

**TRIBE, ETHNICITY AND NATION :
A STUDY IN INTERRELATIONSHIP**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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1988



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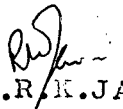


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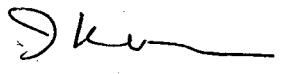
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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

In producing this dissertation I was helped by several people. I take this opportunity to acknowledge their invaluable contributions.

First, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. T.K. Oommen who initiated me into this fascinating field of study. His unflagging help, constructive criticism and timely guidance, as well as, his moral support were instrumental in the completion of this dissertation.

Among the many friends who helped me in the course of the work, special mention must be made of Satya and Amar without whose magnanimous and wholehearted support this dissertation would not have seen the light of the day. Their help was the driving force behind the eventual completion of this work. Butu's constant encouragement has been a great source of inspiration. I thank him for that. I take this opportunity to also thank Rabi Misra, Subrat Nanda, Himanshu Sadangi and Srinath who gave adequate support in terms of research materials. My sincere thanks are also due to Gayatri, Manas, Abani, Parija, Deba, Latu, Sarath and Sapan Bhai. The moral support of my floor-mates especially Tyagi, Durga, Balu, Selvam, Mohan and Ashok & Sharda is gratefully acknowledged.

I would like to specially thank the typist Mr. S. Ramu for his painstaking efforts in producing this dissertation. Finally, to Maa, for being by my side all these years.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION.

India is a multi-national and multi-ethnic state which was first united into a modern nation by colonial conquest. British rule unified the physically, socially culturally and economically diverse people into a modern nation-state. Like many modern nation-states India is plural, in the sense, that it has brought together people of different religious, linguistic and tribal backgrounds into one nation-states. / The major foci of ethnic loyalty in India today are, religion, language and tribe. Ethnicity is a product of interaction with and awareness of other groups. These ethnic loyalties are considered a problem because they often conflict with one another in the process of interaction. Such conflict arises because one ethnic group may feel threatened about its loss of identity. In such a case, an assertion of identity begins by the group which feels threatened. Since ethnicity arises out of interaction, the assertion of identity by the ethnic group is vis-a-vis the other groups, that it comes into contact with. The aim of the ethnic group is the search for an identity and a demand that this identity be acknowledged. It is the social and cultural assertion of a people who have been suppressed, in the process of interaction, by other groups or by a

hegemonistic mainstream. Ethnicity thus arises out of the conquest of a people by another.)

Many of India's ethnic groups, especially those concentrated in compact territories are nations or possess the potential of growing into nations. A territorial referent is a necessary component of the idea of 'nation'. This territorial referent becomes the basis for claiming political autonomy. A territorial base is not a precondition for the existence of ethnic groups. A nation on the other hand has a given geographic area and seeks to achieve self-government in that area. In a multi-national country like India, national boundaries are not congruent with the people inhabiting it. As a result of it many a time, a nation has been dissolved into an ethnic group. The tribals in many regions, who have claims to a geographical territory are often grouped into states which are not contiguous with their territories. Together, with this political displacement there also operates cultural oppression by the cultural mainstream. The tribals are thus rendered into ethnic groups. It is argued that since the various tribes inhabiting a contiguous geographical territory are not similar in terms of language, they cannot form a national group. The tribes thus live as marginal

cultural groups.

There is a search for a common unifying force among the tribals. (Using race as a basis for ethnicity the tribals living in contiguous geographical territories are seeking to unify themselves as a national group.) Moreover, it is argued, that cultural separatedness from the mainstream gives the tribals a distinct identity. This separateness is sought to be the force for creating a pan - tribal identity. This pan-tribal identity can transform into national identity with political economy. Contacts with non-tribal cultures has enhanced cultural differences and there is an awareness of a collective self-identity. This inter-relation between tribal and ethnic identity becomes the basis for nationalist aspirations amongst the tribals. When there is an awareness of being a nation the demand for political autonomy may range from separatism (i.e, seeking autonomy within the nation-state) to secessionism (ie. seeking autonomy outside the nation-state.) There is thus an interrelation between tribe, ethnicity and nation.

In the present study we are interested in studying the interrelation between tribe, ethnicity and nation in Jharkhand and Nagaland. The Jharkhand demand for an autonomous state within the Indian Union is an example of separatism, whereas, the demand for an autonomous sovereign Nagaland is an example of

secessionism. In both places, there is an assertion of tribal identity arising out of interaction with different people. Such interaction reduce the tribals into marginal groups, inspite of their having geographical claim over the territories. The tribals have reacted by seeking a pan-tribal identity as the basis for nationality.

In Jharkhand, the tribals are dispersed over the four states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Initially the demand of the tribals was non-interference in their culture, land and tribal rights. There was a search for a tribal identity which was under the threat of erosion. The tribals sought to unite themselves and foster a pan-tribal identity among the various tribes of Chotanagpur. The search for a pan-tribal identity was to counter the social, economic and cultural oppression unleashed by the outsider-exploiters. A common ethnic identity was used to unite the tribals. The change in demographic composition forced the tribals to open their organisations, is non-tribals. Though there is a new basic of identity in Jharkhand today, it is still essentially tribal to the core. The demand for autonomous statehood is an expression of the urge for self-determination by the Jharkhandis. The search is for a Jharkhand where economic and cultural oppression will be absent. Jharkhandi nationalism has grown out of the oppression unleashed by the exploiters.

In Nagaland, inter-tribal unity and cultural separatedness gave the Nagas the idea of being a nation. At the dawn of Indian independence, the expansionist Indian State threatened to overwhelm the Naga culture and Naga people. The Nagas argued that they were never a part of India and sought to secede from India. The Indian Government denied a distinct Naga identity saying that the Nagas were spread over many tribes and had no special identity. The Nagas sought inter-tribal unity and a using a distinct use of history and culture to create a national identity. Naga nationalism grew out of this sense of distinct origin and culture. The inter-relationship between tribalhood and nationality is sought to be studied in chapter on the Naga National movement.

In both the movements, the interrelationship between tribe, ethnicity and nation is sought to be studied in an effort to locate the historical and sociological basis of nationality in Jharkhand and Nagaland. An effort is made to study the emergence of a separate identity and the subsequent growth of national consciousness among the adherents of the two movements. In both instances the upsurge of nationalism is animated by a powerful motive - the urge of self-determination and the will to live and develop as distinct nationalities.

C H A P T E R - I

NATIONS, NATIONALISM, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS;

A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

NATION, STATE AND NATIONALISM:
CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS.

Great confusion is caused by the fact that the word 'nation' is used in many senses and a great variety of tendencies have been associated with the term. The word has a long history and its meaning has undergone a considerable process of evolution. While some writers have admitted, albeit grudgingly, that "no scientific definition of a nation can be devised"¹, all have acknowledged that the phenomenon has existed and exists. We shall elaborate in the light of such observations. Originally, nation meant a backward tribe. Civilized peoples of Greece and Rome called themselves gens or populus. At the beginning of the Middle Ages the word nation was used in Germany and France to designate the higher ruling class in opposition to the volk or people. The chieftain of an Irish class was called "captain of his nation".² The meaning of the word gradually evolved in Western usage and came generally to refer to a free, self-governing people constituted as a State. The nation, writes Emerson, is:

"a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of common heritage and that they have a common destiny for the future,"³

Most definitions of a nation are based on criteria such as territory, language, religion, race, historical rights, natural frontiers or economic interests. A widely known work is that of Stalin who identifies the four characteristics as - (1) a common language, (2) a common territory, (3) a common economic life and (4) a common psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.⁴ Modern usage identifies nation with a people constituted as a state. In this view every nation forms a state and every citizen a member of a state. But this is an exclusively legal definition and disregards factual inequalities. Many states were, or are composed of different nations and nationalities.⁵ An individual may legally belong to a state without feeling a part of it. The moving force in modern history, however, is not the legal concept of nationality but the social force of national consciousness⁶ or national sentiment without which there is no nation. National consciousness is the product of varied historical experience which is seldom same for every

nation. Common experience leads to the formation of national consciousness. This common experience is based on sharing a common territory, common language, common religion, common race, common economic life and common history. "A nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation or behave as if they formed one"⁷ and national consciousness is this belief that the group holds. Yet, the mere will does not make a nation; it cannot be founded like an association or company. The will has to be supplemented by an indispensable factor - the national territory without which it is not a full-fledged nation though it may possess unity, solidarity, mutual sympathy and the wish to live under a government of its own.⁸ The nation, then, is not only a community of brethren imbued with a sense of common destiny. It is also a community which, in contrast to others such as family, caste or religious body, is characteristically associated with a particular territory to which it lays claim as the traditional national homeland. "The emotional and intellectual tie in the minds of men is buttressed by a location in space which anchors the nation with a permanence on the face of the earth."⁹ Of the many elements that are

essential to the creation of a nation, those that appear insistently are language, territory, common historical tradition, a national consciousness and intricate inter-relation between state and nation. A nation arises when some or all of these elements combine to create a mutual sympathy among its adherents. The concept of the state, as well as, the distinction between nation and state now needs some elaboration.

Around the turn of the century Lord Acton stated that "a State may, in course of time, produce a nationality, but that a nationality should constitute a state is contrary to the nature of modern civilization."¹⁰ But the nation slowly became the principle of state formation and the legitimiser of the state. Today, the nation seeks to take over the state as the political instrument through which it can protect and assert itself.¹¹ But, this is not to say that every state is a nation or that all sovereign states are national states. Such an belief has done much to complicate human understanding of political realities.

A state is a legal and political organisation with the power to require obedience and loyalty from its citizens through its monopolised usage of legitimate

physical force.¹² A nation is a community for people whose numbers are bound together by a sense of solidarity a common culture, a national consciousness. The state, as is used today, is a modern development, but since, in modern times, it is the "most significant form of organisation of men and embodiment of the greatest concentration of power, it is inevitable that there should have been, and should still be, a great revolutionary struggle to secure coincidence between state and nation."¹³ And as nations matured themselves into states on the principle of one nation - one state¹⁴, "a new socio-political formation emerged and the hyphe-nated term nation-state came into vogue."¹⁵ The term Nation-State is an expression of an ideal type which seeks a coincidence of common culture and territory of residence. It refers to a politically organised society which has historically enjoyed a legitimate claim to independent existence.¹⁶ But the term nation-state is an expression of

"a process, and it is possible and historically true that the process can be reversed. Not only that a nation can be constituted into a state, but a state can dismantle and destroy nations. Further, a state can create a new nation. It seems, the eclipse of the nation as a cultural entity is almost complete and it has invariably come to mean a political entity";¹⁷

i.e., possessing a legal, formal state structure. States can moreover, exist without a nation or with several nations among their subjects.. A nation can be co-terminous with

the population of one state or be included together with other nations within one state or be divided between several states. There are some nations which are much older than most states that exist today and most states today envelop a variety of political structures. Oommen¹⁸ illustrates elaborately the variety of situations represented by nation - states:

1. One-nation, one state-an ideal type, the possibility of its recurrence being quite remote. Japan, however, approximates.
2. Parts of different nations come to constitute a state for geo-political reasons (e.g. Switzerland).
3. One nation is divided into two (or more) states for ideological reasons (e.g. Germany, Vietnam & Korea).
4. Part of a nation is constituted into one sovereign state and the remaining part is attached or affiliated to another sovereign state (e.g. Bangladesh and West Bengal in India).
5. A nation may be divided into two sovereign states and constitute parts of them along with other nations (e.g. Indian Punjab and Pakistan Punjab).
6. A number of nations come to constitute a state (e.g. India and the Soviet Union).

7. A set of immigrants drawn from a multiplicity of nations constitute a state (e.g., the U.S.A.).

By explicitly showing the intricate inter-relationship between nation and state, Oommen clarifies in the process that, the nation and state need not be coterminous and that the term nation-state is largely a misnomer. But if, and when the nation "achieves its full realisation in the form of a sovereign state, this double-base of spirit and soul emerges in a perplexing and often dangerous contradiction which lies embedded at the heart of the national concept."¹⁹ The state exercises its will over all people within its boundaries but the nation is unlikely to be confined within the state borders nor always be coterminous with the state; the 'national liberation', 'sub-nationalist' and irredentist movements in most states all over the world are the political expression of such disparity.

What then is the crux of a nation? A 'nation' might have a state and well-defined territory and yet lack the substance of nationality. The substance of nationality is national consciousness, without a sufficient measure of which there is no nation. National

consciousness is the feeling of mutual sympathy born out of the common experience of sharing a common territory, language, history, race, common economic life etc. Such common experience leads to the formation of a community of will in which the idea of a nation is dependent. The nation, then, is what Anderson says, "an imagined community".²⁰ Having stated this, we are now in a position to examine the concept of nationalism.

Nationalism has been one of the greatest motivating factors in the modern world. It is a concept in which the loyalty and allegiance of the individual are held to be due primarily to the nation and there is a desire of the people to be united as a sovereign states. It arises ultimately from some sort of national identity, or, as we are more apt to see, it is the search for such an identity. Nationalism "is a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state."²¹ It is, what Gellner conceives, "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or a movement can be best defined in terms of this principle."²² Elsewhere Gellner strongly posits for the merger of culture and

polity saying that nationalism is "to endow culture with its own political roof and not more than one roof at that."²³ It is a state where "the fusion of will, culture and polity become the norm."²⁴ But, when does this take place? Societies, says Gellner, move through three distinct phases: pre-agrarian, agrarian and industrial. Nationalism is most likely to emerge in the industrial age. The political principle and sentiment of nationalism is not natural but a product of the industrial age, a complex historical destiny towards which every society inevitably evolves. This view of Gellner is untenable because many nations are agrarian.

Benedict Anderson, having given us the idea that the nation is an 'imagined community' says that nationalism is a new form of imagination which does not merely awaken nations to self-consciousness but "invents nations where they do not exist."²⁵ Nationalism, argues Anderson, should not be grouped with the ideologies such as liberalism, socialism and fascism but rather, approached as a phenomena belonging to the genre of kinship, community and religion. But, what makes this new form of imagining possible? To Anderson it was "a half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between a system

of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print) and the fatality of human linguistic diversity."²⁶ The printing of books in large numbers, apart from giving profits to the capitalists, made the vernacular literature easily available and popular. Print-language, says Gellner, laid the basis of national consciousness in three ways: it unified the field of knowledge, brought a new fixity to language and it created languages-of-power quite different from the old language. "It gave a new fixity to language which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation."²⁷

That there are diverse approaches to nationalism shows the complexity of the phenomenon. Much of the diversity results from the fact that scholars approach the problem from varying ideological positions. The forms in which nationalist ideology manifest themselves are to a large extent determined by the cultural and social milieu of the societies in which they emerge. Its nature varies from place to place depending on the historical situations in which it surfaces and develops.

and develops. Nationalism has played the role of a liberator in many colonial countries of Asia and Africa and even today is the force behind which many oppressed nationalities really. Many a time, nationalism played a vital part in economic reconstruction, as in Japan. As historical evidence show, nationalism is would up in a interplay of various social forces operating in a historical situation. Nationalism thus "can be, and has been democratic or authoritarian, forward looking or backward looking, socialist or reactionary."²⁸ Nationalism, then, should be defined as, what smith says, "an ideological movement, for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential "nation" like others."²⁹ In an effort to free the concept from ideological straight-jackets, Breuilly talks of nationalism as a form of politics whose objective is to obtain and use state power. Nationalism is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such arguments with nationalist argument, which is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions: (1) there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character, (2) the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values and (3) the nation

must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.³⁰

Historical occurrences as well as contemporary happenings point that the study of nationalism can be conceived in the realm of movements. The movement is the vehicle of expression of the idea of nationalism. By conceiving of it as a movement we can both operationally define it and fruitfully compare it and thus lend methodological precision to the study of nationalism. A nationalist movement the is "an organised collection of individuals putting forward demands and pursuing activities designed to promote self-rule, integration for the group which they conceive to constitute the 'nation'."³¹

This view is clearly indicative of rule by a colonial power and nationalism is what arises when there is an effort to win self-rule and gain the right to self-determination by the oppressed people. Nationalism as a doctrine in colonial countries, especially Africa and Asia is the yearning for a firmly rooted identity which has always been 'there' but which has been forgotten or abandoned or is being threatened by forces which impinge upon traditional

authority and cultural values. In this encounter with an oppressive culture, a 'nation' is relegated to a position of inferiority and reduced to the status of a non-entity. The base of nationalism is its insistence on the importance of a special cultural group identity as the bedrock of political claims and action. To sum up, nationalism should be treated as a complex of ideas and sentiments which respond flexibly to new situations. It is basically the belief that each nation has the right and duty to constitute itself as a state.

Ethnicity and Nationalism:

What have been designated as tribes and tribal groupings in Africa and Asia are labelled as ethnic groups, nationalities and national communities in Europe and North America. Consequently, it is necessary to develop a common conceptual scheme for the study of ethnicity, ethnic identity and the spirit of regional nationalism.³² We shall begin by trying to see the various ways in which ethnicity has been conceived. Two views predominate regarding the nature of ethnicity. Summing up these views Richmond writes that while one

emphasizes the ascriptive or primordial, nature of ethnic group membership and the importance of early socialisation and primary group membership. The other insists that ethnicity is situationally defined, that ethnic group boundaries are malleable and permeable and that ethnicity may be acquired or divested at will.³³ Ethnicity, writes parson, is a primary focus of group identity, that is, the organisation of plural persons into distinctive groups and second of solidarity and loyalty of individual members to such groups.³⁴ / Ethnicity according to Segal has three components: (1) a combination of factors from among phenotype, faith, language, origin at population concentration in a given region, clustered over time and passed from generation to generation, must serve to demarcate a given collectivity, (2) the members of the collectivity must also share a sense of solidarity, a common subjective identification focussed around the above-mentioned factors, that serve as centre-point and expression of their sentimental attachment to one another and (3) a purported ethnic group must be in contact with one another in the same society so that the difference between the two allow the members of each to view members of the other as outsiders. // The subjective sense of ethnicity depends

on interaction.³⁵ Ethnicity is thus used to denote the character or quality of an ethnic group. The ethnic group may be defined as a group of individuals "with a shared sense of peoplehood, based on presumed shared socio-cultural experience and/or similar physical characteristics. Such groups may be viewed by their members and/or outsiders as religious, racial, national, linguistic and/or geographical. What the ethnic group members have in common is their ethnicity or sense of peoplehood which represents a part of their collective experience."³⁶ This is a group where members have, with respect to their own sentiments and those of non-members, a distinctive identity, which is rooted in a distinctive sense of its history. They are further a "diffusely defined group"³⁷ where members are characterized by what they are rather than what they do.

A distinctive sense of history is the core of the groups identity and of its sense of uniqueness. For an ethnic group to exist, there must not only be a widespread sense of belonging and recognition of otherness by members and outsiders but also distinctive cultural attributes traceable ultimately to the fact of a separate group history and origins. "Ethnicity is the

sense of belonging, the submersion of the self in something that transcends self, the "we-ness" of of heritage and ancestry."³⁸ / In a different tone, Barth posits that ethnic groups arise and persist by virtue of "boundary creation and maintenance", social processes that members of the group consciously and actively participate in and help to determine and ethnicity is that dimension of corporate identity that exists independently of customs, beliefs or institutions.³⁹] But, an ethnic group cannot shed its cultural dimensions and retain its identity. Its identity must have an anchor which is provided by a belief in common and distinctive group origins and a sense of unique history. The ethnic group then is, as Smith sums up, "a social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim a common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more distinctive characteristics and feel a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity."⁴⁰ /

In a recently written paper Oommen notes the caution that should be exercised in using the concept ethnicity, which is rather un-suited in its applicability in the new nations. Ethnicity, argues Oommen,



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being "a product of conquest, colonization and immigration implies dislocation from one's original country, region or nation; it is the rupture between territory and other primordial attributes which creates ethnicity."⁴¹ What merits attention then "is the process through which a nation dissolves into an ethnic group or an ethnic crystallizes into a nation"⁴² or nation-state. "Ethnic, nation and state should be viewed in a processual relationship. When an ethnic acquires legitimate claim over a territory it becomes a nation and when a nation secures political jurisdiction it becomes a state."⁴³

The point of departure for our study is the ethnic group at the point when it begins to assert itself either or an active factor in an existing political structure or as a challenge to such a structure. It is at this point that we refer to the ethnic group as a nation. At this point, the ethnic group exceeds purely local dimensions and becomes significant in the political sphere. What is central to the linkage between political legitimacy and ethnic identity is the concept of self-determination. Self-determination "is the right of a group of people who consider themselves separate and distinct from others to determine for themselves the

state in which they will live and the government it will have."⁴⁴ Today, the right of self-determination has come to inspire ethnic communities all over the world to what Connor designates "Ethno-nationalism."⁴⁵ Ethnic nationalism must be subsumed under the broader canvas of nationalism and nationalistic movements. Ethnic nationalism must also be distinguished from the politicization of ethnicity; this is done by having a territorial referent in the former case. Though there are many paradigms to explain the growth of ethnic nationalism,⁴⁶ what is central to them is the right of self-determination. Ethno-nationalism is the search for, and expression, (within a state) of particular ethnic, cultural, regional or linguistic autonomy. In most contemporary movements seeking to achieve ethnic autonomy, there is an effort to enhance cultural, linguistic, religious, geographical and economic autonomy within specific states. Such tendencies may be referred to as separatism and can be treated as a sub-category of nationalism. Such separatist movements may range from autonomy within the state to outright independence and claim for statehood. The sociological distinction between ethnic group and nation are hard to maintain for they often overlap. A territorial reference is a necessary component of the idea of a nation. A historical association with a certain

certain place is a necessary condition for the growth of a nation. A territorial base is not a necessary condition for the existence of ethnic groups. Members of an ethnic group may retain their connections with each other, in a variety of networks and associations despite the absence of a shared territory.

Nationalism does not always involve aspirations for complete independence or statehood. But some degree of political autonomy is involved. The exercise of ethnicity as a political principle is not necessarily nationalistic. An ethnic group when politically mobilized can have different goals. There may include the right to franchise, the achievement of special status for particular languages.⁴⁷ 'Nationalist' movement may also establish such claims but go further in seeking to achieve some political autonomy within a given area. Nationalism implies increasing that autonomy. Ethnic nationalism or ethnonationalism is only one particular form of nationalism in general.

The whole crux of ethnonationalism then is, the search for political autonomy based on special cultural identity. It is the assertion, by the ethnic community, of the right to 'national' self-determination.

The Study of Social Movement:

Plea for a Theoretical Framework.

The term social movement denotes a wide "variety of collective attempts to bring about a change in certain social institutions and to create an entirely new social order"⁴⁸; they are "socially shared activities and beliefs directed towards the demand for change in some aspect of the social order."⁴⁹ Social movements need not always demand change. After they arise to restrict changes that may be going on in a particular social order. The term first came in to use early in the nineteenth century with a very specific meaning: the social movement meant the movement of the new industrial working class with its socialistic, communistic and anarchistic tendencies. Today, this shallow definition is no longer tenable in view of the peasants' and farmers' movements, of National Socialism, of Nativism, of backward and depressed classes, of ethnic minorities and of the independence movements.

The conventional approach to the study of social movements has been a "historical and philosophical study of their ideas or theories. They were interpreted and analysed as if they were systems of philosophy;

they were submitted to critical evaluation in terms of empirical truth, logical consistency and ethical standards. Not much attention was paid to the meaning of these ideas, to the masses of people who constituted the movement nor to the social structure of these groups, nor to other problems of sociological relevance.⁵⁰ Few studies of specific social movements have been concerned with the development of a theoretical framework; most studies have been motivated by the researchers' interest in particular social issues and philosophies."⁵¹ Mukerjee suggests certain premises for the study of social movements and social change: (1) Social movements are essentially related to social change and therefore to social structure, (2) social movements are a product of the social structure and hence emerges out of certain conditions in the social structure, (3) social movements have consequences for the social structure of which they are products and (4) social movements themselves have a recognisable structure in terms of which they are rendered functional-relative to their goals.⁵² It is pertinent to remember that the characteristics of society shape the ethos and style of movement. A frame of reference for a study of movements comprises of its historical background, its social basis and organisation, its

ideologies including its objectives, strategies etc., and response patterns of other social groups in society to the movement. A frame of reference further should take into account the structural conditions under which movements emerge⁵³ and correlate it with its ideology and identity, its mobilization, organization and leadership and social consequences.

As a first step, movements have been classified with a view to clarify its various dimensions. Rao distinguishes between three levels of structural changes and pursuantly three types of social movements Reformist, Transformative and Revolutionary. Reform movements bring about partial changes in the value system, transformative movements aim at effecting middle level structural changes and revolutionary movements seek to bring about radical changes in the totality of social and cultural systems.⁵⁴ Oommen classifies movements as charismatic, ideological and organisational: (1) the emergence of a charismatic leader who promises to mitigate the evils at hand and lead the people to a future utopia, (2) crystallization of a new ideology which champions the cause of the deprived and (3) establishment of a new organisation

to deal with the problem at hand.⁵⁵ Mukerjee classifies movement based on the quality of change into accumulative alternative and transformative.⁵⁶ While accumulative changes are intra-systematic, the latter two are systemic changes. For the purposes of our study, in which we seek to study the nature and effect of primordial collectivism on the process of nation-building in India, the classification should take into account what Oommen proposes: (1) the basis of group formation and (2) the nature of goals.⁵⁷ On the first criteria Oommen categorises groups as biological (sex, race, age-groups), civil (workers, peasants, students, professionals) and primordial (regional, linguistic, religious and caste groups). By primordial is meant, an attachment that seems from assumed "givens".⁵⁸ This givenness is a product of a particular social practices. In many societies such ties are lifted to the level of political supremacy and is the force behind demands for political autonomy. On the second criteria Oommen categorises movements as instrumental-seeking re-allocation of wealth and power and symbolic-seeking re-definition of status and privilege. Movements may pursue one of them or combine both.

The study of social movement is a treacherous endeavour where passion and prejudice blur our objectivity. The sociology of movements should look into

historical events, organisation, leadership, communication, strategy, ideology and participation aspects of the movements. Any attempt at understanding a movement must consider what it means to the participants and supporters and should aim to study the movement with, what Commen says, "a view from within." 59

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CHAPTER - II

THE JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

BACKGROUND : A HISTORY OF DISCONTENTMENT.

The predominant notion that Chota Nagpur Plateau in Eastern India was cut off from the mainstream of Indian civilization until a few centuries ago, is largely a product of colonial historiography which placed unfamiliar cultures outside the mainstream. Such misconception is untenable in light of the historians' findings about early migration and settlements together with the major historical changes that have taken place in Chotanagpur plateau.

The Jharkhand region (literally meaning a tract of forest) initially comprised the whole of chotanagpur plateau. Known as 'Khukra' before British take-over, Jharkhand was designated as 'Ramagarh Hills Tract' in 1780 and renamed as South-West Frontier Agency in 1833². Sporadic upheavals of 1811, 1818, 1820, 1832 necessitated administrative changes and the South-West Frontier Agency was renamed as Chotanagpur Division in 1854. In 1874, with a view to segregating the tribes into special areas where their lives and interests could, supposedly, be adequately protected, tribal areas were designated as 'Scheduled Districts'. When the freedom movement gained momentum, the anxious British administration wanted to isolate the tribes from the national mainstream. The Simon Commission suggested that on financial and constitutional grounds, the administration of tribal tracts should be entrusted

to the centre. Simon Commission thus brought further administrative changes and the Chotanagpur division was declared as partially Excluded Areas' in 1930. More changes were to come with independence and the Government of India, in 1950, redesignated the area as 'Scheduled Area's and Set up a Tribal Advisory Council.³

In the colonial phase of nineteenth century, there had sparked off a wave of migration resulting in the influx of dikus (aliens, outsiders) and diku-peasants into Chotanagpur. Conditions change with outside influence; in the initial stages external conquest reduced tribal lands and chiefs to tributaries, later, British rule ushered in colonial transformation of tribal economy initiating thereby new production relations. In post-independent India, expanding urbanisation and industrialization has opened the gates for job-seekers and workers and this has resulted in extreme exploitation and virtual alienation of the original tribals. Each historical change is marked by an influx of non-tribal communities into Chotanagpur. Such influx climaxed with the imposition of zamindar-raiyat relationship.⁴ The result was that "monetization developed with the introduction of the new system of taxation and commutation of feudal dues and service into rent. A new class of non-tribal middlemen, the dikus, emerged to meet the demand for money. The communal land system broke down."⁵ As a result, the forces

unleashed by such changes culminated with the tribes being divided into, (a) a statement body of peasants in the 'privileged occupancy' categories, (b) a proliferating mass of small farmer and landless labourers and (c) an emerging industrial proletariat.⁶ An analysis of the term 'diku' shows that no undisputed definition is available. The dikus initially meant a group of 'outsider-exploiter' and the connotation varied from time to time depending on the local and temporal characteristics of the exploiters. Generally speaking the term used to mean originally the zamindars or their employees who were non-tribals, mostly Bengalis, when the Chotanagpur area was a part of Bengal province. Later the term Diku came to mean non-tribals of the upper class. Subsequently the term included outsiders who earn their living here and send their earnings out to their own homes."⁷ The term Diku has consolidated to mean as outsiders-exploiter in a purely xenophobic terms.

Against this background of illegal deprivation of the tribesmen's rights on land and exactions by tax collectors, landlords, British the discontentment

erupted into insurrection and "restorative rebellions"⁸ aimed at restoring autonomy of economy, culture & social organisation. K.L.Sharma⁹ lists the main insurrection between 1765-1857 as (1) The Rajas of Dalbhum 1779-71; (2) The Cuar Tribe of Midnapur 1799; (3) The Bhumij Chuar of Nanbhum, Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas 1795-1880; (4) The Kols, Hos and Mundas of Chotanagpur 1831-32 and (5) The Santhals of Bihar 1855-56. The tribal insurrections of the late 18th century and early 20th century were an outcome of exploitation by dikus and alienation of land by non-tribals. The later 19th century and 20th century movements like the Kharwar rising of Santhals 1871, Sardar agitation of 1889-90 and Tana Bhagat were "revivalist"¹⁰ in character. The Birsa Movement was motivated by the explicit desire for economic liberation from zamindars and British. The Birsa movement was organised with "ethnicity and religiosity as the basis of mobilization and involvement of the people in it."¹¹ Birsa Munda rose as a prophet and preached a new religion to reverse the cultural and economic subordination that Mundas had been subjected to by alien rule. The charismatic Birsa, claiming to be 'Dharti Aba' (Father of the world) and Bhagwan (the supreme God),¹² used religious and messianic means to mobilise the masses and achieve the economic and political goal of a Munda Raj. The

British suppressed the movement ruthlessly and the movement died down with arrest and subsequent death of Birsa.

The Tana Bhagat movement started by Oraons in 1902 and emphasizing Kuruka Dharma (Dharma of Oraons) was not just a religious movement but a "product of economic pressure, oppression and deprivation of land."¹³ The new faith sought to empower, through the worship of Dharmas and following of certain prescribed patterns of behaviour, the will to fight oppressive zamindars, money-lenders and new land laws and thereby restore the Oraon Golden Age.¹⁴ The movements of Jatra Bhagat, Sibu Bhagat, Julaha and Arwa Bhagat, Tana Bhagat all aimed at such restoration. But the point behind these movements is not to be missed—they were not just isolated insurrections, but **phases** in the efforts of Chotanagpur tribes to unburden themselves of the injustices they were subjected to by non-tribal immigrants who usurped their tribal rights and tribal autonomy. Together with these uprisings another development taking place in Chotanagpur was the advent of Christian missionaries which brought in the wake opportunities for education, employment and economic improvement. Christianity gave the tribes a sense of identity, "a history and myth, it also emphasised a sense of separateness from others."¹⁵

The ferment of the past matured into a separatist movement in the early 20th century with the establishment of the Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj (Chotanagpur Improvement Society) in 1915. What greatly contributed to the idea of separatism was a series of factors, chiefly (i) the Chotanagpur was the most advanced of tribal regions in point of literacy, political consciousness and industrial progress, (ii) that the major tribal communities were concentrated in a geographically distinct region, (iii) that christianity laid the basis for distinct identify and separatedness, (iv) that Chotanagpur had a tradition of militant and organised struggle and (v) that anthropological literature provided a few sense of history to legitimise the tribals search for identity.¹⁶

The Idea of Autonomy : The Jharkhand Movement.

The ascendancy of dikus in Chotanagpur was matched by systematic efforts of the tribals to end economic and cultural exploitation. The Unnati Samaj played a vital role in this effort. The forerunner of the Unnati Samaj was a little students organisation shaped by its founder J.Bartholmen.¹⁷ Composed of Christian Adivasi Students, this organisation was initially philanthropic in nature but soon turned to socio-economic upliftment reorganising itself as the Chotonagpur Unnati Samaj and opening membership to non-christian adivasis. Adopting a democratic style

of operation, the Samaj sought to achieve the twin objectives: (1) to uplift Chotanagpur from the backward state and (2) to improve the social, political and economic conditions of the adivasis.¹⁸ Uniting tribals on the basis of ethnicity? it propogated inter-tribal unity and tribal brotherhood.¹⁹ However disunity in Unnati Samaj culminated in the breaking up, along religious lines, into Kisan Sabha and Chotanagpur Catholic Sabha. Such were the conditions, when a militant movement, under the aegis of adivasi Mahasabha formed by 'Marang Genka' (great leader) Jaipal Singh was launched in 1938. The Mahasabha embraced both tribals and non-tribals and thereby commended a wider political base and possessed pan-tribal composition and objectives. The objectives of the Mahasabha were (1) statehood for Jharkhand and (2) protection of adivasis against exploitative tactics of Dikus.²⁰ The Adivasi Mahasabha brought together christian and non-christian tribals. This was an effort to make it pan-tribal in composition and objectives. The Adivasi Mahasabha was led by professional political workers. They soon realised that the success of the movement lay in including non-tribals in this movement. Moreover by this time, there was a sizeable number of non-tribals

in the regions and they thus could not be excluded from the movement. The Bengalis in Bihar and the Muslim League supported the programme of the Adivasi Mahasabha²¹ which in turn opened its membership to non-tribals supporting their cause. All these helped to make the movement broader and give it a wider political base, thereby strengthening the cause of autonomy.

In terms of culture, language and values the adivasis were distinct from the non-tribals. The risk of "losing their identity as primary education was being imparted through the medium of Hindi which for them was only a bazaar language,"²² loomed large over the heads of adivasis who were already a demographic minority in Chotanagpur. Existence with Bihar being detrimental to their identity the demand for Jharkhand was echoed by the tribals. With the framing of the constitution in post-independent India, new tendencies towards group solidarity came up everywhere. In 1951, the Adivasi Mahasabha was organized as a political party and rechristened as Jharkhand party with its doors open to all Chotanagpuris. There was thus, what Singh points, "a transition from ethnicity to regionalism."²³ As a political party, the Jharkhand party emerged as a major party in Chotanagpur and in the second general elections extended its influence to Orissa. But all

these advancements came to an abrupt halt in 1963 when the Jharkhand party merged with the congress and a political vacuum was created.

The act of merger split the party into many factions.²⁴ In 1967, disapproval of the merger resulted in the formation of the All India Jharkhand Party. This party further split in 1968 when the Santhals separated and formed the Bihar Prant Hul Jharkhand Party. The fragmentation of the party and factionalization of politics intensified radicalism. There was also a rise of urban pressure groups led by educated tribals. The Birsa Seva Dal was organised at the instance of Jappal Singh in 1967. In 1973 the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was formed with due consent and help from A.K.Roy, V.B.Mohato and Shibu Soren. The Morcha had as its objectives, the formation of a separate ^{Party} ending exploitation of tribals by non-tribals and securing preferential treatment for the sons of the soil in matter of employment.²⁵ In March 1973, N.E.Horo,²⁶ president of a truncated Jharkhand Party submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi demanding the formation of a Jharkhand state within the Union of India. The proposed state had an area of 1,87,646 sq.km. and a population as per 1971 census 305,98,991. The proposed state had 16 districts, 7 from Bihar (Dhanbad, Ranchi, Singhbhum, Santhal Pargana, Hazaribagh, Giridith and

Palamau); 4 from Orissa (Mayurbhanj, Sambalpur, Keonjhar and Sundergarh); 3 from West Bengal (Bankura, Midnapur and Purulia) and 2 from Madhya Pradesh (Raigarh and Sarguja.)

The Jharkhand movement continued as a strong movement but was not unified. The various organisations had only one point of agreement - the demand for a separate Jharkhand state. It is on this platform that all MLA's and MP's from Jharkhand irrespective of their party affiliations met in 1977 and jointly raised the demand for a separate state.²⁷ Since 1977 with growing fragmentation, the electoral base of Jharkhand party has eroded. The Jharkhand parties, far from aligning together have preferred to join either the Congress or left wing parties. The Congress, as the two elections of 1980 and 1984 show, has dominated the political scene pushing local parties into the background. Of the many factors that have contributed to this, are deep divisions among the tribals, the numerical growth on non-tribals in the area and a "growing stratification in tribal society with their new middle class joining hands with

their non-tribal counter-parts in the Congress party and elsewhere."²⁸ While the concept of political and cultural autonomy is still central to most parties representing the Jharkhand area "tribal^b ethnicity has receded in the background and regional factor come to the fore"²⁹ with the operation of pan-Indian forces.

What characterizes the movement is the lack of unity among its leaders. The Jharkhand coordinating Committee the umbrella organisation for the 56 odd organisations is perennially plagued by dissection.³⁰ Taking a cue from the all Assam Students Union (AASU) the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) was formed in 1986 and is now vociferously putting forth the demand of Jharkhand. Education had infused the members of AJSU with a sense of action which in turn is fuelled by a growing awareness that the plateau has remained an extremely backward region while the other areas and peoples have developed at their cost. Further the burgeoning sense of deprivation stems from the realisation that jobs and opportunities that were created are being grabbed by dikus after ousting and uprooting thousands of people from their land, livelihood and way of life. The AJSU in its obvious new political role seeks to consolidate the gains that were surrendered

by scheming politicians and factionalized politics. The consciousness of the alienation that exists because the tribals are unable to develop on the basis of their own genius has become the basis of mobilization and separatedness and breeds feelings of regionalism. As a movement, now supported and led by students, the AJSU seeks to reverse the marginalization that the tribals have been subjected to for years.

The people of Jharkhand have been struggling to fulfil their aspirations of a separate state since 1938 though the objective reasons for this demand have a long historical background of struggle against encroachment on their economic resources, social organisation and cultural characteristics. In the recent past the movement has assumed a greater sense of insistence and urgency. The atmosphere is charged with ethnocentrism and primordiality leading to the growth of internal solidarity and outgroup antagonism against the 'dikus'.³¹ The resurgence of the movement has ushered in a new found sense of unity and expectation among the people; such expectation however is markedly cautious and apprehensive of past betrayals. The call for revival of the movement has now been given by AJSU and Jharkhand Samanvaya Samiti

(Jharkhand Co-ordination Committee)JSS. In the present phase of the movement there is clear challenge to the "existing racial, more and intellectual leadership,"³² and both AJSU and JSS seek to produce alternative moral and intellectual leadership. In the course of their struggle the people of Jharkhand have experienced, and are now aware of what B.P.Kesari Convener of JSS sums up "The main drawback of the Jharkhand movement since its beginning has been the lack of intellectual support."³³

The political economy of Jharkhand is marked by economic exploitation of minerals, forests and human resources resulting in forced migration and conversion of tribals into bonded or semi-slave agricultural labourers. The historical process has been to assimilate tribals into a composite agrarian-cum-industrial society.³⁴ Together with this the indigenous people are subjected to a cultural assault. "Derision of their way of life on the ground that it is primitive, active subordination of their languages and traditions, domination over their religious and social moves through invidious extension of the so-called Great Tradition"³⁵

represent cultural conquest of the adivasis at the least and "culturocide"³⁶ at worst. The large influx of non-tribals in the region has created an apprehension of identity crisis intensifying a feeling of alienation from other people. The incursion of outsiders (dikus) into the area in "position of power, influence and wealth unleashed physical terror which compounds economic exploitation and socio-cultural oppression".³⁷ It is but natural that a feeling is generating among the people that they can have a better life, if they administer their own affairs in a separate state. Such feelings have become the bedrock for political mobilization and participation against the "outsiders" (dikus) for promoting inter-tribal integration, Jharkhandism.³⁸ The tribals out of their general affinity, deep rooted discontent and sense of alienation rally as one in their demand for Jharkhand.

Emergence of the Jharkhand Identity:

Throughout the period of alien ascendancy the tribals of the Chotanagpur region have raised their heads in rebellion. Most of the rebellions were directed against the takeover of their lands, their tribals rights and tribal autonomy. British advent into Chotanagpur also sparked off protests and rebellions from the indigenous people of the area. The colonial government in an

effort to exploit the mineral resources of the area ushered in industrialisation. The forces of modernisation soon set in with the introduction of the Railways in 1844,³⁹ This was done to draw out mineral resources from the area. This introduction of the Railways had a tremendous impact on the social fabric of the area. The demography of the area changed with the influx of people from outside Chotanagpur.⁴⁰ This hastened the process of exploitation of tribals by non-tribals which was already in progress. In the perception of the tribals, the presence of exploiters-outsiders (Dikus) led to land alienation and indebtedness. The diku-native conflict saw the growth of movements to reverse the economic subordination unleashed by alien presence. The Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj set up in 1915⁴¹ had the goal of improving the social, political and economic conditions of the adivasis. This was explicitly meant for the welfare of the adivasis who were the victims of economic and social oppression by the Dikus. This was also the first instance of mobilization, for the protection of the indigenous tribals from the oppression by the Dikus. A special identity was projected. This identity was not just that of a tribal but also that of an exploited tribal. By according such identity the Samaj sought to project these exploited tribals. There was also an effort

to form a sub-state joined to Bengal or Orissa.⁴²

In 1938, the Unnati Samaj was reorganised into a political organisation, the Adivasi Mahasabha.⁴³ The Mahasabha raised, for the first time, the question of creation of a Jharkhand state. By doing so it gave a political identity to the aspirations of the tribals. There was also the emergence of a regional and geographical identity. The Adivasi Mahasabha, in spite of its name opened its membership to non-tribals of the region. This was done to broaden the base of the movement and accentuate the demand. Moreover non-tribal presence, mostly Bengalis, was large. Bengalis fearing oppression in Bihar supported the demand for a separate state.⁴⁴ There was thus the emergence of a separate Jharkhandi identity with the provision that the proposed state should address itself to the welfare of the natives, tribals. The 1951 census showed that the tribals were numerically not as large as in 1941. The newly formed Jharkhand party opened its membership to all people inhabiting Chotanagpur.⁴⁵ The Jharkhandi identity thus enlarged on a geographical basis, but it had an unmistakable tribal core. The

The Jharkhand region had been treated as a separate administrative unit by the British, and in the post independent India it was given special privileges

under the schedules. The area earlier enjoyed cultural and ethnic exclusiveness and autonomy. The emergence of the Jharkandi identity can also be traced to such cultural exclusiveness. The district of the proposed Jharkhand or Geographically contiguous and contain more Adivathis than any other caste-Hindu groups.⁴⁶ The Jharkandies have survived the onslaught of the Hindu Main stream. They have not been overtaken by the Varnashram division of Hinduism.⁴⁷ The factors of administrative independence, ethnic and cultural autonomy and geographical continuity contribute to the emergence of a common culture out of the diverse tribal structures in the regions.⁴⁸ Moreover their emergence of a Jharkandi identity is also anchored in the rejection of Hindi, which as the Jharkandies perceived is only a bazaar language.⁴⁹ The development of a common language is an important in the light of the development of the Jharkandi nationality. Efforts at finding such a common language which will minimize particularism of the tribal dialects and increase inter tribal ethnicity will bear fruit. But the exclusiveness of Jharkhand people is indicated in their rejection of the mainstream language - Hindi. The several cultural and economic overtones of movements aimed at tribal awakening and social and economic overthrow of exploiters has given Jharkandies a distinct identity.

The Jharkandis consolidated as a major party in Chotanagpur and in the second General Elections extended their influence to other states, especially Orissa. In a period of heightened political activities, the Jharkandis tried to maintain the sense of separatedness by rallying around the party. But in 1963 the Jharkand party merged with the Congress and the political void was created. By submerging in the main stream political parties, the Jharkandis were assimilated and their sense of separatedness was played down. The Jharkand nationalism was betrayed by scheming politicians. The movement stagnated and their political and ethnic assertion lost credibility. Already the mainstream political parties had stigmatised the movement as secessionist and anti-national. By merging with the Congress the leaders of Jharkand of the Party hoped to gain a sympathetic assessment of their demands. But the acts of merger robbed the Jharkhandis' distinct sense of identity and subsequently ethnic separatism as the basis for political autonomy was lost. Of the many factors that led to the development, the principal ones were the impact of development programme in Chotanagpur and the increasing involvement of the tribals in the development process; Madhya Pradesh and Orissa had given representation to tribals in their ministries, and thus proved that all the tribals needed a share of power in order to protect their interests. And this could be achieved by joining the Congress;

the competition for employment opportunities created a split among the tribals.⁵⁰ As a result of all this the Jharkhand national identity was eroded, tribal ethnicity was relegated to the background and the regional factors surfaced.⁵¹ The operation of Pan-Indian forces deprived the Jharkhandis of their special cultural identity.

Now a new phase of the movement has started. There is a resurgence of the Jharkhandi identity with the students in the vanguard. This time the movement is not only pan-tribal but also includes non-tribal workers and peasants.⁵² The movement has ushered in a sense of unity among the people. By including non-tribals as Jharkhandis there is the emergence of a new basis for nationality in Jharkhandi. The external character of exploited and oppression has unified the people in Jharkhandi. A sense of unity is being evoked among all peoples who "share a common history and cultural heritage and practices a common value system."⁵³ The case of demand still remains on cultural separatedness as the basis of identity. New conditions have forced the tribals to look for a new ground of identity. This is now found in their distinction from the people of the main-stream, on new grounds. There is the emergence of a new basis for national identity.

National Question in Jharkhand.

British imperialism distorted the process of nation and nationality building by setting up arbitrary provincial boundaries and the tribes like other groups suffered on account of such divisions. Unequal development initiated internal migration as a result of which the indigenous tribals were uprooted by the scheming dikus. The dikus by their expansionist economic drives subjected the tribals to cultural subjection as well. The exploitation of the resources of the area led to deforestation which in turn deprived the tribals of their own world their ownership and rights on land and pushed them to the margin of a new world. Widespread marginalization occurred and the tribals were woven into an intricate economic and cultural dependency. Under such conditions it is but obvious that the struggle for a separate state is a manifestation of identity-assertion. The question now is, can such an assertion of a cultural identity be legitimately called the subjective consciousness of the idea of a nation,⁵⁴ of a national identity. The tribals of Jharkhand do possess the objective necessity of a 'nation' and seek to consolidate

their cultural separatedness in a separate territory within the Indian state. But given the fact that the proposed Jharkhand includes many tribal groupings speaking different languages and possessing different cultures, it is often debated whether these multi-lingual and multi-cultural groups can forge a unified national ideality.⁵⁵ The emergence of a nationality in Jharkhand is an off_^^{Sheet} of economic exploitation and cultural oppression and the fact of cultural and ethnic oppression can well serve as the basis for the "unity of the victims of this oppression and their common struggle can lead to the formation of a nationality."⁵⁶ The formation of national consciousness in Jharkhand is an extension of cultural separatedness that exists between the tribals and outsiders. And the consolidation of such consciousness has been brought about in the minds of its inhabitants because of the economic exploitation of the indigenous people by aliens. The struggle for Jharkhand is now a struggle for 'national' self-determination against the outsider-exploiters.⁵⁷ Jharkhand seeks, as a pan-tribal movement to unite the numerous oppressed nationalities into a separate politico-administrative unit. The demand for a separate politico-administrative unit deals it away from a secessionist national liberation struggle. The demand rather is for a homeland which historically and legitimately is theirs and in which they can develop

according to their own genius without being subjected to ridicule and humiliation by an expansionist 'mainstream' Self-determination in Jharkhand is the desire and demand to develop, without the cultural and economic interference and oppression of the majority, as equal partners in India. As a separatist movement, the demand for a Jharkhand state is simultaneously a demand for recognising Jharkhand as a specific cultural region and for tribal autonomy. Participation in the political process of the Indian union and the programme of political action pursued by the various ideologically distinct political groups shows that the cultural separatedness is being used to foster a distinct political identity to enhance their bargaining power and thereby gain the goal of a separate politico-administrative unit. Moreover by such a demand, the tribals of Jharkhand seek to reverse the assimilationist policy of the outside exploiters. But this is not to say that they are advocating isolationism, but rather demanding to be heard and treated as equals within the Indian union with the right of self-determination of their way and style of life securely with them. B.K.Roy Burman points out the demand for Jharkhand is an expression of proto-nationalism.⁵⁸ Assessing the tribal situation as "a complex of segmental and totalistic, hierarchial and counter hierarchial relationships"⁵⁹ he acknowledges the forging of a common identity as a colossal task. Proto-nationalism, by incorporation of moral rights, creates symbols of unity and platforms for common action, i.e. "seeking a distinct

political identity for Chotonagpur in one form or another within the Indian Union." ⁶⁰

The demand for Jharkhand was initiated in 1938 has erupted time and again. Behind the demand is a "complex ethnic-socio-economic milieu". ⁶¹ The demand is one of ensuring justice, arresting alienation, removing regional imbalance, stopping economic exploitation and reversing cultural humiliation of the indigenous people. The demand veriferously seeks a democratic solution to to the injustices and an assurance of self-determination and self-government.

A much more fundamental question emerges what is to be the role of tribes and semi-tribes in the building of India? Struggles against ethnic or national oppression and discrimination are important to build the pillars and edifice of democracy in India. The Jharkhand movement is an attempt at such a task. It is not just a demand to end all forms of oppression but is a demand to be admitted as equal partners in the building of a composite India. The mood is succinctly captured in the tribal leader, N.E.Horo's statement -- "For the Indian tribals the question is: whether to be in bondage or to be free, whether to be submerged or retain their identity. Tribals are Indian and they will remain Indian. They should find their place of honour as Indian tribals." ⁶²

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14. The endless repetition of "Tana Baba Tana", pull out father, pull out by the cultists in their exorcism hymns resulted in their being named Tana Bhagat by outsiders. See Ekka, P., op.cit., p.427
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55. It would do well to remember that 'nation', 'nationality' are expressions of a particular historical process at a particular historical time. Nationality may well emerge even if the generally accepted common criteria for the formation of a nationality may not be fulfilled. Moreover 'Jai Jharkhand' in Nagpuri dialect is an effort to minimize the particularism of tribal dialects, encourage inter-tribal ethnicity and thereby foster a common identity, See Sharma, K.L., in Chaudhury, B., (ed.), op.cit., p.110
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PROPOSED

STATE

JHARKHAND

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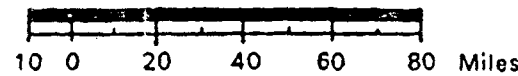
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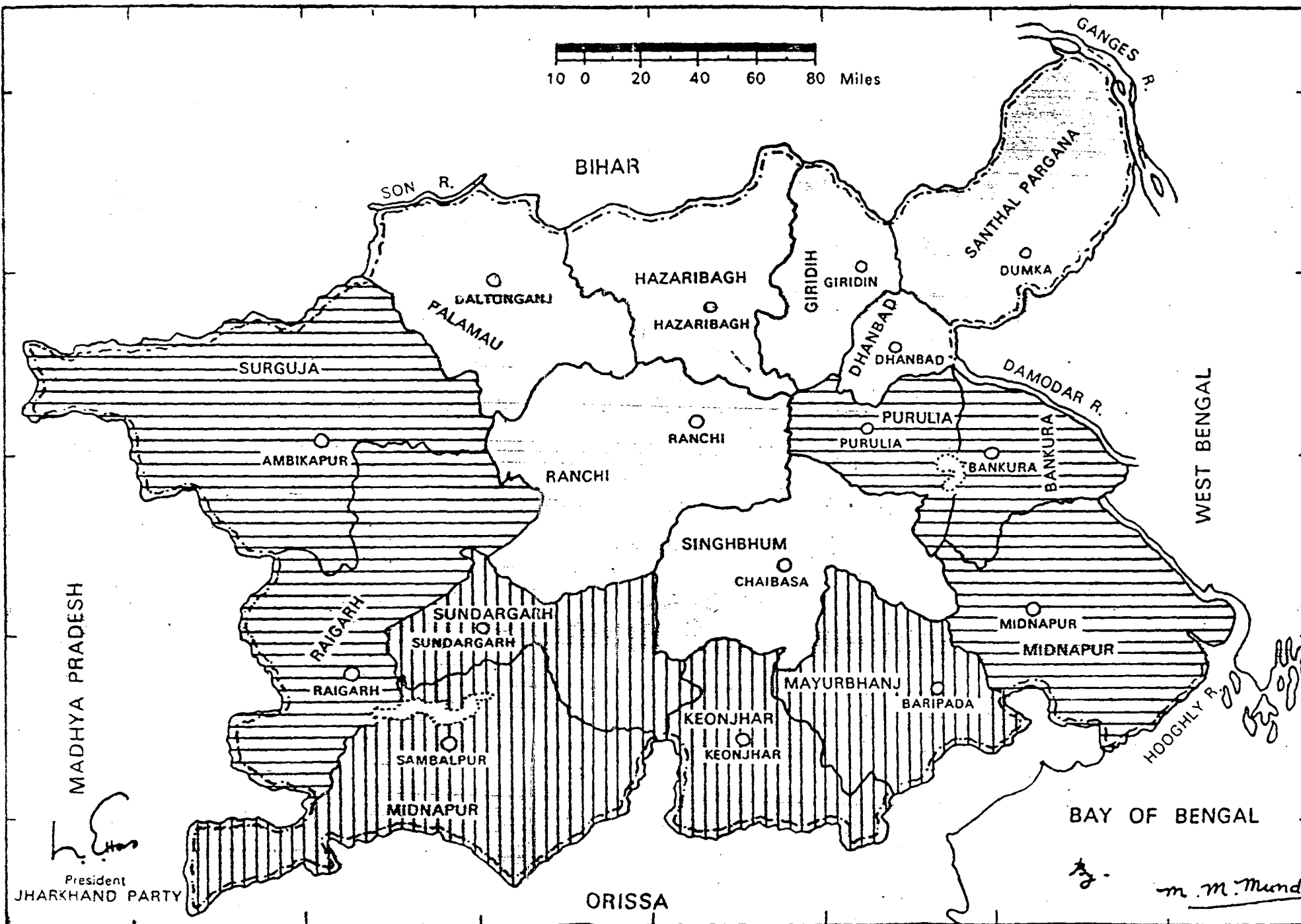
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President
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CHAPTER - III

THE NAGA NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Nagaland lies in the south-east of India's north-eastern horse-shoe-like mountainous region of Arunachal Pradesh, earlier known as NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency). It also shares its borders with Assam on the West, Manipur in the South, and Burma in the East. Nagaland was granted statehood in 1963 as the sixteenth state of India with a geographical area of 16,527 sq.kms.¹

Early History:

The Nagas occupying the north-eastern hills are an Indo-Mongoloid folk. They are divided into a dozen major tribes and many minor ones. The multiplicity of tribes, with diversities in matters of race and language, is due to early migration of various tribes into this region.² After the initial migration, the various Naga tribes settled in the hills and mountains and established tiny sovereign village-states.³ These village-states which had an organised political community were, thus, like the Greek city-states. Constant feuds among different tribes and resulted in their staying disunited as small sovereign village-states. When they did come together, it was only to ward off an external enemy, especially the Meities and Assamese.⁴

In spite of a fragmented political system and multiplicity of languages, these tribes had some distinctive characteristics which made them a distinguishable people since the time of Ptolemy.⁵ What binds the different Naga tribes as a people and subsequently distinguishes them from other tribes is their aboriginal stock. Differences among the tribes in terms of culture, belief and language are overlooked as they "share in legends, folklore, and are rising up in common history, common pronounced cultural unity".⁶ Contacts with outsiders, specially the Meities and the Ahoms always acted a strong unifying force, binding the different Naga tribes. The relationship between the Naga and Ahom was marked by non-interference in Naga affairs, resulting in "infused cordiality, mutual understanding between the two people."⁷ The Ahom had friendly relations with Beri (submissive) Nagas as distinguished from Ahori (non-submissive Nagas). Naga-Assamese trade flourished by barter and sale of salt, cotton, ivory, wax in exchange for rice, clothes, medicines from Assam. The Ahom policy of "conciliation backed by force"⁸ stemmed from the realisation that interference with internal administration of the Nagas would be hazardous. As long as the Nagas did not raid the Ahoms, did not ally with their enemies beyond Patkoi ranges, the "Ahom rulers considered it enough

to receive the submission of the Nagas, allow them to enjoy full ^btrial autonomy".⁹

The British Rule.

The Britishers first came into contact with Nagas in the process of consolidation of their rule in India. The annexation of Assam vide the Treaty of Yandabo (February, 1826) ended non-interference in Naga affairs and the first expedition to the Hills was led by Captain Jenkins, Pemberton in January 1832.¹⁰ From the first expedition to 1850, as many as ten punitive expeditions were carried out by the British, mainly to end Angami raids into the plains of Assam.¹¹ Among the factors that led to British contact with Nagas were¹²:

(i) the necessity to have a safe and secure frontier on the north-eastern border; (ii) repeated Naga raids on Assam compelled the British to establish control over Naga Hills; (iii) after becoming the political masters, the British sought to extend their commercial interest in every neck and corner of the country; (iv) trade and commercial interests in Manipur, Upper Cachar, North Assam, Burma necessiated a passage through Naga Hills, thus the Naga had to be subdued first; (v) the desire

of the king of Manipur to conquer Naga Hills compelled the British to adopt a new policy. These expeditions only showed the futility of the military involvement in Naga Hills and the British soon adopted a policy of non-interference. Repeated incursions into the plains by the Bagas led to rethinking by the British. An active and forward policy was subsequently championed by Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. In pursuance of this policy a new administrative zone was created in 1866 at Samaguting (Chumukedina) with administrative jurisdiction covering the Angami village-states and the watershed of the Deyang.¹³ The headquarters of the district were shifted into the heart of the hills to Wokha in 1876. Thereafter, it was shifted to Kohima in 1878 and Wokha continued as a sub-division. In 1889 the sub division headquarters was shifted from Wokha to Mokukchung.¹⁴ The apprehensive Nagas put up their last fierce resistance against the British in 1879-80, but failed to oust the British. Behind the gradual succumbing of the rebel Nagas was the lack of unity and the absence of a common organised political authority. By 1908, the British had become sovereign masters of Kohima, Mokukchung areas and by 1922 the entire Tuensang area was taken over. Thus, the whole Naga Hills area

come under sovereign jurisdiction of the British by 1922. With the tide of freedom movement rising, the British pursued a policy of isolation of Nagas and by the Government of India Act 1935, the Naga Hills district was declared an excluded area.

The British did not interfere in the tribal pattern of village democracy and acknowledged the right of tribal councils to deal with Naga affairs. The Britishers succeeded in isolating the Nagas from the rest of the country, thereby infused into them a sense of separate identity. Not only that, they also inculcated in the Nagas the spirit of Nationalism, "a political renaissance and consciousness that awakened in the Nagas the realistic existence of modern nation-states".¹⁵

Naga National Council & Growth of Naga Consciousness.

The first organisation to be formed in Nagaland was the Naga Club, in 1918, in Kohima and Mokukchung, and was the centre of social and political gatherings. Its most significant achievement was a memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission impressing upon them the demand to be excluded from the proposed constitutional reforms and kept under direct British rule.¹⁶ In April 1945, at the initiative of the Deputy Commissioner, C.R.Pawsey, the "Naga Hills District Tribal Council"¹⁷ (NHDTTC) was formed. The council soon

graduated in 1946 into the Naga National Council (NNC) comprising of 29 members representing the various tribes on the principle of proportional representation, it brought, for the first time, all the Nagas under a single political organisation and was decidedly a major step in the consolidation of the Naga Nationalistic forces. It was established as "a tentacled political organisation to struggle for freedom and to manifest a new self-assertive quest for Naga identity and sought to achieve the unification and solidarity of all Nagas under one government, as their legitimate national aspiration and interests".¹⁸

The NNC wanted self-determination for the Nagas. When the Cabinet Mission came to India to prepare for granting independence to India, the NNC submitted a four-point memorandum on the 19th of June 1946:

- i) that NNC stands for the solidarity of all Naga tribes including those of the unadministered areas;
- ii) that the council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal;
- iii) that the Naga Hills should be continuously included in an autonomous Assam, in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interest of the Nagas, and
- iv) that the Naga Hills should have a separate electorate.¹⁹

Growing apprehension about its status after British departure coupled with the right to determine their own affairs led to a stiffer stance by the NNC. The demand for an independent Naga state gained momentum. The NNC submitted the Ten-Year Interim Government Scheme to the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Tribes with the suggestion that the new Indian Government should act as guardian power for ten years after which Nagas would be free to determine their political future.²⁰ A misunderstanding between the NNC and the Advisory Committee was sought to be resolved by the Hydari Agreement.²¹ This agreement recognised the right of Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed views. But this agreement was rejected by the NNC in due course and under the leadership of Phizo, elected as President in 1949, the NNC charted out the course to total freedom of the Nagas. The NNC under Phizo became a "militant political organisation, wedded to the idea of a sovereign Nagaland."²² Rejecting the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution the NNC held a successful plebiscite on the question of Naga independence and boycotted the general elections of 1952. Thereafter following police action the Naga Home Guard was set up, the NNC went underground and a Naga Federal Government was set up in 1956.²³ To counter this the Central Government set up the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) as a separate administrative unit under the ministry of external affairs²⁴ and put a wedge

in the Naga movement. The extremists in the Federal Government opposed this move and remained firm on total independence. The extremists-dominated NNC epitomizes the overall stand of the NNC: "Nagas are not Indians and do not want to become Indians. Nagaland was never conquered by India".²⁵

Birth of a New State:

In the constitution's Sixth Schedules, a provision was made for Autonomous District Council for the Hill Districts of Assam. The Hills Districts, including the Naga Hills district, were entitled to form an elected Autonomous Council for day-to-day administration and were allotted seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly. In 1952 Tuensang sub-division of Naga Hills was separated and added to the NEFA as one of the divisions. This separation of the Naga-dominated Tuensang area was resented by the NNC. The NNC also rejected the Autonomous District Council Plan and boycotted the 1952 general elections. In order to counter the growing strength of the NNC, the Central Government encouraged a moderate section of the Nagas led by the Imkongliia Ao. This was a period of intense political activity and resulted inevitably in the polarisation of forces into one extreme and one moderate. The extremist group was more assertive but was a minority. In September 1956, some moderate leaders met Nehru in Delhi and Shillong and Nehru assured the Nagas maximum possible autonomy within the Indian Constitution. Gradually, more liberal leaders openly

condemned the Federal Government and sought a peaceful political solution. The Churches also condemned violence and advocated a peaceful solution. In 1957, the First Naga Peoples Convention was called at Kohima. This convention recommended that the Naga Hills District and the Tuensang District should be amalgamated into a separate administrative unit under the External Affairs Ministry. This came into effect in December 1957.²⁶ In May 1958 the Second Naga People's Convention was held at Ungma. A liason committee was appointed to contact the rebels with a view to bringing about a political settlement.²⁷ In October 1959, the Third Naga People's Convention was held at Mokukchung, purposed the formation of a state to be called Nagaland, within the Indian Constitution and under the External Affairs Ministry, re-transfer of the forest areas to Nagaland and consolidation of contiguous Naga areas.²⁸ Pursuant to the resolution of Third Naga Convention, a delegation headed by Imkonglia, President of the Convention, reached a sixteen-point Agreement in July, 1960 for the establishment of a separate Naga State within the Indian Union.²⁹ Subsequently, an Interim Body was set up with an Executive Council for Nagaland. The Interim Body consisted of 45 elected members representing the various tribes of Nagaland and had a term of three years.³⁰ After due preparations, the Bill for the creation

of a state of Nagaland was placed in the Lok Sabha in the form of Nagaland Act and was passed.³¹ Nagaland was incorporated as the 16th state of the Indian Union on 1 December, 1963 by President Dr. Radhakrishnan.

The inauguration of the state also saw the emergence of political parties in Nagaland. The Naga Nationalist Party (NNP) was formed by those who were instrumental in bringing statehood for Nagaland. The Democratic Party of Nagaland (NDP) was formed by those who harboured sympathy for the secessionist group and differed with the NNP.³² The NDP later merged with the NNP.³² The NDP later merged with the NNC. The militant section of the Naga movement remained underground for more than a decade between 1954-64. The rebel Federal Government tenaciously continued their fight. In 1968 the underground movement split into two factions the federal government remained intact as the original body and the 'underground dissidents' formed a parallel government called the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland.³³ Attempts to attain peace were positively received by the latter group but not the former.

Formal peace talks with the militant Nagas began in 1964. The Peace Mission was to negotiate a ceasefire

agreement between the Government of India and the rebel Naga Federal Government and hammer out a political settlement.³⁴ The Peace Mission relentlessly sought to establish peace in Nagaland. After many years of mutual suspicion and hostilities, peace efforts finally culminated in the signing of the Shillong Accord on Nov.11, 1975 and there occurred a cessation of hostilities. The Shillong Accord was concluded with a three-point formula: (i) unconditional acceptance of the Constitution of India; (ii) surrender of arms by rebel Negas at a designated points and (iii) the representatives of the underground organisations should have reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussions for final settlement.³⁵ This accord sought a constitutional solution to the political problem of Nagaland. It was also successful in bringing insurgency to an end.

Naga National Question:

The NNC has always maintained that the Nagas constitute a nation and this understanding has consistently helped to sustain their liberation struggle. What is the basis for such a consciousness among the

Nagas? Historical evidence show that this consciousness and subsequent feeling of separatedness can be traced back to British subjugation of Nagas. Naga nationalism has always surfaced whenever there was a collective threat to the otherwise differing tribes. The latent feeling of similarity has always manifested into national consciousness with external threat. This is despite the allegation, that Nagas constituting 14 major and several minor tribes who are hostile towards one another and have no common language cannot form a nation. In the course of their struggle against the Ahoms, against the British and against the Indian State gave the Nagas a "sense of cohesiveness and national unity."³⁶ This sense of unity helped preserve liberty, freedom and safety and thereby inter-tribe cohesiveness strengthened. The growing realisation of common origin, background, culture, and history gave them the first indication of being a separate group.

The Nagas' loyalty to his tribe and clan was gradually replaced by the emergence of a new distinctive tribal identity. There has been a crystallization of national identity on an expanded level cutting across former barriers of village, language and tribe.³⁷ An expansive Naga identity based on a redefinition of former narrower identities has emerged. Identities based on clan, sub-tribe or tribe have been amalgamated to form a Naga identity.³⁸ This national movement has been intimately linked with territorial and political questions. The

demand for Nagaland was linked with this growing tide of Naga nationalism. The roots of this Pan-Naga identity and sense of ethnic nationalism can be traced to the founding of the Naga Club in 1918. The ethnic-territorial mobilization of the Naga people and the quest for separate political identity gained momentum with the emergence of the NNC in 1946. The NNC served to unite the different tribes into "one ethnic political block".³⁹ The NNC was, as Elwin described, "a natural extension of the traditional system of the Naga village/tribe to the ultimate scale-the whole of the Nagas."⁴⁰ The NNC captured the essence of Naga nationalism by advocating a sovereign Naga state comprising the entire Naga nation. Naga nationalism grew from the combination of all Naga groups into a single stabilized large society possessing one larger national identity.

The Naga movement also had "politico-cultural and economic"⁴¹ basis of separatedness. Religion (Christianity) helped the Nagas orient themselves to the Christian-Western model and thereby gave a new dimension to the Naga movement. The goal of Naga nationalism was thus geared towards total autonomy to ensure their distinct identity and to ensure their customary socio-economic rights from the interference of outsiders. But the Naga demand for self-determination is not just a product of western education

and ideas that the Christian missionaries planted. Their demand for self-determination had a basis in the democratic pattern of self-government prevailing in the Naga village states. Naga nationalism has strengthened on the Naga form of democracy based on the traditional tribal pattern. Christian missionary efforts only sharpened the idea of national self-determination which has always been the Nagas forte.

The geo-political situation of the Nagas has fostered Naga nationalism. Due to their geographical position they have succeeded in maintaining a distinct identity based on cultural and ethnic unity. The insular environment kept them isolated from the Indian freedom movement. The impending independence of the country from the British threatened the political existence of the Nagas and the NNC justifiably raised an alarm. In early 1947, the NNC submitted a memorandum to the British stating that " a constitution drawn up by the people who have no knowledge of the Naga hills and the Naga people will be quite unsuitable and unacceptable to the Naga people" and "thrown to forty crores of Indians, the one million of Nagas with their unique system of life will be wiped out of existence."⁴² To this Gandhi reacted, "Nagas have every right to be independent. I do not believe in forced and enforced

union. If you do not wish to join the Indian union no one will force you to do that".⁴³ Nehru had earlier stated that the Nagas were too small, politically and economically, to stand as a independent nation and for strategic reasons must join the Indian Union.⁴⁴ The NNC asserted that the union of the Nagas with Indian should be a voluntary one and as far as secession is concerned it does not arise because Nagas were never a part of India.

The growth of nationalism among the various tribes provided a powerful stimulus for the insurgent and political movement. To the NNC the insurgency was the struggle for liberation from the expansionist Indian state. The NNC relied on the long tradition of tribal democracy to build an united Nagaland. The traditional political institution of tribal councils has been an important factor in crystallising Naga national consciousness. If intertribal hostility was a set-back, it was sought to be overtaken by a people who were determined to assert their right of self-determination against the Indian state. The ensuing Naga national consciousness overwhelmed these minor inter-tribal differences and gave them the sense of being a people, a nation. If a "deep attachment to

one's native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authority" ⁴⁵ are the marks of nationalism the Nagas surely qualify as a nation. Common descent, a distinct territory, a common political and economic pattern of life, customs and traditions have broken the isolationism between tribes. ⁴⁶ To this end of instilling in the Nagas the idea that they are a people, the credit goes to the NNC. The NNC has been the custodian of the national aspiration of the Nagas and has helped in evolving a psychological structure on which a common Naga culture rests. The NNC fostered inter-tribal united under the banner of Naga nationalism.

Political exigency compelled the NNC to accept on autonomous Nagaland within the Indian Union. The insurgent battle has since been taken over by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). ⁴⁷ The NSCN now gives expression to the Nagas fighting to set up a separate state outside India. The NSCN calls for armed revolution against the Government of India. In this latest phase of the insurgent movement, the tone is one of militancy and the goal is of liberation: "the NSCN stands for a sovereign Nagaland and we are not begging it from New Delhi. We will fight the

monitors with sword because they come with sword in hand".⁴⁸ The NSCN in an bid to awaken the dormant spirit of Naga Nationalism is using the Christian church to that end. By such usage of the religion, the NSCN hopes to import a distinct identity to the Nagas and thereby re-awaken the Naga national consciousness.⁴⁹ The NSCN, headed by T.H.Muivah is the latest torch-bearer of the nationalist aspirations of the Nagas. The NSCN has gained in popularity because of the suppression by the Government of India, of the Naga sentiment since many years. Initially, the Nagas did not have secession as their prime objective, but the policy of suppression served to instigate in the minds of the Nagas, a sense of separateness. Slowly the embers of this separatedness fired the nationalist imagination of the freedom-loving Nagas. Though the state of Nagaland was the culmination of the autonomy demand, the demand for secession is still alive in the minds of the Nagas, albeit latently. The NSCN now is the preserver of that sentiment.

The question often asked is that, why of the all the tribes in the north-east, the Nagas raised the demand of secession. The historical basis of the national awakening lies in the fact that the Nagas

were subjected by the British and never conquered by the other groups. The British also deliberately imposed 'inner line' restrictions and kept them insulated. Even during British rule, Naga society remained more or less the same. British capital did not penetrate and the phenomenon of market was absent. The entire village republic was based on cooperation and the traditional councils were undisturbed. Thus the idea of being a people was natural to them. The sociological basis of being a people crystallized subsequently on common origin, a unity of moral, spiritual, social and economic institutions, distinct cultural characteristics (language, arts, folklore, customs, manners) and similarity of religion, ideas and concepts. Subsequently the notion of being a nation emerged as "an idea, a vision and a dream in pervasive form".⁵⁰ This idea has given the Nagas a "geo-political entity and economic-cultural force" of an "ethical homogeneity and territorial significance".⁵¹ The Naga movement has often been dismissed as parochial and insular. To all such dismissals, one may refer the statement of J.P.Narayan, a member of the Peace Mission which appreciated the desire of the Nagas for self-determination: "the struggle led by the Naga Federal Government cannot be regarded as a mere problem of law and order. It is most certainly a struggle for national freedom. The Naga people are unquestionably a nation."

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See also Asoso, Yunuo, 1974, The Rising Naga, Vivek Publishing House, New Delhi, P.39
4. Asoso Yunuo, Ibid., P.49
5. Alemchiba, M., op.cit., P.22
6. Asoso, Yunuo, op.cit., P.43
7. The Ahoms had friendly relations with Bari (submissive) Nagar as distinguished from Ahori (non-submissive) Nagas. Nagar- Assamese flourished by barter and sale of Salt, Cotton, ivory, wax in exchange for rice, clothes, medicine, from Assam see Asoso, Yunuo, Ibid., P.62.
8. See Udayan Misra, Naga National Question, Nationality Question in India (seminar papers), Andhra Pradesh Radical Students Union, Hyderabad, 1982.
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11. Ibid., PP. 86-96
12. See Singh, C, Political Evolution of Nagaland, Lancers Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, PP.10-14.
13. Asoso, Yunuo, op.cit., P.90
14. Chumukedima was too far from Angoni area and effective control over them was not possible. The British headquarter were thus shifted to the heart of the Angani area of Kohima. See Singh, C., op.cit., P.20

15. A. Yunuo, op.cit., P.154.
16. This memorandum signed by 20 persons representing the different tribes stated, 'You are the only people who have conquered us and when you go, we should be as we were; leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times', See Alemchiba, M.op.cit.; P.169
17. Ibid, P.165
18. A, Yunuo, op.cit., P.161. The finance was raised by contributions which implied that every Naga was an allegiant member of the NNC. The NNC also published a monthly newspaper, 'Naga Nation'.
19. See Singh, C., op.cit., P.33. Until then complete independence was not demanded and the Nagas seemed to settle for regional autonomy.
20. The ten-year Interim Government included the following terms: (1) The Interim Government of the Naga people will be governed by the Naga people, having full powers in respect of legislation, executive and judiciary; (2) Nagaland belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable; (3) The Interim Government will have full powers in the matter of raising revenue and expenditure, a annual subversion to cover the deficit being given by the Guardian Power; and (4) for defence and for aiding civil power in case of emergency a force considered necessary by the NNC will be maintained in Nagaland by the Guardian Power. That force will be responsible to the NNC who in turn will be responsible to the Guardian Power. See Alemchiba, M., op.cit., P.170.
21. Ibid., P.171
22. Misra, U., op.cit., P.68.
23. Ibid., P.68
24. For details of the promulgation, see Alemchiba, op. cit., PP 186-196.
25. Ibid., P.199.
26. Ibid. PP.186-196
27. Chopra, P.N., and Ghosh, B.B., History of Nagaland, S.Chand and Co.,Ltd., New Delhi; 1981, PP.170-71
28. Ibid., PP.171

29. For details on Sixteen-Point Memorandum, See Alemchiba, M., op.cit., PP.190-196.
30. The Interim Body commenced functioning from 18th February 1961 with an Executive Council of five members to assist the Governor of Nagaland. The members of the council were P.Shilo Ao, Hokisha Seema, R.C.Chiten Jamir, Jashokie and A.Inlong; Inkongliba Ao was the first chairman of the Interim Body and after his assassination, T.N.Angami was elected chairman. Ibid., P.200.
31. Nagaland was created by Act No.73 of 1962. The Act also provided for one seat in Lok Sabha and one seat in Rajya Sabha from Nagaland. It also provided that Tuenasang District being backward would remain in special charge of the Governor for ten years after formation of the State. The Thirteenth constitutional Amendment added one article 371 A granting special provisions in respect of (i) religious and social practices of the Nagas; (ii) Naga customary law and procedure; (iii) administration of Civil and Criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law; (iv) ownership and Transfer of land and its resources. See the constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962. Gazette of India, Extraordinary, August 21, 1962, and the State of Nagaland Act, 1962., Gazette of India Extraordinary, Aug.21, 1962.
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33. Das, N.K., 'The Naga Movement' in Singh, K.S.(Ed.) 'Tribal Movements in India', Manohar, New Delhi, 1982, P.47.
34. The Peace mission that negotiated talks with the Naga Federal Government consisted of J.P.Narayan, B.P.Celiha and Rev.Michael Scott.

35. See Singh, C., op.cit., P.157
36. Misra, U., op.cit., P.62. Quoting Neville Maxwell on India and the Nagas, 'Sense of national identity is as strong as that of any other people of the sub-continent, and stronger perhaps than most.'
37. See Bhagabati, A.C., Emergent Tribal Identity in North-Eastern India, in Chaudhuri, B.(Ed.) Tribal Development in India, 'Inter - India' Publication, New Delhi, 1982, PP.222-224.
38. The classic example of this amalgamation is seen among the distinct major tribes (Angami, Zeliang, Rengma, Chakesaam, Sanglam, Ao, Lotha, Sema, Chong, Khemeenger, Yamchuger, Phon and K Kanyak) and minor tribes (Kabni, Mao, Maram, Kacha). What has since emerged is a Pan-tribal Naga identity.
39. Bhagabati, A.C., op.cit., P.223.
40. Elwin, quoted in Luithui, and Haksar, N, Nagaland File, Lancer International, New Delhi, 1984, P.21.
41. Das, N.K., op.cit., P.48
42. 'The Naga Nation', Feb.1947, Vol.V., No.17, PP.3-7, quoted in Singh, C., op.cit., PP.33-34.
43. Alemchiba, M., op.cit., PP.173-74.
44. See Misra, U., op.cit., P.67
45. Ibid., P.72
46. On the questions of language, English has since been the official language of Nagaland, while Nagamese continues to be the link language between the different tribal. On the question of language being a necessary condition for growth of national consciousness, it may well be remember that it is not an insurmountable factors. Moreover, a nation is the synthesis of a feeling of oneness which need not necessarily stem from a common language.
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P O S T S C R I P T

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The Problem in Perspective

Spread sporadically throughout the country with sizable concentration in certain major areas, the tribal map of India presents a wide linguistic, ethnic and cultural variety. Tribals are the indigenous people of India and are no longer primitive and static. The population of Scheduled Tribes according to the 1981 census stands at 5,16,28,638¹ constituting more than 7% of the total population of India. The tribals of India have got a heterogenous cultural pattern with variegated economic conditions and activities based largely on an ecological setting and ethnic environment.

The British colonial government followed a policy of isolation and protection towards the tribals and thereby divorced them from the mainstream of national life, economic development and social progress. This policy of insulation restricted economic and cultural contact between tribals and non-tribals and minimized conflict between them. At the time of independence the bonds between tribal and non-tribal groups were "tenuous and fragile",² and an "uneasy co-existence"³ prevailed. Soon after independence the tribals have sought to consolidate themselves into an identifiable national society or a distinct nationality

with economic and political power; there is the emergence of a new political idiom. Tribal movements, social, cultural and political have raised many questions since independence. In tackling the tribal question, the government has covertly sought to assimilate and integrate the tribals into the mainstream of Indian society. This has been rejected by all tribal groups as a threat to their bases of identity and distinct way of life. The urge in the tribals is to be allowed to develop according to their own genius, personality, language and cultural heritage. Among the educated tribals the desire is one of being treated as equals in a pluralistic society.⁴

Tribalhood is emerging as a political factor. There is emerging the 'national' self-awareness among the tribal groups concentrated in compact geographical areas. Tribal nationalism as an emergent political force will be a force, especially in a multi-national country like India. In reaction to the economic and cultural manipulation of their way of life, there is a call for self-determination by the tribal people. Tribals in many places are consolidating a distinct and strong tribal image. Academic reactions to such movements are varied. Bose characterizes the tribal political movements as "sub-nationalism";⁵ sub-nationalism is typically generated as Bose believes in economically backward communities of an emer-

ging nation. Roy Burman distinguishes between "infra-nationalism" and "sub-nationalism".⁶ Infra-nationalism is a progressive movement from 'tribalism' to 'nationalism'. Sub-nationalism is a product of social disorganisation where already accultured elites of a tribe become involved in a contra-acculturative contraction of relationship. Dube views this political trend in tribal India as both conjunctive and disjunctive⁷: while on the one hand a new tribal solidarity is being forged, on the other the tribes as a category are being alienated from the rest of the country's population. The bases of tribal movements are anchored in their ecological-cultural isolation, economic backwardness together with the fact of cultural and economic subjugation. Tribal movements like Jharkhand and Naga movement are representative of the tribals' fear of erosion of their identity and their subsequent retaliation to counter any such threat. Such movements should not be viewed with alarm and dismissed as anti-national and secessionist; that would betraying inadequate understanding of the movements. On the contrary, they expose our reluctant strategies at nation building. Movements of such kind force us to take a new look and adopt new efforts at building the Indian nation.

The movement for a separate Jharkhand state within the Indian union originated with the establishment of the

Adivasi Mahasabha. There was a growth of a pan-tribal identity and consolidation of such was sought in a new tribal state. The demand for statehood was not just to gain political status for the tribals. That was the demand to counter the oppressive policies of the Dikus (outsiders, oppressors) who had usurped the tribal lands and were threatening to erode his culture and the basis of his identity. Historically land belonged to the tribals and yet they had no right over its use. Acute marginalisation of tribals resulted in their becoming "outsiders" in their own place of origin. The demand for statehood is to counter the assimilation of tribals, in positions of inferiority, into a composite agrarian-cum-industrial society, resulting in an intricate economic and cultural dependency. Jharkhand epitomises the growth of national consciousness among the tribals demanding for a separate state. The national consciousness has given strength to agitating tribals to ask for self-determination. Self-determination is the desire and the demand, to develop, without cultural and economic interference by the majority community, as equal partners in the Indian union. A distinct political identity for Chotanagpur and the tribes inhabiting it can help the tribals to find their place of honour as Indian tribals.

The Naga tribal movement consolidated the different tribal groups inhabiting the hill areas and fought for a separate national identity. The Nagas were characterised by distinct history and culture and sought to consolidate pan-tribal national consciousness upon such characteristics. The Naga National Council (NNC) as the legitimate representative of Naga aspirations pursued a path of secession from the country. The NNC was wedded to the idea of a sovereign Nagaland. The Nagas were adequately supported by their geo-political situation. Using their geographical position they succeeded in maintaining a distinct identity based on a cultural and national unity. Political exigency compelled the Nagas to the acceptance of an autonomous Nagaland within the Indian union. The Naga movement crystallized into a separate Nagaland within India. With special constitutional privileges, the Nagas sought to use their right of self-determination in an autonomous Nagaland. If Nagas could consolidate into an autonomous unit, why haven't tribals in Jharkhand? Both, historical and geo-political background, gave to the agitating Nagas a distinct sense of identity which the tribals in Chotanagpur lack. The response of Indian state in granting statehood to Nagaland is based on geo-political realities. Of course there was the recognition by the state of an ethnic tribal identity as the basis for state formation, but

such a recognition was aided by geo-political realities and the presence of a distinct tribal group in a distinct area.

A sharpened emphasis on tribal identity need not be viewed as necessarily a disruptive force. When the fear of loss of identity becomes great and real, nationalism becomes the instrument of mobilization, of retaining identity as well as fulfilling expectations. With this instrument, the tribals can look backward and forward and preserve the threatened roots of their culture. Nationalism as an emerging political force helps the tribals to mould their desired and desirable future and to take up a place of honour and dignity in the political set-up of India as equal partners. Tribal nationalism arises ultimately from some sort of tribal identity or that is the search for such an identity.

Nationality Question in India

British rule initiated the process of transformation of the physically, socially, economically, politically and culturally disunited Indian people into a modern nation. British capitalism economically unified India and brought it under the rule of a single centralized state and thereby consolidated the development of a medieval people into a nation.⁸ The Indian National Movement which per-

sonified Indian Nationalism, grew under the conditions of foreign conquest and colonial rule.

The nationality question emerged with the growth of the Indian nationalist movement aimed at releasing the country from the yoke of colonial rule. As a united national movement for political independence gained ground, the embers of the first political awakening among nationality groups like Andhras, Malayalis, Maharashtrians, Oriyas etc., was also lit. Such an awakening was important not only from the standpoint of an united national movement but also from that of the character of the future state structure of post-independent India.⁹

The awakening of these nationalities was inspired by the urge of self-determination, by their will to live and develop as distinct nationalities.¹⁰ These nationality groups asked for the re-construction of their own provinces. They did not ask for separate sovereign states nor did they demand political partition. At the time of independence, India faced the task of building a nation out of a highly fragmented and historically divided society. The task of structuring a fragmented reality into a comprehensive whole and building a national community with national awareness was no mean one. The new leadership set out on the task of building the Indian nation on the principles of economic growth, social justice and

political democracy. The economic, social and political reality since independence are a mockery of any task undertaken in the name of building a unified nation. The problem of the different nationalities and the consolidation of numerous nationalities into a comprehensive 'nation' stares starkly at us. The failure in the nation-building endeavour can be attributed to the failure to grasp two important realities¹¹: one, many of India's tribal and linguistic groups, particularly those concentrated in compact territories, are nations or possess the potential of growing into nations, and two, that nation-building in India is essentially a problem of political and cultural integration of a multi-ethnic and multi-national state. In our task of building a composite nation, we cannot wish away the existence of nationalities of distinct languages and traditions. The union of India is composed of several nationalities, major and minor, united into a single state. There is no single dominant nationality. All the distinct national groups have their distinct history and culture.

British rule unleashed colonial exploitation and retarded the growth of Indian nationalities by creating artificial boundaries. In post-independent India, many groups, especially tribals, have been marginalised by the process of development. The classic case of the tribals

in Jharkhand is a pointer. The tribals of Jharkhand have been economically and culturally marginalised in their native region. The Naga movement was essentially a reaction to cultural marginalisation of a distinct nationality group. The nationality question in India today has acquired urgent proportions : in Assam and Tripura there is a fight for expulsion of foreigners; in Nagaland an outlawed NSCN is waging an armed struggle for total secession; in Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh the tribals are demanding an autonomous Jharkhand state. The right to economic, political and cultural self-determination is the propellant in all these movements. There is also the urge to maintain one's national identity which faces the threat of erosion. An essential ingredient of nationalism is self-determination of people, i.e., liberation from various forms of social, economic, political and cultural bondage. Even after the linguistic reorganisation of an overwhelming portion of territories, numerous linguistic, ethnic, culturally and territorially unified groups have been lumped together into manipulated state formations. Such a grouping generates tension among various national groups and minorities and there is thus a recurrent demand for autonomy by such discontented groups. The recent struggle of the Gorkhas for Gorkhaland and autonomy for tribals in Karbi Anglong in Assam are examples of such. In many of these struggles,

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there is emerging out of the economic and cultural oppression, a distinct class character of the oppressed nationalities. In Jharkhand for instance, the tribals have been absolutely marginalised into what one author says, a "coolie nation".¹² Hegemonistic control of nationality groups by other nationalities is an obvious extension of vested interests.

The developments in post-independent India betrayed the aspirations of the different nationalities. Instead of developing a true federal set-up ensuring free and full development of peoples of all nationalities, there is continued discrimination of some nationality groups.¹¹ Such discrimination is perpetuated by an economic and cultural mainstream¹³ which stand in the way of the full-fledged growth of nationalities. Several nationalities, which are at different stages of their social developments, as well as other dormant nationalities, are sure to attain national consciousness and demand self-determination. National consciousness has developed unevenly in India among the different nationality groups. While some nationalities consolidated after independence, numerous others are arising today to defy social, cultural and national oppression. The struggle of the people of different nationalities is a struggle for a "just society, a federal republic of self-governing nationalities bound together voluntarily".¹⁴

The nationality question in India is thus wound up with the right of self-determination of all nationalities under the banner of the Indian state. India's search for building a national character should not be at the cost of cultural and economic erosion of its numerous nationalities. India is at best a union of multi-national and multi-ethnic groups. It would be rather unrealistic to look for the acceptance of a monolithic pan-Indian identity by all nationalities and ethnic groups. Already there are efforts to sharpen and consolidate identity-consciousness around primordial ties by several numerically small nationality groups and ethnic groups. India must be responsive to efforts of self-determination by its various nationalities. A task such as this can be undertaken in a federal republic with widespread autonomy to constituent nationalities. If India is a multi-national state, which without doubt it is, then the multi-national structure must entail voluntary participation and not coercive cultural, social and economic subjugation of its nationalities.

The Task of Nation-Building

India has to face the task of building a nation out of a historically divisive society, resplendent with a multi-national and multi-ethnic character. All the processes leading to the formation of the Indian nation are

prolonged, partial and differential. They are differential in the respect of economy, culture and political consciousness and integration. This results in extremely uneven development, both in time and space, of national consciousness among different social classes and strata as well as people belonging to regions, cultures and languages. Many dormant national groups are today awakening to this consciousness and are demanding, justifiably, for a new basis of national unity. Such a basis can be located in the goal of social transformation or socialism.¹⁵ India expresses herself in diversity but the task is to foster a central unity. Progressive pluralism should be encouraged and this can be achieved through decentralisation and greater autonomy for federal units. For India, the development of a sense of nationhood among its peoples must not be at the cost of undermining their loyalty to region, tribe, language and religion but to foster a broader national character.

At the time of independence the task of nation-building was three-fold: political integration, economic development and cultural pluralism.¹⁶ Coomaraswamy rightly points out that "to the extent cultural pluralism is perceived to be an obstacle to the realisation of the first two objectives the situation is often described as one of national crisis, disintegration".¹⁷ India, today is composed of a dominant nationality, which occupies the 'centre',

and numerous dominated nationalities of the 'periphery'. The dominant 'centre' is dominated by an economic mainstream (all India bourgeoisie), political mainstream (the Congress Party) and cultural mainstream (twice-born Hindi speaking Hindus) who are the insiders; the peripherals constitute the outsiders.¹⁸ The assertion by peripheral nationalities of primordial collectivism is to counter the economic, political and cultural deprivation and realise their national aspirations. India's quest for nation-building must be at the cost of expansionism and exclusivism being followed by the insiders. The right alternative for India is to "build authentic cultural pluralism reinforcing our multiple cultural streams".¹⁹ India's goal should be to re-legitimise decentralisation and accept cultural nationalism as the important ingredient of political nationalism.²⁰

The task is not an easy one. How does one achieve it? To begin with, there should be a commitment to certain consensual values that determine national identity. The foundations of democracy must be participatory in the real sense. The task may be summed as "federal-nation-building"²¹ with the necessity of carrying together all our diversities as a fraternity. It correctly demands democratic decentralisation on all fronts--- economic, political and cultural for the functioning of a participatory system. The claims of smaller nationalities and the entity of the nation-state have to be

balanced in the context of "declared, universalistic values",²² and they must achieve their individual fulfilment and material needs.

There is the need for decentralisation which should percolate down to the smallest units. There is thus the first task of creating smaller states which would be nearer to the people. The rights of several marginalised nationalities to autonomous statehood must be conceded. Of course, in many instances, autonomy need not be crowned with statehood. But, the rights of marginalised collectivities to cultural autonomy, to re-assert their identities must be acknowledged and respected. The search for an Indian nation can only be realised among a people who are treated as equals by the state. As long there is a threat of economic and cultural dominance, of marginalisation and cultural oppression, so long will the task of building a modern nation remain a remote wish. A united nation can be built when there is true national equality. This necessitates, what Lenin says, "wide regional autonomy and fully democratic self-government, with the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions determined by the local inhabitants on the basis of economic and social condition, national make-up of the people etc."²³

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