local people, mostly tribals, in the hands of the outsiders who have come to the region in the wake of industrialisation and modernisation processes, the mere existence of exploitation, however, does not necessarily lead to a movement. Objective conditions must fuse with the objective reality to create a situation of rupture.

Almost on the same line, Minz, Jones, Roy and others have described Jharkhand as an ‘internal colony’ of the developed regions of the land. According to this view, social inequality generated by the caste system, regional disparities in terms of developmental activities and economic unevenness with regard to employment and other opportunities have created a number of internal colonies within India of which Jharkhand is the most prominent one. Jones has even accused ‘the state of India’ of maintaining the underdevelopment of the tribals in the interest of the rest of the country. The imbalance between the outflow and inflow of rupees in the region, the discrepancy between the revenue collected from the region and the amount of money spent for its development only strengthens this viewpoint.

Interestingly, some scholars have even gone to the extent of describing ethnic movements as movements fabricated by the elites who want to perpetuate their hegemony over the common masses. Thus, for Brass ethnicity is not a given but a social and political construction – creation of elites. Gupta also holds that the manifestation of ethnicity in Indian politics is not so much an outcome of popular, grassroots passions, as it is a creation of
vested political interest. Thus, backwardness may itself become a vested interest. Exploitation of the tribals, their sense of relative deprivation provide dry gun powder to the tribal leaders to mobilise the masses for a violent agitation. It is these leaders who take away all the benefits that accrue from the developmental programmes at the expense of the backward people.

So far as the Jharkhand movement is concerned, it is difficult to prove the conspiracy of foreign powers behind the movement. It is not easy either to establish it as a direct fall out of the developmental activities taking place in the region, which are in fact, not much in evidence. On the contrary, one may refer to the lack of development in the region and the exploitation of the local people in the hands of the so-called 'colonisers' of the region as possible factors contributing towards the movement.

II

A close perusal of the nature and growth of the Jharkhand movement brings into light four basic issues instrumental in mobilising the peace loving people of this tribal belt in Central India, provoking them to raise their voice of protest against the subordination and injustice meted out to them by the outsiders. The issues are: a) Land and Forest Alienation; b) Migration; c) Cultural Identity and d) Underdevelopment.
Land and Forest Alienation:

One of the great sufferings endured by the tribals in the region for generations has been the alienation of their ancestral land of which they were masters from times immemorial. Land, to them, is a part of their socio-cultural heritage. The emotional ties with the land resulted from their belief that it contained the burial ground of their ancestors with whom they would be united after their death and the sacrificial grove where they propitiated their spirits. Thus, apart from providing economic security to the tribals, land serves as a powerful link with their ancestors. Naturally, loss of land is not merely a matter of economic deprivation to them; it amounts to an affront to their dignity, their 'izzat', a theme recurrent in subaltern perception.

Like land, forest is also intimately connected with tribal life and culture. This is reflected in terms like 'Vanabasi', 'Vanaputra', 'Vanajati', 'Girijan' etc., which in local languages refer to the tribals. Forest is a supernatural entity for them. It is the abode of the spirits, the place of worship and the seat of life cycle ceremonies including burial. So when a tribal enters the forest after the day break, he offers a twig to the presiding deity of the forest as a sort of oblation. The first fruit of the season is offered to the ancestral spirits along with other gods and goddesses. Even the tribal year begins with the blooming of the trees in the spring. Besides, forests occupy the central position in tribal economy as most of them draw their sustenance from forests.
Forest provides the tribals with food, fuel, fertiliser, fodder, farm implements and material equipments for family use. The Birhors of Purulia in West Bengal and Cheros of Palamau in Bihar sustain on hunting and food gathering. Rope making by the Birhors, bamboo basketry of the Mahalis, Deswali Majhis’ rearing of cocoons, gathering of lac by Munda, Santal, Kherwar and Chero tribes of both Bihar and West Bengal amply illustrate the importance of forests in tribal life. Besides, the need for leaves and twigs after birth and death and many other religious rites and rituals starting from 'sendra' or 'desh sikar' to the erection of 'mandap' or canopy for marriages, unmistakably point towards a symbiotic relationship between the forest and the tribal communities.

In a memorandum submitted to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in August, 1987 the Jharkhand leaders observed, "the land rights and ownership introduced by the British colonial power and adopted and implemented by the National Government after independence, the forest laws making land and forests as commodities for sale and purchase under the money economy and marketing system have enabled outsiders, money-lenders and the Government to grab adivasi land by fair or foul means." Even a high level study team of the Union Home Ministry, which toured the tribal belt of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas in 1975, admitted that "large scale usurpation of the adivasi land and non-availability of any dependable means of livelihood had contributed to the growing unrest among the tribals in the region."
In fact, transference of tribal land in the hands of the outsiders, especially money lenders and absentee landlords, started much before the advent of the British in the region. Alienation of land began as early as the fourth century A.D. and continued even during the reign of the Mughal rulers. In the 17th century jagirdari system was introduced by the Maharaja of Chotanagpur and a large number of Rajputs, Brahmans and Muslims started migrating to the region at the instance of the Maharaja who awarded them grants of lands or villages not as cultivators but as rent collectors. The situation further worsened with the arrival of the East India Company. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 introduced private proprietorship in land with no provision for any special right for the original reclaimers of land or the village functionaries. The zamindars' obligation to revenue payment was fixed in perpetuity with no restriction on their power of extortion of rent from the actual cultivators of land. The tribals suddenly found themselves relegated to the status of sharecroppers or agricultural labourers as they lost their land either through mortgage or outright sale through dubious means. Most of them, further, did not perceive the need for patta (title deeds) for the land. The non-tribals were quick to grab this opportunity and produced valid documents to prove their ownership over most of the arable lands in the region.

The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 and the Santhal Parganas Tenancy (Supplementary Provisions) Act, 1908 banned illegal transfer of tribal land and made the prior sanction of the Deputy Commissioner compulsory for transferring land *from an aboriginal to a non-
aboriginal*. But it was alleged in a report of the Bihar Tribal Research Institute that even legal provisions were discriminatory between the tribal and non-tribal buyers of land. While the tribals faced problems in getting permission from the Deputy Commissioner's office to purchase land from another tribal under Section 46 of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, for a non-tribal it was relatively easy to get possession of the land under section 49 of the said Act. Between 1959 and 1963–64, there were some 223 land alienation cases involving transfer of about 207 acres of land from tribals to non-tribals. It was not difficult for influential persons and big businessmen to get the necessary permission to purchase tribal lands at a nominal price. However, the easiest way of getting a tribal's land transferred was to acquire a compromise decree from civil courts in order to circumvent the provisions of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act.

With the opening up of the area to mining and industry, in the early years of the present/tribals were further uprooted from their ancestral land. Many of them became landless 'coolie' labourers working in their own land on poor wages. Even some were driven to begging. The Tata Iron and Steel Company, the Hindustan Copper Mines, the Indian Aluminium Company, the National Coal Development Corporation and many others came up one by one. With the launching of the Five Year Plans after independence, both the Central and state governments established heavy industries in and around Ranchi, Rourkela, Bokaro and Hatia. For setting up the Heavy Engineering Corporation alone, some seven hundred and ten tribal families were evicted from 6,341.91 acres of land. Few tribals were given land
(148.49 acres only) and majority of them were given compensation in cash which they were unable to count. During the First Five Year Plan, more than fifty thousand Scheduled Tribe families and ten thousand Scheduled Caste families in the Jharkhand region had to leave their home in order to make room for the construction of various public sector industrial projects.

Along with the big industries, ancillary industries were also developed, taking away more and more arable lands from the tribals. The need for power for these industrial units necessitated the construction of several irrigation and power projects across Koel-Karo, Damodar, Subarnarekha, Tenughat, Kangsabati and Chandrapura rivers. Construction of dams and hydro-electric power projects engulfed thousands and thousands acres of land without providing adequate compensation to the owners or making alternative arrangements for their proper rehabilitation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Project</th>
<th>Land Submerged or Acquired (in Lakh Acres)</th>
<th>People Displaced (in Lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. D.V.C.</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kangsavati</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Subarnarekha</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hirakud Dam</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dimna</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sitarampur Dam</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.55</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jharkhand MuktI Morcha's memorandum to the President of India, dated August 11, 1989, p 10.
Large scale mining further added to the woes of the tribals. More than 250 mines situated in the Kolhan region of the Singbhum district caused large scale displacement of the tribals from their ancestral land. Unplanned mining activities also had a serious bearing on the productivity of lands. It reduced the capacity of the soil to retain moisture and affected the tribal peasants adversely.

All these industries, mines, irrigation and power projects brought in their wake increasing urbanisation taking a heavy toll of land and forest areas. Thus the Chotanagpur - Santal Parganas belt which consisted of only thirteen towns in 1901, experienced an unprecedented growth of urban centres numbering thirty four in 1951 and ninety six in 1971. In Singbhum district alone, the number of towns jumped from four in 1931 to twenty four in 1981. Moreover, the existing towns of Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Singbhum and Dhanbad — all expanded into the surrounding countryside. In the past decade Jamshedpur has grown by 42 per cent, while Ranchi by 116 per cent and each has naturally encroached upon the rural areas around. Thus, the total urban population in the Jharkhand region increased from 13 lakhs in 1961 to 23 lakhs in 1971. In most of these urban areas the outsiders outnumbered the local people. In 1971, only 17% of the total urban population in the Jharkhand region belonged to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories. About 99% of the Santals still live in the rural areas and Oraons with around 5% of their population living in cities, the first position among the Scheduled Tribes as far as the degree of urbanisation is concerned.
Naturally, increasing urbanisation signify displacement of the tribals from their own land in increasing numbers.

The tribals, apart from being alienated from their ancestral lands, are also being denied of their traditional rights over forests day by day. Various legislations by governments both during the pre-independence and post-independence days have taken away sizeable portion of forest areas from the tribals in the name of 'scientific management of forests'. Clearing of forests much in excess of the actual requirements for mining and industry as well as unabated commercial exploitation of forests by unscrupulous forest officers and businessmen has reduced the forest areas in the region considerably. Even access to whatever is left is highly restricted. Such restrictions, interfering with the traditional rights of the tribals and alienating them from their natural environment, have made the tribals unhappy.

The erosion of tribals' rights over forests can be traced back to 1865 when a Forest Act was passed for the first time. This Act was subsequently replaced by Act VII of 1878 and Act XVI of 1927. In 1872, Lt. Governor Sir Richard Temple declared 36 square miles of forest area in the Damin-i-koh region as reserved. Government offices were opened for better management of forests. Felling of Sal trees was forbidden. In 1894 the British Government further asserted its rights over forests through a revised forest policy, (Resolution No.22-F, dated October 19, 1894) formulated in accordance with the suggestions made by a German expert Dr Voelcker. The policy imposed restrictions on 'the rights and privileges of...
In other words, according to the policy national interest was to take precedence over the individual interests of the local tribals. India's forest areas were divided into four groups: Reserved Forests, Protected Forests, Private Forests and Villages, Forests and Wastes. In case of the first two categories the rights of the local people now came under the strict supervision of the State.

In 1910, 192 square miles of forest area in the Santal Pargana region came under the supervision of the Government. The subsequent Bihar Private Forest Act of 1927 and the Private Protected Forests Act of 1949 gradually brought almost the entire forest area in tribal Bihar under State control. In the Chotanagpur region 54,000 acres of forest area were taken over by the Government in 1947 in the name of scientific management of forests. Though the affected families were promised of alternative arrangements for their survival they received nothing in reality. Moreover, the bureaucratic management of the forests by forest officials actually led to the depletion of the forest areas. It is argued that the government's approach towards social forestry though may have a bit of forestry in it, it lacked any social content. Plantation of mostly non-indigenous quick-growing trees like Eucalyptus, Teak etc. in place of traditional Sal or Mahua, for commercial gains, displaced lakhs of tribals, forcing them to seek employment in the urban industrial areas. The religious sentiment of the tribals was also hurt owing to the replacement of the sacred trees, thought to be the seat of their gods and goddesses. The alienation of the forest officials from the forest dwellers had a negative impact on the survival of the saplings planted by the forest department. It has been rightly
said that "no amount of trench digging or barbed wire fencing can be a substitute for social fencing which comes from people's participation."³⁰

Though the National Forest Policy of 1952 laid down its objective of steadily increasing the forest areas in the country in order to bring 33 per cent of the total land surface under forest cover the fact remains that the Jharkhand region was deforested more vigorously ever since the attainment of independence in 1947. According to one account, in the last quarter century or so, 0.67 lakh hectare forest areas have been destroyed in Bihar alone.³¹ Such large scale deforestation not only adds to the misery of the tribals but also leads to soil erosion, landslide and desertification upsetting the ecological balance of the region.

It is alleged by the tribals that though they are deprived of their traditional right to enjoy the forest products, unscrupulous forest officers, in collusion with the greedy timber merchants and the saw mill operators, are destroying forests indiscriminately and amassing huge wealth by selling precious trees, showing utter disregard to all government restrictions. It is further alleged that tribals today enjoy not more than five percent of the forest products ³² despite their symbiotic relationship with the forests. The committee constituted by the Union Home Ministry in September 1982 under the Chairmanship of B.K. Roy Burman admitted the importance of forests in tribal life. The Committee observed that after independence the forestry operations have more or less been taken as revenue earners for the state and the private sector,
In fact, felling a green tree is considered to be a transgression of norms in tribal societies. The tribals' use of forests for their own limited needs keeps its core intact, never resulting in large scale deforestation. While collecting fuel and fodder from the forests, the tribals are generally careful not to over exploit the forest resources as their own survival as well as that of their future generations depends largely on the existence of forests. Normally they use dry twigs or branches for their daily fuel needs. During special occasions like weddings etc. the village headman generally, allocates some dead and dry trees for consumption. Paradoxically, the nationalisation of forests has not only transformed timber contractors into transport contractors, it has also converted the forest dwellers into forest destroyers. The tribals are lured to fell trees illegally, in return for their much sought after wage labour. Thus, the existence of forests is not really threatened by the local people who alone have a vested interest in the very survival of forests. The government agencies would do well to involve the tribals in thwarting the onslaught on forests by greedy outsiders with commercial interests in mind.

b) Migration:

The people of Chotanagpur witnessed a steady flow of outsiders to their region ever since the days of the fourth Magbanshi King Pratap Rai in the fourth century A.D. Subsequent rulers even invited outsiders to settle in the region for military, religious and scholarly pursuits. Occasional military invasions and the resultant
changes in demographic patterns were also taken into their strides by the local people. The process continued till the Mighal period without much of a problem in evidence. Trouble began to appear on the surface when the indigenous people, apart from losing their ancestral lands, gradually became minorities in their own land and started losing their cultural identity and distinctive qualities as well. Rapid industrialisation and development of surface transport facilities under the British rule further facilitated immigrants, in increased volumes, to come and settle in the region. The steady influx of dikus and the gradual eviction of the local people resulted in a substantial decrease in the percentage of the tribals in the region upsetting the demographic balance altogether. This imbalance also resulted into a general hatred among the local people regarding the diku migrants. They were described as looters, trouble-makers and deceivers. In local parlance, diku personified all the vices in social life — 'the ousting cultivator, the usurer, the policeman, the process-server and the rent-collector — parasites all'. The hatred reached such a point that during the famine of 1866, the British officials were surprised to know that the starving Santals in the Chotanagpur region were refusing to accept the food distributed through the relief committees, as the food was cooked by the hated Brahmans.

Since independence the Chotanagpur region has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country in terms of population growth. The industrial cities of Panchi, Jamshedpur and Dhanbad and their peripheries have simply exploded with population. The influx of outsiders has just reversed the tribal - non-tribal ratio in the region over a period of thirty years. While the ratio was 60/40 in
favour of the tribals in 1951, it has just been reversed in 1981. Santal Parganas, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Dhanbad and Singbhum — all registered a decrease in tribal population between 1931 and 1991.

### Declining Percentage of Scheduled Tribes in Different Districts of Bihar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santal Parganas</td>
<td>42.90</td>
<td>41.50</td>
<td>44.67</td>
<td>38.24</td>
<td>36.20</td>
<td>36.79</td>
<td>31.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>20.84</td>
<td>20.06</td>
<td>17.45</td>
<td>19.24</td>
<td>19.10</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>18.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>13.81</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>62.72</td>
<td>69.73</td>
<td>60.47</td>
<td>61.61</td>
<td>58.10</td>
<td>56.41</td>
<td>53.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>15.10</td>
<td>11.08</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>8.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singbhum</td>
<td>54.08</td>
<td>52.94</td>
<td>44.94</td>
<td>47.31</td>
<td>46.10</td>
<td>44.08</td>
<td>42.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1991 figures of Santal Parganas actually include the figures of Deoghar, Godda, Sahebganj and Dumka; Hazaribagh includes both Hazaribagh and Giridih; Ranchi includes Ranchi, Lohardaga and Gumla while Singbhum includes East and West Singbhum.


In terms of numbers, statistics show that while in 1861 there were some 96,000 outsiders in the Bihar portion of the Jharkhand region, their number reached around 1,00,000 in 1891. Till 1921 the growth rate of immigrants, mostly from North and Central Bihar, was rather slow. But since 1939 the rate picked up and while in 1961 they
numbered around 10 lakhs, within two decades their number soared to more than 25 lakhs.

On the other hand, since the middle of the nineteenth century, thousands of tribals from the region have emigrated to far distant places like Punjab, Assam, North Bengal and even to Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The number of emigrants has steadily increased from 3,33,000 in 1891 to 9,47,000 in 1931. The Committee on Jharkhand Matters, constituted in August 1989 by the Central Government, in its report admitted that the tribal majority districts of Santal Parganas and Singhbhum have been turned into minority ones, owing to the influx of outsiders. Only the Ranchi district, in spite of a rise in its urban population, has retained its tribal majority status.

The industries and power projects established in the region needed some skilled personnel and therefore moving in of some specialists from other parts of the country was quite natural. But immigrants came in large numbers and flooded even those areas where no such specialised skills were needed. It is alleged that even the Government of Bihar encouraged people from the thickly populated North and South Bihar plains to migrate to the sparsely populated plateau region to effect a demographic balance.

This large scale influx of outsiders even from U.P. and West Bengal, not only deprived the local people of the newly created job opportunities but practically forced them to leave their own land in search for alternative ways of living. Thus Chotanagpur became a ready source of cheap labour for the rich peasants in Punjab, the tea gardens in Assam, the Metro Rail in Calcutta and for the mines and factories all over India.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>Emigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>96,000</td>
<td>3,33,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,79,000</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2,93,000</td>
<td>7,07,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3,07,000</td>
<td>9,47,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,07,000</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>not available</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>4,80,000</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>10,73,920</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>14,29,805</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These processes of both immigration and emigration not only made the tribals minority in their own land, they even found it increasingly difficult to get access to different industrial jobs and training facilities in the face of stiff competition from the people of the plains. Actually, it was the migrants who primarily gained from whatever little development that took place in the region. They entered the higher educational institutions, occupied most of the positions in the administrative services, grabbed the
skilled jobs in the industrial and commercial sectors and even did not spare the unskilled ones. According to the leaders of the Jharkhand movement, till 1971 only 24% of the total workers employed in different industries in Singbhum were Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes though they constituted around 50% of the population in the district. In the urban areas of the district, only 15.9% of the workers belonged to these groups. In a study of the Heavy Engineering Corporation, Ranchi, it was found that in one plant only 335 workers out of 4,284 were tribals. Thus, the immigrants, accounting for around 10% of the total population in the Jharkhand region, grabbed more than 50% of the industrial jobs at the expense of the local Jharkhandis. Even the well-intended policy of the government to provide reservations for the tribals in training and jobs under the public sector, has so far failed to reverse the trend.

Besides, it is argued that the Government's policy of nationalisation played havoc with the employment opportunities for the tribals. The case cited in favour of this argument shows that in a single week following nationalisation of coal mines in 1971, nearly 50,000 Jharkhandi miners lost their jobs and were replaced by people mostly from the Bhojpur region of Bihar. The tribals' confinement to temporary, lowly paid and unskilled jobs clearly points to the fact that apart from the lack of required skill and perhaps a preference for seasonal employment, tribals in general, are discriminated against the more accomplished and
privileged sections of the society. They are deliberately kept as a reserve workforce of cheap, segregated, unorganised labour in the interest of the industrialists and the business houses. Thus, while the officers come from North Bihar, their orderlies are Jharkhandis; though the contractors hail from outside, their labourers are recruited locally and though the professionals come from far distant places their maid servant's job is a monopoly for the Jharkhandis. These cases of discrimination, deprivation and disproportionate representation of the Jharkhandis are enough to create an ill feeling about the diku migrants which often comes into the open in the form of an agitation. The table below shows the low percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe workers in different industries of the Jharkhand region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industrial category</th>
<th>Total Number of workers</th>
<th>Number of SC/STs</th>
<th>Percentage of SC/STs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mining and Quarrying</td>
<td>2,50,104</td>
<td>79,912</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Industry</td>
<td>1,12,295</td>
<td>40,151</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than Household Industry</td>
<td>2,13,748</td>
<td>43,241</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>42,275</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>1,45,100</td>
<td>6,781</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport etc.</td>
<td>1,02,520</td>
<td>23,815</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>2,45,026</td>
<td>65,131</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Cultural Identity

Cultural pluralism is both strength and weakness for a multi-cultural society like India. While it helps the people to enrich themselves through interaction with diverse and often opposing cultural cross currents, it may also lead to a complex situation when opposing patterns of cultural behaviour meet each other headlong. Jharkhand denotes more than a geographical entity. With a distinct socio-cultural identity of its own, it differs from the cultural patterns of North and Central Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa or Madhya Pradesh. In fact, three major cultural streams viz. Proto-Austroloid, Mediterranean and Nordic, represented through various languages, have converged in the Chotanagpur Plateau, to create a cultural synthesis of its own kind.

A particular culture expresses itself through various symbols and values, which it cultivates, transmits and preserves through ages. In fact, symbols and values are the basic ingredients on the basis of which each culture builds up its own world — its universe — unique and perfect in its own perception but distinct from others. Culture is not a static phenomenon. It changes along with its symbols and values with the passage of time in a self-creative process as also under extraneous historical and ecological pressures. Such changes invariably disturb the natural harmony of a culture, sometimes temporarily and superficially but in others more enduringly and deeply. Cultural change, however, does not always lead to resentment. It depends on the extent or degree of
change as well as on the nature of the reaction of the people. But one thing is certain, no culture would like to deface its universe to the extent that it loses its own identity. An ‘identity crisis’ develops when the people of a region fail to identify themselves with their own culture, when they are considered inferior to an alien culture and when their own cultural symbols change under the influence of a dominant culture.

Over the years, tribal culture in the Chotanagpur region has attained a distinctiveness, marked by a close relationship between nature and man, egalitarianism in social structure, accommodative history, equal sharing of economy, thinking and a people oriented art and literature. Tribals differ among themselves on the basis of their genetic differences and different languages and customs. But a strong sense of separate identity as tribals cuts across the different groups and sub-groups among them. So long as these tribals maintain a safe distance from the people of the plains, they retain their identity and culture without much distortion. Thus, the Mundas in Chotanagpur have been able to maintain their traditional social structure and customs intact, as they are less accommodative in nature. But, most of the tribal societies today are neither isolated from the surrounding non-tribal societies nor are they free from the influences of urban values and dominant cultures.

Improvement in the transport and communication system has made the tribal societies more vulnerable to outside influence.
Contacts with the outside world have created a dilemma in the minds of the tribals. Neither they are being able to acclimatize to the urban and alien values, nor are they in a position to preserve and pursue their own traditional rites, rituals and customs. As a result the Oraons and Hos, for instance, are gradually losing their identity because of their accommodative nature and readiness to mix with outsiders. Similarly, the Bhumijes are almost on the verge of losing their identity under the influence of Hindu culture. In the process, tribal language, religion, customs and tradition are losing their purity and in some cases are being submerged under the influence of forces of modernisation.

Jharkhandis, generally, are worshippers of nature. But a large scale destruction of forests owing to rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and unscientific mining and the consequent social forestry schemes, planting mostly non-indigenous, quick growing trees, have adversely affected their life pattern and religious beliefs. Traditional tribal religions such as 'animism', 'sarna dharam', nature worship are gradually giving way to Christianity, Hinduism and others. Changes in adivasi food habits and festivals are also quite evident these days. Santals, for instance, are abstaining from beef - eating and seem to be less interested in celebrating 'Iteh Bapla', 'Mrbolok Bapla', 'Sanga Bapla' and 'Baha dor Bapla' (Bapla in Santali language means marriage) as a result of their close proximity with the neighbouring Hindu society. Possessing a very rich tradition
of their own, they are, thus, not only denying themselves of a rich protein diet but also sacrificing their age-old cultural heritage.

Besides, the tribal society, traditionally known for its egalitarian principles, is being divided, today, on communal lines. The hierarchical notions of caste and class are creeping in. Agriculture is made subservient to business and industry, literary and artistic pursuits are losing their participatory character and becoming more passive and observation oriented. What has embittered the tribals most is the gradual erosion of the tribal ways of life — replacement of collective farming and cooperative systems by alien values and discriminatory systems.

Outsiders have come and settled in the Jharkhand region through ages. They have changed the cultural patterns of the region and in the process have undergone changes themselves giving rise to a cultural synthesis of a new kind. Up to the Mughal period changes were gradual. External presence was felt only nominally and the new people were gradually absorbed into the tribal society. While the ethnic identities continued, channels of reciprocity were strong enough to make it possible for them to live in harmony. External pressure on tribal economy and culture became pronounced during the reign of the East India Company. Influence of Brahminical culture on tribal societies was quite in evidence during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Even 'Sati' was introduced in tribal societies where widow marriage was a socially recognised practice.
Inroad of capitalism in most of the tribal areas posed a serious challenge to the tribal way of life. The migrants coming to the region in the wake of industrialisation took the simplicity and sincerity of the tribal folk as their weakness and subjected them to various kinds of exploitation and social humiliation. Sexual exploitation of adivasi women by the dikus was an affront to the notion of honour and dignity, which figure prominently in tribal consciousness. All such incidents not only embittered the relation between the dikus and the local people, it also made the tribals apprehensive of the outsiders.

As a matter of fact, the tribals, unable to cope with the external pressures from all sides, are a frustrated lot today and as a natural consequence are developing marks of a negative identity for themselves. They are being branded by the 'civilised' world as 'lazy bum', good for nothing, drunk and criminal. Some tribals like the Lohas of West Bengal and sections of the Gond in Madhya Pradesh are even described as criminal tribes. Thus the notions of a noble, savage and a healthy tribe are fast becoming a myth. These signs of cultural degradation sometimes, generate a feeling of insecurity among the tribals, a fear of being swamped by the dominant, neighbouring culture which in its turn leads to a common psychology of identity assertion for their own survival.

d) Underdevelopment:

The Jharkhand region abounds in minerals and provides a substantial portion of India's total requirements in the field. Easy availability of coal, iron and other minerals led to rapid
industrialisation of the region. Though Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas comprise only 2.5 per cent of the total geographical area of our land, nevertheless, they account for more than twenty five per cent of the mineral wealth of the country. Fifty two per cent of copper deposits, fifty two per cent of mica, about forty nine per cent of coal and thirty eight per cent of total bauxite deposit of the country apart from huge deposits of iron are, uranium, asbestos, fire clay, manganese ore, nickel, kyanite, lead and zinc are to be found in the region. Quite naturally the Jharkhand region alone comprises one fifth of the public sector enterprises of the country. No less than fourteen large scale industries, with investments of crores of rupees, are scattered around the Singbhum district alone. These industries produce iron and steel, copper, aluminium, uranium, lead, mica, glass, cement and fertiliser which are essential as far as India's growth and all-round development is concerned. But if one takes into consideration the development of this region in particular, in terms of irrigation facilities, rural electrification, road construction, levels of literacy, unemployment and indebtedness of the local people or availability of medical facilities in the region, utter negligence of the concerned authorities becomes quite evident.

In the field of agriculture, the traditional shifting cultivation is discouraged without promoting any alternative system. No significant success has been achieved in reclaiming lands or in checking soil erosion. The age old irrigation system in this plateau region has more or less collapsed. But no alternative
arrangement has been made to help the hardworking farmers. As a result, only about five per cent of the total land area in the Chotanagpur region has irrigation facilities compared to around fifty percent in the rest of Bihar.\textsuperscript{57}

Though South Bihar contributes about seven per cent of the total electricity generated in our country and statistically the per capita consumption of electricity in the Jharkhand region is the highest within the country, paradoxically, the proportion of villages electrified so far in the region, is the lowest in the country. According to an account, not more than five per cent of the rural areas in South Bihar have electricity though it has reached around twenty per cent of the rural areas in the rest of the state.\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, while only around five kilometer road per thousand kilometers is paved in South Bihar, the corresponding figure in the rest of Bihar is twenty kilometers per thousand.\textsuperscript{59}

Moreover, literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes in the South Bihar districts is very low. Tribals can hardly take advantage of the meagre educational facilities available in the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Tribal Population</th>
<th>Number of Tribal Literates</th>
<th>Per-centages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>17,32,032</td>
<td>4,02,130</td>
<td>23.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singbhum</td>
<td>12,61,504</td>
<td>2,26,075</td>
<td>17.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal Parganas</td>
<td>13,67,838</td>
<td>1,80,765</td>
<td>13.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>3,51,432</td>
<td>51,818</td>
<td>14.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>1,92,777</td>
<td>27,739</td>
<td>14.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>1,98,792</td>
<td>24,643</td>
<td>12.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1981.
Inspite of constitutional provisions regarding reservation of jobs in the public sector for the tribals, they hardly benefit from such reservations as most of the training facilities in general education, engineering or medical spheres are cornered by the outsiders. Though thousands of new job opportunities are created as a result of rapid industrialisation and mining in the region, the displaced tribals are ignored when it comes to the question of recruiting people for these new posts. Thus the well-intended policy of the government to provide special protection for the weaker sections of the society through reservations, helping them to catch up with the privileged ones, is constantly being frustrated by vested interest groups. Dereservation of a post on the plea of non-availability of qualified tribal or low caste candidates, is a very common occurrence these days. Besides, non-tribals often deprive the genuine tribal candidates by acquiring fake certificates through various unscrupulous means.

Abject poverty and the resultant indebtedness are virtually inseparable from tribal existence. Money lenders, taking advantage of the illiteracy of the tribals, gradually turn them into paupers. Very often the debt extends from one generation to another and leads to various forms of forced and bonded labour. Tribals, moreover, are practically at the mercy of the middle men regarding the marketing aspect of their produce. These middle men, taking advantage of the distance of the collection centres of the Forest Development Corporation from the tribal villages, exploit the tribals by controlling the sale of 'Kendu' leaves or the 'Mahua' fruit collected from the forests. Though the tribals produce the best lac in the
world on the host trees, they are denied of a reasonable price at the prevailing market rate by the middle men. According to an account, almost sixty five per cent of the rural tribal population in Bihar existed below the poverty line in 1983 – 84. A survey of two rural blocks in Ranchi district has shown that two thirds of the tribal children under the age of five, suffered from malnutrition. Even medical facilities available in the South Bihar districts are much below the state average.

Thus, perpetual neglect of the people of this hilly terrain of South Bihar by successive governments in Bihar has created large scale discontent among the people which often comes into the open in the form of an agitation. The aggrieved tribals feel discriminated against the people from the plains of North Bihar. Lakhs of families have been uprooted from their ancestral land to make room for industries, mines, irrigation and power projects; millions have been deprived of their subsistence with the denudation of forests. But when it comes to the question of benefits from these developmental projects, the affected people hardly get their due share. Inspite of talks of modernisation and development, there is hardly any perceivable improvement in the life of the tribals.

Chotanagpur Plateau, enriched with minerals, forest and industrial products, though contributes almost seventy per cent of the total revenue collection in Bihar, only a paltry twenty per cent of it is spent in the region. Thus, it is alleged that the Jharkhand region is treated as a storehouse of resources, necessary for the development of the rest of the country.
The most disturbing feature of the developmental exercises in the region is that out of the meagre amount of money allotted to the region, only a small portion reaches the needy ultimately. While a significant amount of the money is lost while doing the paper work, a large portion of it is returned to the government every year, owing to non-utilisation of the money. Naturally, the tribals known for their sincerity and hard work, are sliding down the poverty line day by day. This slump is more than evident in the urban industrial centres, where more and more tribals are being sandwiched to the slum areas day by day.

The 'Task Force on Development of Tribal Areas' set up by the Planning Commission in April, 1972 while reviewing the tribal situation observed that in spite of investment in various ways by the state and Central Governments for tribal development in the successive plans, the problems of the tribals reflected in primitive methods of agriculture, land alienation, indebtedness, adverse effects of industrialisation, low rates of literacy, poor health and nutrition etc. have not been solved. In fact, it is found that the elites among the tribals tend to take away all the benefits accruing from the developmental programmes denying the more backward among the tribals the fruits of development.

Thus, land and forest alienation, migration, cultural subjugation and underdevelopment are the four major issues around which the Jharkhand movement revolves. But it will be wrong to
explain the movement simply in terms of these objective conditions in a backward society, ignoring the subjective perceptions in tribal mind altogether. In other words, the very existence of exploitation, deprivation or discrimination does not necessarily result into a protest movement. It is the feeling of relative deprivation, the fear of being outnumbered in their own land, the realisation of the perpetual neglect and the suspicion of losing one's own identity that lead to widespread discontent which is then channelised by the interested sections to culminate into a separatist movement.

In fact, for a proper understanding of the tribal discontent and to analyse the Jharkhand movement, one has to go deep into the tribal psyche. The socio-psychological roots of tribal - non-tribal rifts and local - outsider rivalry are to be understood. A widespread feeling of alienation among a large section of the people of Chotanagpur, both tribal and non-tribal, from the people of North and Central Bihar certainly make the task of the leadership much easier to mobilise the masses behind a separatist demand. The overall feeling of discrimination and injustice in the hands of an alien administration, the feeling of being ruled from above by outsiders create a congenial atmosphere that facilitates a movement for self-assertion and self-identity.
NOTES AND REFERENCES:


2. 'Operation Brahamaputra' was the name given to the CIA plot to destabilise the tribal areas of north-east and middle India. Allegedly masterminded by the U.S. representative to the U.N.O., Mrs Kirckpatrick, the scheme covered areas around the river Brahamaputra flowing through north-eastern India.


17. Ibid., p 402.
18. Ibid., p 402.
19. Ibid., p 402.
24. Ibid., p 128.

33. As mentioned by Datta P.K., op. cit., p 134.

34. Das Victor, op. cit., p 275.


40. Sarkar Shyamal, op. cit.


45. Munda Ram Dayal, op. cit., p 34.


47. Ghosh Arun, op. cit., p 137.


49. Munda R.D., op. cit., p 34.


54. Munda R.D., op. cit., p 34.


61. Ibid., p 7.

