

Resources, representation, and authority in Jharkhand, India

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Abstract: *Jharkhand is at the centre of India's struggles to define 'the environment' and 'economically relevant natural resources'. Although cultural labels are applied by leaders who seek influence in these struggles as well as by many of those people who listen, an ethnonational analytic frame does not help answer the questions: How, why and when has the political idea of environment changed in India? When and why has the Jharkhand movement chosen violent tactics? When and why has the Jharkhand statehood movement realised electoral success? Or, why was Jharkhand state formed? To address such questions, a long range historical-institutional approach is much more fruitful.*

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At first glance, the Jharkhand statehood movement had all the characteristics of a resource-based ethnic movement: a local population that had lived in a region since time immemorial was forced out of its traditional economic and social relationship with that land and was largely excluded from newly emerging economic opportunities. The forcers and excluders were ethnically distinct from the local population. The locals sought government support and, failing this, turned to violence. After several rounds of government appeals and violent episodes, the local population successfully convinced government that everyone's interests would be best served if their region were granted autonomy. Hence, Jharkhand state was born.

The ethno-national temptation is hard to resist: a community is not as 'successful' as it 'should be', and its leaders ask, 'Why?' Failing to find a compelling alternative explanation, they offer 'discrimination'. Their offer is accepted, and a social movement is begun.

Such an ethno-national frame has been employed almost continuously during the century-long Jharkhand statehood movement. Indeed, when the state was created in November 2000, then Home Minister L.K. Advani her-

alded it as 'India's newest tribal state'. Chief-Minister-in-Waiting Shibu Soren predicted that the new state would 'surely enable the government to respond to tribal interests'. Whatever they might have been. Would that it were so.

Jharkhand deserves a second glance. The Jharkhand statehood demands demonstrate in an extreme form something that I suspect is a much more general truth: ethno-nationalism can describe almost every moment in the statehood movement as well as the motives and actions of Jharkhandi, Bihari and national Indian leaders. However, ethno-nationalism can explain virtually none of them: why did forestry issues resonate in some campaigns, and industrial issues resonate in others? Why did violence sometimes – but only sometimes – accompany demands for statehood? More standard political analyses can more usefully address these questions.

I will address these questions using a century-long, institutionalist approach, focusing first on how grassroots grievances transformed themselves into movements and then on how those movements were markedly shaped (including both opportunity and constraint) by existing national and state-level political institutions.

Starting from 'the people' and looking up towards government institutions, a broad historical view reveals 'the' Jharkhand movement as a series of political moments that each latch onto the idea of institutional change – excluding the mass of northern Bihari farmers from political decisions that affect Jharkhand – as a solution to the social or economic problem of the day. Precious little beyond a demand for statehood unites the series of political entrepreneurs, each of whom appealed to somewhat differently bounded communities in support of sometimes markedly different substantive goals.

This ought not to be a surprise. State creation – that is, separating Jharkhand from northern Bihar – would do nothing more than change the rules of the game. By itself, statehood would not guarantee any individual or group redress for their substantive concerns, and the 30 million Jharkhandis that would remain were a rather heterogeneous lot! Nonetheless, no matter how a Jharkhandi defined (or redefined) himself, and whatever his interests were, the statehood movement in each iteration claimed that interests would be at least more likely to resonate productively in a Jharkhand legislature than in a Bihari one.

The surprise might be that, when observed carefully, the reality of the grievances did not match the political rhetoric of those seeking to raise ethno-national rancour. Virtually every issue, at virtually every historical moment, cut across ethnicity. People asked, to what extent will our support of the statehood movement enhance the creation of a Jharkhand state? To what extent will creation of a Jharkhand state improve our lives? And, of course, who are we? The political 'we' and the traditional-tribal-linguistic-ethnic 'we' frequently diverged in the face of questions like these.

Starting from government institutions and looking down towards 'the people', one would observe a century of policy preferences, driven by electoral logic, in favour of the Ganges delta and against the Jharkhand area. One would not find policies that substantially favoured one or another social, religious or linguistic group within the Ganges delta, nor would one find social, religious or linguistic preferences among those most ignored in Jharkhand. During the course of a century, the British, the Congress Party and the Janata Dal in its various incarna-

tions each proved to be socially neutral when it came to discriminating against Jharkhandis.

The top-down surprise might be that, when observed carefully, it becomes increasingly clear that Jharkhand state was created in response to national centre/state politics. The Jharkhand movement created a political opportunity, but that opportunity existed for nearly a century! One must place that opportunity in the context of national political pressures – in particular, the changing relationship between national parties (Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)) and those parties that successfully gained influence each in a single state.

No matter which level of analysis one chooses, the Jharkhand movement has been fragmented: competing developmental visions, competition over distribution of benefits, competition over mobilisational frame (ethnic, which excludes some people directly affected by 'the problem' however defined, or substantive, which undermines the ability to harness 'ethnic passion'), competition over appropriate institutional focus (central government, state government), competition over appropriate movement repertoire (electoral, mass movement, violent vanguard) led Jharkhandis of every stripe to have limited influence on government policies that affected them. Jharkhandis of every stripe realised limited rewards from the multiple developmental paths that developed simultaneously during the twentieth century.

Ethno-nationalism is the expected vehicle of people who fit uncomfortably in a political system – people with identifiable, measurable grievances, a plausible explanation and a plausible way out. But it takes routine electoral analysis to unveil the structural sources of that discomfort and careful empirical legwork to give the lie to the ethno-nationalist claim. These are the goals of this paper. After an introductory aside on 'tribe', I will first demonstrate that each of the grievances that drove the Jharkhand statehood movement cut through the ostensible tribe–*sadan*–migrant divide. Then, I will demonstrate that political institutions on the state level created pressure to ignore Jharkhand as a region, and that political institutions on the national level created incentives to accommodate the region, in a variety of ways.

An introductory aside: Which 'ethnic groups' are we talking about, anyway?

Jharkhand's 'sons of the soil' were either '*sadans*' or 'tribespeople'. *Sadans* were those people, typically lower-caste Hindus, who migrated to the region during the centuries before the twentieth century and were gradually incorporated – both socially and economically – into the fabric of Jharkhandi village life. 'Tribespeople' belong to one of 32 tribes in the region that are officially recognised on the National Schedule of Tribes.

'Tribe' is a politically important category because the Indian government determined that it has an obligation to make proactive efforts to ensure the ability of tribespeople to integrate with and receive their full measure of benefits from the modern Indian state. These benefits take the form of special political access for groups, through '5th Schedule' or '6th Schedule' commissions, as well as special benefits for some individual tribespeople through affirmative action – in government employment, higher education and political representation. The benefits, however, flow to 'tribespeople' in general, and not to members of any specific tribe in particular.

The most important benefit is political dignity: an explicit government acknowledgement of the importance and relevance of 'tribe' in the Indian national myth. By casting the benefit in this way, the government also undermines the value of 'tribe' as a vehicle for political mobilisation, in three ways. First, political entrepreneurs belonging to one tribe must either compete with other tribes for a larger share of already existing benefits, or cooperate with other tribes to broaden the opportunities for all (a coalition-building dilemma hardly unique to tribespeople!). Second, even if cooperation is tacitly agreed to, there is no traditionally legitimate means to determine a leader of 'the' Jharkhand 'tribe'. Santhals have a process for selecting a Santhal leader, as do Mundas, and so on. But there is no traditional way to select a tribal leader for all of Jharkhand.¹ Third, substantive grievances unite some tribespeople with non-tribespeople more clearly than they unite members of different tribes.

Tribespeople have never comprised a majority of the Jharkhand population. They were

listed as 44% of the region's population in 1891; as a result of emigration, immigration and re-enumeration, their proportion by 2001 was recorded as 28%.² Of the four major tribes – Munda, Santal, Oraon and Ho – the Munda arrived first. Large tribal states were well established at least by the thirteenth century (Sinha, 1962: 5–79; Saha, 1996: 824–834).³ Tribal states occasionally came into conflict with one another and pushed the earlier communities away, thus generating intra-Jharkhand rivalries and broadening the geographic area that comprises the idea of Jharkhand. These conflicts are recorded in the legends of both 'winning' and 'losing' tribes and also by the burial stones left behind as the losers emigrated deeper into the Jharkhand forests.⁴ While such movements of several hundred kilometres punctuated tribal histories in Jharkhand, the year-by-year pulse of life occurred primarily at the village level.⁵

Grievances and the rise of the Jharkhand movement

Migration and limited integration of the Jharkhand region with India's broader economic system generated a persistent set of grievances. Sectoral and subregional analyses often point towards economic transformation as a source of a variety of specific grievances. However, such grievances were overwhelmed by a common political, positional relationship between all Jharkhandis and their state government. All Jharkhandi groupings were weaker than their northern Bihari counterparts. Not only did each Jharkhandi subgroup fail to be meaningfully integrated into the new economy, but tribespeople also were effectively – and commonly – dislocated from their traditional economic and social institutions. This sounds ethnic, and it is, with three caveats.

First, not all tribespeople lamented this loss. Modernisation is partly about individuals choosing which economic and social communities they will associate with; whichever the choice, the non-chosen community might offer punishments and inducements to change one's mind.⁶ Second, 'traditional economic and social institutions' were ethnically heterogeneous, and became more so during the twentieth century. More than 75% of the migrants who

entered Jharkhand seeking urban or mining employment found none there, were absorbed in Jharkhandi villages, and were similarly affected by governmental policies hindering the village economy. Third, the state government's consistent approach to the region focused more on migration (as a means of diffusing potential social conflict in northern Bihar) than on promoting good economic or social conditions in the Jharkhand area. This was true in migration policy itself, as well as in the substantive issues that migration affected: property rights, forest policy, agricultural policy and industrial policy. Each of these specific policy areas were very much resource-based. Each generated contests over defining 'economic and social resources' as well as contests over distribution over those resources. Each divided ethno-national groups as well as forged coalitions among members of different ethno-national groups.

Migration and modernisation

Although tribespeople are captured in the popular imagination as static and conservative communities, this has clearly not been the case in Jharkhand. When new opportunities presented themselves, Jharkhandis responded quickly and in numbers. Between 1881 and 1921, when the Assamese tea gardens were established, nearly 10% of the Jharkhand population (and 20% of the tribal population) left southern Bihar to work on the tea plantations.⁷ The Chotanagpur worker, called 'Dhangur' or 'Junglee', both pejorative terms for tribespeople, was the clear favourite of the plantation owners. As a tea estate manager in 1913 would have you believe,

it is a matter of fact that Dhangars keep far better health at the garden than the upcountry men. Secondly, the Dhangars are more tractable and better to deal with than the upcountry men. The latter as a rule are much more troublesome and are by no means such good workers.⁸

During the same period, coal was discovered in Jharkhand.⁹ The coalfields in Jharia opened in 1894 and, by 1921, employed 97 245 workers. Of these, only 406 came from the tribal areas of Chotanagpur (Ranchi and Singhbhum). This was not for lack of trying: there is clear evidence of

both *sadans* and tribespeople seeking and being refused jobs in the newly developing industrial areas.¹⁰ A common explanation by employers was that the 'Junglee constitution is well attuned to life out-of-doors, but is ill-disposed to life underground. It takes only a few short weeks before the Junglee falls from any of a number of ailments' (Mullick, 1991: 35).

Despite claims of genetic selection by managers in both Assam and Jharkhand, social Darwinism is not nearly as compelling of an explanation of employer preferences for distant migrants as those explanations coming out of labour economics research. Distant migrants face higher costs of return and have fewer alternative sources of employment, and do not enjoy local social networks. Any of these three would enhance their ability to leave their current job or effectively bargain for higher wages. Migrants are paradoxically, as Oliver Williamson describes, 'immobile societies', and this is as true in the tea gardens of Assam and the coalfields of Santal Parganas as it is of sub-Saharan Africa or company towns in the United States (Williamson, 1985: 35–37; Leonard, 1991: 193–223). In any event, the local population was quickly to face – and lose – the competition for mining jobs. But tribespeople were not the only losers. So also were many *sadans* and most of the people who migrated to the area in search of work.

Property rights

The first and still dominant grievance among Jharkhandis is land transfers away from tribespeople. Jharkhand activists presume that tribespeople and *sadans* owned all Jharkhand land in 1881.¹¹ They observe that, in 1996, members of these groups had title to only 17% of the region's land; 'clearly', the rest had been stolen.¹² The 'thefts' occurred in three phases. First, beginning in the 1880s, the British Raj appropriated most land that was not clearly 'settled' and did not have a clear owner. Second, beginning in the early twentieth century, non-tribal migrants purchased, stole or hustled land from tribespeople and *sadans*.¹³ Third, the Indian state acquired eminent domain land needed to complete large-scale public enterprises, notably steel mills and dams.

Most of the transfers were completed by 1930, yet the issue remains salient for two reasons. First, the government continues to expropriate land – more than 330 000 acres between 1960 and 1990 – and the threat of further appropriation remains (Deogharia, 1994: 217). Second, although the government has instituted laws against illegal alienation and tribespeople have made regular use of the courts in attempts to recover land, continuing illegal land alienation can be gleaned from a brief survey of reports on such court actions. In 1962, Shibnarayan Kabiraj reports that ownership of some 14 000 acres were contested in the courts of the Jharkhand portion of West Bengal (Kabiraj, 1988: 167–168). In 1979, Bishwanth Lal reported that, between 1973 and 1978, 18 624 cases involving 23 556 acres of land were instituted in the Ranchi District. Of these, the courts ordered restoration to the original *adivasi* owners in 9111 cases and 12 465 acres (he does not report on the disposition of the remaining cases). However, Lal continues, none of this land had actually been retransferred at the time his report was published (Lal, 1979: 9). In 1996, activists in the social action group 'JOHAR' reported that ownership of some 12 000 acres of land was being contested in the Singhbhum courts.¹⁴

My tentative conclusion based on these anecdotes is that illegal land appropriations exist on a relatively small scale and are regularly redressed by the courts, but that, over time, most Jharkhandis either have had land appropriated or know somebody who has. A small but persistent economic condition has generated a substantial and persistent political condition.

The land issue cuts many other ways as well. Tribespeople are not legally allowed to sell their land to non-tribespeople, which has the effect not only of retaining property rights within a cultural community, but also of limiting the economic value of land (especially as loan collateral) and limiting the ability of 'migrants' – some of whom are now fourth- and fifth-generation – from purchasing land. These people also supported the Jharkhand movement, on occasion, in the belief that a state government closer to them would more effectively serve their interests.

The idea that government was 'the problem' with regard to land rights (tribal or otherwise)

was deepened in the 1960s, when the government itself became the primary land alienator. Between 1960 and 1990, the government applied the eminent domain principle to gain control of more than 400 000 hectares for use as coal mines, in industry, or for dam projects. Owners were always compensated – usually in cash and with some sort of employment provision. However, determining an appropriate property value in an institutionally depressed market is tricky at best. Those whose land was taken, tribespeople or not, typically believed that they were short-changed.

In this regard, two groups of people supported Jharkhand statehood: those who sought to strengthen 'tribal community' by further restricting land sale by individual tribespeople, and those tribespeople and non-tribespeople who sought to broaden the property market – including those who believed that this could be accomplished without compromising 'tribal culture' if property rights were well supervised by a Jharkhand state government.

Forests policy

A second aspect of economic transformation in the Jharkhand region is a change in forest practices – in particular, the shift towards direct government management of much of Jharkhand's forest area. Indian forest policy evolved quickly into one that treated forests primarily as sources of timber for sale or use by the Indian government, and discriminated against traditional forest practices. In addition to losing ownership of most forest land in the nineteenth century, tribespeople and *sadans* have faced circumscribed access to forest land that is crucial for pursuit of their economic and cultural traditions. Before the National Forest Policy enunciated in 1894, access to the forest was essentially unfettered by the state. In 1952, 'rights and privileges' given to tribespeople and *sadans* in 1894 were downgraded to 'rights and concessions'. Amendments in 1978 and 1995 further limited the access of local people to forests controlled by the state and central governments.¹⁵

Private lumber contractors, overwhelmingly run by businessmen from outside the Jharkhand region, were granted the right to extract timber and other materials from the forest. They sought to 'rationalise' forest production and success-

fully lobbied state government forest officers to enforce restrictions of local people to the forests. Mathew Areeparampil reports that, in 1987, '5,160 cases against about 14,000 *adivasis* were pending in various Singhbhum courts for alleged offences under the Indian Forest Act' (Areeparampil, 1992: 179). Between 1978 and 1985, police in Singhbhum District opened fire on tribespeople at least 18 times. An inquiry made by the Tribal Research and Training Centre in Chaibasa showed that during 1980–1983, more than 450 houses were looted and burned down by the police and forest officials in attempts to intimidate tribespeople and *sadans* to adhere to forest policies that, when enforced, severely circumscribed the ability of the local people to subsist (Areeparampil, 1991: 140).

Yet, once again, the tribal frame misrepresents in two ways those who supported the statehood movement because they suffered from forest policies. First, the forest service concern regarding access to forests for the purpose of collecting 'Non Timber Forest Produce' was the standard commons problem: that too many people collecting too much produce would degrade the timber-producing capabilities of the forest. To avoid this problem, they held lotteries for the right to enter the forest lawfully. I would not expect tribal or *sadan* families that gained legal access to forests in this way to be among the more vocal Jharkhand supporters. Second, 75% of the migrants to Jharkhand from 1950 onwards – that is, some 10 million people – failed to find work in the cities or in the mines. They were absorbed by 'tribal' villages that had a 300-year history (at least) of opening themselves to outsiders. These migrants eased their way into the traditional economy, whether based on non-irrigated agriculture or exploitation of minor forest products. They quickly discovered that government policy supported migration, but not migrants once they arrived in Jharkhand.

Agricultural policy

The agricultural economy affects far more Jharkhandis than any other economic sector. By the late 1960s, the transformation from shifting to 'settled' agriculture was nearly complete. However, the transplant of plains-type agriculture to the mountainous Jharkhand landscape

was far from smooth. Agriculture in Jharkhand is dependent on rainfall; large-scale irrigation is difficult and, with a few exceptions, has not even been attempted; as late as 1991, merely 12% of agricultural land was irrigated.

Unlike northern Bihar, the Jharkhand region has not benefited from the green revolution. Although 67% of the population is involved in agricultural production,¹⁶ only 27% of the land is cultivable. Agricultural population density¹⁷ is nearly as high in Jharkhand as it is in northern Bihar. Worse, because irrigation and fertiliser use is limited (the latter because of the former, 29 kg/hectare in Jharkhand, 87 kg/hectare in Bihar), productive value in Jharkhand is much lower than that in northern Bihar in both per-capita and per-hectare terms.

Jharkhand's challenging agricultural environment is at the base of the more direct grievances – land alienation, moneylending, social dislocation – as voiced by every generation of Jharkhand activists. Nearly 30% of the Jharkhand population, tribe and non-tribe alike, is now classed as agricultural labour!¹⁸ Double and triple cropping is possible only on the 12% of agricultural land that has irrigation facilities. Labourers who work the rest of the land are unemployed for much of the year. Some take out loans and must suffer both high interest rates and, occasionally, legal or illegal appropriation of their land by moneylenders. Others seek employment in the cities or mining towns but, as will be shown below, few are successful. Many migrate to green revolution areas in search of short-term employment. All feel the pain of economic dislocation, which is at the heart of the Jharkhand movement. Many believe that government action could enhance their condition (more irrigation wells, more seed research relevant to hill agriculture), yet agricultural labourers of all ethnic backgrounds are quiescent regarding their condition, have few financial resources to contribute to a statehood or any other political movement, and generally choose not to devote time to political activities.

Industrial policy

The Bihar policy regarding industries was clearly one that supported migration out of northern Bihar and development of India for regional and national purposes. However, the

interests of workers themselves, once they arrived in Jharkhand, were left out of the policy mix. Those who did not get industrial jobs were obviously aggrieved. Those who did get jobs challenged the government for not delivering promised wages and living conditions.

The 1991 Indian National Census recorded only 6.7% of Jharkhand residents – and a much smaller proportion of tribespeople and *sadans* – as involved in mining or manufacturing industries, yet industrial sector issues have been at the centre of the Jharkhand movement, for four reasons. First, far more than 6.7% of the population has been involved in industrial production at one time or another, and a still greater proportion seeks industrial employment. Discrimination against ‘local people’ desperate for employment generated political responses far in excess of the sector’s real employment potential. Second, worse-than-advertised conditions for industrial sector employees – including recent migrants – and the absence of conscientious attempts by the Bihar government to redress these concerns led many migrants to believe that a Jharkhand state might serve their interests as well. Third, pollution from industrial production further inhibits agricultural production. Finally, rapid urbanisation by people insensitive (or negatively predisposed) to ‘tribal culture’ generated a cultural backlash in the cities that resonated also in Jharkhand villages.

Most of Bihar’s industries are located in Jharkhand, and many of these are successful. The Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) was established in Jamshedpur in 1907 and has grown into one of the world’s largest steel companies.¹⁹ In 1996, the 23 largest corporations in Jharkhand had combined sales equivalent to Rs 9200 per capita.²⁰ The region consumes 205 kWh of electricity per capita, compared with an all-India average of 93 kWh and an all-Bihar average of 19 kWh, but virtually all of this is devoted to industrial production.²¹ The promise of ‘development’ generating economic benefit for tribespeople simply has not been realised.

In addition to generally low employment in the industrial sector, government policies that ostensibly guarantee employment to a subset of the local population are not implemented. The usual compensation package for families who are displaced by eminent domain land transfers

includes provision of employment to one family member in the industry that comes to occupy his former home. The policy is of little value to the family members who are not the lucky one. In one well-publicised case, only 11 000, of 180 000 displaced individuals, were ‘rehabilitated’ (Anon, 1994: 1055). There is no reason to believe that rehabilitation rates are substantially better in any of the other eminent domain displacements listed in the land alienation discussion here.

If a large group supports Jharkhand statehood because they believe, naively, that a Jharkhand state government would generate substantially greater modern employment opportunities than does a Bihar state government, another group supports the movement because they believe that a Jharkhand state government would work more actively to ensure good employment conditions in the modern sector. Despite minimum wage legislation since 1972, most modern sector labourers rarely realise minimum wages. Before 1972, prevailing minimum wage varied between Rs 2 and 4 (Anon, 1971: 33). Minimum wage laws only slightly improved this condition. As illegal activities are hard to quantify, I will offer two anecdotes as illustrative of the general trend. First, in 1978, minimum wage for clay mineworkers was Rs 5.80 per day. The official register showed that the mine employed 30 workers who each received minimum wage. However, 150 people actually worked and shared the 30-person wages. Actual daily wage per worker was Rs 2.75.²² Second, a decade later in 1986, an inspecting team from the Bihar state labour department made a surprise check of wage payments at the Bihar Steel Company. As Arun Sinha reports, ‘at the end of the payments, [the inspection team] called for the company’s wage ledger and the team leader scribbled on the margin, “fair wages paid”. None of the members of the inspecting team noticed the clusters of workers outside the site who were asking each other in amazement, “My God, did you too get Rs 6.35 today?”. This pleasant astonishment was short-lived. The next day the company ordered the workers to return the difference between the wages paid to them the previous day and the actual wages they typically earned: a maximum of Rs 4 to male unskilled workers and Rs 3.50 to woman labourers, against the government-set daily

wages of Rs 6.35' (Sinha, 1976: 979–980). These labour issues affect tribespeople and non-tribespeople alike!

The Forest Policy/Industrial Policy substantive division within the Jharkhand statehood movement can also be framed in the form of a divide between a debate regarding the quality of natural resources to be exploited. Those who seek to influence forest policy also seek to retain an element of 'tradition' in the definition of the environment – or a shift in emphasis towards direct use of resources for those in the local economy; those who seek to influence industrial policy seek a greater share of the benefits of industrialisation. Each of these had a political party as their base: the Jharkhand Party (1949–63) and the Jharkhand People's Party (1991–present) were headquartered in Ranchi and were more involved in forest issues. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, founded in 1973 by labour leaders in Santal Parganas and headquartered in Dumka, considers its most reliable base to be industrial and mining workers. Members of both groups would likely resist these generalisations.

Government as problem and solution

While Jharkhandi grievances developed largely in the private sector, the quality of Indian political institutions both exacerbated the regional grievances and had a profound effect on the quality of social mobilisation in the region. Government invented 'tribe' as a political category and then neatly undermined the ability of tribal boundaries to be politically meaningful sources of social mobilisation. Although many political entrepreneurs sought to harness the idea of 'tribe', and some were elected because they were more 'tribal' than others, those representatives could show little in the way of substantive or institutional progress as a result of their efforts.

Rather, in the main, Jharkhandi tension and accommodation can best be understood through a frame that analyses interactions among three semi-hierarchical geographic/political entities: region (Ranchi), state (Patna) and national government (Delhi). Electoral logic is as compelling as it is frustrating, and the harms and charms of a federal system are transparent in the Jharkhand case.

Constituencies are defined by development projects as well as India's center-state electoral competition. Political entrepreneurs have a spectrum of coalition-building choices. Each choice might have seemed plausible, but none of them produced social justice of any meaningful sort during the 90 years of the Jharkhand movement.

Tribes as a political category

Tribespeople are carefully and directly considered by the Indian constitution and political administration – both as individuals and as collectivities whose cultural richness deepens what it means to be 'Indian'.²³ The most important of these is India's globally unique political representation affirmative action policy, which guarantees political representation for members of the scheduled tribes. Guaranteed representation offers a sense of tribal dignity as well as a limited and not very effective platform for placing 'tribal' issues on the political agenda.

India has taken the affirmative-action idea of minority-elite accommodation a giant step farther than have most countries. Tribespeople are guaranteed representation in state and national legislative assemblies in proportion to their population. In the current Jharkhand state, 28 of the assembly's 81 constituencies are 'reserved' for tribespeople – which are actually a greater proportion of assembly seats (34%) than the tribal proportion of the population (26%). In these constituencies, only tribespeople may contest elections, but every resident over the age of 18 years has the right to vote. Hence, a representative with a tribal background is guaranteed, but there is no guarantee of any kind about what political party or agenda any candidate will support. The tribal vote is obviously split, and many tribal constituencies are tribal minority areas; the successful candidate is the one who most effectively appeals beyond his or her ethnic community.

What an elegant rule! At a stroke, India's constitution writers provided a clear sense of tribal dignity and place within the Indian nation and simultaneously rendered the category politically impotent, because the logics of earning the right to contest and crafting a winning platform cut through cultural bound-

aries. The presence of tribespeople in no way guaranteed that tribal interests (whatever these might be) would be represented.²⁴

At least one Jharkhand Party has contested every election since independence. During the 'glory days' of the 1950s, when Jaipal Singh's Jharkhand Party won the majority of seats in Jharkhand – whether scheduled as tribal seats or not – there was a single tribal party. Since 1960, however, several parties have competed for the 'tribal' and 'statehood' votes. By the 1990s, virtually every party claimed to support statehood.

This is not to say that 'tribal politics' were not used. The Jharkhand Party's symbol was the bow and arrow; many actual bows and arrows were brandished during political rallies and demonstrations as well as during moments of violence – although they were no match for police guns.²⁵ Tribal songs and dances were regularly featured, as were 'exchange dances' where members of one tribe would share their art with members of another. But, when it came to voting and crafting of election manifestos, interest group and coalition incentives ruled the day.

Where the action really is: Centre-state–region relations

Political dynamics at the state level perpetuated a condition that cannot be said to be consistent with general notions of social justice. State governments, regardless of the party in power, responded to an electoral incentive to appeal, in one way or another, to the voters. At the same time, political accommodation at the state and especially national governmental levels kept the Jharkhand movement contained to peaceful political expression.

In addition to electoral rules fragmenting a potential 'tribal' whole, the logic of electioneering also demonstrates the value of ambiguous substantive political programmes as a strategy for electoral success. During the 1950s, the Jharkhand Platform went scarcely beyond 'jobs, education, and tribal dignity'.²⁶ Party bosses could agree on little more. The substantive fragility of the party was underscored by its choice of electoral strategy: the party allied with the Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas Janata Party, a party that appealed more explicitly for landlord rights and privatisation of the economy – policies that undermined the 'grievances' that are

always brought up at Jharkhand statehood demonstrations!²⁷ The strategy of opportunistic alliances continued, as the dominant branch of the Jharkhand Party allied with, in turn, the Congress Party, the Rashtriya Janata Party and the BJP. Clearly, 'developmental vision' was not at the heart of these alliances; the goal was to win seats. Even that goal, after the 1950s, was not pursued very effectively.

Eighty-five per cent of the non-Jharkhand Bihar population is involved in plains agriculture. Farmers vote. Governments respond to electoral pressures, both by promising policies that might possibly help an individual farmer on the Ganges plain, and by disavowing policies that would certainly not help that farmer.

The technology and infrastructure make both promises and policies transparent, because plains agriculture is radically different from that for hill agriculture. While it would not be clear whether a particular plain-based policy formulation would benefit an individual farmer, it is quite clear that a hill-based policy would not.²⁸ Every party that sought control of the Bihar state government looked first to the interests of the 60% of the whole-state population that was engaged in plains agriculture. Electoral results show the extent of Jharkhandi political disenfranchisement. In every election between 1952 and 2000, a majority of Jharkhandi legislative assembly seats was won by opposition parties (Table 1).

State budget flows followed electoral results. Between 1950 and 2000, at least 80% of every state budget was dedicated to 'developmental activities' in the northern portion of the state.²⁹ Even on per-capita terms, this is a systematic over-allocation (70% of the population lived in the northern portion of the state). Careful evaluation of budgetary allocations shows that there is no clear preference for Hindus, Muslims or others; for decades, Bihar's development policy has been sector- and region-based, not ethnicity-based. Similarly, members of all ethnic groups in Jharkhand were harmed by government policies in that region.³⁰

State-level neglect was partially compensated by central government policies – especially when the Congress Party controlled both the central government and the Bihar state government.³¹ Tribal subplans, backward areas plans and other forms of development grants from the

Table 1. Bihar legislative assembly results, by party type

	1952	1972	1990	2000
Congress	240	168	70	23
BJP/BJS	0	25 (20 in Jhark)	39 (31 in Jhark)	67 (56 in Jhark)
State (JD, RJD)	9	71	126	184
Jharkhand	44	25	19	37
Others	13	69 (20 in Jhark)	29 (10 in Jhark)	13

Compiled from Singh and Bose (1987); Election Commission of India (<http://www.eci.gov.in>). BJP, Bharatiya Janata Party; BJS, Bharatiya Jan Sangh; JD, Janata Dal; Jharkhand, any of a number of Jharkhand parties; RJD, Rashtriya Janata Dal.

Table 2. Indian parliamentary results, by party type

	1952	1971	1991	2004
Congress	364	350	244	145
BJP	3	22	120	138
State parties	49	66	112	221
Substate parties	4*	5*	4*	15*
Others	69	77	51	5

* Perhaps artificially low; many formed electoral alliances with state or national parties. Compiled from electoral data on website: <http://www.eci.gov.in>. BJP, Bharatiya Janata Party.

central government primarily targeted the Jharkhand area, likely to the extent of making up the per-capita shortfall of state budgetary expenditures.³² Anyone who doubts the rationality of voters in low-literacy developing areas would be well advised to observe electoral data from the Jharkhand region. The same voters who shunned a state-level Congress Party (which directed assistance away from Jharkhand) consistently voted for Congress Party Parliamentary candidates (who directed assistance towards the area).

Congress and BJP interest in the region makes sense given a second-level centre-state political dynamic. While much has been made of the Congress–BJP rivalry, a more powerful shift in parliamentary electoral trends away from either national party or state parties, which contest in only one or a few states. Table 2 illustrates the trend. On three occasions (1977, 1989 and 1996) coalitions of state-level parties actually led the national government. On each occasion, a major legacy was to enhance state-governmental legislative and budgetary autonomy – that is, they used their moment in power to safeguard their longer-term patronage opportunities in their home state, which govern-

ment they (reasonably) expected to control on a more regular basis than the national government (Saez, 1999).

During the 1990s, the BJP successfully captured the vote in neglected regions within state-party-governed states (such as Jharkhand and Uttaranchal). In each of the five parliamentary elections during the 1990s, the BJP garnered at least 10 of Jharkhand's 14 parliamentary seats on the strength of its promise – kept! – to create a Jharkhand state, despite the fact that the BJP social and developmental agendas are at best inconsistent with the substantive grievances at the heart of the Jharkhand movement.

The promise of statehood, fragmented by coalitions that sought direct substantive redress, some of which yielded well-targeted development programmes that assuaged the most likely to rebel, generated a political environment of dissatisfaction and social injustice which lasted, quietly and optimistically, for nearly a century.

Political violence and its accommodation in Jharkhand

While the Jharkhand movement in general cannot be meaningfully described in ethnic-tribal terms, many moments of political violence in the area certainly can be. The explanation for generally low levels of violence despite structural social injustice can be found in the fragmented nature of the political community as well as a plethora of plausibly effective peaceful avenues for substantive redress. The source of violence was, typically, optimism demonstrably betrayed, and it came from three sources.

First, violence followed inconsistent application of 'high principles' by national government. In 1962, the state of Nagaland was carved

out of Assam, and in 1966, Punjab was divided into Punjab, Haryana and Himanchal Pradesh. The long-standing Congress position was that India would not be divided into additional states – especially not other-than-linguistic states – because, once opened, the variety of logics surrounding plausible federal divisions, effectively closed with the 1956 linguistic state principle, would be reopened. With each of the 1960s state boundary changes, neither of which was genuinely along the linguistic principle, Jharkhandi tribespeople asked ‘why not Jharkhand?’ and heard no principled explanation. Political violence was the result.

Second, violence was used in response to national and especially state government efforts to redefine human relationships with the forests. This was a truly emotive social-cultural issue; the state government (led by the party of the day) calculated that Jharkhandi pain was a price worth paying in pursuit of other state-wide goals. The replacement of sal trees (important both as religious symbols and as a source of many subsistence products) with teak, restricting access to forests, or putting communities into competition with one another for limited access, and defining or redefining property rights surrounding timber stands, all generated moments of sometimes intense violence.

Third, violence was used in response to particularly egregiously unkept promises. Most importantly, affirmative action quotas for government jobs were underfilled and, by the late 1960s, it was increasingly believed that underprovision of jobs was an unspoken policy.³³ This inspired a sense of community among all who sought scarce jobs as well as all of those who perceived underprovision as an affront to tribal dignity. Corbridge studied the railway workshops in Sini, Bihar, between 1972 and 1975. He reports that no tribespeople were employed in the most responsible Class I or II jobs; 25 tribespeople were among 384 Class III employees. During the same period, Air India did not even interview any of the tribal applicants for 41 non-flying Class I jobs. Two tribespeople, along with 783 others, were interviewed for 135 Class II posts. Both were unsuccessful. Sixty-nine tribespeople, along with 193 others, earned employment at the Class III level. Tribespeople also filled all seven openings as janitors (Corbridge, 1987: 234–235; see also Corbridge,

2000). The position had not changed markedly by 1988. Ram Dayal Munda reports that ‘there are provisions of 80% reservation for tribal and local people – especially those forced off their land to make room for new development projects – in training and jobs, but the fact is that nearly 90% of the training facilities and jobs are filled by an external population’ (Munda, 1988: 33).

Affirmative-action-based violence was crushed under the heel of the state, pure and simple; substantive redress did not begin in earnest until the 1990s, when the Janata Dal came to power under Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav. Yadav rose to power on the promise, largely fulfilled, to improve living conditions for Bihar’s lowest caste groups. Provision of tribal quotas became a part of his agenda along with filling ‘scheduled caste’ employment quotas. However, another part of Yadav’s lowest-caste agenda was to encourage more rapid migration into the Jharkhandi industrial areas. At election time, these are the policies that voters remembered; the Janata Dal has never had electoral success in Jharkhand.

Ethnicity, tribe and Jharkhand

The Jharkhand statehood movement has all the trappings of an ethnic movement: an ethnic explanation for structural social injustice, an ethnic opportunity in the form of guaranteed ‘ethnic’ representation, a sense of legitimate space for tribal-ethnic political organisation, political parties and social organisations that call themselves tribal, and, in the year 2000, a major political change – redemarcated state boundaries – that was entirely consistent with a 90-year demand. Violence, when it occurred, was interpreted by scholars, political leaders and activists alike as ‘tribal violence’. Accommodation, when it occurred, was directed predominately towards political elites and, indeed, correlated with reduced levels of violence.

Yet, I argue here that such an analysis hides more than it reveals. Underlying grievances cut across ethnic boundaries, political mobilisation cut across competing grievances as well as across ethnic boundaries, and the most important political institutions provided a sense of place and dignity to members of tribal communities – which made it difficult for political

entrepreneurs to harness a general sense of community disrespect to particular, narrowly defined, opportunistic substantive issue areas.

A still deeper analysis, which would focus more directly on any of the thousands of specific locales, environmental spaces and particular resource contests might demonstrate that ethnicity, and ethnic passion, does motivate political action on that level. Without political action at the local level, there would be nothing at all to explore at the regional, state or national levels. But, when one focuses on those more aggregative planes, ethnicity simply washes out of the picture.

Notes

- 1 Interestingly, perhaps, two of the movement-dominant leaders earned their legitimacy far beyond Jharkhand. Jaipal Singh, leader of the Adivasa Mahasabha and the immediate post-independence Jharkhand Party, gained fame as captain of India's gold-medal winning field hockey team. Ram Dayal Munda earned a PhD at the University of Chicago and taught for 10 years at the University of Minnesota before returning to Jharkhand as a charismatic leader. By contrast, the current leader of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Shibu Soren – a perennial contender for the chief ministership when he is not dodging a murder charge – earned his stripes as the son of a man murdered by the Labor Mafia; he later demonstrated his own abilities as a social movement entrepreneur.
- 2 Government of India (2001). The Census India maps page (<http://www.censusindiamaps.net>) reports a 2001 tribal population of 7 087 068, which comes to 26% of a total reported population of 26 945 829. The proportion of tribespeople also fell as a result of the choice one large group, the Kurmi-Mahato, cease to consider itself a scheduled tribe.
- 3 These kingdoms were complete with Rajput priests, constructed genealogies, and, frequently, conversion to Hinduism by kings and higher-ranking subjects. This conversion, however, was more political than religious, in an important sense. Jharkhandi varieties of Hinduism, consistent with Hindu practice elsewhere, developed in consonance with local myths, traditions and rituals. Hence, it is perfectly consistent for much of the Jharkhand 'Hindu' community to profess that they practice 'tribal culture'.
- 4 Note how late this is in the context of human settlement in India. Note also the history of movement and inter-tribal competition, as characterised in Sitakant Mahapatra's rendering of the Santal origination myth: 'A wild goose, coming from the great ocean, alighted at Ahiri Pipri, and there it laid two eggs, out of which were born a male and a female human being, who were the original ancestors of the Santhals. They came to be known as Pilcu Haram and Pilcu Budhi. These ancestors migrated to Hara Duttie, greatly multiplied there, and are called Kharwar. After wanderings through Khairagaarh and Hurreddgarhi, they eventually settled in Chai Champa, in Hazaribagh District. In Chai Champa, a man belonging to the Bihar, another Munda-speaking tribe, seduced a Santhal girl and they had a boy named Madhu Singh, who grew up to be a very powerful man. He demanded a wife from among the Santhals, who refused to give any of their girls in marriage to the son of a Bihar. So, Madhu Singh threatened to violate all Santhal virgins unless he was given a wife. To save the honour of their maidens from this powerful tyrant, the Santhals collected all their women, children, cattle and movable goods, and fled overnight to Chotanagpur, the country of the Munda. Maranburu (literally, the "great mountain"), the God of the Munda, helped them by putting his huge mass between them and their pursuers. Since then, the Santhals have become votaries of Maranburu. Wandering through Jhalda and Patkum, they finally settled in the forests of Saot. Infatuated with the sight of the dancing Santhal maidens, the Raja of Saot demanded a girl for himself. The Santhals refused to comply with this demand. Fearing the consequences, they fled once more, this time to Sikhari, in the north. It was from their long sojourn at Saot that the name Santhal has been derived. As the people multiplied, groups of Santhals moved west and established colonies at Sonabadi and Guttuari in Hazaribagh District' (Prasad, 1972: 38–46; Gautam, 1973: 153–169; Icke-Schwalbe, 1974: 57–69; Mahapatra, 1986: 8–9; Singh, 1987: 75–89).
- 5 Most tribes had a formal organisation that transcended the village – a fact grasped by the British as they sought to harness 'traditional institutions' for their own governance purposes. But the pre-Raj relevance of the multi-village leader was quite limited.
- 6 In many of South Asia's most dramatic ethnic conflicts (e.g. Sri Lanka, Sikh separatism in Punjab, Hindu-Muslim strife in Indian-administered Kashmir) as well as many others in the world (e.g. Protestant–Catholic Ireland), the majority of deaths of members of one ethnic group are perpetrated by members of the same ethnic group, typically because the now-dead person was not sufficiently supportive of the group that claimed the individual as a member.
- 7 Mullick (1991: 54); Bihar Provisional Population Totals. Government of India (1991: 7–8, 36–38). This migration generated political and social challenges in Assam similar to those in Jharkhand, which manifest themselves in the form of the Bodoland movement to this day.
- 8 Quoted in Mohapatra (1985: 264). Sometimes the planters' preference for aboriginal coolies was carried to a ridiculous extent. It was quite a common practice, as the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1906 reports, for the coolie recruiters to change the appearance of an 'inferior coolie' by staining his face and cutting his hair in order to pass him off as a 'Dhangar' or 'Junglee'. Arranging for such good workers cost money. In 1885, recruiters were paid Rs 120 for 'pure aboriginal coolies', Rs 100 for 'good hardy coolies' and 'Rs 60 for Northwest Province coolies'. These recruit-

ment royalties suggest a coercive aspect of recruitment for Assam tea gardens. While the recruiter earned Rs 120 for each tribesperson recruited in 1885, the worker himself earned, on average, only Rs 4 per month! Hence, the worker would have to work for three years to earn as much as the recruiter earned simply from delivery. This surely created a strong incentive to misrepresent the nature of opportunities available in Assam. In any case, Jharkhandi tribespeople made the journey, thereby, demonstrating the ability of many Jharkhandis – 20%! – to overcome whatever cultural pressure to resist change that they might have faced at home.

- 9 As late as 1974, Jharkhand, 0.4% of India's landmass, contained more than 25% of its mineral wealth, despite 80 years of extraction. *Indian Minerals Yearbook 1970*, quoted in Sengupta (1980: 665) and Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (1997: 87). These data do not include petroleum deposits, which are substantial in India but absent in Jharkhand.
- 10 Singh (1982: 1324) said that, indeed, Santal tribespeople travelled to Assam in such numbers that, today, all migrant tribespeople are described generically as 'Santals'. Mohapatra (1985: 261–262) reported that Stuart Corbridge challenges this with much narrower data. According to the employment records at one mine in 1921, 4007 'local' and only 246 'outsider', unskilled labourers, were employed; 388 'local' and 156 'outsider', skilled labourers, were employed. Corbridge (1982: 45) notes, however, that Corbridge analyses mining activities in the heart of Chotanagpur.
- 11 A *sadan* is a non-tribal resident of Jharkhand who can trace his arrival in the region to before the twentieth century. By definition, everyone who lived in Jharkhand in 1881 was either a tribesperson or a *sadan*.
- 12 Interview with Shibu Soren, member of Parliament and President, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, on 16 February 1996.
- 13 The following analysis from *Frontier* magazine gives a flavour of these transactions: 'The case of the Sarda Mine in Chaibasa is typical. The villagers were not willing to part with their lands, which comprised their *sarna* [sacred grove], agricultural lands and house sites. In order to obtain the lease, compensation and agreement papers had to be signed and produced before the mining department. These signatures were obtained by making some tenants drunk and dragging and beating others. Those who still did not yield had a taste of police *lathis* [nightsticks] and jail life before their thumb impression on blank paper could be bought for the normal sum. . . . Practically, every mining lease in Singhbhum is purchased in a similar way'. Excerpted from Anonymous (1980: 3).
- 14 Interview with Xavier Dias, social activist and former editor of Singhbhum Ekta. Chaibasa, on 2 April 1996.
- 15 Forestry was a 'state subject' until 1976, when it was transferred to the 'concurrent list'. The central government managed national forests and the state government managed state forests. However, the state government exercised considerable control even over national forests because it provided much of the ancillary manpower that is crucial to the success (or failure) of policy intentions. Regarding forest policy during the British Raj, see Chandra (1979: 134–157). On the general post-independence forest policy debates, see Poffenberger and McGean (1996); Guha (1983, part I: 29 October; part II, 6 November: 1882–1896); Kulkarni (1982: 55–59); Saxena (1987: 150–162); Sivaramakrishnan (1987: 28–32); Chandrakanth and Romm (1991: 741–756); Baviskar (1994: 2493–2501) and Rangarajan (1996: 2391–2409).
- 16 Such a high proportion of Jharkhandis, including tribespeople, in settled agriculture, is the foundation for another argument which suggests that tribespeople should not be distinguished from other 'peasants' (Mandal 1975: 355–362).
- 17 Hectares of arable land, divided by the number of people engaged in agriculture on that land.
- 18 Government of India (2001)
- 19 The TISCO's 1996 sales were estimated at Rs 4446 crore, or approximately \$14.8 billion (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, 1997: 91). This places it slightly below USX (formerly United States Steel), whose \$21.0 billion revenues in 1996 included substantial non-metals revenue. The TISCO's metal-based revenue is greater than that of the largest predominantly metal-producing corporation in the United States, Alcoa, whose 1997 revenues were \$13.5 billion (*Fortune* 137:8 (27 April 1998), pp. F3, F57). Although Jamshedpur's economy has moved well beyond the TISCO, the company's impact on culture and economy remains profound. During dozens of casual conversations in nearby villages, people would call the city 'Tata', as in, 'If I want to buy something that is not available in the village market, I'll go to Tata'.
- 20 Calculated from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (1997: 95).
- 21 Bihar State Electricity Board (1973), quoted in Sengupta (1980: 668). In 1985, 40% of northern Bihar villages had access to electricity, but only 12% of Jharkhandi villages had electrical connections (Bihar State Electricity Board, 1985, quoted in Jha (1990: 18). Eighty-five per cent of tribespeople and *sadans* live in villages.
- 22 Yes, the math is confusing, to say the least. Perhaps I will sort it out on my next trip to Singhbhum (are you listening, Ford Foundation?) (Anonymous 1980: 5).
- 23 Nehru spoke often and eloquently about cultural diversity enhancing the strength of the Indian state and Indian nation. The processes by which culturally diversity was embedded in that Indian nation took two broad forms: *assimilation*, or inter-cultural learning, that is, enabling individuals to choose which cultural norms are 'best' and, as a result, enabling all of 'India' to progress, and *integration*, or enabling groups a rightful and dignified place in the Indian mosaic. Both principles have found their way into Indian political institutions; each remains deeply contested. For a detailed elaboration, see the first half of Stuligross (1999).
- 24 India's first-past-the-post electoral rule complicates this analysis. As a simple plurality is sufficient for victory (winners occasionally garner as little as 20% of the vote), it is possible for candidates and parties, to survive with very small constituencies.

- 25 The display of 'weapons' was too often used as an excuse for police action against tribespeople. In the most extraordinary case, immediately after independence, 25 000 (it is said) tribespeople from Saraikela sought to have their village included in Orissa rather than Bihar. They gathered peacefully and began to march towards the capitol. En route, 3000 were massacred by military machine guns under the orders of Home Minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel.
- 26 Jharkhand Party Archives, Ranchi.
- 27 The CNSJP later merged with the Swatantra Party in the 1960s, which was generally in favour of less government action in all economic and social sectors (that is, less protection of the very poor, less government-sponsored empowerment of the quite-poor).
- 28 Several state legislators said casually that it was not always necessary for them to implement a pro-plains policy; it was sufficient to vote against measures that would help hill agriculture. Similarly, it was not necessary to hire plains folk for unfilled affirmative action posts; it was sufficient to leave the seats empty so as to demonstrate disdain for Jharkhandis.
- 29 Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Bihar state politics is aware of the extent of corruption here. I might be charitable when I suggest that voters were swayed by promises of developmental assistance, but the argument is essentially about directed patronage politics and it applies equally well to black patronage as to lily-white development projects.
- 30 See Stuligross (2001), Chapter 4 for an exhaustive analysis of this claim.
- 31 The focus on Congress party exceptionalism may well be misplaced. Congress was consistently in power at the state level through the early 1970s and at the national level through the mid-1970s as well as portions of each subsequent decade. Before 1980 and the push for privatisation, government was more capable of directing financial resources than it has been since.
- 32 I have succeeded at tracing these budgetary allocations to the extent of being reasonably, but not wholly, confident with this claim. My findings are consistent with Stuart Corbridge's earlier (and more careful) work demonstrating that Bihar as a whole was not an 'internal colony' in India: the state has consistently received more money from the national government than it has contributed to national governmental coffers.
- 33 They were right. During a March 1996 interview with the Bihar Labour secretary, I was told that underprovision of affirmative action posts was a conscious policy to provide more jobs to 'undeniably poor and deserving' workers in northern Bihar.

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