Chapter 9

Anti-caste movements

Anti-caste movements have a long history in India, from as early as the mid first millennium BC with the start of the Buddhist era. Although the Telugu region included major centres of Buddhist civilisation around the lower Krishna river in the centuries following, continuities from those ancient times are elusive. It is a reformist Saivite movement led by Basava, Basaveśvara or Basavanna, an official of King Bijjala of Kalyana[a] in the twelfth century, that is relevant here. This was at its root hostile to discrimination on the basis of caste, since assertive and absolute devotion to Lord Siva was the only and essential basis for discriminating. It was necessarily fiercely anti-Brahmin.

‘Basavesvara is understood to have belonged to a Brāhmana family of noble traditions. But he was keen to draw a dark curtain over his hereditary superiority and forget his past kinship and kindreds’. He adopted new parents and choose different kinsmen, ‘and they were all drawn from the low classes and communities, particularly those degraded and segregated as outcasts. Again and again, he pronounces the name of Dōhara Kakkayya, a low-born tanner, as his father and Mādara Chennayya, a cobler, as his grandfather’. (Desai 1968: 202)

In the following century, Palkuriki Somanatha, gave the movement the Basava Purāṇa, a great classic of early Telugu literature and in effect a biography of Basaveśvara. This was potentially a powerful tool of propaganda embodying this original message down the centuries, even if it was in practice rarely heard. The Viraśaiva or Lingayat movement itself, however, underwent a ‘Brahminisation’ with ‘a validation of caste identities and of brahminic superiority’ (Narayana Rao 1990 15-16)[b]. Srisailam, the main Saivite pilgrimage city of Andhra Pradesh, became its Telugu centre.[c] As was seen in Chapter 1, aspects of the Basava Purāṇa are alive in contemporary Madiga consciousness.

In this chapter it is the interaction between Christian anti-caste influences and such earlier traditions that the readings enable us to consider. The first observer, Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough, looks for the thinking and the organising in the local society that made the Christian message less than completely alien when it reached Madigas in the nineteenth century. The Rev. John E. Clough, with the first Mrs Clough, established the startlingly successful American Baptist Mission at Ongole in the Coastal region of Andhra Pradesh. Begun in 1866, it became a mission to the Madigas. Already by 1883 when Emma Rauschenbusch first came to Ongole, there were over 20,000 members, making it the largest Baptist church in the world.[d] The Census of India for 1891 reported a total of 84,158 Christians of the American Baptist Telugu Mission. Emma subsequently studied in Switzerland and wrote a PhD thesis on Mary Wollstonecraft, a pioneer of English feminism. This was published as Mary Wollenstonecraft and the Rights of Women (London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1898). She married John Clough after the death of his first wife and returned with him to Ongole, as a researcher and writer rather than an active mission worker. She sought to understand the Madiga experience behind the conversion in its Hindu context and to present the story to the wider world. In doing so, as a privileged observer she provides an unparalleled perspective on Madiga life in the nineteenth century.[e]

In the last section, on Christian conversion, her own work is followed up with accounts of the experience of Madiga Christians of a later generation in Telangana.
Chermanista and Nazraiah

Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough 1899.
While Sewing Sandals.
Or Tales of a Telugu Pariah Tribe. London:
Hodder & Stoughton

[pp 103-07]  The Chermanishta sect

In the Chermanishta sect there are meetings that need the cover of darkness. Vague reports only reach the outer world of that which is done in secret. Once a year the members of the Chermanishta sect meet in the house of one of their number. They may belong to any other cult or religion, and yet come to this secret meeting. Religious distinctions and caste distinctions are wiped out for the time being. Strange to say, Brahmin, Sudra and Madiga are, during that night, on a basis of equality. But the utmost secrecy is required of all. In the morning all resume their own caste, and no one dare divulge the knowledge of the presence of the others during the orgies of the night.

As midnight approaches, the Guru enters the house of meeting; the rest follow, one after another. After all are seated, the Guru goes around with a vessel containing sarai [toddy], and lets each one take a sip. In the other hand he has a piece of meat, and touches the tongue of each. He himself finally eats and drinks of both. Then nine kinds of meat, previously cooked, are passed around: fowl, pigeon, pig, goat, cow, donkey, cat, dog and buffalo. Each one puts a little of each on a plate made of dried leaves and eats it, while sarai flows plentifully.

While eating, all sing: ‘We have now severed both caste and family connection. We have joined together both ruling caste and servants. We desire to be saved by the Guru. This is the time.’

The piece of meat, which touches the tongue of each, seems intended to wipe out every social distinction between them. Later in the night a woman is brought in – generally, it seems, a Madiga woman – and there are orgies that form a loathsome representation of the creative force in nature. At last the Guru announces the place for the next meeting, and all steal away silently, one after another, as they came.

The fact that the Madigas are admitted to the rites which join kulapathi and dasulathi, ‘ruling caste and servants,’ is not without its own significance. Perhaps the Brahmins learned the mysteries of the cult from the aborigines. The members of the sect claim that the deeds of the night are free from lust and vice, because the mind is filled with thoughts of worship.

Nowhere in books could I find a reference to the Chermanishta sect. I concluded that perhaps it was Sakti worship under a local name – perhaps the name of the Guru who first taught its rites in parts of the Telugu country. I thought it would have to be classified as a worship of Siva, because Saktism generally centres in Parvati, the consort of Siva. But I was told repeatedly, by those who claimed that they knew, that it was part of the Ramanuja sect.

An explanation was given me which is a mixture of fact and hearsay. My informants knew
I knew Bangarapu Thatiah seventeen years ago, when he was yet in his prime, honoured and loved by all. I saw him again when old age rested heavily upon him and his memory failed him when he tried to recall the happenings of yesterday. But when I asked him about the far-away past, his almost sightless eyes seemed to peer into the distance, and he told me many things.

‘I called our Dora and he came,’ he said to me, and then relapsed into silence. I looked about on the mission-houses, the school-houses, and the busy activity of the mission compound. And I remembered how this man, many years ago, came to this spot, his heart burning within him, to see whether the white teacher had not come. He found it overgrown with cactus, and Gundla Pentiah living in a hut in one corner of the compound, a faithful man, who told him that the Ongole Missionary was yet in Nellore, but was soon coming.

Thatiah’s plea was the last link in the chain of circumstances that brought the Ongole Missionary to this place. He could justly say before the younger generation, when he leaned heavily on the sturdy shoulders of the young men, ‘I called our Dora, and he came.’

I said, ‘Thatiah, tell me about the old days.’ He looked about helplessly, and one of the younger men said, ‘Grandfather, the Dorasani wants to know about the time when the Dora first came here.’

‘When the Dora first told me to go and preach, I said, ‘How can I go about alone all the time?’ But he said, ‘Take your wife with you and you will be two.’ After that Satyamah and I always went together. Sometimes she carried the bundle, sometimes I put it on my shoulder. What I preached, she preached; what I ate, she ate. Satyamah was always with me.’

‘Did not men persecute you in the old days?’

Thatiah’s face, grown passive with age, brightened with animation, as he assured me, ‘No one ever abused me, no one persecuted me; men always treated me kindly and respectfully.’

‘They tell me that you were much with Rajayogi Gurus. Did you learn anything from them?’

‘Did I learn anything from them? They told me that there is one God, and that He is Spirit that He has created all things, and pervades all things. It was well that they told me this, and I believed it. But nothing satisfied my soul till I heard of Jesus Christ.’

Thatiah told me this, without hesitation, as one of the facts of his life. He was too old for meditation. Thus I had the summary of Thatiah’s search for truth. He had found a nugget of gold in the Rajayogi sect, but the pearl of great price he had found when he heard of the Christ.

Thatiah had, years before, written a sketch of his life, at the request of the Missionary. This was supplemented by the story of many a man, who could not tell of the old days without bringing in Thatiah at decisive points. A singularly pure and holy life this man led before the eyes of thousands of his people.

He was born when his parents were advanced in years. The duty of caring for them fell upon him. It never occurred to him that he might learn to read. There was no one in those days who would teach a Madiga boy to read. He learned of his father to tan leather, and sew the sandals which the Sudras ordered.

In the time of his grandfather, a Guru of the Ramanuja sect had been invited by the family to come with the idols of Vishnu and perform sacred rites before them. This was repeated on special occasions, and the fees demanded by the priest were paid out of the scant earnings. When his father died, Thatiah took pride in having the funeral ceremonies performed according to the dictates of a Guru of the Ramanuja sect. This was considered an advance, both religiously and socially, upon the cults and customs of the ordinary Madiga.
A very old woman, bent with age, came to Thatiah’s neighbourhood to visit her married daughter. This old woman, Bandikatla Veeramah, was a disciple of the Yogi Pothuluri Veerabramham. She must have been a spiritually-minded woman, and of strong personality. Thatiah and several others soon sat at her feet and learned of her.

The personal history of Veerabramham is clothed in much that is legendary. His father was a devotee of Siva; he himself, when a young man, saw a vision in the field, which invited him to a certain shrine, where he henceforth often held converse with the Deity. After the manner of the Yogi he entered his grave alive, and ordered to have the door closed. His chief disciple, Siddapa, who had been absent, came to the grave and called aloud to his master, for he had not given him the final initiation. With an invisible hand, the words which his master had to say to him were written on his tongue. He departed, and directed his preaching mainly against caste; and prophesied, in the name of his master that in the day when God again became incarnate caste would vanish and all men would be equal.

This was the teaching which Thatiah received from Bandikatla Veeramah. Her life was an illustration of her precepts. People of all castes came and went in her house, even Madigas, though she belonged to the goldsmith caste, and was, therefore, far above them.

The woman in whose house she and her daughter were living began to object to the custom of her tenants. She said, ‘All these people are coming and going. They may touch our cooking utensils, and thus spoil our caste. You can look for another house.’ Rather than ask her followers of low degree to stay away, Veeramah looked for another house. Her heart was large, she loved them all.

When she went away, she talked most lovingly to them: ‘You must be like the children of one mother, for you are the followers of one Guru. Be full of faith, don’t go and sin. Strive without ceasing to earn salvation.’

Thatiah had received his initiation as a Rajayogi Guru from Bandikatla Veeramah. For an hour every day he sat in meditation, his eyes closed, his fingers pressed over ears and nostrils, so that objects of sense might be completely shut out, and the soul might perceive the great, all-pervading Divine Being. He was much with the Rajayogi people, and seems to have been looked upon as a leader among them, because of his religious fervour.

In the Kanigiri Taluk, where Thatiah lived, the soil was dry and hard, and the Sudras had to dig wells in their fields to water the growing crops. In large buckets they brought the water to the surface, and these buckets were made of leather, and had to be made and kept in repair by the Madigas. Thatiah heard that much cattle was dying in the Godavery district, stung by a poisonous fly, and that, therefore, hides were cheap. He decided, with a kinsman, to go north on trade.

It was during his stay in that northern district that Thatiah first heard of the Christ. A Madiga, who was also bent on trade, told him of a Dora who was preaching this new religion. They decided to go and see him, and were kindly received. They went again. Thatiah said, ‘This religion is true. My soul is now satisfied.’ The Padre said, ‘You are going back to your home. Inquire from time to time, for soon a white teacher is coming to Ongole. Go to him; he will tell you more about this religion.’

When Thatiah turned toward home, he was determined to break away from the old life and begin the new. He refused to bow before the village idols. He told the Rajayogi people that he was no longer one of them, that he had found something far better than they had to give. When they asked him which swami he was going to worship, he told them that he bowed to one, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had died for men. A Dora had told him, and another Dora was soon coming who would tell him more.

So bold a declaration from a man of the influence of Thatiah was not to be accepted with indifference. Some of the Madigas, who feared the demons and fiends of the village, predicted that their vengeance would smite them all, because of Thatiah’s daring words. Nor were the Sudras pleased with his determination. His friends reasoned with him, ‘You are believing a God not of this country, but a new God. You are bringing new standards of living among us. Our old-time gods, Poleramah and Ankalamah, you no longer come to worship; you stay away when we beat the drums
on their festal days. Don't you know that they will turn from us and curse us on your account?"

Thatiah was not a man to be abused. No one dared to insult him or ill-treat him. All the more keenly
he felt the isolation when all withdrew from him. Those who had heretofore looked up to him as a
spiritual leader now passed him by. Work that had been promised him by the Sudras was quietly
withdrawn; the pay for work which he had done was not forthcoming.

But the grief that was deepest in all his sore trial came through the desertion of his wife Satyamah.
She did not stand by him. Perhaps she was not greatly to blame; for she had not been with Thatiah
when he opened his heart to the religion of Jesus Christ. He had told her all when he returned, but
at the same time she saw him opposed on every hand. The change in him seemed like a wall
between them, she felt that she was losing her husband, and when relatives and friends, who knew
that Thatiah held her dear, told her that she must save him by sternly opposing him, she lent a
willing ear.

Her former care for his comforts was turned to neglect. His food was often late or unsavoury, and
sometimes he had to go hungry. When he wanted to drink there was no water. His remonstrances
were met by reproaches from her. Finally he said to her: 'By thus plunging me into all kinds of
trouble, you cannot keep me here. I shall join the people of the Christian sect as soon as I can find
them, and I shall eat with them.' The strife was ended. When referring to this circumstance in later
life, Thatiah said simply, 'God in His great mercy changed her mind.'

In all the forsaken condition of those days, Thatiah never forgot that a missionary was coming to
Ongole. Could it be that he had already come? Satyamah agreed with him that it might be well to go
and see.

Tired and footsore Thatiah came to the compound in Ongole, which was said to belong to the
Nellore Missionary. In the midst of it was a little bungalow, but no white teacher living in it. As
Thatiah went about the compound, he must have looked like a man who wanted something, for
Gundla Pentiah saw him, and came out of his hut toward him, and asked, 'Why did you come here?'

'I have come to look for the white teacher. Why is he not here?'

Pentiah was a Christian from Nellore, sent to Ongole to watch the compound and await the coming
of the Missionary. He took Thatiah into his hut, and they talked it over. Pentiah grasped the situation;
he sympathized with Thatiah, and he knew that there would be joy in the mission house at Nellore
should a message be received that there was a man in Ongole, that spot of many prayers, who was
hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Pentiah knew of a way to do. He said, 'Come with me to the house by the hillside, to a lady who is a
friend of the Nellore Missionary. She will know what to do.' They went, made a respectful salaam,
and Pentiah, as spokesman said: 'Ammah, this man, Thatiah, as he went north on trade, saw a
missionary who told him that a white teacher would come to Ongole. He believes in Christ as God,
and has come to see this teacher. As he does not find him here, he is very sad, and wants to know
the reason of the delay. We have, therefore, come to make his request known to you.'

The lady understood. She said to Thatiah: 'I shall write to the Nellore Missionary. Be
ready to come at any time when I send for you.'

Not many days had passed when a cooley arrived in Thatiah's village, asking him to come to
Ongole, for the Missionary had come. With his wife, Satyamah, he hastened on his way, barely
taking needed rest as they walked the fifty miles. The joy when he saw the Nellore Missionary, and
with him a younger man, who was soon to become the Ongole Missionary, is described by Thatiah
as unspeakable. The older of the two men had been stoned in the bazaar of Ongole in the years
gone by. But now, in the spot where his message had been spurned, he had a man before him who
could not hear enough. A holy joy shone in the face of the one man; a yearning desire to hear more
was in the face of the other as he sat hour after hour quenching his thirst.

Outcasts from their own community, Thatiah and his wife had made their way to Ongole.

Received into the religious fellowship of the race that rules over India, they returned home. They
could not have had more than a very dim conception of the fact that they were now counted among
the hosts of men and women who represent the salt of the earth, yet they knew that their days of
isolation were over. With a bundle of tracts and books on their shoulders, as many as they could carry, with the words of benediction from their white teachers ringing in their ears, and a new light in their countenances, they returned to their own village.

And now that ceaseless activity began that bore such abundant fruit. With untiring devotion Thatiah journeyed from village to village, his wife Satyamah always with him. The women loved Satyamah, and would gather about her and ask her whether she was not tired and thirsty after her journey, and take her away to refresh her. Late in life a mild insanity rendered her helpless.

With a display of the same faithfulness which she had shown in accompanying her husband during twenty years, he now cared for her with a gentleness which called forth comment in the Madiga community. When her mind wandered, he took her by the hand, bade her sit down, and gave her to eat.

Thatiah stood like a granite pillar in the early days of the mission. He was a leader among his people, when the Madiga community was astir in discarding the old beliefs and accepting the new. He carried himself like a man of experience, of authority, in his humble sphere, to whose opinions deference should be paid. His bold features, measured gait, and a certain innate dignity, blended with a childlike humility, won for him the respect of all whom he addressed.

In his preaching he was not like other men, who had not pondered Rajayogi problems. He was wont to begin his discourses with some of the peculiar combinations of the Shastris. He would say, ‘The alphabet has five lines each way, thus also the body is composed of five elements. There is another five: two to hear, two to see, one to speak. But there is yet another five: the five wounds of Christ.’ By this time the interest of his hearers was aroused; it was a mode of proceeding congenial to the Hindu mind. In later years, when men trained in the Theological Seminary made their influence felt, critics arose, who said Thatiah might at last wheel into line. It was a species of the old strife between philosophy and theology. But Thatiah held his own. Hundreds believed in the Christ through his preaching. Spiritually-minded to an eminent degree, there was power in his words and his example.

In his old age Thatiah journeyed to Ongole once more. Slowly they brought him to his accustomed place on the platform of the chapel on Sunday morning. The Missionary stopped in his sermon to put him in his own chair. He saw the look of wonder on the faces of some of the younger generation, who knew little of the old days and its leaders. His heart was very tender toward the man who had never moved an inch from his God-appointed task, who had stood by his side in the days of small beginnings, in the days of calamity and of overwhelming responsibility.

He turned to the hundreds of listeners before him: ‘Do you want to know who this man is? I will tell you. When you get to heaven – and I hope you will all get there – you will see someone who looks radiant with light, far above you. You will almost need a telescope to see him distinctly, the distance between you and him will be so great. And you will ask some one, “Who is that man clothed in exceeding brightness?” Then you will be told, “That man is Bangarapu Thatiah from the Telugu country.” And you will strain your eyes to behold him.’

There was a look of reverence on many a face as the Missionary proceeded with his sermon. A year later Thatiah’s spirit took its flight.

* * *

In the language of Western civilization Pullikuri Lukshmiah would have been called ‘a fast young man.’ He decked himself with earrings, finger-rings, bangles, belts, and various jewels, all of them conspicuous for glitter – not for their value. Red turbans and bright-coloured jackets lay in the box ready for use. He frequented places where there was dancing, singing, and festivity of every kind. Sin and lust grew apace, until a sense of disgust with the whole situation began to creep into his soul. He was weary of it all, and one day, he did not know from whence, the thought came: What if I should die?

At this juncture one of the wandering disciples of the Yogi Veerabramham came into the village and attracted Lukshmiah's attention. All his earnings were now spent on paying fees and giving gifts to this wandering Guru. He was bent on finding out something that might show him a way to salvation; he desired to secure a blissful state of the soul after death. But the days passed and he heard
nothing definite, and one morning the Guru had taken his staff and wandered to the next place. But soon another came. Lukshmiah hovered around him. He did his share in giving the Guru to eat bountifully. He saw him partake of the intoxicating sarai freely, and then roll into a corner to sleep off the effects. After a few months he too went his way, and Lukshmiah found that he was none the wiser in knowledge.

Six Gurus were thus supported by Lukshmiah, wholly or in part, some for weeks, some for months. The rumour had spread in the Madiga community that he had lost interest in fine clothes and jewels, and was sitting at the feet of Rajayogi Gurus. Soon one after another of those who could claim some degree of kinship to him came to take advantage of this circumstance. They were his guests while they inquired of him concerning the hymns and mantras which he had heard, and the initiation through which he had passed. They were introduced to the Guru who happened to hold sway for the time being, and there was much inquiry and interest among them. Some of the friends came again and again. Bangarapu Thatiah, too, was sometimes among them, especially after Bandikatla Veeramah had gone away. A sense of cohesion was established among these men which lasted through many a year, for almost every member of this group became a strong force in Christian propaganda in the years that followed.

An honest search for truth is never wholly in vain. Lukshmiah and his friends had risen above the superstitions of the ordinary Madiga. They wanted something better, which shows that they had outgrown the beliefs of their childhood. Each individually tried what the abstractions of the Yogi could do to still the hunger of the soul. Friendship and a common interest had led them to meet and find out what the result on each might be. Each in his way had grown disheartened.

One after another of the friends went north to trade in hides. Lukshmiah remained behind with the Guru Balli Somiah, who had been his instructor for two years. He lived in the village proper, with the Sudras, but his chief supporter was Lukshmiah. This meant a constant drain upon his resources. He was already deeply in debt. The Komati who had lent him money at different times demanded the interest, and it was compound interest. The hospitality freely offered to his friends and co-searchers in truth had cost him far beyond his means. They were gone, and there was a rumour that they were again banded together in the north, and that now they were investigating a religion which had come from the land of the English.

Lukshmiah decided to go north, and hoped that by the lucrative trade in hides he might cancel a part of his debt. But what should he do with the Guru Somiah, who showed no intention of leaving? It might prove dangerous to tell him that he could no longer support him, or to simply go away, leaving him in the lurch; for could he not pronounce a curse over him? But the presence and the sway of the Guru Somiah grew daily more irksome, till finally a way appeared to get rid of him. Lukshmiah knew that the Guru had a brother living in that northern district. He said to him: ‘Your disciples are all in the north, earning much money. I must go too; for my debts are very heavy. If you will come with me, you will find support.’ Thus the journey was undertaken.

Disappointment awaited the Guru Somiah when he reached the little settlement of his former followers. They wanted him no more. For the sake of old relationship they gave him food, but they omitted the sarai. He complained bitterly because the customary beverage was withheld. The friends talked it over and agreed to help Lukshmiah to get rid of his burden. They put together ten rupees and sent the Guru to his brother. Bangarapu Thatiah alone stood aloof, and said: ‘I shall give nothing. Send him away empty-handed as he came.’ But Pullikuri Lukshmiah rejoiced; for the presence of the Guru had hindered him greatly in making any progress in finding out what this new religion was.

[…] One after another of the little colony of Madiga traders up in the Godavery district started on his homeward journey. He and his kinsman, Ragaviah, remained behind, intent on speculations that would bring financial gain. Rumours had been brought to them that a missionary had come to Ongole, that everybody was talking about the new religion, and that somehow they would join this Christian sect. They longed for certain news, and were glad indeed when one day a friend and neighbour came from the old home on business, and visited them to tell them what had happened. The Ongole Missionary had come to Tallakondapaud and baptized twenty-eight, among them Lukshmiah's brother and his son, Ragaviah's son, and others of their friends and relatives.

After the visitor had left, the two men sat down together, sad at heart; they could hardly keep back the tears. Lukshmiah said: ‘The brother born after me and my own son are on the way to heaven
before me. I cannot stay here longer.' The next day they proceeded to hire sixteen bandies, to load one hundred hides on each, and to start for home. Eight bandy-loads were sold on the way, and with the remaining eight they arrived at home. Their sons, they found, were in Ongole in school, and they were glad that that which had been denied to them was being granted to their children. The Missionary had been informed of their return home, and a preacher was sent to tell them much about the religion of Christ that was new to them.

Lukshmiah was heavily in debt when he bade farewell to the last of the six Gurus of the Rajayogi sect on whom he had spent his substance. His former associates in the search for truth had become preachers, and were enduring the toil and enjoying the honours of their position.

Lukshmiah held aloof. When questioned, he pointed to his debt. The fact was that the debt was an excuse, for as the years passed all was paid, with the exception, perhaps, of some of the compound interest. Lukshmiah was a man who preferred to be his own master. He did not want to become a link in the chain of organized preachers' work, but wanted to go about on his trade, make money, preach when and where he liked, and be answerable to no one.

Six years thus passed. The Missionary asked him, whenever he came to Ongole to the monthly meeting, whether the time had not come for him to cease going about on trade and to stay and do God's work in earnest. He always replied he would come, but never came. Finally the scales were turned. It was a word from the Missionary that compelled him. Lukshmiah's son was leaving school and returning home for vacation. The Missionary told the young man to say to his father that the Dora sent salaams to him. He added: 'When I call your father to work, he does not come; he runs about the country like a masterless dog.' This word travelled over the country.

Lukshmiah laughed at the time, and laughs to-day as he tells the story. The preachers all laughed; for they saw that Lukshmiah's undetermined position was well characterized by the Dora's words. But Lukshmiah's son said, 'You must go'; and the father, still laughing, agreed that he must, but not just at present. What pleased Lukshmiah was that he had measured his strength with that of the Missionary, and in honest combat had been outdone. He was strong in holding aloof, but the Missionary was stronger in wheeling him right about and making him face his real position.

Soon after this the Missionary made an extensive tour through the Kanigiri Taluk. He saw that Lukshmiah, who joined the other preachers in accompanying him, was in fact the spiritual leader and pastor of a number of Christians in all the region round about his own village. Before they separated he had a talk with Lukshmiah and his wife. He said, 'What would you like to do, Lukshmiah?' He replied, 'I would like to engage in the Lord's service, but have a debt.' The Missionary knew that this was all by way of excuse. He took a piece of paper that was lying on the table, tore it into small shreds, threw the handful of them over Lukshmiah, so that they flew to every corner of the tent, and said, 'That is how your debt is gone.' He gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder and sent him home.

On his way to his own village, Lukshmiah was stung in the face by a poisonous insect. Soon there was a painful swelling, and people said, 'He will surely die; a Komati was thus stung and died.' Lukshmiah was very anxious about this, and on the second day took the Bible to see whether he could not find something to comfort him at the prospect of a speedy death. He happened to turn to the chapters on the prophet Jonah's experience, and thought to himself that he too had fallen into trouble for refusing to preach as he was sent. He dictated a letter to the Dora: 'I am coming, and will go to work.' Two days later the swelling disappeared. He arose, visited a number of villages, preaching everywhere, and arrived in Ongole at the time of the monthly meeting.

The Dora saw him among the other preachers and smiled knowingly. 'Have you come, Lukshmiah?' 'I have come.'

Village Christians and Hindu culture.
Study of a rural church in Andhra Pradesh, South India.
London: Lutterworth Press

The Rev. P.Y. Luke, a presbyter of Medak Diocese of the Church of South India, together with his wife made the original field study of the Christian congregations of five or six villages or hamlets in Medak district over a period of 10 months in 1959. John B. Carman assisted, specially at the planning stage and in the writing of reports submitted locally and for the final publication. He was an American research student at the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in
Bangalore.

The valuable and unique evidence from this study sadly cannot be made available here. Copyright is owned by the British publisher and permission from them to use their text is too costly. The book is not in print but copies are available - at a fraction of the publisher's fee - from www.abebooks.co.uk.

The relevant and recommended sections are:
p.9 [Introduction]
pp 64-69 The founding of the congregations
pp 158-63 The Madiga community of Mallupalle