CHUARS AND OTHER TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Introduction
The tribal revolts of India are now regarded as belonging to the category of sub-nationalism. The tribals first rose against the British rule at a time when the integrated national movement of India had not come into being. From the very time the British rule was imposed on the area later known as the Chota Nagpur division, the tribals started opposing the alien system. And yet a complex, legalistic administrative system was introduced into the area.

The tribal society of Chota Nagpur was already feeling the unhappy effects of the hinduisation and alienation of their own chiefs when the British penetration began. Both introduced foreign nations and non-tribals into Chota Nagpur, in an influx, which eventually brought about the economic ruin of the tribals.

The tribal revolts of Chota Nagpur were a crude form of protest against these changes under the British rule. They were a gesture of despair.

In the course of their uprising the tribesmen were guilty of banditry, murders and arson. But they knew no other method of effective protest. Their ambition was modest: a traditional world in which they should be justly dealt with.

Unfortunately some British writers treated them as restless “marauders and semi-savages”. They failed to appreciate that the tribal protesters were in their own society the equivalent of Robinhood or Rob Roy, rebels against landlords, merchants and usurers who had been exploiting the tribesmen.

In some phases of the movement som echarismatic leaders led the movement, for example, Ganga Narain Singh in 1832-33 and Birsa Munda in 1895-1901. Hence the movement was messianic in nature. Also, such phases are called the revitalisation movements.

Existing Literature
Not much literature has so far been produced on this theme. Most
of the 19th century British historians did not even touch upon it in their writings. Those who did mention these risings suffered from administrators' or imperialist prejudices. They were least concerned with how the traditional tribal system was destroyed by British pressmen.

Between 1868 and 1917 E.T. Dalton, W.W. Hunter, H.H. Risley, F.B. Bradley Birt and L.S.S. O'Malley did take an interest in the tribal problems but most of them were interested in the ethnographical and anthropological aspects only. Even the Imperial Gazetteer of India, the Statistical Account of Bengal and the Bengal District Gazetteers dismissed the tribal revolts in few pages.

Some Indian writers like S.C. Roy tried to present the tribal point of view, but their limitation was the lack of access to the original records.

After independence several Indian writers have tried to discuss the tribal movements, but they have ignored their peculiarities and put them within the general freedom struggle of India.

It was in 1964 that the present author produced a monograph of the Kol Insurrection of 1831-32 (Calcutta) and in 1967 the Bhumij Revolt of 1832-33 (Delhi) and during the last two decades published a number of research papers on the allied themes. In 1966 K.S. Singh Published his The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist: A study of Birsa Munda and his Movement in Chotanagpur (1874-1901) (Calcutta) and its second edition (Birsa Munda and his Movement, 1874-1901, Calutta) appeared in 1983. Besides, many research papers have appeared on the theme in the last two decades.

Land and People

The tragic dramas studies in this work from the beginning of the British rule to its end was enacted on what geographers call Chota Nagpur plateau, an extension of the great Vindhyan range. It is a temperate area of hills and valleys, densely clotted with forest. Hence it was called Jharkhand, the forest tract. J. Houlton calls this area 'one of the most attractive parts of the Indian peninsula'.

The actors on this stage were tribal people who had found here a secure asylum. Its inviolability they maintained till the British penetration of the area began in 1787, two years after the grant of the diwani of Bengal.

At that time Chota Nagpur had a number of estates. For example, Barabhum to the north-east of Singhbhum, had dense jungle on its border areas. It had ten important ghat (passes) predominantly jungle covered and guarded by the ghatwala. It was inhabited predominantly by the Bhumij tribe with some Kurmis, Santals and others and some non-tribals here and there. In the Damla hills two tribes, Paharia and Kharias lived.
The Bhumijas were very fond of Bhumi (land) and even though gradually getting hinduised, retained the cattle-lifting and other traditional activities. Hence they were nicknamed by the non-tribals churar (chuhars), or thieves—a word derived from chuha (rat). They were short in stature, stout and muscular, not much different from their neighbours the mundas.

The local leaders of the Bhumijas were the sardar ghatwala who, like the mundas and mankis of central Chota Nagpur, had organised the tribal occupations and clearance of the land. These ghatwals, village or circle heads, the guardians of the passes and of the local peace, occupied a taras (jagir) at a nominal rent, as a reward for their services, and maintained a permanent body of retainers—the digwars, sadials and tabedars. The last one was similar to the chaukidar or gorsit of other areas. At need they could call upon the support of the whole Bhumij masses.

F.B. Bradley-Birt called the Bhumijes "wild and unkempt". H.H. Risley called them marauders, "conspicuous for the dislike of discipline, which is one of the prominent characteristics of the Kolarian races." A writer in the India Gazette (25 April 1833) found them "fighting only in the ambush", while a military officer who fought against them, found them brave and "active as the leopared." W.W. Hunter noted that they were a stronger and more tenacious race than the Santals and in the capacity for resisting the encroachments of the non-tribals they stood midway between the Mundas of Central Chota Nagpur and the Hos of Singhbhum.

Over the ghatwals and their sardars was the ruling family of the hinduised raja living at Barabazar, now looking down upon his 'subject'. The first chief who clashed with the British was Vivek Narain who was eventually forced to abdicate in favour of his eldest son. With this began a long series of disputes between the British notions of primogeniture and the tribal custom under which the son of the chief queen succeeded to the zamindari.

The continued opposition of the Bhumijes to the installation of the rajas according to British notion proved the unsuitability of the regulations with regard to the law of succession and incidentally showed how useless was the daroga system of police.

In 1805 the Jungle Mahala were carved out as a separate administrative unit, though the district remained under the supervision of the Birbhum authorities, but the area remained disturbed.

The new district included the estate of Dhalbhum with Ghatshila as the headquarters of the Dhal chief. This zamindari was also inhabited by the Bhumijes. Here again the chief had been hinduised.

Beyond fixing the terms of the revenue settlement the British authorities interfered as little as possible in the affairs of this estate,
warned perhaps by the long resistance to their penetration before 1777.

In 1793 the Company police then had been established, but the non-tribal daroga proved very corrupt. So in 1800 here as in Barabhum and elsewhere, the ghatwali police was revived and the raja was formally vested with the powers of the police daroga, keeping under his orders all the paiks, digwars, sardars and others.

The Pachet estate, to the north of Barabhum, was only partly cultivated and had extensive jungles. The population was almost entirely Bhumij, and lived by cultivation and hunting, enlivened by occasional raids on the neighbouring areas. With the opening of the great Banaras road through Pachet, late in the 18th century, the non-tribal traders and other adventurers began to visit the area, some even settling down. The raja was hinduised.

On the north and the non-west of Pachet were a group of twelve minor marcher lords—the zamindars of Bagmundi, Bagankodar, Jaipur, Mukundpur, Hasla, Torang, Katras, Nawagarh, Jharia, Tundi, Pandra and Jhelda—all subordinate to the Pachet raja.

Kasipur was a Bhumij pargana in Pachet to the east of Bagmundi. Patkum was a moderate-sized estate of about 300 villages in the western part of the Jungle Mahala district adjoining Tamar. The population was mainly Bhumij with strong Munda influence. Social banditry was common. At the behest of their leaders, they could do or die, for offence or defence. The ruling family was hinduised.

Bagmundi to the east of Palkum was partly jungle and partly cultivated. The population was chiefly Bhumij. This estate was first a part of the large Ramgarh district and then of Birbhum till 1805 when it came under the Jungle Mahala.

Manhum was a large estate, open and cultivated, to the east of Barabhum. From 1805 it was a part of the Jungle Mahala, and the police power was vested in the raja aided by an extensive establishment of ghatwals. The raja was a hinduised Bhumij chief.

Ambikanagar lay to the east of Manhum. The chief was considered to be defiant to the British rule and the Bhumijes turbulent.

Coalpal was a small estate near the Dhadka ghat and its inhabitants were all Bhumijes, very much devoted to their chief. Bir Singh, the turbulent chief, was the Rob Roy of the area from 1798 to 1809. He surrendered in 1870.

Shamsundarpur and Phulkusma—These two estates were partly cultivated and partly jungle. The chiefs opposed the British from the very beginning. During the Chaur rebellion the Bhumijes of this estate helped the Rani of the Midnapur estate. Even after the constitution of the jungle Mahals these estates remained disturbed and the chiefs remained heavily indebted to some non-tribal usurers.

The people of the Raiipur estate were also Bhumijes and the chief
was hinduised.

To the other side was the huge Chota Nagpur, estate with its gateway, Palamau. This region was a high, rolling, well-wooded table-land. The face of Palamau was wider and more broken by rock and jungle than in the Chota Nagpur estate. The forests, hills and rivers provided security and seclusion for the tribals.

The Kherwars and Cherces of Palamau had always been a powerful people and they had also been influenced by Hinduism. The Bhogtas were a sub-tribe of the Khewars.

In January 1771 the British forces attacked Palamau, but the resistance of the Bhogtas and other tribes was very stiff. The precarious nature of the British control was emphasised by revolts which followed the British occupation. So Palamau was put under the Ramgarh district and a Ramgarh battalion was organised at Hazaribagh.

**Chota Nagpur Estate and its Dependencies**

To the east and south of Palamu lay the Chota Nagpur estate and its dependent Parganas, a high, rather isolated table-land approached on all sides by passes (ghats or pats). Within this hill region there are two distinct plateaus rising to 3,600 feet. Chota Nagpur had been a natural refuge for tribal people.

The tribes of this area are the Mundas, Oraons (Dhangars) Mahalis, etc. Dalton and other ethnologists distinguished the Mundas of Chota Nagpur proper from, the Hos (Larka Kols) of Singhbhum. The name ‘Kol’ was used indiscriminately for these tribesmen. The Mundas and the Hos were Kolarians, while the Oraons Dravidians.

These tribes were remarkable for their physical strength and hardness. They were often described by the non-tribals as blood-thirsty barbarians because of the Robinhood syndrome. But in fact they were peaceful agricultural people rather than marauders.

The dependent parganas of Chota Nagpur—Tamar Baranda, Rabi, Bundu, Silli and Barwa—were less well-cultivated. Tori with 700 villages below the ghats to the north-west of Chota Nagpur proper was also linked with this large zamindari.

In the early years of the Munda and Oraon occupation of Chota Nagpur there was no individual ownership of land. The tribesmen cleared the land under the leadership of their headman (Munda) and village-priest (Pahan) who were responsible for re-allocating lands and collecting such dues or services as were owed to the community. The extent of the cultivators’ field was shown before witnesses, and a piece of earth as a token of acceptance was taken from the headman (mahto) as he was called in some areas.

Above the village was a wider tribal division, the parhs (patti) under a circle headman (the manki) who had much influence over the tribal
masses and at the festival and hunting times.

By the 18th century the chiefs had been rajputised, taking the title ‘Singh’, and they were encouraging non-tribals to settle in these areas. The royal administration came to be staffed by the non-tribals. All the outsiders were provided with land at the expense of the tribal cultivators. So were the members of the royal family who received expensive grants to support their dignity—all at the tribesmen’s expense. Many headmen were thus dispossessed. According to an estimate 4,288 villages were alienated.

The bhuihars (the original clearers of the land, e.g., the munda and the manki) had a hereditary interest in the land. They had a right to reclaim any such land. But the new farmers refused to recognise such rights.

Besides, the moneylenders became oppressive, charging a high rate of interest. The borrower even became a bondsman.

The hinduised Chota Nagpur maharaja came under British protection in 1769-71. By the Kabulist (agreement) of 1787 the maharaja agreed to maintain law and order. The British overlordship acted as a cloak to the encroachments upon tribal life by the chiefs and jagirdars.

In 1789 Leslie, the Ramgarh collector, opposed the extension of the Permanent Settlement into Chota Nagpur. The Resolution of the Bengal Government (12 September 1789) which confirmed the Decennial Settlement in Bihar, exempted this area from this settlement. Even the Permanent Settlement was not formally extended to it. But in practice it was made applicable to it and all its pernicious effects—rack-renting, resumption, subletting were felt by the tribal peasantry.

Indeed, the advent of the British rule over this area, with its courts to enforce complex regulations, its magistrates ignorant of the local language and custom, and its non-tribal amlas open to corruption, meant the wholesale ruin of the tribal peasantry. Even the introduction of the zamindari police in 1805 did not improve matters.

I. SPORADIC REVOLTS

In 1787 when the British forces tried to subjugate the ‘jungle zamindars’ to the west of Midnapur, they faced an uphill task. The Jhargram chief’s defeat was followed by the surrender of Jamani, Silda, Ambikanagar, Supur, Manbhum, Ghatna, Barabhum, Raipur and Phulkusma. The last one had defied the Burdwan authorities for quite some time. Most of them protested against the oppressive measures of East India Company’s forces.

It was soon realised that the tribal chiefs had by no means been thoroughly subdued. The collection of revenue was difficult. The chief
of Ghatshila (Dhalbhum) refused to submit. He even destroyed the roads and felled the trees to block the passes leading to his zamindari. He was joined by many tribal chiefs. The company’s envoys were turned back by a force of 150 bowmen.

Even when the Dhalbhum chief was deposed and imprisoned, his nephew, the new chief, revolted, and the neighbouring chiefs took recourse to social banditry. In the encounter, the bowmen galled the Company’s soldiers, and surrendered only after a good fight.

The next year saw the rebellion of the Ghatshila chief once again and the British authority was re-established with great difficulty. In the operation against the Chukulia chief, the path was heavily stockaded and the troops were harassed. A military officer admitted, “It is all a joke to talk of licking these jungle fellows. They are a parcel of wasps: they endeavour to sting you with their arrows, and then fly off. It is impossible almost to kill any of them, as they always keep at a great distance and fling their arrows at you.” The tribal chiefs often drove their cattle before them into the jungle and from behind the swollen rivers were able to defy the troops, who found provisions almost impossible to obtain.

The Company’s military officers thought that a revenue settlement was difficult to achieve. If the sardars were behind the tribal chief it was difficult to subdue them, the more so because the Marathas were making suspicious moves in the area and the neighbouring Bamanghati zamindar and his overlord the Raja of Mayurbhanj in Orissa were supporting the Ghatshila chief.

In 1769 the chuars of Dhalbhum, Barabhum, Pachet and Patkum were in turmoil. The Hos of Singhbhum also joined the insurgents. About 5,000 chuars invaded Ghatshila and the Company’s sepoys had to retreat to the Narsingarh fort.

In 1770 the Company’s sepoys were surprised by the chuars among the hills and jungles. A Subedar, a Sergeant and about twenty sepoys were killed and many more wounded and the others fled. An English Captain was greatly harassed in the hills.

Some Company’s sepoys were permanently posted in Barabhum. Some sardars and jagirdars, however, remained undaunted. The Midnapur authorities had to fight such chuar chiefs as Subla Singh of Koilapal, Samangujan of Dhadka and Jagannath Peter of Dampara for some time. And the Company’s government turned to the creation of a system of forts and permanent police posts for a solution to the problem.

Without looking into the grievances of the tribals a military officer imagined that they would never be quiet unless troops constantly remained in those parts and small thanas with sixty men each could quell any rising in its infancy. The thanadar of Narsingarh also believed that such
small thanas would strike terror into the hearts of the chuars.

The troops faced ambush everywhere. When the tribals were surpris-
ed by the British troops at one place they began to dance and jump like
furies. From the harvest until seed-time, however, the rebels became
more active. From 1772 to 1774 the land survey operations were con-
tantly opposed, even though two whole companies of troops accompanied
the survey party. The tribals attacked the party constantly between
Barabhum and Manbhum and stopped all supplies of provisions.

In 1773 the Dhalbhum was once again disturbed and the tribals
destroyed the area with fire and sword. The troops could not do much in
the inaccessible areas and the rebels after the harvest carried their grain
to the tops of the hills or lodged these in the impregnable forests. Pursued
by the troops they took shelter in these places. The zamindars were
described as "mere freebooters who plunder their neighbours and one
another" and their tenants "a banditti" whom they mainly employed in
these outrages. "The Zamindars", said a report, "are refractory and the
inhabitants rude and ungovernable."

In 1774 fresh disturbances occurred and the chuars constantly fought
the troops. The difficulties of the government were aggravated by the
many changes in the framework of the administration in the area and by
the unsuitability of the police and revenue systems applied to the area.
There were also changes being introduced in the powers of the various
officials posted here. Constant shifts of the headquarters and the various
changes made it difficult for the people to understand the working of the
British system.

No official got the root of the problem. No one had the sympathy
to realise that the tribals had reacted adversely to the new system of con-
rol. The officers took it for granted that these were criminals who
could be subdued only through ruthless measures. Naturally enough,
whenever they rose, they were attacked by the military force.

One of the causes for resistance was the revenue system imposed by
the Company. The area had never been effectively subdued by the
northern empires, and thus had had no experience of the survey and
detailed assessment of the Mughals. Any attempt to introduce a formal
revenue system was likely to be ill-received, and one that ignored the
tribal custom and feeling and which was operated by the outsiders, was
certain to cause trouble.

The thanadar system under which the thanadar collected the revenue
in Western Midnapur did not succeed. Formerly the cultivators in this
jungle area held their land without any paper. They brought the whole
produce to the landlord who gave them as much as would support them
for the whole year.
The Chuar Rising

In the Jungle Mahals no one urged the unsuitability of the Permanent Settlement and so the regulations of 1793 were applied there. The immediate authority over the tribals was given to the police *darogas*, and by the operation of selling estates for revenue balances, many of the zamindars, condemned the authority of the police officers, and were frequently guilty of great disorders.

As Hunter put it, the Permanent Settlement tried to suddenly substitute contract for custom. What a tremendous shock the new system of values must have been for tribal cultivators and chiefs who had always been guided by their own customs! The floodgates of land litigation were now opened-forged papers, hard swearing, and the power of a party to exhaust the resources of the other by chicanery, delays and appeals, these now become the deciding factors. The zamindars and peasants who suddenly found themselves possessed, as landowners, of private property, which was a first-class security, borrowed improvidently. Their creditors knew how to handle the new machinery of the courts who were often ignorant of the tribal land structure and indifferent to the ruinous rates of interest being charged. Moreover, the landlords were now given unlimited powers for increasing the rents of the cultivators, and rack-renting ruined many families.

No wonder the Rani of the Midanpur estate, the Raja of Pachet, the zamindar of Raipur and many others all of a sudden found themselves driven from pillar to post, facing unusual humiliations. And their tribal followers would not tolerate the exit of their old chiefs, and the entry of the new non-tribal zamindars. Hence there were revolts from 1795 to 1800 in all the estates which were auctioned off. In Bishnupur the Bhumijes of Barabhum, Manbhum and other Jungle Mahals came in thousands to assist the chief, showing unusual enmity to the purchasers of the land-holdings. Murder, plunder and rapine continued in 1799.

The *ghatwals* were also aggrieved by the actions of the government. Their *ghatwali* lands were resumed under the 1793 regulations when the government took the charge of the police. They had so far paid only a quite-rent, but now they had to pay full revenue.

In fact, the *daroga* system of police introduced in 1793, had proved an utter failure here. The *darogas* from the non-tribal areas of Bihar and Bengal, were prone to taking bribes and exploiting the simple tribals. In 1794 the police *darogas* of Chhatna and Manbhum were found corrupt. Physically and mentally also the plainmen were unfit for this job in this area. Also, the troops were quite ignorant of the jungles and fastnesses. The situation became serious due to the revolt of the *ghatwals*.

The Chuar rising was the natural consequence. It began in April
1798 when two villages were burnt down in Silda. The next month the chuars fought at Raipur and in July 400 of them appeared in the Chandrakona thana. This was followed by their raids in the parganas Kasijora, Tamluk, Tarkuschaur and Jaleshwar.

The worst affected areas were the western parts of the Midnapur district. In September they ravaged Nayabasan and Barajit. In December they captured about seven villages and sacked fifteen. One of the bands was active about ten miles away from Balrampur. Ramgarh was plundered and burnt. Near Salbani the chuars raided the villages every day. Even the pargana of Midnapur was pillaged.

Indeed the areas from the thana Narayangarh on the south to the pargana Bhanjabhum on the north were devastated. There was such a panic among the cultivators that they refused to harvest the crops and fled to Midnapur, Anandpur, and other places protected by the Company's troops.

Near the Midnapur town the strongholds of the chuars were Bahadurpur, Salbani and Karnagarh. The last one was the home of the Rani whose zamindari had been sold up. From these three places the chuars operated and whatever they brought as booty they divided among themselves.

The district administration fell helpless, the more so because there was a difference of opinion between the collector and the Judge-Magistrate as to the action to be taken. Besides, the chuars continued their plundering spree as sufficient troops were not at hand. The Sheristadar of the Janpur thana, a non-tribal, was killed and the tahsildar of Balrampur was threatened. And the authorities had to take drastic actions.

In February 1799 the chuars destroyed several villages near the Midnapur town. It was feared that the treasury might be looted. There was a big refugee problem as the non-tribals from the neighbouring areas took shelter in this town. Those who subsisted by selling the firewood brought from the jungles, were starving.

According to J.C Price the year 1799 saw "the great Chuar rebellion, ghastly with its tale of horrors and massacre; where all the evil passions of the infuriated sardars and Paiks burst forth in a wild attempt to revenge the resumption of their jagir lands on the Government, if not to compel it to order a complete restoration of them. All the lawless tribes of the Jungle Mahals made common cause with the Paiks and carried slaughter and flame to the very doors of the Magistrate's Cutchery."

On 16 March the chuars attacked Anandpur and killed two sepoys and many ryots. Some guards fled in fear. This place was sacked and burnt on 2 April.

In March the Midnapur town was threatened several times and
there was a general panic, some people taking shelter in the collector's compound. No one could travel even in the open plains.

Later Ausgarh and Karnagarh were captured by the government troops and the Rani was brought to Midnapur as a prisoner. Five more companies of sepoys were brought to the district in May and posted to the affected areas at Anandpur, Salbani, Karnagarh, Gopiballabhpur and other places.

By June the authorities felt somewhat secure, though the sporadic attacks on the non-tribals continued. Six persons were murdered at Shiromani and two near Anandpur in September and in October a village ten miles away from Midnapur was attacked. In December the rebels plundered many villages near the town. It was only by the end of the year that peace was restored but only after "a period of the greatest anxiety and suspense, after the death of the Judge-Magistrate . . . who could bear the weight of his charge no longer."

On the discontent of the ghatwals the Midnapur Collector reported on 25 May 1899, "It was hardly a matter for surprise or indignation that, when the ancient occupants of the land, without having been charged with any crime or misconduct, saw their supposed rights, founded upon long possession of them, deliberately invaded in order to provide funds for the charge of the police, and at last found themselves either stripped of all their possessions or subjected to new demands of rent, which they were incapable of paying. They should have despaired of obtaining redress by a proper representation of their grievances, and have seized the first favourable opportunity that presented itself of taking up arms, and of attempting to recover by force what they thought had been taken from them with injustice."

Ultimately the settlement of the ghatwali land was postponed until the uprising was over. The local chiefs were vested with police powers and the regulations about the arrears of revenue would not be enforced against defaulting estates in the Jungle Mahals until the area was peaceful.

Once again the chuar movement began in the Bagree (Bhograi) pargana in 1806 and it was around 1816 that the Bhumijes were pacified.

According to the Regulation XVIII of 1805, a magistrate was appointed in the Jungle Mahals. Pachet, Bagmuntdi and other mahals came under the new jurisdiction. Following the revolt by Baijnath Singh of Dampara in 1810 to suppress which the troops were called in, the ghatwali establishment of Jaibalea in Bishnupur was abolished and new police stations were opened in several estates and the daroga system of police came back.

Around 1780 the Bhumijes of the Pachet estate also rose in revolt, presumably as a protest against the tightening of the British control over it. The chuars plundered not only Pachet but also the neighbouring
estates of Jhalda, Nawagarh and Jharia. The chaukidars were attacked.

In March 1783 Mangal Shah, the tribal leader of Jhalda, surrendered under the pressure of the British troops. It was suggested that all the tribals, even of the central Chota Nagpur should be disarmed, but it was found impracticable. Obviously the British encroachment on the tribal system was resented.

Even so, the decennial settlement of Pachet was concluded in 1791 and in 1793 the Permanent Settlement was introduced with the new complex of revenues methods and the raja opposed the measurement of the land and the issue of Kabuliat and patta (confirmation). It was no longer the mahto who would distribute the land among the villagers.

When the estate was put on sale the non-tribals bought it, some of them indirectly in the name of their relatives and friends. No wonder as in the other areas of the Jungle Mahals, the Pachet Bhumiyes rose in revolt in 1795 and began to kill the new purchasers of the land.

Ultimately the Raja was restored in 1799 and was put in charge of the local ghatwali police. But once again in 1805 changes were introduced and police thanas were set up.

The Bhumiyes of Patkum resented the British encroachments upon their tribal system from the very beginning, opposing the measurement of the land and other innovations. The introduction of the patta under the Decennial system and later the regulations of 1793 were specially disliked.

At last Regulation 4 of 1794 suspended the earlier rules under Regulation 8 of 1793 regarding the Pattas and the patwaris. But no attention was paid to the unsuitability of the other rules and measures.

So the tribal unrest continued to grow. From 1792 to 1807 the unrest was intensified by a struggle for succession to the throne in which the local mundas and the mankis as well as those of the neighbouring estates took part and lands were laid waste.

The British troops hunted down the tribal rebels year after, and yet the Patkum chief loomed large on the horizon till 1807 when he was hanged. But no steps were taken to prevent the activities of the usurers and speculators.

The Bhumiyes of Bagmundi also opposed the British rule tooth and nail. In 1793 they opposed the introduction of pattas and the measurement of the land and in 1790-99 the sale of the estate in lieu of revenue arrears. The British troops were employed here, as in Pachet and elsewhere. Raja Anand Singh, the Hinduised chief, was fully supported by the common masses. Ultimately the Raja was restored to his estate. Later new police rules were introduced in 1805 but did not improve matters.

Raipur was one of the most disturbed estates in the late 18th century. In 1799 a body of 1500 chuars set fire to a bazar and the
kacha-hari and overran the whole tract. The military operation had no effect. At least at the recommendation of the Midnapur collector the sale of the estate was cancelled. In 1800 and again in 1805 the ghatwals became quiet, of but by 1809 the tribal sardars became restive because of the increase of the land revenue and the curruptio nand inefficiency in the police.

On the other side, in Palamau the cheros, the Bhogtas and other tribes rose in revolt soon after the British occupation in 1771. Some how the risings were suppressed in 1773.

During the factional struggle which followed the British troops interfered several times and Raja Gopal Rai was imprisoned at Patna where he died.

The Decennial Settlement confirmed many new men as jagirdars and the tribesmen who were quite unwilling to pay any land revenue resented the new settlements. Naturally, many uprisings occurred between 1800 and 1803 and the Campany's troops had to be deployed. In February 1801 about 1,500 armed Cheroes with auxiliaries from neighbouring Sarguja, Tamar, etc., armed to the teeth, were in the field.

The abolition of the post of the sazawal, and some other administrative changes followed. In 1811-1812 some more drastic actions were taken and the rising of the Cheroes was crushed by the newly constituted Ramgarh battalion. However, the new settlement had to be annulled. But on the advice of Captain Roughsedge, the commandant of the battalion, the estate was sold up in 1813 and bought by the government, ignoring the tribal feelings about their chief.

In the Chota Nagpur estate and its dependencies also tribal revolts became common. In 1793 when the Tamar rebels were joined by their brethren from Patkum, Silli and Singhbhum, the situation called for the employment of the Company's troops for about a year.

It became evident that the revenue collectors of the maharaja and other chiefs had been rapacious. The Bhumihars of Tamar were rack-rented against the traditional practice. There were other outrages and abuses. The oppressed tribal peasantry had no other means of ventilating their grievances than through revolt. And every time they rose they were hunted down by the troops.

In Silli, Hajam Banta and Palma, Tamar, Rahi, Barwa and other disturbed pockets between 1797 and 1799 the loss of life and property was considerable.

In 1810 Barwa and Tamar were seriously disturbed. Between 1811 and 1813 the tribes of Nawagarh under Baktaur Sahi and Mandal Singh even defeated the Ramgarh battalion.

II. THE PALAMAU AND TAMAR RISINGS

The Chero Rising 1817-1818

As soon as the estate was made over to a non-tribal chief Raja
Ghanshyam Singh of Deo in the Gaya district who was loyal to the British, troubles started.

The deposed Hinduised Chero chief Ram Bahadur forgot the injustice done to him and to his father by the Company's government, but his tribal people did not. Indeed, they ascribed all their misfortunes to their raja having accepted a pension, thus wilfully renouncing his claims over the estate.

The Company had, in fact, anticipated that the tribals would prove hostile. In September 1813 the Collector of the Bihar district which bordered the Ramgarh district, had warned the government against attempting the direct management of a pargana with tribal population. In 1814 the Ramgarh Assistant Collector had rightly supported Raja Churaman's petition to have the estate returned to him on payment of his dues, urging that thereby "many troublesome consequence of transferring Palamau to a stranger will thus be avoided." Even then when the Raja of Deo was installed in the estate, he was warned not to disturb the existing tenures, not to enhance the rents, fixed so far back as 1789. Roughsdale was specially instructed to impress this on the raja.

But Ghanshyam Singh, the son and successor of the Deo raja, asked Roughsdale for an exhibition of military support so that his authority might not be challenged by the tribals. So Roughsdale, at the head of his Ramgarh battalion, installed him as the new raja. But no sooner was this done than the problems began. The resumption of 107 villages created a storm and the great Chero rising began.

At first it was believed that the attack upon the non-tribal outsiders, the officers of the Deo raja, who had resumed the Chero holdings, was the work of the petty Chero tenure holders (jagirdars) who had not been given the protection provided for the jagirdars in the sanad to the raja. But it was latter discovered that the outbreak, which laid waste much of Palamau, had been fostered by the jagirdars.

The magistrate Lindsay who investigated the grievances of the Cheros in 1817, believed that it was a people's rising. Both the tribes—the Cheros and the Kherwara—took a leading part in the attacks on the non-tribals and the government machinery, and the jagirdars, instigated them. The leaders of the movement were Rambux Singh and his son Vikramjeet Singh of Chandu, Jeet Singh of Obra, Suraj Singh of Kukra, Puran Singh of Loharsimi and Akaloo Manjhi of Seeduk.

In the vigorous military campaign Bikram Singh and Rambux Singh suffered terribly and many villages were ruined.

The Commission of enquiry formed by the local civil and military authorities was dissolved following a representation by some jagirdars. And then the superintendent of the Lower Provinces conducted the enquiry. He found that the above-mentioned commission's view that the revolts originated in the machinations and intrigues of the deposed
CHUARS AND OTHER TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Chero Zamindars and some jagirdars in collaboration with the discontented tribals of Sarguja was wrong. The oppressions of the new non-tribal raja, who wanted the ryots to execute a fresh agreement with him to pay more land revenue than they had been paying, was conclusively proved.

So the experiment of entrusting the estate to the management of an outsider was abruptly terminated, despite Roughsedge’s efforts to protect the interests of his friend, the Deo raja. At the same time the properties of the rebel chiefs, Bikramajit, Shiva Prasad Singh of Ranka, Chatradharis Singh of Lokeya, Gajpati Rai of Bisrampur, Jit Singh of Obra, Sheoraj Singh, Pahalwan Singh and Puran Singh were confiscated for varying periods. Shivaraj Singh was transported for life in Alipur Jail in Calcutta.

Unfortunately no effort was made to recognise the rights and sentiments of the Chero people. Rather loose phrases about the “vile, rebellious and intriguing” nature of the tribesman continued to be used. Nor was much attention paid to the fluctuation and inefficient pattern of the British administration though this had contributed over many years to the mismanagement of Palamau affairs. Constant administrative changes like the shifting of the district headquarters or the changes in the collectorship, precluded any continuing of a sympathetic policy towards the tribesmen. Besides, the regulations of the settled areas were freely introduced here and non-tribal officers did not even dare to learn the local language.

The Board of Revenue of Bengal rightly said in 1824 that Palamau would never be peaceful until all agrarian questions were settled. The changes of authority and opinion made it impossible for those questions to be set at rest.

The Munda Rising of Tamar, 1819-1820

The Mundas of Tamar had risen against the local jagirdars and the British rule in 1783 and from 1789 to 1795. In 1810 the leader of the rebels was Raghunath Singh.

In 1819 the Mundas rose en masse under two leaders, Rudan and Kanta. They kidnapped Haru Adhikari, a Bengali, and his son who had proved themselves obnoxious to them. They also carried off grain in the open daylight in the very presence of the thanadar of the Bunda pargana. They sacked several villages and attacked a party of sepoys led by the Hindu daroga and jamadar. They threatened the life of the Hinduised Tamar raja saying “which quarter will the sipahi defend?”

The strength of the rebels was 2,000 and the main target of attack was one Tribhuvan, a sorcerer. In the course of the attack Kamal Hazam, a barber, was wounded; Jhura, Tribhuvan’s uncle, and his son were killed and the houses of Tribhuvan and several others were fired.

Five days later the rebels assembled again, burnt all the remaining
houses and carried off all the cattle and grain and even the standing crops.

Captain Roughsedge marched his Ramgarh battalion against the rebels. The Magistrate of the Jungle Mahals investigated into the causes of the unrest and found the situation out of control.

Rudan and Kanta refused to appear before the magistrate. They openly defied the government in the hills and jungles as they knew that the British forces had failed at Delhi, Bharatpur and Nepal. Thus they were not invincible.

Gradually the magistrate won over some rebel leaders and continued to send messages to Rudan and Kanta. But his parwanas were suspected of being attached with some witchcraft which would derange their mind and paralyse their limbs. They also sent the curt reply, "Were Ishwar himself to come to us we would not attend. If we are killed, it shall be in this place."

The British forces were employed in Tamar for several months. The rebels were forced to take refuge in the jungle and then in neighbouring Singhbhum. Later many of them were arrested with the help of the Singhbhum's hinduised chiefs.

The rebellion was thus suppressed, but in the encounters which took place, several people were killed, and many houses were burnt. At last Dukhjat, Sughan and other leaders surrendered and were pardoned. Eventually Rudan and Kanta were arrested and suffered a long term of imprisonment.

The immediate cause of the rising was the superstitions prevailing among the Mudas. They accused Tribhuvan and some others of preventing the rainfall though their magical powers. But on a close examination it seems that at the root of the trouble was the oppression perpetrated on some of the tenants in revenue matters. One such tenant was the son of Raghunath Singh of Sindri who had risen eleven years earlier. Raghunath had been dispossessed of his land and jailed because of his protests against the revenue laws. But the struggle was now resumed by his son Bahadur Singh.

Sagun Das, the father of Raghunath, had at one time been one of the most powerful chuar chiefs of the area. In lieu of his services to Balram Shah, Raja of Tamar, he had been granted 84 villages. Later during the infancy of Raghunath these villages had been confiscated. So when he had grown up, he had fought for the recovery of this grant and after his imprisonment his son and other kinsmen had continued the struggle.

The tribal chiefs of Irki, Sonapet, Sangtu and other neighbouring places had joined the struggle and the general tribal masses had supported them. And the authorities had been compelled to refer the dispute to the civil court, and in 1917 the tribal claim had been rejected.
So the tribesmen took recourse to violence, defying the authority of the hinduised raja and the British government. Rudan and Kanta were supposed to pay Rs. 1,496 as land revenue, lying due in their name. So they joined the struggle to get rid of this liability.

Thus the Tamar revolt was a result of the long standing dispute relating to the rent or possession of many villages of the Mundas. But the British authorities did not find any act of oppression or injustice on the part of the raja, and attributed the uprising to "the turbulent disposition" of the tribesmen as well as to the "spirit of insubordination which exhibited itself in the former tumults". However, they admitted that the length of time involved in the dispute fanned the flames.

The seriousness of the revolt is evident from the military operations having continued for several months. The "contempt of authority" among the mankis and the mundas was seen everywhere. The tribals used the bow and arrow and phalsa (axe) and at the sound of their immediate superior's drum they would immediately assemble and do or die. One Mohan Rai claimed before the enquiring magistrate in 1821 that he could collect in a few hours at least 1,200 men.

The Tamar revolt was followed by a number of administrative changes and a change in the outlook of some local officials.

III. THE REVOLT OF THE MUNDAS AND ORAONS ASSISTED BY THE HOS (1831-32)

The end of the year 1831 saw an unprecedented uprising of the Mundas and the Oraons, aided by the Hos (Larka Kols) of Singhbhum. On 11 December a party of the tribesmen from Kochang and Jamur carried off from the Kumang village in the Sonepur pargana of the Chota Nagpur zamindari two hundred heads of cattle without inflicting physical injury, plundering or burning other property. A few days before this incident Bindrai Manjhi of Singhbhum and a number of his followers had assembled at Lanka in the Tamar pargana and decided to plunder and murder.

On 20 December four other neighbouring villages were plundered and burnt by 700 primitive rebels and a Sikh who had taken the farm of the villages was wounded. The leaders of the raiding group were Sui Munda, Topa Munda and Bindrai Manjhi and Singrai, a manki of Sudgaon, and other mankis and mundas.

Because of the widespread discontent at their loss of land and influence to the outsiders, these attacks found popular support. The arrow of war circulated in the villages as the summons to arms like the fiery cross and more and more tribesmen joined the revolt to assert tribal authority. The wrath was directed against the non-tribal who had taken over the villages of Singrae Manki who had earlier been dispossessed by
the hinduised chief Harnath Shahi of Govindpur.

A handful of policemen, supported by thirty armed men of Harnath Shahi, were sent to investigate the second incident, but they were pursued and attacked and suffered casualties.

In the last week of December 300 tribesmen plundered and burnt the villages of Gasu and Ramjeri, the former held in farm by two Muslims of Deo in the Gaya district. One man was killed and thrown into the fire and another whose house was burnt, somehow escaped death.

In early January the rebels again plundered and burnt Kumang and Koru Buru and a party of 1,000 rebels murdered the farmer of the Gangira village and his concubine and children.

The Nazir of the Sherghati court tried to reason with the rebels and offered to restore the lands to the Manki of Sonepur. When he sent for the manikis and mundas they refused and threatened that they would not leave a single thikadar alive. They would destroy every village of the Sonepur paragana and would wash their weapons in the river Karoo.

Then the arrest of Baijnahat Manki added oil to the fire. On 12 January about 4,000 rebels attacked Govindpur and the Kunwar (landlord) fled with his family followed by the thana staff. The whole of the paragana of Belkudra was plundered and burnt.

The rebels indiscriminately attacked the Hindus, Muslims and other dikkus (non-tribals) who had settled into their villages and engaged in commercial and other pursuits, drove them and plundered or burnt their property. Those who were caught, are done to death.

The police force was inadequate and therefore Captain Wilkinson the Commandant of the Ramgarh battalion had moved his forces into the disturbed areas. Re-inforcements were asked for from Danapur near Patna.

Meanwhile the rebellion continued to spread like wild-fire. The villages of the Barkagarh paragana and thana were burnt and plundered and those dikkus who could not escape, were murdered. Important places like Chutia and Churia were plundered and burnt and the thana staff ran away everywhere. Those who could not escape from the Armai thana were killed. The hinduised Raja of Barwa and his employees fled away.

By the end of January almost the whole of the Chota Nagpur estate and its dependencies were at the mercy of the rebels. And the military operations by Wilkinson had not much ice, even though he had defeated a force of 3,000 rebels advancing upon Pitoria.

Then the troops from Danapur arrived and the soldiers of Mitrabhan Singh of Deo (Gaya) came to help the government. The problem of supplies was solved. From Barrackpore (near Calcutta) came a regiment of native infantry and from Midnapur a detachment of the 38th
Regiment N.I.

But the revolt had spread to Tori, Palamau on the west and Patkum, Bagmundi, Hasla and Jhalda to the east. The houses of the non-tribals were burnt down everywhere.

Two companies of the 38th N.I. from Midnapur brought the situation under the control in the Patkum and the neighbouring zamindaris. By March 1832 hundreds of cattle and thousands of tons of grain were recovered and hundreds of rebels were arrested.

The detachment from Banaras and Hawtray's squadron suppressed the first phase of the rebellion in Palamau and its neighbourhood. The second phase was confined to Mankiari and Manka parganas, where the tribesmen—the Cheros, the Bhogtas and others—were led by Chamar Singh of Bariatu, Hukum Singh and Haril Singh of Jer and others.

With the main bodies of the rebels dispersed, the troops arriving in considerable numbers, and the inhabitants reassured, the next task was to re-establish the civil administration and to enquire into the causes of the revolt. By April Palamau and the surrounding areas had been pacified.

In Chota Nagpur proper the arrival of the cavalry changed the situation. Even so, the Ramgarh district authorities wanted more and more troops, but the rebels had completely ravaged the area and supplies were hard to get and so they had to desist from calling more troops.

After Captain Impey inflicted heavy losses on the insurgents near Tikoo, a body of some 4,000 of them threw down their arms and surrendered. The most tragic scene was enacted at Silligaon which was surrounded by four companies of infantry and some cavalry men. The rebels under Buddhu Bhagat made a stiff resistance. In the face of bullets they stood firm like a rock. But what chance had the bow and arrow and the axe against a round of musketry and the pistol and sabres? The old leader perished with his brother, sons and a hundred followers. In the villages of Deori Nagri and Gari also there was a stubborn resistance by the rebels.

But seeing the sad fate of Buddhu Bhagat and his family, many tribals surrendered through their local chiefs, the pahans and the mahtos in the western and southern parganas. In the words of Major Sutherland, they shouted a "power of endurance beyond that which exists in most other countries." Resistance continued in Tamar, Sonepur and Barwa, where the tribals had carried their corn and cattle into the hills, and where the proximity of Singhabhum gave promise of Larka (Ho) help, or of a safe refuge in the case of a crisis. The Mundas and the Oraons (Dhangars) under their manjis, mundas and bhagats were formidable fighters. As they became aware of the destructive fire-arms and more wary of cavalry attack, it became difficult to inflict any considerable defeat. Their scouts and spies quickly passed the news of the plans of
the authorities from circle to circle so that surprise was difficult.

In late February the Joint Commissioner of Chota Nagpur issued a couple of proclamations, asking the rebels to submit. Those who did not, would be punished and killed. When these had not much effect, the troops began combing-up operations in the hills and jungles. In a night attack Suru Bhagat, who had refused to submit, was killed along with his associates and many rebels were arrested.

In central Chota Nagpur the tribal leaders began to surrender. But the south-west portions were still disturbed. During the military operations untold miseries were brought about to the rebels. Thanks to the operations of the Company's forces as well as of the rebels, the whole of Chota Nagpur had become a scene of desolation. There was no prospect of any harvest and famine was impending. So the authorities started releasing the cattle they had seized.

However, a war of attrition continued in many areas. The villages of the rebels were being burnt and the grain-stores destroyed and the cattle captured even in late March. The process of starving the rebels into submission, and of harassing them continually went on. It was only by April that the rebellion and the campaign ended.

A writer in the India Gazette, presumably a military officer, called the campaign 'a ridiculous episode', 'worse than useless Cole hunt' by the 'mighty Indo-British power'.

Causes

It has been seen earlier that in Chota Nagpur the establishment of British authority led to "a more general and more thorough victimization" of the tribesmen. The non-tribal land-grabbers, jobbers, traders and usurers had felt encouraged to spread their nets wider here. They seized the land, the very basis of the tribal society and thus set in motion the "break-up of tribal solidarity and the disintegration of the village community."

The grant of large areas to the "hangers-on of all kinds" of the Hinduised maharaja and the lesser rajas at the cost of the tribal rights over these lands, led to the ruin of the tribesmen who could not compete with the plainsmen in cunning. Besides, the non-tribal advisers of the maharaja and the lesser rajas encouraged an attitude of derision for the tribesmen who at one time were their own people.

Maharaja Jagannath Sahi, the maharaja of the Chota Nagpur zamindari from 1822 was a mere cypher like his late father and his non-tribal amlas ruled the roost. His main interest was the upkeep of the temples, the worship of Hindu goddesses and the celebration of the Dashahara festival on a lavish scale. He had a knack of buying costly horses and clothes on credit from foreign merchants. Several Pathans (Mughals), Sikhs and others who came to him as horse-dealers and
shawl and brocade merchants, secured enormous sums and even obtained land from the maharaja.

Naturally this chief had no interest in the plight of his tribal subjects. He left the whole business of revenue collection and internal management in the hands of the unscrupulous Hindu diwan and his non-tribal subordinates. Indeed, every species of oppression was perpetrated on the tribal peasantry. The maharaja and the lesser rajas received begari (forced labour) from the tenants. Besides, many duties known as rasum, gangait, mufarka, etc. were levied. The rapacious non-tribal servants of these chiefs fleeced the tribal peasants whenever they visited the villages.

The British authorities never tried to check these oppressions. In 1830 it was admitted by the district authorities that no European officer had visited the Chota Nagpur estate for several years. The district of Ramgarh which included this estate and its dependencies, was also unfortunate in the officers posted here. N. Smith was eccentric as his various actions show. Cuthbert who remained here for a decade from 1821 was unimaginative. He introduced the tax on rice-bear, the indispensable drink of the tribals, and pressed for the cultivation of the opium poppy. He got an unsympathetic non-tribal Indian officer appointed as munsif in Chota Nagpur. Cuthbert also offended the Hinduised maharaja of Chota Nagpur by interfering with the custom of sati (widow-burning) and by introducing the zamindari dak. He dreamt of changing the habits of the tribals. But he never mentioned the real malady—the infiltration of the non-tribal elements in the tribal society—in his long reports.

The official apathy and ignorance may, therefore, be considered an important cause of the unrest. Since like other tribal movements, the Kol rising was a defensive movement, the last resort of the tribesmen driven to despair by the encroachments of outsiders on their land or economic resources, this rebellion could have been avoided by recognizing on time the tribemen’s grievances. The authorities could very well have taken proper steps before the pressure on the tribemen made an attack unavoidable.

Even when the rebellion began the authorities thought for a while that it was just a petty rising with a few robberies which could easily be suppressed. The burning of several thanas with their records early in 1832 showed the wrath of the people towards the official police system in the place of the traditional system or the zamindari police with the ghatwals chaukidars and others.

The civil, judicial, revenue, excise and salt establishments of the government in this area were manned by plains-people whose sole motive was to fleece the poor tribal cultivators. Worse still, the nazir, the canungo, the sali-daroga and the peons of the different departments—
all non-tribals—were not only corrupt, they also invariably sided with the non-tribal farmers who were dispossessing the tribal landholders of their lands.

In Palamau the inability patiently to endure the tyranny of forms, and injustices under the cover of law had displayed itself in acts of violence, while in Chota Nagpur proper it gave rise to conspiracies. The tribesmen felt that they were neglected by their new masters, oppressed by aliens and deprived of the means they had formerly possessed of obtaining redress through their own chief.

If the tribals went to the non-tribal darogas to complain of the loss of land, or of some man-handling by the foreign settlers, they found every influence arranged against them, and a number of witnesses in the pay of the opposite party to prove that the poor tribesman had not only no rights in the land, but was a turbulent rebel besides. Charles Metcalf, the Vice-President of the Governor-General’s Council, thought that these tribals should have petitioned the government. He believed that they did not do that simply because they wanted to overthrow the British government and to achieve their independence: “they did intend to expel the British Government from their own country and establish their own independence in imitation of their brethren, the Singhbooms Coles, who are as free and independent as any people on earth, acknowledging no government but that of their own village chiefs, for the most part paying revenue to no one, and scarcely acknowledging any allegiance to their nominal Raja”. Metcalf also referred to the general “antipathy against us as foreigners and conquerors”—a feeling of “natural antipathy for a race so different in every respect from the native population”.

The tribals could not find a simpler method of airing their grievances than a rebellion. But it is also possible that the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur had also been thinking of throwing off British control which had been growing tighter since 1819 when his police powers had been taken away. In 1822, the maharaja had been forbidden by a proclamation from collecting the sauer duties.

The government rejected the maharaja’s complaints in this regard as well as his objection to the introduction of the abkari duties. But the authorities ignored the financial distress he was in. He was even humiliated for the revenue arrears. The interference of the British authorities had affected the power and prestige of the maharaja in several ways. In 1837 he had been stopped from conferring titles upon his subordinate jagirdars.

It may, therefore, be imagined that the maharaja would have welcomed an end to the British control and to their undue interference in his affairs. Several local British officers felt that the maharaja was at the bottom of the revolt. And some of the tribal leaders corroborated this.

Some of the subordinate chiefs of the maharaja, like the kunwars
of Basia and Govindpur were also involved in the revolt. When these chiefs complained to the zamindar of Chatna about the loss of their independence, the latter asked them to emulate the example of the Pachet raja who had successfully defied the British authority in 1797-98 with the help of the tribemen.

But these chiefs could not of themselves have caused a revolt without some heavy grievances among the tribemen. Land was of primary importance and the rebellion mainly originated in the dispossession of the Mankis and the Mundas of Sonepur and elsewhere of their hereditary land. Now only the blood of the tribals boiled at the sight of the non-tribals who had been let loose on their lands.

The usurers who advanced money and grain managed within a year to get from them 70 per cent and sometimes more. According to the India Gazette of Calcutta (19 March 1832) these usurers came from Patna, Gaya, Sherghati and elsewhere, captured the trade of this area and by means of loans, exhorbitant interest, etc., even the land and villages eventually became theirs and the tribemen were reduced to mere serfs.

Yet another grievance of the tribemen was the manipulation of the currency. With the introduction of a money economy, for the payment of revenue, they were exposed to numerous frauds by money-changers and revenue officials. Besides, rack-renting was ruining them.

There were reports of tribal women being seduced or kidnapped by the non-tribals. Jafar Ali was killed by Bindrae Manki of Katwa because the former had dishonoured one of his women. Such aggrieved tribemen could not go to the court because it was honey combed with abuses. And the police darogas oppressed the tribals everywhere. Sui Munda of Echagutu gave some gold to Lutti of Kumang for a pair of buffaloes to be given in three years' time. When the former did not get his due he took away the buffaloes. For this Mohammad Ali Naik of Kumang suspended Sui from a tree by a rope tied to his hair and then dropped him to the ground, breaking one of his toes. Besides the two buffaloes one bullock and a buffalo were taken from him and he was tortured for five days. The Porahat raja ignored his complaint and the munshi and jamadar of Bandgaon fined him. Such incidents created a sense of frustration and desperation among the tribals, inevitably leading to violent action.

Bindrae Manki had borrowed a pair of old buffaloes from a grocer of Sonepur pargana for which the latter's sixty muscle men seized six cows and calves and four buffaloes as well as his brother Singrae and himself. Later the munshi and jamadar of Chakradharpur tortured the two brothers for a fortnight and demanded a bribe of 100 rupees. The women of the brothers were also dishonoured.

Incidents like these put the spark to the fumes of discontent. No wonder Bindrae and Singrae assembled their brethren of Singhbhum and
Tamar, and resolved to do or die.

Metcalf made light of the excessive or undue or illegal exactions by the raja and the jagirdars and by their men as well as by the subordinate staff of the government as "hardly sufficient to cause such an insurrection as this" which was aimed at "the utter annihilation of the Government" and the extermination or expulsion of the non-tribals. But he failed to recognise the strength of the tribal spirit of independence and their tradition of tribal exclusiveness. The seven cuts inflicted on their victims, as the Santal rebels later did in the Santal Parganas in 1855, on account of seven obnoxious taxes suggest that the extortion and abuses were not unimportant to the rebels. One cut was given for each tax: for the batta (discount) on changing copper for silver, the excise tax on spirits, the proposed tax on opium, the fines for supposed or real crimes, the village salamis, the forced labour on the road constructions and the postal taxes on the villages.

The abkari (excise) tax was a major factor responsible for the rebellion. The expressions of the excise staff were intolerable. The new opium policy was a minor cause of the unrest. The thanadars took bribes from the tribesmen who wanted exemptions from cultivating opium.

The revolt was not accidental or spontaneous in its origin. There were serious grievances against the administration. And so the tribals rose in desperation.

The extension of the revolt to Palamau was caused almost by the same pressures which had mined the tribals of Chota Nagpur Zamindari and its dependencies. The murder of the mahajans in Leslieganj and Latehar suggests that they were as obnoxious in Palamau as in the neighbouring areas. The subordinate government staff were as corrupt and inefficient as elsewhere.

The loss in the villages of Palamau directly under the government was larger than in other because they contained more non-tribals—who had made themselves obnoxious to the tribesmen because of their exactions.

So far as the Larka Kols (Hos) of Singhbhum were concerned, one of their main grievances against the non-tribal thikadars of the southern parts of Chota Nagpur was the ill-treatment of their women who went to sell iron in Sonapur pargana. These sellers were often cheated.

The old dispute between the Bamanghati chief and his suzerain, the Raja of Mayurbhanj, was also a cause of unrest in this area. This dispute was aggravated by the division of control between the Political Agent on the South-West Frontier and the Superintendent of the tributary mahals (the Cuttack commissioner). The misunderstanding between the chiefs of Porahat raj were also responsible for the unrest.
Nature

Thornton described the uprising as an orgy of mutual slaughter. The worst excesses attended its course and progress. There was a sort of madness and blindness and the rebels could no longer see the light of reason. Fire, rapine and murder marked their path.

The hacking to death of the victims was common. Those found hiding in the jungle were brought back to their village and murdered there. A father and son were pulled out from their hut, mercilessly beaten, and finally killed by having their heads hacked off. A Muslim family of eight was completely annihilated. Women, children, the aged, none were spared.

Cases of treachery and brutality were very common during the revolt. In one case non-tribal family, which had returned from the pargana Jashpur after supposed tranquility, was offered pretended hospitality by a tribal and then the head of the family was murdered in cold blood. At one place, after the male members of a party had been killed, fire was set to a house in which their women and children had taken refuge, and when they attempted to escape they were all murdered.

As compared to this awful tale of misery in Chota Nagpur and its dependencies, the estates on its fringe suffered much less. In the northern part of the district of Ramgarh only a few villages in the Gola pargana were plundered. On the other hand, in the small portion of the Jungle Mahals in the east, Patkum and Hasla suffered severely, but Bagmundi and Torong only slightly. Six of the houses burnt in Patkum belonged to the non-tribal employees of the zamindars. In the Palamau and Tori areas to the west, the rebels of the Chota Nagpur zamindari had first entered and fired the faggots. But once the Cheros and Kherwars were excited, there was the same melancholy tale of plunder, arson and murder.

The official returns of persons murdered in Chota Nagpur show that 219 Hindus and 76 Muslims fell a victim to the tribal wrath, besides 7 Hindus and 2 Muslims killed in Doma. Though the number of houses burnt in Chota Nagpur proper was officially put at 4,086 the number of cattle seized at 17,058 and the quantity of grain burnt at 822,992 maunds, the report seems to be partial. A contemporary newspaper report rightly noted that it was impossible to calculate the number of men murdered, villages burnt, and property destroyed or pillaged. Chota Nagpur, a flourishing area, was rendered a desert.

There was such a terror that those who were possible victims tried their best to escape, carrying off such valuables as they could. There was an atmosphere of uncertainty and excitement. It served to rouse hopes of plunder among the tribal people through whose midst they had to pass. So the movement which began as a rebellion against oppression assumed the air of ordinary banditry.
Several methods were adopted by the tribal leaders to spread the uprising: One was the beating of the nagaras (big drums), another the circulation of a dheori (a branch of a tree, usually mango), which was despatched from one party of rebels to another as a signal for them to join expeditiously and to engage in any contemplated exploit; a third was to circulate arrows of war. The villages which wished to join those by whom the arrows were sent, were required to return these arrows whole, and those who decided otherwise were to return them broken.

The spread of the uprising so quickly and so widely was only made possible by the absence of any effective check. It was the consciousness of this lack of any effective curb to the rebel activities that caused the unusual alarm. Rumours were at one time afloat that Mirzapur near Banaras to the west of Palamau, had been sacked and that disturbances had occurred at Azamgarh. According to the India Gazette, from Chota Nagpur to the frontiers of Awadh there was a general commotion. Even the people of Banaras in U.P. were getting panicky. It was rumoured that the Marathas were also joining tribal rebels from the south-west.

The Patna Commissioner argued that the tribals who had been emigrating in large numbers to Calcutta and other big cities in search of work (the tea gardens of Assam and the coal and other mines had not yet come up to provide an opening) should have been familiar with the British enterprise, resources and power. Is it not surprising that even then they decided to overthrow this power? Metcalfe believed that the revolt originated "in the spirit of independence" of the tribals who believed that the opportunity of throwing off the British yoke had arrived. Sutherland thought that since the rebels had made incursions into the foreign possessions of Patkum on the one hand and Palamau on the other, and had "talked of Calcutta and the form of Government they were to establish", they had certainly a design to throw off the British yoke and "had they possessed either leaders or enterprise, they would undoubtedly have established themselves at our stations of Hazareebaugh, Bankoorah and Sheraghotty, perhaps at Gyah (Gaya), commanding the principal road between Calcutta and Banaras and taking possession of some of the oldest territories of the Company."

There is no doubt that the tribals rose against the whole British system of administration and laws which had made serious inroads into their system. Some local chiefs of course indulged in double dealing. The Rani of Patkum, for example, first utilised the services of the tribals in ousting the non-tribals, and then got seventy-five of them arrested.

The unrest was indeed a revolt of the dispossessed, of the helots against their master. The moneylenders, merchants and shopkeepers, landgrabbers and tax farmers, the dealers in salt, the non-tribal landlords these were the targets of attack. The milkmen, artisans and others, even
though non-tribals, helped the rebels in many ways and were spared.

Aftermath

More than a thousand non-tribals, according to a conservative estimate, perished in the vendetta of the tribals. On the rebel side losses were even higher. The loss of property was indeed great. Some newspapers denounced the punitive actions of the troops.

After the suppression of the revolt the government re-established the official police as well as the zamindari or ghatwali police, wherever possible. In other areas it was to the rajas and other chiefs that police duties were re-entrusted. Those who had helped the government during the crisis were rewarded.

The number of prisoners had increased greatly and so the Joint Commissioners for Chota Nagpur arranged the tribal of these people. By November about 364 prisoners were on trial in cases involving the killing of some 238 persons. In most cases the prisoners made confessions and on that basis the law officers normally pronounced the sentence of capital punishment. Fearing that there would be a lot of executions, the government ordered the suspension of all capital sentences passed by the Nizamat Adalat. Those so convicted were, however, kept in close confinement for the time being. Ultimately on the orders of the special judge, 8 convicts were hanged and 24 imprisoned for life.

On the receipt of the detailed report of the special commissioners the government introduced new measures and in early 1834 a new administrative unit of the South-West Frontier Agency (later called the Chota Nagpur division) was formed. The Agency had three divisions: Manbhum consisting of those parts of the Jungle Mahals which had been de-regulationised along with Dhalbhum; Lohardagga comprising the Chota Nagpur Zamindari including Tori, Barwa and the five dependent parganas; Hazaribagh comprising Ramgarh, Kharakdiha and other estates of the Ramgarh district.

A new stress was laid on annual tours of the Agent, the head of the Agency, and his assistants to have a good rapport with the general mass of the tribals. Efforts were made to check the corruption among the subordinate government staff. The village panchayats were reactivated and salutary rules were introduced against the enforced sale of lands for private debt or revenue arrears.

IV. THE REVOLT OF THE BHUMIJES (1832-33)

The Outbreak

The Kol Insurrection had hardly been suppressed when away to the east another revolt, called Ganga Narain's hangama, broke out on 26 April 1832 in the Jungle Mahals, assuming the most serious character
and spreading over part of the Midnapur district and the adjoining tributary states. This revolt commenced with the cold-blooded murder of Madhava Singh, the half-brother and diwan of the zamindar of the Barabhum pargana, at the hands of Ganga Narain Singh, a disgruntled cousin of the zamindar and the diwan.

Ganga Narain took care to implicate his ghatwal followers. They remained at the heart of all the subsequent troubles in the Jungle Mahals and Dhalbhum, giving them a personal focus which had been lacking in the more generalised movement of protest in Chota Nagpur proper and Palamau.

On 1 May Ganga Narain led his followers against the munsif's cutchery at Barabazar, killing the peons, burning the court, and plundering the bazar. This gave a clear anti-British dimension to the movement.

The Magistrate and Collector of the Jungle Mahals asked for military help from the Calcutta authorities, for the irregular and local forces offered him little hope of effective support. The sardar ghatwals and the digwars and tabedars who constituted the zamindari police were no better armed than the insurgents, and were often sympathetic to their fellow tribesmen, especially the ghatwals who were in many cases the chief supporters of Ganga Narain. As for the Hinduised zamindars, many had antagonized their tribal tenants and were uncertain about their own safety.

Soon what had originally appeared to be a private feud assumed all the measures of an organized and extensive insurrection. Ganga Narain had already collected enough grain to support his forces for some time before he had launched his first attack. Now he collected a large number of Bhumijes (chuars) with whom he was in force in the hills, extorting grain in large quantities from the villages. According to a government report, "Nearly every Bhumij, whether Ghatwal or Ryot, had by this time joined Ganga Narain who announced his determination to clear the country of police thanas as far as the great Benares road."

The clash with the government forces occurred on 14 May. The drums of the rebels were heard near the magistrate's camp on the 12th night. Early next morning some huts near Barabazar were burnt. Then on the 14th about 3,000 rebels surrounded the magistrate's camp and launched an attack. The magistrate tried to pacify them, but in vain. But as a military officer wrote, this "the commencement of a new war" and it was difficult for the detachment of the 50th N.I., short of ammunition and supplies, and completely worn out by incessant fatigue in the course of the Kol Insurrection, to contain it.

According to a contemporary newspaper account, the rebels came "with horrible shouts, Yells, beating of drums" to attack the camp. Some of them danced with large swords and shields, battle-axes, bows and arrows in their hands. From the cover of a large tank, they opened
fire with matchlocks. But ultimately they dispersed, carrying away their dead. However, the determination of the initial attack and their refusal to be dismayed by their losses, became clear. For they returned the very next morning to harass the camp, seeking to cut off the supplies.

Ganga Narain had persuaded his followers to believe that he was invincible. The Magistrate was impressed by the influence he exerted over his tribal people for he proclaimed Ganga Narain a rebel and offered a reward of Rs. 1,000 for his apprehension, dead or alive. He also asked for more troops and appealed to the ghatwals to surrender.

The Burdwan magistrate also asked for troops to restore the confidence of the inhabitants of his district. Soon troops came from Barrackpore. This created a momentary stir of alarm in Calcutta.

At the end of June, disturbances flared up, this time in Patkum, to the west. Patkum continued to be in commotion till early July. The rebels drove away cattle, terrorised people and threatened the Hinduised zamindar.

The neighbouring Kolhan in Singhbhum was also disturbed as the Larka Kols spilled north on a sharp foray against Saraikela, killing 28 of the zamindar's men, and driving off cattle. This was followed at the end of July by another flare up at the opposite corner of the Jungle Mahals, this time by Ganga Narain. Ambikanagar was attacked on 26 July by 3,000 chuars.

The Manbhum and Supur zamindars came to terms with Ganga Narain. Bishnupur was saved by the Barabazar magistrate, but no other zamindar held out. Ganga Narain then attacked Raipur, Shamsundarpur and Phulkusma. His forces thus traversed the whole eastern flank of the Jungle Mahals from Puncia to Phulkusma almost unopposed. They were joined by the Bhumiyes of the parganas they passed through, who, in conjunction with those of Silda and Koilapal, commenced a general system of plunder which continued till the 34th Regiment N.I. reached Raipur in late November.

The zamindars of the area were as ready as their Bhumiij tenants to join Ganga Narain. Many of them were deeply involved in debt and were happy to see the money-lenders destroyed.

In August Ganga Narain suffered defeat but his lieutenant, Raghu Nath Singh continued to keep the south in turmoil. Then after the monsoon more government troops came and intensive operations began. Both sides suffered casualties. The southern groups of rebels lost their courage first. Other followed suit.

Ganga Narain, deserted by his followers, fled to Singhbhum and tried to rouse the Lerka Kols there. But on 7 February he was killed. The operations, however, had to continue against the other rebels, though the supreme leader's death had a demoralising effect on them.

Thousands of acres of land had been laid waste, thousands of houses
and huts were destroyed. Great quantities of grains were seized, scattered or burnt, so that even seed grain was not available. Cows, buffaloes, bullocks, goats and sheep were seized in large numbers. Most of them were sold up.

Initially the losses in killed and wounded among the rebels were not heavy but later the Bhumij casualties ran into thousands.

Origins

The Bhumij revolt had a multiple origin: in the personal grievances of a gifted leader, Ganga Narain, in the feuds and dissensions of petty chiefs and in the general discontent of the tribal people under the pressure of alien social and political systems. The tribal discontent was two-fold: with the administrative system and its alien officials imposed upon them by the East India Company, and with the Hinduisation of their chiefs, which had set disruptive forces at work at the very heart of their society. All these pressures and reactions were simultaneous.

The extraordinary ignorance of the British officials and the indifference of the local Hinduised rajas to the causes of tribal discontent also accounted for the uprising. Even after the violent revolt of the Kols in the neighbourhood nothing was done in Dhalbhum, Manbhum and other estates. So the utter lack of contact between the tribesmen and the district authorities was one reason why the unrest so soon got out of hand.

On the one hand, the district authorities were over-burdened with heavy responsibilities, on the other they did not think it worthwhile to inspect the remote areas inhabited, they believed, by turbulent chuars. Besides, the local rajas who should have been a defence to their people, failed them through indifference or incapacity.

So the tribemen’s only remedy seemed to be in violence. As Haimendorf says, one “must be surprised, not by the occurrence of risings, but by the infrequency of violent reaction on the part of the aboriginals to the loss of their ancestral lands and to their economic enslavement.” The enslavement had followed almost automatically from the action of the Bengal Government in exteuding the Permanent Settlement and the Cornwallis Code to these undeveloped tribal areas. Though it was the Indian subordinate officials of the courts, the police, excise and revenue departments who actually harassed and exploited with the new and complex regulations, it was indeed the British administration which was ultimately responsible as it facilitated contacts with tribesmen. It was only the presence of the British power which permitted “the administrative frontier”, “the traders’ frontier”, and “the settlers’ frontier” to encroach upon the tribal territory.

The rise of Brahman settlers or of Muslim merchants to the positions of authority in the feudal estates of the Jungle Mahals, and the oppressive activities of the money-lenders were much resented by the Bhumijes.
And the oppressive petty officials of the Company were hated. The oppressions by the salt-
*darogas*, the police *darogas*, the peons and the *barkandazes* were equally resented.

Had there been no pre-existing general discontent among the tribesmen, Ganga Narain could not have obtained such influence. But without a Ganga Narain, equally, the discontent might have continued to simmer without boiling over into violence.

The unfeeling and cruel attachment and sale of a debtor’s property in land which was now enforced, was a rude shock to the tribals who were so much attached to their land.

The tribal *sardars* accused the subordinate servants of the government with all sorts of oppressions. And the *diwan* and other non-tribal servants of the local rajas exacted a house-tax *abwabs* (exactions) like *mangan* (voluntary subsidy), etc. The new police stations with up-country *barkandazes* were another source of oppression.

No wonder the tribal peasant was seething with discontent against all outsider encroachments. He was oppressed from all sides and armed revolt represented his last bid to escape from the net closing round him.

**Nature**

The revolt was not an unconsidered, spasmodic affair, but one very closely connected with the oppressions which the tribals had suffered. The retaliation therefore was as violent and unprecedented as the oppression on them had been.

There was a certain madness and blindness in the tribals. Unlike the Kol Insurrection, the revolt did not smack of heinous murders and atrocities on women, old men and children. But a few stray cases of murder there certainly were. The most common occurrence was the plunder of cattle and property. The non-tribal intruders were a special target of attack in all the areas.

The police *thanases* were attacked and a particular ‘spite’ was shown towards the *darogas*. And in these acts the *ghatwals* took the lead, as the mundas and the mankis had done in Chota Nagpur proper.

With the emergence of Ganga Narain as a major figure, the revolt did take a rather more political or ‘national’ aspect. Guhi Sardar, Suri Naya, Govardhan Bhumij, Bauri Naya, Buli Mehto and others were charged with aiding and abetting Ganga Narain.

Ganga Narain exploited the superstition and credility of the simple tribal folk, by claiming to possess superhuman powers, as Sidhu and Kanhu did later during the Santal Insurrection (1855). He claimed to possess the power of enchanting the sepoys and their muskets. Even when he was not present during an attack, the Bhumijes gave the impression that he was there in some form.

Many of the local zamindars were suspected of being in league with
the rebels. The fact that many of them were deeply in debt may explain their tacit support. But there was undoubtedly a very concerted attack upon the British administration in the Jungle Mahals.

Far more than in Chota Nagpur there was in the Jungle Mahals military campaigns an element of retaliatory retribution. The heavy loss of life, through destruction of property, the capture of women and children—all these marked this campaign. And they seem rather to have stiffened than weakened the tribal will to resist. Whereas in the Kol Insurrection the government offered a thousand rupees reward for the seizure of the leader, Buddh Bhagat, five thousand rupees were offered for the apprehension of Ganga Narain.

**Aftermath**

As the tribal leaders surrendered one by one in 1833, great emphasis was laid from the government side upon reconciliation and rehabilitation in the devastated areas. First, temporary police posts and zamindari police posts were established. Then commendations and rewards were distributed to the loyalists.

Only those were detained for trial and punishment, who appeared to be the most influential and ‘the most bold’. The British troops entered Singhbum and captured some rebel leaders who had taken shelter there.

Under Regulation XIII of 1833 early in 1834 a new administrative unit known as the South-West Frontier Agency was formed, of which the Jungle Mahals and Dhalbhum became a part. The ordinary laws would not apply to these areas, as in Chota Nagpur proper and Palamau. In these deregulationised tracts simple rules were applied and the officers were asked to keep in direct touch with the people. The claws of the usurers, land speculators and others were blunted. The annual tours by the higher officials became imperative and the cases concerning the tribals were to be tried summarily. The sale or transfer of land in lieu of the rent or debt was regulated.

V. THE REVOLT OF 1857 AND THE TRIBALS OF CHOTA NAGPUR

Chota Nagpur remained peaceful during the two decades following the tribal unrest of 1831-33. But in 1854 new administrative changes were initiated and the South-West Frontier Agency was named the Chota Nagpur division with the new town of Ranchi as its headquarters and Hazaribagh, Chaibasa and Purulia as the headquarters of the three subordinate districts.

Meanwhile the German Christian mission had been set up at Ranchi and from 1850 the missionaries began to work among the Mundas, making them conscious of their rights.
During the period of the Agency the Mundas had not been able to get the security of tenure. And gradually the non-tribals who had fled the area during 1831-33 returned and started avenging themselves on the Tribal.

No wonder the tribals found their opportunity during the revolt of 1857 which started on 30 July at Hazaribagh. The mutiny of the troops at Hazaribagh and Ranchi was followed by the rising of the tribals under the leadership of some disgruntled chiefs. Thakur Bishwanath Sahi of Barkagarh, Jagat (Jit) Nath Sahi and Gopal Sahi joined the rebellion at Doranda (near Ranchi) to take revenge upon their enemies.

In the rural areas of the Hazaribagh district plunder became common and the roads were unsafe. By the third week of August Thakur Bishwanath with a rebel force of 150 badly damaged the road passing through the Ramgarh ghat (pass), obstructing the march of government troops against the Doranda rebels.

The tribals plundered the affluent houses, taking revenge upon their oppressors, money-lenders, land-grabbers and others. And the Chota Nagpur Commissioner and other authorities were trying to get more and more troops from outside.

The rising in Hazaribagh was taken advantage of by the Bhuinya tikaiis who had lost their land due to the operation of the new sale laws: with the support of the tenants they recovered their lands from the purchasers. Two coffee planters, Libert and Wheeler, a pensioner from the Artillery who had settled at Hazaribagh, lost much of the property at the hands of the rebels. Two of the tribal leaders of the revolt Arjun Santal and Rambani Manjhi, were arrested on 21 November.

At Ranchi-Doranda there was peace after the departure of the rebels to meet Kunwar Singh in Shahabad. But the rebel force of a few thousand proceeding to Shahabad was defeated at a grim fight at Chatra. Wishwanath Sahi and Ganpat Rai were later hanged in April 1858.

The Zamindar of Pachet, Nilmani Singh Deo was reminded by the Chota Nagpur Commissioner that since his former rights had just been confirmed, he must maintain the peace and tranquility in his estate. The Chuars of the neighbouring Manbhum district were restless after the mutiny of the sepoys at Purulia. Now they started plundering the property of those non-tribals who had been oppressing them in so many ways. In the midst of the general panic the raja was deserted by his jagirdars, relatives and khorposhdars (dependents enjoying land grants) against whom a number of cases were pending in the law courts.

The Manbhum raja’s reluctance in helping the British forces was taken by the Commissioner as the “most outrageously insolent” behaviour and he asked the government to treat him as a traitor. He also suggested that a commission of enquiry might investigate all the charges against this zamindar and his estate might be attached.
Some chiefs of the neighbouring tributary estates also raised the banner of revolt: In Sarguja, the son of Jagmohan, with a past record of rebellion, defied the authorities; disgruntled Raja of Udaypur who had earlier been deprived of his estate, proclaimed himself a raja. Sambhalpur was also disturbed.

By the middle of October a large number of village headmen of the Manbhum, Hazaribagh and Ranchi districts were plundering and attacking their oppressors. In the inaccessible areas the ghatwals fully exploited the situation, often cutting away small sections of the police and the army. The zamindars, especially the small ones, were conniving with the rebels so that most of the thanas with the zamindari police completely broke down.

So Dalton planned to move the troops simultaneously into Purulia, Hazaribagh and Ranchi areas. Meanwhile a large number of Santals had assembled near Jaipur for plunder and arson. The British authorities, however, secured about 900 soldiers from some of the Hinduised chiefs of the Manbhum district and saved the situation.

Meanwhile the zamindar of Pachet was preparing for a showdown, strengthening his defences and arming his retainers. Dalton therefore requested the Calcutta authorities to ask Col. Burney and the 32nd N.I. proceeding to Kashipur where the zamindar lived, to disarm him as well as to demolish the fortifications he had raised, so that the other refractory chiefs might be cowed down.

The Santals of Manbhum were said to be incited by the local influential men like the zamindar of Pachet, but Dalton though that there was no "organised and formidable combination" of the tribals.

Unlike in Palamau, the rajas and other chiefs in the Manbhum and Ranchi areas remained, by and large, loyal to the British. Even the chiefs like the Pachet raja were wavering. Had there been a good leadership in these areas the revolt would have continued for a long time.

The Santals of Manbhum and Hazaribagh, however, fought for a long time, plundering here and there. But with Captain Montgomery's troops marching into this area they had to disperse.

Only the zamindar of the Manbhum area, Nilmani Singh of Raniganj, remained. But he too was disarmed by the troops and his fortifications were dismantled.

Meanwhile at Gomia on the old Trunk Road near the Damodar river armed Santals under Rupa Manjhi clashed with the British troops. So Rupa's house was burnt and a reward of one hundred rupees for his capture was announced.

Soon the tribals of other areas rose in revolt even though they knew that it was an uneven fight. How could the bows and arrows face the bullets? Besides, the Hinduised chiefs were supporting the British.
Singhbhum had been conquered in 1837 by the British much after the other areas of the Chota Nagpur division. Before it was settled according to the new rules, it was drawn into the revolt of 1857 when the government troops at Chaibasa mutinied and joined the Doranda rebels. The leader of the revolt was Raja Arjun Singh of the Porahat estate. His representative Chaibasa explained to the tribal rebels that the British had left the country and so it was now under the raja. The mundas and mankis were called to the Raja at Chakradharpur and were told that they should be faithful to the Raja and not to the government or to its stooge, the Raja of Seraikela. The Porahat Raja also tried to contract the Doranda rebels and Bishwanath Shahi.

An arrow, the emblem of God, was taken to the Chaibasa authorities by one Dabru Manki who said on oath that it had been given to him for circulation in the Kolhan where the Hos (Larka or fighting Kols) lived. Mora Manki and Hari Tanti also confirmed that they had received such arrows from the Porahat raja.

One of the Ilakadars of Porahat, Jagu Diwan threatened all the tribals who refused to answer his summons: Their cattle would be seized and their villages destroyed.

In January 1858 the Larka Kols had a terrible fight with the British forces at Mogra and four European officers and many men were wounded. There were other encounters too between March and June 1858.

It was only in early 1859 that Raja Arjun Singh surrendered along with his brothers and a large number of other rebel leaders. But Raghu Deo and Sham Karan could not be arrested.

Arjun Singh was later tried and died at Banaras even before the judgement. The whole of his estate was confiscated.

If Raja Arjun Singh had been able to join the famous leader of the revolt in Shahabad, Kunwar Singh, the British could not have easily suppressed the revolt in Chota Nagpur.

The main cause of the rising in the Singhbhum and Kolhan area was the new pressure on the tribal society there. The mankis and the mundas who had been the backbone of the economic, social and political structure of the tribes, resented the interference of the British authorities. They did not like the parwanas, directing them to the Chota Nagpur authorities for law and order in their villages. They were also asked to collect the revenues from the tenants. Formerly they had worked in collaboration with the local rajas but now they were to ignore them and obey the orders of the government.

So first there were murmurs of protest and then the flare-up in 1857 which was suppressed ruthlessly be the Shekhwati Battalion from Chaibasa, the Sikh volunteers and other troops.

An effort was also made to raise a tribal corps to reconcile the dissatisfied tribals. But unlike the Mundas of the Ranchi area, the Hos of
Singhbhum and the Cheros of Palamau were not willing to join it.

Palamau

The Bhogtas, one of the two branches of the Kherwars took a leading part in the revolt in Palamau. Two brothers of this tribe, Nilamber and Pitamber had been given the jagir of their ancestral zamindari on a quit-rent. Pitamber was at Ranchi when the sepoys of the Ramgarh battalion there revolted in July 1857. He further saw the rising of the men of the 8th N.I. while passing through Palamau on its way to join the Shahabad heroes, Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh. Pitamber and his brother were convinced that the British rule had ended. So they declared their independence and attacked two non-tribal jagirdars, Raghubar Dayal Singh and his cousin, Thakur Kishan Dayal Singh, their enemy.

Many jagirdars of the Chero tribe also joined the rebels. They were promised to be restored to their jagirs, thus improving their social and economic condition. In October about 500 Bhogtas with some Kherwars and a group of Cheros under Nilamber and Pitamber, attacked Chainpur Shahpur and Leslieganj. At the last place they damaged or destroyed the public buildings and killed some men. When faced by the government troops they retreated to the hills of Sarguja, a neighbouring estate.

By November end the whole of Palamau was up in arms and Lt. Graham and his small party had to take shelter at Raghubar Dayal’s place, while the rebels plundered the villages. Rajhara colliery was soon attacked and two employees of the Coal company, both Europeans, somehow escaped assault and possible death.

With the arrival of two companies of troops from Sassram side, one rebel leader Debi Bux Rai was captured. The rebels, however, burned the village named Kanka and destroyed the house of the influential non-tribal zamindar, Bikhari Singh.

With the pressure exerted by 6,000 matchlock men and 100 sawars the Patanghat (pass) was cleared of the Bhogta rebels. The rebels also withdrew from Chainpur after having unsuccessfully attacked the Ranka fort.

The rebel chief of Kunda, a leader of the Kherwar tribe, with his lieutenants was surprised. But Nilamber Sabi was still plundering some villages. Sarguja was invaded by the followers of the Singrauli chief.

In January Captain Dalton, the Chota Nagpur Commissioner, marched to Palamau with a large force including that of a loyal zamindar. There was a fight for the Palamau fort but ultimately the rebels fled, leaving their guns, ammunition, cattle, supplies, etc., behind them. Ten rebels were killed and the English loss was one killed and two wounded. A letter from Kuar Singh, and Amar Singh assuring
help was found here.

Then the Commissioner with a force of about 2,000 men attacked the Bhogta strongholds, when the Bhogtas numbered only 1,000. The rebel jagirdars had gradually been surrendering, the last one was Bhawani Bux Rai, a Chero chief, who after initial hesitation, surrendered on 3 February. Then the rebels were attacked from two sides—through the Baghmara ghat as well as through the Tungarighat. The rebels found plundering a village named Harnaman near the latter ghat, were immediately attacked and a number of captives and cattle were recovered. One leader and two ordinary rebels were arrested. One of these eventually became an approver and the other two were hanged.

On 13 February the main residence of the Bhogta chiefs was attacked. The rebels fought from behind the marked breast-works of stone for a while and then fled. The casualty on the rebel side could not be known, but on the government side one dafadar of the Ramgarh cavalry was killed. The fortified house was destroyed and the village along with Saneya in the neighbourhood, were devastated by the troops. Large quantities of grain were seized, as well as herds of cattle and several herdsmen captured by the rebels, were released.

Then efforts began for the capture of the supreme leaders of the Bhogtas, Nilamber and Pitamber, but neither threats nor promises induced the influential people of the area to tell their whereabouts. So the commissioner got the village of Nilamber and Pitamber destroyed, their movable property seized and their zamindaris confiscated. The lesser lights, however, were sought to be conciliated.

Eventually Nilamber Sahi and Pitamber Sahi were captured, tried and hanged and those who had helped the British were rewarded.

There is clear evidence of some contact between the Palamau rebels and the rebel chiefs of Shahabad. There was also some contact with the Singhbhum rebels. The Government was in panic because of this liaison as well as the strategic importance of Palamau. Besides, the general masses of Palamau were with the rebels supplying them all the information about the movement of the government troops.

Naklat Manjhi of the Kherwar tribe remained a headache for the authorities for quite some time. Raja Singh of Hamir was arrested with great difficulty and was later executed and his jagir of five villages confiscated. Tikait Unaras Singh and his diwan Shaikh Bhikhari were captured in January 1858 and executed.

The uprising in Palamau was a really mass upsurge. At one time in December 1857 nearly the whole area was up in arms. On this score it was different from the rebellions of Ranchi and other areas where the movement was less popular among the masses. Here it was not the case of the sepoys of the Ramgarh battalion rising first and then seeking the support of the civil population. From the very outset the rebels
were led by their natural leaders.

With the restoration of peace in all the areas of Chota Nagpur division the shop-keepers, the amlas and the dikkus returned and started their activities without any hindrance. The Christian missionaries became more active. In 1859 the Civil Procedure Code was introduced into this area, in 1861 the Police Act, in 1865 the Registration Act, in 1872 the Chota Nagpur Tenures Act, in 1878 the Hazaribagh and Lohardagga Rural Police Act and in 1887 Chota Nagpur Rural Police Act.

None of these measures could remove the fundamental causes of discontent and the area saw three movements in succession.

VI. THE SARDARI LARAI, 1858-1890

Background

The work of the Christian missionaries among the Mudas of the Ranchi district gradually changed the whole outlook of these tribesmen. They realised the futility of an armed revolt and gradually became conscious of their rights. Even before the revolt of 1857 many Christian tribals had asserted their rights in the courts. But now they were a powerful and organized society. They were often given moral financial support by the European missionaries.

According to Col. Dalton, an impression was created that by becoming a Christian the tribals could assert their rights. The family of the original clearers of the land had a bhuinhari right in that land. But many of them had been ousted. So now many got converted to Christianity to reclaim their right to such land. Even those who were not bhuinhars often became Christians to get admitted to the rank of the bhuinhars.

Thus conflicts between Christian tribals and their landlords became common. These tribals often tried to take forcible possession of the lands from which they had been dispossessed by the landlords. The latter retaliated by instituting false cases of dacoity and robbery against these tenants, subjecting them to illegal confinement and duress.

The struggle continued for years. The zamindars tried to retain what they had possessed and the ryots tried to retain what they had lost and even more. This tug of war went on, sometimes ending in serious clashes throughout the Ranchi district. There were some murders too.

The government investigated the origins of these troubles. It was found that the German missionaries working from their mission founded at Ranchi in 1845, put forward a theory that the Mudas and the Oraons freely gave up half the land of their villages for the maintenance of the Raja, when he was first elected, on the condition that they held the other half free of rent.
The whole difficulty was that before the administrative and territorial recognition of 1834 there was no record of rights and each petty or big chief governed his own sice of territory according to his sweet-will. The landlords and middlemen, however, had always recognised the right of the descendants of the original clearers of the villages to set apart a chunk of land called bhuiharsi either rent-free or at a quit-rent. The bhuihars rendered certain services like cultivating the landlord’s khas lands and repairing his house.

Among the Mundas and the Oraons the reclamer of a patch of land in the jungle was regarded as its owner. Eventually he paid a quit-rent or rendered some service to the village chief. And his status as a bhuihar (pioneer) was much higher than that of the latecomers to the village.

In the first half of the 19th century the hinduised chiefs as well as the outsiders who obtained jagirs began to demand rent from the bhuihars as from others. The bhuihars naturally resisted. Extravagant claims were made from both the sides. If the landlords were willing to admit their existence only in the oldest villages, all the ryots began to claim the privileges of the bhuihars. And the two sides tried to dispossess each other by force.

The leaders of the movement started in 1858, were called the sardars and their agitation the sardari (mulki) larai (the struggle for the land). Aiming at expelling the zamindars, the leaders bitterly attacked forced-labour and praedial conditions. They recalled their fight in Tamar in 1819-20 and the unrest of 1831-33, but preferred the moderate constitutional agitation with prayer, protest and petition, rather than the extreme violent method. They did not trust the non-tribal non-white, judicial, civil and police officers. They refused to pay land revenue and even chased away the revenue collectors. For meeting the legal expenses on the court cases they collected money and threatened those who did not pay the contribution.

The sardari larai had three distinct phases—(1) the agrarian phase (1858-81); (2) the revivalistic phase (1881-90); (3) the political phase (1891-95). Even the later phases had an undercurrent of agrarian protest.

Even before the Revolt of 1857-58 had fully ended, this conflict assumed a serious aspect and troops had to be sent from Ranchi to Gobindpur to restore order in the Basia had Sonepur parganas. Also, to remove the grievances Lala Loknath Sahi, a zamindar related to the Chota Nagpur maharaja was asked to prepare a record of all the bhuihari land. He worked till 1862, enquiring into 572 cases and completing a register of all the bhuihari lands.

The Mundas were pacified and even the most disturbed areas became quiet. But Sahi had been partisan to the landlords. So in
1867 a petitioned signed by 14,000 Christian tribals, was presented to the local authorities, asking them to complete the survey.

To settle the disputes properly the Act II of 1869 was passed by the Bengal government. Special commissioners surveyed and demarcated the bhuihari lands and the manjikias land of the landlords. The bhuihari lands included bhukhetia, dalikatari, pahanua and mahatoai. The first was equivalent to nijote (under own cultivation of the zamindars) in other areas.

The operations continued from 1869 to 1880. The enquiries extended to 2,482 villages in the Ranchi district. Though the operations were partly successful, they were "a mere palliative of the disorders which prevailed in the whole district."

The Act II of 1869 itself was vague on many issues. The tenures to be surveyed were not defined properly. No criterion was fixed for the determination of the bhuihari land. Naturally, in many cases the decisions were arbitrary and unsatisfactory. No wonder the government admitted that the operations were unable to remove any cause of disagreement and disputes were still frequent.

The main cause of the failure was that the rajhas tenures were not included in the scope of the Act. Moreover, those bhuihars who made absurd claims, could not be satisfied. Also, some landlords persuaded bhuihars to conceal their status, for the government would impose a special tax upon them.

Once the landlords saw that the exhorbitant claims of the bhuihars had been rejected, they tried to dispossess them of all the lands other then the demarcated bhuihari land. Failing that they took recourse to rack-renting.

Besides, the Mundas and other headmen took little advantage of the provisions of the Act, permitting the commutations of praedial conditions and services for cash payment. In fact, just more than a thousand applications were received. Moreover, outside the Chota Nagpur zamindar no survey was undertaken.

The sardars were disappointed, for their ancestral lands were not fully restored. The German mission in 1876 called for the abolition of many taxes and imposts. But the government ignored it. The Mundas then claimed in 1879 that Chota Nagpur belonged to them. In 1881 some sardars set up a raj’at Dresa, the old headquarters of the Chota Nagpur maharaja. The government only punished these sardars.

In the Act I of 1879 the word bhuihari or its local variant khuntkatti was not defined. Not even the Act I B.C. took it up. This Act provided that no bhuihar or khuntkattidar or korkar holders would be liable to any enhancement of rent previously paid by him for his land unless it was proved that the tenure had been created within twenty years before the institution of the suit to enhance the rent of the said lands. In the
case of an enhancement the rent should not exceed one-half of the rent paid by an ordinary tenant with a right of occupancy in the same type of land.

The local courts, however, failed to understand the exact meaning of the terms and could not give effect to the relevant provisions. Thus until one Lister started the survey and settlement operations many of the bhuihars suffered and the situation became serious. The landlords evaded the provisions of the Act, rack-rented and increased the praedial services frequently by instituting suits for arrears of rent at enhanced rates by cheating the ryots to agree to higher rates.

The disappointment with the new Act inevitably led to a movement of protest. In the villages with mostly Christian inhabitants praedial service was refused. In a few cases the landlords were forcibly deprived of their khas lands.

The bhuihari survey had other defects which fanned the flame of revolt. It had been extended only to the privileged tenures and that too to a portion of the Ranchi district. Nothing was done to commute the praedial dues and services which was a perpetual source of tussle between the tenants and the landlords.

Since the operations were not extended to the khuntkatti area, future troubles were inevitable. Further, the ordinary raiyati (rajhias) lands which formed the bulk of the cultivated area, were left out. No wonder the struggle regarding these lands began with a fresh vigour.

Besides, in 1872 the government recognised the title of 'maharaja' for the Hinduised chief of the Chota Nagpur zamindari and in 1876 the Chota Nagpur Encumbered Estates Act was passed to stop the troubles arising between the purchaser of the land in lieu of debts and the villagers whose rights were infringed upon.

Under the Civil Procedure Act of 1859 the officers had been looking into such problems. But its provisions were not enough; even though mischief was averted from time to time as the officers did not have enough powers of interference.

Now by the Act VI of 1876 the executive authorities were given effective powers as they had enjoyed from 1834 to 1859, to prevent any mischief in the debt repayment proceedings involving the land. But the root of the evil could not be removed.

From 1885 to 1887 protests were made against the system of bethbegari (compulsory labour), the exaction of praedial conditions (raku-mats) and the rack-renting of rajhas lands, and demands were made to ascertain the status of the Munda proprietors of the khuskatti villages not included in the bhuihari survey. Many Mundas and Oraons refused to pay the rent to the landlords. Efforts were made to capture the majhihas land in Tilma, Tamar, etc.

In 1886-87 the newly converted tribals asked the German mission-
aries whether they had the power to get them the lands according to the provisions of the recent Acts. Since the reply was in the negative they scolded these missionaries, broke off their relationship with the Mission and turned for support to the Roman Catholic Mission with its branches at Burudi (Khunti thana) since 1874 and at Doranda since 1883.

With this support the agitation spread to the police stations of Basia, Pakote, Sisai and Chainpur in 1889-90. The Roman Christian Youths moved about, forcibly converting the tribals. Money was collected for meeting the expenses of taking the complaints regarding the encroachments of their land tenures to the authorities. Thousands of petitions were put in, praying that they should be allowed to form the village communities under the government umbrella. Unfortunately the petitions were summarily rejected.

In 1889 many landlords petitioned the government against the activities of the Roman Catholic Church. But generally even non-Christian tribals resisted the claim of the landlords to exact unlimited services from them. In some villages the Christians tried to forcibly cut off the top knots of the non-Christian tribals to convert them to Christianity, and failing that forcibly cut and carried off the crops from the manjhihas lands.

In 1890 the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal held a conference at Ranchi with the leading zamindars, missionaries and officials. The Commissioner prescribed a scale of service renderable for each holding according to the custom of the area. The Christian missionaries were asked to keep off the land question. But the sardars who were taking subscriptions were punished. The varying terms of imprisonment and the death of a few in the jails showed that the Ranchi authorities were siding with the zamindars. They were also disillusioned with the missionaries and the Calcutta babus.

Small wonder that there was a clear anti-British stance from 1890 onwards. The constitutional method had obviously failed. The British rule, they thought, was the root of their problem. In 1892 many of the neo-sardars planned to kill all the contractors and German missionaries. But they failed.

The ground was prepared for a purely political movement under Birsa Munda.

VII. THE BIRSA MOVEMENT, 1896-1901

It was in the middle of 1897 that the ferment among the Mundas came to the surface again when they found a charismatic leader in Birsa Munda of the Chalked village in the Tamar thana.

At a time when the peaceful sardari, agitation had failed and scarcity, famine and epidemics were ravaging the Ranchi district and its
neighbourhood, Birsa appeared as a messiah, giving a new hope to his despairing people.

Birsa's stay at Chaibasa in the Singhbhum area from 1886 onwards moulded his personality in a particular way. He was influenced by Christianity and by the help the German Lutheran and Roman Catholic missions had given to the Sardari Larai. His stay in a Christian mission school gave him a smattering of the English language and a rudimentary knowledge of Hindi.

Soon after leaving Chaibasa in 1890 Birsa severed his connections with the German mission and according to the plan of the sardari agitation turned to the Roman Catholic mission, but he did not formally join it.

At Bandgaon Birsa came into contact in 1891 with Anand Panre, a munshi of the zamindar, and learnt the rudiments of Vaishnavism. A Vaishnava saint also influenced him and Birsa gave up meat and wore the sacred thread of the high caste Hindus. Once he had the vision of the Hindu God Vishnu.

Later Birsa kept himself in touch with the sardars who were fighting against the restrictions imposed on the tribals with regard to the reserved forest in the Porahat (Singhbhum) area. Under the Indian Forest Act VII of 1878 all waste lands in the villages of Chota Nagpur were deemed 'protected forest' in 1893-94. Birsa led many royers of Sigrida to Chaibasa to petition for the remission of the forest dues, but in vain.

In 1895 Birsa reverted to his original faith, sacrificed a goat to the spirit and did not like the bonga worship. Then in May-June 1895 the Supreme God, he felt, entered his spirit and he became a prophet. One day he dreamt of a grey-haired old man (Haram Horo) with a spear in his hand in the presence of the Bonga (Spirit), a raja, a judge and himself. The old man called each of them to climb a slippery mahua tree and bring down a valuable object from its top. Only Birsa succeeded. Obviously the dream projected his present conflicts with the authorities, the zamindar and the old religion.

Then in a forest in the rains Birsa was said to have been transformed through the impact of a thunder storm and a lightening and received the divine word regarding the deliverance of his people.

The news spread like wild fire and Birsa became a healter for his people. He also started preaching his new religion and the Mundas even from distant villages came to listen to him. He cited parables, asking his people to be laborious. He claimed to be the father of the earth and he attacked the bongas.

Not only the Mundas, but also the Oraons and Kherias flocked to Chalked to see the prophet. Like Bhagirath and Dubia, the leaders of the Kherwar Movement of the Santals in the 1870s and 80s Birsa asked his followers to destroy all the white pigs and white fowls for they were
unclean. Once this was done he announced that fire and stones would rain from the heavens on a particular day and only those who took shelter in Chalked would be saved. Stores of rice were collected and temporary huts erected and crowds of armed Mundas, especially from the sardari villages, assembled there.

Soon this revitalisation movement became an agrarian Movement. First the rebels decided not to pay the land revenue and to hold the land rent-free. Then it was decided to re-establish the Munda's old rights in respect of forests. Birsa asked his followers to defy the authorities for the raj of Queen Victoria had ended and the Munda (Birsa) raj had commenced. He convinced them that if the government forces opposed him, the rifles would become wood and the bullets water. Since Birsa was now a Bhagwan (God), people believed him.

The authorities then acted and Birsa was arrested and brought to Ranchi. He was charged with casting odium upon the government, announcing the disappearance of the treasury, and inability of the government arms and ammunitions and norent campaign in defiance of the authority. Ultimately he was convicted and imprisoned for two years with a fine of Rs. 50.

But the Birsait movement continued. The followers of Birsa believed that their leader had temporarily gone to heaven and would reappear at the appropriate time. And Birsa did appear on his release from the prison. He started urging his people to assert their ancient rights over the land and the jungle. He immediately gathered a large following. He desecrated the Hindu temple of Chutia, presumably to assert his claim to the Chota Nagpur raj, of which Chutia was an ancient seat. He sent secret messages to his followers on the night of the Holi festival of the Hindus to get prepared for the struggle.

The government tried to arrest him, but he went underground for two years, moving from village to village inciting the people. He and his followers did useful work during the famine of 1897-99.

When the constructive programme was over and the rebel forces were trained and reorganised, he asked his people to attack the authorities and the Christian missionaries. The secret meetings were held at night and in secluded areas. After one of such meetings Birsa led his men to the top of the Dumri hill where he planted two flags—one red and the other white. Then he told his followers that there would be a great fight with the Dikkus in which the ground would be as red as the flag with their blood.

Birsa told the crowds that they had suffered much at the hands of the zamindars, rajas, hakims and others and they must now be revenged upon, In one of the meetings a plantain tree was stuck up and Birsa got it cut into seven pieces with the remark that in the same way he would cut the rajas and the hakims until he set up his own raj.
On 24 December 1899 this vendetta began. A series of murderous attack were made on the Indian Christians and others in the thanas of Ranchi, Basia and Khunti. Then on 7 January about 300 Mundas, armed with sharp weapons, attacked the Khunti police station, killed one of the constables and set fire to some houses. Such violent acts continued in early 1900. Burning of houses and indiscriminate killings continued until the British troops arrived.

Many men, women and children on the rebel side were killed. But the rebels could not be cowed down. Hundreds of Birsais were arrested. In February 1900 Birsa himself was arrested with much difficulty.

Some of the trial cases went in appeal to the Calcutta High Court. Birsa died of Cholera in the jail and others were sentenced from hanging and transportation for life to varying terms of imprisonment.

The Birsa rising impressed upon the government the need of removing all the grievances of the tribals. Already the grievances with regard to rakunats and begari were sought to be removed through the Commutation Act of 1897. Now a compulsory commutation of the praedial services could be done. But like its predecessors, this Act also remained ineffective. Now in 1901 it was decided to have a Survey and Settlement of the Munda areas.

This work was begun in 1902. All the praedial services were commuted in the Ranchi district. The law relating to landlords and tenants was amended and improved in the light of the experience gained during the settlement operations by the Act V of 1903 which dealt mainly with the Mundari Khuntkatti tenancies and finally by the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act (Act VI of 1908) which re-arranged and consolidated the previous enactments in force and embodied certain provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act and some new provisions confirming local customary right and usages.

Nature

The Birsa movement, like other tribal movements, was agrarian and defensive in nature. While the contemporary British newspapers emphasised its agrarian and religious nature, the Indian newspapers focused on its political character. In fact, no zamindar or dikku was killed or molested during this movement, though the anti-dikku stance was quite pronounced.

By now the rebels were convinced that the British rule was at the root of all the evils. Though the agrarian dimension of this movement was the same as in the sardari larai the charismatic leadership of the Birsa made the former a messianic movement.

Like the hool of the Santal Parganas (1855) this unrest (ulgulan) was aimed at reviving the gold old days of the tribals where there was no exploitation. And for a time the Birsa movement did halt the rapid
breakdown of the agrarian order, secured some khuntkatti villages and led to the creation of more manageable administrative units.

The ulgulan shared with the Indian National Movement an anti-British stance, with a no-rent campaign as one of the common means of protest. It was motivated by the tribal urge to establish their own kingdom under the leadership of Birsa to the exclusion of all the enemies of the Mundas, including the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur and his tenure and under-tenure holders, the Christian churches and the British raj. The religion of the new raj would be one preached by Birsa. The movement was basically revivalistic, but also reformist in nature, relying on some Hindu and Christian elements.

The anti-British crado of the movement later merged with the Tana Bhagat and Hari Baba movements and the Birsa cult survived even into the modern times.

VIII. THE TANA BHAGAT AND UNNATI SAMAJ MOVEMENTS, 1914-1942 AND THE HARI BABA MOVEMENT, 1930-31

In 1914-1915 two movements known as the Tana Bhagat Movement and the Unnati Samaj, were started. The former was originally a purely religious movement confined mainly to the Oraons. It wanted to substitute Hinduised religious doctrines for the old animistic beliefs of the tribals.

The Unnati Samaj was a movement organised by the Lutheran Christians among the Mundas directed towards the moral and social amelioration of these people. The two movements, though allied in their aims, were at the outset entirely separate and non-political in their objects.

The founder of the Tana Bhagat movement was one Jatra Oraon (Dhangar) of village Chingri in the Bishnupur thana in the Gumla subdivision. In April 1914 this youngman of 20 proclaimed that Dharmesh (God) had asked the Oraons to give up the worship of bhuts (spirit), to abstain from meat and liquor, to stop animal sacrifice, and to stop ploughing the fields and labouring for others. Jatra taught his followers divine mantras for the exorcism of spirits and curing of diseases.

Eventually Jatra was arrested with his seven followers and sentenced to 1½ years' imprisonment. Meanwhile other gurus like Devmania of Batkuri preached his message. Jatra Oraon was said to have 2,60,000 followers in the district of Ranchi, Palamau and Hazaribagh.

It was a reformist movement aimed at promoting simplicity and purity of life among the Oraons. But it was also an agrarian movement, a protest against the oppressions by the zamindars, the usurers and others.

First of all, the Tana Bhagat made a symbolic break with the past
by a mass exorcism (tana) of bhuts from the Oraon households. Then they gave up alcohol, meat and hunting, even though each of these was indispensable in their life so far. In the process of Hinduisation they became vegetarians and took ritual bath and sacred thread. Now they worshipped God alone and had their congregational prayer on Thursdays in imitation of the Christians.

In March 1919 about 800 Oraons gathered near the house of one Mayo Orain at the village Sero under the thana Bero in the Lohardagga subdivision. The meeting place had been well decorated with flags and about 1,000 cooking places had been set up in a neighbouring grove.

The leader Sibu, a boy of twenty, told a government officer that Bhagwan (God) had told him that he was destined to become the leader of the world. After the Holi festival great changes were expected. The leader showed some serriblings on a footstap paper in Hindi, said to be the directives from God to reform the world. The devotees believed that they need not work for God would free them.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner sent summons to Sibu to meet him at Ranchi, but he refused to oblige him. Meanwhile the Bhagats had decided not to pay any rent to the zamindars or chaukidari tax to the government.

The movement was anti-zamindar, anti-trader and usurer and antigovernment. Presumably Sibu and Mayo were imitating Birsa Munda and Bhagrit and Dubia Gosain of the past, and were bringing in a religious and agrarian dimension to a political movement. In fact the Thursday school of the Birsaits later mixed up with Tana Bhagats in the Karra and Torpa thanas.

Sibu and Mayo were arrested and when they were being brought to Ranchi 200 of their followers followed them to demand their release. When they refused to listen to the the Deputy Commissioner four more leaders were arrested and others dispersed.

One of the leaflets of the Tana Bhagats said that the raj of the zamindars had ended and that of the pious men had begun. Besides the no-rent campaign, the leaders asked the banias (grocers) to stop their trade because they used to rob the tribals. The cloth of the merchants (the Marwaris) might be burnt to ashes as they were charging high rates and cheating religious minded people. The Muslims also might perish. So would the vagabond and prostitutes before the Hindu month of Phalgun.

The leaflet lamented that the non-tribals, the Brahmans, the Rajputs, the rajas and the zamindars had nothing with them when they came to Chota Nagpur, but now they were powerful enough to beat up the Oraons and the Mundas. The Christians, God told the Bhagats, were said to belong to the lowest class.

The Deputy Commissioner called these Bhagats ‘misguided people’
and was willing to drop all the proceedings against them if the movement subsided.

By December 1919 the Tana Bhagats of Tikoo in their petitions to the government, alleged grievances against the zamindars. They threatened that the district authorities would not listen, they would loot the property of one Domen Sahu, a zamindar of Balumath, and even kill him.

The Deputy Commissioner asked them to come over to Ranchi, but two Bhagats, Jitu and Turia, told the Sub-Inspector of Police at Tikoo that they would not. They also complained that a landlord had assaulted them and the tahsildar of Chichari had attached their property for the non-payment of dues. So they planned to attack that zamindar and the tahsildar.

The Bhagats offered water daily at Tikoo on the grave of an Oraon martyr who had been killed in a revolt a century back.

In another village named Tikri, a couple of miles to the north of Kuru police station, about 400 Tana Bhagats assembled under their leader Turia Bhagat. Here again it was decided to stop the payment of the chaukidari tax as well as the vaccination of the tribals.

The Bhagats some of whom had come from the Palamau and Hazaribagh districts also, had asked the police and the zamindars to supply them food but failing that they went home to eat. Wild rumours were afloat since the zamindar of Balumath had been threatened.

Meanwhile Sibu and Mayo Oraon continued to be in the jail. The Bhagats were demanding their release, but the district authorities were reluctant for fear of the unrest spreading.

The government was also reluctant to withdraw the Gurkha force from Ranchi in view of the Tana Bhagat movement in the district. The convicted leaders of the movement were also shifted from the Ranchi jail.

While trying to stamp out this movement the authorities tried to convince the Bhagats that their leaders were not Bhagwan. Unless it was done, they feared, an armed revolt might take place. They also suspected the hand of some influential people behind the movement.

By 1920 the Tana Bhagat Movement became a part of the Indian National movement. The Bhagats were influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his Non-Co-operation Movement. They joined as satyagrahis and court arrested. They wore Khadi cloth and the Gandhi cap and furled the tri-colour flag of the Indian National Congress in front of their houses.

In 1921-22 the Tana Bhagat Movement as well as the Unnati Samaj Movement showed an antagonistic attitude to the landlords and the government. They attempted to organise by means of the panchayats a powerful body of opinion to force the government to introduce certain
agrarian reforms. Meetings were organised at which resolutions with respect to the charkha, temperance, independent schools and the power of the panchayat to deal with petty cases, were passed.

In 1922 a Tana Bhagat panchayat fined a ryot and the police of Sisai intervened. The same year many Tana Bhagats attended the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress. They court arrested in large numbers and remained at the forefront of the national movement in the Ranchi district. Bare-footed they used to walk long distances with the Congress flag in their hands to carry its message to the masses even in the inaccessible areas. They also attended the meetings organised by the non-co-operators.

In 1929 the government on the recommendation of the Chota Nagpur Commissioner rejected the memorial of the landlords' association of Ranchi, asking for a general rent settlement. This was partly the result of the Tana Bhagat Movement, campaigning against rent payment.

During the Quit India Movement (1942) the Tana Bhagats assembled at the Mander Hat and Chamar Bhagat and Goa Bhagat asked the people to push on the movement and the government servants to resign. These leaders and some others who were distributing leaflets were arrested by the police.

On 24 August four Tana Bhagats attacked the post office at Burmu and took away the dak (mails) by force. On 28 August some Tana Bhagats tried to capture the Burmu police station, but they were arrested. A few days later in a meeting at Tuko Hat in the Bero Police station the Tana Bhagats advocated the non-payment of taxes, but they were arrested. Later on 26 September many Tana Bhagats assembled at Daragaon Hat in the Chainpur police station to remove the government employees from their offices, but two of the leaders were arrested and the houses of many were searched. Still later many Tana Bhagats tried to attack the Dumarpat Dak Bungalow but they were dispersed by the police and some arrested. Even the procession of Tana Bhagats at Bero was dispersed by the policy. In the middle of November some Tana Bhagats were arrested. Already in August-September many Tana Bhagats had been arrested at village Tippu under the Latehar police station in Palamau.

Thus the Tana Bhagat movement which initially aimed at social and religious changes, turned out to be a political movement aimed at ending the British raj.

The Hari Baba Movement, 1931-32

This movement, like the Tana Bhagat Movement, became a part of the Indian National Movement. It affected the northern parts of Singhbhum and the whole of the Ranchi district.

The leader of the movement, Dukha Ho (Hari Baba) like Birsa and
the Tana Bhagats, described the worship of the bongas. His followers
cut down the trees where the bongas were supposed to live. Like the
Birsaitis and the Tana Bhagats, they had their prayers on Thursdays.
But their deity was Hanuman (the monkey-faced Hindu God). Again,
like the Tana Bhagats, they gave up meat and drinks. They wore the
sacred thread, bathed twice a day, worshipped the Tulsi (basil) plant in
their courtyard as Hindus do. Fasting, recitation of mantras and
shaking of body and head led to the trance.

The movement had a strong political undercurrent. By uniting the
tribals it aimed at ending all oppressors. Hari Baba claimed to be a
disciple of Mahatma Gandhi.

In July 1931 Dukha Ho visited the Congress headquarters at
Chakradharpur. He also established contact with Tarachand of Dhalbhum
who later started collaborating with him.

Even after Hari Baba was arrested, his followers believed that he
had only gone out to fight the British. They looked forward to the day
when the ‘Gandhi raj’ would come and they would celebrate it with
dances and feasts.

When any village wanted to join the new cult its inhabitants had to
leave their home and dwell in the sarna (sacred grove) and eat only one
meal. At the end of a week the Munda and Pahan (the headman and
the village priest) went to the shrine with offerings. Hari Baba accepted
them and explained that he was the Singh bonga and only he should be
worshipped.

Unlike the Birsaitis (of the Munda tribe) and the Tana Bhagats (of
the Oraon tribe) movements the Hari Baba movement (of the Ho tribe)
tried to revitalise the tribal society and to end the alien rule. But the last
one did not survive long.

Conclusion

The study of the tribal movements in Chota Nagpur from the advent
of the British to the Quit India Movement (1942) shows that in the early
stage the risings were sporadic, but the Tamar and Palamau risings of
1819-20, the Kol rising (1831-32), the Bhumij Revolt (1832-33), the
Sardari Larai (1858-90), the Birsa rising (1898-1901), and the Tana
Bhagat Movement (1914-42) were more widespread and effective. During
the Revolt of 1857 the Charos and the Kherwars of Palamau and the
Hos of Singhbhum and Kolhan played a significant role.

The earlier movements were violent with limited aims. They were
concerned with the immediate problems only. But the anti-British
dimension was quite pronounced even in these revolts. The Sardari
Larai and the Tana Bhagat Movement were by and large peaceful and
constitutional. At least two revolts, one of 1832 and the other of 1895
had charismatic leaders to guide the protesters.
The aim of every phase of the movement was rather modest: To recreate the old scenario where there would be no exploitation by the dikkus. Since these primitive rebels could not cope with the new pressures of the colonial system, they later wanted to revitalise their society and often rose to remove the encroachments on their system.

It is significant to note that the Tana Bhagats and the followers of Hari Baba closely associated themselves with the mainstream of the Indian National Movement, even though they were not familiar with the concept of nationalism or the nuances of the struggle under Gandhi.

A study of these millenarian movements may help us in understanding the nature, the sentiments and the aspirations of the tribesmen for our future guidance. It is wrong to wait till the tribesmen have to protest violently to get their grievances redressed. They are simple and need murapathy.
INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

Background
The Indian National Army (hereinafter referred to as IN
essentially the creation of Indian Army personnel posted in M.R.
when the Japanese attacked the Allied Forces in the Far East on
December 8, 1941. It would be appropriate, therefore, to mention some
aspects of this army as it existed then. It may surprise the present and
future generations to know that up to the First Great War of 1914-18,
even the Indians with the best of talents and hailing from the best of
families, could only rise to the ranks of Subedars and Subedar Majors.
And after a life-time of service, they were still juniors to the British.
Second Lieutenants had to salute these youngsters of 19 to 20 years of age.
It was only during this war that some Subedars and Subedar Majors were
given the ranks of Captains and Majors. And it was not till 1920
that Indians started getting Kings Commissions on regular basis. The
first lot to get these commissions was from the Indore College Cadets,
after that included K.M. Cariappa, who later became the first Indian
Army Chief. There, these commissions were given after training
at Royal Military College Sandhurst, England. And even then only a
dozen Indians were given these commissions per year, compared to
dozens of Britishers. Worse still, these Indian officers were posted to
specified units, six Infantry and two Cavalry. No Britishers were
posted to these units thereafter. And Britishers did not have to serve
under Indians directly. And entry into the officer grades of the technical
arms, as engineers, was not opened to Indians till the late twenties
again after training in England. Indians' entry into the Indian Air
Force and Indian Navy came later still. Our own Military Academy at
Dehra Dun did not start producing officers till mid-thirties. Thus at the
state of second Great War in 1939, the highest rank any Indian held was
that of a Major, not counting the Indian Medical Service and the honorary
ranks given to Princes and some others as a decoration. And the first
Indian Commissioned Officer from Dehra Dun Military Academy (ICO-I),
Bhagwati Singh, a very fine officer in my company, was only a Lieutenant,
when this war started. This was the officer situation in the Indian Army in 1939. And the British were careful in selecting Indian officers from institutions that they could count upon most. The British, of course, were counting upon the Indian Army personnel to keep and prolong their rule over India, though they had a number of British units posted all over the country, an indirect acceptance that foreign rule can always be in danger. Hence the British did not want to Indianize the Officer category of the Indian Army for as long as possible, though in the civil services Indians had reached the higher positions much earlier. Nevertheless, as history had shown earlier all over the world, love of one’s motherland overwhels other considerations at critical stages, as the formation of the INA in Malaya in 1942 was to prove again.

Malayan Scene, 1938-41

The first Indian troops to Malaya reached Singapore in August 1939, as a part of Force Emu. The arrival of Indian Officers with equal status to the British caused a sensation amongst the Indian community there, even though the seniormost amongst us were only Captains, as S.M. Shrinagesh, and K.S. Thimayya, both of whom later become Army Chiefs. The Indians in Malaya till then had been considered inferior to the British in all spheres. And the story goes that there was a notice at the entrance of the Kuala Lumpur Club, ‘Indians and Dogs not allowed’. This situation was to change almost overnight. And later with the formation of the Indian Independence League (hereinafter referred to as IIL) and INA, members of the Indian community were to come into their own, enjoying due respect and status, specially in the areas formally controlled by the British and the Dutch.

Up to 1940 the British plans in this area catered only for the defence of Singapore from sea attack. Increasing Japanese military activities forced the British to plan for the defence of Malayan mainland as well. Result, 11 “Indian Division, under the command of Major General Mursay Lyon, arrived in Malaya in October 1940, and set up its headquarters at Kuala Lumpur. I was on the staff of this formation with the rank of a Major. A few months later, it moved forward to Nee Soon, south of Alor Star and was replaced by 9th Indian Division commanded by Major General Barstow. The headquarters of the Indian Corps, commanded by Lt.-General Riggy Heath was also at Kuala Lumpur. The overall army commander, Lt.-Gen. Percival, and the overall Commander of all forces in Malaya, Air Chief Marshal Brooke Popham, both had their headquarters at Singapore.

The Malayan Battle: 8-12-41 to 15-2-42

The British had planned to delay the enemy from reaching Singapore for at least six months by which time they hoped to get
sufficient reinforcements to resume the offensive. However, these arrangements came too late and proved inadequate. Though an Air Chief Marshal was the overall Commander, there was no air force worth the name. Furthermore, a plan had been formed to enter South Thailand in order to fight the Japanese when they were the weakest by landing by sea around Singapore. This plan was abandoned at the last moment. And to add insult to injury, the prepared favourable position, North of Slor Star, known as the Jitra Line, was given up at the last moment in the hope that the Japanese could be delayed further north. The sack of Brigadier Lay and Major General Murray Lyon for this fault could make no difference. And on the very first day of the battle, 1 December 1941, Japanese succeeded in destroying the so-called famous battleships, The Prince of Wales and The Repulse, thereby gaining sea supremacy, having already got a superiority. Resul them factors was a one-sided battle from the very first day. Arrival of an Australian Division under the command of Major General Gorden Bannet in January could make no difference now. And by February 2, 1942 with the fall of Singapore all was over. It this rather shameful defeat that created the circumstances for the formation of the INA and the IIL. And the Indians in that area, both the prisoners of war and the civilians, should be given credit, whatever the drawbacks, for seizing this opportunity in the cause of their motherland. They suffered very heavily, with defeats in the battlefields, for reason beyond their control. But their sacrifices were not in vain. They gained psychological victory that really counted, thereby making history, as will be seen by the story that follows.

Farrer Park Gathering 16/17-2-1942

The British surrendered at Singapore on 15, February 1942. All Indian troops were ordered to gather at Farrer Park the next day. Though physical conditions concerning food, water, sanitation, hygiene, etc. were very bad following total disorganization, it was like a Mela gathering, all of us welcoming each other, finding who is alive and who was not. Shortly after my arrival at this Park, I was called over the microphone to come to the main pavilion. On reaching there, I found Major Iwachi FIIjiiwara and his group, the Japanese Liaison group to our movement as well as Mohan Singh and his colleagues. Later I had to translate the speech of Colonel Hung, who had come there on behalf of the British High Command to hand over the Indian Prisoners of War to join him in organizing a National Force to help in the fight for the independence of our motherland, adding that Japanese had promised all help to us in this effort. This was the first time most of the prisoners of war, including myself, learnt that something unusual had happened during the actual fighting. But on that day our first priority
was to settle the prisoners of war in proper accommodation, to ensure against the spread of disease and to arrange for proper food and water. As the seniormost combatant officer, I was entrusted with this task. This was fortunately completed after a few days, thanks specially to our medical personnel.

A few days later, Mohan Singh met me and told me his story. Shortly after the war started, he was cut off. While wandering in the jungles, with some colleagues including Mohd. Akram and organizing retreat, he was pleasantly surprised to see some Sikhs coming along with the Japanese force, headed by Giani Pritam Singh, hailing from Sarpkalan of Amritsar District. He was informed by the Giani that Japanese would welcome if he and others took up the cause of their motherland. And they would render all assistance to them. Japanese Special Team for this purpose headed by Major Fujiwara was there for the same purpose. It stands to C-~ Mohan Singh’s credit that he seized the opportunity without hesitation. Thereafter his plan was simple. A number of soldiers who were cut off along with him would return to their units, with Japanese help, and at the next battle, this was easy, too. This plan had started by the end of December 1941. And by the time Singapore fell, Mohan Singh was clearly the leader of this group. And when he met me, he was sporting enough to offer me the lead in this movement, as I was the seniormost officer there. However, my reactions were mixed. On the one hand was my long attachment with the British, on the other, it was not possible to stifle thoughts for my motherland. And the way Colonel Hunt had handed us over to the Japanese had also adversely affected me. Without any hesitation the British had agreed to the Japanese demand that Indian Officers be separated from others and handed over as if we were mere scapegoats to be thrown away when no longer required. So after thinking over the matter, I thanked Mohan Singh for his offer and told him that he was the right person to lead the movement and I would be happy to help him as long as we made sure that Japanese do not make us mere tools. And to this effect we signed an agreement at a local Gurdwara at Singapore.

Tokyo Conference, March-April 1942

After extended consultations in the early days of March amongst ourselves, that is between the top army officers and civilians in Malaya and Thailand, and between us and the Japanese, it was decided to send a select team to Tokyo for consultations with the Japanese High Command and as well with the well-known revolutionaries residing there, namely Raja Mahendra Partap and Rash Behari Bose. The main team from Malaya consisted of Mohan Singh, Myself and Mohd. Akram Khan from the army side and K.P.K. Menon, N. Raghavan, S.C. Gopi and N.K. Ayer all leading lawyers, and, of course, Giani Pritam Singh from
the civil side.

At Bangkok we were joined by Swami Satyanand Puri, a very able person, in charge of the local India Culture Centre. Along with the Japanese team, we flew to Tokyo in two planes in mid-March. Here I must record with the deepest regret that on arrival at Tokyo we were informed that the other plane had crashed killing all. Among them were Giani Pritam Singh, Swami Satyanand Puri, Capt. Mohd. Akram Khan and N.K. Ayer. They are hardly known or remembered now. But history should record that they were the first martyrs of our movement in the East. We honoured them at a special ceremony at a local temple, where their ashes were enshrined. We were also upset to learn that Raja Mahendra Partap had been replaced by Rash Behari Bose as President of IIL. Against the Japanese wishes we went to see him. And were pained to learn that because of his independent views about his motherland's independence, he had not only been removed from the Presidentship of the IIL but also put under house arrest. Rash Behari Bose, quite old now, locally married and with a son in the Japanese Army was more acceptable to the Japanese. Even Anand Mohan Sahay, the Indian National Congress representative in Japan and Secretary of the IIL, was not allowed to meet us freely. Our meeting with General Tojo, the Japanese Premier, was more or less an audience. We were taken into his office, lectured to and brought out. The main theme of his talk was for our country. All these incidents did not exactly cheer us up. But at that stage in our enthusiasm, we took these happenings in our stride and went ahead with our plans. Apart from our main delegation from Malaya, others present at the discussions were Khan and Malik from Hongkong, Usman, actually Hari Singh of Ludhiana who had fled the British, from Indonesia and Naik from Marchuria. Somehow or the other, these persons did not play any significant part in the movement thereafter. The main decisions at the Tokyo Conference, presided over by Rash Behari Bose were (i) to strengthen the newly formed IIL throughout East Asia; (ii) to raise the INA under IIL auspices based mainly on the Indian Prisoners of war; (iii) to safeguard the interests of the Indian community in the area; and (iv) to hold a conference of Indian delegates from all over the area at Bangkok in June, to ratify these decisions and to strengthen the freedom movement. We returned to Singapore in mid-April and set about making the preliminary arrangements to get going both regarding the INA and IIL and to ensure the success of the Bangkok Conference. The plan for the formation of the INA was also more or less finalised.

The Japanese had by now guessed that I was not their man. And from their point of view they were correct. So after I had done the initial planning of the INA, they persuaded Mohan Singh by various false arguments as arousing his jealousy that I might replace him as I
happened to be much senior to him in the Indian Army, and succeeded in sending me to Bangkok straight away for the so called purpose of making preliminary arrangement for the Bangkok Conference, but, in reality to get me away from the centre of activities at Singapore. So along with two officers, Major M.S. Dhillon and Capt. Hussain, I reached Bangkok in May.

Bangkok Conference, 15—20 June 1942

This conference was held from 15 to 20 June. About 150 delegates from all over the East attended, representing two million members of the Indian community. This conference passed resolutions that will be recorded as fully honourable. Apart from the formalization of the decisions of the Tokyo Conference and envisaging further strengthening of IIL and INA, these catered for:

1. That complete independence of India, free from any foreign control, domination, interference of whatsoever nature, shall be the object of this movement.

2. That as the Indian National Congress is the only political organization, which can claim to represent the real interests of India, this conference is of the opinion that the programme and plan of action of this movement be so guided, controlled and directed as to bring them into line with the aims and intentions of the Indian National Congress.

3. All prisoners of war and all members of the Indian community, numbering nearly two millions, along with their properties will be placed under the direct control of the IIL, to safeguard their interests and security and to strengthen the movement.

4. That Subhash Chandra Bose be invited and brought over from Europe to give real strength and inspiration to the movement.

5. That while we are highly grateful to the Japanese for their assistance, without which we can hardly expect to succeed, the Japanese should forthwith declare their acceptance of these resolutions so that we could go ahead with confidence knowing that our actions and motives will be appreciated and approved both in India and outside.

To carry out the objectives of the Tokyo and Bangkok Conferences, the following Council of Action was formed:

- Rash Behari Bose, President
- Major-General Mohan Singh, Head of the INA and Incharge of Defence Affairs
- Lt.-Col. A.Q. Gilani, Military Training
July-November 1942

Although I had been designated the Chief Adviser of the INA and its number two with the rank of a full Colonel, all others then holding lesser ranks, the Japanese again succeeded in keeping me out of the Council of Action. The organization of the INA now went further ahead. About half of the Indian prisoners of war, totalling at least 45,000 were already to join INA. Admittedly, their motives varied. Some came to escape hardships, others to keep company with their colleagues who had joined and some in the hope that they will be able to escape to India later. These motives were but natural, all of them being ordinary human beings. But gradually the spirit caught up and love of motherland became the motive for most of them. It was hoped to eventually raise three divisions of 15,000 troops each. The first division had already started going ahead. And by September 1942, it was ready. It had three Brigades, overall Commander being General Mohan Singh.

1. Gandhi Brigade commanded by Lt.-Col. M.J. Kiani
2. Nehru Brigade commanded by Lt.-Col. Aziz Ahmed Khan

There were a number of supporting groups commanded by various officers, some of whom as Lt.-Col. J.K. Bhonsle and Lt.-Col. Shah Nawaz Khan, later became well known. It may be noted that the brigades were named after our national leaders in pursuance of our objectives. The Junior Commissioned Officer rank was abolished. Only one rank was to exist among the officers. Hindi words of command were introduced. There were common kitchens. One of the main features of the INA was total secularism. No one thought in terms of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Hence the partition of India on religious lines came as a great shock to the INA personnel.

Our major aim was to start action as early as possible, to go to Burma in 1942 and to start military action in 1943, so that we can enter Indian territory as early as possible, hoist the National Flag on its soil and proclaim the independence of India giving a fresh cause to the people of India and even within the Indian army ranks itself, wherein we all had friends and relatives, for all to redouble their efforts to throw away the foreign yoke. And this was very much possible in 1943 when the British forces in East India were hardly prepared. But this simply could not be done without a major Japanese offensive on the Burma front. And this most unfortunately, the Japanese refused to undertake at this stage.
Meanwhile, the Japanese again managed to send me to Rangoon, well away from the centre of activities, Singapore, even though, I was supposed to be a number two in the INA and the organization’s Chief Adviser. I was accompanied by Major M.S. Dhillon and Capts. Tehl Singh and R.S. Grewal. On arrival there, instead of being asked to organize the forward headquarters of the INA, I was shocked to find that the task given to me was to organize sending of small sabotage and propaganda groups into India. Worst still, a number of other groups of Indians with similar work, were also being organized all under direct Japanese control, none being allowed to meet each other. The only difference perhaps was that we had better living facilities. We were badly caught. But nothing could be done. And no contacts were allowed with Singapore. The only change during these four months was the arrival of K. Palta and party after an adventurous journey from India to join our movement. He later wrote a book about it. Then at last came the call to return to Singapore which I had been expecting for long.

Later, Mahabir managed to escape to India. Tehl Singh and Grewal, fine officers, played their due part in the later phase of the INA.

Situation at Singapore, November 1942

I arrived back at Singapore in early November. And after meeting General Mohan Singh and other members of the Council of Action, I found the situation much worse than I had expected. Even Mohan Singh, who had earlier gone along with the Japanese plans, rightly so because we could hardly achieve anything without their assistance, was now deeply upset. So was K.P.K. Menon. Only Rash Behari Bose thought there was nothing to worry and we should go ahead in accordance with the Japanese plans. In spite of repeated and persistent reminders to the Japanese, they had not officially accepted the Bangkok resolutions nor taken any action on them, there was no response. They wanted to treat these as secret, under the carpet so as to say, to be used if need be to their own purposes if and when necessary. Leave alone declaring India Independence, even the existence of the IIL and INA was not officially recognized. In fact, we were denied contacts with some of our soldiers. Japanese had taken away for the defence of Singapore. And leave alone putting the Indians and their properties under the IIL, many were being ill treated, for not complying with the Japanese wishes and their properties taken over. We could only guess the reasons for this unfortunate Japanese attitude. Some thought that the Japanese first priority had been to over-run Australia and to exploit this continent’s vast resources and empty spaces. Easy victory in Malaya and Burma and stiffer resistance then expected in their advance towards Australia made them change their plans, causing some indecisions. And there was a clear possibility
that, should an opportunity arise, the Japanese would like to make up with the Allies, who, in return, would recognize the Far East as the Japanese sphere of influence. So, why antagonize the British by declaring in favour of India's independence, and pushing into India. They would also have liked a situation to arise wherein cooperation with the Allies they could fight and defeat the communists, i.e. Russia, further safeguarding their interests in the East. And their alliance with the Axis powers seemed to be one of convenience not of convictions or principles. And the Japanese had taken no interest in one of our major demands, namely bringing over of Netaji from Europe to the East to give inspiration and international importance of our movement. Perhaps they thought that whereas unknown persons could be exploited, that might not be possible with Subhash Chandra Bose. Our repeated requests for the public acceptance of the Bangkok resolutions and thereafter earliest movement to Burma were repeatedly rejected, some time insulting so. Little did the Japanese seem to realize that this delay in taking up the offensive on the Burma front would prove fatal to their own planes. Here is what Major Fujiwara (now Lt. Gen. retired) says on the page XVII of his introduction to Mohan Singh’s Book, “A Soldier’s Contribution to Indian Independence”, “The disastrous results were mainly caused by a number of miscalculations and erroneous strategies on the part of the Japanese Army, the biggest of all was the loss of the golden opportunity to commence operations in Burma between autumn of 1942 and autumn of 1943, when one could take full advantage of India’s incomplete defence structure and political commotion, owing to the vacillations and indecisions of the Japanese General Headquarters, the die was not cast for the zero hour until the last. It was too late then.”

Up to this date, I cannot understand why Japanese recalled me from Rangoon at this critical juncture. I, who was supposed to be the most anti-Japanese amongst the movement leaders. On first December 1942, I was called to meet Colonel Iwa Kuru, the head of the Japanese group dealing with our movement. He both tempted me with the top positions within the movement and as well when we get to India. And threatened me with dire consequences, if I did not cooperate. I replied that I agree with my colleagues, that the Japanese should agree to our demands before we proceed further.

At 3.30 A.M. on 8 December 1942, the first anniversary of the Japanese victorious attack in the East came a knock at my door. On opening it, I found an armed group of Japanese. The leader asked me to get ready to accompany them. And even when I went to the bathroom two of them accompanied me. In the commotion that followed Mohan Singh, sleeping next door, woke up and insisted on accompanying me. They agreed, subject to the condition that we speak only in English
and one Japanese sits in between us. In no time we were driven to what turned out to be the headquarters of the Japanese secret police known as Kempla, as Gestappo in Germany, parted and I put into an underground cell of 8 x 12 feet. That I did not see sunlight thereafter till November 1943, was kept in solitary confinement throughout till August 1945, first in this cell till April 1944 and then in the Pearl Hill Jail also at Singapore with a number of beatings, with no books or recreation and with starvation food throughout, followed by arrest by the British in September 1945, brought over to India in October, and confined in the Red Fort, Delhi, categorized "Black", dismissed from service and released in April 1946, escaping worse punishment even death, along with many other colleagues, thanks to the rescue that came to us from the Indian leaders and the people as a result of the Red Fort INA trials is another story.

My arrest if anything added to the determination of the leaders of the movement to stand firm and be ready for any personal one suffering that such a stand may involve. The credit for this honourable stand specially goes to General Mohan Singh and K.P.K. Menon. Rash Behari Bose had no choice but to reconstitute the new Council of Action but that really meant nothing. The biggest blow to the Japanese came when on 21 December 1942, General Mohan Singh announced the dissolution of the INA. Mohan Singh himself was arrested on 29 December 1942. The movement came to a standstill. Thus ended the first phase of the INA and IIL. It was destiny again, I repeat, that enabled us all to pay an honourable role in the face of the mighty Japanese, who had recently vanquished the mighty Anglo-Americans. It is destiny again that some of us are alive to tell the tale, for the Japanese could easily have thrown us into the sea, none being the worse for the disappearance of a few then unknown personalities.

Both K.P.K Menon and N. Raghavan came to India after the war, the former after heavy sufferings at the hands of the Japanese. Menon became the editor of the Mathrubhumi and came to be known as the grand-old-man of Kerala, Raghavan, after a distinguished service as Ambassador of India to a number of countries settled at Madras. Bhai Singh, known as Malayan Gandhi, heading the IIT in Malaya also returned to India to his village Batala, district Amritsar. Alas! none of them are with us now. Mohan Singh, after work in the service of the Indian National Congress and a term in the Rajya Sabha, has settled on his beautiful farm at Jugsana, district Ludhiana. Here I pay my tribute to them and all the other INA and IIL colleagues with whom I had the pleasure of working in this movement for the cause of our motherland.

First Phase vis-a-vis the Second Phase

Before I go on to the second phase and complete the story of this movement, I have to state that the two phases were actually complement-
ary to each other. Without the first, the second may not have been possible. And without the second under the inspiring leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the first may not have achieved very much. So in reality the two phases are part of the same story. So I now go on to record the second phase of this movement for India's Independence in the East, its first uncertain part lasting from dissolution of the INA on December 21, 1942 till the arrival of the Netaji in Singapore on July 2, 1943, then the most important part under his leadership from July 2, 1943 to the end of the war in that area on August 15, 1945, then Netaji's unfortunate death in a plane crash on August 18, 1945, then the Red Fort trials November, December 1946, and the final historic impact the whole movement had on the achievement of Indian Independence, thereby fully entitling it to be an honourable allied movement to the Indian National Congress.

INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY—SECOND PHASE

Intervening Period—December 1942 to July 1943

On December 8, 1942, I was arrested and imprisoned in a Japanese Secret Service, Kemptal Cell. The same day, General Mohan Singh called a meeting of Council of Action. And as a protest against my arrest, all members of the Council of Action, except Rash Behari Bose, resigned. The next day Mohan Singh called a meeting of the Senior Army Officers of the INA, who unanimously supported this stand. Finding no change in the Japanese attitude, on December 21, 1942, Mohan Singh issued an order dissolving the INA. Finally with his arrest on December 29, 1942, the first phase of the INA and IIL came to a standstill.

The Japanese, with the help of Rash Behari Bose and some others, did their best to keep the movement going. They used both threats and temptations. About 4,000 of INA personnel, who appeared very firm not to cooperate with the Japanese any more, were sent to labour camps in New Guinea, where many of them perished. Promotions to senior ranks were offered to many others. In spite of all efforts, Japanese could not succeed to keep the movement going ahead though they prevented if from collapsing; INA with a much reduced strength. In the conditions and the circumstances prevailing, many, agreed to play safe and to await developments.

The Japanese now realized more than ever that if the movement was to move forward again, the presence of Subhas Chandra Bose was absolutely essential. Subhas had escaped from Calcutta in mid-January 1941 and after an adventurous journey via Peshawar, Kabul, Samarkand and Moscow reached Berlin by the end of March. Immediately thereafter, he started a movement in Europe in the cause of Indian
dependence. An Indian Centre and an Indian Legion were formed. He had been welcomed by the Axis Powers but like all dictatorial regimes, he was asked to play a secondary role, which he could hardly tolerate. (The story of his efforts in Europe in brief is given in Appendix ‘A’). By now i.e. by early 1943, with the allied successes at Stalingrad and at El Armenien North Africa, the tide of war had turned against the Axis Powers. And so scope for any progress of this movement in support of India’s Independence in Europe had lessened considerably. But the situation in the East with Japanese forces on the Indian frontiers was highly favourable for Netaji to appear on the scene. Thus Netaji accompanied by Abid Hussain, left Germany in the first week of February 1943 and after a risky journey first in German then in Japanese submarines travelling around the Cape of Good Hope, arrived at Saban Island on the northern trip of Sumatra on May 6, 1943. He made this journey under the name of Matsuda. After some rest, he flew from Saban via Penang, Saigon, Manila and Taipei, arriving at Tokyo on May 16, though the official announcement of his arrival in the East was not made till June 18, 1943. Meanwhile, he had prolonged talks with the Japanese Prime Minister and other Japanese leaders. Rash Behari Bose also arrived at Tokyo and offered Netaji the Presidentship of the IIL. After the announcement of his arrival, the Indians in the Far East, numbering nearly two millions, were thrilled. And the INA and the IIL became alive again. Netaji’s speeches, broadcasts and personality greatly impressed the Japanese as well. The stage was now set to get the INA, the IIL and the whole movement going ahead with greater vigour than ever.

Netaji arrived at Singapore on July 2, 1943. He was given a tremendous welcome. Two days later, he officially took charge of the movement at the Cathay Cinema Hall. Representatives of the IIL and of the INA were present. A message from General Tojo was read, followed by a welcome from Rash Behari Bose, who gave the details of the movement that had taken place so far. The president of the Malayan IIL, J.A. Thivy, welcomed him on behalf of the civilians. And Lt.-Col. J.K. Bonsle, new chief of the Military Bureau, did so on behalf of the INA. On July 5, Netaji took the salute of the INA and addressed the soldiers in the following words:

“Today is the proudest day of my life. Today it pleased the Providence to give me the unique privilege and honour of announcing to the whole world that India’s Army of Liberation has come into being. This Army has been drawn up in military formation on the battle field of Singapore, once the bulwark of the British Empire. This is not only the Army that will emancipate India from the British yoke; it is also the Army that will hereafter create the feature of National Army of India” . . .

‘Comrades let your battle cry be ‘To Delhi, To Delhi’. How many of
us will individually survive in this war of freedom, I do not know. But I do know this that we shall ultimately win, and our task will not end until our surviving heroes hold the victory parade on the graveyard of the British Empire, at the Lal Quilla, the Red Fort of ancient Delhi”.

Next day, he reviewed the parade of INA along with Premier Tojo, both addressing the soldiers.

Supreme Commander INA

After a visit to Rangoon to meet Dr. Ba Maw, who was going to be the Head of Independent of Burma, for mutual consultation and cooperation in the future, he set down to the task of reorganisation and strengthening of the IIL and INA in according with his views and plans. And on August 26, 1943, he became the Supreme Commander of the INA renaming it Azad Hind Fauj. He issued the following order of the day:

“... I regard myself as the servant of 38 crores of my countrymen who profess different religious faiths. I am determined to discharge my duties in such a manner that the interests of these 38 crores may be safe in my hands and every single Indian will have reason to put complete faith in me. It is only on the basis of undiluted nationalism and of perfect justice and impartiality that Indian Army of Liberation can be built up”. ... “when we stand, the Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a wall of granite. when we march, the Azad Hind Fauj has to be like a steam roller”.

“With the slogan ‘Onward to Delhi’ on your lips, let us continue to fight till National Flag flies over the Viceroy’s House in New Delhi and the Azad Hind Fauj holds the Victory parade in side the ancient Red Fort of the Indian metropolis.” Then he visited various centres in Malaya, Penang and Bangkok to spread his message.

Formation of Provisional Government of Free India

On October 21, 1943, Netaji announced the formation of the Provisional Government of free India “Arzi Hakumate Azad Hind” and took the following oath:

“In the name of God, I take the sacred oath that to liberate India and 38 crores of my countrymen, I, Subahs Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life. I shall always remain servant of India and look after the welfare of 38 crores of Indian brothers and sisters. This shall be for me, my highest duty. Even after winning freedom, I will always be prepared to shed the last drop of my blood for the preservation of Indian Freedom.”

Each member of Cabinet then took the following oath:
"In the name of God, I take this only oath that to liberate India and 38 crores of my countrymen, I will be absolutely faithful to our leader, Subhas Chandra Bose and shall always be prepared to sacrifice my life and all I have for the cause."

The members of Netaji's cabinet were as follows:


Rani of Jahansi Regiment

To gather the support of the Indian women, a ladies' training camp was started soon after. The regiment, Rani of Jhansi Regiment, was to be about 500 strong, under the command of Captain Laxmi Swaminathan, later Lt.-Col., a remarkable personality. She later married Lt.-Col. P.K. Sehgal, one of the heroes of the Red Fort INA trials.

Greater East Asia Prosperity Sphere Conference

In early November 1943, Netaji flew to Tokyo to attend the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Conference. He was accompanied by J.K. Bhonsle (now Major General and Chief of Staff, INA) S.A. Ayer (Minister Incharge of Publicity and Propaganda), Lt.-Col. D.S. Raju (Personal Physician) and A.M. Sahay (who had earlier been the Indian National Congress representative in Japan) and Abid Hussain (who had accompanied Netaji from Germany). It was during this gathering, the Japanese announced that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands would be handed over to the Provisional Government of Free India. He returned to Singapore in early December via Nanking, Shanghai and Manila. At Nanking, he broadcast an appeal to the Chungking Government of Marshal Chang-Kai-Shek for cooperation and change of attitude in the interests of Asians, that was not to be. He then visited Java, Sumatra, Suralaya and Borneo in pursuance of his objectives. In the last week of December, he visited Andaman and Nicobar Islands renaming them Shahid and Swraj, appointing Maj.-General Loganathan as the Chief Commissioner of these Islands, though in practice he remained powerless, thanks to the Japanese.

Move Forward

Netaji had now taken over the IIL and INA, formed the Provisio-
nal Government of Free India and had visited all important countries in the East to explain his motive and plans. He had certainly captured the imagination of the entire Indian community, numbering two millions.

Hopes and expectations were very high. The time for action had come. So, in January 1944, the Headquarters of the Provisional Government of Free India moved to Rangoon. The position of the INA at that stage was as follows:

Subhas Brigade with a strength of about 3,000 soldiers under the Command of Lt.-Col. Shah Nawaz Khan (later Maj.-Gen.) that had been formed of selected persons of the First Division had already arrived in Burma to be the foremost of the INA group to take part at the front. The First Division of about 10,000 troops was ready to move to Burma. It was commanded by Lt.-Col. (later Major General) M.Z. Kiani. Its three Brigades were commanded by Lt.-Cols. I.J. Kiani, Gulzara Singh and Aziz Ahmed. The Second INA Division, under the command of Lt.-Col. N.S. Bhagat, was formed in December 1943, consisting mostly of civilian recruits.

The Third Division also mostly civilians recruits, was in the process of being formed at Singapore. Major General J.K. Bhonsle was the overall Chief of Staff. It must be added here that civilians in the INA, though hastily trained, played a magnificent role in the forward campaigns and at the various bases in the whole of Far East by sacrificing their properties and lives as well.

The First Division started arriving in Burma in January 1944 and the Second in March the same year, the Third remaining at Singapore till the end of the War. While the spirit of the INA soldiers was high, they all remained badly equipped, thanks to the Japanese designs. Here is what Major General Chatterjee says about this aspect in his book "India's Struggle for Freedom", "Notwithstanding every endeavour, our forces, when they reached Burma, had no artillery of their own, nor, any mortars. The machineguns were only of medium size and deficient of belts and spare parts for them were not available. Our Guerilla Regiment had no wireless equipment or telephones. Transport, pack and mechanical, for carrying extra arms and ammunition across the country or over the hills were not available. Medical supplies were short, particularly surgical appliances. Many of the men had to march barefooted because of shortage of boots in Malaya and, therefore, their feet had suffered."

Imphal and Kohima Campaigns

The main Japanese offensive in Burma started in February 1944. About 1,00,000 well-trained, well-equipped and well-organised Japanese troops took part in these campaigns. Whereas only about 7,000 of INA
troops were allowed to take part and they were all ill equipped. Thus these troops could only play a very secondary role. They were unfortunately not allowed to play this role properly either. Before proceeding to the front, Shah Nawaz Khan made every effort to arm, equip and clothe his regiment but without success. This is what Shah Nawaz Khan says about this at this stage. "The Japanese were not giving all the assistance which they could and should have given. They made all sorts of vague promises that the INA would be supplied with every thing when it reached the front lines but this, of course, was never done."

It has to be once more emphasised that the Japanese had lost vital time for their offensive in Burma and India, that is from the end of 1942 till nearly end of 1943. Why this happened will always be debated and argued about. Hence the campaign that started with the Japanese in February 1944, was doomed from the very inception, as the Anglo-Americans had by now not only fully prepared for defence but were ready to launch their own offensive as well. Thus along with the Japanese, INA had to face defeats within a few months of the offensive. And the Japanese were forced to start their retreat by May 1944. Here is what Shah Nawaz Khan says about the retreat. It is a longest quotation from his book, My Memories of INA and its Netaji, worthy of being mentioned in this tale of INA history.

"The men made fresh tracks which soon became almost a knee-deep of mud, in which many of our men got stuck and died there. At that time, there was no transport of any type with us. Almost every man was suffering from dysentry and malaria. No one had any strength left in him to help any one else. It was a question of every man for himself and devil take the hindmost. In that retreat, I saw men eating horses, which had been dead four days ago. There were hundreds of dead bodies of Japanese and Indian soldiers lying on both sides of the road."..."some had committed suicide to escape capture by the British". "During this retreat, there were several instances when severe clashes took place between the Japanese and our men and at Kundat and Yuowe, we had regular machinegun battles. When the Haka Garrison was returning to Kelewa, the Japanese captured one of our small detachments of approximately 10 men in the early hours of the morning and bayoneted them as enemy spies, after tying them with the trees, most of them died but a few lived with as many as 10 bayonnet wounds to tell the ghastly story..." "It is difficult to explain why the Japanese acted towards the INA in such a manner. The only explanation that I can think of is that in the earlier stages of the battle they were too sure of themselves and of capturing Imphal. It is quite likely, in fact probable, that they had certain designs on India and they were afraid of allowing the INA to be too powerful and one day turning round and fighting the Japanese in case of their betrayal..."
This is a heart rendering story of what the INA soldiers had to face, soldiers of the Subhas Brigade, soldiers of the First Indian Division and to some extent those of the Second Division as well, the Third Division having remained at Singapore. Initially some Indians territory was captured and our flag hoisted and Maj. General A.C. Chatterjee was even appointed the Chief Administrator of the occupied territories. But this was a short lived dream. Soon the Japanese and along with them the INA troops were on retreat, though it will always go on records that INA soldiers fought as well as they could under the highly adverse circumstances. The rest of the story of these campaigns and the defeat of the Japanese can be told in a few words. The suspension of this campaign was made public by the Japanese on July 26, 1944, when Premier General Tojo resigned and was replaced by General Koiso. It was now only a question of how long the Japanese could hold before their final defeat. Yet, it must be admitted that they bravely carried on for over a year and might have carried on a little longer but for the 'Atom Bomb'.

Meanwhile, brave appearances were kept on. In October 1944, Netaji flew to Tokyo to meet the new Japanese Premier, General Koiso. A Japanese ambassador Hachiya was appointed to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, though he only reached Rangoon in February 1945, when the Government itself was to evacuate Rangoon. During this visit, Netaji was received by Emperor Hirohito. General Tojo presented him with a sword of Honour. Netaji returned to Rangoon in January 1945 to face the deteriorating situation. In Europe, Italy had fallen and Germany was collapsing. The question of Japanese defeat now was only a matter of time.

And soon our brave soldiers started surrendering, Colonel Sehgal was compelled to surrender along with the remnants of his Regiment in the last week of April 1945. A few days later, Shah Nawaz Khan along with Col. Dhillon and the few soldiers left with him, had also to surrender. Towards the end of April 1945, Netaji and his party, consisting of some Ministers, Army Officers, IIL workers, Rani of Jhnsi ladies had to leave Rangoon for Bangkok in a convoy leaving Major General A.D. Loganathan and Col. Arshad with about 5,000 troops all the INA force left now, that had managed to reach Rangoon for surrender to the British. And this surrender took place on May 4, 1945. Netaji and his party reached Bangkok in the second week of May 1945 to find that Germany had surrendered. It was all over. But the spirit still kept going with orders to fight for every yard in Malaya. In early July, Netaji laid the foundation stone of the INA Memorial at Singapore. He still toured Malaya and inspected the troops of the Third Division, also at Singapore, a remarkable personality at his best in the face of certain defeat.
End of the War

Events now moved much faster than expected. On August 6 and 8, Americans dropped the Atom Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 9, Russia declared war on Japan. On August 15, it was officially announced that Japan had surrendered. All was over.

Netaji’s Final Journey

After discussions with his colleagues, Netaji flew from Singapore on August 16 for Bangkok. He was accompanied by Habibul Rehman, Major Pritam Singh and S.A. Ayer. At Bangkok, Col. Gulzara Singh, Maj. Abid Hussain and Deb Nath Das also joined the party. Netaji was hoping if he could go to Russia, he could carry on his struggle for India’s Independence. But that was not to be. This request drew the following response from the Japanese. “Mr. Bose should know it better than to write off Japan and go over to Russia after having received whole-hearted assistance and cooperation from Japan”. In spite of this message, some high Japanese officers were keen to help Netaji to go to Russia. But destiny was to intervene immediately. From Bangkok Netaji and his party flew to Saigon in two planes next day. Apart from his party, the Japanese ambassador to the Provisional Azad Hind Government Hachiyya and General Isodo, the head of Hitkai Kikan, the Japanese liaison group for the Indian movement, were also accompanying Netaji. Soon after arrival at Saigon, Netaji was informed that a special plane was about to leave for Taipeh and then to Darien. He was told that only one seat was available in this plane. With great difficulty the Japanese agreed to another seat for Habibul Rehman. Sadly but regrettfully the other members of Netaji party agreed that he should proceed ahead without delay so as to escape capture by the British. The plane left Saigon on August 17, 1945. That night they all stayed at Toorane (Indo-China). The next day they flew to Taipeh. The party had now heard that Port Arthur had fallen to the Russians and they must make every effort to reach Darien, their destination, before it was also captured, if Netaji was to make an effort to go to Russia. So, after a short rest, the plane took off again. But after a steep ascent and when the plane was hardly a hundred feet above the ground, loud explosion took place and the plane crashed headlong to the ground and caught fire i.e. on August 18, 1945.

Netaji was removed to the local army hospital where he retained consciousness for quite some time. And according to Habibul Rehman, who was himself injured, a few minutes before his end, Netaji spoke to him saying “Habib, I feel, I shall die very soon. I have fought for India’s freedom until the last. Tell my countrymen India will be free before long. Long Live Free India”. Worthy last words of this great person. Then he is reported to have said, ‘I want to sleep’. And shortly afterwards this historic personality went to his final sleep, i.e., August 18,
1945. General Shid and another Japanese died instantly. Netaji and three other Japanese died in the hospital. Six Japanese and Habibul Rehman survived. Such incidents often change the course of history, as this one did, too. Had Netaji survived and returned to India, history of India in the post-independence days would have been certainly affected and for the good of the nation. But again destiny has its own ways, beyond the comprehensions of even the tallest of human beings.

Many do not believe in the crash. But, if Netaji did not die, it is almost impossible to believe that he would remain hidden and inactive. How can this magnificent personality act as such. Finally, as the circumstances did not permit his body being brought back to Singapore, he was cremated at Taipih. Later his ashes were taken to Tokyo and enshrined with honour at REOKOJO temple on September 14, 1945. Though this fact may also remain a matter of speculation in some circles, it is a matter of deepest regret that Netaji left at such a young age of 48 years, when there was so much for him to do.

And to indicate the ever unbroken spirit of this great man, Netaji issued his special order of the day, August 15, 1945, when Japanese had surrendered, and all was over.

"Comrades,

In our struggle for the independence of our Motherland, we have been overwhelmed by an undreamt of crisis. You may perhaps feel that you have failed in your mission to liberate India. But let me tell you that this failure is of only temporary nature. No setback and no defeat can undo your positive achievements of the past. (How true it was to prove later). Many of you have participated in the fight along the Indo-Burma frontier and also inside India and have gone through hardships and sufferings of every sort. Many of your comrades have laid down their lives on the battlefield and have become the immortal heroes of Azad Hind. This glorious sacrifice can never go in vain.

Comrades, in this dark hour, I call upon you to conduct yourselves with the discipline, dignity, and strength befitting truly Revolutionary Army. You have already given proofs of your venture and self-sacrifice on the field of battle. It is now your duty to demonstrate your undying optimism and unshakable will power in the hour of temporary defeat. Knowing you as I do have not the slightest doubt that even in this dire adversity you would hold your heads erect and face the future with unending hope and confidence.

Comrades, I feel that in this critical hour, thirtyeight crores of our countrymen at home are looking at us, the members of India’s Army of Liberation. Therefore, remain true to India and do not for a moment waver in your faith in India’s destiny. The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal. The sacrifice of your immortal Comrades and of yourselves will certainly achieve their fulfilment. There
is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long.” “Jai Hind”.

Some IIL and INA Personalities

Before I go on the INA Red Fort trials and more important to the final chapter explaining the achievements of the INA and the movement of free Indian Independence in the Far East, it will be fair to mention the names of some personalities, who served the movement to the best of their capacity even though it will not be possible to mention thousands who perished in the process. But first, all tribute to them, who will remain unknown and unmentioned. If there is a world hereafter, surely they will get their dues.

Netaji, of course, was a class apart and loomed large over the entire movement. Then there was a special set of leaders in this movement headed by General Mohan Singh from among the soldiers and Raja Mahendra Pratap, Rash Behari Bose, K.P.K. Menon and Bhai Budh Singh among the civilians. Then there was that group of leading soldiers, who in spite of the adverse circumstances fought so well, headed by Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Sehgal and Gurbux Dhillon. Supporting them were many many others as Colonels Bishen Singh, I.S. Mura, Thakur Singh, Ram Singh, Padam Singh and so forth. And how can I forget to mention some whom even now I occasionally meet and hear from them their stories of those hazardous days. Among them are Colonels Gurmit Singh (a former Hockey Olympian) and Tehl Singh and juniors as Captain Hardial Singh Bhullar, Roshan Lal Seth, Fauja Singh, Gurdial Singh, Sohan Singh Bhullar, Joginder Singh, Hira Singh, Harnam Singh and Gurbachan Singh, and Mehnga Singh and Gurmukh Singh of the German INA, representing all others whom I am unable to name. The names of those who became members of the Provisional Azad Hind Government and senior INA Formation Commanders have already been mentioned. Suffice it to say that through these names, a tribute is paid to all who took part in this glorious campaign. And here my memory goes back to March 1942, when of the planes going to Tokyo crashed killing Giani Pritam Singh, Mohd. Akram Khan and N.K. Ayer, the first martyrs of our movement.

Some Comments

The first and most important conclusion of this story of INA is that independence of any nation or for that matter progress of any nation can only be attained by the efforts and sacrifices of its own people and not through any foreign help, except to a limited extent in rare cases. The story of the INA also shows that neither Germany nor Italy, nor Japan were directly interested in India’s interests except to the extent that suited their plans.
Here is what Mohan Singh pro-Japanese in early stages and why not if Japanese help had to be sought says, "It appeared to us that a grand drama of deception was being enacted by the Japanese to exploit our patriotic sentiments and to convert them into willing instruments to carry out their own designs".

Then here is what Fujiwara himself says, "To my dismay it did not take me long to discover that they (the Japanese) hardly knew the feelings and sentiments of the people in this vast region. Indeed, I found them almost indifferent to their aspirations, to their culture, to their tradition".

And Shah Nawaz has said, "In actual fact, as Field Marshal Tarauchi had told Netaji long before in Singapore, the Japanese did not want large formations of the INA to come to the front and now that they were there, the Japanese wished to break their spirit and health by putting impossible obstacles in their way. All that they wanted to do was to break the morale of the INA and tell Netaji that his army could not face the rigours of a hard campaign". These quotations prove well enough that ultimately the destiny of any nation is in the hands of its own people. And this must be remembered always.

Secondly, I would once more like to state that the physical defeat of the INA on the battlefields were entirely due to Japanese plans, which were naturally based on their own interests. But it can only be the work of destiny that the long delay in launching an offensive on the Burma front from December 1942 to early 1944, apart from our defeats, caused their own direct fatal defeat and changed the course of history.

Thirdly, only later generations can perhaps give the real judgement as to why after exploiting the INA episode for its own cause and why not because it was the cause of India, the Indian National Congress failed to safeguard the interests of the INA personnel (see Appendix 'B').

I must also add here that the INA was as secular a force as ever was, Muslim officers playing a prominent part. And the partition of India on religious basis came as a great shock to us, from which we have hardly recovered even now. I may also add that the INA personnel hailed from all over India though the majority of them were from the North-West and Western India, as until then most of the Indian Army soldiers were recruited from these areas.

Red Fort Trials

A number of INA soldiers captured during the war were executed and many severely punished. About 10,000 were expatriated from Rangoon between May and September 1945. Another 7,000 were brought back from Malaya and Bangkok by March 1946. The existence of the INA had been kept a military secret during the war. Only thereafter, its existence was officially announced along with the trials that were to
follow. This news broke among the Indian people like a bomb shell. Overnight, the INA became the centre of attention throughout the country. The British wanted to treat us as traitors and to punish us accordingly. But the political situation had changed not only in India but throughout the world. Referring to the story of the INA, Jawaharlal Nehru said on August 20, 1945, "Now a very large number of officers and soldiers of the INA are prisoners and some of them have at least been executed. At any time it would have been wrong to treat them too harshly but at this time, when it is being said that big changes are impending in India, it would be a very grave mistake leading to far-reaching consequences, if they were treated as ordinary rebels. The punishment given to them would, in effect, be a punishment on all India and all Indians and a deep wound be created in millions of hearts."

And later, referring to the trial of Shah Nawaz Khan, Sehgal and Dhillon, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Behind the law there was something deeper and more vital, something that stirred the subconscious depth of the Indian mind. Those three officers and INA became symbols of India fighting for her independence. All minor issues faded away. The trial dramatised the old contest, England versus India. It became a reality not merely a question of law or forensic eloquence, but rather a trial of strength between the will of the Indian people and the will of those who hold power in India."

No wonder the fate and future of the INA personnel changed overnight. The Indian National Congress formed a high level committee of topmost lawyers headed by Bhulabhai Desai to defend the INA persons to be tried. Mahatma Gandhi also himself visited these prisoners. The British just could not meet the new situation. They decided to drop all trials for sedition and breaking of the oath, else the major trial may well have been that of Mohan Singh, who had initiated the INA and myself as the senior-most Indian Combatant Officer of the Indian Army in that theatre of war. It is again destiny that made the British pick up a Muslim, a Hindu and a Sikh for the major INA trial at the Red Fort, more for atrocities than sedition.

But due to public pressure, they were soon released. And the INA received its due honour and role in the history of our nation. Though some more trials took place and punishments awarded, it was all over. Thanks to the magnificent support of the Indian National Congress and the people of India, INA personnel escaped deaths and severe punishment though it is another matter that after independence, the Government failed to come to their rescue and majority of them have had to live from hand to mouth thereafter.

Achievements of the Indian National Army

Before, I enumerate the achievements of the INA, the most important
part of this history of INA, I have to touch upon some aspects of the circumstances that existed in India at that stage namely at the beginning of the last Great War of 1939-45. The Indian National Congress dominated the Indian scene, led as I have said earlier, by a set of leaders of such high calibre that perhaps history has not so far produced in that numbers, in one country and at one time. Again as I have said before elsewhere, if Mahatma Gandhi was the logical successor to saints of the old, Jawaharlal Nehru was the logical successor to Ashoka and Akbar. The influence of the Indian National Congress pervaded in all spheres, even among the services and the so called loyalists. The non-violent struggle for the achievement of all good objectives, was a light that mankind will have to adopt one day if, humanity and civilization are to survive. Unfortunately, that stage in human history has not yet arrived, so violence cannot be discarded for the achievement of just objectives, when all other means have failed. Thus came the INA as a logical support to the efforts of the Indian National Congress in its fight for India's Independence.

I must here also touch on the issue of INA vis-a-vis the Indian Army. In my opinion, they were one and the same. INA was formed by the Indian Army personnel who became prisoners of war in Malaya in February 1942. Had these persons remained in India, they would have carried on fighting for the British as the Indian Army personnel did. *Vice versa*, if those who remained in India had become prisoners of war in Malaya, as happened to us, surely many of them would have acted as we did for love of motherland prevails amongst all. Hence we the personnel of the INA feel deeply hurt that in stead of taking all INA personnel back into the Indian Army, they were punished for having dared to contribute some thing towards their motherland's independence, instead of remaining mercenary soldiers, history will surely record that this injustice should never have taken place. (Please see Appendix 'B').

I must here pay a tribute to the Indian Army. In 1939, I was the first Indian officer (King's Commissioned Indian Officer) to be ever posted to the Army Headquarters, this centre of Army power. I was only a Captain then and at that time no Indian had a higher rank than that of a Major. Even my clerks were British, as they were in all sensitive departments of the Army Headquarters. Yet, within ten years of 1939, the whole of the Indian Army and the Army Headquarters had been successfully Indianised. A remarkable performance by any standard, which must be remembered.

In 1982, I attended the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the RIMC, Dehra Dun. And as the only senior old cadet to me, Hira Lal Atal, could not come because of ill health, I had to act as the senior-most old boy of this institution. It gladdened my heart to see how the officers of the Defence Forces are keeping up high standard of behaviour and
discipline, even in these days of admittedly lowering political standards. It will be an ill day for our nation if any attempt to politicalise our defence forces is made from any quarter. As of today, the country can fully rely on our Army, Air Force and Navy in the service of our motherland.

Now the Achievements of the INA and the IIL

Firstly, the information of the INA undoubtedly helped to get better treatment not only for the soldiers, who joined it but as well as for those who remained prisoners of war.

Secondly, the formation of the INA and IIL assured better treatment and security for the nearly two million members of the Indian community on the Far East. They never looked back thereafter. Thirdly, this movement strengthened secularism. No body thought in terms of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as evidenced by the prominent part played in the INA by many Muslim officers.

And finally, what was the Real Achievement of the INA? It is well put in the words of an Englishman. Hugh Toye, in his book “The Springing Tiger ‘Subhas Chandra Bose’,” when he says, “There can be little doubt that the Indian National Army, not in its unhappy career on the battle field, but in its thundering distintegration, hastened the end of the British rule in India. The agitation, which surrounded the INA trials, turned the issue of Independence of India into instant burning question once more”. And as another writer, Dalip Kumar Roy, has said, “Subhas’s suddenly amplified figure added to the romance of the INA marching and singing to Delhi, galvanized a frustrated nation out of its torpol and substantially demaged the insulation of the Indian Army from the magnetic currents of popular enthusiasm for immediate independence”. Thus the British could no longer rely on the Indian Army, their main bulwark of power in India. And wisely and gracefully hastened their departure from our motherland. This was the basic achievement of the INA in support of the Indian National Congress, in its fight for “Complete Independence”, a slogan this great organization had given at the banks of the river Ravi at its gathering at Lahore in 1939.

APPENDIX A

German INA

The story of Subhas Chandra Bose’s well planned escape from Calcutta on the night of January 16-17, 1941 and his adventurous journey to Berlin where he reached in March via Kabul, where he got a passport in the name of Orlando Massotta, Samarkand and Moscow is too well known for me to try to give any details. He made this escape to have greater chances to fight for the cause of India’s Independence. Soon
after arrival in Europe, he met both Ribbentop and Ciano, the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Italy. Subhas wanted to organize a movement in favour of India's Independence straight away and organise an Indian Legion for the purpose from the Indian prisoners of war in Europe and North Africa and to form a Provisional Free India Government. Neither Hitler nor Mussolini were agreeable to this at that stage, partly because they did not want to antagonise Russia, which considered the Indian area as its sphere of influence and partly because they considered this step premature until they had captured Egypt and were somewhat nearer to India. They preferred propaganda and espionage work to be done at this stage.

Nevertheless Subhas started the movement to organise force to fight for the cause of Indian Independence. Two eminent civilians, N.G. Swami and Abid Hussain, joined him. A number of Indian prisoners of war were placed at his disposal.

Axis Powers declaration of war on Russia in June 1941 changed the entire situation. Netaji now started efforts to organise a force, Indian Legion, which would go with the forward German Forces into India. First meeting of India Centre was held in November 1941. Subhas became Netaji, Jai Hind was introduced as the national greetings, Jana Gana Mana was adopted as the National Anthem. A well known Indian Journalist and personality in Europe, A.C.N. Nambiar joined Netaji in January 1942 and became his number two. Azad Hind Radio had also started functioning by the end of 1941.

However, there were unfortunate aspects to these efforts, perhaps that was inevitable when dealing with dictators, as was also going to be the case with the Japanese later. Total strength of the Legionaries had risen to 3,000 divided into three battalions. But the officers and the N.C.Os. of this group were Germans. Words of command were also in German. The Oath as follows, were also taken in German and was worded as follows:

"I swear by God this holy oath, that I will obey the leader of the German State of people, Adolf Hitler as commander of the German Armed Forces, in the fight for the freedom of India, in which fight the leader is Subhas Chandra Bose, and that, as a brave soldier I am willing to lay my life for this oath."

However, in view of the circumstances, some compromises had to be made in the hope of bringing in correctives at the right time. Netajee met both Mussolini and Hitler, who were undoubtedly impressed by his personality. But dictators are dictators and they had their own plans and designs, especially at that stage when they were on the top of the world. Nevertheless, Netaji determined to make the best use of the circumstances.

Now destiny came into play to redirect this movement. The German
defeats at Stalingrad and at El Amecin in North Africa changed the entire war situation in Europe, making it impossible to launch any Free India Movement in Europe. But Japanese had reached the Indian frontiers. And there were other favourable factors, too. The number of Indian prisoners of war were much larger and a group from them had already formed the Indian National Army. Besides, there were nearly two million Indians in this area. The situation was ideal to strike a blow for India’s independence here. Netajee had earlier sent a message to the June 1942 Bangkok Conference. Now his place was here and here he came in May 1943.

The Movement in Europe carried on for sometime under Nambar but with the war going against Germany and Italy, it soon disintegrated. Let me conclude this Appendix with a quotation from Hugh Tote’s book, when he describes the great impact on the Indian people of the official announcement of the existence of the INA, which during the war, had been kept strictly secret, and now with Red Fort trials and groups of INA, being seen all over. “At the same time bodies of Legionaries from Germany, unrepentant, truculent and some still in German uniform were seen in trains and on stations as they were taken to their camps or regimental centres”. So this movement also had some impact and there are many German INA persons with us even today.

APPENDIX B

Treatment of INA Personnel

All these years, i.e. ever since 1946, when I was released from the Red Fort and dismissed from the Indian Army, I have tried to understand why after being made heroes, the government of free India failed completely to give INA personnel justice, just their due, no more no less. I have still to find a satisfactory answer to this query. As I have written in this history, the personnel of the Indian Army and the Indian National Army were one and the same. They acted in accordance with the different circumstances, no more, no less. Therefore, these INA personnel, who belonged to the Indian Army and they were the majority in the INA, should simply have been taken ‘back’ in this Army in their original ranks and places. Some exceptions could have been made of those who had taken to politics and those were very few indeed. The rest at least should have been simply treated as prisoners of war, who did their duty to their motherland to the best of their knowledge and ability and were now back into the Indian Army of free India, carrying on with their careers. It is a lame excuse that because they broke their oath to a foreign power, British, they may again break their oath to free India, their motherland, for whom they all suffered, many many perishing. In fact, our own Government treated us as British had decided and punished us. Will history record this as just.