



Origin And Development Of Jharkhand Movement In Odisha

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The origin of the name 'Jharkhand' derives from the Mundari word '*Jaherkhand*'. *Jaher* means place of worship and *Khand* means the geographical location of the tribal inhabitants.¹ Later on it was called as Jharkhand. Jharkhand means a geographical region covered with dense forests and hills. The Jharkhand region included the whole of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pragana and the adjoining areas of West Bengal, Chhatisgarh and Odisha.² The north Odishan tribal dominated districts particularly Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Nilgiri region of Balasore were a part of Jharkhand.³ The tribes of this region are affected by the Jharkhand movement of Bihar. Though Sambalpur was initially included in the movement was excluded later on due to the lack of proper tribal leadership. The effect of the Jharkhand movement was found in the districts of Purulia, Bankuda and undivided Midnapur of West Bengal and Surguja and Raigarh of Chhatisgarh and Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Nilgiri of Balasore districts of Odisha.⁴ According to Cunningham the Jharkhand region extended from the river Damodar in the north to the Baitarani river of Odisha in the south.⁵

The entire Jharkhand region has underlying cultural similarity which is expressed through their language, lifestyle, world view, outlook, simplicity, social structure, equality and common tendency to fight against exploitation.⁶ Ranchi district Gazetteers and Purulia district Gazetteers mentioned about the existence and extension of Jharkhand region. It is also found in Sri *Chaitanya Charitamriti* that while he was to Mathura from Puri in 16th century A.D. visited Jharkhand and converted the *Adivasis* into his sect.⁷ It has been stated in Sanskrit *sloka* on a palm leaf that:

Ayask paatre payah panam,

Sal patre cha bhojanam,

Shayanam khajur patre,

*Jharkhand Bidhiyate.*⁸

The people of Jharkhand region drink water from metal vessels eat food on plates made of Sal leaves. They sleep on the palm leaves mat. This is the customs of the people of Jharkhand.

Jaipal Singh a western educated young tribal leader of village Takra in Khunti near Ranchi appeared as a divine Messiah in the land of Jharkhand. He organized the tribes under the banner of *Adivasi Mahasabha* in the year 1939.⁹ Though there was the organization of the tribe in Jharkhand, they did not play active part to save the tribes from exploitation. Theodore Surin, the president of the *Mahasabha* handed over the responsibility of the *Mahasabha* to Jaipal Singh as the people desired. Then the tribal organizations like

Munda Sabha, Yatha Kisan Sabha, Unnati Samaj, Kharia Samaj and Catholic Sabha joined with the *Adivasi Mahasabha* of Jaipal Singh.¹⁰

The *Adivasi Mahasabha* in a special meeting passed a resolution of a separate league under the chairmanship of Debakinandan Singh, which was supported by the tribes of Jamshedpur, Palamu, Hazaribag, Singhbhum and Santal Pragana. Jaipal Singh as the President of the *Mahasabha* recommended the proposal. The aim of the separate league was to separate Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pragana and the tribal dominated districts of other states. They demanded separate province, a separate government and a separate administration for the tribes. Then Jaipal Singh started his struggle as a commander of the tribes for their economic and political freedom.¹¹

Jaipal Singh as the President of *Adivasi Mahasabha* visited different places and holds public meetings. The speeches of Jaipal were in English then Hindi and his mother tongue Mundari mesmerized and electrified the people who had travelled for miles just to listen him. He published a weekly paper of four pages named *Adivasi Sakam* in English, Hindi and Mundari with 2000 copies to propagate his messages among the tribes.¹² Then all the missionary institutions, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Bengalis openly joined with the movement of Jaipal Singh. Then the *Adivasi Mahasabha* turned into Jharkhand movement.

The Jharkhand movement of Bihar had tremendous impact on the tribes of West Bengal, Chhatisgarh and Odisha. In the state of Odisha, particularly the districts like Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Nilgiri a part of Balasore were largely influenced by the tribal movement of Jaipal Singh. Among all the districts of north and west Odisha the Jharkhand movement was very popular particularly in Mayurbhanj.¹³ Due to the absence of tribal leadership the movement was inactive in other districts of Odisha.

Sunaram Soren, an educated and dynamic leader of the village Hesla near Bahalda in Mayurbhanj started his career as a freedom fighter, who united the tribes of Bamanghati against the British raj and hold public meetings in 1938.¹⁴ He organized the tribes of Panchpir and Sadar Subdivision for a fresh movement of the tribes. Then he formed *Adivasi Mahasabha* in 1946 to ventilate the grievance of the *Adivasis* of Mayurbhanj and other tribal belts of north Odisha.¹⁵ Soren had close contract with Jaipal Singh, who frequently visited Odisha. Jaipal Singh enrolled 15000 tribes of different community as the members of the *Mahasabha* only in Bamanghati and Panchpir Subdivision. Then Sunaram moved to the Sadar Subdivision of Mayurbhanj and formed Pragana Samities in tribal dominated villages.

In 1947, Mayurbhanj *Adivasi Mahasabha* was organized like the *Adivasi Mahasabha* of Santhal Pragana. Sunaram Soren was unanimous nominated as the President of the *Mahasabha* and Mahendra Nath Murmu was Vice-President. Shyam Charan Hansda became the General Secretary. Sundar Mohan Hembram was Councillor and Ghasiram Sandil was nominated as the Commander in Chief. ¹⁶Sunaram Soren carefully included all sections of the Santal like *Murmu, Hansda, Hembram, Sandil, Kisku, Baskey, Marandi, Soren* and other in the *Mahasabha* by which there was a bond of solidarity among the *Santals*. The *Adivasi Mahasabha* openly declared that all sections of people irrespective of their religion caste and sex would be the member of the *Mahasabha*. Then the *Gonds, Kolhas, Bhumijas, Kharias, Bathudis* and the people of other community supported the *Adivasi* movement. Sub-divisional units were formed with identical office bearers. They were affiliated to the main unit at Rairangpur.

The aim and objectives of the *Adivasi Mahasabha* of Mayurbhanj is given below.

1. To create political awareness among the people of Mayurbhanj.
2. To work for the all-round development and prosperity of all the illiterate, poor, downtrodden peasants and agricultural laborers irrespective of caste, religion and language.
3. To maintain the integrity and independence of Mayurbhanj.
4. To establish responsible government in the peaceful manner under the aegis of the Maharaja.

5. To establish adult franchise in all elections and the right to contest for election would have no restriction like property or education.
6. To establish Grampanchayat, Praja Sabha and other organizations by direct elections.
7. To provide elementary education in mother tongue for the cultural development of the society.¹⁷

The goals and objectives of the *Adivasi Mahasabha* clearly indicate that they were the ardent supporter of the Maharaja. The other leaders of Mayurbhanj, who were anti-royalists and other who worked for democracy, called the *Mahasabha* as a party of the Maharaja and criticized Sunaram and other leaders of the *Mahasabha*. But they refuted the allegation and claimed that it was a party of their own. They argued that the *Adivasi Mahasabha* was formed to work for the all-round development of Mayurbhanj.¹⁸ Later on Mayurbhanj *Adivasi Mahasabha* appeared as an influential political party in the state of Mayurbhanj under the leadership of Sunaram Soren like Prajamandal organisation. The other parties were *Kudmi Kshatriya Sabha*, *Bhanjabasi Sabha* and *Swadhin Dal*.¹⁹ But these parties had no any constitution or rules for membership or specified goals and objectives. Though some members called themselves as Socialists, it had not any strong base in the state. The Party was formed in January 1948 by Surendra Nath Dwibedy and Girish Chandra Roy. Harish Chandra Das in his paper “*Mayurbhanj Jagaran*” has mentioned about the six parties of Mayurbhanj. They were *Mayurbhanj Adivasi Sabha*, *Mayurbhanj Praja Mandal*, *Mayurbhanj Socialist Party*, *Bhanjabasi Sabha*, *Kudmi Kshatriya Sabha* and *Swadhin Dal*.²⁰

Mayurbhanj *Adivasi Sabha* accepted green flag and green cap as their logo to be used by all members. There was the sign of plough and sun on the cap of the President. The Commander's cap was designed with a symbol of plough and three strokes on its left and right side.²¹

Sunaram went on to tour from village to village to organize the tribals. The villagers greeted him everywhere from the core of their hearts. In some places, his body was fully covered by the garlands of various wild flowers and his feet were washed by turmeric water. He was even presented garlands of coins and currency notes as a token of their love and affection for the man. Even the non tribal leaders like Pramod Ghose, Nilamani Tripathi and Jainarayan Singbabu were greatly influenced by the Adivasi movement of Sunaram Soren.²² He used to wear a Jacket made of tiger skin and the garland of boiled eggs, vegetables, greens and dried fish with a *Kendra* in his hand. The use of tiger skin indicates the bravery of all the tribes whereas the garland indicates the auspicious sign for them. The *Kendra* indicates the tribes' love for their culture.²³

On 15 August, 1947, India became Independent and the British paramount power was lapsed from the political scenario of India. The question of the integration of the princely states emerged as an emotional issue of great significance. Mayurbhanj *Adivasi Sabha* repeatedly declared its intention that Mayurbhanj would remain Independent and it would not join with any province. ²⁴Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanjdeo handed over the administration of Mayurbhanj to the Prajamandal government on 9th December 1947. Sarat Chandra Das was appointed as the Premier and two other Ministers were Bidyadhar Mohapatra and Maheswar Naik. To satisfy the tribes the Maharaja had given 12 seats to the tribal in the Constituent Assembly having 51 members. Maheswar Naik a Gonda tribe was nominated to the cabinet, which made the tribal very happy.²⁵

There was good relationship between the Mayurbhanj Adivasi Mahasabha and the Prajamandal Government of Sarat Das. Sri Das and his Ministry demanded for the independent status of Mayurbhanj state under the union Government. They went to Delhi to convince the reality to V.P.Menon and Sardar Patel, but

all the effort of Sarat Das to Keep Mayurbhanj a separate unit was failed. The tribal leaders also had met Sardar Patel, but returned in vain.²⁶ When V.P.Menon declared the merger of Mayurbhanj with Odisha, the Adivasis in different places revolted violently. They started non-cooperation movement in Mayurbhanj, which they theoretically learnt from Gandhi. Then most of the tribal leaders including Soren were kept in jail. On 6th February 1949 the tribal gathered at Gunduria demanding the release of Sunaram and other leaders and started meeting violating 144. The army and the police jointly fired on the mob where a huge number of tribes died and injured.²⁷ Harekrushna Mahatab, the Premier of Odisha Province paid a visit to Baripada and Bamanghati on 19th April to have a general discussion Thus Mahatab solved the problem of merger with Odisha with the help of V.S.Mathew, the Collector of Mayurbhanj.

After the tribal unrest of 1949, the leaders who come out from jail organized Jharkhand Party and the others aligned with the Congress Party and the rest remained silent. The demand for a greater Jharkhand state was not all to gather vanished from their mind. An Odisha Division within the proposed Jharkhand state was formed which included Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh districts and Nilhiri, a part of Balasore district. Singhbhum, Sareikala and Kharasuan also included under Odisha Division.²⁸ The Adivasi Jharkhandis claimed that the Adivasis are the original inhabitant of India and others are their guests.

The aim of the Jharkhand Party was to unite the tribes living in the hilly region of the state of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttarpradesh and Madhyapradesh into a separate state. The Jharkhand Party's slogan was that, 'Jharkhand Party stands for a separate state for all people of Jharkhand irrespective of caste and creed for achieving democratic socialism, equality, justice and fair play'. The tribal of the Jharkhand region were exploited by the non tribal in different ways. So were not able to safeguard their interests, to enrich their culture and to enjoy all facilities for socio-economic upliftment. The leaders of the Party claimed that through the formation of a separate state and having their own representatives in the Government, their interests would be adequately safeguarded.²⁹ The Jharkhandis thought that any administration other than their own leads to the exploitation and deprivation of the Adivasis. After the formation of the proposed Jharkhand state, both the Adivasi and the non –Adivasis would be treated equally.

The Adivasi had their language and culture. Their mother-tongue was neither *Odia* , nor *Bengali*. So they claimed that they should not be deprived of enriching their own culture and language. The Government should not restrict the preparation of *Handia*, as it is their sacred and customary drink. Thus the Jharkhand Party's main aim was to revive and to enrich tribal language, traditions and customs in their proposed Jharkhand region.³⁰

The Jharkhand Party recruited the workers in different tribal villages to propagate its manifesto or objectives to the common people. The non tribal like the *Kudmis*, *Kumbhars*, *Teli*, *Tanti* or *Pan*, *Sadgop*, *Kamars*, *Kharias* and other communities supported the Jharkhand movement as a result of which the base of the Jharkhand Party became very strong. Sunaram Soren, the Jharkhand leader was treated as the Messiah even the tribal and the non tribal in Mayurbhanj. So after the merger of Mayurbhanj, Jharkhand Party was very popular in the district of Mayurbhanj.³¹

The spirit of the Jharkhand movement was revealed in the first general election of 1951-52 in the state of Bihar and Odisha. The candidates of Jharkhand Party were contesting as independent candidate in the State Assembly election. The workers of the party were giving their service because they were in the habit of doing so, and in the last resort because they were morally convinced of the rightness of their party politics. It was a poor party and all workers rendered voluntary service without expecting any immediate personal material gain. Yet the six contestants, including Sunaram Soren, representing the party were elected to the State Legislative Assembly. The other elected members were Jadabananda Murmu, Ghasiram Sandil, Hardev Singh Tiriya, Surendra Singh and others.³²

The Jharkhand Party, which was leading the tribal movement in north Odisha, faced constant threats from the Ganatantra Parishad and Nikhil Utkal Adivasi Congress. Ranjit Singh Bariha, a leader of western Odisha laid the foundation of Nikhil Utkal Adivasi Congress towards the end of the year 1950. Soon after becoming a member of the Assembly, Sunaram Soren joined the Nikhil Utkal Congress, an opponent front of the Jharkhand Party, and extended his support to the Congress in forming the government under the leadership of Nabakrushna Chaudhury. Then Soren was nominated as the Cabinet Minister for Tribal and Rural Welfare, Labor and Commerce.³³ But the other members remain unchanged and raised the issue of the formation of Jharkhand State. As a Minister he established Ashram schools in the different parts of the tribal dominated areas of Mayurbhanj and constructed roads to the rural inaccessible areas of the district. Drinking water facilities were provided to the villagers. Yet the tribal of Mayurbhanj did not tolerate the injustice that he done by changing the Party which was founded by him.

The second general election was held in the year 1957. Sunaram Soren was contested from Bahalda Assembly Constituency as a candidate of Congress Party, but miserably defeated.³⁴ The tribal of Mayurbhanj taught him the lesson in the election as he betrayed them. Five candidates of the Party were elected. They were contested as an independent candidate for the Assembly. The Congress being the single largest Party could not obtain a working majority in the State Legislative Assembly. It formed coalition government with the support of five Jharkhand members.³⁵ The Congress Ministry was not stable in the state as a result of which the Bill introduced by the Revenue Minister was not passed on February 23, 1959. The Congress Ministry was defeated but did not resign. The Congress again formed coalition Ministry with the support of Ganatantra Parishad in May 1959. The Ganatantra Parishad was the rival Party of the Jharkhandis in Mayurbhanj, as a result of which the members of the Jharkhand Party withdrew their support and joined in the opposition.

The Jharkhand Party failed to capture any seats in the mid-term State Assembly election in 1961. Again it failed in 1967 election, though it had set up seven candidates in the district of Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh. Sunaram Soren was elected from the Bahalda, Assembly constituency of Mayurbhanj as a candidate of Jana Congress. After the election the coalition Government was formed in Odisha by the Swatantra and Jana Congress parties. The activities of Sri Soren indicated that he was running after power then otherwise.³⁶

The fifth Assembly election of Odisha was held in the year 1971. The Jharkhand Party contested the election in organized way under the leadership of Sidhilal Murmu. The Party put up candidates in fifteen constituencies in the district of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh and Keonjhar, but won by only four candidates. All the four MLA joined the coalition Government formed by the Swatantra and Utkal Congress. Sidhilal Murmu, the leading Jharkhand MLA became Minister for labor, Employment and Housing and continued till 9th June 1972. When some MLAs of Utkal Congress- Swatantra united front merged with Congress, the coalition Government collapsed in 1972 and the Congress Party formed Ministry. The Jharkhand Party High Command declared that the Party would not merge with Congress.³⁷ It would work independently in the Orissa Assembly. But Sidhilal Murmu joined in Congress, ignoring the Party's order. He was not given any chance in the Ministry as he was only joined in Congress.

After 1970s, the Jharkhand Party in Odisha had been weak due to the internal conflicts among the leaders. Binod Bihari Mohato founded Jharkhand Mukti Morchha (JMM) in the year 1972. The other prominent leaders were Sibu Soren, Champai Soren, Nirmal Mahato, Sudhir Mahato, Takelal Mahato and others.³⁸ In north Odisha a large group of tribal became the member of the JMM. Bagun Sambrai was the leader of All India Jharkhand Party. N.E.Horo remained as the leader of the old Jharkhand Party. Hul Jharkhand was another Party headed by Justin Richard. In the later year Jharkhand Peoples Party with the symbol side drum became popular under the leadership of T.D.Lugun and Karia Munda. There were the branches of all the political Parties in Odisha particularly in the district of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh and Keonjhar.³⁹

During the State Assembly election of 1974, the Jharkhand Party and the All India Jharkhand Party mainly contested opposing each other in twenty three constituencies of the districts – namely Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj. The other Parties were inactive as they were newly organized. There was very strong contest in four constituencies of Mayurbhanj viz. Bahalda Rairangpur, Bangriposi and Kuliana. Out of the twenty seven contestants belonging to both the Parties only two candidates were successful. They were Christoda Lugun of Jharkhand Party from Biramitrapur constituency in Sundargarh district and Shasi Bhusan Marandi of the All India Jharkhand Party from Bahalda constituency in Mayurbhanj district. It was a great blunder for the Jharkhandis of Odisha.⁴⁰

After 1980s the Jharkhand Party divided into different groups in the name of different regional Party like JPP, Jharkhand Hul and others. Late Nirmal Mahato and Sudesh Mahato had founded Jharkhand Adivasi Yuva Morchha or All Jharkhand Students Organisation in Bihar. Later on Surya Singh Beshra, an educated youth of Ghatsila of Singhbhum popularized this organization in Odisha. The students were largely influenced by the activities of All Assam Students Union. In the year 1985, Prafulla Kumar Mahato became the President, which later on emerged as a political Party and captured power in the Assembly election in Assam. The students took the leadership to mobilize the general masses. Meetings were held at Rairangpur, Baripada and other places in spite of the police action.⁴¹

After a long disruption the Jharkhand Party in the name of AJSU appeared in the political horizon of north Odisha. The AJSU candidates contested the election of 1990 and won two seats in Mayurbhanj. They fought as an independent candidate as the Party was not recognized. Sri Sudam Marndi won in Bangriposi and Khelaram Mahali from Bahalda constituencies of Mayurbhanj. The success of the student leaders had been created new spirit among the tribal leaders of Odisha.⁴²

Under the leadership of Guru Gamke Sibhu Soren, the Jharkhand Mukti Morchha stands, as a single trusted and strong political Party in Bihar. He frequently organized several meetings in different places to unite the tribes and other artisans. Then most of the leaders of Mayurbhanj including Sudam Marndi joined in JMM. There was also the influence of Jharkhand Peoples Party in the Bamanghati region. In the State Assembly election of 1995, Khelaram Mahali elected as a candidate of JPP from Bahalda, and the JMM candidates Sudam Marndi and Ajen Murmu won from the Kuliana and Bangriposi constituencies.⁴³

Sri Sudam Marndi became a popular leader of JMM not only in Mayurbhanj, but also the whole of north Odisha. He properly organized the Party and contested the Assembly election of 2000. He was successful to elect from Kuliana constituency and Kishore Kumar Dash was elected under the banner of JMM from Baripada General constituency. Sri Dash was a student leader and demanded Law College, Medical College and a University for Mayurbhanj in the year 1977-78. As a popular leader, he was supported by the general voters of Baripada, which made him easy success. The other contesting candidates including Ajen Murmu of Bangriposi constituency were defeated.⁴⁴

Sri Marandi was very laborious leader. He visited all the tribal dominated villages and had made friendly relations. He was sincerely remembered the name of the workers of different villages, which brought them closer to him. Sometimes he helped the needy students as he was primarily a student leader and the general needy people. The Kudmis are a dominant community in the district of Mayurbhanj, who had good relations with the Santals since the remote past. He cleverly made good relation with them and brought them to his party. Then the general people also extended their moral and material support for their personal gain. So the year 2004 was a golden period for JMM Party in Odisha. In the election of 2004, Sri Marandi was elected for the Parliamentary Constituency of Mayurbhanj and went to Delhi as Member of Parliament. Late Bimal Lochan Das was elected from Baripada General Constituency and Prahallad Purty from Bahalda constituency under the banner of JMM.⁴⁵

The dark period of JMM Party appeared in the political scenario of Odisha in 2009. Sri Marandi stayed most of the time in Delhi for his Parliamentary work. The local leaders had no co-ordination. They work for their own selfish interest with the absence of their leader. There was no public or review meeting of the Party. Again the people were interested to search better leader, who would work for their locality. During the election of 2009, Sri Marandi was defeated in both the Parliamentary Constituency of Mayurbhanj and in the Bangriposi State Assembly Constituency. Most of the leaders of JMM Party were miserably defeated in different constituencies. The ruling Party was became popular providing various welfare measures to the tribes and the poor people. Lastly the JMM leader Sudam Marndi with his friend Bhadab Hansdah resigned

from the Party and joined in Biju Janata Dal and won the election of 2014. Then the Party became very weak in north Odisha.⁴⁶

Thus the Jharkhand Party lost its courage and confidence in Odisha, particularly in the district of Mayurbhanj since the year 2010. The original Jharkhand Party was divided into various regional Parties in course of time. The Party members even their leaders joined in other reputed Party instead of reforming and organizing their own Party. Lack of proper leadership and adequate funds to run the Party, the organization of Jharkhand Party became weak. The Jharkhand state has been formed on 15th November 2000, so the tribes felt that there would be no need for Jharkhand movement. The welfare measures of the popular government diverted the attention of the tribes, who changed their way in politics. Presently Honorable Droupadi Murmu, the President of India is a tribal lady of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. Honorable Mohan Charan Majhi, the Chief Minister of Odisha is a tribal of Santal community of Keonjhar district of Odisha. They are working for the development of the tribes of the whole of Odisha. Yet the need of Jharkhand Party cannot be denied, It should remain to improve the leadership quality of the tribes and to create awareness among them. It would be able to ventilate the grievances of the tribes and to work for the preservation and expansion of their language and culture.

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