



Research Article

HIERARCHY IN ODISHA CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Religion is the inevitable part of human life. There are thousands of religions practicing by the people of different parts of the world since long back. Each and every man closely connects with their faith and believes. Now peoples are known through their practicing religions. These religions have been developed and spread out by the hard efforts of certain group of peoples of the concerned religions. They are the bridge between religion and common people. Again these peoples are known to us as missionaries and the missionaries who are working for Christianity is known as Christian missionaries. There is a ladder system or hierarchical system among the Christian missionaries not only in Odisha but also in the world in general. In this paper an attempt has been made to focus the different level of Christian missionaries and their role for the spread and development and functioning of institutions who are working for the religion and believers.

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INTRODUCTION

There are so many religions in this world practice by the peoples. Peoples from literate to illiterate, educated to uneducated, rural to urban, labourer to capitalist have the life of religion. Each and every religion from micro to macro and animism to humanism deals the life of religion through the practice of religious code of conduct. Religion develops with the application of different factors and missionaries are the major factor for the growth and development of every religion. Christianity is one of the major religions of this world. This religion spread and developed after Jesus Christ's death of two thousand years back. Within two thousand years of origin this religion spread in every corner of all over the world. The Disciples of Christ went on every corner of the world to propagate this religion. Those who propagated this Christianity among the peoples are known as missionaries or Christian Missionaries.

Meaning and Definitions of Missionaries: Generally those who have certain mission to fulfill are known as missionary or those who are going in a certain aims and objective is known as missionaries. The propagators or preachers or a teacher of Christianity is known as Christian Missionaries. They have the particular mission or aims and objective that is the propagation of Christianity, hence they are known as Christian Missionaries. Missionary means a person sent on a religious mission, especially one sent to promote Christianity in a foreign country.

A person sent by a church into an area to carry on evangelism or other activities as educational or hospital work, a person strongly in favour of a programme, set of principles etc., who attempts to persuade or convert others, a person who is sent on mission.¹ A person who has been sent to a foreign country to teach their religion to the people who live there.²

Hierarchy of Missionaries in Odisha: In each and every system there is an administrative set up. Institution cannot run smoothly without the administrative set up. This is the key stone of well-functioning of any institutions in this world. Church is a religious institution where the missionaries of different level are working for the spread and growth of Christianity not only in Odisha but also in the world. The administrative set up of Church is similar throughout the world but some differences are there on the basis of denominations and local convenient. Each and every denomination Christians have well set up administrative system is there. Roman Catholic Christians have well structure administrative system is there by which Churches are functioning smoothly. This happens because of certain groups of peoples engaged in this administrative work. The Churches have been divided into numbers of administrative units and accordingly the missionaries being appointed to run these units. Pastor and Bishops are the most important designated missionaries to run the churches of different denominations but there are different levels of designated missionaries not only in Roman Catholic but also in every denomination Christianity for Church administration. These missionaries are such as *Pastor, Touring Catechist, Deacon, Priest, Parish Priest, Vicar General, Bishop, Arch-Bishop, Cardinal and Pope.*³

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Missionaries in Odisha: There are so many religious leaders who lead the religious activities in the society for spreading and development of their respective religion. Unless the efforts of these peoples no religion can developed. They are the key stone of each and every religion of this world. All denominations of Christianity provided training and educate these peoples to be technically sound for propagation of religion and motivation to the peoples to accept Christianity.

Pastor is a grass root level preacher of Christianity. Most of Denominations have Pastor in village level or in the lowest unit of Church activities. The Committee of the Village unit of Christianity or Church is known as *Mandali* appoints Pastor for church activities. In the Roman Catholic *Mandali Upadestha* (who gives good advice/direction to the people) is equivalent to the Pastors of other denominations. The village committee appoints *Upadestha* or Pastor and trained by Christian organizations to be skillful to guide *Mandali* in right direction.⁴

Though an individual is the root or foundation of church still then village is the last and lowest unit of Christian organization or church administration. Odisha is village based State in the Republic of India. There are 51349 villages and 47529 inhabited villages in Odisha as per Data Handbook of ST and SC of Orissa.⁵ Village constitutes with a number of families and when a numbers of Christian families live a community life that speaks a village life. Some Christian families live together in some parts of Odisha and in some parts they live in scattered. In Urban areas of Odisha most of the Christian families live scattered way excluding few noted villages which had been established in initial time of Christianity in this land such as Christianpore, Societypore, Satahator Lacy Sahi, PaetonSahi, Makarabag, Thulasipore Stewart Patna at Cuttack and Hilpatna at Berhampur.⁶ The tribal Christians are basically fond of village life but after industrialization that village life is greatly affected and at present in some tribal areas they live scattered way for searching agricultural field. But most of the Dalit Christians are living a village or a community life in Odisha.⁷ The Christian Village life is some extend different than other community life because they live with caring and sharing each other in a village. Each and every Christian village has its own committee to take all decisions on socio-religious feast and festivals. The committee is the highest body in the village for all purpose with guidance of village *Pastor*.

Village committee recommends any families for social and religious functions and also recommends to higher body to any one of the young villagers for religious participation and for marriages within church principles.⁸ Though there are number of denominations in Christianity still then village is the key stone of the church activities. The village committee constitutes taking president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and other members in modern system but in some places of Odisha it is like Behera (president), Adhikary (vice-president), Chhatia (who united people for meeting) and the *Upadestha* (Pastor or village preacher or who advices to people). The strength of the committee sometimes 5, 7, 9 or 11 depending on the population of the village.⁹ This is the core committee to take decisions of the Christian villages but in important case the committee will ask for general body meeting where all family heads basically male members take part for decision and in some villages in tribal Odisha all villagers both men and women take part in decision making. Whether it is a core committee meeting or a general village meeting, the people

pray in the name of Christ for fruitfulness of the meeting while Pastor or Behera or head of the village starts to pray in the beginning and at the end of the meeting again people offer prayer with thanks giving to Christ for success of the meeting.¹⁰ The Village Committee and Core Committee can make hundred percent efforts to solve the village problems by counseling villagers. If not possible, then the matter is placed before *Mandali* or *Parish* to solve the problem.

It is one of the units of the church administration which constitutes with one village or more than one village. It is seen in all denominations Christianity in Odisha. *Mandali* is the lowest unit for some denominations in some areas of Odisha but in Roman Catholic Christianity it is a unit of church administration. The village may not have church or prayer house but there must be a church or prayer house in a *Mandali*. Church plays key role in entire activities of the *Mandali*. All decisions of *Mandali* take in the premises of Church. Though there is a committee to take all decisions of *Mandali* still then *Pastor* plays key role regarding all matters of the *Mandali*. *Mandali* has its own committee constitutes taking President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint- Secretary, Treasurer, and Executive members.

Pastor is a permanent member of the committee. Church is the center place of all activities of the *Mandali*. All decisions of the *Mandali* taken by the core committee and in important matters the general body meeting convene for decision where all heads of the family members of the *Mandali* participate. There are numbers of associations working under the *Mandali* formed taking heads of the families known as a *Mandali* Committee and other committees are like Women Association (NariSangha), Youth Association (Yuba Sangha or Young boys and Girls) and child Association (ShishuSangha).¹¹ These associations are formed all most all denominations of the Christianity in Odisha but most of these associations seen in Roman Catholic *Mandali*. There is church gathering in Sunday for Sunday Prayer in every churches of all denominations of Christianity and time to time a number of feast and festivals celebrate with pomp and splendor. The collection of donations is done from each family of the *Mandali* to meet the expenses of the feast and festivals. But the non-catholic *Mandali* indicates its bigger size in population and also in area like Utkal Baptist *Mandali*, Gajapati.

The Touring Catechist is one of the most important Church activists in Roman Catholic who assist the Parish Priest in religious as well as social activities in the Parish. A Touring Catechist makes his visit or tour to all villages/*Mandali*s for religious activities. He is the bridge between the Parish and *Mandali*.

Deacon is a person under in training to be priest in Roman Catholic Christian denomination in Odisha in particular and world in general. Before ordain as a priest a candidate goes with rigorous training with biblical and social issues.

Priest/Parish Priest/ Pastor: The Parish Priest/Pastors are the real grass root preachers for church activities in Christianity. The Parish Priest or Pastor is the head of the church administration in the locality. The Father for Roman Catholic or Pastor for other denominations is the head of the Parish/Pastorate in Christianity. The Parish is the unit of Diocese of Church administration in Odisha in particular and world in general. The Parish basically seen in Roman Catholic denomination and Pastorate is the administrative units in

church administration in most of denomination excluding Roman Catholic in Odisha. Though Father (Priest of Roman Catholic) is the head of the parish still then the parish committee takes all decisions with the approval of Parish Priest on religious activities of the Parish.¹² Parish Committee known as Parish Council is a highest body in the Parish. This Parish Council constitutes with the representatives of all Mandali under the Parish.¹³ The Head of the Mandali represents in the Parish Council and participate in the discussions of every aspects of Mandali and all decisions of Parish Council is informed to all families of Mandali and executes properly for prosperity of Mandali.

Dean: The Dean is the head of the Deanery is an upper body in the church administration of Roman Catholic Christianity in Odisha. The Deanery constitutes taking a number of Parishes of a particular region. The Chief Priest of Parish is known as Parish Priest and the Chief Priest of all Parishes are the members of the Deanery. They nominate one among them as the Dean of concern Deanery who is the head of Deanery connects between Parish and Diocese. The Dean has power to channelize all official messages to all concern Parishes and all sorts of decisions, problems and difficulties of Parishes are informed to the Diocese. All religious, financial and governance systems are discussed in the Deanery Meeting held in the Deanery Parish with given schedule served by the Dean Parish Priest.¹⁴ The Pastorate system prevailed among all denominations of Christianity except Roman Catholic in Odisha. The Pastorate of some denominations is bigger in size with population and area than the Parish of Roman Catholic. Sometimes Pastorate is equal with Diocese of Roman Catholic in governance point of view.

Vicar General: The Vicar general is the deputy of Bishop under the particular region. The Vicariate is one of the functional units seen only in Roman Catholic Christianity in Odisha in particular and world in general. The Diocese is divided into a number of Vicariate on the basis of geographical location of Deaneries and the population of Parishes under Deaneries.¹⁵ And basically the Vicariates are constituted with the deaneries. The Priests' Council of Diocese nominates senior priests for the post of required numbers of Vicar Generals with the approval of Concerned Bishop of the diocese.¹⁶ Vicar General is the head of Vicariate in all purposes such as religious and administrative activities. The office of Vicariate is attached with the headquarters of diocese and sometime concerned Parish of Vicar General communicates as the office of Vicar General.

Bishop: The Bishop is the head of Diocese. The Diocese is the higher body in church administration of Roman Catholic in Odisha and in the same time the Diocese is the highest body of Church administration of non-Catholic denominations in Odisha. Except Roman Catholic there are numbers of Christian denominations like Baptist, Lutheran, and Pentecost etc. The Bishops are the head of diocese as an administrator and also on religious affairs. Even in Pastorate some denominations are similar to that of diocese of Roman Catholic and Baptist where the Bishops are the head of respective pastorate. The Bishops are the chief of dioceses in all denominations of Christianity in Odisha. There is a diocesan committee to take all religious and administrative decisions for the diocese. There are five diocese of Roman Catholic Christianity in Odisha such as Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur, Berhampur, Baleswar and Raurkela.¹⁷ The Diocesan Committee formed with the

representatives of the priest of all Parishes of the Diocese. Though there are different committees in the diocese to execute the policies resolved by the diocesan committee with the consent and approval of the concerned Bishop. The Christians of other denominations have more or less similar functional structure in Odisha but the functional units of other denominations of Christianity are similar except Roman Catholic in Odisha. The highest functional body of Roman Catholic is the Arch-diocese in the state, Diocese for Baptist and some other denominations it is Mandali or Pastorate. The Arch-Bishop is highest Authority of Roman Catholic in Odisha but Bishops are the head of other denomination in their respective diocese of the state.

Arch-Bishop: The Arch-Bishop is the head of the Arch-Diocese who is the chief or main of Arch-diocese. This missionary post is only seen in Roman Catholic Christianity in Odisha in particular and world in general. There are five dioceses in Roman Catholic of Odisha as above discussed. Among these, Cuttack-Bhubaneswar diocese is the main or Arch-Diocese. The head of this diocese is known as Arch-Bishop who is the chief Bishop among the Bishops in Odisha. The Cuttack-Bhubaneswar archdiocese was created in 1974 when Cuttack mission was divided with the creation of Berhampur diocese. Rev. Henry D' Souza was the first archbishop of this archdiocese.¹⁸

Sisters: Sisters or nun is well-known in Roman Catholic Christianity as women missionaries who are preaching and teaching Christianity through extending health care to the poor patients, supporting womenfolk in empowering financial strength through SHGs and providing education to the needy.

CONCLUSION: The discussion reveals that the above mentioned missionaries are the main tools or mechanisms who are working among the Christians and Christianity in Odisha. These missionaries are the key stone for the functions and deeply connect people with the people of Christianity. These missionaries such as *Pastor, Touring Catechist, Deacon, Priest, Parish Priest, Vicar General, Bishop and Arch-Bishop* are working as the head of Village, Mandali, Deanery, Vicariate, Diocese and Arch-diocese functioning in Odisha. Most of the denominations have Village, Mandali and Diocese which are the basic administrative units in Odisha but Catholic Christianity have more administrative units seen in Odisha Christian history. Christianity develops and spread through this functional units with the active participation of person concerned who are taking care of respective units. These unit brings the idea of Christianity to the people, nurture and guide them to be true Christian in believes and also in practice.

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