

Original Article

From Jaipal Singh Munda to N E Horo: A study of the fundamental phase of the Jharkhand Movement

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Manuscript ID: **Abstract**

JRD -2026-180410

ISSN: 2230-9578

Volume 18

Issue 4

Pp. 80-82

April- 2026

Submitted: 15 Mar. 2026

Revised: 25 Mar. 2026

Accepted: 10 Apr. 2026

Published: 30 April. 2026

Jharkhand, earlier a part of Bihar struggled too long in order to get the status of a separate state. This struggle, commonly known as Jharkhand Movement stretches from the pre-independence era to the onset of the 21st century when on 15th of November 2000, a new sunrise welcomed the newly created state of Jharkhand. Considering the long time span of the movement, many leaderships changed, several upheavals took place and the movement kept swinging forward and backward. If a single person has to be named as the pioneer of the movement, it was Jaipal Singh Munda who not only united the tribal communities of the region for a common cause, but also became successful in connecting to the non tribal natives of the region. In this way, he laid the foundation of the Jharkhand movement. Gradually, Jaipal Singh became the face of the movement as well as the most popular leader of the region. But, in due course of time, his aura began to decline which ultimately forced him to join hands with the Congress and merger of his Jharkhand Party into it.

After the merger, when it appeared that the Jharkhand movement had lost its direction and edge, N E Horo came forward to gather the fragments of the erstwhile Jharkhand Party and give a fresh breath to the movement. Thus, the period from Jaipal Singh Munda to N E Horo is a very fundamental phase of the Jharkhand movement.

Keywords

Tribal, Dikku, Upliftment, Abua Dishum, Marang Gomke

Introduction

Jaipal Singh Munda also known as Marang Gomke was the founder of the Jharkhand Party formed in the middle of the 20th century when the political fate of the nation was changing. The fresh breezes of freedom from a long foreign rule was quite refreshing and every Indian was full of hopes and dreams. It was the beginning of a new India free and fearless. At the same time, the politics of the southern part of the then undivided Bihar was ready to take a new turn under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, Justin Richard, Sushil Kumar Bage and others in the form of Jharkhand Party, the first regional political party of this region. Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj and Adivasi Mahasabha had formed the base for the first regional political party of this region, the Jharkhand Party. The role of Jaipal Singh and Jharkhand Party is significant in raising the voice for the creation of a separate Jharkhand state before and after independence. The great fighter leader of the land, Birsa Munda had died and the echo of Ulgulan was declining. A feeling of disappointment and frustration was gripping the native people of Jharkhand. On the other hand, the British rule had consolidated its position But with a view to prevent such mass uprisings like Ulgulan in future, the British govt. tried to improve the administrative system. They brought many changes in the administration of the region. Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was passed in 1908 to provide protection to the tribal. As we have seen earlier that Bihar and Orissa were separated from Bengal in 1912 and Orissa was also made a separate state in 1936. But Chotanapur and Santhal Pargana remained under the state of Bihar. There was a common feeling among the natives of this region that owing to the social, geographical, economic and ethnic differences, Jharkhand deserves the status of a separate state Also, the people of other states whom they called Dikkus had carved a special place in the public life of Jharkhand.



Quick Response Code:



Website:

<https://jrdrvb.org/>

DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.20352946



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How to cite this article:

Aryan, S. (2026). From Jaipal Singh Munda to N E Horo: A study of the fundamental phase of the Jharkhand Movement. *Journal of Research & Development*, 18(4) 80-82.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20352946>

They were in dominant positions and the natives blamed them for their misery and exploitation in all aspects. In such scenario, Chhotanagpur Unnati Samaj was formed in the year 1915 under the leadership of Bandi Oraon, Theble Oraon, Julious Lakra, Alphanso Kujur, Alice Topno, Anand Masih, Paul Dayal etc. It was a democratic organization which aimed at uniting the tribals of Jharkhand and securing their multi-sectoral development. Its programs and activities revolved round the following purposes.

1. Upliftment of Jharkhand from backwardness.
2. Upliftment of the tribal communities.
3. Protection of tribal rights over land, water and forest.
4. Reservation in the jobs and representative assemblies etc.

The Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj could not bring about any significant changes in the ongoing circumstances. The essential unity among different tribal communities was still a target far from being achieved. That is why, in 1938, Chhota Nagpur Adivasi Mahasabha was formed which is the predecessor of the Jharkhand Party, the first platform to raise the voice of the separate state of Jharkhand under the leadership of Jaipal Singh Munda. Jaipal Singh Munda was on a high position under the state of Bikaner. When he came to Ranchi, he was offered the leadership of the Adivasi Mahasabha which he accepted and a great chapter of the Jharkhand movement started. The demand for a separate state of Jharkhand soon gained momentum. The Congress Party was fast losing its base among the tribal masses and an alarming Congress Working Committee asked Dr Rajendra Prasad to find out the underlying reasons behind it. Dr Rajendra Prasad sought suggestions in this regard from Jaipal Singh who conveyed the problems and demands of the tribals of Jharkhand along with his suggestions. Chhotanagpur Adivasi Mahasabha was gaining wide popularity among the tribal masses under the leadership of Jaipal Singh. He was called 'Marang Gomke' and truly he acquired the position of the great leader of the tribal masses. Jaipal Singh Munda wanted to transform this popularity into electoral success. The Adivasi Mahasabha contested assembly elections of 1946 but could gain success in only three seats and Jaipal Singh himself lost the election.

This experience made Jaipal Singh Munda think over the reasons and draw a future line of action. It was felt that the non-tribal participation was a must for the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand as the tribal population in Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana was less than that of the non tribal communities. The Sadaans (non-tribal natives) constituted majority of the total population of this region at the time of 1937 elections. Therefore, it was necessary to change the nature of Chhotanagpur Adivasi Mahasabha and give it an inclusive character. In 1950, the name was changed as 'Jharkhand Party' and its doors were opened for all casts and communities. Jaipal Singh Munda was a member of the Constituent Assembly. When the Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly for the Partially Excluded Areas headed by A.V.Thakkar came to Chhotanagpur, the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand was raised strongly. But the Sub Committee said that it didn't possess the right to recommend the formation of a new state. Yet, Jharkhand Party led by Jaipal Singh Munda presented the vision of Jharkhand before the masses and the sub Committee as well. A large gathering at Abdul Bari Park, Ranchi listened to Marang Gomke enthusiastically and found hope in his words and vision.

Jaipal Singh Munda spoke vigorously in the Constituent Assembly for the cause of the natives. He was well aware of the capabilities, strengths and pride of the natives. Therefore he, on many occasions, proudly declared that he didn't beg for charity for his people but the rights and powers they deserve to have.

After independence of the nation, state assembly elections were held in 1952. Jharkhand Party led by Jaipal Singh Munda performed its best by grabbing 33 seats in Bihar Assembly and six in the neighbouring state of Odissa. It was a mandate that reflected belief, hope and aspirations of the natives and aboriginals. They believed that their dream for a separate state was not a mere dream and could be achieved in the near future. The time came very soon when the members of State Reorganization Commission came to Chhotanagpur. The demand for a separate state was vigorously presented before it. But, to the great disappointment of the masses, the Commission declined the demand of statehood. The dream was shattered and a kind of disappointment prevailed among the masses. The Charismatic leader image of Jaipal Singh was also hurt. In 1957 Bihar Assembly elections, the party somehow managed to perform almost similar to the earlier elections yet the coming elections showed the traces of disappointment of the people.

Jaipal Singh Munda himself was not very happy. After a huge success which seemed to promise a bright future for him, his party and his people, the things seemed to start deviating from the right path. This disappointment was further boosted by the fact that the Indian National Congress was fast making inroads. Jaipal Singh has been a tribal stalwart but by now, he had started limiting himself and finally the Congress Party succeeded in alluring Jaipal Singh for a merger. The Jharkhand Party was finally merged with the Congress in 1963. This merger not only shattered the hopes of the people but also created a sense of resentment among the erstwhile Jharkhand Party leaders as well. Jharkhand Movement after a long journey seemed to have halted.

Emergence of N. E. Horo:

No doubt, a vacuum was created and there was frustration among the people and the workers of Jharkhand movement. It seemed to reach the crossroads from where emerged N. E. Horo who not only kept the movement going but also tried his best to keep the masses united. Though, he had his own limitations. The Jharkhand Party had merged with the Congress. The merger was opposed by many leaders. There were many factions of the erstwhile Jharkhand

Party who claimed the name and election symbol of the party but was given to none. Many factions claimed to inherit the legacy of Jaipal Singh Munda and Jharkhand Party but none could match it. It was only N. E. Horo who didn't allow the movement to die and with his limited resources, he kept it alive.

Niral Enam Horo widely known as N. E. Horo was a teacher in Gossner School, Ranchi before joining active politics. He was a man with a big heart. Serving the needy and deprived was the prime motto of his life. During the worst famine of 1966-67, he had stretched helping hands for the affected and starving masses. His "Feed the Children Aid Program" helped the people a lot. He was also the secretary of the G.E.L. Church Ranchi. His public life was adorned with the service of his people. Gradually, he became a prominent personality in the Jharkhand Party.

Jaipal Singh Munda's decision of merger with the Congress brought a storm inside the party circles. Many other leaders and workers didn't agree with this decision. Niral Enam Horo was one of them. He wanted to go ahead with his own people on the way to struggle for the cause of a separate state. As stated earlier, the decision of the merger had created many factions inside the party. N. E. Horo, reconstituted the remains of Jharkhand Party and began to strengthen his cader base.

The sixth decade of the 20th century was a period of political upheavals. For the first time after independence, the non-Congress parties were gaining significance in the electoral politics. In the 1967 Bihar Assembly elections, N. E. Horo was elected a member. He became a minister as well in the first non-Congress government of Bihar. Later, he also became a member of Parliament from Khunti parliamentary constituency. His electoral success proved his popularity and faith of the people upon him.

N. E. Horo revived the Jharkhand movement with a moderate voice and fair tone. The seventh decade of the 20th century brought mixed results for N. E. Horo. He won the parliamentary elections in 1970 and 1974 but lost in 1977 though winning it again in 1980. Movement for a separate state continued. A demonstration was held in New Delhi on 12th March, 1973 under his leadership. Again in 1975, such a demonstration was held in New Delhi to make the voice of the natives echoing in the corridors of power. In the year 1978, Jharkhand Party began to emphasize the demand of a separate state by adopting Gandhian ways of Non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Demonstrations were held in the towns and villages of Chhotanagpur. People shouted slogans for Jharkhand. N. E. Horo continued to strengthen the movement with his limited resources and kept the torchlight burning. But by now, the Jharkhand movement was undergoing a shift of platform. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha had emerged as a strong platform to fight for the cause of a separate state. Shibu Soren, Binod Bihari Mahto, A. K. Roy and a number of second line leaders began to sharpen the movement. Yet, N. E. Horo remained an honorable and glorious power centre. He continued to serve as a member of Bihar Assembly till the year 2000.

N. E. Horo was a connecting hub of the Jharkhand movement. He began to lead it when it was staggering. He tried his best to fill the gap which had occurred after the merger of Jharkhand Party with the Congress. Later years, saw the emergence of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha which led the final phase of the Jharkhand movement. Yet, N. E. Horo never lost his significance. After Jaipal Singh Munda, it was N. E. Horo alone who kept the Jharkhand movement alive even during the tough times of despair and disappointment. He inherited the legacy from Jaipal Singh and successfully handed it over to the next line.

In fact, Jaipal Singh Munda and N. E. Horo both played a crucial role in the making and strengthening of the movement for a separate state of Jharkhand. Jaipal Singh not only laid the very foundation of the movement but also took it to great heights. His contribution to the movement is unique and extraordinary in the sense that he brought unity and togetherness among the tribal communities and motivated them to fight for their rights. Also, he gave an inclusive character to the movement by opening the doors of the Jharkhand Party for non-tribals as well. The electoral success gained by the Jharkhand Party under Jaipal Singh Munda remained matchless for the entire period of the Jharkhand movement and even after the formation of Jharkhand for a long time for any regional political party. He enjoyed a strong support base and widespread reputation which helped him chalk out special place in the history of the Jharkhand movement. On the other hand, N. E. Horo with his moderate and decent style, ensured respiration and continuity for the movement when it needed them the most. He didn't allow the movement to break away and provided a kind of moral strength to the supporters of the movement.

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