



HISTORIC MARCHING OF MISSIONARIES FROM BREKLUM TO KORAPUT: AN EPOCH MAKING EVENT

Dr Raghmani Naik*

Abstract: *The evangelical activities of Undivided Koraput District followed the formation of Breklum Mission on 19th September, 1876 A.D. in the Northern part of West Germany. The motive behind this mission was nothing but to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation to all the people of the world to believe Jesus Christ, the only savior. The Mission was the brain child of Rev. Christian Jensen, a peitist of Breklum. To produce missionaries “a Breklum Mission Seminary was established on 10th April 1877. As the first batch was being trained, a request was sent by missionary working in Andhra Pradesh (Rajahmundry) to send missionaries to the Bastar (Now Chhatisgarh) area of Madhya Pradesh. So, two dedicated young persons were selected by the Mission Society named Ernst Pohl and Hermann Bothmann. They started their journey to India on 23rd December, 1881 A.D. and reached Koraput on 15th May, 1882 A.D. Thereafter, the missionaries heralded a new epoch in this inaccessible and most backward region of Odisha by bringing a handful of welfare schemes for aboriginal natives.*

Keywords: *Koraput, Breklum, missionaries, Bastar, Kotpad, Koraput, Churches*

*Head, Dept. of History, NSCB College, Sambalpur



1. INTRODUCTION:

The history of undivided Koraput district underwent a great transmutation with the coming of Breklum Mission on 15th May, 1882 A.D. This article relates to missionary marching from Breklum to Koraput and brief account of the sufferings and tribulation of the pioneer missionaries on their journey. It also indicates how the missionary activities took place such in a hilly and inaccessible region inhabited by the aboriginals and dalit people.

2. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF BREKLUM MISSION

The Schleswig-Holstein Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society was founded by Pastor Christian Jensen, a peitist of Breklum in the Northern part of West Germany on **19th September, 1876 A.D** in the pastorate of Breklum.¹ The SHELMS was popularly known as “**Breklum Mission**” because Breklum was the headquarters of the work². This mission was built on the foundation of belief and prayer. 40 laymen (farmers, Craftsmen, District Magistrates and 20 pastors) from different parts of the Schleswig-Holstein province at Breklum had assembled on this auspicious occasion.

Breklum Mission, the brain child of the Rev. Christian Jensen , a very devoted servant of Lord Jesus Christ - the only Saviour and Redeemer of Soul, was the most divine thing of his life and preaching .The theme of his prayer was ‘Jesus Saves Souls’. His entire objective planned for mission work was ‘founded on faith and action’ and his motto was ‘Beten and Arbeiten’ (pray and work) ⁴. To produce missionaries, he set up ‘a Breklum Mission Seminary’ on 10th April 1877 A.D⁵. To begin with, 12 members were admitted and dedicated to the Lord’s service so that trained workers would preach the Gospel in other areas of Germany. The motive behind this mission was nothing but to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to all the people of the world to believe Jesus Christ, the only savior. This great mission society started doing missionary work not only in India but also in Africa and South America.

As the first batch was under training, a request was sent by missionary working in Andhra Pradesh (Rajahmundry) to send missionaries to the Bastar (Now Chhatisgarh) area of Madhya Pradesh. Then, the Breklum mission seminary decided to send two missionaries for the purpose. Two dedicated young persons were selected by SHEL Mission Society named Ernst Pohl and Hermann Bothmann. Bothmann was a man of practical bent of mind and a master builder whereas Pohl was a Lutheran Theologian and Artist.⁶ So, out of 12



trained missionaries; Rev. Harmann Bothmann and Rev. Ernst Pohl were the first ones to come to Koraput in India –Both were ordained along with two others for Sumatra on 24th November, 1881 by General Superintendent D.Godt at Breklum.⁷ These four candidates gathered at the pastorate of Breklum by 8.30 AM. in the morning. Pastor Jensen requested all of them to kneel down and pray for their safe journey. It was a remarkable day for Breklum Mission as four missionaries were ordained to witness the Lord among the heathen.

A farewell Sunday was organized at the Breklum Church on **4th December, 1881**. The parents of Rev. Pohl bade farewell to him on 23rd December, 1881. The two young missionaries left for India on **23rd December' 1881** A.D. with the words of God given to them to face all the difficulties on the way. They had traveled via Ceylon (Srilanka) and finally arrived at Madras on **21st January, 1882 A.D.** Thereafter they went to the house of the '**Leipzig Mission.**' One German lady missionary 'Senior Handmann' by name greeted them in German language and received them in her house.⁸ She cared them with motherly love. Here they had opportunity to learn Hindi language and practised English with Mrs. Handmann. After three weeks of stay at Madras, they started for Rajahmundry on **10th February, 1882** via Cocanada (kakanada) and reached at Rajahmundry on **13th February, 1882** A.D.⁹ After a long journey, they took rest at Rajahmundry with other missionary friends and planned for their work. Mr. Hellis of 'Plymouth Brethern Missionary' accompanied the first missionaries from Kakanada to Rajahmundry and Dr. Schmidt and Rev. Artman of Rajahmundry Mission heartily received them there.

Bastar (at Present Chattisgarh District) a small native region of the Central province had been selected as the mission field because it is centrally located¹⁰. For weeks the Missionaries stayed with their friends of Rajahmundry mission and made all necessary preparations for their expedition to Bastar State.¹¹ Both of them left for their destination on a mission boat called "Peace Dove"¹² on 15th March 1882 A.D. and they were accompanied by Dr. Schmidt, Artmann and Mr. Hellis¹³. They reached the boarder of Bastar State on 23rd March 1882 A. D. Then they had to walk in the hot climate to reach Jagdalpur, the capital of Bastar on **10th April 1882 A.D.**¹⁴



3. HOSTILITY IN BASTAR

After reaching in Bastar, they entered into negotiations with the authorities over a piece of land but they met with resistance from the Raja of Jagdalpur and his people.¹⁵ Every day they had to approach the king for a piece of land to construct a building. They had selected a site and requested the Maharaja for its lease. The Raja agreed to give some land on lease to the missionaries but deceived them after taking Rs. 100/- with a promise to supply timber for building the residential house, a church and a school but he did not care for it. This event disappointed the Missionaries, yet they did not give up hope¹⁶. Next the Raja asked the missionaries to give him rupees two thousand as loan but the missionaries turned down the Raja's proposal. Therefore, the Raja ordered people not to sell them food and vegetables. Their sufferings were untold. Finally the Raja promised that they would receive the documents on 25th April 1882 A.D. if Rs. 2000/- or Rs. 1000/- would be given as loan.¹⁷ But the king kept quiet after taking money from the Missionaries. The missionaries were despaired of getting land in Jagdalpur. Even at last the cruel Maharaja of Jagdalpur, Bhairam Deo did not allow them to stay there and he conspired with his people to kill instead of allowing them to do missionary work. They were boycotted. Nobody was permitted to work for them. Threats were uttered against them. Besides that, the missionaries suffered from Malaria there and decided to leave the place and go to Koraput.¹⁸

4. PIONEER MISSIONARIES AT KOTPAD

Therefore, Bothmann and Pohl had no option but to flee to nearby place Kotpad on **10th May, 1882** A.D. to escape death. It was the only route to escape from wrath of Jagdalpur Maharaja. After reaching at Kotpad, they took shelter in the police station because at that time, there was no temporary resort as we are having now-a-days. They met an English man at Kotpad, Travers by name who was Police Superintendent then. He had his own room which he shared with the missionaries. On their way from Tarapur to Kotpad, there was heavy rain and they were wet in toto. Here they changed their clothes and went to the quarters of the jail and rested at night.

Before the Breklum Mission came to Kotpad, the missionaries from Bobbili had posted native catechist in this place to preach Christianity in Jeypore Estate. According to Rev. W. Ahren's report, '**Some Baptist Christians** were there in Jeypore Estate before the arrival of the Breklum missionaries. But they were not giving Christian teaching and their faith was



weak because they were living with Hindu people and later on they became Hindu also. So, they could not convert the people. The first Baptist Christian at Kotpad was Krutibasi Mohanty. When the first missionaries came to Kotpad his successor Satyabadi Patnaik and his wife Hira had already been prepared to be Christian after 12 years, but the result was naught. Besides him, a Christian married couple lived in the village of Joba who shifted later on to Churchunda. The couple was Gongada (Jerimias) and his wife Droupadi (Ruth). There were a very few Baptist Christians at Jeypore, Umarmkote and Nabarangpur by that time, when the pioneer missionaries entered this District. So, Mr. Travers had a very little impression on Christianity. Therefore, he had a deep impression on them and supplied his own bed laying himself on the ground.

Next day morning, they took farewell from Travers and started their journey from Kotpad towards Koraput. On the way, they spent the night at Shosahandi. Next day, they reached at Borigumma and the following day at Pujariput. From Pujariput they arrived at Koraput exactly at noon (12 O' Clock) on the **15th May, 1882** A.D. via Ranigada.¹⁹

The natural view ranging from Kotpad to Koraput was very much attractive to them. As per the advice of the Travers at Kotpad, they came to the Government building at Koraput. Then two English Civil Officers who were on tour welcomed to the missionaries and arranged for their temporary staying. They felt safe and quite comfortable with the English people living here. Above all. Koraput district was under Jeypore Estate in the Madras Presidency then. The missionaries felt it safe to come to Koraput as it was the place of British officers and was adjacent to Jagadapur.²⁰

The plan of God is beyond human understanding. Neither the Breklum Mission nor the pioneer missionaries thought of starting any missionary work in the Jeypore Estate with Koraput as its first mission station because their first and foremost choice was Bastar in central India which was a strategic geographical location for the mission. But it is said "Man proposes and God disposes." They were compelled to move from Bastar to Koraput due to hostile attitude of Bastar Maharaja. The persecution to the pioneer missionaries by the king of Jagdalpur was a blessing in disguise for the people of undivided Koraput District as the persecution to the early Christians of Jerusalem was to the other regions of Judaea, Samaria, (Acts 8:1) Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19)²¹



After that, as many as 70 missionaries came to Koraput to continue evangelical work and they heralded a new epoch not only in the life of the poor illiterate natives but also in the inaccessible hilly regions of undivided Koraput district. They were –

1. Rev. Hermann Bothmann & Mrs. 1881-1913
2. Rev. Ernst Pohl & Mrs. 1881-1906
3. Rev. Julius Reimers & Mrs. 1884-1893
4. Rev. Lukas Harle B & Mrs. 1885-1896
5. Rev. J.Timmcke & Mrs. Timmche 1885-1916
1927-1934
6. Rev. Johnnes Timm & Mrs. 1885-1900
7. Rev. Wilhelm Ahrens & Mrs. 1886-1916
8. Rev. Wilhelm Von Frieling 1886-1911
9. Rev. Theodor Ahrens & Mrs. 1886-1916
10. Rev. Ernst Gloyer & Mrs. 1888-1916 &
1926-1936
11. Rev. Dr. Paul Schulze & Mrs. 1889-1916 &
1928
12. Rev. Jehannes Leuckfeld & Mrs. 1893-1916 &
1926
13. Rev. Christoph Wohlenberg & Mrs. 1895-1916
14. Rev. H. Kuhlmann 1896-1900
15. Anna Asmussen 1899-1915
16. Rev. Edlef Sell & Mrs. 1900-1916
17. Rev. Hans Larsen & Mrs. 1900-1916
18. Rev. Jurgen Stacker & Mrs. 1901-1916
19. Rev. Hans Haack & Mrs. 1902-1916
20. Rev. Fredrich Hubner Sen & Mrs. 1903-1913 &
1926
21. Rev. Siem Speck & Mrs. 1903-1913



22.	Diakonisse Elisabeth Reimer	1905-1916
23.	Diakonisse Mathilde Jespersen	1905-1916 & 1926
24.	Rev. Gustav Russing & Mrs.	1905-1916
25.	Rev. Hinrich Speck & Mrs.	1906-1914
	Rev. Fritz Oppermann	1906-1914
26.	Rev. OleJensen & Mrs.	1906-1916
27.	Rev. Hens Taft & Mrs.	1907-1916 and 1924, DMS
28.	Rev. Kay Gimm & Mrs.	1907-1916
29.	Rev. Rasmus Jorgensen & Mrs.	1908-1916
30.	Diakonisse Herwine Knuth	1909-1916
31.	Diakonisse Otty Jensen	1909-1916 & 1926
32.	Rev. Paul Weber & Mrs.	1909-1920
33.	Hedwig Sibbers	1910-1916
34.	Rev. Peter Piening & Mrs.	1910-1916
35.	Rev. Henrich Stackere & Mrs.	1911-1916 and 1926-1930
36.	Ilse Von Wedel	1912-1915
37.	Rev. Anderss Andersen & Mrs.	1912-1916 & 1934, DMS
38.	Rev. Rudolf Tauscher & Mrs.	1927-1968
39.	Wilhelm Brasen & Mrs.	1927-1946
40.	Rev. Niko Laus Helms & Mrs.	1929-1950
41.	Rev. Dr. Henrich Meyer & Mrs.	1929-1951
42.	Rev. Traugott Jungjohann & Mrs.	1932-1958
43.	Rev. Johannes Bohwedder & Mrs.	1933-1939
44.	Rev. Christian Lohse & Mrs.	1935-1946



45.	Rev.	Reimer Speck & Mrs.	1936-1972
46.	Rev.	Dr. Friedrich Hubner Jun & Mrs.	1937-1946
47.	Rev.	Walter Ahrens & Mrs.	1938-1946
48.	Mrs.	Lene Langlo	1939-1946
49.	Dr.	Martin Scheel & Mrs.	1951-1957
50.	Miss	Magdalene Keding	1951-1961
51.	Miss	Barbara Janke	1953-1975
52.	Rev.	Dr. Otto Waack & Mrs.	1954-1967
53.	Dr.	Sator	1955-1957
54.	Dr.	Elizabeth Probst	
55.	Dr.	Hansjürgen Mollat & Mrs.	1958-1966
56.	Miss	Alwine Berg	1961-1963
57.	Dr.	Karin Winkler	1960-1964 & 1972-1974
58.		Ute Dohler	1963-1966
59.	Dr.	Dankfried Steuernagel	1963-1971
60.	Miss	Erika Wittenberg	1963-1976
61.		Anneliese Schemidt	1965-1968
62.	Dr.	Uwe Johannsen & Mrs.	1965-1970
63.	Rev.	Dr. Reinhart Hummel & Mrs.	1966-1973
64.	Rev.	Jan Kleinig & Mrs.	1966-1973
65.	Miss	Anne Marie Giesel Busch	1966-1978
66.	Miss	Uta Wingel Meyer	1968-1969
67.	Dr.	Annelene Meyer	1970-1971
68.	Dr.	Eckard Winkler & Mrs.	1972-1974
69.	Miss	Dora Wegner	1973-1974
70.		Helga Salzmann	1974-



5. CONCLUSION :

They had to get through huddles innumerable and suffering untold. In the face of all this, they did their best for disdained and helpless people who were deprived of seeing the light of modern world. Initially, they faced threatening and harassment not only from police personnel but also high caste people. The missionaries were the only people who realized the problems and difficulties of the natives and endeavoured to bring a handful of welfare programmes like eradication of illiteracy, economic upliftment, social mobilization, consciousness of health and hygiene etc. They ultimately succeeded to do all measures adopted by them. The missionaries established evangelical centres for the propagation and popularization of Christianity and opened missionary stations at all four important places of Koraput i.e. a) Koraput (1884 A.D) b) Kotpad (1885 A.D) c) Jeypore (1887 A.D) d) Nabarangapur (1889 A.D)²² Today, these are the main centres of the Lutheran Church activities. Furthermore, several new missionary centers were opened around for the spread of Christianity. These new stations were Parvatipur in A.P (1890 A. D.), Gunupur (1902 A. D.), Bissam Cuttack (1907 A. D.), Laxmipur (1907 A. D.), Nandapur (1909 A. D.), and Doliambo (1910 A. D.).²³

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