CHAPTER-FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An effort to discern and explore the liberative spirituality inherent in the *Asur* myth prevalent among the Oraon people of Chotanagpur/Jharkhand region necessitated a general study of the population. The study reveals that the Oraons are a divided people geographically and politically, yet they maintain their identity through maintaining dress, eating habits and many other cultural traits, such as, observation of *Jani Sikar* (Women’s Hunt) every twelve years wherever they live. It implies that they are sensitive to their history. Though they claim to be superior to their tribal neighbours in agriculture operations, numerical strength, partial upliftment due to governmental development schemes, they have yet to achieve satisfactory and full liberation which they wish to achieve.

In an effort to understand the Oraon’s situation of enslavement, it is realized that their history has to be reconstructed and rewritten. The histories of Oraons, Mundas, Santals, Kharias, Hos and other similar indigenous communities written so far are the attempts by outsiders. But, they may be classified among the oppressors and exploiters. In relying on the available studies, and analyses, there is a danger of falling in illusion and going far away from the reality. By slowly forgetting their language, the Oraons have become one of the most divided people inhabiting the plateau of Chotanagpur in the Central-Eastern region of the Indian subcontinent. Other indigenous communities are not much different in this regard. So far the cause of their enslavement and poor condition is concerned; outside and external factors cannot be blamed altogether. Some of the social evils, such as drinking alcoholic beverages at the cost of losing health and economy, inability to assert their potentialities and other inner weaknesses also are responsible for their sorry state of affairs.

Hardly there have been systematic efforts to explore the resources of liberation of the people found among them. While the governments and cultural analysts have failed to discern and explore indigenous resources found among the people, there is evidence of growing awareness among the people in question to assert their identity and to go to their cultural roots. In spite of several drawbacks there are ample opportunities to re-read and re-state their
situation of oppression and the way of liberation in terms of the mythic tradition. There are some common issues dealt with in the research, like that of the ecological crises/environmental problems discussed in terms of global warming and climate change which are common to all, oppressors and the oppressed as well. The Asur myth found among several indigenous groups of Chotanagpur has opened ways to ponder upon the issue from various angles in search of solutions for the whole humanity. A communiqué from the workshop on "Spirituality of Resistance, Liberation and Transformation" held at Matanzas, Cuba, in 2008 rightly affirmed the leading role of indigenous people, honoring specially their earth-centered spirituality. This exemplary model of spirituality found among the indigenous people all over the world focuses on interdependence of body, mind, land, community, and spirit, as resources for a liberating justice for all creation. The workshop also affirmed the struggle of such people for their land and their rights to self-determination.495

In the process of understanding myth in Primal societies in general and that in the region of Chotanagpur, the method applied by Levi-Strauss and Mircea Eliade have proved to be fruitful. The Asur myth found among the Oraons and some other tribes of Chotanagpur gets a place in analyzing Primal myths. Myths are neither false nor a historical, but present a people’s self-understanding of themselves and their effort to relate themselves to the unknown. In this study an effort was made to study the spiritual values/spiritualities of the Asur myth prevalent among the Oraons, that are either scattered here and there are only its fragments delineated occasionally. The methods employed by Liberation Theology in studying the Third World situation falls short of neglecting or ignoring the indigenous wisdom hidden in the indigenous population of this region and of the wider world. In this process the insights from the ‘Fourth World Dynamics’ is of help. The native American Biblical scholars, cultural analysts and theologians and ecologists, such as George E. Tinker, Vine Deloria, Gabriel Horn and others come with important and very valuable insights for analyzing the situation and discerning the rich spiritual resources so far unexplored in the indigenous population of the world.

A world of myth is found in Chotanagpur cultural region, the core geographical settlement of the Oraon, Munda, Santhal, Ho, Kharia and other indigenous people. Of all these, the Asur myth stands apart for its quantitative as well as qualitative point of view. When it is taken and considered among cosmogenic myths, it is most important of all and has attracted the attention of the scholars. But the sorry state of affairs is that it has become the sole property of the diviner cum spirit-doctors. Had it been used by the common people elaborately, its insights could have been adopted not only by Oraons and Mundas but also by others living side by side with them. Its ritual context is certainly most important for it is used in the worship of Dharmes the Supreme God. When all human efforts and approach to minor deities have failed, the performer of the Danda-Katta ritual approaches to God saying, Now, Dharmes, you the only one to solve the problem. But unfortunately many have given up performing the ritual of Danda-Katta. This is due to not only the process of acculturation as the result of culture contact, but primarily due to the lack of awareness to recognize one’s potentialities. Proselytization of the Adivasis is not the only factor for cultural alienation, but long suffering of the people in colonial time and its continuation of suffering even in the post-independent India deteriorates the situation.

The spiritualities of divine-centeredness, justice, feminism, eco-spirit, earth-centeredness, communitarian practices, ritual-relatedness, self-identity-centered, related to religion and culture, liberative from the outside oppressive forces, holistic vision of life, self-sacrifice of the leper boy are some of the values found in the Asur myth. There appears a similarity between the self-sacrifice of the leper boy (itch-covered boy) and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for saving the humans and the whole world from the punishment for human sin. The God Dharmes took the form of leper boy to lead the greedy Asurs to their doom and thus saved the whole creation. It is surprising, though it is a historical fact that the Asur myth has been prevalent among the population much before Christian message of Christ's crucifixion for the salvation of the world was preached in the region. The solidarity of the people, equality among men and women is seen when they gather for social functions. Anti-greed, love to animals and concern for all creations and proper respect to the creator is amply reflected in the Asur myth. Oraon’s belief in Dharmes, the Supreme God while performing the Palkansna/Dana-Katta ceremony is crucial. Their love for nature does not disqualify
them from worship of the divine. Rather they try to act in the light and guidance of the Spirit in all their activities, temporal and spiritual without discrimination. The question remains that the world should patiently help them assert their identity and work out liberation from various forms of enslavement.

By releasing the *Asur* myth from the monopoly of the diviner, it can be popularized among the common people in the ritual as well as wider contexts for creating awareness towards their situation of enslavement and work out their liberation getting insights from the myth. This can function as their scripture and a dynamic guide in all spheres of life, individual and communitarian. The concern for all people and all creatures only led the Oraon and other tribal people to oppose heavy industrialization in the land that ultimately resulted in migration and displacement of the indigenous population and deterioration of their poor and unjust conditions.

The popularization and use of *Asur* myth can further strengthen the tribal and inter-tribal unity inspiring them for joint struggle against injustice meted out to them from outside. This must have certainly inspired and encouraged the people of different communities for struggle. Some of the struggles that came in while analyzing the situation of oppression and enslavement were, Birsa movement among the Mundas, Sidhu-Kanho movement among the Santals, Kol insurgence among Mundas and Oraons, Sardar Movement among the Mundas and Oraons, Tana Bhagat movement among the Oraons, Koel-Karo movement against the construction of mega dam and more recently the Jharkhand movement participated by all indigenous communities of the land. It is noted that as a result of these movements some important laws were enacted for the protection of the Tribal land and forest. The formation of the State of Jharkhand as the 28th State of the Indian Union officially declared on the 15th of November, 2000, the Birth Day of Birsa Munda is the latest result of the several struggles in the past and present to honour the demand of self-determination of the Tribals of this region.

A further/detailed study of the *Asur* myth with some survey/questionnaire must be conducted for understanding deeper values for peaceful and harmonious human life in the region and elsewhere. This can certainly add to the literature dealing with the indigenous people in India. In the development of Tribal Theology which is ongoing process, will certainly
strengthen and add to its value. The ideal of unity in diversity be promoted by giving proper place to the Primal/tribal myth in theological literature.

**The following objectives of research have been achieved:**

1. The contents and meaning of the *Asur* myth prevalent among the Oraon people has been studied in the context of Oraons and other tribal people of Jharkhand.
2. The power and function of myth in general and primal society in particular were explored on the basis of available literature and under the limitation and scope proposed. The area of myth itself is very vast and cannot be covered by one study.
3. The meaning of spirituality inherent in the *Asur* myth prevalent among the Oraon people was assessed as far as possible.
4. The life offering values of *Asur* myth were explored that would provide guidelines for harmonious living.
5. A study of liberative spirituality was done with a concern to promote ecological concern through balanced relationship between God, people and nature.

**Proposal for further Research:**

1. There is a scope for further research as comparative study of the different versions of *Asur* myth found among different tribal communities.
2. The relevance of *Asur* myth for developing Christian spirituality will be may be explored.
3. The implication of Asur myth for ecological concern is another area of prospective research.