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Political Awakening, Identity Formation and the Other's Survival: Bihar's Internal Re-Organization

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**Political Awakening, Identity Formation and the other's Survival:
Bihar's Internal Re-organization**

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Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any university or other institution of learning.

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Abstract

Since Independence in 1947, India has been internally reorganized several times, and new states have been carved out of old ones for various reasons. The latest stage of reorganization occurred in 2000 when the states of Uttaranchal (Uttarakhand), Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh came into being from the remodelling of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively. The three new states have their under-development in common as well as their sense of injustice about regional exploitation. This research focuses on the case study of Bihar and Jharkhand, situated in the Eastern part of India's Northern Hindi-speaking belt. Two distinct threads are followed: a top-down approach which asks why the central government decided to split Bihar; and a bottom-up approach wondering how the local population – specifically the tribal one – managed, throughout the years, to gain political power and to obtain their long-wanted – yet truncated – autonomous state within the Indian federation.

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Acronyms

BJP:	Bharatiya Janata Party
HDI:	Human Development Index
JAAC:	Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council
JD:	Janata Dal
JD(U):	Janata Dal United
JMM:	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
MCC:	Marxist Coordination Committee
MNS:	Maharashtra Navnirman Sena
NDA:	National Democratic Alliance
OBC:	Other Backward Classes
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
RJD:	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RSS:	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SC:	Scheduled Caste
ST:	Scheduled Tribe

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There are debates on whether small units, in a federal setting, may be easier to manage than large and populous ones. On the one hand, it would be logical to think that smaller provinces or states are more homogenous than bigger ones; and thus less complicated to administer. Paul Buckholts said, many years back, that the major problem of African countries lied in the heterogeneity of their units.¹ Some have also argued that the size of the population matters for federal states to work properly. Borrowing to physics, Daniel J. Elazar argues that units with a critical-mass (in opposition to excess mass) population allows governments “to meet the appropriate needs, demands and expectations of its citizens.”² On the other hand, the greater the number of units the more pieces there are to the federal puzzle and the more difficult it is for the central government to share the powers and resources evenly. Indeed, Elazar’s critical mass argument also implies that entities with less than critical mass population are not viable.³ Also, it can be argued that the smaller and the more homogeneous provinces are, the easier it is for the units to dissociate themselves from the greater heterogeneous entity. In Yugoslavia for instance, ethnically homogeneous units within a federal structure “helped create a political environment that was ripe for dissolution by ethnic mobilization once decentralization began.”⁴

The creation of new states within a federation may or may not be beneficial for the affected people. If the creation is the result of a long battle for autonomy, like in the case of the Swiss

¹ Paul Buckholts, *Political Geography* (New York, Roland Press Co., 1966): 470.

² Daniel J. Elazar, “Cursed by Bigness or toward a Post-Technocratic Federalism”, *Publius*, Vol. 3, No. 2, *The Federal Polity* (Autumn 1973): 284.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Robert H. Dorff, “Federalism in Eastern Europe: Part of the Solution or Part of the Problem?”, *Publius*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 1994): 104.

Jura, the newly gained identity is a reward. Independent until the beginning of the 19th century, the overwhelmingly French-Catholic Jura was given in 1815 to the German-Protestant Canton of Bern for various political reasons. After a long struggle for autonomy led by the French population, the Jura became the 26th Canton of Switzerland in 1979.⁵ However, if a new border is traced without the population's approval, it can provoke violence in an otherwise peaceful setting. The Nigerian example represents an extreme illustration of this fact. Before its 1960 independence, the country was divided in three regions (North, West and East), to which was added a Mid-West region in 1963. After the 1966 coup, twelve states were forcibly carved out of these four regions and dissatisfaction led to a civil war and to the secession of the former Eastern Region known – until its 1970 reintegration in Nigeria – as the Republic of Biafra.⁶

The formation of new provinces is a complex decision as it entails heavy administrative costs and the parties involved in the decision-making process should ensure that actual costs (administration, name changes, new government bodies) do not overwhelm planned benefits (economic growth, social recognition, political weight of minorities, etc). The current research will take a look at India and at a specific episode of its latest states reorganization wave to better understand such complexity.

India is a fascinating case study for many reasons. Its federalism is often compared, in scholarly articles, to the federalisms of Canada or the United States of America.⁷ It has been widely

⁵ Michel Bassand, "The Jura Problem", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 12, No. 2, *Special Issue: Peace Research in Switzerland* (1975): 139-150.

⁶ Ladipo Adamolekun, "Introduction: Federalism in Nigeria", *Publius*, Vol. 21, No. 4, *Federalism in Nigeria: Toward Federal Democracy* (Autumn 1991): 2.

⁷ See, for example, Douglas V. Verney, "Federalism, Federative Systems, and Federations: The United States, Canada, and India", *Publius*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 1995): 81-97.

argued that, especially under Congress rule, the government in New Delhi has had too much arbitrary power and has been too centralised to qualify as a real federation and that the Westminster parliamentary system is anyway incompatible with a federal setting as the power divided among the units (federalism) does not allow an amendment to the constitution by the national government alone (Westminster).⁸ However, the growth of coalition politics in India pushes some scholars to talk about the consolidation of the Indian federal system.⁹ At a more fundamental level for those who care about the normative dimensions of politics, India stands out as the largest democracy in the world and as the birth place of a distinctive political tradition, which includes various trends, ranging from the pacifist ideals of M.K. Gandhi to the religious chauvinism that killed him. The fact that democracy endures in India constitutes a remarkable achievement, considering the wide diversity of cultures, nations, languages, religions and opinions in the country. Violence does occur in certain regions but it is contained better than in neighbouring countries and economic growth is slowly but surely bringing India from Third-World country to emerging economy status.

Since Independence in 1947, India has been internally reorganized several times, and new states have been carved out of old ones for various reasons, which will be enumerated later. The latest stage of reorganization occurred in 2000 when the states of Uttaranchal (Uttarakhand), Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh came into being from the remodelling of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively. The three new states have their under-development in common as well as their sense of injustice about regional exploitation. "All three areas are also, to a degree,

⁸ Douglas V. Verney, "Federalism, Federative Systems, and Federations: The United States, Canada, and India", *Publius*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 1995): 93.

⁹ Mahendra P. Singh, "Towards a More Federalized Parliamentary System in India: Explaining Functional Change", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (Winter 2001-2002): 568.

ethno-culturally marginal: Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh because of their relatively large *adivasi* (tribal) populations, and Uttaranchal because of its *pahari* (mountain) geography and identity.”¹⁰

The research undertaken being limited in time and space focuses solely on the case study of Bihar and Jharkhand, situated in the Eastern part of India’s Northern Hindi-speaking belt. If the creation of Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh attracted no or very little opposition, Jharkhand has been a matter of contention because of the economic situation in which Bihar was to be left after the creation of the new state. Indeed, Jharkhand is extremely rich in forests and mineral resources; it accounts for 100 per cent of the country’s mica and 48 per cent of its coal, “and about a third of all the other minerals in the country. It comprise[d] 45 percent of Bihar’s territory but 79 per cent of its forests.”¹¹ This is an interesting research problem in itself. Why would the central government decide on a territorial reorganization that takes away what is presumably the main source of revenue from its poorest state?

There are other pieces to the puzzle about this hollowing out of a state that is so poor. Bihar presents a marked contrast between its glorious past and its present poorly developed state. The goal here is not to retell Bihar’s history but it can be important to know that Buddha attained enlightenment¹² in this state (Bodhgaya), that Nalanda University was one of the first centres of knowledge in South Asia¹³, that the 10th Guru of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh, was born in

¹⁰ Emma Mawdsley, “Redrawing the body politic: federalism, regionalism and the creation of new states in India”, *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.40, No.3 (2002): 41.

¹¹ Walter Fernandes, “Jharkhand or Vananchal: Where Are the Tribals?” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 44 (Oct. 31 - Nov. 6 1998): 2770.

¹² Buddhist Studies, Buddha Dharma Education Association & BuddhaNet, “Bodh Gaya, Place of Enlightenment”, <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/bodgaya.htm>, (information retrieved in November 2008)

¹³ Nalanda Digital Library, “Nalanda – the Ancient Seat of Learning”, <http://www.nalanda.nitc.ac.in/about/NalandaHeritage.html>, (information retrieved in November 2008)

Patna¹⁴ and that the Gangetic plains throughout the state are extremely fertile. Glory is however not a word associated with Bihar today as the state slowly gained an ill-famous reputation of random violence, Naxalite¹⁵ activism, corruption, bad governance, poverty and backwardness. In 2002, the Planning Commission of the Government of India published a national Human Development Report (HDI) parallel to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) one, highlighting the fifteen main states' performances from 1981 to 2001. While the South Indian state of Kerala performed extremely well by taking the lead and remaining well above the HDI Indian average, Bihar was unable to leave the last rank with an HDI value competing with the poorest sub-Saharan African countries.¹⁶ Table 1 illustrates this reality.

Table 1

*Trends in the Human Development Index (HDI) 1981-2001
India and its 15 main states¹⁷*

<i>State</i>	<i>1981 value</i>	<i>1981 rank</i>	<i>1991 value</i>	<i>1991 rank</i>	<i>2001 value</i>	<i>2001 rank</i>
<i>Andhra Pradesh</i>	<i>0.298</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0.377</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0.416</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Assam</i>	<i>0.272</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0.348</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0.386</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Bihar</i>	<i>0.237</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>0.308</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>0.367</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Gujarat</i>	<i>0.360</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0.431</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0.479</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Haryana</i>	<i>0.360</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0.443</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0.509</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Karnataka</i>	<i>0.346</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0.412</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0.478</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Kerala</i>	<i>0.500</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.591</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.638</i>	<i>1</i>

¹⁴ Official Website of Patna District, "Takth Harmandir", <http://patna.bih.nic.in/html/harmandir.htm>, (information retrieved in November 2008)

¹⁵ Group of communists which emerged from West Bengal at the end of the 1960s, Naxalites are widely perceived as violent and extremist. (see: Hindustan Times, "History of Naxalism", <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News/nm2/History-of-Naxalism/225549/Article1-6545.aspx>)

¹⁶ Planning Commission (2002) *National Human Development Report 2001*, Government of India, New Delhi, information retrieved on United Nations Development Program India, 2006, <http://www.undp.org.in/hdrc/hds/HDFct/India/TrendsHDISeIctdStates.htm> and on http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr03_HDI.pdf

¹⁷ United Nations Development Program, India, <http://www.undp.org.in/hdrc/hds/HDFct/India/TrendsHDISeIctdStates.htm>, (information retrieved in November 2008)

<i>Madhya Pradesh</i>	0.245	14	0.328	13	0.394	12
<i>Maharashtra</i>	0.363	13	0.452	4	0.523	4
<i>Orissa</i>	0.267	11	0.345	12	0.404	11
<i>Punjab</i>	0.411	2	0.475	2	0.537	2
<i>Rajasthan</i>	0.256	12	0.347	11	0.424	9
<i>Tamil Nadu</i>	0.343	7	0.466	3	0.531	3
<i>Uttar Pradesh</i>	0.255	13	0.314	14	0.388	13
<i>West Bengal</i>	0.305	8	0.404	8	0.472	8
<i>All India</i>	0.302		0.381		0.472	

Asking why the central government has decided on the separation of one of India's poorest state misses an important aspect of the territorial reorganization: it may be less about the central authorities' desire and vision than about the wish of local communities. If Bihar, as suggested above, had a lot to lose from separation, this begs the question: what did the new region hoped to gain from separation? And, why did the Bihar elite failed to prevent the loss if a rich part of their state? With 28% of its population being of tribal descent¹⁸, Jharkhand is often stapled as a 'tribal region' and decades before the Independence in 1947, there has been several Jharkhand movements – sometimes tribal, sometimes not – asking for a greater independence, for a separate state carved out not only of Bihar, but also of Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. These movements, which will be commented in Chapter two in greater detail, have pushed for the creation of their state, and after decades of failure, suddenly succeeded. How can we explain this sudden change of policy from the centre? Is it caused by a change of view in Delhi, or is it because of new strategies adopted by the local movements for autonomy?

¹⁸ Jharkhand Government, <http://jharkhand.nic.in/about.htm>, (information retrieved in August 2008)

The research follows two distinct threads: a top-down approach which asks why the central government decided to split Bihar; and a bottom-up approach wondering how the local population – specifically the tribal one – managed, throughout the years, to gain political power and to obtain their long-wanted – yet truncated – independent state within the Indian federation. This thesis asks why the central government decided to go ahead with the Bihar bifurcation despite the economic situation of the state. Why did the government decide, after refusing for decades to respond positively to tribal people's demands for independence, to suddenly grant their own state to the people of Jharkhand? The fact that there was a separation is not by itself surprising as there has been several internal "re-organizations" since the Indian Independence. What is more difficult to grasp is the reason behind the Bihar re-design; not because tribal people should not be entitled to a state of their own, but because Bihar has, on paper, been greatly impoverished through this government decision.

Many hypotheses can be drawn out of this research question. It would be, for example, appropriate to think that the separation was due to a pressure from the Jharkhand elite to keep a tight control on the natural riches of the region without having to share with the whole Bihar. This hypothesis has been explored by several scholars who see that in a democratic setting, wealthier states are more inclined toward separation while in an autocratic setting; the poorest ones would generally wish for a definite change.¹⁹ These authors believe that in some cases, the need to control resources comes first among the reasons for separatist demands; John Wood argues that it could have been the case for Biafra, Katanga and Scotland for example.²⁰ It is well

¹⁹ Jason Sorens, "The Cross-Sectional Determinants of Secessionism in Advanced Democracies", *Comparative Political Studies*, No.38, (2005): 310.

²⁰ John R. Wood, "Secession: A Comparative Analytical Framework," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol.14, no.1 (March 1981): 118.

documented that “[t]he coal belt in Bihar is virtually ruled by mafia-gangsters, who freely indulge in extortion and clandestine business, violence and murder, with blessings from the politicians, who share the booty.”²¹ It is plausible that these politicians who profit from the underworld activities are the ones who were craving for a separate Jharkhand. It is true that Shibu Soren, chief of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha²², and current Chief Minister of Jharkhand has been, in 2006, sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiracy, kidnapping and murder²³ and that he allegedly widely profited from the criminal activities in the mining districts, but North Bihar politicians also got richer through these illegal means.²⁴ If we assume elites on both sides take advantage of the resources and that elites are more numerous and thus more powerful in North Bihar than in Jharkhand, the hypothesis cannot stand. Also, if this hypothesis could have potentially explained the Jharkhand case, it could not have justified the simultaneous separation of Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal, which are not known for their great natural riches. No author who has seriously analysed the Jharkhand situation has in fact been in a position to prove that the region’s elite’s use of the natural resources revenue explains the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar. A more solid hypothesis should thus be presented.

Closely related to the previous hypothesis, another one can emerge: industrialisation attracts private corporations and corporations pay taxes. If the taxation system in India rewards the states with a high concentration of private corporations, then Jharkhand is better off without the over populated and poor Bihar. This argument, rather than a linguistic or cultural argument has

²¹ K. N. Prasad, *Problems of Indian Economic Development: National and Regional Dimensions* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1983): 350.

²² The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha started as a social movement in the mining districts of Jharkhand to later evolve as a recognized political party fighting elections in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal.

²³ Niminesh Kumar, “Shibu Soren sentenced to life”, *The Hindu*, December 6, 2006, p.1.

²⁴ Tilak D. Gupta, “Jharkhand Autonomy a Far Cry”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 39 (Sep. 25, 1993): 2066.

been used more than once to explain the secessionist tendencies of Basques, who are concentrated in the Spanish provinces with the highest income.²⁵ Leaving aside for a moment the fact that Jharkhand is certainly not one of India's richest states; let us consider the impact of private corporations such as Tata Steel on the Jharkhand economy. First, it is clear that only a limited number of regions in Jharkhand have seen private companies settle down on their territory (in Jamshedpur, Dhanbad, and Ranchi for instance) and that the economic development experienced there has not spread all over Jharkhand.²⁶ Second, the taxation system in India does not necessarily reward the states in which the private companies have settled since the federal government is the one responsible for the taxation on corporate income.²⁷ Also, New Delhi decides on the distribution pattern regardless of where the money is coming from. It appears that states have to compete in order to retain economic resources as the centre is doing its best to take as much as it can to eventually redistribute to centre-friendly states.²⁸ For example, income generated in Bihar and Jharkhand may well go to Punjab as "the more advanced states have tended to receive a higher per capita tax devolution than the less advanced states."²⁹ In other words, some regions of Jharkhand are generating high revenues for New Delhi, but these revenues have mostly been beneficial for better-off states. The socio-economic status hypothesis is therefore unlikely to explain why Jharkhand has seceded from Bihar. Apart from some small pockets of wealth, the population of Jharkhand is as poor as the population of Bihar and has thus nothing to lose by staying with Bihar. Activists may claim that Jharkhand has been formed on

²⁵ Jason Sorens, "The Cross-Sectional Determinants of Secessionism in Advanced Democracies", *Comparative Political Studies*, No.38 (2005): 320.

²⁶ K. N. Prasad, *Problems of Indian Economic Development: National and Regional Dimensions* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1983): 367.

²⁷ Embassy of India, Washington D.C., "Taxation System in India", http://www.indianembassy.org/newsite//doing_business_in_india/fiscal_taxation_system_in_india.asp#, (information retrieved in December 2008)

²⁸ T. V. Sathyamurthy, "Centralised State Power and Decentralised Politics: Case of India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 13 (Mar. 30, 1996): 839.

²⁹ Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1991): 125.

the basis of “promoting the interest of the industrialists and transnational companies”³⁰, but no tangible proof supports the argument. In fact, as it will be demonstrated later, the Jharkhand leaders have inversely brought forth the backwardness (of Jharkhand) argument to justify the need for a split.

A more plausible hypothesis would be that, over the years, tribals (*adivasis*)³¹ gained enough political power to ascertain themselves and obtain their own autonomous ‘tribal’ state. Indigenous populations have kept special rights in several countries but there are not many examples of purely tribal units within a federal entity. In the United States of America, Indian tribes are, to a certain extent, considered as “domestic dependent nations” but none of the states are officially considered as indigenous.³² Indeed, the fact that Oklahoma has been gradually formed from Indian Territory³³ does not make the state ‘indian’. Meanwhile, in Canada, the Inuit nation has obtained, in 1999, a greater political autonomy through the creation of the Nunavut Territories out of the Northwest Territories. The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada was formed in 1973 and proposed the formation of Nunavut as early as 1979. Canada, following a plebiscite in the Northwest Territories in 1992, approved the creation of Nunavut.³⁴ Although Nunavut and Jharkhand cannot be compared in terms of population, area and wealth, the Canadian case still

³⁰ The indigenous world 2000-2001, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) Copenhagen, 2000, Chapter on India p.310

³¹ It is important to note that the terms “native”, “autochthonous” or “indigenous” are not used in India to describe the tribal peoples. The central government is not ready to acknowledge the fact that indo-Aryans and Dravidians may not be the original inhabitants of the land. Granting tribes of the “autochthonous” status would automatically mean that they were there before and the whole political dynamic would be changed. So, throughout the text, the terms “tribal people”, “tribes”, “adivasis” and “Scheduled Tribes (ST)” will be used.

³² W. Dale Mason, “Tribes and States: A New Era in Intergovernmental Affairs”, *Publius*, Vol. 28, No. 1, *The State of American Federalism, 1997-1998* (Winter 1998): 112.

³³ W. Dale Mason, “Tribes and States: A New Era in Intergovernmental Affairs”, *Publius*, Vol. 28, No. 1, *The State of American Federalism, 1997-1998* (Winter 1998): 113.

³⁴ Government of Nunavut, “Nunavut: A Chronological History”, <http://www.gov.nu.ca/english/about/Nunavut%20a%20chronological%20history-Feb%2008.pdf>, (information retrieved in November 2008).

shows that indigenous peoples are capable of political organization and self-governance. The political empowerment hypothesis could very well explain the Bihar split and will thus be explored at length in the third chapter of this paper. The case of Nigeria could also offer a great comparison here as three states became thirty-six and the notion of local ethnic identities did have a role to play.³⁵ However, on political grounds, it would be difficult to compare Nigeria and India as the former has a strong military history while the later has, for most of its independent life, been democratic.

The last hypothesis considers the role of political coalitions. Coalition politics have, over the years, become common practice in India and the right combination, in Patna as well as in New Delhi, may well have been instrumental in the separation of Jharkhand. It is important, before going further, to clarify why coalitions could still differentiate the Jharkhand case from the Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh ones. Chhattisgarh was formed out of Congress-ruled Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand out of BJP³⁶-ruled Uttar Pradesh and “in both cases the distribution of seats in the state assemblies allowed the ruling party of the undivided state to form a government in both the successor states.”³⁷ The Bihar situation, as it will be demonstrated later, has been quite different, thus making the coalition politics hypothesis more pertinent than the more straightforward hypothesis that a political party was already in control of a soon-to-be separate region within a state prior to its division.

³⁵ Ladipo Adamolekun, “Introduction: Federalism in Nigeria”, *Publius*, Vol. 21, No. 4, *Federalism in Nigeria: Toward Federal Democracy* (Autumn 1991): 1-11.

³⁶ The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is generally known as a Hindu-elitist nationalist party.

³⁷ Arun Swamy, “India in 2000: A Respite from Instability”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2001): 95.

To sum up, the tribal empowerment hypothesis will be analysed through the identity politics theory in chapter three, and chapter four will deal with the coalition politics hypothesis. It should be noted that a greater emphasis will be put on the states' politics than on the central one because although the centre has the final say on the creation of new states, "no state was ever created on the initiative of the centre."³⁸

But before testing these two hypotheses, the next chapter presents some important background information about Indian politics and the pre-remodelling Bihar/Jharkhand situation.

³⁸ Pradeep Kumar, "Demand for New States: Cultural Identity Loses Ground to Urge for Development", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 35/36 (Aug. 26 - Sep. 8, 2000): 3080.

CHAPTER TWO

State reorganization in India and the special case of Jharkhand

2.1 Waves of States Reorganization

Since India's independence in 1947, there have been several waves of internal states reorganization and it is primordial to understand the rationale behind these waves in order to grasp the uncommon character of the one in which Bihar was remodelled. It should first be noted that for the Indian government territorial reorganization will always be a better option than secession even if violent movements emerge like in the North-Eastern states. Indeed, Dr. Ambedkar, chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, stated in November 1948 that the "Committee wanted to make it clear that though India was to be a federation, the federation was not the result of an agreement by the States to join in a federation and therefore no state has the right to secede from it."³⁹

"The first major reorganization occurred in [the 1950s] following a nation wide movement for the creation of linguistically compact provinces."⁴⁰ At that time, it was becoming clear that people wanted to see in their state the reflection of cultural and linguistic differences. After major riots, protests and deadly fasts in South India, New Delhi conceded the division of Madras in 1953. Andhra Pradesh was created for Telegu speakers and Tamil Nadu went to Tamil speakers. The same year, seeing that the matter needed a more official policy, the Centre created the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) to specifically look at territorial reorganisation.⁴¹

"The four principles guiding the Commissioners were (a) the preservation and strengthening of

³⁹ Sagarika Dutt, "Identities and the Indian State: an overview", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.3, (Sept. 1998): 420.

⁴⁰ Maya Chadda, "Integration through Internal Reorganization: Containing Ethnic Conflict in India", *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2 no. 1 (September 2002): 44.

⁴¹ Emma Mawdsley, "Redrawing the body politic: federalism, regionalism and the creation of new states in India", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.40, No.3 (2002): 39.

the unity and security of India, (b) linguistic and cultural homogeneity, (c) financial, economic and administrative considerations, and (d) the successful working of the Five Year Plans.”⁴² In 1960, the Province of Bombay was divided between Gujarat and Maharashtra along linguistic lines after the occurrence of violent language riots. Demands for a Punjab State also came at that time but were initially resisted as they were thought to be religiously motivated. “Only after a leader was elected in whom Delhi leaders could place their trust was a State of Punjab conceded, ostensibly on *linguistic* grounds. Accordingly, in 1966 'greater Punjab' was split between Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.”⁴³ A fairly wide amount of reorganization demands emerged throughout India following the language policies. In Bihar itself, there was a strong feeling among the elite in the North, that Maithili speakers should get their own state as their language is distinct from Hindi. The demand never really had a strong popular support despite its importance in poetry and arts.⁴⁴ Although it took several years for the Congress to implement all the language re-organizations, the division of Indian states on a linguistic basis was part of the Congress Party political platform as early as 1928, long before the end of the British rule. The British had formed units in order to retain power in strategically and economically important regions without caring about natural affinities and the Congress reiterated in 1947 that states ought to be, when possible, linguistically and culturally homogeneous.⁴⁵

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 20

⁴⁴ Paul Brass, *The new Cambridge History of India: The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 151.

⁴⁵ Satish Kumar Arora, “The Reorganization of the Indian States”, *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol.25, No.2 (February 1956): 27-28.

The second major wave came following the establishment of Nagaland in 1963. Several new states were created out of Assam in the Northeast in the 1970s.⁴⁶ Because these new states are home to a large central-Asian population (in opposition to Indo-Aryan), they demonstrated “that ethnicity also has been granted recognition as an 'informally valid' basis for political-administrative reorganisation under certain circumstances. Meghalaya was accorded Statehood in 1971, Manipur and Tripura in 1972, and Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became States in 1986.”⁴⁷ Most of the Northeastern states are strongly populated by tribal peoples (above 90% in some cases⁴⁸) and up until now are subject to political instability.

The creation of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh represents the third major reorganisation phase. “This region had been unaffected by previous phases of state creation, since these had focused on unifying minority regions.”⁴⁹ An exception would be that in 1956 the Bihar district of Purulia was incorporated into West Bengal following the Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States.⁵⁰ As mentioned in the introduction, the three new states have in common their backwardness, i.e., their disadvantaged socio-economic conditions, as well as their ethno-cultural differences. The creation of Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh attracted no or very little opposition while Jharkhand was a matter of contention mainly because of the economic situation in which Bihar was left. Although the motivations for this last phase are less clear cut, some argue that each reorganization phase reflected a new balance of power between the Centre

⁴⁶ Maya Chadda, “Integration through Internal Reorganization: Containing Ethnic Conflict in India”, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2 no. 1 (September 2002): 44.

⁴⁷ Emma Mawdsley, “Redrawing the body politic: federalism, regionalism and the creation of new states in India”, *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.40, No.3 (2002): 40.

⁴⁸ Census of India, “Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Population”, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/scst.aspx, (information retrieved in November 2008)

⁴⁹ Arun Swamy, “India in 2000: A Respite from Instability”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2001): 95.

⁵⁰ Government of Bihar, <http://gov.bih.nic.in/Profile/default.htm>, (information retrieved in August 2008)

and the federal units. In 1947, leaders were concerned about the coherence of their new State; in the 1950s fears that language fights could tear the union apart propelled the divisions; in the 1970s security issues emerged in the Northeast following violent internal conflicts; in the 1980s, separatist movements challenged India's territorial unity; and in the 21st century, the party holding power in New Delhi seems to be concerned about the implementation of its own national agenda.⁵¹ Chapter four will demonstrate the importance of the national agenda in the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar. This national agenda cannot be dissociated from the socio-cultural realities of India and although this research is not focusing on the complex interactions of castes and classes in the Indian society, it is primordial, for a fuller understanding of the case studied, to look at this dimension of the national policies concerning the peoples of India.

2.2 Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes

According to Hindu ritual practices, the population subsumed in that category⁵² is divided in four main orders (*varna*, in Hindi), each subdivided in a number of castes (*jati*) which all have a specific role to play in society. Although upper castes cannot function properly without the lower ones, the latter are perceived as socially less important. The Brahmin castes are the highest ones in this ritual ordering; the Brahmins include priests, religious figures and intellectuals. The Khsatriya castes were traditionally meant to give warriors and rulers. Vaishya castes are generally merchants and artists. Finally, the Shudra castes are workers serving the other castes. The first three orders include the purest elements of the society: they are said to be twice born or, to put it in other words, entitled to a second birth at the end of their life. Those who do not fit in any of these four orders are outcastes; this is a group that includes people of

⁵¹ Maya Chadda, "Integration through Internal Reorganization: Containing Ethnic Conflict in India", *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2 no. 1 (September 2002): 45.

⁵² Hinduism is not a religion in the narrow sense of an organized religion with a clear structure of authority, so it is inappropriate to talk about believers.

other faiths, tribal peoples and untouchables. The latter do not have the same ritual rights as other Hindus even if the great majority of them practice Hindu rituals. Untouchability has been abolished in India at Independence but there still exists a certain degree of discrimination against the members of this group by other Hindus.

At independence, the new government of India drew a Constitution based on equality for all. As a democracy, India had to offer its population the assurance that each Indian was equal in the eyes of the law and of the government. However, the Constitution did specify that nothing “shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.”⁵³ In order to correct the historical social marginalization of ex-untouchables (also known as *Harijan*⁵⁴ or *Dalit*⁵⁵), the government has officially taken positive discrimination measures. Indeed, ex-untouchables are classified as scheduled castes and are entitled to reservations (quotas) in public employment and education. Tribal peoples have also been listed as scheduled tribes so they can too enjoy a percentage of reservations. At the origin, these quotas were meant to decrease the social gap between backward groups and the others and eventually merge the backward elements to the mainstream. The policy was to be on for a decade only but successive amendments to the Constitution enabled its continuity.⁵⁶

The term ‘Scheduled Caste’ appeared for the first time in the Government of India Act, 1935. In April 1936, the British Government issued the Government of India (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1936 specifying certain castes, races and tribes as scheduled castes [...]. Prior to that, these castes were generally known as the

⁵³ Partha S. Ghosh, “Positive Discrimination in India: A Political Analysis”, *Ethnic Studies Report*, Vol.15, No.2 (July 1997): 138.

⁵⁴ ‘Son of God,’ the designation was coined by M.K. Gandhi but is considered patronizing

⁵⁵ ‘The oppressed,’ a self-designation

⁵⁶ Evan Osborne, “Culture, Development, and Government Reservations in India”, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol.49, No.3 (April 2001): 672.

‘Depressed classes’. [...] The list of scheduled castes issued in 1936 was the continuation of the earlier list of depressed classes. The list drawn after India’s independence, specially in 1950, was a revised version of the list of scheduled castes under the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936. The test applied for identifying the names of scheduled castes was the social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the historical custom of untouchability. After the Constitution of India came into force, the list of scheduled castes was notified by the President, in accordance with the provision of article 341 of the Constitution. The list of scheduled castes is revised from time to time on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes.⁵⁷

The term ‘Scheduled Tribe’ appeared later, in the Constitution of India (1950) and is vaguely drawn in article 342 as: “the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purpose of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State.”⁵⁸ Although not specifically said, Scheduled Tribes are defined according to their geographical isolation; backwardness; distinctive culture, language and religion; and shyness of contact.⁵⁹

The 1991 census reported scheduled castes as representing 16.5 percent of India’s population while the scheduled tribes represented 8.1 percent.⁶⁰ In 2001, the numbers had slightly changed to 16.2 percent and 8.2 percent respectively.⁶¹ While scheduled castes are wide spread across India, tribes can mainly be found within three specific geographical regions: in the Northeast provinces, from Gujarat to Orissa as well as in pockets of South India. They thus do not have the same politico-social weight all over India. “More than half the Adivasis (54.69 per cent) live in

⁵⁷ Makhan Jha, *Scheduled Castes Today* (M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1997): 2.

⁵⁸ Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, “Constitution of India”, Article 242 (Modified 1st December 2007): 211.

⁵⁹ Government of India, Labour Bureau, “Report of socio-economic conditions of scheduled tribes” (2006-2007): 6.

⁶⁰ Ashutosh Varshney, “Is India becoming more Democratic?” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.59, N0.1 (Feb. 2000): 8.

⁶¹ Census of India, “Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Population”, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/scst.aspx, (information retrieved in November 2008)

the Central region consisting of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal.”⁶² Although the states generally grant quotas according to the percentage of scheduled population on their territory, the reservations are sometimes ineffective. After several years of reservations (a lot more than originally planned), in Bihar, “SCs, despite their 15% state quota, held only 2.3% of Class I jobs and 2.7% of Class II jobs by 1972, while STs, despite their 10% quota, held only 2% of Class I posts and 1.1% of Class II posts.”⁶³ Poverty and lack of education renders the SC and ST incapable of availing the benefits offered to them by the government.⁶⁴

Not every tribe has been granted the scheduled status. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, less than 50% of the tribes are officially listed as scheduled.⁶⁵ Also, Scheduled tribes are associated to Scheduled Areas beyond which they generally lose their special status. A tribe listed as scheduled in one state may not be considered as such in the neighbouring one. “This situation not only restricts mobility on the part of the peoples in question but also deprives them of their rightful place in the political system of the country.”⁶⁶ The census may not then be recording accurately the composition of the Indian population. On that note, tribals in Jharkhand assert that they represent the majority of the population despite the census’ claims. The Kurmis, for

⁶² Ratnaker Bhengra, C.R. Bijoy and Shimreichon Luithui, *The Adivasis of India* (United Kingdom, Minority Rights Group International, 1999), 5.

⁶³ Steven Ian Wilkinson, “India, Consociational Theory, and Ethnic Violence”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (Sep. - Oct. 2000): 776.

⁶⁴ Sagarika Dutt, “Identities and the Indian State: an overview”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.3 (Sept. 1998): 425.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Mullick Samar Bosu, “Indigenous Peoples and Electoral Politics in India: an Experience of Incompatibility”, in *Challenging Politics: Indigenous Peoples’ Experiences with Political Parties and Elections*, Kathrin Wessendorf, Published by (IWGIA, 2001): 101.

instance, could be considered as tribal but they are not included in the schedule on tribes. If they were included the official tribal population of Jharkhand would then exceed 60 percent.⁶⁷

Statistics about Scheduled Castes and Tribes can reveal a lot about the need they have for reservations because in India, “backwardness is viewed as an attribute not of individuals but of communities.”⁶⁸ According to the 1991 census, the general population of India had a literacy rate of 33.83 percent, while the rate was only at 24.80 per cent among scheduled tribes and 17.49 per cent among scheduled castes.⁶⁹ In 2000, a majority of urban and rural SC and ST households were wage labourers “and the poverty levels among them were about 46% for SC, and 61% for ST households respectively.” Among urban casual labourers households, poverty level for SC was 58% and for ST 64%.⁷⁰ Health wise, the socio-economic indicators for the Adivasi population show that they live in poor conditions. “[The Infant Mortality], Child Mortality, and Under Five Mortality rates in 1998-99 for the STs were 84, 46.3, and 126 [per thousand] respectively, whereas for the non-schedule groups they were 61.8, 22.2, and 82.6 [...]. About 65% of women [and] 78% of ST children [...] suffered from anaemia.”⁷¹

Throughout the years, other backward groups came forth asking for government social protection. Members of the Shudra caste as well as non-Hindus are entitled, since the 1990s, to reservations under the Other Backward Classes Act. In 1968, years before the Act was made public, B.P. Mandal became the first OBC Chief Minister, in Bihar. He was later made chairman

⁶⁷ Alexius Ekka, “Jharkhand Tribals: Are They Really a Minority?” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 52/53 (Dec. 30, 2000 - Jan. 5, 2001): 4610-4612.

⁶⁸ André Beteille, *The Backward Classes and the New Social Order* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1981): 8.

⁶⁹ Anand Charkravarti, “Caste and Agrarian class: A View from Bihar”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.36, No.17 (April 28, 2001):1452.

⁷⁰ Sukhadeo Thorat, “Marginalized Groups and the Common Minimum Programme”, *Social Scientist*, Vol.32, No.7/8 (Jul.-Aug. 2004): 73.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 71

of the Mandal Commission, responsible for defining social and educational backwardness; recommending measures for the betterment of backward classes; and examining the need for OBC reservations.⁷² The Commission concluded that OBCs' "backwardness justified a quota of 27 percent of the posts being reserved for them in the bureaucracy and the public sector."⁷³ The castes or communities entitled to reservations under the Other Backward Classes Act are classified according to social, educational and economic criteria.⁷⁴ It will be seen later that this Act may have precipitated the separation of Jharkhand as it shook the pro-Bihar government in New Delhi.

The views toward the reservations system are polarized. On one hand, proponents of that system argue that reservations are fair as they are meant to correct historical deprivation and to let the disadvantaged peoples compete on the same level as others for social goods. Also, they say that reservations allow for a "greater use of all talents", and a better social integration. Moreover, "proponents contend that reservation programmes are temporary and self-liquidating." On the other hand, opponents argue that merit is pushed aside by the reservations and that talented individuals should not have to pay for historical marginalization. Opponents also note that reservations are only benefiting a privileged minority among backward groups, leaving the others in the same deprived situation. Finally, opponents say that "emphasis on ascription and separate treatment perpetuates invidious distinctions, encourages dependency, and breed resentment" and that reservations will not automatically fade away as they are "self-extending

⁷² A. Ramaiah, "Identifying Other Backward Classes", *Economic and Political Weekly* (June 6, 1992): 1204.

⁷³ Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb. 2000): 94.

⁷⁴ Government of India, National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), <http://www.ncbc.nic.in/html/guideline.htm>, (information retrieved in September 2008)

both over time and with regard to the inclusion of new groups.”⁷⁵ There is indeed some advantage in being officially called as ‘backward’, and every new census shows that more and more groups demand, albeit unsuccessfully, to be considered as SC, ST or OBC. As Cincinnati University Professor Laura Jenkins puts it: “The current politics of reservations draw more attention to the question of who may become ‘backward’ than the question of who may become ‘forward’.”⁷⁶

Whatever the reasons behind the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar are, the tribal element cannot be left aside as Jharkhand is defined through its adivasi population. It is not possible to find a scholarly article about Jharkhand which omits to mention the tribal character of the state and it is thus essential to get a clear picture of what the tribal demands have been throughout the years.

2.3 Tribes of Jharkhand and their Political Struggles

The Jharkhand adivasis can be classified in two main linguistic groups: the Santhal, Ho and Munda tribes speak Austro-Asiatic languages while the Oraon and Chero speak Dravidian languages.⁷⁷ Jharkhand, composed of the Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions, was historically never under the control of Hindus or Muslims. “Within the limits of the Munda’s villages, all lands, hills, jungles and streams [...] became the common property of the members of the village family or the *khunt-kattidars*.”⁷⁸ Mundas and other tribes settled in Chhotanagpur well before the 11th century when the region “became a centre of inter-regional trade” and when

⁷⁵ John R. Wood, “Reservations in Doubt: The Backlash Against Affirmative Action in Gujarat, India”, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.60, No.3 (1987): 414.

⁷⁶ Laura Dudley Jenkins, “Another “People of India” Project: Colonial and National Anthropology”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Nov. 2003): 1151.

⁷⁷ Govind Kelkar and Dev Nathan, *Gender & Tribe: Women, Land and Forests* (New Delhi, Zed Books, 1991): 21.

⁷⁸ Ratnaker Bhengra, C.R. Bijoy and Shimreichon Luithui, *The Adivasis of India* (United Kingdom, Minority Rights Group International, 1999), 17.

migration to and from Jharkhand became common.⁷⁹ Before 1930, Chhotanagpur saw a lot of its population out-migrating to the brickyards of Calcutta or the tea plantations of Assam. During the industrialisation of districts like Dhanbad and Singhbhum however, in-migration was greatly expanded and contributed to the outnumbering of tribal population by non-tribal elements. The intra-Bihar population movement has, however, never been very dynamic. Even during low agricultural seasons, the great majority – over 90 per cent – of the population stays immobile in the home district. One of the exceptions would be that North Biharis have tended to move towards the Chhotanagpur plateau of the Jharkhand region in search of better employment and economic opportunities.⁸⁰ These changes were reflected in the censuses conducted between 1872 and 1971 in Bihar,⁸¹ and the effect of these migrations on the relationship between North Bihar and Jharkhand cannot be ignored.

Political mobilization and turmoil in the Jharkhand part of Bihar have been going on for centuries, as the inhabitants –mainly tribals in the 1700s – never seemed to appreciate foreign or ‘non tribal’ occupation from the people of Bihar. It would be extremely long to retell all the events in detail so a few of them, the ones willingly made public by the government of Jharkhand, are enumerated here.

Santhal Pargana came under the British rule in 1765 after a successful military campaign. Until 1947, at the Indian Independence, many tribal movements aimed at pushing the British away

⁷⁹ Stuart Corbridge, “The ideology of tribal economy and society: politics in the Jharkhand, 1950-1980”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1988): 18-19.

⁸⁰ K. N. Prasad, *Problems of Indian Economic Development: National and Regional Dimensions* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1983): 352.

⁸¹ Sajal Basu, “Ethno-regionalism and Tribal Development: Problems and Challenges in Jharkhand”, in *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*, edited by Govinda Chandra Rath (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2006): 134.

from the Jharkhand land. From 1772 to 1780, there was a Paharia revolt followed by another revolt leading to the death, by hanging, of the adivasi leader Tilka Manjhi. From 1799 to 1800, the Tamar revolted and the Munda (1797), the Chaur (1798) and the Bhoomij (1798-99) revolted simultaneously. The Munda started another uprising in 1800 (until 1802) and charged back in 1819-1820. Kherwar and Bhoomij revolts followed. In 1855, the “Santhals waged war against the permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis.” From 1855 to 1860, 10,000 Santhals managed to run a parallel government in order to collect their own taxes and make their own laws. The instigators of the movement were arrested after the British government announced a 10,000 rupees reward for their arrest. There were several Birsa movements from 1874 to 1899 and Kherwar movements from 1874 to 1881. In 1914, 26,000 tribals participated in the Tana bhajgat movement.⁸² Adivasis from Jharkhand also had their role to play in the struggle for India’s independence. They were strong supporters of the Gandhian movement. According to K.S Singh, three to four hundred Adivasis walked 200 miles from Ranchi to Gaya to be present for Gandhi’s presentation in 1922. They enthusiastically helped with the preparation of the *pandal* (temporary religious structure) and were rewarded with membership badges and Gandhi caps, which they wore proudly for many years.⁸³ At the independence, political parties started to emerge in Jharkhand and a closer look at their creation and goals will be taken in a later section.

It is widely believed that tribal communities prefer to live in remote areas where they survive through paddy cultivation, plough agriculture and forest resources. Because they do not organize themselves hierarchically and they generally do not specialize, they are thought to be strangers to

⁸² Government of Jharkhand, History, <http://jharkhand.nic.in/history.htm>, (information retrieved in August 2008)

⁸³ K. S. Singh, “Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism: A Case Study of the Tanabagats in Chotanagpur, 1914-25”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, No. 11 (Nov. 1988): 48.

the modern ways of life.⁸⁴ Despite their preference for a more ‘traditional’ way of life, with the coming to Jharkhand of outsiders or *dikus*, tribals have had no other choice than to start mixing up, working and living with the main stream Hindu population. A significant proportion of the labour force in the mining and industrial sectors of the Jharkhand economy comprises ‘permanent’ tribal workers, who are receiving enough wages to save and achieve capital accumulation for their community.⁸⁵

The Jharkhand region is home to an impressive percentage of India’s natural resources. The region is rich with uranium, coal, tungsten, steatite, mica, magnesium, limestone, kyanite, iron ore, fire clay, dolomite, copper, chromite, china clay, bauxite and asbestos to name a few.⁸⁶ One of the first resources to be exported from Jharkhand’s forest was Lac. Timber and coal also became important materials to come out of Jharkhand for building the national railways. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Tata Company set its iron and steel factory in Jharkhand due to abundant iron ore reserves.⁸⁷ Because of all the natural riches, Jharkhand has been the most industrialised region of Bihar⁸⁸, which surprisingly does not mean that it has been a socio-economically developed region. Indeed, only some areas of Jharkhand have been targeted for industrialization and the surroundings did not profit from the economic activities. Also,

⁸⁴ Stuart Corbridge, “Competing Inequalities: The Scheduled Tribes and the Reservations System in India’s Jharkhand”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb. 2000): 73. See also: James C. Scott. “La montagne et la liberté”, *Critique Internationale*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2001) : 85-104.

⁸⁵ Stuart Corbridge, “Industrialisation, internal colonialism and ethnoregionalism: the Jharkhand, India, 1880-1980”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1987): 249.

⁸⁶ Ratnaker Bhengra, C.R. Bijoy and Shimreichon Luithui, *The Adivasis of India* (United Kingdom, Minority Rights Group International, 1999): 16.

⁸⁷ Govind Kelkar and Dev Nathan, *Gender & Tribe: Women, Land and Forests* (New Delhi, Zed Books, 1991): 83.

⁸⁸ Anand Chakravarti, “Caste and Agrarian Class: A View from Bihar”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.36, No.17 (April 28, 2001): 1451.

investments in the region have brought more dividends for outsiders than for the Jharkhand economy.⁸⁹

The wealth of Jharkhand just described above, however, does not explain the attitude of the political actors, as the introductory chapter suggested, and therefore it had very little influence on the 2000 outcome. The next chapter deals more specifically with the tribal identity associated with the Jharkhand region and the role of this identity in the political struggle of the Jharkhand people.

⁸⁹ K. N. Prasad, *Problems of Indian Economic Development: National and Regional Dimensions* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1983): 433.

CHAPTER THREE

Tribal Identity as a Factor of Political Empowerment and Freedom

The hypothesis tested in this chapter involves tribal identity and political empowerment. It looks at the evolution of identities in the public sphere and analyses the role of these transformations in the unfolding of political events. It is plausible that tribal peoples' claim for a separate Jharkhand was closely linked to the fear of loss of culture, especially since 1947, when the preservation of tribal cultures took a back seat to the economic development of the tribal areas. This became clear after Indira Gandhi's campaign to get rid of poverty in the 1970s, when the planning process was increasingly centralized and the tribal peoples were left out of the main decisions concerning them.⁹⁰ The situation can somewhat be compared to the Canadian one where Quebec nationalism rises every time a significant proportion of the population of that province feels a loss in the recognition of its particular identity. The transformation of tribal identity associated with the struggle for a separate Jharkhand may or may not have been the decisive element that pushed New Delhi to accept the re-organisation of Bihar, but it has been, without a doubt, instrumental in the unfolding of events. Identity politics offers a wide array of theories and although instrumentalism has its limitations, it will be used as a theoretical framework explaining the adivasis' identity transformations and the use of changing identities for political coalitions.

3.1 Identity Politics

Many scholars like Paul Brass, Kachan Chandra, James Manor and David Laitin to name but a few have used identity politics and constructivist approaches to explain ethnic and nationalist movements as well as the relevance of identity to politics. Several cases have been looked at

⁹⁰ Paul Brass, *The new Cambridge History of India: The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990): 179.

throughout the years, yet most of the researchers agree on the fact that “whether ethnic divisions are built upon visible biological differences among populations or rest upon invisible cultural and ideational distinctions, the boundaries around and the meanings attached to ethnic groups are pure social constructions.”⁹¹ Identities are thus in constant movement: they change according to the situation and according to the changes in others’ identities. The “I” or “we” do not have the same meaning in opposition to the “other A” or the “other B”. Before becoming a group member, an individual has a vague understanding of its main identity/ethnic category. Without stimuli, without a political or social tension, the individual does not necessarily feel the need to be part of a specific identity group. However, because a world without social interaction does not exist, individuals are confronted to the others and they feel the need to belong.⁹² One individual can be a member of different identity groups and can emphasize its belonging to a certain group over the other depending on the situation. Group identity is usually formed in opposition to another group or another identity; a line is drawn between the members and the outsiders. “Whether rational or not, individuals develop anxiety and latent fears about the intentions of “outsiders,” leading them to embrace the collective [...] as a protector from perceived threats.”⁹³

Kanchan Chandra and David Laitin have written at length about identity construction and deconstruction. They mention that a difference should be made between the three components of identity: categories, attributes, and dimensions. A category is a wide group, to which many individuals can identify, for example, mother or lawyer. “Attributes are the characteristics that

⁹¹ J. Nagel, “Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture”, *Social Forces*, No.41, p.167-168, in Thomas C. Davis, “Revisiting Group Attachment: Ethnic and National Identity”, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Mar. 1999): 26.

⁹² Jean Tournon, “Construction et déconstruction du groupe ethnique”, *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Oct. 1989) : 337.

⁹³ Thomas C. Davis, “Revisiting Group Attachment: Ethnic and National Identity”, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Mar. 1999): 29.

qualify an individual for membership in a given category,” and summed together, categories become dimensions. For example, the dimension of religion includes the categories Christian, Hindu, Muslim, etc.⁹⁴ Because categories and dimensions are determined by attributes, it is with the later that the individual can play in order to be part of a certain group. Individuals possess many attributes, which decide on the repertoire of identities they can choose from. “The possible ethnic demographics for the population, as well as the degree of stability of these demographics, are determined by the map of attributes for the population. Differences in the maps of attributes are the key variable driving the construction of different ethnic demographics across countries.”⁹⁵ These pools of attributes render the study of identity politics rather unstable.⁹⁶ A group can never be considered as fixed if we accept that it evolves along with its members. But what if the group could not easily evolve?

The case of India is quite interesting and challenging for the constructivist approach. So many identities can be found within a single Indian, yet some categories tend to remain unchallenged despite the internal movements of their members. Castes are not classes and they are not unstable identity groups either. André Béteille has said, many years back, that the Indian reservations policies will remain problematic until there is a clear decision whether these policies are directed towards castes or towards classes. Indeed, a “class is an aggregate of individuals, and, as such, quite different from a caste which is an enduring group. [...] A class derives the character it has by virtue of the characteristics of its individual members. In the case of caste

⁹⁴ Kanchan Chandra and David Laitin, “A Constructivist Framework For Thinking About Identity Change”, Paper prepared for presentation at conference on *Modeling Constructivist Approaches to Ethnic Identity and Incorporating Them Into New Research Agendas* (December 6-8, 2002): 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10

⁹⁶ Kanchan Chandra, “Ethnic Bargains, Group Instability, and Social Choice Theory”, *Politics & Society*, Vol. 29 No. 3 (September 2001): 349.

[...] it is the group that stamps the individual with its own characteristics.”⁹⁷ This is challenging for the researcher, as Indians are members of both static and dynamic groups. And in the case of Bihar, that static group is persistent. Indeed, Bihar has “long been notorious as a stronghold of political casteism. The Biharis did not wait until independence to mobilize caste groups for political purposes; they began to do so in the 1920s and have continued ever since.”⁹⁸ Bihar is widely known in India as a very traditional society, “highly inegalitarian [and] class- or caste-ridden.”⁹⁹

Speaking of India, James Manor mentions that there are five possible identity dimensions. There are “identities grounded in religion”, mainly Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism; “identities grounded in language [...] ‘Tribal’ identities among adivasis or ‘scheduled tribes’ [...] ‘Tribal’ identities among people in Himalayan or remote north-eastern areas [and] ‘Aryan’ and ‘Dravidian’ identities.”¹⁰⁰ Apart from the Himalayan and north-eastern tribal peoples, most of the groups are racially similar; their differences are mainly social and ideological. The dimensions are either religious, linguistic or cultural. All of these dimensions have the possibility to be crosscutting and to become at some point stronger or weaker than the other. The heterogeneity of the Indian society and the large population allows for a wide range of identities. These identities “include at least three different kinds of caste identities (*varna*, and *jati*), religious identities [...] and identifications with clans and lineages.”¹⁰¹ *Varna* refers to the four main orders mentioned earlier (Brahmin, Khsatriya, Vaishya and Shudra), and *jati* to castes like the Yadav in Bihar and

⁹⁷ André Beteille, “The Backward Classes and the New Social Order”, Oxford University Press, New Delhi (1981): 38.

⁹⁸ Harry W. Blair, “Ethnicity and Democratic Politics in India: Caste as a Differential Mobilizer in Bihar”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Oct. 1972): 114.

⁹⁹ K. N. Prasad, *Problems of Indian Economic Development: National and Regional Dimensions* (New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1983), 363.

¹⁰⁰ James Manor, “Ethnicity and Politics in India”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Jul. 1996): 461-462.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 461-463

Uttar Pradesh. Individuals who can choose which groups they want to belong to use these diverse identities – within the non changeable caste identity – and politicians who wish to attract a certain category of people to their cause also use them.

‘Identity entrepreneurs’ have the power to construct a relevant set of identities in order to gain something. They “might include politicians seeking votes in an electoral setting; instigators of ethnic ‘riots’ [...], organizers of protest activity; social or religious reformers [...] Identity entrepreneurs [...] are instrumental actors who seek to construct coalitions of optimal size.”¹⁰² To take an extreme example, political parties, during an electoral campaign, might be tempted to play the religious card in a traditional community while simultaneously talking about sexual freedom elsewhere in order to attract gays in their ranks. Once identity entrepreneurs create an optimal coalition, it is believed that individuals will want to join that coalition, as they also want to be on the winning side.¹⁰³ However, as mentioned earlier, groups are, to a certain extent, changing and unstable. As soon as a new dimension is introduced, the chemistry of the winning coalition will be modified and a new group will be formed.¹⁰⁴ This is one of the reasons why a political coalition can be the winner by a strong majority in one election and come dead last in the next one.

¹⁰² Kanchan Chandra and David Laitin, “A Constructivist Framework For Thinking About Identity Change”, Paper prepared for presentation at conference on *Modeling Constructivist Approaches to Ethnic Identity and Incorporating Them Into New Research Agendas* (December 6-8, 2002): 13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 15

¹⁰⁴ Kanchan Chandra, “Ethnic Bargains, Group Instability, and Social Choice Theory”, *Politics & Society*, Vol. 29 No. 3 (September 2001): 349.

3.2 Tribal Identity versus Jharkhand Identity

Table 2 demonstrates the contradictions between the way adivasis perceive themselves and the way outsiders see them.

Table 2

Perception about the Tribals¹⁰⁵

Perception by SC and ST Commission	Perception by Tribals
Isolation in forest	Casteless, classless and egalitarian society
Tribal dialect	Community based economic system
Animism	Symbiotic with nature
Primitive occupation	Democratic policy based on consensus
Carnivorous diet	Fight for dignity and self-respect
Naked or semi-naked	Change according to demands of the times
Nomadic habits	Accommodative history
Love drink and dance	Love art and literature

Although the different tribes living in Jharkhand are distinct from each other, sometimes poles apart when it comes to language, culture, traditions and economic conditions, they are united through their common tribal identity. This common identity separates them from those who are non-tribal and pushes them to continue their struggle against foreign elements. The simple fact of being tribal among a sea of outsiders reinforces the solidarity feeling and leads to cooperation rather than conflict. Adivasis have, like many other groups, gained their identity through an opposition with the outsider. Without the mainstream Hindu population in Bihar, each tribe would most likely have focused on its unique identity rather than on the global adivasi one. This tension between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between the adivasis and the *dikus* (a term coined by the adivasis to describe the outsiders) has been fuelled in part by tribal leaders who wanted to highlight their cause.

¹⁰⁵ Munda Ram Dayal, “Adivasis Identity: Crisis and Way Out: Rising Fascism”, *Update Collective*, p.53 in Prakash Louis, “Marginalisation of Tribals”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.49 (Nov. 18, 2000): 4089.

Adeed Dawisha wrote that nations are ideologically created and sustained through the reviving of their glorious past. Leaders are using myths, heroisms, achievements and confronted obstacles to inform the population about the grandeur of their nation and lineage. The less rewarding episodes are generally forgotten to offer a perfect image of the people's struggle.¹⁰⁶ The list of historical events presented by the government of Jharkhand on its website and enumerated in the previous chapter illustrates this fact¹⁰⁷. The Jharkhand leaders have promoted an idealized version of the local histories and they have glorified the tribal revolts in order to create – with concrete and imaginative elements – a politically distinct tribal community, premised on the uniqueness of its traditions.¹⁰⁸ These leaders sought to have South Bihar's historical political autonomy recognized; they corrected history to get the wanted modern identity. The tribal identity came to be associated with the greater autonomy demands for the Jharkhand. The tradition of protest against foreign invasion has been emphasized through chosen historical episodes in order to make the modern movement for independence historically legitimate.¹⁰⁹ The reservations system has enabled this tribal identity to crystallize and to strengthen the idea of an historical exploitation and marginalization of adivasis. However, adivasis, in order to keep their different status have to ensure that the reservations do not contribute to their total integration into the mainstream society. They have to play the 'difference/protection' card rather than the 'sameness/normalization' one.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Adeed Dawisha, "Nation and Nationalism: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Debates", *International Studies Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2002): 5-6.

¹⁰⁷ Government of Jharkhand, "history", <http://jharkhand.nic.in/history.htm>, (information retrieved in October 2008)

¹⁰⁸ Amit Prakash, "Decolonisation and Tribal Policy in Jharkhand: Continuities with Colonial Discourse", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug. 1999): 116.

¹⁰⁹ Prakash, Amit, "Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity", Orient Longman, 2002, p.293 & 297

¹¹⁰ Corbridge, Stuart, "Competing Inequalities: The Scheduled Tribes and the Reservations System in India's Jharkhand", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Feb. 2000, p.65

The adivasi identity came to be synonymous with the Jharkhand identity, which was “premised on the uniqueness of the tribal cultural heritage and way of life.”¹¹¹ However, throughout the years, the adivasis, who were fighting against foreign exploitation, saw a commonality in other groups’ struggle. They associated with backward groups like the dalits and Muslims who became an integral part of the political and social struggle. “Jharkhand came to be known as ‘the land of the destitutes’ comprising of all the deprived sections of Indian society.”¹¹² Along with its 28 per cent tribal population, Jharkhand has 15 per cent scheduled castes and 40 per cent other backward classes.¹¹³ The change in the struggle against the exploitation has made the Jharkhand identity evolve and become, over time, more inclusive of socially and economically backward groups. The tribal identity remains at the core of the Jharkhand identity, but some members of the new Jharkhand group have attributes differentiating them from the original members.

The *Jharkhand Mukti Morcha* had a lot to do with the evolution of the Jharkhand identity from purely tribal to the larger backward and exploited conception. After independence, two protest movements evolved in parallel: the tribal agrarian unrest in Dhanbad district and the workers unrest in the coal mining districts. At that time, tribes were practicing forcible harvesting in order to protest against the landlords who acquired their lands illegally. They would go in the fields and harvest what was, according to them, their due share of the crops. This “agrarian unrest [...] attracted the attention of a section of militant trade unionists, led by A.K. Roy [a chemical engineer turned politician¹¹⁴], operating in the colliery sector.”¹¹⁵ These unionists were

¹¹¹ Amit Prakash, *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* (Orient Longman, 2002), 293 & 297.

¹¹² Prakash Louis, “Marginalisation of Tribals”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.49 (Nov. 18, 2000): 4088.

¹¹³ A. K. Roy, “Jharkhand: From Separation to Liberation”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.41 (October 7, 2000): 3631.

¹¹⁴ “Candidate Watch: A.K. Roy,” *The Hindu*, April 17, 2004, <http://www.hindu.com/2004/04/17/stories/2004041702451200.htm>

working for the rights of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes miners and thought that in order to have a deep impact on the social way of life, the two movements should merge. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) was thus inaugurated in 1972 and it “sought to transform spontaneity into organization and channelize unleashed objectives. [...] It would not merely seek to restore land to the tribals but also initiate steps to dynamize the rural economy.”¹¹⁶ So, what was originally a tribal protest movement, evolved into a broader resistance and the new definition of a *Jharkhandi* would not leave place to xenophobia. The JMM would state that in an autonomous Jharkhand state, any producer, irrespective of caste, religion or tribe would be a *Jharkhandi*.¹¹⁷ Shibu Soren soon became the tribal leader of the JMM and he is the one who brought the JMM from an anti-exploitation group to a full-fledged political party. A.K. Roy eventually left the militant group to join the Communist Party of India (Marxist) from which he was expelled before forming the Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC).¹¹⁸

Outside actors also contributed to the changes in the Jharkhand identity. The BJP, for instance, attempted to rewrite history by saying that adivasis are simply very backward Hindus. They call them ‘jungles’ or ‘vanvasis’, which generally means ‘forest dwellers’ but which has taken the pejorative meaning of ‘uncivilised’.¹¹⁹ The BJP clubs together the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes into one wide backward category. The Party also contributed to the near erasing of the tribal essence of the south Bihar region by making a formal proposal to rename it

¹¹⁵ Arvind N. Das, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980* (New Delhi, Manohar Publications, 1983), 271.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273

¹¹⁸ “Candidate Watch: A.K. Roy,” *The Hindu*, April 17, 2004, <http://www.hindu.com/2004/04/17/stories/2004041702451200.htm>

¹¹⁹ Prakash Louis, “Marginalisation of Tribals”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.49 (Nov. 18, 2000): 4089 and Ratnaker Bhengra, C.R. Bijoy and Shimreichon Luithui, *The Adivasis of India* (United Kingdom, Minority Rights Group International, 1999): 4.

Vananchal instead of Jharkhand. In sum, the Jharkhand identity is malleable and has been, more than once, influenced and transformed by outside actors.

3.3 Political Discourse and New Jharkhand Identity

The main national political parties like the Congress, the BJP, the Janata Dal and the Communist Party are present in Jharkhand. Most adivasi MPs belong to these parties and those who join the ranks of tribal oriented parties are a minority.¹²⁰ As it will be seen in greater details in the next chapter, the Congress Party has ruled Bihar and Jharkhand from Independence to 1992 (with a few short breaks) and the BJP has now taken the lead in Jharkhand while the Rashtriya Janata Dal is more popular in Bihar.¹²¹ However, local political parties are still present in Jharkhand and they have, in the past, had good political victories at the state level.

Tribal peoples organized themselves to ask for more autonomy before the British had even left India. In the late 1920s, leaders from South Bihar articulated their idea of Jharkhand in a Memorandum to the Simon Commission on constitutional reforms.¹²² In 1935, the same year as the adoption of the Government of India Act, Jharkhand people formed the Adivasi Mahasabha or the Great Council of the Indigenous Peoples.¹²³ The Adivasi Mahasabha was later renamed the All India Jharkhand Party and later again the Jharkhand party by its leader, Jaipal Singh¹²⁴ Just before the Indian independence, Jaipal Singh approached Pakistan's first leader, Mohammed

¹²⁰ Ratnaker Bhengra, C.R. Bijoy and Shimreihon Luithui, *The Adivasis of India* (United Kingdom, Minority Rights Group International, 1999): 9.

¹²¹ Manish Tiwary and Mahesa Tivari, *Participatory Forest Policies and Politics in India: Joint Forest Management Institutions in Jharkhand and West Bengal* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004): 34.

¹²² Amit Prakash, "Decolonisation and Tribal Policy in Jharkhand: Continuities with Colonial Discourse", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug. 1999): 116.

¹²³ Mullick Samar Bosu "Indigenous Peoples and Electoral Politics in India: an Experience of Incompatibility", in Kathrin Wessendorf, *Challenging Politics: Indigenous Peoples' Experiences with Political Parties and Elections* (IWGIA, 2001): 123.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124

Ali Jinnah, to propose that he keeps Jharkhand in the corridor between the western and eastern wings of Pakistan.¹²⁵ At Independence, Singh raised rather contradictory issues: the issue of the unique political consciousness in Jharkhand necessitating seat reservations for tribal and the issue of Indian unity, implying “that the tribal identity was a part of the Indian identity and yet separate from it.”¹²⁶ Just like the Maithili speakers of North Bihar, Jaipal Singh submitted a proposal for the autonomy of his region to the State Reorganization Commission in 1955.¹²⁷

Despite the frustration of not being heard by the centre, the Jharkhand party continued its fight and Jaipal Singh could secure 31 seats (out of 276¹²⁸) and 32 seats (out of 264¹²⁹) respectively in the 1951 and 1957 state assembly elections which made the party the chief opposition to the Congress in Bihar.¹³⁰ However, to the great deception of many, Singh decided to associate his Jharkhand party to the Congress in the 1960s.¹³¹ What happened to the Jharkhand Party and Jaipal Singh is widely seen as one of the Congress strategies for dealing with “tribal protest movements”; the Party appropriates the movement, divides it, and co-opts the leaders in satisfying their desire for power.¹³² The Jharkhand Party was consequently on the down side when the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha emerged in the 1970s. The JMM quickly spread all over the

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.118

¹²⁶ Amit Prakash, “Decolonisation and Tribal Policy in Jharkhand: Continuities with Colonial Discourse”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 27, No. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug. 1999): 131.

¹²⁷ Vijay Kapur, “Forest Land Afforestation and Erosion of Tribal Rights: the Jharkhand Experience”, (paper submitted at Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth Project South & South East Asia Regional Expert Meeting, New Delhi, March 2002): 3.

¹²⁸ Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on General Election 1951 to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar*, (New Delhi, 1951): 3.

¹²⁹ Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on General Election 1957 to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar*, (New Delhi, 1957): 3.

¹³⁰ S. E. Corbridge, “The ideology of tribal economy and society: politics in the Jharkhand, 1950-1980”, *Modern Asian Studies*, No. 22, Vol.1 (1988): 2.

¹³¹ Prakash Louis, “Fractured Mandate for Social Change in Bihar”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (March 18th 2000): 980.

¹³² Paul Brass, *The new Cambridge History of India: The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990): 183.

districts of the four states of the proposed Jharkhand.¹³³ It can be argued that the JMM has had, since its creation, several occasions to voice its opinion at the state as well as at the national level. Its response to the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State Relations is a good example.

The Sarkaria Commission was constituted in June 1983 by the Ministry of Home Affairs and after conducting extensive studies, it delivered its conclusions and recommendations in an exhaustive report in January 1988. The main role of the Commission was to examine and review “the working of the existing arrangements between the Union and States in regard to powers, functions and responsibilities in all spheres and [to] recommend such changes or other measures as may be appropriate.”¹³⁴ Politicians were asked for their opinions on the matter and 247 recommendations were formulated.¹³⁵ The only registered regional party of South Bihar in the 1983-1988 period was the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.¹³⁶ At that time, the JMM said “that the State’s model of development has failed due to its inability to respond to the needs of a Jharkhandi society that is a politically self-conscious identity.” According to the JMM, Jharkhand’s autonomy would bring both faster development and the realisation of the region’s political aspirations.¹³⁷ Without saying that new states ought to be formed in India, the Commission acknowledged the fact that different groups would like to enjoy a better autonomy and gain more political power. The Commission recommended that the Indian government revisits the Nehru idea of Panchayati Raj (local government) in order to give a political voice to

¹³³ Mullick Samar Bosu, “Indigenous Peoples and Electoral Politics in India: an Experience of Incompatibility”, in Kathrin Wessendorf, *Challenging Politics: Indigenous Peoples’ Experiences with Political Parties and Elections* (IWGIA, 2001): 125.

¹³⁴ Inter-State Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, “Sarkaria Commission – Introduction”, 1988, p.1, <http://interstatecouncil.nic.in/INTRODUCTION.pdf>

¹³⁵ Inter-State Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, “Sarkaria Commission”, <http://interstatecouncil.nic.in/SARCOMM.htm>, (information retrieved in December 2008)

¹³⁶ Amit Prakash, *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* (Orient Longman, 2002): 301.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 303

a greater number of people.¹³⁸ If, at the time of the Sarkaria Commission, the JMM discourse was about Jharkhand cultural uniqueness and its lack of socio-economic development, it slowly transformed in face of the little results obtained.

By the year 1995, the cultural identity issue had vanished from the JMM campaign manifesto and soon all major political interests would agree to see the Jharkhand autonomy demand as one rooted in the poor development of the region rather than in any cultural particularity.¹³⁹ 50 years after the foundational cultural and linguistic principles that guided federalism in India, the focus had shifted toward economic principles. There were serious discussions about the Jharkhand situation in New Delhi following the 1990 Committee on Jharkhand Matters and the general opinion can be summarized by the remarks of Chitta Basu, MP of West Bengal in 1993, who acknowledged development problems in the region and favoured a decentralized development scheme within Bihar:

There is no basic question of ethnicity, language or culture for the demand of creation of Jharkhand State. The basic issue or the basic emotion or the basic sensitivity for the demand of creation of Jharkhand state is a regional disparity of development... and because of regional disparity in development, the question of having a separate state has arisen and not on the basis of language, not on the basis of culture and not on the basis of ethnicity because even if Jharkhand State is created, it will be a multi-lingual State..., it will be a multi-ethnic State;... it will be a multi-cultural State... [...] The grievance is even if some resource is transferred to the State by the centre, the appropriate proportion does not go [to] the Jharkhand area and therefore, there should be an autonomous council which should be guaranteed with wide powers of administration and legislative business and also guaranteed with statutory financial resources both from the centre and State. This can be reasonable, rational and satisfactory solution to the Jharkhand problem.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Inter-State Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "Sarkaria Commission – Chapter XXI: General Observations", 1988, p.543, <http://interstatecouncil.nic.in/CHAPTERXXI.pdf>

¹³⁹ Amit Prakash, *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* (Orient Longman, 2002): 308-321

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 315-316

This is where the 'adivasi identity' or tribal empowerment hypothesis needs to be supplemented by other elements as it could not directly lead to the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar. Adivasis did gain some political power in Jharkhand; enough to get their voice heard, but not enough to get Jharkhand autonomous on the basis of tribal identity. The tribal identity has not been strong enough to put sufficient pressure on the governments of Patna and New Delhi for them to acknowledge the need for an autonomous Jharkhand. The people of Jharkhand lost faith in the mobilizational power of tribal identity, a fact that has been noticeable election after election. If the Jharkhand Party and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha were successful in attracting votes during their earlier years, they lost the confidence of the electorate who saw more benefits in voting for a mainstream party like the Hindu-elitist BJP. If the feelings of ethnicity can be exacerbated through the sentiment of deprivation and of unequal distribution of resources¹⁴¹, we can argue that by encompassing socio-economic aspects, the Jharkhand 'ethnicity' evolved beyond the tribal aspect while at the same time remaining somewhat cultural. The transformation of the tribal identity into a Jharkhand identity and then a 'backward' one is thus relevant. Has that 'backward' identity been a sufficient reason to convince the central government of the need for Jharkhand outside of Bihar?

3.4 The Backward Identity of Jharkhand

Jharkhand did not become a nation per se, but the nature of its fight for a greater autonomy can certainly be associated with nationalist aspirations. Paul R. Brass, in his book on nationalism and ethnicity, makes an interesting comment about the factors leading to nationalistic demands. Brass mentions that the success of an ethnic group with political demands depends on four main factors: "the persistence or the perception of the persistence of an unequal distribution of

¹⁴¹ Smita G. Sabhlok, "Nationalism and ethnicity and the nation-state in South Asia", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2002): 35.

resources [...], the degree to which the process of building communal consciousness has involved the creation of the organizational resources necessary to build a political movement, the response of the government [...], and the general political context.”¹⁴² Leaving aside the factors two, three and four for the moment, let us have a look at the *persistence or the perception of the persistence of an unequal distribution of resources* factor. It is primordial to mention here that the unequal distribution can either be against or to the advantage of the nationalist group.¹⁴³ For instance, as seen in the first hypothesis, the elite of Jharkhand could say that they need their own state because they are so much richer than the people of Bihar. Because this hypothesis has been refuted earlier, this section will focus solely on the other side of the coin; namely on the victimisation of the Jharkhand people by the Jharkhand people themselves.

Some authors, like Sajal Basu for instance, argue that in 2000, it was “the people’s urge for speedier economic development [that] led to the creation of [...] new states.”¹⁴⁴ The argument makes sense as, as stated earlier, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, when questioned by the Sarkaria Commission about its views on the centre-states relations in India, claimed that Jharkhand was a backward region and that it should thus be separated from Bihar. The leaders wished to capitalize on the deprivation argument while portraying their region’s “non-development, development of underdevelopment, or retarded development.”¹⁴⁵ In order to understand the validity (or non-validity) of the “backward” argument, we can look at how Jharkhand people think they are doing now compared to how they were doing then. However we have to keep in

¹⁴² Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1991): 41.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Sajal Basu, “Ethno-regionalism and Tribal Development: Problems and Challenges in Jharkhand”, in *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*, Govinda Chandra Rath editor (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2006): 136.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

mind that Bihar is, without a doubt, backward, so the question “is (or was) Jharkhand backward *compared to Bihar?*” should not be forgotten.

Because the 2001 census of India has been undertaken only a few months after the Bihar and Jharkhand separation, the data presented offers an excellent starting point to know what was the situation of the two states at the time of the split. And it is also the first official federal document showing data from Bihar and Jharkhand separately. According to this census, 35.1% of the occupied houses in Bihar were in good conditions, 54% in liveable condition and 10.9% of them were dilapidated. In Jharkhand, the figures were slightly better with 41.6%, 53% and 5.4% respectively. In both states, the houses were owned rather than rented and had generally from six to eight members. In Bihar, 42.6% of houses had only one room, and 28.6% had two rooms. In Jharkhand, the figures were at 32.2% and 36.5% for one-room and two-room houses respectively. In 2001, the drinking water conditions were slightly better in Bihar than in Jharkhand. In the former, 39.6% of households had access to drinking water within premises, 48.2% near premises and 12.2% had to go away. The main source of drinking water was a handpump (77.9%). In Jharkhand, only 20% of households had access to water within premises, 55.5% had a near access and 24.5% had to fetch the water away. The main source of drinking water was the well (51.8%). Jharkhand had, in 2001, 24.3% of its households electrified while the figure for Bihar was 10.3%. In Bihar, only 9.6% of houses had bathroom facilities while in Jharkhand it was 15.1% of the houses. As for transportation means, 40.6% of Bihar households had access to a bicycle, 3.6% to a scooter or motorcycle and 0.9% to a car. In Jharkhand, the numbers were at 50.3%, 9.3% and 1.5% respectively.¹⁴⁶ Bihar’s percentage of people living in

¹⁴⁶ Census of India, Office of the Registrar & Census Commissioner, India, “Bihar, housing profile”, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/States_at_glance/State_Links/10_bih.pdf and “Jharkhand,

urban setting was at 10.5%, the literacy rate was at 47% and the work participation rate was at 34%. In Jharkhand, the same indicators were at 22.2%, 54% and 38% respectively.¹⁴⁷ The following table summarizes the data.

Table 3

Development indicators, Bihar and Jharkhand 2001

	Bihar	Jharkhand
Occupied houses in:		
- Good condition	35.1%	41.6%
- Liveable condition	54.0%	53.0%
- Dilapidated condition	10.9%	5.4%
Number of rooms		
- 1 room	42.6%	32.2%
- 2 rooms	28.6%	36.5%
Drinking water access		
- Within premises	39.6%	20.0%
- Near premises	49.2%	55.5%
- Away	12.2%	24.5%
Electrified houses	10.3%	24.3%
Bathroom facilities	9.6%	15.1%
Transportation means		
- Bicycle	40.6%	50.3%
- Scooter or motorbike	3.6%	9.3%
- Car	0.9%	1.5%
% of population in urban areas	10.5%	22.2%
Literacy rate	47.0%	54.0%
Work participation rate	34.0%	38.0%

Numbers show that Jharkhand was backward in 2001 but they also demonstrate that the region fared a little better than Bihar for the majority of indicators. So, Jharkhand, within Bihar, was doing better than the rest of the state. The question is now to know if it could do even better separated from Bihar. The JMM argument could not be that Jharkhand was more backward than

housing profile", http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/States_at_glance/State_Links/20_jha.pdf, (information retrieved in November 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Census of India, Office of the Registrar & Census Commissioner, India, "Census data online – Area profile", http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Area_Profile/State_Profile.aspx, (information retrieved in November 2008).

Bihar, but it could very well be that Bihar was keeping Jharkhand in some un-natural backwardness. Has Jharkhand improved its socio-economic situation since it has left Bihar? An article from the World Bank indicates that in 2007 Jharkhand had not yet taken advantage of its mineral wealth and that it was still lacking in infrastructures and remained backward with one of the highest poverty rates in India.¹⁴⁸ Thus, Jharkhand has not taken off economically as it was first expected. The North Bihar elite has taken the lead even in the new Jharkhand and “there is little concern for development and resurgence of culture.”¹⁴⁹ In fact, the newly formed state lacks organisational skills and has not given better opportunities to the marginalized populations. The new state’s “naïve approach to development is exposed in the state government’s advertisement in Delhi newspapers inviting proposals for the development of Jharkhand.”¹⁵⁰ A representative from the association Ekta Parishad judiciously said that smaller states in India are not the solution because smaller assemblies can easily be bought and in the particular case of Bihar and Jharkhand, the division also separated Scheduled Tribes from a wide basin of Scheduled Castes, which could have been, in the long run, politically helpful for an undivided Bihar. According to this representative, Bihar stayed the same after the split while Jharkhand slowly worsened.¹⁵¹

The argument given to refute the economic hypotheses in the introduction chapter can be used here also. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the Indian taxation system does not necessarily reward the states that have the capacity to attract investments. Also, cut from Jharkhand, Bihar is partly

¹⁴⁸ Rajni Khanna and Binayak Sen, “Jharkhand: An Opportunity Lost?”, The World Bank, News and Broadcast, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21608536~menuPK:51340323~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>, (information retrieved in November 2008).

¹⁴⁹ Sajal Basu, “Ethno-regionalism and Tribal Development: Problems and Challenges in Jharkhand”, in *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*, Govinda Chandra Rath editor (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2006): 149.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ New Delhi, India, October 13th, 2008

freed of the mining districts mafia issue associated with a high criminality rate as well as with corruption and Indian scholars observe that the economic impact of the separation is not as important as it was thought because “the mines and heavy industries in Jharkhand have hardly been generating wider gains for the region [and that] these mines and heavy industries have rather emerged as mafia-infested islands in an ocean of economic backwardness, social displacement and environmental degradation.”¹⁵² The predictions seem to have turned out wrong about the future of Bihar without Jharkhand. Some fervent supporters of Jharkhand have been arguing, in order to explain New Delhi’s reluctance to give the South Bihar plateau what it had been demanding for centuries, that Bihar would only be left with “calamity-prone subsistence agriculture north of the Ganga, [...] a few processing industries like the refinery at Barauni dependent on capricious crude supply from Assam, and the humiliating existence of being the rest of India’s poor relation.”¹⁵³ Yet, facts demonstrate that Jharkhand has also been at lost from its separation from Bihar. Without Bihar, Jharkhand is left alone with its own “mining curse”, meaning that development does not necessarily and naturally emerge in regions rich in minerals. The phenomenon can be observed in Africa where mining often brings violence, poor human security and difficult living conditions. The World Bank also stated in 2007 that Jharkhand’s short-term development will not come from mining activities, but from agriculture. And nothing was preventing Jharkhand, while it was still in Bihar, to develop its agriculture economy. In fact, once properly irrigated, crops should be safer in Jharkhand as it is less flood-prone than North Bihar.

¹⁵² Dipankar Bhattacharya, “Bihar after Bifurcation: A Challenging Future”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, Nos.43-44 (October 28th 2000): 3800.

¹⁵³ Arvind N. Das, “Jharkhand Aborted Once Again”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 45 (Nov. 7-13, 1998): 2829.

The Jharkhand identity is certainly different from the Bihar one, for many reasons. It has more tribals, it has a different ecosystem and the economy works differently. These aspects all played in the separation of the region from Bihar, but none of them was powerful enough to give the final blow to Bihar's integrity. Indeed, if these elements were really that important, Jharkhand would have been autonomous long time back, decades before 2000. So, what did happen in 2000 that made Jharkhand a full-fledged state?

CHAPTER FOUR

Coalition politics and the loss of Jharkhand

4.1 Coalition politics in India

This chapter looks at the local history of government formations in Bihar and Jharkhand to understand the vicissitudes of the political movements favoring the creation of the Jharkhand state until they succeeded in their goal in 2000. The tribal, Jharkhand and backward identities brought the Jharkhand cause to the attention of politicians but failed for many years to achieve results. This chapter looks at one significant change in the political system that made the attainment of this goal possible and provided the movement for the autonomy of Jharkhand with a very useful tool: the opportunities offered by coalition politics.

If the Congress dominated politics in the early years of India's Independence, coalition politics has been taking most of the space since the mid-1970s when the Janata Dal managed to win the federal elections. This new political setting had an enormous impact on the states' politics, especially the Northern Hindi speaking states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In relation to this trend, regionalization has also emerged as a major dimension in Indian politics for the past decades. Most states have a dominant local party, competing seriously against national parties like the Congress, the BJP and the Communist Party.¹⁵⁴ This trend has definitely had an impact on the outcomes of the elections in New Delhi and in the individual states as coalitions with regional powers need to be formed in order for the leading parties to be strong enough to rule.

Because the theory of coalition is closely related to the realist game theory, scholars are overwhelmingly concerned about the model that could emerge from the theory. They are

¹⁵⁴ Paul Brass, *The new Cambridge History of India: The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990): 107.

concerned with abstractions without necessarily relating to concrete realities. Rather than understanding the consequences of coalitions, they are mainly looking at the causes and factors leading to a political coalition. Indian scholars like Sudha Pai and M.P. Singh, when looking at coalition politics, borrow from theories associating expected costs and benefits to the politicians' behavior.¹⁵⁵ As in a game, politicians fear losses and are thus attracted towards expected benefits. A break in the coalition is considered as a high cost because the leading party can be treated as irresponsible and ineffective at the next poll.¹⁵⁶ A coalition agreement consequently needs to be seriously thought through before the election takes place so unexpected costs, like the withdrawal of an ally, do not occur.

Broadly speaking, coalition politics theories can be classified in three categories. "First, there are utility maximization theories that postulate the size principle that predicts the minimum winning coalition."¹⁵⁷ In this kind of coalition, rational actors choose to enter in an alliance which will allow them to win around 50 percent of the votes. The smaller the coalition is, the more benefits there are for each member. In fact, most of the coalition theories borrow elements from William H. Riker's Theory of Political Coalitions in which he mentions that actors would generally go for minimal winning coalitions¹⁵⁸ or that "participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger."¹⁵⁹ Different criteria can be preferred by actors in order to get a minimal winning coalition: they could get rid of any surplus members,

¹⁵⁵ See, Sudha Pai, "The Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 9 (Sep. 1998): 846-850; and M. P. Singh, "India's National Front and United Front Coalition Governments: A Phase in Federalized Governance", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr. 2001): 330.

¹⁵⁶ Carol Mershon, "The Costs of Coalition: Coalition Theories and Italian Governments", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (Sep. 1996): 538.

¹⁵⁷ M. P. Singh, "India's National Front and United Front Coalition Governments: A Phase in Federalized Governance", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr. 2001): 330.

¹⁵⁸ David H. Koehler, "Legislative Coalition Formation: The Meaning of Minimal Winning Size with Uncertain Participation", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Feb. 1975): 29.

¹⁵⁹ William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965): 32-33.

“minimize the size of the coalition [...] minimize the ideological diversity of the coalition [or] minimize the number of parties in the coalition.”¹⁶⁰ Then, “there are ideological and policy compatibility theories.”¹⁶¹ For example, in India, all the denominations of the Marxist and Communist Parties could decide to enter into a coalition. Meanwhile, not all parties are willing to accept ideological compromises and it is important to underline the fact that in India, coalitions have not been – for the most part – ideological. However, it is easier for the dominant party in the coalition to sell its policy ideas to moderate parties rather than to the extreme right or extreme left ones.¹⁶² And, obviously, when more than one coalition proposal faces a certain party, the party is more likely to choose a coalition where its ideological preferences will be taken into account.¹⁶³ “Third, there are theories that treat coalitions as sequential episodes that offer opportunities for redistribution of political resources that determine the relative political influence of coalition partners.”¹⁶⁴ We have to assume that those fighting elections are fighting to win something and that those who engage in a coalition ought to bargain to control something. Each coalition has a different rationale and to understand it, one needs to find what is that ‘something’ parties are fighting for.¹⁶⁵ In order to test the hypothesis that coalitions have led to the empowerment of the movement for Jharkhand autonomy, it is necessary to look at the evolution of the major parties and the coalitions they built, on the political scene of Bihar, and in relation to developments elsewhere in India.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Taylor, “On the Theory of Government Coalition Formation”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Jul. 1972): 363.

¹⁶¹ M. P. Singh, “India's National Front and United Front Coalition Governments: A Phase in Federalized Governance”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr. 2001): 330.

¹⁶² Itai Sened, “A Model of Coalition Formation: Theory and Evidence”, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (May, 1996): 351.

¹⁶³ Nigel Nicholson, Steven G. Cole and Thomas Rocklin, “Coalition Formation in Parliamentary Situations as a Function of Simulated Ideology, Resources, and Electoral Systems”, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1986): 113.

¹⁶⁴ M. P. Singh, “India's National Front and United Front Coalition Governments: A Phase in Federalized Governance”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr. 2001): 330.

¹⁶⁵ Michael Laver, Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, “Coalition Theory and Local Government: Coalition Payoffs in Britain”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Oct. 1987): 502.

Because each coalition has a different meaning, a different goal and a different formation pattern, they have to be analyzed separately. Two distinct but equally important political outcomes at the Indian national level will be analyzed here in order to better understand the political tensions that arose in Bihar and Jharkhand at the end of the 20th Century. The rise (and to some extent the fall) of both the Janata Dal (JD) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will be looked upon. The history of these two parties is relevant for the current study because, as can be seen in the following table, they have consistently gained power in Bihar, while the Congress and Jharkhand parties seemed to have slowly lost ground.

Table 4Bihar's Legislative Assembly Results 1951-2000 (major parties)¹⁶⁶

Year	Political Parties					
	Congress	BJP	Janata	(C)ommunist/(S)ocialist	Jharkhand	Other
1951	41.38%	-	-	18.11% (s)	8.01%	-
1957	42.09%	-	-	16.01% (s)	14.91%*	-
1962	41.35%	-	-	14.17% (s)	4.39%	17.25% ¹
1967	33.09%	10.42%**	-	17.62% (s)	-	-
1969	30.46%	15.63%**	3.34%	23.78%* (s)	-	-
1972	33.12%	11.69%**	-	16.39% (c)	-	14.02% ²
1977	23.58%	-	42.68%	7.00% (c)	-	-
1980	34.20%	8.41%	7.21%	9.21% (c)	1.69%	15.63% ³
1985	39.30%	7.54%	7.21%	8.86% (c)	1.82%	14.69% ⁴
1990	24.78%	11.61%	25.61%	6.59% (c)	3.14%	-
1995	16.27%	12.96%	27.98%	4.76% (c)	2.32%	7.06% ⁵
2000	11.06%	14.64%	28.34%	6.10%* (c)	3.53%	8.65% ⁵

*combination of votes for more than one party, ** Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)

¹ Swatantra, ² Congress (Organization), ³ Janata (secular), ⁴ Lok Dal, ⁵ Samata Party

The loss of popularity of Jharkhand parties can be explained by the rise in development problems. The Jharkhand population saw in other parties' manifestoes the promise of a faster

¹⁶⁶ Election Commission of India, "Statistical Reports of Assembly Elections", Bihar 1951-2000, <http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/ElectionStatistics.asp>, (information retrieved in November 2008)

socio-economic development while they realized that most Jharkhand parties had the creation of a separate state as their only political goal.¹⁶⁷ The fact that Jharkhand parties could never have any political weight on the national front may also have played a role in the voters' shift. The Indian constitution is federal in form but is strongly unitary in practice. Powers are divided between the central government and the states governments, but "the distribution of power favours the centre." For example, "in certain circumstances, the Union Parliament can make laws on any subject in the state list."¹⁶⁸ New Delhi has the power and without an ally at the centre, Jharkhand could probably not have become reality.

4.2 The Janata Dal

At the National level, the Janata Dal (JD) was formed in 1988 from three different factions. "One wing of the party [...] reached back to the now defunct socialist parties of India [...]. Another wing, [...] came from the middle peasantry and so-called "backward castes" of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh [and the] third wing consisted of Congress dissident leaders [...] who had defected from the Congress Party in 1987 on the corruption issue."¹⁶⁹ The Janata Dal, as the core party in the United Front coalition, held power in New Delhi for a very short period of time, from 1989 to 1991. Divergence of opinions among the coalition front men weakened the party and the leadership took decisions that drove away the timely support it was getting from the Bharatiya Janata Party, which was slowly emerging as a serious contender to power.

At that time, the BJP was campaigning for the erection of a Hindu temple on the site of a mosque, the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. The city is famously known as the birth

¹⁶⁷ Amit Prakash, *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* (Orient Longman, 2002): 354.

¹⁶⁸ Sagarika Dutt, "Identities and the Indian State: an overview", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.3 (Sept. 1998): 420.

¹⁶⁹ Lewis P. Jr. Fickett, "The Rise and Fall of the Janata Dal", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 12 (Dec. 1993): 1151.

place of Lord Rama and the Hindu fundamentalists claimed that the Babri Masjid was built on the site of an ancient temple dedicated to Lord Rama. The BJP had always mentioned, in its manifestoes, that it would reclaim the temple upon its election. The leader of the Janata Dal, V.P. Singh, not only opposed, in 1990, the destruction of the Babri Masjid but he also ordered the arrest of L.K Advani (BJP leader) on his pilgrimage to Ayodhya.¹⁷⁰ These decisions played a major role in the JD's loss of support and the gains for the BJP. The mosque was finally destroyed in 1992 by Advani and his followers.

The Janata Dal leadership took another controversial decision in 1990 when it implemented the recommendations of the Mandal Commission on the reservations for Other Backward Castes. The OBC would now be guaranteed 27% of the government jobs. "This action precipitated riots and concomitant deaths throughout India and weakened the Singh government even further."¹⁷¹ Upper caste youths were one of the first groups to react to V.P. Singh's implementation of the Mandal Commission report. Students from upper castes anxious about a perceived decline of their socio-economic status formed in Uttar Pradesh the Arakshan Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti (*group against the reservations*) and the Mandal Ayog Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti (*group against the Mandal Commission*) to show their anger toward a new reservation that would deprive them of some university spots and administration posts.¹⁷² The Mandal Commission report had been submitted in 1980 but Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv did not want to implement recommendations that could affect the higher-caste supporters of the Congress.¹⁷³ The Janata Dal was massively defeated at the 1991 general election, won by Narasimha Rao's Congress

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1152-1156.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1156

¹⁷² Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb. 2000): 97.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 94

(Rajiv Gandhi had been assassinated during the election campaign). Meanwhile, despite its national debacle, the JD achieved victory in Bihar where it widened its electorate due mainly to the promise of reservations for OBCs.¹⁷⁴ The popularity of the Janata Dal in Bihar is an important indicator of the divergence of opinion between New Delhi and Patna.

As shown in the table above, the Janata entered the political scene in Bihar in 1969 with a meager 3.34% of the votes and dramatically increased its vote share to 42.68% in 1977. It should be however noted that in 1977, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh merged with the Janata Dal until the creation of the BJP in 1980.¹⁷⁵ The fact that one of the factions that formed the National Janata Dal came from the backward castes of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh is significant as it can explain why the JD remained powerful in these states despite its humiliation at the centre. While the Congress in Bihar was dominated by upper castes Hindus¹⁷⁶, the JD, with its OBC leadership, has been more representative of the demographic situation of the state. The undivided Bihar had only 13.6% of its population belonging to the 'twice-born' castes while 50.7% were Shudra (OBC). The remainder of the population was divided among Muslims (12.5%), Scheduled Castes (14.1%) and Scheduled Tribes (9.1%).¹⁷⁷ According to Christophe Jaffrelot, Shudra leaders (mainly from the Yadav clan, which accounts for 11% of the Bihar population¹⁷⁸) in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, "used the Janata Dal reservation policy for promoting their caste

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102

¹⁷⁵ Yogendra K. Malik, and V.B. Singh, "Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Apr. 1992): 319.

¹⁷⁶ Manish Tiwary and Mahesa Tivari, *Participatory Forest policies and Politics in India: Joint Forest management Institutions in Jharkhand and West Bengal* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004): 34.

¹⁷⁷ Harry W. Blair, "Ethnicity and Democratic Politics in India: Caste as a Differential Mobilizer in Bihar", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Oct. 1972): 111.

¹⁷⁸ Christophe Jaffrelot, "Sanskritization vs. Ethnicization in India: Changing Identities and Caste Politics before Mandal", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (Sept. - Oct. 2000): 763.

interests.”¹⁷⁹ In Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav won the 1990 and 1995 state elections and continued to govern through his wife in 1997 when he was arrested for a major corruption scandal involving the animal husbandry department.¹⁸⁰ Before his arrest, Laloo Prasad secured the JD electoral ground in Bihar through the formation of an OBC-Muslim alliance. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, when the whole country experienced communal violence and massive deadly riots, Laloo made sure that Muslims were protected in his state. Despite the otherwise infamous reputation of Bihar, there has been no instance of violence related to the mosque destruction. “The kind of protection given to Muslims during Laloo raj was unprecedented, and ever since the Muslims clearly identify themselves with the Janata Dal.”¹⁸¹ The two mistakes made by the Janata Dal at the national level have thus not been negative for the party in Bihar. The Congress did not come back in force in the state and the BJP could never secure a plurality.

Undefeated leader of Bihar in the early and mid 1990s, Laloo Prasad Yadav swore that his state would remain intact and that the separation of the Jharkhand region would only be allowed “on his corpse.”¹⁸² Unfortunately for him, his involvement in the corruption scam tore apart the Janata Dal in Bihar and allowed for an even greater fragmentation of the vote and coalition opportunities. If the Janata Dal under Yadav had the upper hand among OBCs for nearly a decade, its split into the Janata Dal United JD(U) and Laloo Prasad’s new Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) gave some space for another OBC party to gain strength – this one representing the Kurmi

¹⁷⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Rise of the Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb. 2000): 101.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Sanjay Kumar, “New Phase in Backward Caste Politics in Bihar: Janata Dal on the Decline”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 34/35 (Aug. 21 - Sep. 3, 1999): 2474.

¹⁸² Indu Sinha, “Lok Sabha Elections: playing the Semi-Finals”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34, No.38 (September 18, 1999): 2704.

and Koeri castes.¹⁸³ The Samata Party, as shown in the table above, made important gains in the 1995 and 2000 elections, allowing for an alliance with the BJP and thus diminishing the influence of the RJD. As is widely the case in India, new parties, emerging from splits within political groups, see some benefits in allying with leading parties like the BJP or the Congress. These alliances are seldom ideological as “they are merely short-term tactical arrangements established by ambitious politicians that are rooted in the exchange of mutual benefits and the compulsions of power.”¹⁸⁴ The BJP has, without a doubt, taken advantage of party splits and in Bihar the strategy showed some results.

4.3 The Bharatiya Janata Party

Since the decline of the Congress in Indian politics, a party fascinates the scholars by its ability to gain strength through a traditional, orthodox Hindu discourse. The Bharatiya Janata Party has been studied and observed numerous times and it is not the goal of the current research to look into the details of the party. A general picture of the party’s creation will be given in order to understand the evolution of the BJP among Bihar and Jharkhand electorate. Because the BJP was in power in New Delhi at the time of the separation, it is primordial to understand how and when it put its roots in the state politics of Bihar.

In 1925, K.R.B. Hedgewar, a doctor from Nagpur, founded the National Army of Volunteers, or *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) aiming to unite all Hindus through “genuine nationalism”, a popular expression in India previously used by Swami Vivekananda and the Mahatma

¹⁸³ Sanjay Kumar, “New Phase in Backward Caste Politics in Bihar: Janata Dal on the Decline”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 34/35 (Aug. 21 - Sep. 3, 1999): 2473.

¹⁸⁴ Sudha Pai, “The Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 9 (Sep. 1998): 846-850.

Gandhi.¹⁸⁵ The RSS took part in the struggle for independence, advocating pure Hinduism for the nation in order to make sure that Indians are forever free.¹⁸⁶ Often perceived as a militant organization, the RSS has been banned several times in India, like, for instance, when a RSS member assassinated Gandhi. “After the RSS was banned, some of its sympathizers created a new political party in 1951, the Jana Sangh.”¹⁸⁷ The BJP, as it is known today, was created in 1980 from the remnants of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

The most orthodox branch of the party widely believes that “India’s national identity is rooted in Hindu culture for the obvious reason that the Hindus are the dominant majority in the country and [that] a genuine concept of Indian nationhood should incorporate the Hindu heritage along with the traditions, practices, and beliefs that flow through the ancient history of the country.”¹⁸⁸ A group of moderate Hindu nationalists led by A.B. Vajpayee is responsible for the modification of “the chauvinistic and militant aspects of Hindu nationalism in order to widen the electoral appeal of the party.”¹⁸⁹ Without being deep and irreconcilable, a division exists between the moderate and the orthodox branches of the BJP and it can be observed around election time when both factions use different strategies, slogans and symbols to appeal to the electorate.¹⁹⁰ But whatever the faction, the appeal to Hinduism is invariably present as it constitutes the base of the BJP ideology. The vote base of the BJP generally comes from the North Indian Hindus of

¹⁸⁵ P. R. Bhuyan, *Swami Vivekananda, Messiah of Resurgent India* (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2003): 323.

¹⁸⁶ Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, “History”, http://www.rss.org:8080/New_RSS/History/Evolution.jsp, (information retrieved in November 2008).

¹⁸⁷ Rekha Datta, “Hindu Nationalism or Pragmatic Party Politics? A Study of India’s Hindu Party”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1999): 580.

¹⁸⁸ Yogendra K. Malik, and V.B. Singh, “Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Apr. 1992): 321.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 322

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 323

upper and middle classes¹⁹¹ and the party consistently fares badly with minorities (especially Muslims) and scheduled castes. The aversion of the Muslims for the BJP is understandable as the Hindu party represents a threat to their special religious rights. Indeed, the BJP sees Muslims as converted Hindus who will eventually “come back to their senses;” and advocates the dissolution of religious pluralism for India to become a religiously homogeneous nation.¹⁹² In fact, the so-called ‘minority politics’ is not relevant for the BJP as the party considers India as a unique entity or as “one country, one nation, one culture, and one law.”¹⁹³ How then, did the BJP manage to win the confidence of the majority in Jharkhand when the state has, according to the 2001 census, 28% of declared scheduled tribes, 12% of scheduled castes¹⁹⁴ and 13.85% of known Muslims¹⁹⁵?

4.4 Religious Identity of Tribal Peoples in Jharkhand

Many observers of Indian politics would qualify the electoral strategy of the main parties as a divide-and-rule one. The Congress and the BJP, in particular, have become experts in dividing the electorate along religious lines.¹⁹⁶ The tribes in Jharkhand are mainly divided among two religious groups: the Christians and the non-Christians who are generally animists.

¹⁹¹ Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, “The United Colours of Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 34/35 (Aug. 21 - Sep. 3, 1999): 2523.

¹⁹² Shaila Seshia, “Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 11 (Nov. 1998): 1041.

¹⁹³ Rekha Datta, “Hindu Nationalism or Pragmatic Party Politics? A Study of India's Hindu Party”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1999): 580.

¹⁹⁴ Government of Jharkhand, “Profile”, <http://jharkhand.nic.in/about.htm>, (information retrieved in January 2009)

¹⁹⁵ Census of India, Office of the Registrar & Census Commissioner, India, “Census data online – Religious Compositions”, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Social_and_cultural/Religion.aspx, (information retrieved in November 2008)

¹⁹⁶ Mullick Samar Bosu, “Indigenous Peoples and Electoral Politics in India: an Experience of Incompatibility”, in Kathrin Wessendorf, *Challenging Politics: Indigenous Peoples' Experiences with Political Parties and Elections* (IWGIA, 2001): 128.

During the British Raj period, Christian missionaries entered India as they did in many other European colonies. However, they entered quite late in history as the East India Company was reluctant and only allowed missionaries to come when they were forced to by the 1813 Charter Act. The financial help of the British government to missions was mainly directed towards educational activities.¹⁹⁷ Education thus came to the Jharkhand tribes through the Christian missions and as a consequence, those who converted to Christianity were generally better off than those who did not. “Christianity in a latent way contributed to tribal identity formation by providing education. Those educated by the church played a leadership role by mobilizing resources for tribal educational development. [...] Religious conversion also aided social mobility by opening up avenues.”¹⁹⁸ In fact, the educated Christian tribal communities emerged as middle class communities as early as the 1940s and these Christians were in a better position to avail the opportunities offered to them through the government reservations.¹⁹⁹ The socio-economic development offered by Christianity appealed to many tribals and other religious groups tried to intervene in order to stop the growth of the foreign religion.

In the 1930s, Gandhians and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh became active in Jharkhand. Mundas were told that Gandhi was the semi-god who would create the ‘kingdom of righteousness’ and that he would expel foreigners from tribal land. If they believed in Gandhi’s vision, the tribals would be freed from invaders.²⁰⁰ Simultaneously, the RSS and later the Jana Sangh, came into Jharkhand – just like the Christians did decades earlier – to build their own

¹⁹⁷ S. K. Chaube, “The Scheduled Tribes and Christianity in India”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 9 (Feb. 27 - Mar. 5, 1999): 525.

¹⁹⁸ Jose J. Nedumpara, *Political Economy and Class Contradiction* (New Delhi, Anmol Publications PVT: 2004): 86.

¹⁹⁹ Stuart Corbridge, “Competing Inequalities: The Scheduled Tribes and the Reservations System in India’s Jharkhand”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Feb. 2000): 70.

²⁰⁰ K.S. Singh, “Tribal Peasantry, Millenarianism, Anarchism and Nationalism: A Case Study of the Tanabhagats in Chotanagpur, 1914-25”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, No. 11 (Nov. 1988): 47.

schools and education centres. The Hindus spread their ideology through tribal welfare centres like the “Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams, Sandeepanu Ashrams and Birsa Seva Sadans.”²⁰¹ When the BJP came to Jharkhand, it highlighted the developmental differences existing between Christians and non-Christians. The party pointed that Christians were allowed access to educational and health facilities while the non-Christians were not. It was evident, according to the BJP discourse that the Christians were trying to take the lead while leaving the rest of the tribal population in a backward state.²⁰² The BJP informed the non-Christians that they were in fact Hindus and that recognizing it would help them come out of their backwardness.²⁰³ It is not known to what extent this particular strategy of the BJP had a decisive impact on the election results. It may have weakened tribal unity and their common identity, but would that single strategy really have been enough to give the BJP a central role in Jharkhand’s politics? One can doubt it, especially because the ideological card, played by Jharkhand leaders before India’s Independence, never really paid dividends. The BJP needed to have stronger arguments to convince the tribal population into joining its side during electoral campaigns.

4.5 Right wing party and the economic efficiency

The destruction of the Babri Masjid did not necessarily benefit the BJP on the political front as even the majority of its regular followers thought it was an extreme and unnecessary measure. Leaving its orthodox religious ideology aside, the BJP campaigned, following the mid-90s, with an agenda meant to increase its electoral base among all communities and socio-economic classes. In 1995 for instance, the BJP, which was earlier outraged by the Janata Dal decision of

²⁰¹ Prakash Louis, “Marginalisation of Tribals”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.49 (Nov. 18, 2000): 4089.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Mullick Samar Bosu, “Indigenous Peoples and Electoral Politics in India: an Experience of Incompatibility”, in Kathrin Wessendorf, *Challenging Politics: Indigenous Peoples’ Experiences with Political Parties and Elections* (IWGIA, 2001): 128.

implementing the OBC reservations, decided to support the Mandal Commission in order to attract voters from backward classes. The Party also avoided in its 1998 campaign any reference to Ayodhya as it focused solely on food prices, agriculture and its opponents' corruption scandals.²⁰⁴ The moderate A.B. Vajpayee was chosen as the Prime Ministerial candidate and he widely "advocated a return to Gandhian principles of socialism building on a revival of the lower classes and the peasantry, including the untouchables."²⁰⁵ This had the effect of widening the support for the BJP among all strata of the Hindu society. Meanwhile, the BJP also campaigned for the opening of the Indian economy according to the basic principles of the World Bank and IMF doctrines. As the most conservative among the large parties in India, the BJP saw the improvement of the Indian economy as an important, if not primordial matter. The Party was always in favor of giving to the states a greater amount of economic powers and one of its electoral promises was "to set up a commission to report on the formation of smaller states which are economically and democratically viable."²⁰⁶ This is mainly where the BJP became an interesting option for the Jharkhand peoples, ever more interesting than the local parties with the same agenda but without power at the national level. If Rao claimed in his 1993 Independence Day Speech that the leaders of the Jharkhand movement should not lose patience as some solution would eventually be found,²⁰⁷ the BJP straight away claimed that if elected, it would create the state of Vananchal out of the Southern part of Bihar. The 1999 BJP manifesto stated

²⁰⁴ Sudha Pai, "The Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 9 (Sep. 1998): 841-843.

²⁰⁵ Rekha Datta, "Hindu Nationalism or Pragmatic Party Politics? A Study of India's Hindu Party", *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1999): 580.

²⁰⁶ Yogendra K. Malik, and V.B. Singh, "Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Apr. 1992): 328.

²⁰⁷ Tilak D. Gupta, "Jharkhand Autonomy a Far Cry", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 39 (Sep. 25, 1993): 2066.

its “commitment to give full statehood to Delhi and also create Uttaranchal, Vananchal and Chhattisgarh as new states.”²⁰⁸

As briefly stated in the introduction, the original Jharkhand territory comprised districts in four different states: Bihar (79,638 sq km), Madhya Pradesh (31,247 sq km), Orissa (45,897 sq km) and West Bengal (26,546 sq km).²⁰⁹ However, when the central government proposed, in 1994, to establish a Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council (JAAC), the government of Bihar was the only one willing to implement it. The Jharkhand districts in Bihar thus gained some autonomy that the other districts could not enjoy. Even if there were not much tribal elements to the JAAC – no recognition to the unique Jharkhand culture was present²¹⁰ – it sealed the fact that if an autonomous Jharkhand was to be, it would be carved out of Bihar only. This new development on the territorial front pushed the BJP to include the autonomy issue in its political campaign. Jagat Vir Singh Drona of the BJP said in 1993 that the original territorial demand was too eclectic and complicated to manage as four different administrations were involved and that Jharkhand could thus not become reality. However, the BJP recognized certain similarities in the districts of South Bihar and declared that Vananchal could be formed there.²¹¹

The betterment of governance and socio-economic development were the stated reasons supporting the creation of new states in 2000. However, there were obvious contradictions in the political discourse around the issue. On one hand, the BJP was campaigning for social

²⁰⁸ Nitya Rao, “Social justice and empowerment of the weaker sections and gender rights”, in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 130.

²⁰⁹ A. K. Roy, “Jharkhand: From Separation to Liberation”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.41 (October 7 2000): 3631.

²¹⁰ Amit Prakash, *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* (Orient Longman, 2002): 342.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 312

assimilation and unity while, on the other hand, the allies were talking of “political decentralization and [...] assertion of group identities.”²¹²

Fervent tribal representatives may thus have been right when saying that Vananchal was “part of the hindutva ideology to establish a non-tribal upper caste, socio-economic and political hegemony in the region and to keep the tribals in perpetual subservience.”²¹³ They also argued that Vananchal did not recognize the tribal socio-economic and political uniqueness, that it was not self-created and that it shattered the tribal dream for self-rule.²¹⁴ In fact, if some moves were taken by the BJP to acknowledge the cultural differences of Jharkhand (and Chhattisgarh) the emphasis was mainly put on economic policies, leaving aside the tribal priorities. “The strategy adopted for economic growth [was] one of industrial and mineral development largely through encouragement to the private sector” wherein reservations could not be imposed.²¹⁵ However, the idea of a Vananchal state distinct from Bihar has certainly helped the BJP gain popularity in the South Bihar plateau.

4.6 Election results: Lok Sabha 1998-1999, Bihar Legislative Assembly 2000

The Lok Sabha, or House of the People, is composed of a maximum of 552 elected representatives, 530 representing the states, 20 the Union Territories and 2 the Anglo-Indian Community. “The total elective membership is distributed among the States in such a way that

²¹² Nitya Rao, “Social justice and empowerment of the weaker sections and gender rights”, in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 122.

²¹³ Alexius Ekka, “Jharkhand Movement and Parliamentary Elections”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.5 (January 29, 2000): 258.

²¹⁴ Sajal Basu, “Ethno-regionalism and Tribal Development: Problems and Challenges in Jharkhand”, in *Tribal Development in India: The Contemporary Debate*, Govinda Chandra Rath, editor (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2006): 139.

²¹⁵ Nitya Rao, “Social justice and empowerment of the weaker sections and gender rights”, in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 130.

the ratio between the number of seats allotted to each State and the population of the State is, so far as practicable, the same for all States.”²¹⁶ Jharkhand accounts for 14 seats²¹⁷ and Bihar 40²¹⁸.

In the March 1998 election, the BJP won 25.59% (182 seats) of the national votes while the Congress followed closely with a higher share of the votes (25.82%) for only 141 seats. 20 of the seats won by the BJP were in Bihar, twelve of which were in Jharkhand. The BJP increased its share of the vote bank by forming a coalition, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), with several regional parties like the Samata Party and the Shiv Sena.²¹⁹ The coalition failed in October 1999 when one of the parties from Tamil Nadu left the alliance and fresh elections were called. In 1999, the BJP won the same number of seats (182) while the Congress lost ground with only 114 seats. 23 of the BJP seats were in Bihar, eleven of which were in Jharkhand.²²⁰

Most coalitions in India are formed before the elections on the basis of vote pooling, which is an “alliance where political parties agree to cooperate in securing votes by not putting up candidates in a certain constituency against other members of the alliance.”²²¹ In both the 1998 and 1999 elections, the BJP has been more agile than the Congress in securing alliances. Indeed,

²¹⁶ Lok Sabha House of the people, “Parliament of India”, <http://loksabha.nic.in/>, (retrieved October 1st, 2008).

²¹⁷ Sanjay Kumar, “New Phase in Backward Caste Politics in Bihar: Janata Dal on the Decline”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 34/35 (Aug. 21 - Sep. 3, 1999): 2476.

²¹⁸ Walter Hauser, “General Elections 1996 in Bihar: Politics, Administrative Atrophy and Anarchy”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 41 (Oct. 11-17, 1997): 2601.

²¹⁹ Election Commission of India, “Statistical Report on General Elections, 1998 to the 12th Lok Sabha: Volume 1”, p.90-92, http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS_1998/Vol_I_LS_98.pdf, (information retrieved on December 6th, 2008)

²²⁰ Election Commission of India, “Statistical Report on General Elections, 1999 to the 13th Lok Sabha: Volume 1”, p.90-92, http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS_1999/Vol_I_LS_99.pdf, (information retrieved on December 6th, 2008)

²²¹ Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, “Coalition politics, religious nationalism and public policy: a theoretical examination,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 4.

“ramshackle arrangements” with Bihar’s RJD and Kerala parties²²², were not sufficient for the Congress to surpass the BJP. The National Democratic Alliance has been the first national coalition in India to serve a full term (5 years) in power. If the 1998 aborted coalition had 13 members, the 1999 NDA was strong of 24 members, 22 of whom were official members and two were outside supporters.²²³ After the BJP, the Samata Party was, with 22 seats won, the member with the most weight in the coalition.²²⁴ (Refer to annex A for the details of the parties forming the 1999 NDA) Even if 22 seats seems quite small compared to the BJP’s 182, the Samata Party has had a great influence on the NDA’s decisions. For instance, twice during its first coalition mandate (98-99), the BJP tried to impose President’s Rule in Bihar, bowing to the Samata Party’s pressure. The October 1998 and February 1999 attempts were rebuffed by the President Narayanan and by the Congress opposition.²²⁵

Insecurities were felt among minorities after the NDA was elected in 1999 due to the strength of the BJP in the coalition. As “the largest member of the coalition, [the BJP] secured for itself the Ministries of Home, Law, Human Resources and Scheduled Tribes and Castes.”²²⁶ So, the fact that Jharkhand voters conceded the great majority of their seats to the BJP in both the 1998 and 1999 elections is significant. Even if analysts claimed that the BJP’s ambition of breaking up and reorganize Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh was “far in excess of its parliamentary

²²² Alistair McMillan, “The BJP coalition: partisanship and power-sharing in government,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 22.

²²³ Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, “Coalition politics, religious nationalism and public policy: a theoretical examination,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 3-12.

²²⁴ Alistair McMillan, “The BJP coalition: partisanship and power-sharing in government,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 27.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28

²²⁶ Subrata K. Mitra, “The NDA and the politics of ‘minorities’ in India,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 77.

capacities,”²²⁷ the voters who supported the creation of new states might have seen a window of opportunity in having the BJP rule both at the national and state levels.

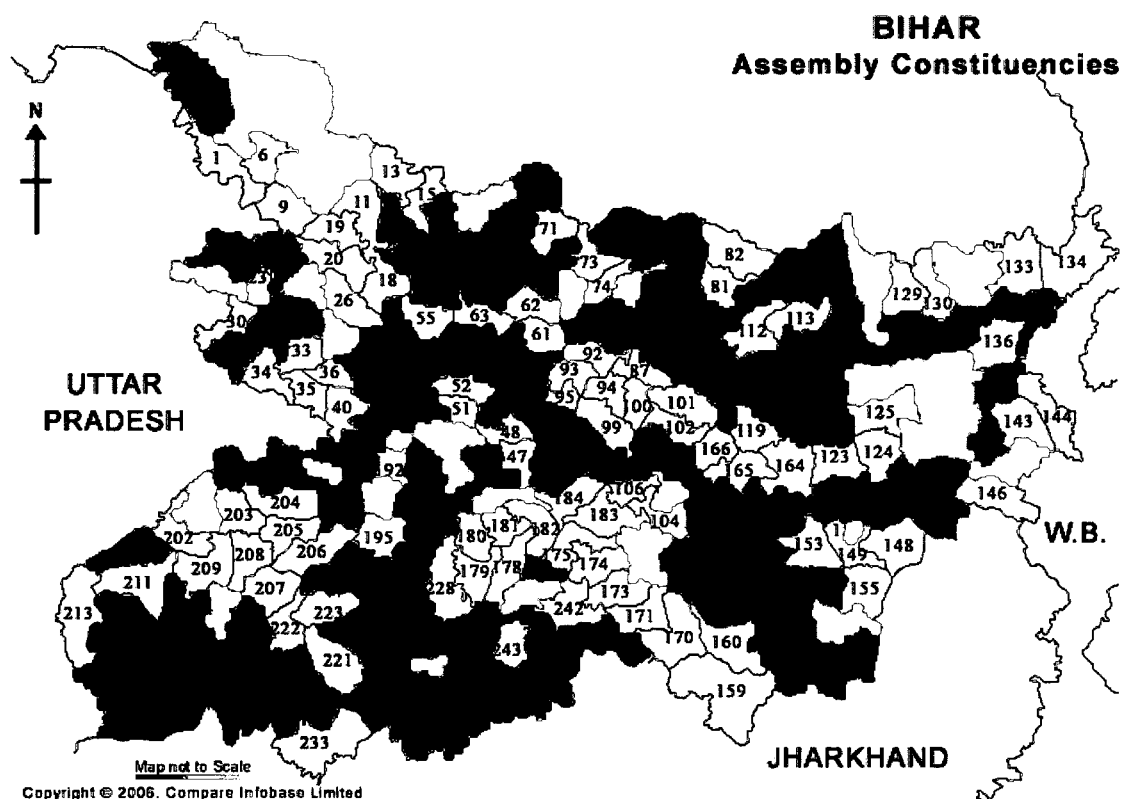
Since the rise of the Janata Dal in Bihar politics, the Congress party has been a minor player in the state. The election results presented here will thus mainly account for the performance of the RJD and BJP, with a mention of the Congress and Samata Party who had their part to play in the politics of coalition. The following maps show the 2000 election results in Bihar (North and Central) and Jharkhand (South Bihar). The BJP constituencies are coloured in orange, while the RJD ones are in blue. The JMM constituencies have been included (in grey) just as an indicator of the performance of the only party that could still be associated, at that time, to the pure Jharkhand-identity-ideology. 324 seats were at stake for these elections.²²⁸

²²⁷ Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, “India in 1998: The Travails of Political Fragmentation”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 1999): 165.

²²⁸ Election Commission of India, “Statistical Report of Assembly Election, Bihar 2000”, p.5, http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/SE_2000/STAI_REPORT_LA-BR-2000.pdf, (information retrieved on October 1st, 2008)

Figure 1

North and Central Bihar Election Results (RJD & BJP)
February 2000



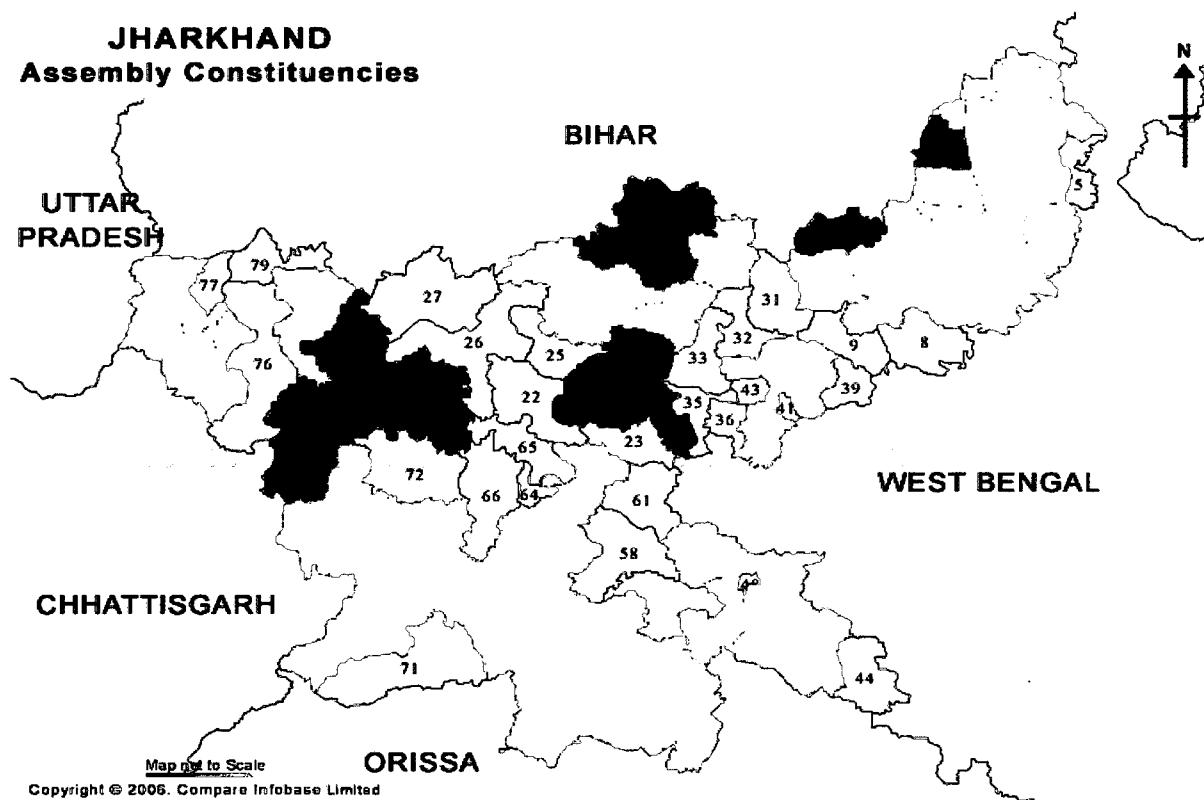
*Outline map of Bihar constituencies from Maps of India, www.mapsofindia.com. Election results from Election Commission of India, “Statistical Report on General Election, 2000 to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar”, New Delhi, 2000, p.29-351

Figure one shows the clear dominance of the RJD in Northern and Central Bihar. The party secured 116 seats in these regions while the BJP won a meagre 36 seats. Other constituencies were split between the Congress Party, the Samata Party, the Communist Parties and the Janata Dal United.²²⁹

²²⁹ Election Commission of India, “Statistical Report of Assembly Election, Bihar 2000”, pp.29-351, http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/SE_2000/STAI_REPORT_LA-BR-2000.pdf, (information retrieved on October 1st, 2008)

Figure 2

South Bihar Election Results (RJD, BJP & JMM)
February 2000



* Outline map of Jharkhand constituencies from Maps of India, www.mapsofindia.com. Election results from Election Commission of India, "Statistical Report on General Election, 2000 to the Legislative Assembly of Bihar", New Delhi, 2000, p.29-351

Figure two demonstrates how the electoral work of the BJP paid dividends in Southern Bihar. The party eclipsed the RJD (8 seats) and the JMM (12 seats) with its 32 seats win.²³⁰ Now dominant in both national and state politics in Jharkhand, the BJP gained a strong control of the Jharkhand affairs. However, the plateau region could not, at that time, obtain its autonomy without the approval of the RJD. Furthermore, it would have to overcome the objection of Laloo

²³⁰ Election Commission of India, "Statistical Report of Assembly Election, Bihar 2000", pp.29-351, http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/SE_2000/STAI_REPORT_LA-BR-2000.pdf, (information retrieved on October 1st, 2008)

Prasad Yadav who, as mentioned before, had said that Jharkhand would never be autonomous in his lifetime. Yadav was certainly not dead physically at that time, but politically, the picture was different.

In Bihar and Jharkhand, one of the BJP tools was the Samata Party led by Nitish Kumar. On the one hand, the Samata had a strong emotional attach to the Bihar boundaries, but on the other hand, the party had irreconcilable ideological differences with the RJD and it openly wanted Laloo Prasad to fall. So, although the Samata also had major ideological differences with the BJP, it chose to enter into a political alliance, to compromise on the Bihar borders, and to work for defeating Laloo Prasad Yadav.²³¹ In fact, Nitish Kumar did leave the NDA coalition in 2000, hoping to form a state government in Bihar. As his attempt failed, he returned to the coalition as Agriculture Minister.²³² This decision paid dividends later as Nitish Kumar's Samata Party, along with the Janata Dal United, won the 2005 state elections. But let us not divert from the case study, and let us go back to the unfolding of events following the 2000 election in Bihar.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal had the choice of two options following the 2000 election. Because the party won a plurality rather than a majority, it could not have ruled by itself easily. It could have made an alliance with the Congress Party, as it had done in the past, and rule an undivided Bihar. The second option, in view of the BJP's success in Jharkhand, was to agree on the split of the state and rule without the Congress' support in a smaller Bihar state.²³³ The very idea of the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar came from tribal and later socio-economic demands and was

²³¹ Sudha Pai, "The Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 9 (Sep. 1998): 850.

²³² Alistair McMillan, "The BJP coalition: partisanship and power-sharing in government," in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 29.

²³³ Arun Swamy, "India in 2000: A Respite from Instability", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2001): 95.

realised, in 2000, following a political transaction meant at saving the RJD from imminent political struggle. “The fact that the plateau region of southern Bihar was named Jharkhand, and not Vananchal, appears as a key compromise made by the BJP due to pressure from local groups and regional allies.”²³⁴

Obviously, the split could not have happened without the Jharkhand movement and the demands of tribals; politicians could not have decided to split the state without historical pressure, without a reason going beyond merely manoeuvring to keep political power. As if to confirm the validity of this argument, it is significant to note that while the BJP remained dominant in the tribal districts of Chhattisgarh after the 2000 split, it managed to win only one seat in Jharkhand for the 2004 general election.²³⁵ This could prove that the Jharkhand people were greatly influenced by the ‘small states promise’ rather than by the ideology of the BJP. Once they acquired what they wanted, Jharkhand voters did not see the need of the BJP anymore. The BJP’s sole seat in 2004 was in a normal constituency, while the Congress won 3 normal constituencies and 3 ST ones and the JMM 2 normal and 2 ST seats. Surprisingly, the RJD fared better than the BJP, even in Jharkhand, with 1 normal seat and 1 SC seat.

This chapter demonstrated that electoral calculations have had at least an equal impact on the Jharkhand autonomy than tribal political empowerment or Jharkhand’s identity transformation. While the Janata Dal was experiencing great popularity in North and Central Bihar, the BJP found its way in the South through a modified and inclusive electoral discourse and the promise

²³⁴ Nitya Rao, “Social justice and empowerment of the weaker sections and gender rights,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 130-131.

²³⁵ Katharine Adeney, “Hindu nationalism and federal structures in an era of regionalism,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 108.

of an autonomous Vananchal. It is not known whether or not Jharkhand would have become reality without Laloo Prasad Yadav's implication in a major corruption scam but one can safely assume that it did not help the cause of an undivided Bihar. Yadav may well have been the maestro of an unwanted scenario.

It is interesting to note that although the BJP seems to have used a 'vote buying' technique in the campaign leading to its 2000 victory in Jharkhand, it only kept the people's confidence for a very short period of time. Once they obtained their long wanted autonomy, the Jharkhand peoples showed the exit door to the BJP. Another research could try to analyse if the people demonstrated that they also knew how to use the power of a political party to their own advantage or if the BJP simply lost its interest in Jharkhand after winning in New Delhi. In the end, coalition politics are no stranger to identity politics as both concepts use identities as the core of ideal winning coalitions. The next chapter will highlight the links between both approaches by bringing together the findings so far.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis and concluding remarks

In 2000, decades after the first adivasi movements, Jharkhand has finally attained autonomy. The path was certainly not without hurdles and, until the very last moment, nobody, even those responsible for agreeing on the split, knew that Jharkhand would become reality. The outcome was the result of several elements, none of which coming as the evident reason for the sudden split. Even after an in-depth study of the case of Bihar and Jharkhand, it is not possible to leave either the identity politics or coalition politics hypothesis aside as they both had a certain amount of influence in the Jharkhand outcome. Could coalition politics have worked in Jharkhand without the initial changes in the identity of the movement? Probably not as coalition politics and identity politics have been closely linked in the Jharkhand case and one cannot be acknowledged as a decisive factor without at least mentioning the other. The links between the two theories are highlighted here.

5.1 Identity meets Coalition Politics

Chapter three demonstrated how the politics of identity played out in the advancement of the Jharkhand struggle. Every writer encountered along this research highlighted the tribal character of the movement. Indeed, Jharkhand cannot be understood outside of its tribal population or, in other words, the tribal category is an integral part of the Jharkhand identity. Several attributes are necessary to be a member of the tribal category. Traditions are certainly the main types of attributes defining tribal peoples. In order for the tribal category to be distinct from the other categories (scheduled castes, Muslims, twice-born Hindus...), the history and ancestor's legends have to be different from the other ones. Tribes' set of beliefs – beyond the purely religious ones – are generally more closely related to nature than those of the other groups. Their relation to the

forest will be anchored differently in their beliefs than it would be for high classes Hindus or Muslims for example. Along with cultural beliefs, territory can be understood as an attribute in the case of Jharkhand tribes. Vijay Kapur mentions that the Jharkhand struggle fell conceptually within the 'place' and 'territory' mobilization framework.²³⁶ The forests of Jharkhand are an integral part of the tribes' identity as the term *adivasis* itself refers to a population of 'forest dwellers'. Because the Jharkhand territorial identity historically comprised, in addition to the Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions, the tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal it cannot be denied that even if the tribes have not been pushed away from their loved territory, the very idea of Vananchal certainly modified the core identity of the Jharkhand tribal movement. The essential attributes for the members of the Jharkhand tribes are culture and territory. In addition to these main attributes, others, given by outsiders, have slowly emerged and somewhat expanded the category, making its borders less clearly defined. Identity in Jharkhand has, without a doubt, been modified with the allowance of reservations for marginal groups like untouchables and tribes through the 1935 Government of India Act. The simple fact of listing tribes in official government documents made the tribal category official and automatically distinguished tribal peoples from other groups and enabled them to remain distinct and somewhat special. The schedule on tribes truly helped the tribal peoples in asserting their differences as the category could not seriously be doubted. However, because not all tribes are listed in the schedule, the scheduled status cannot be considered as one of the main attributes of the tribal category. Other groups identify themselves as tribal groups and despite the non-official nature of their tribal identity, it can be argued that they can still be members of the tribal category as they possess, according to their own beliefs, all the 'compulsory' attributes. This

²³⁶ Vijar Kapur, "Forest Land Afforestation and Erosion of Tribal Rights: the Jharkhand Experience", (paper submitted at Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth Project South & South East Asia Regional Expert Meeting, New Delhi, March 2002): 3.

ought to be mentioned as it challenges the thought that tribal peoples are limited in number only to those who are counted as such in the census. If the Jharkhand population is officially 28 per cent tribal, unofficial figures may be much larger and thus they may have had an impact on the weight of the tribal movement.

Sub-categories can at times emerge within a wider category. For instance, in Jharkhand, the tribal category is divided along religious lines. Christian missionaries and later Hindu activists played a big part in the construction of the tribal identity in Jharkhand. Educated people are certainly more inclined to become identity entrepreneurs and because education came to the Jharkhand tribes through religion, faith has had an impact on the construction of identities. Because groups tend to wish to be part of optimal winning coalitions, sub-categories are vulnerable to the influence of identity entrepreneurs. The identity element is, without a doubt, playing a major role in coalition politics. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the BJP used the politics of identity to form winning coalitions. This will be discussed at greater length later.

Because boundaries of ethnic identities are porous and because no group is secluded enough not to come in contact with the *other*, the tribal category lost its importance, throughout the years, in the Jharkhand dimension. The demographic reality of Jharkhand drastically changed with the waves of migrations provoked by employments prospects in the mining districts of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas. If, centuries back, Jharkhand was allegedly a tribal dominated region, it became a *diku* controlled area, leaving the tribes in the margin of their ancestral land. Mainly because it was diluted in the mass of new categories, the tribal identity did not, by itself, lead to independence. However, the pressure was constantly sustained due to the “ability of the political

elite to adapt to the changing politics of place and identity.”²³⁷ In part because of the loss of demographic weight, the tribal category had to become an integral part of a wider category, with more attributes, encompassing a wider group of people. To make a reference to coalition politics, the tribal leaders needed to find allies in their fight for the autonomy of Jharkhand and thus to embed their group within a wider identity group. Yet, the Jharkhand coalition differed from the regular Indian political coalition in the sense that it could not only be a one-time affair involving different actors who simply wished to quickly gain from the alliance. In fact, the tribal peoples, in face of the long-term nature of their struggle, needed partners who would understand and embrace their ideology. Going back to hypotheses one and two, which were pertaining to the control of riches and to the privatisation and taxation of resources, Jharkhand leaders might have wished to coalesce with elites or industrialists who were seeing monetary benefit in keeping Jharkhand away from Bihar. However, such an alliance could have diluted the tribal identity more than the tribal people may have wanted and would have even been detrimental to their unity. Where would have been the tribal peoples now if industrialists and private corporations would have taken the lead in Jharkhand? As Nitya Rao judiciously observed, reservations, and thus the scheduled tribes’ importance would be shaken by wide scale privatisation.²³⁸ A solid coalition with like-minded people was thus needed for the tribal movement to expand. This is when the tribal category joined forces with the wider ‘exploited Jharkhand’ category.

The specific attributes of the tribal peoples have been put aside by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha entrepreneurs, even though the tribal spirit remained present in the background. Compared to the tribal category, the Jharkhand one was less limited as it meant to include all those who were

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Nitya Rao, “Social justice and empowerment of the weaker sections and gender rights,” in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 130.

exploited by power holders, or by those in a position of authority. Many identified with the attribute, including landless labourers, mining and factory workers from various backgrounds and religious denominations. The same groups who had thus been considered as 'others' in the past joined forces with the core group and fought against a re-defined 'other.' At that point, Jharkhand did not need to be freed from Bihar only because of its tribal identity, but also because it was a region populated with exploited and backward peoples.

Although the Jharkhand movement spread on a shorter time period than the tribal movement, it paid greater dividends as the cause was heard and, to some extent, understood in New Delhi. Indeed, following the Sarkaria Commission, it is the backward element, rather than the tribal one, that made politicians think that something should be done for Jharkhand. They were not talking about autonomy yet but were finally acknowledging the differences between Jharkhand and Bihar. Of course, the real difference was more related to the tribal culture element than to the backwardness of the region but, somehow, the later was deemed more relevant than the former. The supporting argument may have been, at that time, that Jharkhand was backward despite its mineral and forest riches and that it must have something to do with its attachment to Bihar. In fact, even outside actors like the World Bank saw in South Bihar a developmental problem that they did not seem to see elsewhere. Indeed, the World Bank launched the Bihar Plateau Development Project (ID P010408) in 1992, which was meant to improve transportation, agriculture and water sanitation in the Jharkhand region. As seen in table 3 (p.48), development indicators show that Bihar was lagging behind Jharkhand and would thus have had a greater need for a development program. The World Bank chose Jharkhand but it is not clear if the project went on as the website has not been updated since 1992 and thus does not feature any progress

report or closing documents.²³⁹ No scholarly article or official government documents mention this particular project.²⁴⁰

We can assume that even though the core of the Jharkhand identity was diluted in the new coalition, the redefined category helped in accelerating the separation because the reasons behind the demands became less tight, more encompassing, thus giving more options to the decision-makers. The new group accepted the idea of Vananchal instead of Jharkhand because the main identity had shifted from tribal (with territorial attributes) to exploited (with social attributes). We now know that the name chosen was finally the tribal one, but if the movement would have remained fiercely tribal rather than backward, would the members of the category have voted for the BJP and its Hindu Vananchal? No one can know for sure, but the question remains pertinent. Indeed, the BJP did not really campaign on the tribal attributes of the Jharkhand peoples. In fact, the party is well known for lumping together scheduled castes and tribes as backward Hindus²⁴¹ dwelling at a different point on the evolution track. Minorities are not naturally inclined towards the BJP so the identity entrepreneurs had to use other more common attributes to attract important votes in Jharkhand. As seen in chapter four, the BJP has decided to bank on the religious identity of tribal peoples rather than on the tribal one by telling the non-Christians that they should vote for the BJP not because they are from tribal descent, but because they are Hindus and that only a Hindu party can defend them against Christians. The BJP played with religious and economic attributes rather than with cultural, traditional or even territorial ones (if

²³⁹ The World Bank, "Bihar Plateau Development Project", <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?Projectid=P010408&Type=Overview&theSitePK=40941&pagePK=64283627&menuPK=64282134&piPK=64290415>, (information retrieved on December 12, 2008)

²⁴⁰ A worker of the Ekta Parishad NGO mentioned that the World Bank withdrew its support because Jharkhand was still part of Bihar but the information could not be cross-checked at the time of writing. Anonymous, interviewed October 13th, 2008

²⁴¹ Amit Prakash, *Jharkhand: Politics of Development and Identity* (Orient Longman, 2002): 328.

we understand the tribal territorial identity to include Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal districts).

5.2 The BJP as Coalition Entrepreneur

The Bharatiya Janata Party grew in popularity, as seen in chapter four, at the very end of the 20th century. A series of factor allowed this growth, one of which being the slow decay of the Congress party. The success of the BJP in forming coalition may have been linked to the fact that in India, coalitions are formed negatively; they are an indicator of opposition toward one of the main parties.²⁴² Smaller parties arguably joined the BJP because they were against the Congress. In 2004, the Congress came back to power because some of the BJP's former allies grew a certain aversion for the conservative and Hindu chauvinistic party. That being said, the BJP could not have had the success it had in the 1999 elections solely because it was representing something different than the Congress. Indeed, the BJP leaders have been agile identity entrepreneurs and they have secured winning coalitions in many parts of the country, including in Jharkhand.

For its 1999 election campaign, the BJP decided to modify its discourse in order to widen its voting support. The party augmented the number of categories that would support its nomination by adding attributes to its voters' profile. In the BJP's early days, the party's supporters could be defined by a limited number of attributes (Hindu, urban, higher caste, higher class), because the party was still very much associated to the RSS and to a very orthodox branch of Hinduism. After Ayodhya, the BJP decided to show its softer side and to project the image of a group welcoming more categories than it was earlier thought. By showing its concerns about the rising

²⁴² M. P. Singh, "India's National Front and United Front Coalition Governments: A Phase in Federalized Governance", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr. 2001): 334.

prices of food, the BJP attracted poorer people who were having the same concerns and who could identify with the candidates' talks. Because it was aware of the poor's burden, and because it made promises to lighten that burden, the BJP became an interesting option for the lower classes of the society who could feel that their attributes and group needs could be served as well as the higher classes' ones through a party like the BJP. Through its discourse on agriculture, the BJP also widened its geographical focus and attracted rural voters to its ranks. In fact, by discussing real life issues instead of religious controversies (such as the construction of the Ayodhya temple) or nuclear aspirations, the BJP became more attractive, and thus a more realistic political option. If the identity entrepreneurship of the BJP worked with categories of individuals, it also worked with political parties. Indeed, as seen in chapter four, the BJP could not have formed a strong government by itself in 1999 as it won only 182 seats out of 552. And, as the only real Indian conservative party, the BJP could not have found a lot of natural ideological partners in the Indian political scene. The Samata Party, for instance, was and still is a party with an ideology and vote base very different from the BJP.

The rise of the Samata Party as a powerful option in Bihar has been quickly described in the previous chapter. This party deserves a bit more attention even though it played a secondary role in the pre-separation politics of Bihar and Jharkhand compared to the BJP or the Rashtriya Janata Dal. Although it gain most of its popularity after a financial scam forced Laloo Prasad Yadav to quit in 1997 and consequently split the Janata Dal, the Samata Party was formed earlier, in 1994, by Nitish Kumar and George Fernandes, the former Defence Minister of the BJP-led NDA government. Their faction was earlier part of the Janata Dal but they left due to the growing

caste orientation of the JD.²⁴³ The Samata leadership was mainly issued from kurmi and koeri backward classes, as opposed to the yadavs of the Janata Dal.²⁴⁴ George Fernandes was known, before the creation of the Samata Party, for his opposition to multinational companies and to his aversion for the BJP's liberal economic ideas. Despite these ideological barriers, the Samata Party allied with the BJP in both national and state elections in the late 1990s.²⁴⁵ The BJP leaders had to be good identity entrepreneurs in order to attract the rural and backward Samata Party to its coalition. Parties cannot be treated as voters and the identity politics cannot have played the same role in the coalition than it played in the widening of the BJP's support. In fact, while coalescing, parties have to look at both the affinity and the possible gains. On one hand, even though Indian political coalitions are known to be non-ideological, they still do not make enemies shake hands. It would be quite surprising indeed to see a Muslim based party coalescing with the BJP. So even if at first sight, it may seem odd to see the rural, backward, socialist Samata Party entering into an alliance with the urban, higher class, right wing BJP, common grounds can still be found between the two groups. First of all, both parties attract mainly Hindu voters and, with the discourse modifications brought by the BJP after the Ayodhya incident, both parties are allegedly concerned about the everyday challenges of lower classes people. On the other hand, coalition partners should not be too closely linked ideologically because there are only a limited number of voters and each party wants to maximize its electoral performance. Vote pooling does not occur in every single district and in cases where two allies run against each other, the parties should want to give a clear message to the voters; the message

²⁴³ Indian Elections, Political Parties, "Samata Party", <http://www.indian-elections.com/partyprofiles/samta-party.html>, (information retrieved on December 14th, 2008)

²⁴⁴ Sanjay Kumar, "New Phase in Backward Caste Politics in Bihar: Janata Dal on the Decline", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 34/35, (Aug. 21 - Sep. 3, 1999): 2473.

²⁴⁵ Indian Elections, Political Parties, "Samata Party", <http://www.indian-elections.com/partyprofiles/samta-party.html>, (information retrieved on December 14th, 2008)

that they are distinct and that even if they are momentary partners, they remain different groups, talking to categories with different attributes. The Samata Party was perhaps content with the National Democratic Alliance from 1999 to 2004 because of the powers it brought to its representatives; however, it is doubtful that the Samata Party would have liked to be eclipsed in Bihar by the BJP once the RJD would have been ousted. This is why coalition politics is so closely linked to the game theory: actors assess the gains and losses, try to anticipate the behaviour of the others, and take decisions according to their findings. According to the BJP's calculations, it needed the 21 other parties to form a minimum winning coalition and these 21 parties would not have tasted power at the national level without this alliance with the BJP. The Samata party needed the BJP in order to play a role in New Delhi, but in Bihar, its calculation could rationally be that, once the RJD weakened, it could make it without help, without such a strong partner as the BJP or the Congress for that matter. This was the same with the RJD, which did not want nor need an alliance with the Congress to rule on a truncated Bihar after the 2000 state elections.

So, what does it come all to? At first sight, the Jharkhand case looked like a quite complicated one with the tribal, socio-economic, political and mineral elements intermingling. However, once the tribal identity evolved into a more encompassing one, the political entrepreneurs were quick at taking power in Jharkhand and at leaving leaders in Patna facing a difficult choice: an unwanted coalition in an undivided Bihar or absolute power on a smaller territory. The fear of losing power made Jharkhand a possibility. In the end, the split was a straightforward political transaction meant at keeping Laloo Prasad Yadav and his RJD alive and running for a little longer. Of course, the strength of the Jharkhand movement helped, and the separation was

bound to happen, but not in 2000, not while the RJD was ruling in Patna. As mentioned earlier, the new Chhattisgarh was BJP-led, but so was Madhya Pradesh; and Uttaranchal was Congress-led, just like Uttar Pradesh at that time. Bihar was without a doubt a different case, where coalition politics and identity transformations played a major role in the unfolding of the political results leading to the RJD's decision. Of course, it cannot be assumed that the separations of Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal were without hurdles and the cases certainly cannot be left aside in order to understand the third wave as a whole.

However, another element of the Bihar politics made a difference. It is likely that had Laloo Prasad Yadav not been caught in the money siphoning 'fodder scam'²⁴⁶ and if Janata Dal would have remained united the situation may have been different. Then, the Samata Party may not have had the same popularity and consequently the same interest for the BJP. We cannot say for sure that the Jharkhand cause was won following the fodder scam, but we can probably say that this is precisely where things went wrong for Laloo Prasad and where he started feeling the pressure of political instability in Bihar. Without that scandal, he may not have needed the Congress to rule on an undivided Bihar and he may well have kept the people of Jharkhand waiting. Or, if a coalition would have still been needed, he might have felt more comfortable agreeing to it as his political life would not have been threatened. Only another research with a deeper look at election results and probabilities could help assess properly the political consequences of the fodder scam.

²⁴⁶ Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "India in 1998: The Travails of Political Fragmentation", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 1999): 167.

The current research has been done from a distance and has thus a number of limitations. Documented information can be interpreted differently by different people, however, the range of answers is more limited than when original information (surveys or interviews for example) is used. Through an exhaustive fieldwork, it would have been easier to determine why the people of Jharkhand wanted to be out of Bihar even after demographic studies showed that the majority of the population was not native anymore; and how people from Jharkhand and Bihar feel about the separation almost a decade after it happened. Facts, most of them provided by official sources, have been analysed in this thesis but unofficial records of the population's thoughts would have been equally interesting and useful to explore. A future research should take these elements in consideration in order to get a better picture of the situation in Bihar. In fact, by taking a political approach, the current research had to leave aside a very important aspect of the Bihar reality, namely the psychological constraints associated with the Bihar identity. Some elements of reflection are presented here and could be used as starting points for further research on Bihar and Jharkhand.

5.3 The want and need to lose the 'Bihar' identity attribute

It is not always easy to be a Bihari; because of the socio-economic situation of the state but also because of the bad reputation the region gained over the years. Violence against Biharis is common, especially in Mumbai but in other parts of the country as well. It would be interesting, in another research, to look at this aspect of the Bihar and Jharkhand issue.

In the early 1980's, professor and demographer Ashish Bose coined the term BIMARU from the names of four backward Indian states: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In Hindi, the main language used in these Northern States, *bimar* means *sick*. The nickname, after

decades, still sticks to the states and is even used in official government and international NGOs' documentation. For example, *The Hindu* reports that UNDP's plan is to target poverty in BIMARU states, Orissa and Chhattisgarh.²⁴⁷ With titles like "Immunisation status of children in BIMARU states," from the *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*²⁴⁸, "Bimaru states hampers India's growth" in the national newspaper *Times of India*²⁴⁹, and "Private sector shuns Bimaru states," from the *Project Monitor*²⁵⁰, these states are constantly reminded of their perceived status and the population suffers from the 'sick' stigma. Bihar has been especially targeted as a dysfunctional, corrupted, backward, poor and even feudal state. In 2008, "Goa Home Minister Ravi Naik [...] said commencement of trains from Patna would increase the number of beggars in" Goa, as according to him, beggars come from this side of the country...²⁵¹ Biharis have been massively going out of their own state as job seekers, hoping for a better life, hoping to leave behind the social stigma associated with their place of birth. Thousands of youth decide to go study outside of Bihar even if they suffer from the bad reputation of Bihar. "The Bihari students who are derisively called 'Harrys' and even sometimes 'Harias' if their accent is particularly marked, are uncomfortable for years in the capital city of the country; where one citizen out of every 10 is from 'Harrysburg'."²⁵² Recently, massive anger riots occurred in Bihar's main cities following the death of a Bihar youth in Mumbai who was in the city to appear for the Railway Recruitment Board examination. Local police claimed that the young man fell on the tracks while attempting to catch a train but because the incident occurred almost simultaneously to the

²⁴⁷ S. Vijay Kumar and Shastry V. Mallady, "UNDP poverty alleviation plan for BIMARU States", *The Hindu*, Saturday March 15th, 2008

²⁴⁸ Padam Singh and R.J. Yadav, "Immunisation status of children in BIMARU states", *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*, Vol.68, No.6 (June 2001): 495-499.

²⁴⁹ "Bimaru States Hampers India's Growth", *The Times of India*, September 7th, 2005

²⁵⁰ Shashikant Hegde, "Private sector shuns Bimaru states", *Project Monitor*, September 22, 2008

²⁵¹ "Commencement of trains from Patna will increase beggars: Naik", *The Times of India*, August 19th, 2008

²⁵² Arvind N. Das, "India in the Image of Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 49 (Dec. 5-11, 1998): 3104.

beating up of dozens of Bihar applicants to the Railway Board, it is widely thought that the death was the result of violence against North Indians in general and Biharis in particular, in Mumbai.²⁵³ Activists from the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) attacked thirteen railway board examination centres on that day.²⁵⁴ Many Biharis living outside Bihar are reluctant to mention their origins as the consequences could be dangerous. Could such a handicap associated with the Bihar identity push those who could get away from it to do so?

What if, after the mobilization around the tribal identity failed to show results, the Jharkhand population decided to unite because they did not want to be associated with the Bihar identity anymore? Without falling in the depth of a conspiracy theory, it could be interesting to think that the perception of Bihar by the rest of India accelerated the desire for a change and for the use of the most obvious way out in Jharkhand. This hypothesis could be verified via a cross-cutting research looking into the development pattern of Jharkhand after the separation. Did the new government really make an effort to develop the state as they thought they would do when claiming that Jharkhand was socio-economically backward, or were they simply content with the newly acquired autonomy? As briefly shown in chapter three, Jharkhand, although not associated to the BIMARU states anymore, has not achieved much developmental gains since 2000 and a future research should explore the reasons of the stagnation. If it can somehow be proven that the population is happier now than it was then despite the non-changing socio-economic situation, it could support the fact that the Bihar identity was an element of their identity Jharkhandi wanted to get away from. Of course, what a population wants is not

²⁵³ Rahi Gaikwad, "North Indians Attacked in Mumbai", *The Hindu*, October 20, 2008, front page

²⁵⁴ "Can't Beat them in Exams, so beat them up: MNS", *The Economic Times*, October 20th, 2008, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/Cant_beat_them_in_exams_so_beat_them_up_MNS/articleshow/3616650.cms, (information retrieved on December 19th, 2008)

necessarily what a population gets and a deeper look at New Delhi's role in the separation could be taken in a future research.

5.4 New Delhi's decisions and the modification of India's political map

Although the current research has taken a look at different level of government to explain the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar, it has mainly focused on the micro-level; on the role played by local politics in the remodelling of Bihar. The research has quickly mentioned the differences between the cases of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal, but it has not shown the reason why these three states were created at the same time. It would be useful to look at the other two states' cases separately to discover what the internal mechanisms were, but it would also be important to take a look at the wider picture; to compare the three cases and analyse the part New Delhi played in these separations. Was it mainly an administrative role – approving the decision taken at the state level? Or was the centre widely involved? The aim of this paper was not to analyse the Indian political system and it would have been space consuming to do so. However, by not tracing a clear line between the BJP at the state level and the BJP at the national level, it showed the complexity of party politics in India. Unlike in Canada where, for example, the Canadian Liberal Party and the Quebec or Ontario Liberal parties are different entities, not necessarily attracting the same vote base, there exist a confusing and persistent blur between the national and state levels in India. The same politicians would generally be seen on the state and national scenes. For example, now that Laloo Prasad Yadav is no more Chief Minister of Bihar, he has been appointed as the railway minister in the Congress coalition cabinet, at the national level. So, another research would be needed to fully understand the role of the central government in the separation of Bihar and Jharkhand. This role is even more difficult to grasp due to the fact that the BJP was, in 2000, holding power both in Delhi and in Ranchi

(Jharkhand). So, is it the state BJP that was the most instrumental in the separation or the national one? This question should be examined by making a comparison with the other waves of reorganisation and the interactions that occurred at these times between the national and state governments. As mentioned earlier, both Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were governed by the BJP at the time of the split while Uttaranchal (and Uttar Pradesh) had a Congress majority. The role of the national and state governments may thus have been clearer in the creation of Uttaranchal than in the formation of Jharkhand and looking at this case could also help in finding answers. The center's role should be examined to understand why the separations occurred at a specific point in time (2000 in these cases) but it should still not be forgotten that the demands for autonomy have, until now, always come from the states themselves. The national politicians have a key role to play in the final implementation but arguably not in the initial elaboration.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

Looking at the problem with political lenses, it appears that, in the end, the future of Jharkhand was decided through a simple political transaction. Indeed, the deciding moments came when the RJD had no other choice but to agree to the BJP's proposition of creating a smaller state in South Bihar. However, going backward from 2000 to the beginning of the tribal movements, we notice that the simple outcome emerged from a complicated web of events, successes, failures and surprises. If, at the end of the research, everything appeared determined by coalition politics, at the beginning, everything seemed related to the issue of tribal identity. In fact, before getting into the case study, it was easy to assume, just like any outsider would, that Jharkhand came to be because of the proportion of tribal peoples in its population. Nagaland and Mizoram became reality on that base after all. Adding the mineral wealth to the tribal element brings a whole new dimension to the Jharkhand question. Again, it could be easy to assume that

Jharkhand peoples wanted independence to retain all the wealth. However, a quick look at the Indian taxation system showed that a state does not gain that much from the exploitation of minerals. And, although some violent incidents occurred in and around the mining districts, and although a mafia was active in these regions, mining in India does not seem to be a curse as much as it is in some African countries. For instance, even if Bihar had, in 2001 a Human Development Index similar to the one of the Democratic Republic of Congo – 0.367 and 0.363²⁵⁵ respectively – it never really experienced a war on a scale comparable to what the DRC has been going through. It would in reality be difficult to associate the Jharkhand movement with the Katanga one.²⁵⁶ Of course, Jharkhand's coal does not equal Congo's diamonds but coal is nonetheless, on a smaller scale, a much sought-after natural resource. Although we have seen that the desire to control mineral and forest wealth did not represent an important motivating factor behind the mobilization of the separation movement, the possibility that controlling mineral wealth explains Bihar's reluctance to accept the creation of the Jharkhand state remains unexplored. This could be the object of another research.

It is striking that despite the fact that Bihar's extreme poverty should warrant attention from the central government, it is Jharkhand's backward identity that helped the autonomy movement gain a hearing from the authority in Delhi. Backwardness does not at all differentiate Jharkhand from Bihar so it is surprising that this element has been chosen as the core of Jharkhand's problem, almost as if Jharkhand could be saved by being separated while Bihar was condemned. But Jharkhand was not saved as it is still only doing slightly better than Bihar and both states lag

²⁵⁵ United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report 2001, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr03_HDI.pdf, (information retrieved on October 10th, 2008)

²⁵⁶ International Crisis Group, "Katanga: The Congo's Forgotten Crisis", Africa Report No. 103, 9 January 2006, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3861&l=1>, (information retrieved on December 19th, 2008)

behind the Indian development average. If development was really the issue for the autonomy movement, one could assume that a development plan has been elaborated before the separation. One wonders why the option of a better cooperation between North and South Bihar was not pushed harder to get out of the backward stigma.

In the end, this thesis showed that coalition politics have precipitated the creation of Jharkhand in 2000 while high-minded ideas about the protection of cultural identity or the empowering of downtrodden minorities offered a base for it. Coalitions are formed through game theory calculations where each actor usually cares more about his own affairs than about the other's well-being. Laloo Prasad Yadav could have chosen to ally with the Congress after the 2000 elections but the fodder scam had shaken him and the fear of losing too much of his political power pushed him toward an agreement with the BJP. Jharkhand was finally created out of political fear on the Bihar side. The goal of this paper is obviously not to judge the merits of the Jharkhand separation but it can be mentioned that the way in which it finally happened does not give credit to the efforts made by the Jharkhand peoples, generation after generation.

This research opens up several avenues for future studies. Many unanswered questions have been raised throughout this paper and they would gain at being explored. For instance, the third wave of states reorganization, which is still very recent, should be studied as a whole in order to understand the national motivations and to see if the three cases were at all linked to each other. Also, the changing role of the BJP in regional politics, and particularly in the regions where it does not have a natural vote base, should be looked upon. The party's campaign for the 1998 and 1999 elections attracted a significant amount of other parties and voters but the performance

could not be replicated since. It would be interesting to see what the party did then and why it did it then in opposition to what it has been doing since. Finally, the case of India could be compared with other developing countries that saw waves of re-organization or tribal movements in a federal setting. Nigeria comes as an obvious example, while Ethiopia and Malaysia could also be compared.

Annex A

The National Democratic Alliance, 1999

List of parties²⁵⁷

Formal members (22)

- BJP
- Indian National Lok Dal
- Jammu and Kashmir National Conference
- Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)
- Biju Janata Dal (BJD)
- Shiv Sena
- Sikkim Democratic Front
- Haryana Vikas Party
- Lok Jana Shakti Party
- Rashtriya Lok Dal
- Akhil Bharatiya Lok Tantrik Congress
- Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK)
- Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)
- Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK)
- Tamizhaga Rajiv Congress (TRC)
- Manipur State Congress Party
- Kerala Congress (Mani)
- Janata Dal (United) (JD(U))
- Samata Party
- Anna MGR
- Indian Federal Democratic Party
- Janata Party (JP)

²⁵⁷ Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, "Coalition politics, religious nationalism and public policy: a theoretical examination," in *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, Katharine Adeney and Lawrence Saez, editors (New York, Routledge, 2005): 12.

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