

Module Detail and Its Structure

Subject Name	Sociology
Paper Name	Social Movements
Module Title	Tribal Movements in India
Module Id	SM 28
Pre-requisites	Some knowledge of social movements and tribal social life
Objectives	To introduce the learners to some major tribal movements that occurred during British rule and after post independence in India and to draw lessons for readers also.
Keywords	Tribe, Alienation, Exploitation

Development Team

Role in Content Development	Name	Affiliation
Principal Investigator	Prof. Sujata Patel	Dept. of Sociology, University of Hyderabad
Paper Coordinator	Prof. Biswajit Ghosh	Professor, Department of Sociology, The University of Burdwan, West Bengal Email: bghoshbu@gmail.com
Content Writer	Dr. Swapan Kumar Kolay	Associate Professor and Head School of Anthropology & Tribal Studies Bastar University, Jagdalpur: 494001 Email: kolay.swapan@gmail.com
Content Reviewer (CR) & Language Editor (LE)	Prof. Biswajit Ghosh	Professor, Department of Sociology, The University of Burdwan, West Bengal Email: bghoshbu@gmail.com

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1. Objectives

The main objective of this module is to highlight the major tribal rebellions in India as well as to generate knowledge about reasons and the consequences of tribals' movements. This module would try to answer the following questions: What were the main reasons behind these revolts? Who motivated the tribals for such revolts? How they fought their enemies? Which kind of sacrifices did they have to make? And finally, what were the results or consequences of these movements?

2. Introduction

India is known for its tribal or adivasi inhabitants. The term 'adivasi' connotes that they were the first or original inhabitants of the land, having original habitat, native to the soil. Rivers has defined a tribe as a social group of a simple kind, the members of which speak a common dialect and act together for such common purpose as welfare. Tribes live in a definite habitat and area, remain unified by a social organisation that is based primarily on blood relationship, cultural homogeneity, a common scheme of deities and common ancestors and a common dialect with a common folk lore. Their habitat and culture not only provides them a sense of freedom, self identity and respect, it also empowers them to stand united against any kind of exploitation, oppression and harassment by outsiders like zamindars, kings, British and others. As a corollary, the tribal history of India is abundant with stories of uprising against the exploiters as and when such occasion arose (Wilson 1973).

Before independence, tribal revolts stood primarily against alien rulers. According to Mahapatra (1972), most of the tribal movements had their origins in religious upheavals. Vaishnavist movements were one of the important religious movements found among the Meithei tribe in Manipur, Bhumij in West Bengal, Nokte Naga in Assam, Bathudi in Orissa and tribals in Jharkhand (Bihar), Orissa and south India. These were also found among Gonds in central India, Kondh in Orissa and Bhils in Rajasthan. In the early years of colonisation, no other community and even rulers of so many dynasties in India could put forward such heroic resistance to British rule and faced tragic consequences as did by the numerous Adivasi or tribal communities of present Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Bengal. Shah (1977) has stated that there were also movements against oppressing landlords, moneylenders and harassment by police and forest officials in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. For example, Bhagat movements were found among Oraon of Chotanagpur, Bhils of Rajasthan, etc (Bose 1975: 64-71). These were also revivalist movement for avoiding animal food, liquor and blood sacrifices. Apart from that, Mundas reformative movement was also reported under a powerful charismatic leader Dharti Aba who preached Hindu ideals of ritual purity, morality and asceticism and criticised the worship of priests (Singh 1985).

Extinction of two important resources of the tribals namely land and forest were at the helm of many tribal movements. Xaxa (2012) has argued that the erosion on land rights of tribes began with the coming of the British rule and administration. It was brought about by a combination of forces that were at work during the British period. Of these the most important were the introduction of the private property in land and the penetration of the market forces. The two taken together opened up the way for large-scale alienation of land from tribes to non-tribes especially after the tribal areas came to be linked by roads and railways. The mechanisms through which this was achieved were fraud, deceit, coercion and the most widely debt bondage. Despite much protective and even restorative legislation to stop land alienation in the post-independence period, there has been little success to this effect. Of course the major source of land alienation in the post-independence period is not so much the encroachment of the non-tribals into the tribal land as the process of development that the Indian State has followed during the period. The large scale industrialisation and exploitation of mineral resources and the construction of irrigation dams and the power projects that the tribal areas have witnessed during the period have been the single most factors that have uprooted more people

out of their lands than the transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals on the individual basis. These issues have also influenced the contours of Maoist movements in India (Ghosh 2015).

At the extreme end, there are instances of tribal movements for the agenda of liberation. We can include the instances of Naga revolution, Mizo movement, and the Gond Raj movement, under this category. Thus, on the whole, tribes of India have launched different kinds of movements and these were mainly related to their issues of livelihood, socio cultural security, oppression and discrimination, neglect and backwardness, poverty, hunger, unemployment and exploitation.

3. Learning Outcomes

This module would allow the readers to understand the causes and consequences of several tribal movements that have occurred in India since the British rule. A reading of these movements would allow reflecting on the issues facing the tribal life in general.

4. Major Reasons of Tribal Movements

Various reasons have stimulated the tribals for uprising. Historically speaking, however, there is a qualitative shift in tribal movement in independent India as compared to the period before 1947. Let us begin by explaining this difference.

4.1 Before Independence

It is possible to classify tribal movement in India before 1947 into three types (Mahapatra 1972). The first type is called the 'reactionary' movement. It attempted to oppose political or social reform by the tribes mostly in the context of mixture with non-tribes. Such movement was mostly seen among the tribals living a simple and isolated life in forest. Whenever they saw alien groups creating obstacles in their life, they became offensive and tried to bring back the 'good old days'. The second type is 'conservative' which opposed any kind of changes in tribal life and culture and sought to maintain status quo. And the third type is 'revolutionary' that aimed to replace certain traits of their traditional culture or social order with a progressive one. This movement is also termed as 'revivalistic' as the leaders of such movement also sought to 'purify' certain elements of culture by eliminating evil customs, beliefs and institutions.

Apart from these, there are several other attempts to classify tribal movements. For instance, Singh (1982) has suggested a four fold classification which is based on i) political autonomy (e.g. Jharkhand movement), ii) agrarian (e.g. Santhal Movement) and forest based issues (Koi movement), iii) sanskritization (e.g. Bhagat movement), and iv) cultural movements for script and language (Bhil movement). Again, Sinha (1968) has classified tribal movements into five types: a) Ethnic rebellion, b) Reform movements, c) Political autonomy movements within the Indian Union, d) Secessionist movements, and e) Agrarian unrest. For Dubey (1982), these movements are of four categories namely, a) Religious and social reform movements, b) Movements for separate statehood, c) Insurgent movements and d) Cultural rights movements. Shah (1990) too has categorised them in three groups which are Ethnic, Agrarian, and Political.

4.2 After Independence

After independence, the Government of India and various state governments have made great and incessant efforts in the direction of tribal welfare and development. Various efforts have been made by these governments to improve the socio-economic status of the tribals and to guarantee constitutional safeguards given to tribal people. Special programmes for their development have been

undertaken in the successive Five Year Plans. But, at the same time, the establishment of heavy industries, construction of dams and launching of development plans in tribal zones has necessitated displacement of local population. Destruction of forests as a consequence of felling of trees for industrial purposes has threatened the small communities of hunters and food gatherers. In spite of some rehabilitation and resettlement programmes here and there, unfortunately a large section of the tribals became the victims of developmental projects and they could not also adequately adopt themselves with new challenges (Rao 1978). Against rising economic and social disparities, the tribals started raising their collective voice in independent India. The tribals especially in central India had reacted sharply against their exploiters. These movements were directed towards freeing their land from all those who exploited them economically and culturally (Roy and Debal 2004). At the same time, each of these movements put emphasis on revitalisation of their culture, their traditional culture which was swayed under the impact of the outsiders. So, the basic issues behind the tribal movements in India after independence are: land alienation, unemployment, deprivation, cultural sub-mergence and unbalanced development.

It is possible to categorise various tribal movements by their reasons in the following way:

Table 1: Kind of Movements with their Examples

Sl No.	Kind of Movement	Examples
1	Movements due to exploitation by outsiders	The Santhals and the Mundas
2	Movements due to economic deprivation	The Gonds in Madhya Pradesh and the Mahars in Andhra Pradesh
3	Movements due to separatist tendencies	The Nagas and Mizos
4	Movements seeking political autonomy and formation of a state	Nagas, Mizos, Jharkhand
5	Agrarian movements	Santhal Movements
6	Forest based movements	Muriya and Mariya movements
7	Socio-religious or socio-cultural movements	The Bhagat movement among Bhils of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, movement among tribals of south Gujarat or Raghunath Murmu's movement among the Santhals

Self Check Exercise-1

Q. 1 What were the main reasons behind any tribal revolt?

Tribes of India have time and again protested against any acquisition of their land and exerted their rights over forest resources. In recent times, displacement due to industrial and developmental projects has affected them the most. There have also been movements for social, cultural and political reasons.

Q. 2 What are the major differences between the social movement during the British rule and those taking place after independence in India?

The British policies were harmful for the socio-cultural life of the tribes. Out of sheer ignorance they neglected their rights and customs. They established a system of law which encouraged the outsiders to enter into the tribal hinterland and exploit their life. Movements during the British rule were therefore launched mainly against such policies as well as for ignoring tribal rights over the land. After independence, the Central and State governments have introduced various kind of

development programmes for tribals. But, at the same time, developmental projects launched by the governments contributed to large scale eviction of tribals. The state failed to rehabilitate them properly. The process became more faster in the current phase of economic globalisation. Tribals also grouped themselves for demands of political autonomy including rights for separate statehood.

5. Paths of Tribal Movements

There are only two paths of any kind of movement: nonviolent and violent. The non-violent path is based on bargaining and negotiating with the government and using a variety of pressure tactics without resorting to violence/revolts. On the other hand, the violent path is militant path of revolts or mass struggles based on developing the fighting power of the oppressed tribal strata. The importance of both these paths is different. One indicates struggle generated to reshape and reform, while the other indicates structural transformation of the community. For example Tana Bhagat movement was nonviolent and Muriya Movement was one of the violent insurgent of tribals. The Tana Bhagat movement is also an example of what M.N. Srinivas called as 'sanskritization'. These tribals found solutions to their problems by the acceptance of new life style, values and beliefs. Those who converted to this new life are known as Bhagat.

6. Spectrum of Major Tribals Movements in India

In 1976, the Anthropological Survey of India had identified 36 tribal movements in the country. Raghavaiah (1971) has listed 70 revolts from 1978 to 1971, while various other scholars (Mathur 1988; Fuchs 1965; Shah 1990; Sharma 1986; Singh 1972) have argued that instances of tribal movements could be traced even before 1768. Singh (1982) has divided all these movements into three faces. The first face was between 1778 and 1860 and these coincide with the rise, expansion and establishment of the British Empire. The second face covers the period of colonialism when merchant capital penetrated into tribal economy affecting their relationship with the land and forest. The third phase deals with the period from 1920 till the achievement of independence in 1947. During this phase the tribals not only began to launch the so called separatist movement but at the same time participated in nationalist and agrarian movements. Apart from these faces, we are able to identify the fourth face of the insurgents which started from 1947 and continuing at present.

There have however been attempts to identify several tribal movements basically as peasant uprisings. It is true that the tribals mostly live as forest dwellers and simple peasants. According to Shah (1990) despite tribals joining movements of different types, land question predominates in all these. Many other scholars have also treated tribal movements as peasant movements (Gough 1974; Desai 1979; Guha 1983). Historically speaking, since the introduction of the permanent settlement by Lord Cornwallis, increasing instances of alienation of tribal land led to general discontentment among them (Hardiman 1981). It has also been argued that the tribals revolted mostly against those alien groups who wanted to acquire their culture, habitat, farm, forest as well as solidarity (Gopalankatty 1981). For example, Mundas joined the Sardar movement which was a peasant movement based on agrarian reforming. Similarly, the Gonds of Andhra Pradesh protested when they lost their traditional privileges in the forest. According to Verier Elwin (1965), the tribals firmly believe that the forests belong to them and they have a right to collect forest products. They also worship forest as their 'god'. They have been there for centuries; it is their life and they consider themselves justified in resisting any attempt to deprive them of it. On the whole, most of the tribal movements, during the British rule in particular, were organised in order to mobilize tribal peasants against oppressors like land lords (Zamindars) money lenders and officials of British.

We may provide a chronological list of some tribal movements in the following table since 1768:

Table 2: Tribals Movements in India from 1768 to 2008

S.N.	Movement	Period	Place	Leader
1	Chuar uprising	1768	Midnapur	Jagannath Singh, the zamindar of Ghatshila or the king of Dhalbhum
2	Halba rebellion	1774-79	Donger, Chhatisgarh	-
3	Chakma rebellion	1776-1787	North East India	-
4	Pahariya Sardar's Revolution	1778	Chhotanagpur	Raja Jagganath
5	Tamar's revolution	1794-1795	Chhotanagpur	Chief Bisoi
6	Bhopalpatnam Struggle	1795	Bhopalpatnam	-
7	Chuar rebellion in Bengal	1795-1800	Midnapur	Jagannath Singh, Dhadkar Shyamganjan and Durjol Singh
8	Kol Rebellion	1795-1831	Chhotanagpur	Bir Budhu Bhagat, Joa Bhagat, Jhindrai Manki and Sui Munda
9	Tribal Revolt against the sale of Panchet estate	1798	Chhotanagpur	Raja Jagganath
10	Mizo Movement	1810	Mizoram	-
11	Khurda Rebellion	1817	Orisha	-
12	Kondhas Rebellion	1817	Orissa	-
13	Bhil rebellion	1822-1857	Rajasthan and Madhyapradesh	Bhagoji Naik and Kajar Singh
14	Paralkot Rebellion	1825	Bastar	Gend Singh
15	Khasi and Garo Rebellion	1829	Meghalaya	-
16	Tarapur rebellion	1842-54	Bastar	-
17	Maria rebellion	1842-63	Bastar	-
18	Jharkhand Movement	1845	Jharkhand	-
19	Kond Revolution	1850	Orissa	Chief Bisoi.
20	First Freedom Struggle	1856-57	Sidu Murmu and Kanu Murmu	-
21	Bhil rebellion	1858	Banswara	Tantya Tope
22	Koi revolt	1859	Bastar	
23	Gond rebellion	1860	Ramji Gond	Adilabad
24	Synteng tribal	1860-1862	North East India	-
25	Kuki Invasion	1860s	Manipur	-
26	Juang tribal	1861	Orissa	-
27	Koya	1862	Andhra Pradesh	Tammandora
28	Bhuiyas Rebellion	1868	Keonjhar	-
29	Daflas Rebellion	1875	North East India	-
30	Rani of Nagas rebellion	1878-82	Manipur	-
31	1st Rampa Rebellion	1879	Vizagapatnam (Visakhapatnam)	-
32	Naga Movement	1879	North East India	Tikendraji Singh
33	Sentinelese tribal people	1883	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	-

Table 2: Tribals Movements in India from 1768 to 2008

S.N.	Movement	Period	Place	Leader
34	Santhal Revolt	1885-1886	Dhanbad	Sidhu and Kanhu
35	Muria Gond Rebellion	1886	Eastern Madhya Pradesh	-
36	Mundal rebellion	1889	Orissa	Birsa Munda
37	Lushei rebellion	1892	Tripura	-
38	Bhumkal	1910	Bastar, Chhattisgarh	-
39	Samp sabha Movement	1913	Rajasthan	Guru Govind
40	Tana Bhagat movement	1913-1914	Bihar	Tana Bhagat
41	Kuki Movement	1917-1919	Manipur	chieftains called <i>haosa</i>
42	Tana Bhagat movement	1920-1921	Jharkhand	Tana Bhagat
43	2nd Rampa Rebellion	1921-1923	Visakhapatnam	-
44	Koya Rebellion	1922	Andrapradesh	Alluri Sree Rama Raju.
45	Naga Rebellion	1932	Nagaland	Rani Guidallo
46	Gond and the Kolam	1941	Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh	-
47	Koraput Revolution	1942	Orissa	Lakshmana Naik
48	Andamanese Revolution	1942-1945	Andaman and Nicobar	-
49	Bodo Movement	1987	Assam	Upendranath Brahma
50	Dongria Kondh Movement	2008	Odisha	-

7. Some Major Tribal Movements:

7.1 The Chuar Revolt

The Chuars were inhabitant of north western Midnapur. Basically they were simple farmers and hunters and also worked under local *zamindars*. They received tax free land instead of salaries. During colonization period of East India Company, when the *zamindars* had imposed huge tax burden, the Chuars revolted. The uprising continued for around three decades from 1768-69 to 1799.

Table 3: Three Phases of The Chuar Revolt

Periods	Leader	Significant Aspect
1768-69	Jagannath Singh, the zamindar of Ghatshila or the king of Dhalbhum	It was initially an armed uprising backed by local zamindars and 50,000 Chuars. The frightened Government who returned the zamindari to Jagannath.
1771	Dhadkar Shyamganjan	Chuars rose again, but they failed that time.
1783-84 and 1789-90	Durjol Singh	This was the most significant uprising. In 1789-90, it was brutally put down by the Government. The revolt covered Midnapur, Bankura, Birbhum and Dhalbhum. It was a spontaneous and extensive uprising of poor and lower classes. Peasants were the pillars of this movement.

7.2 The Kol Revolt

The Kol tribe was the inhabitant of Chotanagpur. They preferred an independent life. The main reason of Kol revolt was imposition of new taxes by the king of Porhat. In 1820, the king of Porhat agreed to support the British and pay them huge taxes annually. In return, he claimed the neighbouring Kol region for collection of taxes. He went on to collect taxes from the Kols. The Kols resented against this kind of taxes and a few officials were killed by them. The British then sent troops in support of the king. The Kols took up traditional arms like bows and arrows to face British troops armed in modern weapons. They revolted very bravely but had to surrender in 1821. In 1831 the Kols rose again because the region of Chotanagpur was leased out to Hindu, Muslim and Sikh money lenders for revenue collection. The oppressive tactics of money lenders, high revenue rates, British judicial and vulnerable revenue policies devastated the traditional socio-cultural framework of the Kols. They gathered under the leadership of Bir Budhu Bhagat, Joa Bhagat, Jhindrai Manki and Sui Munda. In 1831, Munda and Oraon peasants first took up arms against the British. It encouraged the tribals of Singbhum, Manbhum, Hazaribagh and Palamou as well. But, after two years of intense resistance they lost to modern weapons of the British. Thousands of tribal men, women and children were killed and the rebellion was suppressed.

7.3 The Santhal Revolt

The Santhals were mainly agriculturalists living in the dense forests of Bankura, Midnapur, Birbhum, Manbhum, Chotanagpur and Palamou. The Santhals fled their original land (Bhagalpur and Manbhoom) when the oppressive zamindars brought that land under Company's revenue control. They started living and farming in hill of Rajmahal, calling it Damin-i-Koh. But their oppressors followed them and exploitation started in full swing. Apart from the zamindari and British Company, local moneylenders also cheated them with high interest rates. The simple minded Santals reeled under loans and taxes and had to lose everything. Sidhu and Kanhu, the two brothers, rose against these dreadful activities. Santhals assembled at the Bhagnadihi fields on 30 June 1855 and pledged to establish a free Santhal state. The rebels' ranks swelled and they numbered nearly 50,000 from early 10000. Almost all the postal and rail services were thoroughly disrupted during this movement. They bravely fought with only bows and arrows with the armed British soldiers. At last, in February 1856, the British could suppress this uprising by slaughtering 23,000 rebels. Overall the Santhal Revolt was essentially a peasant revolt. People from all professions and communities such as potters, blacksmiths, weavers, leather workers and doms also joined in (Chandra 1998). It was distinctly against the policies of colonial rulers in British India.

7.4 Koi Revolt

Koi revolt is an important mass uprising among the tribals of Bastar. The people of the Jamindaris, who were involved in the cutting of trees, were known as Kois, which subsequently became the name of the revolution. The rebellion stood against the autocratic and dominant British rule. A vital revolution among the other tribal rebellions, Koi revolt is considered as a serious uprising that resulted in a considerable change in its aftermath. The tribal people denied the decision of the British, which offered the contracts of cutting of Sal trees to people outside the region of Bastar. The outside contractors who were offered the contract of cutting the trees were also known to exploit the innocent tribal people in many ways. This added to the problem and the tribal men were exploited both economically as well as mentally. When the water rose above their heads, the tribal people of Bastar collectively decided that they would not tolerate the cutting of a single tree. The British wanted to suppress the unrest and used various methods to stop the opposition led by the tribal people. But the tribals were very rigid in their decision. They stated that forest and its trees was their mother and they would not allow the exploitation of their natural resources and forests. Finally, they decided that they

would not allow the exploitation of their natural resources and rich forests. After this insurgency, Britishers became alert and modified their rules in order to use their natural resources.

7.5 Paralkot Rebellion

In 1825, the Paralkot rebellion was a symbol of protest against foreign rules by Abujhmarias, who were the inhabitants of the present day state of Chhattisgarh. The anger of Abujhmarias mainly originated against the foreign rulers like the Marathas and the British. Gend Singh led the revolt of Paralkot and the other Abujhmarias supported him. The purpose of this rebellion was to acquire a world that is free from all outsiders. In the time of Maratha Dynasty, Abujhmarias were levied heavy tax, which was impossible for them to pay. So, they revolted against the injustice by the foreign powers. One thing noteworthy of this movement was the desire of the Abujhmarias to build an independent Bastar, free of foreign intrusion. The Paralkot revolt is one of the important tribal rebellions in the history of the Indian state of Chhattisgarh.

7.6 Halba rebellion

The event of Halba rebellion took place in the Bastar District in Chhattisgarh. The Halba rebellion started against the Marathas and the British in the year 1774 after the decline of the Chalukyas. The governor of Dongar, Ajmer Singh, was the initiator leader of the revolt of Halba. The movement of Halba was aimed at creating a new and independent state in Dongar. The Halbas stood beside Ajmer Singh as the soldiers. Another reason for insurgency was lack of money and food in the hands of the common people. Added to this huge problem, there was the pressure and fear caused by the Maratha and the British which eventually resulted in the uprising. Many of the Halba tribal people were killed by the British and Maratha armies. Subsequently, the army of Halba was also defeated. The Halba revolt created conditions for the decline of the Chalukya dynasty which in turn significantly altered the history of Bastar. It created circumstances for first bringing the Marathas and then the British to the region.

7.7 Maria Rebellion

The uprising of Maria Tribe was a prolonged rebellion in Bastar; it continued for twenty years from 1842 to 1863. It was apparently fought to preserve the practice of human sacrifice. The Anglo-Maratha Rule forced the aboriginal tribes to part with their tribal faiths and practices. The British and the Marathas used to enter the temples constantly, which according to the innocent beliefs of the tribal people polluted the sacred atmosphere of the temples. The only way to save the identity of the Marias was to revolt against the invaders. The Maria Rebellion is considered one of the major tribal rebellions for their expression of particular identity and socio-cultural specificity.

7.8 Muria Rebellion

Muria rebellion of 1876 is another revolt that appeared in the region of Bastar. It is a great booster for the ill treated and suppressed people of all ages, all over the country. In the year 1867, Gopinath Kapardas was selected as the Diwan of the state of Bastar. Gopinath Kapardas used to exploit the simple and innocent tribal people. The tribal people appealed to the King to remove the Diwan from the position, but the King did not support their subjects. Being repeatedly neglected by the King, the Murias were left with only one option: to revolt. On second March of the year 1876, the raging tribal people enclosed Jagdalpur, the abode of the King. The Muria people besieged the King and blocked all the ways of exit. Surrounded by all sides, the King faced real inconvenience to inform the British about the unrest that had generated among the tribal people. Much later, the British Army was sent which rescued the king and suppressed the revolution. Despite such suppression, the Muria rebellion encouraged the common people to raise the voice against injustice done against them.

7.9 Tarapur Rebellion

Tarapur rebellion is a great example of the tribal rebellions in Bastar, the present Chhattisgarh. The common people of Bastar stood against the foreign rulers. The revolt of Tarapur took place from 1842 to 1854. The native people of Bastar felt that their local tradition and culture were being considerably harmed and the social, political as well as economic interests were being hampered. Thus, they stood against the Anglo-Maratha reign in order to restore their native culture and protest against imposition of heavy taxes. The local Diwan, who used to collect the taxes from the common people, became the symbol of oppression for them. The tribal rage grew more and more, resulting in the Tarapur rebellion. It was an assertion of tribal identity against the tampering with their traditional aspects of living. For tribals, the experience of coercive taxation was alien and therefore they opposed them. As a result of such taxation, the annual tribute paid to the Nagpur rulers in Tarapur had increased which was opposed by Dalganijian Singh. The latter decided to leave Tarapur after being pressurised by the Nagpur rulers.

7.10 Bodo Movement

The Bodos are recognized as a plains tribe in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The major objective of the Bodo movement was to have a separate state of their own. Since the colonial period, there had been attempts to subsume the Bodos under the umbrella of Assamese nationalism. Therefore, it was under the British rule that the Bodos first raised the demand for a separate homeland along with the hill tribes of the northeast. The formation of the *All Assam Plains Tribal League* (AAPTL) in 1933 was evidence enough. Subsequently, formation of organisations such as the *Bodo Sahitya Sabha* (BSS) in 1952, *Plains Tribal Council of Assam* (PTCA), and *All Bodo Students' Union* (ABSU) in 1967 reflected the Bodo people's quest for political power and self-determination. The movement of ABSU began with the slogan "Divide Assam Fifty-Fifty". In order to spearhead the movement, the *All Bodo Students Union* (ABSU) created a political organization called the *Bodo People's Action Committee* (BPAC). Initially, the ABSU and PTCA worked in tandem to put forth the demand for a separate homeland for the Bodos, but ABSU withdrew its support to PTCA in 1979 when they felt that the PTCA had failed to fulfill the aspirations of the Bodo people for a separate state during the reorganisation process of Assam. This movement officially started under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma on 2 March 1987; but the movement was suppressed by the Government and ended up with the creation of *Bodoland Autonomous Council* (BAC) through bipartite Bodo Accord in 1993.

7.11 Jharkhand Movement

The Jharkhand movement in Bihar is a movement of tribal communities consisting of settled agriculturalists who are sensitised to Vaishnavism. There were major cultural changes in the life of tribals since 1845 when the Christian missionaries first arrived in Jharkhand. Many tribes were converted into Christianity and many schools including higher institutions for both the sexes were established for educating the tribals. The impact of modern education on the changing aspirations of the tribal boys and girls became evident later. As against such positive development, the tribals also had to face many problems due to extraction of mineral wealth from Jharkhand. The region is a rich source of coal and iron. Even bauxite, copper, asbestos, limestone and graphite are also found there. Coal mining in this region had started in the year 1856 itself. In the year 1907, the Tata Iron and Steel Factory was established in Jamshedpur. Since independence, much emphasis was laid on planned industrialization concentrating on heavy industries especially on the expansion of mining. Interestingly, the Jharkhand region contributed to 75 percent of the revenue of Bihar. The Government began acquiring the lands of the tribals, but did not resettle and rehabilitate them. The local people also felt that the prices of different forest products, which the Government paid them, were much less. In the course of time, these problems continued and were intensified. In the early part

of the twentieth century, the Jharkhand movement was initiated by the Christian tribal students and it was later continued by the non-tribals and the non-Christians too.

Interestingly, the Jharkhand movement developed in phases from ethnicity to regionalism since 1950. The social base of this movement later got broadened to include the non-tribals so as to transform it from an ethnic to a regional movement (Ghosh 2001). The movement was based on the demand of autonomous state owing to the exploitation of local tribal people by *dikus* or non tribals. It was a result of the interplay between historical, cultural, economic and political forces which culminated in the emergence of Jharkhand Party in the Chotanagpur division and the Santhal Parganas of Bihar in the late 1940s. The tribal autonomy in the Jharkhand movement comprises the whole of the Chotanagpur plains, some districts of Orissa, Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. The formation of the Jharkhand party in 1950 gave a new direction to political and other welfare activities in the Jharkhand region in Bihar. The history of Jharkhand movement has passed through four phases since independence: first from 1947 to 1954, second from 1955 to 1963, third from 1964 to 1969 and forth was 1970 onwards. The Jarkhand Mukti Morcha was formally formed during the first period. It contested the 1952 general election and emerged as the main opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly. The second phase started with the States Reorganization Commission's rejection of the demand for a separate Jharkhand State and ended with the merger of the Jharkhand party with the Congress Party. During the third phase, there emerged factions and cleavages among the Jharkhand cadre. The movement which lasted for more than five decades which started since 1845 and significantly the movement ended with the formation of new separate Jharkhand State.

7.12 Bhumkal

The Bhumkal rebellion took place in the year 1910 in the present Indian state of Chhattisgarh. It was a widespread rebellion. Tribal people of forty six out of the eighty four *parganas* of the district of Bastar participated in this movement. According to most of the historians, the origin of the Bhumkal protest movement was rooted in the previous rebellious movements that took place in this region. It was a movement based in the earlier struggle of the tribal people of Bastar to protect and preserve their tradition, culture and customs. The revolt of the tribal people of Bastar was to reassert their rights on the forests and other natural resources of this area. It is because all their customs, culture and economic activities depended on their basic belief about the relation between man and nature. The sudden dispossession of the forestland since 1908 when the British declared the forests as 'reserved zones' initiated the Bhumkal rebellion.

7.13 Bhil Rebellion

The Bhils are a tribe of central India, mainly distributed in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, who traditionally had an identity of guerrilla fighters and warriors. Under the Moghul Emperors, they could peacefully live the life of a hunter-gatherers; but they faced persecution under the Marathas. They took to the jungles and became less acquiescent to authority. In 1818, when the British organised the princely states of Central India into the Central India Agency, centred on the town of Neemuch (north-west Madhya Pradesh, close to the border with Rajasthan), they attempted to bring the Bhils from the hill. But the Bhils did not like this. The Bhil's main objection was similar to that of nomadic hunter gatherers anywhere in the colonised world, whether it is Apache or Sioux in America, Bushmen in South Africa and aborigines in Australia. Therefore, in 1825 the British created a Bhil Agency, specifically to deal with them and a Bhil Corps was formed, in an attempt to quell the less cooperative tribesmen. But the British failed to control them completely and Captain Henry Bowden Smith died at Neemuch in 1831 because of "wounds received in action against the Bhils" (Singh, 1972). The Bhils being nomadic hunters operated from thick jungle and the regimented British forces clearly found them difficult to overcome. The guerrilla war lasted for over twenty years.

7.14 Tana Bhagat Movement

Tana Bhagats is a tribal community of Jharkhand. This community were formed by Oaron saints Jatra Bhagat and Turia Bhagat. In its earlier phase, it was called as Kurukh Dharam. Kurukh is literally the original religion of the Oraons. The movement was against the Zamindars, missionaries and British. Tana Bhagats were followers of Mahatma Gandhi and believes in Non-violence. They opposed the taxes imposed on them by the British and they staged a *Satyagraha* (civil disobedience movement) even joined Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement.

7.15 Nagas Rebellion

Nagas were once head hunters, as they used to cut off the heads of the enemies and preserve them as trophies. But with the advent of Christianity and education, the Nagas, comprising more than 30 tribes, have evolved a rich culture and tradition. The Naga national movement is the consequence of the intermingling of ethnicity, geography, history and most significantly the indomitable spirit of the Nagas who belong to Mongoloid race under Tibeto-Burman category. They have customs and traditions which are very different from those of the plains people. One of the theoretical paradigms of how an ethnic group becomes a nation is when that group faces a common enemy (Fuchs, 1965). This may be said to be true in the case of the Nagas as the emergence of their national movement and simultaneously that of their nation have their moorings in their interaction and contact with the outside world, which is riven with unpleasant exchanges. Oral tradition indicates that the Nagas fought battles with the people of other plains. In order to protect their indigenous culture, they demanded independent homeland for the Nagas.

The objective of the NSCN (Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland), that led the movement, was to establish a Sovereign State by unifying all the Naga inhabited areas in the North East of India and Northern Burma which the organisation and the people of the area proposed as Nagalim. Unification of all Naga tribes under one administration and 'liberating' Nagalim from India is listed as one of the supposed main objectives of the organisation. Its manifesto is based on the principle of Socialism for economic development and a Baptist Christian religious outlook. The leaders however had to forgo many of their demands when the new state of Nagaland was finally formed on 31 January 1980. The name of the Government was called "The People Republic of Nagaland (Nagalim)".

7.16 Munda Rebellion

This rebellion was led by Birsa Munda in the south of Ranchi in the year 1899 against of land alienation. The "Great Tumult" aimed to establish Munda Raj and independence. Traditionally, the Mundas enjoyed a preferential rent rate known as the *khuntkattidar*, which meant the original clearer of the forest. However, in course of time, the Mundas realized that this system of *khuntkattidar* is being corroded by the *jagirdars* and *thikadars* who came as moneylenders and as traders. After the establishment of the British rule, the movement into the tribal regions by the non-tribals increased. This, in turn, led to increase in the practice of forced labour. The tribal people became more aware of their rights due to the spread of education, which was provided by the missionaries. The social cleavage between the Christian and non-Christian Mundas deepened due to which the solidarity of the tribals got diluted. Therefore, there were two reasons for the revitalization of the movement, one was agrarian discontent and the other was the advent of Christianity. The movement aimed to reconstruct the tribal society from disintegration, which was staring in its face due to the stress and strains of the colonial rule.

7.17 Dongria Kondh's Struggle:

Dongria Kondh tribe have resided in the Niyamgiri Mountains for generations. They have sacred and symbiotic relationship with nature. One of the mountains in the Niyamgiri hill range, Niyam Dongar, is regarded by the tribe to be the abode of their divine God, Niyam Raja (The King of Law). As a part of their customs, felling trees on mountain tops is considered taboo and a sign of disrespect to their supreme deity. The peaceful life of the tribe was brought under threat, when on June 7, 2003 Vedanta signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Odisha for the construction of one million ton per annum alumina refinery, along with coal based power plant in the Lanjigarh region of Kalahandi district. For the purpose of obtaining bauxite for this alumina refinery, Vedanta owned Sterlite Industries also entered the picture, with plans to construct an open pit, bauxite mining plant at the top of the sacred Niyam Dongar Mountain.

The Dongria people clearly understood that any mining activity at the top of the mountain would cause these perennial streams to dry up. So, they stood together and prevented workers from Vedanta from entering their sacred hill. They strongly stand against the mining process in Niyamgiri. The movement against Vedanta was not only led by the local tribes, but it also gained massive support from international communities. Organizations like Survival International, Amnesty International and Foil Vedanta visited the protest site in India regularly and also organized mass rallies outside the company's London office. For seven years, Survival International organized demonstrations at the Annual General Meeting of the company in London. The organization also launched an international campaign, encouraging major shareholders of Vedanta Resources to disinvest in the company until it removed its operations from Niyamgiri. Witnessing the company's atrocious treatment of the Dongria Kondh and its involvement in the blatant violation of human rights, many international investors like the Norwegian Government Pension Fund, Martin Currie, the Church of England and Marlborough Ethical Fund sold their stocks in the company.

Self Check Exercise-2

Q. 1. What were the major objectives of the Bodo movements in Assam?

The major objective of the Bodo movement was to have a separate state of their own. Since the colonial period, there had been attempts to subsume the Bodos under the umbrella of Assamese nationalism. Therefore, it was under the British rule that the Bodos first raised the demand for a separate homeland along with the hill tribes of the northeast.

Q. 2. How did the tribals organise their movements?

The tribals who are expert in guerrilla warfare mostly use weapons like bow and arrow to fight their enemies violently. For example, members of the Soora tribe of Andhra Pradesh revolted violently against the forest department. But, some of the tribal movements are non violent. For instance, in Bhagat movement and Kharwar movement in Bihar tribals participated in the forest *Satyagrah* in 1930s demanding restoration of their customary rights to extract timber and collect forest produce for consumption.

8. Conclusion

The tribes of India since time immemorial have been engaged in protecting their land and culture from the outsiders including powerful rulers like the British. Their potential, strength and energy for holding their fort till the last person is alive had always been a matter of great inspiration for common

man and activists. Interestingly, the spirit of their revolutionary action has not shown any marked signs of abatement in independent India. It is because of these movements that the Indian state today recognises the rights of tribal to live and manage forests. Tribals have time and again resisted the exploitation of natural resources by the nexus of money-lenders, bureaucrats, politicians and corporate honchos. In recent times, the transnational corporate companies are invited by the state to take control over the mineral rich landmass in the tribal areas. Uncontrolled infiltration in the tribal domain by the national and multinational corporations aided and abetted by the state machinery without any commensurate wergild provided to the 'sons of the soil' have led to their marginalization. A feeling of lack of empowerment and lack of effective governance, compounded with appalling poverty has given rise to belligerence amongst tribal population in India. It is also a major cause of the rise of Maoist influence in the hilly regions domesticated by the tribals. It appears that when the government and its machinery fail to protect the tribals, they are forced to take up arms against their exploiters. The instances of tribal movement therefore remain a source of inspiration for all those who are exploited and marginalised.

