ABSTRACT

The studies on religious movements among the Oraons like; Tana Bhagat movement, Kabir Panthi movement and Vishnu Panthi movement have been documented by S.C. Roy, K.S. Singh, P. Ekka, S. Fuchs and many others. However there are no recent anthropological and ethnographic works that explores and reflects on the nature of religious movements among the Oraons. Through my Ph. D. research I hope to fill this gap in the study of religion and religious movements among the Oraons. Thus this research seeks to explore contemporary religious movements among the Oraons of Chotangpur.

In recent times Oraons have witnessed numerous religious movements like Sarna, Jai Dharne and Chala Aayo movements. Beside these movements, Christian Oraons too are trying to make sense of Christianity in the context of Chotanagpur and trying to give the Biblical interpretations of the Oraon folklore, belief system culture and festivals. Christian Oraons have equated 'Dharmes' with the God of the Bible, and argue that there is no difference between the Oraon religion and Christianity. On the other hand there has been gradual rise of the Sarna religion among the Oraons of Chotanagpur. Over the last few years, the Sarna Oraons have been able to mobilize themselves and voiced for the recognition of Sarna religious code. The laal – Paar Saree (red borderd saree) issue in May 2013 reflects the resistance of the Adivasis to get assimilated into the Christian ethoes and belief system. Few years back Sarna Oraons had strongly protested against the kurukh translation of the Bible, alleging that it did not portray Sarnas in good light. Sarnas also have problem with the Christian Adivasis celebrating karma in the Church and replacing the karam branch with the cross. On the other hand Christian Oraons allege Sarna Adivasis of becoming Hinduized, and participating in the Hindu festivals like Durga Puja, kali pooja, etc.

There are numemous divisions among Sarnas, each following a different line of thought. Some are fully hinduisised, while others are interested in reviving the Parha system. And some consider white
flag as the sacred flag of the Oroans, while the others have accepted the new white-red flag as the symbol of Sarna identity and solidarity. Similarly Christian adivasis too are divided into numerous faiths and denominations, but Catholic Church continues to have its sway over the Christians in Chotanagpur. With huge number of Catholic religious, priests and nuns, scholars and academicians, they dominated the Christian theology in India.

This reveals the heterogeneity and complexity within the Oraon society over the question of religion. My research needs to explore this ongoing debate on question of religion among the Oraons.