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Title of Research Paper: The Early Phase Of Jharkhand Movement: Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj

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Abstract:

During its initial stages, the movement for a separate state of Jharkhand was primarily defined by the participation of tribal leadership, leading many to categorize it exclusively as a tribal cause. The Jharkhand movement was the most successful and prominent tribal movement in post-independence India. It began in the early 20th century when educated tribal students and social workers from Chhotanagpur protested against regional development disparities and the exploitation of Adivasis. They demanded a distinct territory for Adivasis spanning parts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal. This region was primarily inhabited by the Munda, Ho, and Oraon tribes, whose isolated habitats, land ownership models, cultures, and political structures differed significantly from non-tribal populations. In 1920, the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj was formed to address these tribal concerns. The organization gained government attention and was eventually renamed the Adivasi Sabha.

Introduction:

Founded in 1915, the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj (Chhotanagpur Improvement Society) was created to uplift the region's tribal communities. The organization advocated for tribal rights, preserved local identity, and promoted socio-economic development. It became a central force in Chhotanagpur's political, social, and cultural history.Founder — Rev. Joel Lakra with Theble Oraon, Bandi Oraon and Paul Dayal.

Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj:

The term "Jharkhand" for the Chota Nagpur tribal region dates back to medieval times, when independent tribal groups governed the area autonomously. The British were the first outsiders to

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successfully establish political control. Under their rule, the region was merged first with the Bengal province and later with Bihar; this sparked the demand for a separate political unit.

The movement for a separate Jharkhand originated in Dhaka. In 1912, J. Barthelman established a branch of the Dhaka Vidyarthi Parishad in Ranchi. This organization later became the Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj and eventually evolved into the Jharkhand Party, which led the early stages of the movement.

Initially, the organization focused on uplifting Christian students and integrating tribal society. In 1915, the Chota Nagpur Unnati Samaj was established to support all tribal groups. Over time, the organization began advocating for the creation of a separate Jharkhand province.

Founders

Juel Lakra, Pal Dayal, Bandi Ram Oraon, and The vale Oraon founded the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj to defend tribal rights and identity against external encroachment. They established the organization to provide a platform for tribal grievances and aspirations.



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Juel Lakra

Key Contributions to the Jharkhand Movement

1.The Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj gathered different tribal communities from the Chhotanagpur plateau, highlighting their common culture, customs, and shared problems.It helped start bigger tribal movements in the area, bringing the Oraon, Munda, and Santhal tribes together. The awareness campaign focused on issues such as land alienation resulting from the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act violations, which later sparked the Jharkhand Movement.

2. Adivasi, the society's multilingual magazine, played a crucial role in raising awareness about tribal rights, culture, and social issues. By publishing in languages like Kurukh and Mundari, it helped strengthen the unique cultural identity of the tribal people, making them feel proud and connected to their heritage. The magazine also acted as a way to show concerns about unfair policies and actions, which helped bring more tribal people together to support efforts for change.

3. The Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj opposed the Simon Commission in 1928, showing that they supported the nationalist movement and wanted more voice for tribal people. The society's leaders understood that colonial rules, especially regarding land and forests, hurt tribal people more than others, and they focused a lot on fighting for these issues.

4. In the 1930s, under Joel Lakra's guidance, the society became a major movement, involving large numbers of tribal people in its efforts. This change showed that the tribals were becoming more aware of their political rights, as they wanted control over their own affairs and protection from being taken advantage of by both the colonial rulers and non-tribal landowners.

Role of Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj in Opposition to the Simon Commission

In 1928, the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj showed its increasing political awareness and active participation by strongly opposing the Simon Commission when it came to Patna. The Commission, which did not include any representatives from India, was considered a disrespect to India's hopes for independence. The organization's disagreement with the Simon Commission showed that it was in line with the larger nationalist movement in India. A promise to make sure that tribal people's voices were part of the conversations about how India will be governed in the

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future. This act of defiance showed how the society was changing into a political force that fought for both tribal and national interests.

Legacy in the Jharkhand Movement

The Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj's contributions to the socio-political awakening of the region's tribal population were instrumental in shaping the Jharkhand Movement. Its efforts to unite tribals, preserve their cultural identity, and fight against exploitation provided a blueprint for the later demands for a separate state. As one of the earliest organizations to articulate tribal aspirations, the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj remains a foundational chapter in the history of Jharkhand, symbolizing the resilience and unity of the tribal communities in their quest for dignity and autonomy.

Conclusion:

The Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj played a key role in bringing about social, political, and cultural changes among the tribal communities in Chhotanagpur. The founders' dream, the work they did such as publishing Adivasi, and their brave stand against the Simon Commission show how much they contributed to both tribal and national issues. As part of India's bigger fight for freedom, the organization connected the hopes of tribal people with the overall struggle for independence, making a lasting impact on history. The story of the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj keeps inspiring people, showing how important it is to protect our cultures, support those who are treated unfairly, and work together for growth that includes everyone. This detailed look at the Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj shows how important it is in history and also explains why it matters today when talking about the rights and empowerment of tribal communities.

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