



Communion in Christianity: A Study of Odisha

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Abstract:

Every religion has its own spiritual process for life. Peoples of every religion adopt these processes in their life to reach the heavenly kingdom after death. The heavenly kingdom is possible only through attachments with God by practicing prescribed religious principles. Communion is one of the principles through which Christians keep touch with Christ for eternal life after death. The Communion is a bridge between Christ and Believers of Christ. This communion is a similar process of religious activities throughout world in general and Odisha in particular. The Churches of different denominations practice this communion system as to remember the death and resurrection of Christ till to the second journey of Christ. It is believed that this communion system deals the body and blood of Christ. It is the only most important practice which is going on again and again except other principles of Christianity. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the important aspects of Communion system as well as the key role on the strengthening of Christian life in Odisha in particular and general in the world.

Keywords: Christianity, Communion, Believers, Religion, Odisha

Introduction: World is a place of all religions. From micro to macro religions have certain principles which are known as religious principle. Without these principles religion has no identity. All religions are known through its prescribed code of conduct. All religions have been observed a group of peoples. Man has been associated with certain religion and religious activities. Without religion man cannot live a happy life. Every religion speaks on life after death. To earn that eternal life is possible through practice of prescribed code of conduct or religious principles. Christianity is one of the major religions in the world. In Christianity so many principles are there and Communion is one of them. The Communion is not Unlike Baptism, which is a one-time event, Communion is a practice meant to be observed over and over throughout the life of a Christian. It is a Holy time of worship when the Christians corporately come together as one body to remember and celebrate what Christ did for them.¹

Meaning and definitions of Communion: Communion is closely connected with the Christians in general and Roman Catholics in particular throughout the world. In each and every corner of this world have been practicing this communion system as the part of religious and spiritual life. This communion associated with different names such as *Holy Communion*, *The Sacrament of Communion*, *Bread and Wine*, *The Body and Blood of Christ*, *The Lords Supper* and the *Eucharist*. The Communion is an act or instance of sharing a Christian sacrament in which consecrated bread and wine are consumed as memorials of Christ's death or as symbols for the realization of a spiritual union between Christ and communicant or as the body and blood of Christ.² Communion is a close relationship with someone in which feelings and thoughts are exchanged.³ Communion means unity or relation between two i.e. Lord Jesus Christ and the Believers in him through the practice of consuming consecrated bread and wine in the name of Jesus sharing among the faith holders.

Process and methods of Communion in Odisha: The Church is a communion with Christ, and every celebration of the Eucharist brings about this communion and maintains it. If anyone want to get the most out of the Eucharist they will need to offer themselves and enter into communion with and his body.⁴ The Communion is most important because the Bible says that he who eats me will live because of me.⁵ Again it is believed that the Eucharistic communion brings about in a sublime way the mutual abiding of Christ and each of his followers: “Abide in me and I in you”.⁶ this Communion system started by early believers who had been baptized and devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.⁷ The celebration of Eucharist started where the peoples gather to hear the Gospel that has been handed down to the generation by the apostles and to hear the preaching of those who trace their priesthood back to the apostles. The Christians share their prayers and the breaking of the Eucharistic bread. Yet there is a further aspect of this communion all who believed were together and had all things in common and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all as any had need.⁸ Pope John Paul says that each Holy Mass they are called to measure themselves against the ideal of communion which the Acts of the Apostles paints as a model for the Church in every age.⁹

Odisha is one of the states of Republic of India where more than 2% percent peoples are Christians from all denominations of all sections of Odia people. This Communion system has been practicing all Christians in general and Catholics in very particular. Even the Baptist Christians and Lutherans also make practice of this communion as their religious rite. The Eucharist starts with the preparation of the gifts which are brought to the priest, who lays them on the altar. The gifts are essentially the bread and wine required for the sacrifice. Most of the believers of the congregation bring these gifts to the altar in procession. By doing so, all will

realize that they bring to God gifts to represent the spiritual offering each one makes of himself of his work of his pains and joys.¹⁰ The procession may be accompanied by songs and music. All must feel that they are making their contribution to the common offering of the Church. The collection taken on Sundays gives all an opportunity to offer something to God for the needs of the Church and of the community.¹¹ The priest having laid the gifts on the altar, recites the blessing. Raising the plate with bread, he thanks God who gives them all good things, saying: Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.' All will answer, Blessed be God for ever. The priest again takes the cup containing the wine and water, raises it and recites the blessing over what 'will become spiritual drink.' All will answer: Blessed be God for ever.

The priest invites the faithful to pray, speaks to brethren that their sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father. All will answer 'May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands to the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his Church.' The priest recites a prayer over the gifts to consecrate them to God. The priest asks the Holy Spirit to come and sanctify the gifts prepared that they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The priest will speak while he takes the cup with the wine and recalls how, when supper was ended, Christ took the cup, rendered thanks and praise to his Father and gave the cup to his disciples saying; take this all of you and drink from it; this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting Covenant.' It will be shed for you and for all men so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me. In this moment all will say My Lord and my God.¹² After this the priest eats the body and drinks the blood of Christ. Then he goes forward to give to all those who wish to communicate the bread of life, saying to each one: "The body of Christ; when

he gives communion under both species, he says “the body and blood of Christ. The communicants receive their Lord with and return to their places. A hymn may be sung during or after Communion to express the joy of those who come to receive their Lord. After Communion, there follows a time of silent prayer of adoration and thanksgiving, then the priest sums up the feelings of the faithful in a last prayer of thanksgiving to which all answer “Amen”.¹³

Christian believers in Communion Practice: All Christians may present in the rite and ritual time of Communion service but only those Christians are eligible to accept Communion can deeply involve in that ritual time. There is no age bar to participate in the Communion ritual except Roman Catholic. The Catholic Church has a variety of rules and guidelines about who can receive Communion. In Catholic Church only those who baptized and having the practice of Confession can receive Communion. It is noted that the Catholic Christians can receive Communion without Confession for a particular Communion ritual when he/she feels that they have free from sin or not done any sin from last Confession.¹⁴

Impact of Communion in Christians Life: Communion is the spiritual food of Christians in general and Catholics in particular. The Eucharist unites the Christians with Jesus Christ. Communion transforms the ordinary people into a divine character. The Christians of Odisha, very particularly the Roman Catholics believed that this Communion separates believers from sin and connects with Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Communion renew the faith of faithful on God and strengthen the bonding of believers with God. This Communion argues to believers to be free from all sins by confessing what they have done wrong against any people of the society. Unless it, the believers are not eligible to accept communion or fully participate in the rituals of Eucharist. So, it strengthens the social relations and harmony within the believers and outside of believers.

Conclusion:

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