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Once the freedom was won all the subdued forces surfaced again in the independent democratic India. Political power came to be the key to economic prosperity and enhanced social status. Henceforth, conscious attempts have been made by vested interests to whip up ethnic identity and invariably all political parties have made compromises with ethnic demand. Thus, we can see that the articulation of ethnicity or ethnic movements has closely been related to the power structure, the democratic process and initiation of socio-economic development.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Write in few lines the opinions of K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman on ethnicity.

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- 2) Who coined the word ethnicity?

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- 3) What are the principal arguments given by the tribals for their demand of a separate state of Jharkhand?

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**24.5 DEPRIVATION, DISPARITY AND THE STATE’S RESPONSE**

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A careful observation will reveal that ethnic movements are generally the expressions of deprivation and disparities in sharing of privileges. The Jharkhand Movement, for example, was a movement essentially to fight the exploitation of tribes by non-tribes not only in terms of natural resources but in terms of subjugation of their culture.

### 24.5.1 Regional and Ethnic Identities

What can be gathered from the above is that state is essentially accommodative of some of the ethnic demands. This has diffused the ethnic tension and conflicts in the country. And in some sense this enhanced the mobility and bargaining power of the ethnic group.

The post-Independent India has seen a lot of changes. We have made some new strides in development activity. Amidst this, there have emerged new classes and groups which have asserted for their separate identity and have enabled them to claim a larger share in the fruits of development. They have also realised that in a federal political structure like ours, which has a strong central state, the best way of carving out more power is to capture power at the state level.

Soon after Independence the most powerful manifestation of ethnicity in India was the demand for creation of state or province on linguistic basis. The State Reorganisation Committee was formed in 1956 and boundaries of the states were redrawn on the linguistic basis. This forming of linguistic states was a manifestation of ethnic identity. This process reinforced the regional and linguistic identity and ethnicity. Thus, the demand for separate state on various accounts like ethnicity, language, etc. soon became a part of the political scenario. Various political parties were formed at the state level which were, by and large, identified with ethnic elements.

### 24.5.2 Jharkhand Movement as an Example

The tribal belt of Central India comprising the portion of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa has seen the rise of the Jharkhand Movement, which agitated for the formation of a separate state for tribals and which they succeed in achieving. The Jharkhand Movement is a good example of politics of ethnicity. The movement drew its sustenance mainly from the growing discontent among tribals on account of their land alienation, exploitation and political neglect of their problems at the national level.

The Jagirdari system in the 18th century turned tribals into more tenants. And they were exploited shamelessly by non-tribals. In the wake of this there were a series of tribal uprisings between 1789-1900 A.D.

The Christian Missionaries entered the area of the middle of the 19th century. They made available for the tribals the facilities of education and helped, increase employment opportunities and economic improvement for them. A few educated tribal Christians organised Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj (CNUS) in 1928 for the tribal upliftment.

The turning point came when a separate province of Orissa was carved out of Bihar in 1936. The Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj and its new incarnation was Adibasi Sabha in 1938, emerged as the dominant political party under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, a British educated tribal of the area and this party demanded, for the first time, a separate tribal province.

The principal arguments given for the demand of separate state were: the physical characteristic of the area is such as there is a large concentration of the tribals. Their mental make-up, language culture and values are totally different from those of non-tribals. Also, the tribals felt that the welfare and

developmental works both provided and carried out for them are pittance in comparison to the mineral wealth and forest resources exploited from the region. The tribals had a strong fear of losing their identity as they were in minority surrounded by the non-tribals.

The tribals were marginalised at all levels. This had generated tremendous frustration among them. This harsh reality had provided the ground for effective propaganda which had facilitated the growth of an internal solidarity and out-group antagonism. There was an antipathy among them towards the non-tribals or Dikus. Interestingly, the definition of Dikus has changed with changing context. Originally Dikus were Zamindars and their non-tribal employees. Later non-tribals of upper castes background were identified as such. At present, the people from North Bihar are branded as Dikus.

### **24.5.3 The Indian State's Response**

The Indian constitution, has recognised the ethnic diversities and ensured that these diversities may not be obliterated. At the same time, the constitution has also felt that ethnicity should not stand in the way of political, social, economic and cultural progress of people in the country. Provisions such as universal adult franchise granted to the people irrespective of their caste, race, language etc. granted to the people secular participation in various social and economic activities. The state has also turned to be reformist and has intervened to promote the lot of weaker sections and minorities.

Let us have look at some of the government policies to have an idea of the nature of ethnic demands and the State's response. "The most important of such demands came from religion and linguistic groups the resultant fear of dismemberment of the nation, appears to have made such demands totally unacceptable to the government. Whereas, demand for linguistic reorganisation of the State have been considered despite initial reluctance. Further, a policy of accommodation is clearly visible on the official, language issue. Brass (1978) lists down four rules which regulate the attitude of government towards ethnic demands. They are: (1) All demands short of secession will be allowed full expression, but sessionist demand will be suppressed, if necessary, by armed forces (2) Regional demands based on language and culture will be accommodated but those demands based on religious differences will not be accepted. (3) An ethnic demand will be accepted only when it achieves broad popular support in the region and (4) the views of other groups involved in the dispute is essential for problem solving" (Nair, K.S., 1985: 106).

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## **24.6 LET US SUM UP**

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One often hears a great deal about ethnicity and ethnic movement without really knowing what these mean. In our unit on ethnicity we have attempted to bring across to you the meaning of ethnicity. We have also mentioned about various perspectives on ethnicity and we hope that you would realise that ethnicity can be looked from various angles. The problem of ethnicity cannot be seen only as an identity problem but a problem of deprivation and lop-sided development. By presenting the case of the Jharkhand movement, we have drawn attention to the underlying basic problem of deprivation and exploitation covered in any ethnic movement.

It can be said in the end that ethnic movements are basically movements demanding for a larger share of the fruits of development and for this they adopt various strategies of mobilisation. The ethnic identity having a strong emotive appeal mobilises people into strong cohesive groups which then go on to make their demands felt whether real or imaginary.

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## 24.7 KEY WORDS

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- Boundary** : A line that marks a limit in terms of identity. A boundary separates one group from the other by pointing to the distinctive aspects of each group.
- Ethnocentrism** : It is a word coined by W.G. Sumner and used in his book 'Folkways'. It is a technical term for the view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything and all other groups are scaled and rated generally inferior to it.
- In-group** : A social group of people having the same interests and attitudes.
- Out-group** : A social group of people other than those of in-group and their interests and attitudes are also different from those of the former.
- Latent** : Concealed and not visible, lying undeveloped but capable of developing.
- Manifest** : That which is clearly seen.
- Mobilisation** : In this context, it would mean to mobilise people into active participation in an ethnic movement.
- Primordial** : Existing from the beginning. That is why it is said to, be very basic. For example, identity to one's group by way of language, ethnic stock etc. is primordial because it seems to have always existed.

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## 24.8 FURTHER READINGS

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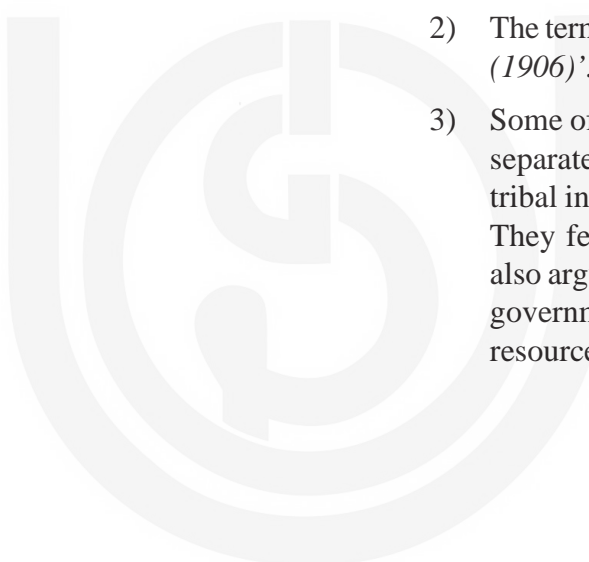

## 24.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) An ethnic community may consider itself distinct and different from other on the basis of a shared culture, language, race, religion or combination of all these.
- 2) William G. Sumner observes that people have their own group as the centre of times and rate all other groups with reference to their own. Identity is this process where an individual is bound to his/her social group by which he/she realised his/her social self.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman feel that the word ethnicity is being used to denote people with distinctive set of bio-cultural and bio-social characteristics which draws a line between us and them. They are of the view that ethnicity is an excellent tool for identification of the aspirations of a community for delineating its boundaries and presenting its identity.
- 2) The term 'ethnicity' was first used by W.G. Sumner in his book '*Folkways*' (1906)'.  

- 3) Some of the principal arguments given by the tribals for the demand of a separate state-of Jharkhand were that the tribals are different from non-tribal in terms of language, culture, values, physical and mental makeup. They feared that they will lose their identity of being minorities. They also argued that the welfare and developmental measures provided by the government are pittance as compared to the mineral wealth and forest resources extracted from the tribal dominated areas.  




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