Rise and Development of Adivasi Identity and Politics in Colonial *Chhotanagpur*: Retracing through its Historiography

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ABSTRACT

Adivasi Mahasabha led movement technically stands for the moral and material advancement of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana and for the economic and political freedom of the Adivasis. Adivasi movement spread not only in Bihar province, it was also very strong in Bengal and Orissa provinces too. Adivasi identity was consolidating its grounds similarly as Bengali, Bihari and Oriya identities earlier had done. Historically, these identities prepared the backgrounds for their own state formation. During the first half of 20th century, politics over these identities created the basis for identity-politics and thus, Mahasabha began to recognize its own politics based on Adivasi ethnicity, culture and territory. Adivasis were not only countering *Biharis* but also differentiated themselves from *Bengalis* and *Oriyas*.

Key Words : Adivasi Mahasabha, Adivasi Politics, Jaipal Singh Munda

INTRODUCTION

Up to the fifties of 20th century, the nature of research and studies that have been conducted on Adivasis of Chhotanagpur were more or less anthropological studies. However, during the last two-three decades the whole scenario has changed. The research works and seminars on Adivasi movements have been conducted in several institutions of India and abroad from time to time and explored entirely new concepts. In the first half of 20th century, foreign historians who had written on the Indian affairs did not touch much upon the Adivasi movements. Historians such as Edward Tuite Dalton, Francis B. Bradley-Birt, Lewis Sydney Steward O'Malley, William Wilson Hunter, Herbert Hope Risley and many others, who were mostly administrator turned anthropologist in colonial India, definitely took some interests into the Adivasi affairs but they hardly recognized the nature of their movements and understood the essence of Adivasi struggle. They generally treated them as 'noble savage' and showed the administrators' prejudice against them and looked through western standards and values.

Among the Indian writers, Sarat Chandra Roy wrote on the Mundas, Oraons, Kharias and Birhors and relied mostly on folklore and hearsay which, though a guide to sentiments, is not a safe guide to actual events. Being very close to Christian Missionaries, he could not criticize their role in the Adivasi movements. After the Independence of India and especially in the wake of centenary celebration of the 'Great Revolt of 1857' several Indian historians began to deal with the Adivasis' movements as an integral part of the 'National Freedom Struggle' of colonial India. Historians such as Kalikinkar Datta, Kumar Suresh Singh, P.K. Shukla, L.K. Mahapatra, L. N. Rana, K.L. Sharma, S.C. Jha, Sushila Mishra, U.S. Rekhi, Victor Das, L.P. Vidyarthi, Nirmal Sengupta, Sanjukta Dasgupta, Sangeeta Dasgupta, S.P. Sinha, Amit Prakash, SajalBasu, Sanjay Bosu Mullick, Vinita Damodaran, Dilip Simeon are some prominent historians who dealt with history of Adivasi struggle and movement in Chhotanagpur.

Some of them tried to categorize the Adivasi

movements only on the basis of Adivasi versus Non-Adivasi aspect which represented a type of the ethnic nationalism. Some of them, being government sponsored employees, did not give adequate space to the Adivasi movements. One of the recent trends in the study of Adivasi movement is to correlate it with mainstream national movement. For instance, Kumar Suresh Singh argued that 'Non-Cooperation Movement', 'Civil Disobedience Movement' and 'Quit India Movement' either inspired Adivasi Movement or had direct participation of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur into it. He says that ethnicity moved from a bio-social concept to the psycho-social concept, *i.e.* from looking ethnic to feeling ethnic. Historians who did work on Adivasi organizations and movements in colonial Chhotanagpur, especially during the 1930's - 40's are very less in numbers. Many of the subaltern historians had never seen Adivasi life-style and their culture but still showed certain amount of empathy with the downtrodden people of India. It is doubtful that they reconstruct or deconstruct the history of Adivasi *Ulgulan* in India and take into account that was ignored and manipulated by the nationalist historians. They just criticize those who suffered from the imperialist or administrator's biasness as well as those who presented a blurred view because of their nationalist stance. They forget that some historians and researchers are trying to present unbiased pictures without caring for certain 'ism'.

Most of the scholars and researchers concern with the socio-political, economic and cultural history of Adivasis in colonial Chhotanagpur during the first half of 20th century. However, very few works focus on the whole Adivasi movements and their political activities during the high time of the Second World War and Independence of India. First half of the 20th century have witnessed that colonial India was taking a new shape and the transfer of power politics was at its high stage and the idea of nation state was flourishing all across the Indian sub-continent. It is a historical fact that the mainstream national movement got huge supports and attention from all the sections of Indian society and succeeded in mobilizing the masses into the mainstream political platform. At the same time, several other nationality based movements were emerging such as the ethnic and identity based Adivasi movement which was mainly for their 'own country own rule' in the Adivasi majority regions of India such as North-East India, Chhotanagpur, Santhal Pargana and Central Belt of India.

It is the fact that Adivasi society had not been living in isolation; modernity and new model of political system provided the socio-political space for all the sections, groups, castes and classes of Indian society. The socio-political awakening of Adivasis initiated several Adivasi movements as well as mobilized and motivated the entire Adivasis of Indian sub-continent.

Most of the historians argue that Adivasi Mahasabha was engaged in their sectarian politics and it was against the Indian National Congress. They even categorize it as an anti-national outfit and a separatist movement by comparing it with the politics of the Muslim League. They tried to frame Mahasabha as a British loyalist. But historically, it was not the case. It is considered that Adivasi Mahasabha always demanded the separation of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas from the Bihar province but they also shared the platform with Chhotanagpur Separation League which was led by Non-Adivasi people of that region. Adivasi people came to attend the conferences and annual sessions of Adivasi Mahasabha from all across the regions of Bihar, Orissa, and Bengal provinces. Several Adivasi communities such as Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Ho, Santhal and others whether they belonged to Sarna, Hindu or Christianity, they united within one political platform. The local Adivasi leaders had also played a vital role in the socio-political awakening of Adivasis of Chhotanagpur. Adivasi Mahasabha began to counter the whole politics that was sponsored and initiated by Bihari Congressmen. The anti-Bihari sentiment was consequential product of anti-Adivasi stance and the emergence of identity politics provided an adequate political space for several groups and communities such as Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Dalit Associations, and Adivasi Mahasabha and so on.

We cannot generalize the whole history of Adivasi struggles. The subjugation of the history of the Adivasi struggles in the name of national interests and integration is politically motivated and constructed. Historians must not be judgmental but the trends of history-writing show that the manipulation of margin's history became the main political tool for appropriating any personality, organization and identity. The Adivasi resistance and struggle cannot be categorized generally as a separatist movement. Of Course, there were the notion of self-determination and ethnic nationalism in Adivasi minds. For instance, the slogan such as *Abua Dishum Abua Raj* of the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur indicates their political ambitions and expectations for their own country and their own rule.

Similarly, controversies such as Adivasi versus Bihari, Christian Adivasi versus Sarna Adivasi, Bihari versus Bengali and the concept of *Diku* are more complex in nature and complicated. It provided a socio-political platform for the identity politics in Chhotanagpur.

Historiography on Adivasi Politics and Movements during First Half of the 20th Century:

It is important to note that a large number of scholars and historians have been working on the nature and development of Adivasi movement in Chhotanagpur during first half of 20th century. Andre Beteille argues about the background and emergence of Adivasi identity in colonial India that:

The effect of industrialization has been to give it a new identity and even a new character. The result of entering into a complex system of production has been to break down the homogenous nature of tribal society.[1]

He tries to highlight the articulation between national economy and tribal economy where a large number of Adivasi masses as well as Adivasi society were experiencing a new mode of production system which emerged as a product of industrialization and colonization. He does not consider it as a new development.

Stephen Fuchs points out the basic reason behind the emergence of the Adivasi unrest and resistance and elaborates that:

The tribal leaders there have raised the demand for a separate state in which they would be left to themselves, could rule and govern themselves and be rid forever of any interference by non-tribals.[2]

He argues that the Adivasis' demands were largely backward looking such as returning to their happy past and resistance against intrusion of outsiders-exploiters and desire to decide their own future.

L.P. Vidyarthi elaborates several phases of the historical growth of Adivasi movement in Chhotanagpur during the first half of the 20th century. He argues that the first phase of Adivasi struggle in Chhotanagpur region was majorly the formulation phase in which movement was initiated by Christian Missionaries through philanthropic ways. According to him, second phase was constructive phase that was for socio-economic improvement of the Adivasis. Consequently, the third phase was elaborative phase where political movement of the Adivasis took a new shape and dimension. He points out that:

A new model of leadership is emerging under the increased impact of urbanisation and growing industrialisation in Ranchi. This leadership symbolises the aspiration and needs of the local and regional people.[3]

He argues that several Adivasi communities in Chhotanagpur region were joining hands together and trying to establish the secularized leadership before the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur.

Nirmal Sengupta wrote about the transformation of nature of the Adivasi leadership. He considers the Birsa's *Ulgulan* as a transitional phase for the Adivasi movement. He argues that Birsa Munda led Adivasi movement provided the last traditional religious type of leadership for the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur during the latter half of 19th century. After Birsa's death it was the beginning of a rationalistic type of modern leadership for Adivasi movement. He points out that it was not just a coincidence that almost at the same time when Congressmen Rajendra Prasad formed Bihari Students' Conference in Patna and the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur founded Christian Students' Association at Hazaribag in 1910. He commented on Adivasi Mahasabha that:

In spite of its name, it opened its membership to Non-Adivasi of that region, although it must be remembered that the strict distinction between tribal and non-tribal in the popular minds has been crystallised only years after the announcement of Scheduled Tribe list by the Government of colonial India in 1936.[4]

He pointed out that a large section of *Sadani* people or non-Adivasi inhabitants were also settled in the traditional villages of Adivasis such as *Khuntkatti* and *Bhuinhari* villages and several other servile groups or communities such as *Mahato* (Agricultural caste)*, Lohra* (Blacksmith) and several others backward communities had embraced the Adivasis' customary practices and rituals. However, after colonial anthropological surveys and codification of tribes, these servile communities were categorized as Non-Adivasi communities and thus Adivasi/Non-Adivasi controversy came into limelight and became major political agenda in the politics of Chhotanagpur.

Shashi Shekhar Jha talks about the emergence of Adivasi leadership in Chhotanagpur region and argues that 'the sources of their new leaders were not the dreams and divinations but their education and experiences and their political skills gained through contacts with modern civilisation.'[5] Similarly, Kumar Suresh Singh talks about the politicization of tribe and the appropriation of Adivasis into politics during the first half of 20th century in colonial

Chhotanagpur. He argues that:

It is only since 1920's, when capitalism has made rapid advance into Chhotanagpur, the bond of kinship and ethnicity, the primitive identities those were in the process of dissolution became stronger in Chhotanagpur because of the appreciation of the political advantages of the continuation of tribe as an entity.[6]

It is a historical fact that emergence of nationalism in India was one of the colonial products in which colonialism never destroyed but relied upon the vivid form of pre-capitalist mode of production to facilitate its process of exploitation. However, Singh's argument is historically not factual and true that Adivasi identity was at the stage of its dissolution. However, it is a fact that several Adivasi communities of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana region were not enlisted into the Scheduled Tribes list in colonial India. Dilip Simeon points out in this regard:

Nationalism is fundamentally a mysterious and mystifying ideology which constructs the entity of nation by playing down the aspect of class and laying stress on certain homogenous features of a particular community or people.[7]

It is true that the Adivasi movements are characterized by contrast. The growth of industrialization in Chhotanagpur had intensified and disassociated the links of the Adivasis with their own traditional mode of survival. The Adivasi movement, on the one hand, was deeply rooted in the pauperization created by colonial mode of production and was a struggle of the working class against the capitalist system and on the other hand, it became a tool of exploitation whose agents were majorly outsiders and thus it became a struggle of original inhabitants against the outsiders. Marxist historians explore that during the first half of 20th century in Chhotanagpur region, the mainstream national movement was an integral part of the class struggle and in order to end the exploitation, Adivasis would have to unite within the proletariat class. They argue that the formation of nation in India succeeded through forging of institutionalized links between the Indian National Congress and several segmental organizations.

In the Government of India Act, 1935, one of the provisions was about the provincial autonomy, which was granted to India. This particular act changed the whole politics and its patterns of colonial India. In Chhotanagpur region, it nourished Adivasi politics and strengthened its dimensions. Historically, it provided the socio-political space for the unification of various Adivasi organizations and amalgamated different Adivasi identities into one identity. The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur, mainly Mundas and Oraons, felt the need of reorganizing themselves into a united political organization and thus under the persuasive leadership of Ignace Beck and Bandiram Oraon, mainly Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj, Kishan Sabha and Chhotanagpur Catholic Sabha founded the Adivasi Mahasabha as an integrated Adivasi political organization. It was formed irrespective of religion and clan. Nirmal Minz and Joel Lakra pointed out that:

We have a clear and irrefutable proof of the fact that long before the arrival of any missionaries in Chhotanagpur, the Adivasis have been ceaselessly fighting against and resisting all alien intrusion, exploitation, oppression and the frontal attack on their social and cultural institutions.[8]

It is a historical fact that the Adivasi Mahasabha as a political outfit desired to alliance with the Indian National Congress and asked representation in the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee. However, both of these desires were rejected and several clashes and conflicts occurred between the Congress workers and the activists of the Adivasi Mahasabha. K.L. Sharma pointed out that Congress Party, mainly the Bihari Congressmen, always branded and categorized the Adivasi Mahasabha as a separatist outfit and as a Christian Missionary initiated organization. He argues that:

At the initial stage tribal identity was at its peak, emanating mainly from the hatred generated against the non-Adivasi. Christian tribals in general and Mundas in particular created a stir against Congress Party and north Biharis labelling the latter as *Dikus*.[9]

He also talks about the involvement of the Christian Missionaries in the Adivasi Movement of Chhotanagpur and argues that these Christian Missionaries not only actively participated in the Adivasi agitation but also provided all kinds of help to accelerate the ongoing movement. This particular statement has some sort of exaggeration. Upjit Singh Rekhi, in his doctoral thesis, explores that:

The Adivasi movement which was almost a century old now became a manifestation of popular revolt against this sort of colonial oppression and exploitation. It is also a reflection of regional economic disparity and social injustice. Backwardness to a given region is identical to colonial status and it is a function of dominance within a larger political system.[10]

Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci. | July, 2019 | **6** (7)

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He argues that the Adivasi Mahasabha had its wider political base and represented the whole Adivasi communities in Chhotanagpur region and also claimed to be a pan-Adivasi movement across the India. Rekhi also talks about the nature of this movement and its leadership that the Adivasi Mahasabha for the whole time remained outside from the mainstream nationalist politics. He says that by this time leadership of Adivasi Mahasabha were highly articulated and educated and they were very much professional political workers.

Rekhi also pointed out that Adivasi movement at the beginning gained support from Bengalis and Muslim League. This resulted into Bengali-Bihari controversies. During 1940's Muslim League desired to construct a corridor passing through the whole Adivasi region to link West and East Pakistan. He argues that on the one side the Adivasi Mahasabha dissociated the alliance with Muslim League and on the other side, Bengali-Bihari controversy declined but the Mahasabha continued to get supports from other political organizations such as Forward Bloc, Congress Socialist Party and some other political organisations. Rekhi's argument that Adivasi Mahasabha was never a part of national politics is substantially invalid. On the one hand, the Mahasabha represented the whole Adivasi communities in the Constituent Assembly and actively participated into mainstream political discourse. On the other hand, the Mahasabha recognized Adivasi politics and established Adivasi identity in the mainstream politics of India.

Kumar Suresh Singh talks about the amalgamation of Adivasi identities and states that along with the development of the Adivasi movement, religion, cultural, language, script and educational system also became the common heritage of all the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas region. It is important to figure out the nature of Adivasi struggle which was persisting ceaselessly for a long time an identity of the oppressed had emerged. Nirmal Sengupta observes that 'it as a juxtaposed identity with respect to the concept of *diku*'.[11] He argues that the ongoing Adivasi movement was neither a regional movement nor simply an ethnic movement. He criticizes the notion that Adivasi movement was separatist and anti-national movement. Such argument is more or less to ridicule the century old struggle of Adivasis which was for the emancipation for their community.

Different political organizations such as Indian National Congress, Muslim League, Forward Bloc, Adivasi Mahasabha, Sanatan Adivasi Mahasabha, etc., have different views on Adivasi movement in Chhotanagpur. L. N. Rana states that:

The Congress Party in Chhotanagpur which had developed a base among non-Christian Adivasis and backward communities eulogized Birsa as anti-British. It played up an anti-Christian aspect in its tirade against the Adivasi Mahasabha and accused it of being loyalist.[12]

However, new archival materials uncover different aspects of the political agenda of various organizations. During the 1940s, *Bihar Congressmen* and its allied associations such as the Sanatan Adivasi Mahasabha began to celebrate the 'Birsa Day'. There were many occasions when Indian National Congress tried to appropriate Birsa Munda as a nationalist icon. For instance, one of the confidential reports reveals that 'at the Ramgarh session of Indian National Congress in 1940 the main gate was named after the Birsa Munda and the stories of his life were written and published in the souvenir.'[13] On the other side, regarding the District Board elections of Chhotanagpur, Muslim League decided to boycott the District Board elections in Chhotanagpur. However, it extended its support to the candidate set up by the Adivasi Mahasabha.[14]

The *Adivasi Sakam*, a newspaper of the Adivasi Mahasabha, owned by Jaipal Singh, made its first debut in July 1940 in which Jaipal Singh supported war efforts of the British Government. L.N. Rana argues that Adivasi Mahasabha's anti-Bihari Congressmen stand brought them close to the Muslim League. Jaipal Singh, the President of Adivasi Mahasabha, was appointed as a member of the Provincial War Committee and addressed several meetings in 1940s in Chhotanagpur region regarding recruitment of Adivasis into military units of colonial Government and asking them to join the labour companies and combatant forces.[15] Thus, the consequences were such that there were around hundreds of Adivasi women who had joined the Women Auxiliary Corps and some of them even secured officer rank. There were around seven thousand Adivasi youths who joined the British war efforts. Due to such political activities, most of the historians categorize the Adivasi Mahasabha as an anti-national outfit and called it a separatist.

This particular research article highlights that this dominant discourse on Adivasi Mahasabha was misplaced and mislead by facts. Jaipal Singh, for instance, argued that:

Fighting or serving overseas was enlightenment which helped the movement. I was, of course, dubbed as a traitor to the struggle for national freedom. It did not worry me at all. I found the Congress financiers, like Birlas and Tatas, taking full advantage of war contracts.[16]

Jaipal Singh, by his extremely fluent and effective speeches, could convince the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur to join colonial military forces in such a large number because of their poor economic conditions. He repeatedly asked for the formation of more labour companies recruited from these classes and was aggrieved that more was not being done in that connection.[17] In this regard, R.S. Shukla wrote a letter to Ballabhbhai Patel and informed him about the position and political activities of Muslim League. He states that:

The Muslim League gathered very little supports of the Muslims in Chhotanagpur. However, it fomented the Adivasi separatism by consistently supporting the Adivasi Mahasabha both morally and financially. In fact, the League was working on a scheme of carving out an independent Adivasistan forming a corridor between the proposed East and West Pakistan.[18]

On the other side, Hindu Mahasabha did not get any success to make a notable impact on Adivasi politics during that period. However, it continuously opposed the political demands of the Adivasi Mahasabha and always enraged on the issue of conversion of the Adivasis to Christianity. Hindu Mahasabha tried to recognize the Adivasis into the Hindu fold and blamed the Adivasi Mahasabha as an anti-national and separatist outfit. They tried to convince the Adivasis of Chhotanagpur that they were traditionally Hindu and an integral part of the Hindu religion.

The Mahasabha represented the whole Adivasis of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana of the Bihar province during the first half of the 20th century in the Constituent Assembly where the new constitution of India was constituted for the sovereign India. The Constituent Assembly formed the Advisory Committee on fundamental rights, minorities and tribal areas under the chairmanship of Ballabhbhai Patel. This particular Advisory Committee formed two sub-committees, one for the *Excluded Areas of Assam* chaired by G.N. Bardoloi and another for the *Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (Other than Assam)* chaired by A.V. Thakkar on 27th February 1947. Jaipal Singh, the President of Adivasi Mahasabha, was appointed as one of the members of the Thakkar Sub-Committee. The

Interim Report of the Thakkar Sub-Committee recommended descheduling of the districts of Hazaribagh, Palamau and Manbhum in Chhotanagpur region on the basis of their level of development and reported that it did not require special treatment. However, Jaipal Singh forwarded a minute of dissent regarding this report and argued against descheduling of these three districts of Chhotanagpur region of the Bihar province. Jaipal Singh urged that:

How I can agree to the demolition of the economic, geographical and ethnic unity and entity of Chhotanagpur Division. It is not right that we should give an *ex-parte* verdict and change the status quo of the respective districts.[19]

Jaipal Singh never compromised on this particular report and raised voice against its implementation. Historically, these districts were the core regions of Chhotanagpur where majority of the population belonged to the Adivasi community. Jaipal Singh knew the ground realities that these particular regions were geographically, culturally and ethnically dominated by the Adivasis. It is also a fact that these districts were the core center for the Adivasi movement and the people of these regions actively participated in the political programmes of the Adivasi Mahasabha and strongly demanded the separation of Chhotanagpur from Bihar province.

The final report of the *Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (Other than Assam)* reported the conditions of respective areas as:

The extreme expression of the discontent prevalent in Chhotanagpur is the separatist movement which demands the formation of a new province of Jharkhand out of the Partially Excluded Areas. The separatist movement seems to be gaining strength as a symptom of the discontent which is simmering in varying intensity among all section of Chhotanagpur population.[20]

The above final report indicates the ground realities of the ongoing Adivasi movement and highlights the impact and influence of the Adivasi Mahasabha in public domain. Here, one thing is important to note that the Adivasi Mahasabha wanted exclusion from the Scheduled Areas as well as determined to create a new province out of the partially-excluded areas. This final report clearly mentioned that the Mahasabha led Adivasi movement was spreading and influencing not only the sections of Adivasi community but definitely gained huge supports from the Non-Adivasi inhabitants of this region and strengthened its base all across Chhotanagpur. It also

means that the Adivasi movement was neither separatist nor communal in nature at all due to its wider supports from all the sections of people of Chhotanagpur.

Emergence of Adivasi Identity and Politics in Chhotanagpur during First Half of 20th Century:

This research article also deals with the nature and mode of the Adivasi movement which was led by Adivasi Mahasabha during the first half of 20th century in colonial Chhotanagpur. It is a fact that the Adivasi movement was primarily for the moral and material advancement of the people of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas regions. It was basically for the economic and political freedom of the Adivasis and for the formation of a separate province comprising roughly of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas regions with a new government and a separate administration appropriate to its needs and socio-cultural requirements. It was conceded everywhere that Chhotanagpur suffered by being tacked on to Bengal and that it was suffering very badly by being tacked on to Bihar province. The Adivasis of Chhotanagpur believed that only separation would usher the salvation of Chhotanagpur and desired nothing less than an existence of their own through a separate province, a separate government and a separate administration.

The Adivasi movement amalgamated into a united organization as Adivasi Mahasabha. Jaipal Singh delivered the influential and impactful public speech in 1939 during the annual session of Adivasi Mahasabha. He urged that:

Separation is vital; it is a matter of life and death to us. Only when we have become a separate province can we believe that Congress regards it as its primary duty and fundamental policy to protect the religion, linguistic, cultural and other rights of the minorities in India. So as to ensure for them in any scheme of government to which the Congress is a party, the widest scope for their development and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation.[21]

Here, it is important to note that the idea of separation was not historically a new concept. Even the reports of the *Montagu-Chelmsford* in 1918 already declared the possibility of constituting a sub-province for Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions. The unification of the Oriya speaking tracts was already an accomplished fact and thus the Adivasis were demanding the unification of Chhotanagpur and the Santhal Pargana under one administration and a new separate province. Jaipal Singh pointed out in this regard that:

The Adivasi, on the one side, have been politically unarticulated and remained out of sight and out of mind. Whether the Adivasis are included in the present body politics or not they cannot and will not really be of it. They have been reduced to a serf in their own country. On the other side, the moral and material progress of the Adivasis, their primitive outlook and backwardness present a special problem to the educationist and to the nation building department generally… a problem that does not respond to treatment in the mass by stereotyped methods.[22]

Jaipal Singh repeatedly stated that there could be no resolution to Chhotanagpur problem without the creation of a separate administrative unit for the Adivasis and no amount of corporation could alter the economic hostility that have existed between Bihar province and Chhotanagpur region. He criticized the Bihari Congressmen stating that British imperialism might have eradicated from India but unfortunately in its place *Bihari imperialism* had stepped in as it was before, as far as Chhotanagpur is concerned. He told that the Adivasi problem could only be solved by constituting a new province.

Jaipal Singh wrote a letter to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, a prominent Bihari Congressmen, on 16 January 1939 and urged that:

I have always felt that nothing should be done to weaken the nationalistic forces of India and I am most concerned that the Adivasi movement should be within the major national struggle for an all-India freedom. I have now been recognized as a natural leader of the Adivasis and I feel I must use my weight to make the Adivasis work for their advancement within the national movement.[23]

On the one hand, Jaipal Singh and several leaders of the Adivasi Mahasabha publicly did not dissociate themselves from the national freedom movement and always engaged in the national politics. On the other hand, they also criticized and even opposed the policies and political programmes of the Indian National Congress which was initiated all across Chhotanagpur region in the name of welfare for the Adivasis. Jaipal Singh urged that instead of the national heroes working for the integration of disintegrated Adivasis, every efforts was being made to split the Adivasi people into more helpless

bits and particularly the Bihari Congressmen were determined to pit the Sarna Adivasis against Christian Adivasis. Historically, the ongoing Adivasi movement in whole Chhotanagpur region was based on the merger of the States of *Eastern States Union* (never implemented) which comprised of States of Orissa and Chhattisgarh State Agencies. The question came up with the return to Chhotanagpur administration of 11 States, which had always been known as *Chhotanagpur States Agency*. These eleven regions were namely Kharsawan, Saraikella, Keonjhar, Bonai, Bamra, Gangpur, Jashpur, Surguja, Udaipur, Korea and Changbhakar.

The States Agency system was introduced under the commissioner of Chhotanagpur Division in colonial India. The Adivasis of these respective regions belonged to the same group or community of Chhotanagpur and in every way, geographically, administratively, culturally and ethnically, they were indistinguishable and inseparable from Chhotanagpur. The whole region of Chhotanagpur plateau was considered as the *Jharkhand region.* The people of Chhotanagpur began the agitation and demanded the merger of these regions into Chhotanagpur division. Jaipal Singh said in this regard that Bihari Congressmen naturally frightened about the return of these eleven Chhotanagpur States that would strengthen the claim of a separate province for Chhotanagpur. The people of the eleven States had expressed their desire and determinations, in unequivocal language; to return to Chhotanagpur administration as well as their respective princely rulers was also on the same view.

Conclusion:

If we retrace the viewpoint of the party workers and activists along with the growth of the organization in stature and area, the supporters and activists of the Adivasi Mahasabha had continuously increased and influenced all across Chhotanagpur. It is a fact that these Adivasi activists were of varied temperament, characters and interests. It is natural as it happens in every political movement that frequently the personal and group rivalries developed. These rivalries either individual or in groups, began originally as a move by one single individual for his own personal ends and take religious, communal or racial colour only for gaining political mileage. It is easy to enunciate principles but exceedingly difficult to reduce them in action. However, whatever the difficulties the leaders must always keep these principles in mind and endeavour to act accordingly. In fact we can see that

Mahasabha supported the same party in one place and oppose in another. For instance, the Adivasi Mahasabha made an alliance with the Congress in Orissa province but was opposing the Congress of Bihar province. It is a fact that Adivasi Mahasabha had allied and sought support from other political parties and groups but never compromised on its political demands.

Adivasi Mahasabha, through its historical journey from 1930's to 1940's, succeeded in establishing itself as a major Adivasi organization all across Chhotanagpur region and became the voice of the oppressed and exploited people. It is also a fact that the Adivasi Mahasabha and its leaders initiated Adivasi politics and played a vital role in the making of Adivasi identity, particularly in Chhotanagpur region as well as in other parts of India.

There were several socio-economic factors which helped in making of Adivasi identity particularly in Chhotanagpur and India in general. These socio-economic factors were such as modern education, emergence of Adivasi middle class, industrialization, transportation, Adivasi rituals and cultural festivals, backwardness and agrarian crisis, Adivasi ways of life and so on. This particular book only focuses on the socio-political factors which defined the meanings of the Adivasi. It is fact that every identity emerges as a counter-product of the other dominated identity.

For instance, emergence of Adivasi identity in the first half of 20th century in Chhotanagpur was due to socio-economic exploitation of the particular community, socio-political domination of other community and socio-cultural imposition of other dominant identity over it. Every socio-political identity flourishes on the backgrounds of specific region, time, population and politics. Adivasi identity emerged and recognized through the long historical process but all the time politics of time defines it as a newer one according to the demand of the time.

Adivasi Mahasabha as a socio-political and cultural organization played a decisive role in the making of Adivasi identity in colonial Chhotanagpur during the first half of 20th century. It is a historical fact that Adivasi Mahasabha, through its political programmes, activities and campaigns, through mass mobilization and public discourses as well as through its identity based politics, prepared the background for the recognition of Adivasi identity and strengthened its base among the people of Chhotanagpur as well as among the Adivasis of India. Thus, socio-political factors became the main force in

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the making of Adivasi identity in Chhotanagpur. Finally, we can say that the history of emergence of Adivasi identity would not be completed without the history of Adivasi Mahasabha in Chhotanagpur.

The second half of 20th century has witnessed the next phase of Adivasi movement that was more aggressive and inclusive than previous one. In real sense, movement got momentum after 1949 when it opened the doors for all the people of Chhotanagpur in the newly transformed organisation. Thus, Adivasi politics had shifted its base from ethnic to regional. The new caravan was *'Jharkhand Movement led by Jharkhand Party on the basis of Jharkhandi Identity.'* In the first general election (1951-52) Jharkhand Party got 32 seats out of 352 seats in Bihar Legislative Assembly and became a major opposition party of Bihar province. Here, it is interesting to point out that with the beginning of power-politics and vote-bank politics the core objectives of ongoing movement had been reduced to its minimal level, *i.e.*, the formation of separate state. The ultimate objective of this long lasting movement had remained unfulfilled, *i.e.* *'Abua Dishum Abua Raj'* (our country, our rule) and the liberation of Adivasis of Chhotanagpur. In true sense, Adivasi Mahasabha led movement provided the historical background and popular legitimacy to the people of Chhotanagpur that carried forward this mass movement with new spirits and energy. But this time, the major change for ongoing movement was that old British rule had ended and new Indian rule had established and now they were bound to do anything within the constitutional framework of free India.

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