



History of Religious Institutions In Jharkhand

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Jharkhand, the 28th state of the Indian Union was brought into existence by the Bihar reorganization Act on 15th November, 2000- the birth anniversary of the legendary Bhagwan Birsa Munda.. From the tribals perspective, Jharkhand may be divided into two regions –The plateau of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas region. Fifty years ago these two regions (then in the state of Bihar) boasted of about 28 per cent of India’s total tribal population (about 32 major and minor tribes residing in this region) but as of today the figure has diminished abruptly. However, tribal of Jharkhand continues to be rich in terms of heritage, history and culture. In the present study, an attempt has been made to study the religious ‘institutions’ located in the tribal regions of Jharkhand Talking in terms of time and space, we have tried to examine the influence of contemporary Christian institutions on the Mundas and Oraons (the two major tribes) of Chotanagpur region in Jharkhand.

An ‘institution’ in this context may be considered a culturally defined set, or pattern, of interactions expected to occur in certain situations, the violation of which would bring cultural sanctions of some sort. Institutionalization would indicate the process and means by which certain evaluative and cognitive standards (i.e. ‘value- orientations) are made operative, in a more or consistent way, in the interactions of people who share those standards. From this perspective, a temple and the priesthood serving as it would not be considered institutions in the sense of the concrete building or individuals concerned, but in the sense of the sets of complementary role expectations shared by those who manage, support, attend and serve at the temple. It is also clear, that in the process of institutionalization, explicitly religious motivation and meaning are inextricably bound with mundane constraints and interests. However, the mechanisms of such sacral-profane bonding vary extremely widely, as does the relative weighing of initial\core religio-spiritual ‘value-orientation vs. subsequent\extraneous mundane exigencies.

Therefore, the functional aspects, symbolic meaning of the religious institutions, and their role at the ideological and institutional planes constitute the subject matter of this work. Indian history abounds in examples of various kinds of patronage by individuals, families, guilds, community, governments, etc. Besides other things, what needs consideration is how these patrons bind monuments, religious institutions in the present case, to religious, social, economic and ideological purposes. It needs no emphasis that by implication the work envisages a study of the religious establishments in their contemporary socio-political background. Thus problems at two levels have to be investigated, which entails the examination of religious institutions at the architectural and infrastructure level and consequently study their implication in the society.



We tried to adopt an inter-disciplinary approach to get to some extent, a holistic picture of the afore-mentioned area of research. The anthropological model of 'Sacred Complex' appeared to be very handy to examine the primary religious institutions of the region. We also tried to analyze the folklores, other oral traditions and diffusion of traits and study the religious monuments, buildings, ruins, potsherds, iconology (especially in case of Hindu temples) and various other types of artefacts with a view to discovering and dating the various cultural layers or the phases in the growth and development of these religious institutions. In case of subsidiary religious institutions (hospitals, schools, etc.), besides the study of their architectural designs and infrastructure facilities, their sources of income, maintenance and funding aspects had to be looked into. Architecture actually becomes a landmark of the pattern of society indicating resources, spiritual and material as well as economic, and technical limitations. Buildings actually represent their social, ceremonial and community life.

History of Muslims in Jharkhand

According to RR Diwakar, author of *Bihar Through Ages*, first Muslim contingents arrived in Jharkhand territory 800 years ago and settled in the villages of Mundas. They mixed with the locals in such a way that they forgot their own culture, language and life-styles. The most surprising matter is that the residents of this territory not only treated them as their own but according to Father Hoffman, 'they adopted Arabic and Persian words in their own language.'

Muslims set up their mosque in Jharkhand territory for the first time in 1661 in Dayoodnagar. Later on *madrasas* were set up. In 1740 it was the first chance when a Muslim known as 'Hidamatullah Khan' was nominated as *jagirdar* of Japla in Jharkhand.

These historical events show that the Muslims in Jharkhand have a long history. They have taken active part in the Indian Independence Movement as well as in the movement for the formation of a separate state in Jharkhand.

Now Jharkhand state has been formed and the first BJP government was sworn in on 15 November 2000. The Jharkhand Movement in which the Muslims have played a vital role has cherished the dream of the formation of Jharkhand state. The contribution of Muslims in the formation of Jharkhand state is not less than the contribution of any other community. But it is a matter of grave concern that the contribution of Muslims in Jharkhand movement is already being totally neglected.

It is worthy to note that the Muslims of Jharkhand state have not only taken part in Jharkhand movement, they have also taken part in the freedom movement to free India from the clutches of the British colonial rule. Shaikh Bhikhari is one of the heroes who fought against the Britishers



and sacrificed his life for the country. When he was 38 years old in 1857, Thakur Vishwanath Shahdeo gave him an opportunity to become an active member of Mukti Vahini. He helped the Indian army when there was revolt at Doranda (Ranchi) on 31 July 1857. The British commander Graham and three other officers were stunned by Shaikh Bhikhari's bravery. He planned with commander Vishnu Singh to fight the Britishers when the army attacked Ranchi on 2

August 1857. This bravery foiled British plans. Later on Shaikh Bhikhari awakened the Santhalis of Santhal Pargana to revolt against the Britishers. The battle continued for one hour and the Indians were defeated. The main cause of this defeat was that the followers of Shaikh Bhikhari had country-made guns. He himself used to make guns with the co-operation of Shaikh Saad. On 2 August 1857 there was a fierce battle in Chatra under the leadership of Jai Mangal Pandey.. Shaikh Bhikhari was also leading a contingent. During 1857, Nadir Ali (Chatra), Shaikh Bhikhari (Chutupal), Salamat Ali (Chaibasa), Shaikh Haru (Chaibasa) lost their lives and became immortal in the history of Jharkhand. Nadir Ali was sentenced to death alongwith Thakur Vishwanath Pandey while Salamat Ali and Shaikh Haru were sent to kalapani (deportation for life to the Andamans).

In 1923 Momin Conference was formed at Murma, 13 miles west from Ranchi. Its Chotanagpur conference was organized to condemn Jalianwala Bagh massacre, to pay homage to the Indian martyrs and save the weaving profession from the British tyranny. Imam Ali (Brombay), Nazahat Hussain (Bundu) Jaggu Mian (Bijulia) Farzand Ali (Itki) Abdullah Sardar (Sisai) Zakir Ali (Itki) Ali Jan Mian (Gudri Ranchi) Sohbat Mian (Ranchi) Chandan Mian (Dumri) were among the important Muslim figures of Jharkhand who protested against the brutality of the Britishers in India.

History bears testimony that when Bihar State was separated from Bengal in 1912, various parts of Jharkhand territory were included in Bengal, and Chotanagpur Santhal Pargana became part of Bihar. Asmat Ali was the first leader in Jharkhand territory who guessed the impending danger in Bihar. He was sure that the social culture of Jharkhand territory would be at stake. So he raised the demand of a separate Jharkhand state in 1912 and since then the emotions for the preservation of the social culture of Jharkhand has been a popular issue in the area. Chiragh Ali is also a renowned figure in the history of Jharkhand movement who strengthened it in 1919. Following him a large number of Muslims took part in the movement for the formation of Jharkhand. In 1989, Muhammad Murtaza Ansari (Chakdrapur), in 1990 Ashraf Khan (Khellari Ranchi), in 1992, Muhammad Sayeed and Zuber Ahmad (Sonari-Jamshedpur), in 1993 Wahab Ansari (Kothashila-Purulia) and S.K.Qutubuddin (Medinapur) sacrificed their lives for the Jharkhand movement.

It is a fact that Muslims throughout Jharkhand region were first to raise the Jharkhand issue. In 1912 Asmat Ali gave a call for the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar for the first time. And in 1936 Momin Conference passed the resolution calling for a separate Jharkhand state. In 1952 Chiragh Ali Shah raised the voice for the fulfilment of this demand and in 1989 Jharkhand Qaumi Tahrik played an important role to lead Jharkhand movement. In 1937 R. Ali of the



Momin Conference, defeated the Muslim League candidate and became a member of Bihar Legislative Assembly. In 1946 H. Saharwardi (Bengal) lead the Muslim League election campaign in Jharkhand territory and the Momin Conference frustrated this campaign by winning five seats out of seven in the Legislative Assembly election. After 1937, Dhable Urao formed Adivasi Progressive Society and Momin Conference raised a voice for the welfare of the inhabitants of Jharkhand. Later Haji Imam Ali, Nazarat Hussain, Abdullah Sardar, Farzand Ali, Sheikh Ali Jaan, Maulvi Dukhu Mian and others became active members of the Adivasi society which proves that from the very beginning there has been close relationship between Muslims and Adivasis who were united to save their old customs, culture and social rituals in Jharkhand. Jamiyatul Momin, which later came to be known as Momin Conference, spread the message of nationalism in Jharkhand territory. After the independence of the country Momin Conference backed Marang, Gomille and Jaipal Singh in Jharkhand state movement.

Tribals and the Muslims

The reaction of the tribals (both Oraon and Munda) to the Muslims is one of extreme antagonism. Though they do interact freely in the market place and in casual encounters, there is an undertone of suspicion and mistrust. The answer to these lies in a number of causal factors.

In 1193 A.D., the Turkish Muslims had attacked various region in Central and North India. In doing so, they went through the Jharkhand area (as Chotanagpur was then known) via the Old Benares route passing from near Ranchi. The Turks were led by Bakhtiyar Khilji dynasty who set up the Khilji dynasty. In the land of the Oraon, the Muslims are known a Turukh. After being attacked by Sher Shah Suri, the Oraons migrated from Rohtasgarh to the Chotanagpur area between 1539-1543 A.D., so say some myths.

By this time, the Muslims had made deep excursions into the area and had settled here. *Peshgis* and other land grant were also given to them. Still later, the Maharaja of Chotanagpur and the British Govt. had both given land grants to the Muslims whom they favoured. This was what caused the primary conflict. The land of the tribals was taken away, sometimes by forces and then given away to others. This became an issue in many of the tribal revolts in the area during the last hundred years.

The Muslims and the tribals, wherever seen, do not normally stay together. They each have their own spaces. For instance, in Nawadih, the houses are clustered into two tolis (Bhagaltoli and Nawatoli). A case study from this village on Ranchi district describes this tension.

The perpetrators ran off. They were not caught. Langra was caught and served a long jail sentence. He was freed in March, 1995, just before Sarhul. At a ceremony, Langra was warmly welcomed back to the village and was remarried to his wife along with the *pahan* (for eight of the youths involved were also arrested. By October, 1991, only Langra was in prison. Further, some



Muslim who had been using the land on rent occupied about 40 acres of land. This case went to court. It also contained the land which included the Gawan Deoti, the village Goddess. The Oraon won the case in 1993-94. A madadi was called to till this land in 1995 and a puja was conducted later in the same year.

It appears that the tribals in general feel closer to the Hindus and hence, feel an animosity towards the Muslims. This also applies to the Mundas and Oraons. In many ways, the differences are highlighted and similarities ignored. The opposite is true for the Hindus and tribals. This will become evident soon. Further, a difference is seen in the fact the Oraons and Hindus do not eat beef and the Mundas do. Yet, unlike the Hindu the Oraon also eat beef (buffalo meat) as well as pig meat at ceremonial occasions. It appears that as compared to the Oraon, the Munda do not exhibit close affinity with the Hindus.

In some areas, the Munda belong to Birsa Dharam, Tana Bhagats and Muni Samaj, a reformist sect of Hinduism. In the three study areas Birsaism were found in Nawadih in Torpa Block and Sirum Serengdih in Khunti Block. In Kalet there were two Munda households belonging to Tana Bhagats. Tana Bhagats are mostly found among the Oraons. In Salehatu two households belonged to Muni Samaj—a reformist Hindu sect which has its head office at Gorakhpur in U.P. This religion is popular among the Swansis of Maranghada area and they are agents for its spread among the Mundas. Chota Rai of Salehatu, who belongs to Muni Samaj does not worship the Munda deities, or offer sacrifice or take meat and rice-beer. He has a framed photograph of the Muni Samaj Guru displayed in his house and offers incense and prayers to him every morning and evening. Members of this sect in this area hold occasional congregations at a place and sing in praise of their *Guru*.

Birsa Dharam

Birsa Bhagwan propagated Birsa Dharam for the first time among the Mundas of Chotanagpur during the closing years of nineteenth century. In formulating the tenets of his faith, Hinduism and Christianity influenced him; however, the soul of his religion remained completely Munda. The new religion preached that God was one and He was *Singbonga*. He called for a belief in one God in place of numerous deities. The followers were to abstain from the worship of innumerable spirits. They were not to sacrifice fowl or flesh for the deities, but were to pray to *Singbonga* who was Almighty and the Creator of all. *Arua* rice, a few coins etc. could be used for the purpose of worship. They should love all creatures and venerate the cow. They should eat neither flesh nor fish nor fowl and should give up taking rice-beer. They should lead simple lives and should not tell lies or steal. Birsaism were asked to be united. They were directed to take weekly rest from work such as ploughing etc. and devote the day in worship and meditation. Birsa asked his followers, male or female, to wear the sacred thread of the Hindus and take their meals after purifying themselves by taking a bath. They were also directed not to inter-dine with



non-Birsaites and not to take impure food. They were further asked not to inter-marry with non-Birsaites

Mundas. Birsa also wrote a book of prayers for the use of his disciples. He came to be known as *Bhagwan* or *Dharti Aba* by his followers.

The Birsaites are spread over more than one hundred villages of Porahat (Singbhum), Karra, Torpa, Khunti, Murhu and Tamar police stations of the Khunti sub-division, Kolebira and Bario of Simdega sub-division, Bero and Lapung of Sadar sub-division of Ranchi district. The Birsaites are everywhere a compact and closely-knit community, living in small groups in hamlets.

Faith in Birsa as the messenger of God or prophet and his prayers replace propitiation of spirits as the road to happiness. The prayers of the Birsaites subsequently apotheosized him into God himself. In the early days of the prophethood of Chalkad, he was *Dharti Aba* and later *Bhagwan* or God incarnate.

Presently, however, the Birsaites themselves are losing faith in their religion. By departing from the traditional religion they can neither have relations with the non-Birsaites nor can they claim to stand at par with the Brahmins. The non-Birsaites do not give any consideration to the religious convictions of the Birsaites. It is difficult for them to believe that there is only one God and that the *bongas* of the *sarna* should not be worshipped. In illness and other misfortunes they continue to take the help of the *sokha* who necessarily must be from the non-Birsaites. On receiving the advice of the *sokha* they have to propitiate the offended spirit by sacrificing a goat or a hell. While they abstain from animal food. They cannot abstain from animal sacrifices. Unmarried boys and girls, even in a Birsaites family, take sacrificial meat. Even the drinking of rice-beer is not forbidden. It was observed that the Birsaites in Serengdili village had lost their land and, therefore, were dependent on the people of the Palian Khut for borrowing money and other things. In the *panchayat* also the *Pahan Khut* played a leading role. The Birsaites felt so isolated that seven families from their village have now ceased to be Birsaites. The Birsa religion, which once gave new philosophy and hope to the Munda during a crisis. does not seem to have much prospects for transforming the Munda society in the face of the new forces of urbanization and industrialization

Tribals and the Hindus

Col. Dalton, in his *Ethnology of Bengal*, has mentioned that The Hinduised Mundas and Oraons abstain from most of the meats, which Hindus consider impure. The latter aboriginal tribe, the Oraons, is distinguished from the Mundas so far as their symbols of worship are concerned. The Mundas normally have no symbols and make no representation to their gods. The Oraons



however, have some visible object of worship, though it may be a stone or a wooden post or a lump of earth. This symbolization on the part of the Oraons may have been due to the impact of Hindu influence.

The tribals in general are close to the Hindus in Chotanagpur. As compared to the Oraon, Munda do not exhibit very close proximity with Hindus. The Oraon believe themselves to be extremely close to the Hindus. Their festivals are accepted as being close to the tribal way of life. For instance, the Sarhul festival falls on the day of Holi the Sohrai festival falls on the day after that of the Hindu Diwali.

Oraon celebrated these festival by using colours and water like other Hindu on Holi, they may blow up fire crackers during Diwali and they visit the temples on *Dussehra (Durga puja)* but they do not participate in the religious rituals of the Hindus. There are no cases where Hindu marrying Oraon performing propitiatory rituals in order to be accepted into the Oraon fold. However, the Oraon claim that the lower Hindu castes are not easily accepted into the Oraon. These include *mochi, lohar* and *harijan* castes.

As already mentioned, the relationship of the Oraon with the Hindus has been maintained from early days. The great seer and mystic of the Hindu Chaitanya Mahaprabhu brought in wave of Bhakta tradition among the Oraon. This became evident in a series of Bhagat movements among the Oraon. However, such movement can also affect political and economic forces beyond the local. The following is a landmark case of such a movement when it first occurred. The document in the District Commissioner Office at Ranchi in Bihar. It was sent to Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy for his comments. The document is dated 30th January, 1917-6th February, 1917.

Tribals and Christian Missions

At the arrival of missionaries in Chotanagpur, the tribal peoples were in an acute agrarian crisis. They were being gradually alienated from their land by moneylenders, the Zamindars, and were "thus being transformed into landless agricultural labourers."³⁷ Later on burdensome taxes were imposed upon them. In their poverty they sought loans "which they often could not repay because of the high interest charged."³⁸ Thus the lands were taken over and they were forced to become bonded labourers in some cases. "There was no limit to their exploitation. There was also no social intercourse between these adivasis and the Hindu or Muslim inhabitants of Chotanagpur," wrote Sivaji Koyl. It was in this context and among these economically exploited and socially oppressed tribal peoples that the missionaries arrived and preached the gospel of liberation.

Christian Conference of Asia is the mother organisation of all denominations of Churches in Asia including India. It organised a Tribal Rally in Ranchi on November 2, 1995 on the occasion of their celebration of the 150th anniversary of the coming of the Gospel to Chotanagpur. A new



term was coined for the tribals of Chotanagpur as they were termed as the ‘cultural minorities’ of India. This rally also envisaged the unity of all churches in Chotanagpur⁴⁰ Actually, they were celebrating the coming of the four missionaries of the Gossner Mission to Ranchi in 1845. As a result of their work, four Oraons were baptized in 1850 and the first church was founded; and two Mundas were baptized in 1851. The Anglican Mission established its work in Ranchi in 1869 and the Roman Catholic mission started work in Chotanagpur in 1887. Thus Christianity spread in the Chotanagpur area.

History of Christianity in Munda regions of Chotanagpur

Christian missionaries first arrived in Chotanagpur in 1845 They belonged to the Gossner Mission and came from Germany. The four pioneer missionaries ' Pastors E. Schatz, F. Bastch, A. Brandt and H. Janke, who arrived at Ranchi in November 1845, preached among the Munda and other tribes for about 5 years before they succeeded in converting any one to Christianity. Four Mundas families received baptism on 9 June, 1850. On 26 October 1851, Sadho Munda, *bhuinhar* of village Bandhea, and Mangta Munda of village Balalong were baptised by the Rev. Schatz. They were the first Munda converts to Christianity. On 18 November, 185 1, the foundation stone of

⁴⁰ *The Times of India*, Ranchi, ,November 2, 1995

⁴¹ As in other religions, so also among Christians, the original Church split, first into the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches in

1054 and later into, what is generally known as the Protestant Church, a division led by Martin Luther after ‘Reformation’ in the 16th century. Thereafter, there have been many splits and hundreds of smaller independent churches have come up all over the world.. The Protestants, for instance, do not uphold the supremacy of the Pope, nor venerate the Blessed Virgin Mother Mary in the way Catholics do.

the Gothic building popularly known as the German Church, on the Ranchi-Chaibasa Road, was laid. This Church, was consecrated on Christmas 1855, and called Christ Church. It is the first Christian church built in Chotanagpur.

With the spread of Christianity, the Mundas became more aware of their rights to the land and of the persistent suppression and victimization at the hands of lease-holders and landlords. It caused displeasure to the alien landlords who used every possible means of persecution against these converts with no other effect than the spread of Christianity.



Oraons and Various Denominations of Christian Churches in Chotanagpur

As already mentioned Christian missionaries started to arrive in Chotanagpur from the middle of the 19th century. The Missionaries felt that Chotanagpur might be an appropriate field for evangelical works. At the same time, Captain Hannington, the then Commissioner of the Chotanagpur Division learnt about some missionaries looking for a field and wrote to the Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society,

Calcutta, asking him to send them to Chotanagpur to preach the Gospel to its people. This gave great encouragement to the missionaries and they finally made up their mind to select Chotanagpur as their Mission field.

On the 2nd November 1845 the four missionaries arrived at Ranchi and started their work of preaching. But for four long years their efforts did not meet with any success and in the ir disappointment they wrote to Father Gossner to change the field. Father Gossner was not a man to be discouraged so easily. He asked the Missionaries to have patience, replying that if the people do not receive the words for their salvation 'then preach to them for their condemnation' (Lakra 1952, 51).. These four Protestant Christian missionaries were E. Schutz, F. Batsch, A. Brandt and H. Jamke. They came and settled down at Ranchi. For a few years there was not a single convert. Then a strange incident occurred. One day four men of the Oraon tribe came to the mission house asking to see Jesus, of whom the missionaries had been preaching. They were asked to attend the church service. Having done so, they were deeply impressed but still unsatisfied. "They wished and said to see Jesus with their own eyes." One of the missionaries took them into an inner room and prayed fervently that they might be guided to the light. They went away quietly. Some time later the same men reappeared and asked again to be allowed to participate in worship service. At its close they came forward with great joy in their faces saying now they had found Jesus. Now they were satisfied and they desired to become Christians⁴². After further instruction and teaching they were baptized on June 9, 1850. Another door was opened when two Oraons were also converted in October, 1851. In the same year the foundation of the big Church at Ranchi was laid, and in 1855. From then on the number of converts rapidly increased and by 1857 there were 700 baptized Christians. Thus the mission work continued, spread, and flourished. Apparently the tribal people came with their desire to become Christians. Sometimes a whole village came to missionaries asking for baptism. An Anglican mission (The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) arrived in this region in 1869. By 1872, the Anglican Church had consolidated their position and reported that they had 5,000 converts.⁴⁴ The Roman Catholic Church entered the region only in 1887 and established the mission work.

Comparison between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant churches in Chotanagpur

The great disparity in the population of the Lutheran (3.3 lakh). and the Catholic Oraon (7.5 lakh) in Chotanagpur may be explained in the light of the fact that the 'Roman Catholics had a greater number of convert because they (did not insist on

prohibiting consumption of liquor whereas the Lutherans who completely advocated the



prohibition of liquor could secure a small number of Christian.

Another reason for this disparity in the two types of Christian population

in Chotanagpur may be attributed to the fact that the evangelical work of the Lutheran Missionaries was greatly hampered specially because, firstly the German missionaries on mass scale were repatriated by the British Government during the first world war, which was followed by a great disorganisation in the Church affairs and secondly, the Lutheran Church was declared autonomous in 1919 which also somehow or other affected the evangelical work of the Church. On the other hand, no such impediment came in the way of the Catholic Missionaries. Besides, comparatively a better and well knit organisation of the Roman Catholic Mission on a global level, being more resourceful and efficiently administered by the Pope in contrast to the Lutheran Mission which was a single man sponsored Mission by Father Gossner with limited funds and resources at his disposal, may be said to be the third significant reason for the differences in the workings of the two missions including their evangelical works.

Concludingly, the Anglican Church came into existence in 1869 in Ranchi. It was in the year 1869 that some difference of opinion emerged among the Lutheran Missionaries. A few Lutheran missionaries along with some of their followers became Anglican and it was they who started the first Anglican Church in Ranchi.. It was in the year 1870 that the foundation stone of St. Paul's Cathedral Church was laid down now the Anglican church has its own hospitals, schools, bookshop and needlework school at Ranchi.

The Seventh Day Adventist is another Christian Mission working in Chotanagpur having its headquarters at Ranchi. It has only a hospital and Church both located at Bariatu56. Though the Adventist Hospital as such began in the year1950, it had been functioning as a dispensary since the year 1947. Almost all the workers in the hospital

belong to the same denomination but the majority of them come from Madras. The hospital has earned great fame not only in Ranchi but outside Ranchi as well. The Mission at Bariatu functions mainly through this hospital. The Adventist Church also established at Bariatu in the year 1950.

Causes for the success of the missionaries in Chotnagpur region

The foregoing account of the condition of the tribals in the pre-missionary days of extortion and exploitation by the landlords and others, and subsequent embracing of the Christian faith by the tribals in a bid to safeguard their age long economic and social rights, gives us some idea of the factors and forces involved in the growth of Christianity. Apart from evangelical efforts on the part of the Christian Missionaries, there were following major factors, which further accelerated the growth of Christianity in Chotanagpur.



Firstly, as we have seen exploitation of the aboriginals, the encroachment upon their tenant rights and the demand of excessive *begari* labour were the most important factors which gave a favourable push to Christianity. The people were subject to oppression for centuries and gradually a psychological background was created in which the people were ready to follow anyone who would help them in their distress. The Missionaries came at the right moment and the natives found a great defender of their rights and comforts in them. Thus the Christian movement in Chotanagpur may be said to have flourished as a reaction to the longstanding exploitations, which the natives suffered at the hands of local landlords, petty officials, and the alien money-lenders.

Patronage of the British Officials

The second significant factor, which the history of Christianity brings to light, was the intimate terms of the Missionaries and the British administration. The Missionaries enjoyed the goodwill and respect of the Government and they did not fail to utilise the opportunity whenever they needed it in the interest of their followers. Looking back to the history of the Lutheran Mission, we find that while the four missionaries were waiting and looking for a field at Calcutta, it was the Commissioner of Chotanagpur Division who invited them to Chotanagpur through the Secretary of the Bible Society. Again, we find that when Father Stockman, the first Roman Catholic Missionary was sent to Chotanagpur, the Residential Magistrate sent him a hearty letter of welcome, greatly rejoicing at the thought that the native people of Chotanagpur will be soon converted to Christianity. The Inspector of Police at Chaibassa also helped the Father in procuring a comfortable place for him there.

The mention of another Police Inspector at Chaibassa further substantiates my point. It was he who first gave 'the inside information' of the customs and troubles of the native people to Father Lievens and advised him further to defend the tenant right of the people through court and accordingly, Father Lievens was successful in making thousands of converts. This Inspector also gave Father Lievens a shelter in one corner of the Police Station at Torpa. We also observed that Col. Dalton had become a special friend of Missionaries and Christians, and was always ready to help them in every possible manner.

When Father Lievens and other Missionaries were accused of holding seditious assemblies and fomenting rebellion while working in Barway leading to the persecution of converts, it was Mgr. Goethal, the Arch-Bishop of Calcutta who directly appealed to the Viceroy, complained about the ill-treatment of his Christians and was able to get his demands fulfilled by exercising his influence and esteem which he enjoyed with the Government of India (Bowen: 1936: 134). So, several such instances go to show that the British officials were great sympathisers of the Missionaries, particularly of the Roman Catholic, and Christianity had developed under the



patronage of the British administration.

Identifying Christian Missionaries with the British Government

The third important factor, which worked towards the growth of Christianity was that, the natives of Chotanagpur identified the Christian Missionaries with the British Government. Since the Missionaries enjoyed the goodwill of the Government, whenever they helped the people or exercised their influence, the natives thought that they had also the same power of the Government. The people had begun to associate the Missionaries with Government. We have already noted the Padoria case involving Father Lievens. As the news spread of his successful case against a Thikedar, several villages at once applied for instruction and were taken into the Church.

These instances had great effect upon the simple mind of the aboriginals. They would think that the white British officers and the white Missionaries, both came from England (Europe). Both were Europeans having the same prestige and power to help them in their distress. *Topi Topi Eke Topi* (All Europeans whether an officer or a Missionary with hats on their head are just the same) was the common saying current among the natives.