

Native Women in Christian Missions of Hyderabad State (1880-1950): Narratives from Khammammet Region

**A Thesis Submitted During 2024 to the University of Hyderabad
in Partial Fulfilment of the Award of a Ph.D. Degree**

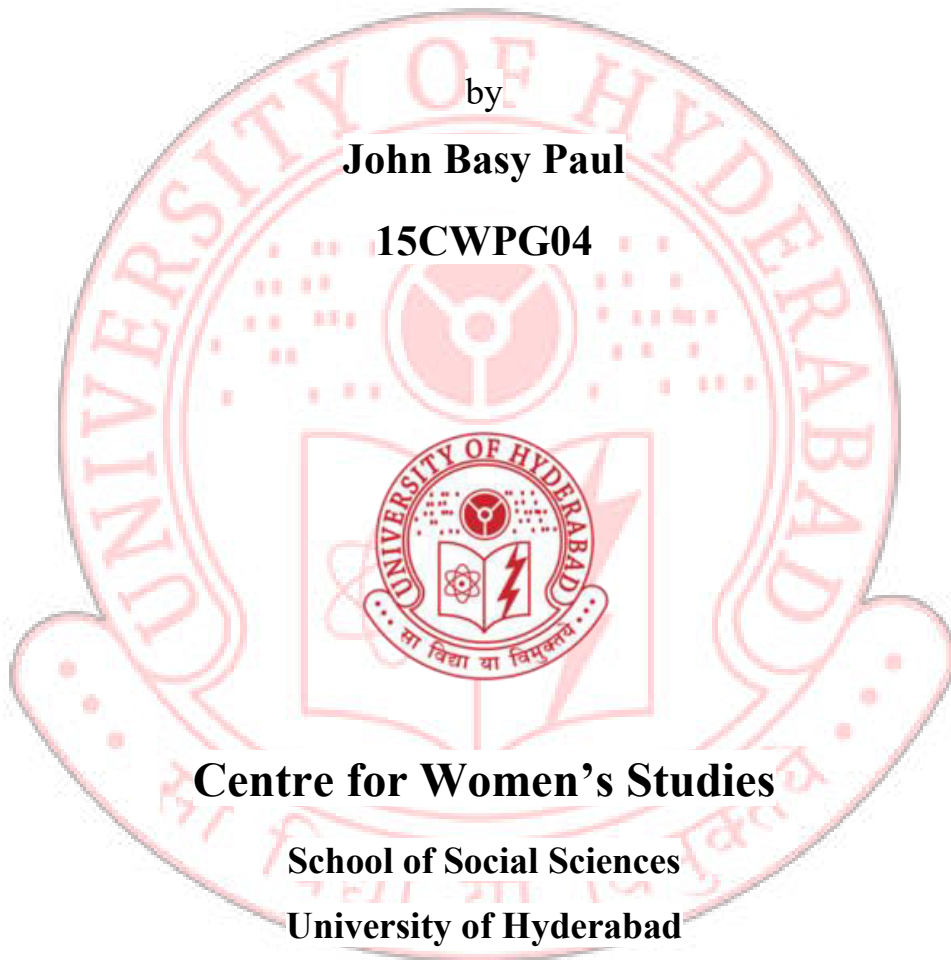
in

Gender Studies

by

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March 2024



Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“Native Women in Christian Missions of Hyderabad State (1880-1950): Narratives from Khammammet Region”** submitted by **John Basy Paul** bearing Registration Number **15CWPG04** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy in **Gender Studies** from Centre for Women’s Studies, School of Social Sciences is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

This thesis is free from Plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for award of any degree or diploma.

Further, the student has the following publication(s) before submission of the thesis/monograph for adjudication and has produced evidence for the same in the form of acceptance letter or the reprint in the relevant area of her research

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Declaration

I, **John Basy Paul**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Native Women in Christian Missions of Hyderabad State (1880-1950): Narratives from Khammammet Region**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. K. Suneetha Rani** is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Abbreviations

ABM	American Baptist Mission
AMBM	American Mennonite Brethren Mission
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> (in the year of the Lord)
ARP	Air Raid Precautions
Capt.	Captain
CE	Common Era
CEZMS	Church of England Zenana Missionary
CID	Crime Investigation Department
CISRS	Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society
CLS	The Christian Literature Society
CMC	Christian Medical College
CMS	Church Missionary Society
Col.,	Colonel
Dr.	Doctor
IWU	Indian Widows Union
JEB	Japan Evangelistic Band

LMS	London Missionary Society
Mr.	Mister
Mrs.	Mistress
OUP	Oxford University Press
PM	<i>post meridiem</i>
Rev.	Reverend
SAF	Special Armed Forces Society
TB	Tuberculosis
UK	United Kingdom

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The role of native women in Christian missions has been far-reaching. However, their narratives and contributions are minimally mentioned in various written sources like historical books, missionary documents, and archival resources. Besides, it is sometimes obscure, principally in the literature written during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Hence, this study aims to locate, identify, and explore the native women's presence, identity, and contribution to the Christian mission, particularly in Hyderabad State. I focus on the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) work at Khammammet (Khammam today) for this study. It explores how caste, gender, and religion are interlinked in the mission field. Further, it also explores how the native women created their agency in reaching the secluded spaces. It is important to understand that the broader Christian mission history is predominantly male-centered. This research explores the possibility of constructing a mission history based on the testimonies of communities, women's narratives, and their experiences in the mission work, juxtaposing them with the existing archival material.

1.2. Retrieving “Her-Stories”: A Historical Quest

The article “That Magic Time: Women in the Telangana People Struggle,” by Vasantha Kannabiran and K. Lalita in the edited work *Recasting Women Essays in Colonial History* (1989) by Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, provided me with the basic template and thought to read through the research documents to listen to the voices of native women in the missionary archives. Two groups of women were active

simultaneously in two different spheres. One group was fighting in a guerrilla war against the oppressive social systems—another under the mask of religion contributing to the church missionary works. In documenting Christian history, the voices of the native women have been muted, making their presence invisible. While writing about women's role in the Telangana Armed Struggle, the book *We Were Making History* (1989) tries to construct history from people's voices. History is also built in two steps: data collection and analysis. Research can be done anytime, but the voices have to be heard. The author says, "After completing nearly forty interviews, we decided it would be best to publish them as life stories. We now thought of it as a book that was theirs, as much as it was ours."¹ Native women's silenced voices, contributions, and works are still heard through the oral narratives in the communities. These voices and narratives are documented as life stories through this research. Oral histories and autobiographies are not just legitimate sources for feminist historiography; they form the basis for women's histories, wherein one can find their voice and self. The documentation of memories and voices of women in the Telangana uprising, a communist peasant movement, provides a methodological entry point to document women's voices working in mission stations in the same region.

The word "native" as a prefix added to women does not just imply the women who belong to this land. It indicates that various socio-political and economic conditions shaped these women. "Natives" are people of the land; however, most historical writings imply heathen, barbaric, or savages who needed to be civilised. Native women were predominant in Christian missionary work acting as agents for foreign missionaries to interact with the

¹ K. Lalita, Vasantha Kannabiran, Rama Melkote, Uma Maheswari, Susie Tharu and Veena Shatrugna, *We Were Making History: Women and the Telangana Uprising Stree Shakti Sanghatana* (London: Zed, 1989), 280.

locals. However, neither the native nor the foreign historians recognised their contributions. Hence, the native women's stories and histories must be constructed to acknowledge their role in making history and the heterogeneity of the history itself. The marginal and diverse experiences must become the theoretical framework for building their history. The term "native women" is not confined to the Bible but to women in the mission field. It also includes women in medicine, education, and other services.

The role of Bible women is not confined to church ministry but extends to the educational and medical fields. They were the people who entered the secluded places of those times, such as the *Goshas* and *Zenanas*, where they educated and provided medical help for the women. The native Christian women workers did not just assist the foreign missionaries but also the forerunners of the mission work. The native Bible women knew their language and could better relate to and understand their fellow women's problems, circumstances, and difficulties than the foreign/ English ladies. Moreover, they were often very successful in teaching their fellow women when carefully taught. The Bible women taught in the *Zenanas*. Their work was supervised by a lady missionary, who visited the homes as frequently as possible to assess the pupils' progress, ascertain the thoroughness of the teacher's work, and impart further instruction. The excellent textbook used in *Zenana's* teaching is the Bible.

Native agents were required to carry out mission activities successfully. For example, women taught in the *Zenanas*, where male missionaries are not permitted, and Bible teachers in hospitals, dispensaries, and caste girls' schools. Most of them were widows whose husbands were previously involved in mission work. They received

specialised training and had years of teaching experience. They communicated the truth in a straightforward, firm manner that almost always kept their audience's attention.

However, when we read historical documents like archival materials or major books on Mission history, native women's identity is confined to certain 'groups' but not identified as individuals. Antoinette Burton articulates how domestic space is an archival source in her work, *Dwelling in the Archives Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (2003). Family histories become an enduring site of historical evidence and historiographical opportunity in and for the present. Through this, people can construct their histories, and the contradiction of the Indian women's lives in colonial modernity can be recorded.

Further, the native women had access to the places/spaces where the native men and foreign women were denied entry. In such a context, they became the agents through whom the missionaries entered the secluded areas. "Spaces" can be articulated in two ways: the gaps or the spaces created in the historical narration without native women's narratives. The rooms they got access to were denied to others.

The native Christian women played a prominent role in converting people of other faiths to Christianity. Several mass conversions happened among the subaltern communities to affirm their new locus of self-definition and identity, which they were deprived of in the religion they believed in. Education, work, and medical care attracted people towards Christianity. The native Christian women's mobility increased as they travelled with foreign missionaries. Most of the native women workers belonged to subaltern communities. However, they could access the dominant spaces in some contexts because of their Christian identity. Hence, caste, conversion, and gender discrimination in

society and missionary societies must be closely observed and analysed to expound on the role of native women in mission work.

On the other hand, the primary role of Western women in missionary activity was to be good wives to their husbands. Missionary women were, in a sense, wedded for the work as well as to the job itself. Their presence in the mission field was an indicator of peaceful intentions. It ensured a friendly reception by the local people. They also served as a role model of female behaviour. In the 1860s, there was a change in the attitude towards the role of women in the mission. There was a realisation that the women missionaries needed to approach women. The mission of the sisterhood also compared the “unfree” Zenana victims and the “free” English society, portraying most sharply the contrast between the confining Zenanas and freedom in the British home.²

Furthermore, the emergence of the feminist movement in European countries in the 19th century influenced several single women to work in distant lands as missionaries. Although missionary wives were unpaid workers, the single women missionaries were paid incredibly less than the male missionaries. The missionary women were discriminated against as mere labourers within the male-controlled missionary enterprise. The latter worked an average of thirty hours weekly in the “field.” However, the native women workers never had stipulated working hours and were expected to be always available.

1.3. Time and Location: An Overview of the Context

To locate and explore the role of native women in mission work, a particular period (1880-1950) has been chosen, particularly for two reasons. Specifically, this period was the time when diverse waves of women’s movement were actively making changes at the

² Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present – Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), 27.

global level. During this period, they influenced the mission bodies to incorporate women missionaries. Women started collaborating and contributing through philanthropic work rather than just confining their roles as wives. This was the period when many mass conversions happened in several parts of India, which increased the demand for both foreign and native workers in the mission field. It was also the time the nationalistic movement was predominant, and an internal war happened in Hyderabad.

The period between 1869–1900 was pivotal in the history of Hyderabad State. The British impacted nearly every aspect of society, including social structure, administration, business, education, and politics. Adapa Satyanarayana and Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana's book *Telangana: History, Culture and Movements* (2022) is a crucial work to understand the context from historical and political aspects. The authors observe that composite culture began to form and thrive during the reign of the sixth and seventh Nizam. Salar Jung's reforms established the groundwork for modernising social, economic, and administrative advances. This resulted in a unique Deccan culture that could be seen in art, architecture, and literature.³

The authors further elaborate on different regions and administrative units within Hyderabad state. The entire Hyderabad State was divided into four Subas or administrative units for administrative reasons. Warangal and Medak in Telangana, Aurangabad in Marathwada and Gulbarga in Karnataka. Telangana region occupied fifty percent of the area, Marathwada Twenty-eight percent, and Karnataka twenty-two percent, respectively. Among all the four areas, it is noted that Telangana society witnessed several social evils such as Purdah, Child or early marriage, polygamy, prohibition of widow remarriage,

³ Adapa Satyanarayana and Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana, *Telangana: History Culture and Movements* (Hyderabad, Telangana: Telangana Publications, 2022)

prostitution, female infanticide, sati, *jogini/basavi*, *dasi/adabapa*, *sani/bhogam*, untouchability, etc. Since it was considered to be a luxury and unnecessary, women in Telangana were denied basic education. Girls from higher castes received some primary elementary education amidst many doubts. During my fieldwork, it was observed that women were deprived of formal education, and there was indeed discrimination. Higher caste communities have more access to education and other resources.

Satyanarayana's work brings to the forefront the various ways in which women were exploited in this region during that specific period. Sexual exploitation of girls was increasingly prevalent in the guise of religion. The *Devadasi* system was prominent, in which women were forced into prostitution as *joginis*, *basavi*, or *muralis*. Under the guise of religion, women, mainly from the Madiga caste, were coerced into this system. Women danced in the upper caste's funeral procession. Parents committed their daughters to gods for fear of ostracism from the village and superstitious beliefs. The worst of all, feudal extortions was a widespread practice of keeping girls as *dasis/adapapas* (slave girls) in the homes of upper-caste landlords. These young girls had to arrive at the landlords' home as virgins. Both their guests and the family members' sexual needs must be met. In the surrounding villages of Khammammet, such practices were prevalent, as seen in the missionary correspondences. The missionaries write extensively on such practices to create curiosity about their contexts and the challenges they face in the mission field. Rescuing narratives of such women had a good readership, directly reflecting financial support to the mission work.

The oppressed communities were usually exploited in the region at various levels in different forms. On the other hand, the elites of society contributed to the upliftment of

the people through their philanthropic work. Satyanarayana's work mentions several organisations and women's groups formed in Hyderabad State to liberate and end societal injustices against women. Nadimpalli Sundaramma formed the Andhra Sodari Samajam in 1905, while Seetabai founded the Bharata Mahila Samajam in 1907. Yuvathi Saranalayam was founded at Secunderabad by Yamini Purnam. The primary goal is to eliminate poverty and assist sex workers in finding alternative sources of income and living a dignified life every day. Prominent women of those times, like Amina Pope, Sarojini Naidu, and Mrs. Rustomji Fardun, established the Hyderabad Women's Association as a section of the All-India Women's Conference. This group aimed to encourage women's education and address issues affecting women's and children's welfare. With the foundation of the Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1930, women's activities in Telangana gained traction in a culture where high and middle-class women were forbidden from public appearances and public speech. The Andhra Mahila Sabha provided a forum for women to express themselves and fight for their rights. The third Andhra Mahila Sabha was held at Khammammet, with Yellapragada Seeta Kumari as President. In my fieldwork and other readings, I observed that being a border region with British India, the Khammammet region was directly influenced by the movements happening in the Andhra region rather than Hyderabad. The women's movements were more Hyderabad-based and concentrated in the centre, while Khammammet was a region in the margins.

Women's education, mainly Muslim education in Hyderabad, is relevant to this research. The CEZMS mission station in the Khammammet region is in a Muslim-dominated location that caters to the medical and educational needs of the community. Satyanarayana's work elaborates on Muslim women's education in the area. Abdul

Qayyum and Maulvi Mohi Hussain championed the cause of social change among Muslim women. Purdah, Zenana, Courtesans, Nautch girls, and Tawaifs were common social problems in Muslim society. Poverty and illiteracy were regular occurrences. Several women from wealthy backgrounds contributed to the cause of education and social reform. Tayyeba Bilgrami, Masuma Begum, Amina Hydari, and many more. They played an active part in enhancing women's education by founding educational institutions. The Hyderabad Ladies Association Club, established in 1901, was a social gathering place for Hyderabadi and affluent British ladies. Lady Amina Hydari, wife of Sir Akbar Hydari, was a notable social worker who got the Kaisar-i-Hind award for her efforts after the Musi River flood in 1908.⁴ She established the Mahbubia Girls School, Hyderabad's first girls' school. With the influences and interactions with the British, the Hyderabad elite women started to adopt some of their humanitarian methods of women to impact their community.

Further, some women Educators from the Muslim community played a crucial role in spreading education among women. Noor Unissa Begum, daughter of Salar Jung I, was the first educated Muslim woman to initiate women's education. Medical school, with the aid of the Nizam's government, was established in 1846 with a residency surgeon. This school provided training for hakims or physicians and trained them as medical assistants. The medium of instruction was Urdu, but it was later changed to English in 1884. In 1917, Nizam Osman Ali Khan issued a Farman to establish a university in his name. Education in the State was revolutionised with the establishment of Osmania University in 1918. The medium of instruction was Urdu, but English was offered as a compulsory course.

⁴ Satyanarayana and Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana, *Telangana: History Culture*, 451.

Some individuals dedicated their lives to the education and upliftment of the Dalit communities. Katta Ramakka and Jangam Sarvaiah founded Payal Schools to educate Dalit girls. Ramakka, a widow, devoted her life to educating Dalit girls. She established a tiny classroom before her home, teaching young girls and boys. As the strength of her school grew, her institution became well-known in Secunderabad.

Whenever pandemics, famines, and floods affected the region, along with the missionaries, other agencies did charity work in Hyderabad state. Satyanarayana wrote about the work of the Hyderabad Relief Association, which did commendable voluntary work during the pandemic. Women from this organisation visited several infected colonies, particularly Muslim women, and shifted them to isolated hospitals for medical treatment. They did charitable work by distributing packets with essentials and little money to purchase milk. They encouraged the public to get vaccinated, evacuate from infected places and trained people on sanitation and hygiene. In the later chapters, we observe that the same sort of work was happening in England ghettos with the emergence of Bible women.

One of the missionary agendas was the education of women and girls. Other learned people in the region worked for the cause in their respective capacities. Bhangya Bhukya's work, *History of Modern Telangana* (2017), is another critical piece of literature that elaborates on the region's condition in a given period.⁵ He explains the work of Aghornath Chattopadhyaya and Syed Hussain Bilgrami, pioneers in promoting girls' education. Chattopadhyaya established Gloria High School in 1881 to educate Hindu and Muslim Girls. Chattopadhyaya focused mainly on girls' education. With the support of his wife, he

⁵ Bhangya Bhukya, *History of Modern Telangana* (Hyderabad, Telangana: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2017)

established a school for girls in Chaderghat. He fought against caste practices and advocated for the abolition of child marriages and allowing widow remarriages.

Education was an essential aspect of Hyderabad State that impacted the region. The rulers of the times and the foreigners had their contribution to the development of educational institutions in the area. Bhukya's work elaborates on it. In 1834, St George's Grammar School, meant for European children, was founded by the Church of England in Chaderghat. The school aimed to prepare good English-speaking citizens. In 1855, All Saints High School was opened in Secunderabad to educate the Army kids but later opened for all castes and communities. In 1854, Salarjung started Dar-ul-Uloom Oriental College to develop modern education in the State and promote oriental knowledge and culture. The medium of instruction was Persian and Urdu, but English, Telugu, and Marathi were taught. Telugu Normal School was started in Hyderabad by the Wesleyan Mission to train Telugu teachers. Until 1870, women's education was given little importance in Hyderabad state. The missionary's education for girls did not reach the Hindu and Muslim girls.

In the beginning, the dominant peasant caste took advantage of educational opportunities. The Dalits in Hyderabad also took advantage of modern education. Nizam Osman Ali Khan took a particular interest in educating the backward-class communities. Special schools were established for depressed classes, women, and tribals, along with general schools for their upliftment.

Caste dynamics in the Telangana region differ from those in the British-dominated areas. It was, to a great extent, free from the direct influence of the Brahminic culture. Different caste practices have emerged in the region, combining the Sudra upper caste feudal system and Brahminical values. The Sudra upper caste exploited lower caste people

through inhumane practices like *Vetti* and the Jogini system. The railways accommodated considerable numbers of members of the Dalit communities as labourers.

Y.B. Satyanarayana's biography *My Father Baliah* (2011) is an important work that broadly narrates the conditions of the Dalits in the region. This work elaborates on the role of education and railways in emancipating Dalit communities. "Had my father not felt the importance of education, had he not been on the railways, we would probably not have seen the days and good fortune we had."⁶ Education provided opportunities for these communities to migrate to Hyderabad city by liberating themselves from the feudal clutches in rural areas. Princely states are characterised as being underdeveloped or exploited. However, the consciousness of Dalit communities in these states is at the highest stage.

Various movements emerged from the influences of the neighbouring states, and the Andhra Dalit Movement inspired the Hyderabad Dalit movement. Andhra Dalit's conference, held at Bezawada (present name as Vijayawada) in 1917, was presided over by Bhagya Reddy Varma. He condemned using the term Panchama and proposed the term Adi-Andhra for Dalits. The Adi-Hindu movement was started in Hyderabad state to fight against untouchability and caste discrimination. Madari Bhagayya alias Bhagya Reddy Varma started *Jagan Mitra Mandali* in 1906 and pioneered the movement. Inspired by Jyotiba Phule, he aimed to impart modern education to Dalits. "Get educated; Dalits are not untouchable; Dalits are the backbone of the country; hence, they are Adi-Hindus,"⁷ were his slogans to educate and enlighten people. He believed and propagated the theory of original sons of the soil or original inhabitants as "Adi," tracing Dalit ancestry to Pre-

⁶ Y. B. Satyanarayana, *My Father Baliah* (India: Harper Collins, 2011), xxi.

⁷ Satyanarayana and Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana, *Telangana: History Culture*, 412.

Aryan culture. He started education programs for Dalit children with his resources and established twenty-six schools with 2600 children. At the request of Bhagya Reddy Varma, the Nizam's government took over these schools and designated them as "Special Primary Schools" in 1934. These movements were confined to the central places like Hyderabad. During my fieldwork, I enquired about the role of such a movement, but they were unaware of it.

Satyanarayana elaborates on Nizam's pro-Dalit position; Ambedkar visited five times and was particularly interested in Hyderabad State due to Nizam's supportive programs to uplift the Dalit communities. He appreciated the Dalit activism and leadership in the State. In his presidential address, Ambedkar thanked the Nizam government for initiatives for the depressed classes, a rare example of the Nizam government's graciousness. "No other Indian States have provided such educational facilities for this class. This conference requests other rulers of the states to follow in the footsteps of the Nizam."⁸ As a result of Dalit activism, inhuman practices like *Vetti* (bonded labour) were abolished in the State through separate acts in 1923 and 1944.

Bhukya notes that the Dalit-Muslim Alliance is another novel regional development by the Hyderabad Dalit movement. Shyam Sunder was the architect of this alliance. According to him, the joint fight against the caste Hindu feudal system united Dalits – Muslims but not the religion or conversion. For him, "conversion cannot liberate Dalits, as Dalits have no religion."⁹ The Dalit movements in Hyderabad State inspired the caste Hindus to mobilise and organise themselves.

⁸ Satyanarayana and Dyavanapalli Satyanarayana, *Telangana: History Culture*, 370.

⁹ Bhukya, *History of Modern Telangana*, 110.

The medium and method of education are essential to understanding education in Hyderabad State. In my fieldwork, the respondents narrated their struggle as Telugu people to choose the medium of education: Urdu or Persian. Unlike British India, the Nizam government chose Urdu, a regional vernacular language, as a medium of university education instruction. Persian and Arabic are the medium of instruction in madrassas and local mosques. In the 19th century, Persian was important and considered the State's official language. Bhukya observes that this idea challenges the domination of English as a language of learning and business. On the other hand, Urdu was born in north-western India in the Sindh region of eastern Punjab in the 13th century. It came to the Deccan region of south India through soldiers. In the 14th century, Urdu was considered the language of soldiers in the Deccan region. Urdu is derived from Turkish, which means Lashkar or army. Urdu was first introduced as an administrative language in 1884 and later used by the revenue department. Urdu was declared as an official language of the State by the Nizam government in 1886.

The non-Muslims have the option to study in their respective mother tongue till the third standard. They struggled to cope with the curriculum once they moved to Urdu medium from the fourth standard. Bhukya observes that with the increase of Hindu politics and National movements by 1920, Urdu was confined as the language of the Muslims. The politics of language became more apparent with the establishment of Osmania University. Fluency in Urdu was a must to enter the state services. In 1938, the Vande Mataram movement brought this issue to the forefront. The university offered courses on uniform ethics, grounded and Muslim ethics, which the non-Muslims resisted. Moreover, Christian missionaries first introduced modern education in the State. The English people thought

modern education could be used to transform the medievalist Hyderabad society. Missionaries established schools in several places in the State with an agenda to provide resources for their administration works.

Along with education, there was also the library movement, which was necessary for promoting the Telugu language. Several private libraries were established in the State; Vijnana Niketanam was started in Khammammet in 1936. This movement laid the foundation for the Telugu language movement in the State. An annual Andhra Desa Library conference meeting was a fast-spreading movement in Andhra and was held in Khammammet in 1944. Satyanarayana explains that a library's principal goal was to promote socio-cultural enlightenment. As part of their work, they taught the illiterate *Harijans* and other caste members so that they could keep up with political events. The library was a space of engagement for social reform initiatives, including promoting literacy among *Harijans*, combating untouchability, and promoting village cleanliness. It was a space where people interact and initiate action plans for various social issues. Bible women in the field usually provided pamphlets to enlighten people with Bible messages and information about hygiene and social awareness.

Another significant cultural movement that later took a political turn was *Andhra Jana Sangh*, which was started in 1920. The main aim of the sangha was to revive the social, economic, and cultural lives of people in Telangana. They established libraries, reading rooms, and schools to promote their ideologies and programs. The exploitation of labour was a common phenomenon in the Telangana region. This led many Dalits to convert to Islam in the 1920s to escape *Vetti*. All other communities were forced to supply the products produced by the respective communities and render their services to *doras* for

free. Burgula Ranganadha Rao launched another literary movement in 1939. Satyanarayana observed that the primary purpose was to spread the Telugu language among the population, offer exams in Telugu, and develop standard publications to promote Telugu literature and culture. In 1944, strong advertising resulted in a well-structured test format in Telugu. In the 1940s, this movement took a Marxist turn and began to reflect peasant socioeconomic situations, addressing many social problems and anti-feudal fights in villages. These movements influenced people in Khammammet. In the missionary correspondences, we note that some missionaries write about the influence of the communist movement in both the church and society at large.

The Khammammet region was highly inclined towards communist ideologies, and newspapers were the platforms to create public opinion and exchange ideas between various groups of intellectuals. It helped them generate interest and awareness of Telugu nationalism and campaign against anti-Nizam propaganda. *Hitabodhini* was the first full-fledged Telugu monthly newspaper, started in 1913 at Mahabubnagar by Jagirdar Bandaru Srinivas Sharma. Caste groups had their publications to spread reform activities. *Panchama* was begun in 1918 by J.S Muthaiah of Manya Sangham. *Bhagyanagar Patrika* was started in 1189 by Bhagya Reddy Varma, a Prominent Dalit leader. Christian magazines like *Suvarthamani* (1929) and *Mula Varthamani* started promoting Christian teachings in Mahbubnagar and Khammam. Bhukya observes that these newspapers played a significant role in educating and shaping the communities and reforming them in the face of changing times and modernity. *Suvarthamani*, a Christian magazine published by Mennonite missionaries, had a good readership among the community as it carried information on

spiritual, social, and health topics. I got access to a few editions, but there is not much information about women's work.

Handloom weavers, like other backward castes, were victims of high-caste crimes as they were compelled to undertake bonded labour. Satyanarayana's work elaborated on the Padmashali Association founded by Konda Laxman Bapuji to advocate for the interests of the weaving community in Telangana. Nizam's administration later imprisoned him for his vigorous participation in the region's independence struggle and socio-political activities. In the 1930s, he established the Hyderabad State Padmasali Yuvajana Sangham in Hyderabad State.

Conversions to other religions can be noted among the lower caste groups and the people of Hyderabad State. They faced different sorts of oppression in villages and joined Islam as a way of protest and retaliation against upper-caste landlords. Many Hindu organisations were alarmed, and Arya Samaj launched a reconversion campaign. Dalits in the Nalgonda area turned to Islam in the 1930s, a region a few kilometres from Khammammet. Satyanarayana observes that by practising *Shuddhi*, Pandit Narendraji and Pandit Baldev have reintroduced many individuals into the Arya fold. The *Shuddhi campaign* avoided large conversions of Hindus to Islam since many eventually recovered. This drew the attention of the Nizam's administration, and Arya Samaj's activities were scrutinised. The missionary work in Telangana State happened amidst all these different people's movements.

Anglo-American, German Lutheran, and other protestant missionaries were crucial in organising different socioeconomic advancements to benefit lower caste populations in the Telangana region of Hyderabad State. The Hindu caste system prevented poor

populations from accessing modern education. Missionaries' efforts provided downtrodden classes with access to education. In addition to schools, vocational and industrial schools were formed to foster technical knowledge in both boys and girls. Christian missionary institutions taught students occupational skills such as weaving and farming. For boys, it was weaving and agriculture; for girls, it was needlework, tailoring, cooking, and housekeeping. The Christian schools served the untouchable villages of Malas and Madigas.

Protestant missionaries also provided for individuals' social and spiritual needs based on caste. Some missionary agencies concentrated on the Malas, and others on the Madigas. Khammammet was more a mala-dominant region, and the first converts were Malas. Satyanarayana observed that the first Christians in Hyderabad were Malas. Other converted caste Hindus included weavers, herders, carpenters, and blacksmiths. Karimnagar, Siddipet, Medak, Kundi, and Aleru had five circuits by 1896. In the initial phase of missionary activity, 4000 people were converted. The total number of converts increased from 1656 in 1879 to 66,570 in 1921 due to the efforts of missionaries. The first generation of Dalit intellectuals benefited from missionary education and played essential roles in socio-political activities. Bhagya Reddy Varma, the Hyderabad State Dalit movement's founder, was a product of missionary education and support.

Mennonite missionaries' efforts in Mahabubnagar and Gadwal regions are remarkable, primarily converting the Madigas. Educated Dalits and their offspring found work in contemporary fields, including education, government services, railroads, army, and police, among others, and achieved socioeconomic mobility. Dalit women educated in mission schools were employed as teachers and nurses. In the later period, many men from

the Madiga community converted to Christianity in Khammammet. Many of these converts found work in Dornakal mission fields. Others were assigned to lower posts in the Nizam government's police, forest, and other ministries. Elementary girls' boarding schools had done an outstanding job in Ellore (presently known as Eluru), Khammammet, and Dornakal. They were also trained in vocational occupations like the lace industry, developing their skills to make them economically self-supportive and stable. Lace industries were founded in Khammammet and Dummagudem, and a needlework school was established in Dornakal. As a researcher, I observed that people from the Mala and Madiga communities were encouraged to join industrial schools rather than regular schools. This can be interpreted as a subtle discrimination to confine some communities to specific skills.

Satyanarayana's work informs that more than a million individuals were converted to Christianity under the guidance of Bishop V.S. Azariah. Untouchables were the first to be restored, followed by Sudras and upper castes. Inter-caste interactions changed noticeably. Worship sites became hubs for the mingling of all caste converts. By 1924, the Dornakal mission field included eight English priests and fifty-three Indian clergy. By 1935, there were 250 ordained Indian clergy, nearly 2000 teachers, and medical personnel. Particularly in Dornakal and Khammammet mission fields, I observed parents of children from Mala and Madiga communities demanding that their children be educated in schools rather than confining them to farms and industrial training.

Khammammet and the surrounding regions are known for their coal deposits. The seventh Nizam had a passion for industrial development in the State. The development of large-scale industries gained momentum after World War I. There was a good market for

indigenous art. The whole of north-eastern Telangana has rich coal minerals. Coal mines are the earliest large-scale industry in Telangana after textiles. The Deccan company was started in 1887, and the first coal field Singareni collieries were started at Yellandu. Later, in 1923, Singareni Collieries took over the Deccan company. The Nizams supported this industry by reducing taxes on production and their royalty percentage. By 1939, new coal fields were commissioned in Tandur, Sirpur, and Kothagudem. The primary labour force for these industries was men and women from the Dalit communities. The people with the primary education were appointed to clerical and administrative jobs. Several women worked along with men in the coalfields.

Hyderabad state was known for its immense natural resources. Railways were introduced in British India to identify and transport these materials in 1853. It was in 1870 that the tender was given to Nizam's guaranteed state railways company to construct railway lines in the Hyderabad State. Bhukya observes that more than the public welfare, the British were keen to extract cotton and forest resources from the region. In 1886, Hyderabad- Godavari Valley railway was constructed between Hyderabad and Bezawada via Warangal, extending from Dornakal via Singareni to the Godavari River opposite Bhadrachalam. This railway line extracted forest and mineral resources from the Nizam Forest regions. Khammammet has been known for its top-quality timber and excellent woodcraft works.

Notably, in the Hyderabad State, there was a freedom struggle for a nation within a nation and the role of native Christian women at the time of the Razakars crisis. At the end of the Mughal Empire, the Nizam established the State of Hyderabad. Under British rule, it was reduced to a minor feudatory state. They comprised three linguistic regions,

three Kannada-speaking districts, five Marathwada districts, and eight Telangana districts. Urdu was the official language. Starting new schools that educate the community's mother tongue requires Nizam's approval. Under the Nizam, people were subjected to feudal exploitation and bound to the tyrant. Forced labour, often known as the vetting system, was prevalent in the area. In the landlord's home, peasant girls were kept enslaved and later sent with married girls to act as concubines.

Bhukya explains that the national movement influenced people in the Nizam domain to struggle against the repressive political structures. The Andhra Maha Sabha was transformed from a liberal group to a unified mass militant movement against the Nizam, and it started to call for the repeal of *vetti*. The Telangana peasants' guerrilla battle against the landlords and Razakars produced several fruitful outcomes. The conflict affected the areas of Nalgonda, Warangal, Khammam, Adilabad, and Medak. There are several memories the respondents narrate when questioned about this particular period of internal war.

Khammammet was the administrative centre of the Telugu Mission's newest district. It was explored for the first time in 1888; there has been continuous development with no notable changes in gatherings. The Telangana region under Nizam's rule vividly played a vital role, as the socio-political, cultural, and economic conditions were different from those in the Andhra region. The religion and the language were different. The missionaries initially had a very challenging time entering the Hyderabad State. Khammammet, the border of Hyderabad State, is a strategic and challenging location for missionaries. CEZMS mission station at Khammammet was initiated, influenced, and constantly supported by the Bezawada and Masulipatnam (presently known as

Machilipatnam) mission stations. Having elaborately explored the socio-political and economic condition of the region in the later section, we look at the British and Nizam relationship.

1.4. Nizam – British Relations

During Aurangzeb's rule in 1713, the founder of the Asaf Jahi dynasty Mir Qamar-ud-Din Siddqui (Asaf Jah I) was appointed as the *Subahdar* (Viceroy) of the Deccan with Nizam-ul-Mulk, which later became the family title. Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah founded the state of Hyderabad in 1724. He established himself as a ruler of a sovereign territory in central Deccan, known as "Nizam's States." The Nizam-British relationship was pivotal in shaping Hyderabad's socio-political and economic conditions. The Nizams were always considered to be the 'faithful ally' of the British during a crisis. They shared a mutual relationship for maintaining their power in the Deccan region. Without the help of the British, the Nizams could have been conquered by the Marathas. With the Nizam's support, the British could defeat the French and establish themselves in the South. Instead, the British left the Hyderabad state unconquered to check the Marathas. By then, they had emerged as a strong power in South India.

On the other hand, with the British gaining power elsewhere in India, they made Hyderabad into a "princely state." The Nizams were made powerless through treaties, honours, titles, gifts, and friendship. Moreover, there was an indirect rule. Local rulers were honoured with titles like 'Star of India'¹⁰ while a British representative closely monitored and regulated the State as a resident.

¹⁰ Bhukya, *History of Modern Telangana*, 16.

Bhukya further elaborates that the British exercised their power through the Residency system, wherein the Nizam governments checked, policed, and administered. In the treaty signed in 1798, James Achilles Kirkpatrick was appointed as the first resident of Hyderabad. He played an essential role in shaping Nizam's British relations and constructed the Residency building in Koti in 1803 in the European style. The British started to be involved in internal matters against the treaty. They were interested in the appointment of the Diwans and other important officials. The Nizam became vulnerable; when one of the officials submitted his resignation, the Nizam asked him to forward his resignation to the Resident officer. The Resident officers were even involved in the personal lives of the Nizams by expressing their opinions on which royal family members should marry and which education system they should follow.

Though Nizam and the British relationship was cordial, there was some friction when the British administration tried to get involved in internal matters with Nizam. Bhukya narrated an incident when Mahbub Ali Khan turned four; the British residents insisted on appointing an English superintendent to look after their upbringing and education. However, with the involvement of Salar Jung, the then-prime minister, it was postponed. Mahbub Ali Khan was first taught the Quran and other prayers later. When he was seven, the resident constituted a committee, and John Clerk was appointed an English tutor. There was also a controversy about the tutor wearing shoes in the palace because the residents saw it as disrespectful. However, Salar Jung argued that wearing shoes was against the local tradition and won his case by taking the matter to the viceroy. The cultural friction between the Nizam and the British is evident through this incident. Mahbub Ali Khan faced the same experience when educating his son.

Bhukya elaborates on the tension and cultural interaction, stating that there was a profound tension between the English and the Hyderabad cultures. As European personnel increased, many European officials associated with the Hyderabad contingency. When the Secunderabad cantonment was established, it became the icon of modern English culture. Salar Jung strictly restricted the mingling of nobles with the British in the Residency social gatherings. However, Salar Jung II and Nizam adopted the new culture after his death. English education and visiting England became part of the young noble's life. The city's club culture emerged; the Chaderghat and Hyderabad clubs were the centres for these new social gatherings.

The cultural fusion is also reflected in various new architectural styles. For example, the Falaknuma palace was built in the Palladian and early European styles. The Koti Women's College, created in 1803, replicates a government house in Calcutta. On the other hand, the Ottomanian style of Indo-Saracenic architecture emerged by the early 20th century.¹¹ It combines Qutub Shahi and European-style buildings like City College, High Court, Osmania Hospital, and many others with an architectural synthesis of two cultures. The interaction of native and foreign cultures can also be noticed in the mission stations. Mission bungalows were constructed but in British and native architectural designs.

The British curtailed Nizam's freedom to exercise their power systematically. However, though they became financially vulnerable, Nizams still had a lavish lifestyle. There are several legends about their wealth. The missionaries were invited to the Nizam Palace during their first visit to Hyderabad State. They were surprised by the immense wealth and ornaments displayed. Wiebe narrates, "An immense wealth was concealed in a

¹¹ Bhukya, *History of Modern Telangana*, 28.

small palace area. The Jacob diamond, a beautiful stone the size of a lime-281 valuable carat, was crammed into a corner of Nizam's desk and covered in an old newspaper.”¹² Wiebe also explains the living conditions of the people in the margins. The people on the fringes of society lived in deteriorating conditions. Several natural disasters and health epidemics directly affected people's survival. Regular famines left many destitute; the great famine of 1896-97 and 1899-1901 directly affected the Nizam region, leading people to migrate to the neighbouring British districts. Malaria deaths were a common phenomenon. Around 10,000 people died in the city during 1918-19. Cholera was severe, and 9000 people died from influenza during the great epidemic of 1918.

1.5. Nizam and Missionary Activities

In his book *Christians in Andhra Pradesh* (1988), Wiebe elaborates on the challenges experienced by the early missionaries who came to Hyderabad state. The first Christian missionary who worked in the Nizam's State was Father Louis, a Franciscan priest who arrived in 1835. However, the protestant missionary work was first started in the Maratha language region by the Church missionary society in 1860. Missionaries faced several challenges from the community when they first tried to evangelise people. The people of the Hyderabad State were not welcoming, particularly to the Church missionary society (CMS), when they attempted to enter the Khammammet region. They were sceptical about the new people and new faith.¹³ The missionaries had to change their course of action and plans as people were not receptive.

On the other hand, the Nizams were open to missionary activities and supported their work in cash and kind. Following are some examples: Jacob Chamberlin, a Baptist

¹² Paul D. Wiebe, *Heirs and Joint Heirs* (Canada: Kindred Press, 2010), 63.

¹³ Wiebe, *Christians in Andhra Pradesh*.

missionary, mentions a paper document in his missionary travel narrative, *In the Tiger Jungle* (1896), a *Hook* or *Farman* of Nizam, which he received through a British officer. This order authorises him for the journey. Chamberlain states, “Any of his officials, of whatever rank, to render any assistance, either in the way of protection, transportation or supplies, at the shortest notice and under the highest penalties for non-performance.”¹⁴ When the deputy governor saw the order with the tremendous royal seal, he forced his assistants to run to surrounding villages to get the necessary load bearers. Forty-four men were arranged. These men must carry heavy loads of the missionary; failing to do their duty is highly punishable.

In her scrapbook, Viola Wiebe writes about how she and her parents were invited to the Falaknuma palace when they first arrived in the Hyderabad State to start their missionary work. Elephants were sent from the royal palace to transport the missionaries to the palace. Viola Wiebe shares the picture of them having lunch on the veranda of the Falaknuma Palace.¹⁵ In her narrative about the Khammam mission hospital, Dr. Krupa Abraham writes about how the Nizam donated the land freely to establish the hospital. Charles Walker Posnett had a cordial relationship with the Nizam. They helped him with the necessary assistance during the construction of the Medak Cathedral. When Rev. Azariah was finishing the Cathedral work in Dornakal, it was recorded in one of the miscellaneous matters of Nizam’s Gazetteer that Rs. 3000/- should be sent towards the Cathedral construction work. The Nizams were supportive of missionary activities.

¹⁴ Jacob Chamberlain, *In the Tigers Jungle and Other Stories of Missionary Work Among the Telugus of India* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1896), 30.

¹⁵ Viola Bergthold Wiebe and Marilyn Wiebe Dodge, *Sepia Prints: Memoirs of a Missionary in India* (Canada: Kindred Press, 1990), 10.

However, they may have enjoyed a different acceptance than their fellow missionaries in the British colonies.

1.6. Mission Stations in Hyderabad State

Colonisation and evangelization of the colonies happened simultaneously in several parts of the world, and India is no exception. The colonial officers requested or invited the missionaries to cater to their spiritual needs, which extended to the native communities. Over the years, several mission organisations were formed, and many committed Christian men and women, married and single, came to India through the mission organisations. “The company, keen for money, but not for the souls of men, thought that missionaries would have an upsetting influence on non-Christians under their (company’s) power and would undermine their prestige.”¹⁶ So, it adopted a policy of forcibly keeping the missionaries out of India. In 1793, William Wilberforce attempted to add a provision to the company’s charter to launch missionary activities in India. However, sending missionaries to India upset the company’s board of directors. Dalton observes that they feared it would jeopardise their security and incite Hindu religious fervour. As a result, they condemn the idea of conversion as impolite and unworthy of being pursued at the moment. As a result, the corporation became more stringent and carefully prohibited missionaries from its region during the period. Due to Evangelical pressure in 1813, two new clauses were added to the charter. The first was the foundation of a regular church in India. The second was the inclusion of missionaries as people who may be granted a licence to practise their trade. As a result, England prepared to bring Western civilization, Christianity, and science to India.

¹⁶ Eira Dalton, *Fellow Workers of God* (Kottayam: CMS Press, 1966), 2.

The main goal was evangelization; they also attended to the people's needs for healthcare and education. The Telugu-speaking regions of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were split into the Nizam's State, the Ceded Districts, and the Northern Circar. The first two were under British rule, and the native Kings ruled the latter. This section briefly discusses the various mission organisations and their work in the Andhra and Telangana regions. It mainly focuses on the work of mission organisations in Hyderabad. It elaborates on the Nizam and British relationships and Nizam's attitude towards missionaries' work. It further expounds on the contribution of the Church Missionary Society, Zenana Mission, and Indian Missionary Society, which worked in the Khammam and Dornakal regions.

As I read through the various missionary correspondences and the fieldwork, I observed that every mission agency in its mission station has a native convert from the dominant caste group. In the initial days, missionaries prioritised converting the dominant caste men. In the majority of cases, their efforts went in vain. The dominant caste communities only accepted medical and educational privileges from the missionaries. However, they were sceptical about Christian teaching and never accepted the religion. Therefore, the conversion from the dominant caste communities was very minimal. The first single convert becomes the entry point to reach the caste members. Women of the dominant caste have the space to resist conversion. They never followed their husband's path of conversion. Missionaries considered women as a hindrance to the conversion of dominant men.

On the other hand, there was mass conversion among the Dalit communities like Malas and Madigas in the Nizam and Andhra regions. A single convert in the caste group initiated the mass conversions. After this, the whole caste or community got baptised and

accepted Christianity. The Dalit women's conversion is automatic with the conversion of their husbands or men of the community. The native women and men of the subaltern communities, like Malas and Madigas, are later used as instruments by the missionaries to reach the dominant communities. Below is the brief history of each mission agency that contributed to the growth of Christianity in the Nizam and Andhra regions.

1.6.1. American Baptist Mission (ABM)

In 1814, some enthusiastic Christian youth in America started an American Baptist Missionary Union organisation. Rev. Amos Suttan was a missionary in Orissa; when they returned to America in 1815, they informed the ABM members about the need for missionaries in India. Dalton elaborates on early missionary work; Rev. Samuel Day and his wife arrived in Calcutta as the pioneers of the American Baptist Mission in India in 1836. They worked in Madras for two years since there was no positive response from the Tamil people. So, they moved and settled in Nellore in February 1840.¹⁷ In 1848, another missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. Lymon Jewett, joined Rev. Day's couple and established a school. The first convert who studied in this school and got converted was Julaamma. Stephen Niell, in this work, *The Story of Christian Church in India and Pakistan*, observes that the mission work was not as encouraging as they concentrated more on the caste people. Since it was the only mission station, they called it Lone Star Mission.¹⁸ He further elaborates on the work of John Clough and how his work triggered mass conversions in the region. John E. Clough and his wife arrived in India on 22nd April 1965 and played an essential role during the great famine between 1876 and 1878. He participated in the Buckingham Canal digging work to provide food and work for the people during the

¹⁷ Dalton, *Fellow Workers of God*, 13.

¹⁸ Stephen Neill, *The Story of Christian Church in India and Pakistan* (Madras: CLS, 1972), 117.

famine. This humanitarian gesture attracted several outcast people towards Christianity, and 2,222 were baptised in the Gundlakamma River on a single day.¹⁹ Busamalla Benjamin elaborated on the conversion of Dalits, which led to the mass conversions in the region. The conversion of Yerraguntla Pariah from a Dalit community is a new chapter in Ongole Christian history. Pariah played a significant role in his ministry. He shared his experiences and faith, which resulted in later mass conversions. The conversion of W. Jacob from the Madigas community triggered the great conversion movement along the Krishna River in Ongole.²⁰ Apart from Ongole, mission centres were established in Ramapatnam, where Ramapatnam Baptist Theological Seminary was established. In 1875, the Telugu Baptist church was established in Secunderabad.²¹ Missionary work was done in Allour, Kavali, Kanigiri, Narasaraopet, Kurnool, Hanamakoda, Atmakur, Podili, Bapatla, and Suryapet.

1.6.2. Church Missionary Society (CMS)

The Church Missionary Society was founded by members of the Church of England on April 12, 1799, with the goal of advancing the gospel throughout Asia and India. They started their initial work in South India at Tirunelveli.²² In 1837, the then collector of Krishna District, Mr. Goldingham, requested CMS to send missionaries. However, due to a lack of funds, they refused. Then, Mr. Goldingham and other believers raised money to support the missionaries. On 8th March 1841, H. W. Fox and Robert Turlington Noble were sent to Muslipatnam as CMS missionaries. Noble started Noble School's educational institution in 1843, which later became Noble College, with a negative response to the

¹⁹ Busamalla Benjamin, *Andhra Pradesh Christava Sangha Charitra: A History of the Church in Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Christian Council, 1976), 16 – 18.

²⁰ Paul D. Wiebe, *Christians in Andhra Pradesh: The Mennonites of Mahbubnagar* (Madras/ Bangalore: CLS/ CISRS, 1988), 67.

²¹ Ravela Joseph, *American Baptist Mission Among Telugus* (Secunderabad: CLS, 1982), 115.

²² Benjamin, *Andhra Pradesh Christava Sangha Charitra*, 36.

gospel they preach.²³ The pupils of this school, Manchala Ratnam from the Brahmin caste and Inala Bhushanam from the Velama caste were converted and baptised. There was some resistance from the community, and the school was closed for some time. Noble's work focused on the conversion of the caste people. He vehemently opposed joining the outcast people into the school. In 1848, John Sharkey and Thomas Darling took responsibility for the mission work after the death of H. W. Fox.²⁴ They started a girls' school with a hostel, which survived even the great cyclone on 1st November 1964. Though all the girls were saved, several people died, and several children became orphans. There were mass graves with 30,000 people buried at once.²⁵

Benjamin elaborates on this work about another convert near Khammammet, who led to mass conversions. This directly influenced the work and ministry of the CEZMS mission station in Khammammet. Pagolu Venkayya's conversion from Raghavapuram village led to mass conversion in the CMS mission. He was a thief from the Mala community; he desired to know God, which led him to missionary Thomas Darling. Venkayya invited Darling to his village to preach, and all his family and relatives converted. There were only 200 people when he was converted through his great testimony and efforts; by his death, the CMS members were around 10,000. The CMS mission centres were extended and established in surrounding places like Eluru, Dummugudem, Khammam, and Raghavapuram. Furthermore, Khammam was the headquarters for the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS). Together with the CMS mission

²³ Eugene Stock, ed. *History of Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Men and Work*, vol.3 (London: CMS, 1899), 166.

²⁴ Gujarlamudi Krupachari, *Telugu Sahityaniki Kristavula Seva* (Hyderabad: Telugu University, 1988), 43.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Andhra Pradesh Christava Sangha Charitra*, 40.

worker, it functioned. More elaboration will be given in the later chapters on CMS and CEZMS, particularly in the Khammam region.

1.6.3. Wesleyan Mission

Kurpachari introduces and explains the Wesleyan mission in his work *Telugu Sahityaniki Kristavula Seva*. Rev. John Wesley started the Wesleyan Methodist mission in 1813 in England. During Nawab Mir Mehaboob Ali Khan, Rev. William Burgess and Henry Little arrived in Hyderabad in 1879. Sir Richards was the British resident with the Nawab, Sir Salar Jung, and with the minister. Rev. Burgess started his ministry through street preaching in 1880; a small church at Chaderghat was established after another church was built in Ramkote. One Hindu boy was converted and baptised for the first time. William Pratt started his ministry for the British soldiers at Trimulgherry, a containment region.²⁶

The construction of cathedrals and dams provided missionaries access to marginalised communities. During floods and famine, missionaries started construction projects to provide work and food supplies. Benjamin elaborated on the work of missionaries and the construction of Medak Cathedral. Charles Walker Posnett, his sister Emilie Posnett, and Sarah Harris were remarkable during the great famine. 1987-1900 was not just a period of famine but also cholera, tuberculosis, and malaria, and people from the lower strata of the society, particularly the Malas and Madigas, were starving. Rev. Posnett started “Food for Work” and constructed mission buildings, schools, and the famous Medak Cathedral.²⁷ Gulshanabad is a flower place in Hyderabad State, where flowers were grown by the rulers of that time. With the arrival of the missionaries and their philanthropic

²⁶ Krupachari, *Telugu Sahityaniki*, 48.

²⁷ Benjamin, *Andhra Pradesh Christava Sangha Charitra*, 86 – 87.

work, the availability of the basic food (rice (Methuku) became Medak. The construction of the Medak Cathedral is a historically significant event because of its architectural excellence and size. It was 68 feet above the ground level and one foot lower than the height of Charminar, as the then Nizam insisted. Nizam and the then prime minister Salar Jung had a cordial relationship with Posnett. The work extended from Medak to the surrounding districts in Hyderabad, like Aler, Jagityal, Siddipet, Sanga Reddy, Karimnagar, Nalgonda, and Nizamabad.

1.6.4. American Mennonite Brethren Mission (AMBM)

The first Mennonite Brethren missionary couple, Abraham and Maria Friesen, came from Russia in 1890. I.P. Asheervadam, a Mennonite historian, writes that they worked with the American Baptists and later moved to the Nalgonda region to start their first independent mission station. On their furlough to America, the Friesen couple encouraged the Mennonite church in America. As a result, the American Mennonite Brethren mission sent its missionaries to India. The first missionaries from the AMBM were N.N. Hiebert and his wife, Susie Wiebe Hiebert, who arrived in India in 1899. They started their mission at Hughestown in Hyderabad. On 27th March 1904, the foreign missionaries and some native converts organised themselves as the first Mennonite Brethren Church in India. In the same year, Miss. Neufeld started a school for children, and Miss. Suderman started her medical mission by treating the sick and evangelising the local women.²⁸ The American Mennonite Brethren established their mission station by building their mission compounds at Mahabubnagar, Gadwal, Nagar Kurnool, Wanaparthi, Devarakonda, Shamshabad, and Kalavakurthy. Several native pastors were

²⁸ Asheervadam, "The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches in India," 139.

trained and worked, particularly in the Madigas community. However, like other Baptist missionaries, the Mennonites did not develop skill training but concentrated more on the medical and educational ministry.

Apart from the above mission organisation, several other missionary churches like the Episcopal Methodist Church, Indian Pentecostal Church, Indian Mission, Indian Missionary Society of Tirunelveli, and Salvation Army worked in Nizam and Andhra region. The Dornakal Mission was founded and run by Indian Christians. Apart from the European direction, the Indian Church has often demonstrated a willingness to evangelise the Indian community independently. The Indian Missionary Society of Tirunelveli is the organisation's full name that oversees the Dornakal Mission. This group comprises members of the Tirunelveli Anglican Church who have banded together for this specific project. It began in July 1903 during a meeting at Palamcottah in the Tirunelveli district. Two service offers were received at the end of the year.

The first missionary, representing a Tamil church branch, was depicted in a Telugu region six hundred miles distant in 1904. Society's purpose was not simply to evangelise those inside its borders but to send its preachers to what would legitimately be called a foreign country. Dornakal was chosen as the ideal location on the railway between Bezwada and Hyderabad in the Manukota Taluq of the Hyderabad State. Before going to his station, the missionary learned Telugu at the Khammammet CMS station. The workforce had increased to three missionaries and four native labourers by 1906.²⁹

The native and indigenous mission organisations included Mulugu, Arakuloya, Alampur, Parakal, Bible Missions, and Brethren Mission. All these mission organisations

²⁹ G. Hibbert-Ware, *Christian Missions in the Telugu Country* (Westminster: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1912), 205.

followed the same colonial model of missionary work of identifying the places where the Christian gospel was not heard, motivating, encouraging, and sending the people to a “foreign” land as missionaries and evangelising.

1.7.Objectives

To construct the history of native women’s contribution to the Christian missions, this research aims to initially locate and “name” the native women who have been neither recognized nor acknowledged in history. This work accesses the available material related to this field. It attempts to document the narratives the communities still carry as a memory of the native women’s work or orally transmitted to one another. It also identifies the gaps in documentation. This dissertation is a critical intervention into feminist historiography to contribute to studying religion, missionary history, gender, and caste. It is not a “compensatory” history of adding women but a “contributory” history of identifying and recovering women. I argue that the work and voices of countless native women who contributed to the Christian missionary movement in India are ignored or not recorded. My work intervenes in the dominant discourse of mission history and gender studies to construct undocumented sources from the public memory. It assesses the gender roles in the missionary documentation juxtaposed with the oral narratives collected from the field. I used a variety of sources collected through interdisciplinary research methods. The methodology includes archival methods and feminist and post-colonial research analysis. Oral narratives are collected through fieldwork by conducting personal and group interviews.

To critically analyse the role played by the native women by problematizing their identity and status in Indian society compared to the Western women, this dissertation

highlights the different roles native women play within a mission centre. They are assigned a “role play” based on their caste and creative abilities. Their “role play” provides them spaces to develop their skills and contribute to the broader growth of the mission work. I analyse how these “role plays” are historically defined and designed from the inception of Christianity. Particularly widows “role play” in the early church and later mission history.

1.8. Research Questions

1. What is the role and contribution of native women to CEZMS in the Khammammet Region?
2. How are native women’s lives and work written and represented in various missionary correspondences?
3. How did the “outreach to women by women” emerge in England (CEZMS), and how does it serve Women in India?
4. What are the different spaces within a mission station, and how do these spaces provide women’s workforce for various missionary activities?
5. How can oral narratives from the field be used to connect the missing archival links or bring the undocumented Her Stories to the forefront?

1.9. Research Methodology

Researching women’s history requires meticulously discovering and compiling an archive of women’s writing. Given the masculine biases of the sources typically relied on by conventional narrative and the challenges faced by the researcher in locating alternative sources, the creation of this collection has been highly crucial. A combination of methodological tools and theoretical frameworks are employed to unravel the layered historical narratives. Archival documents are searched and read through the lenses of

Feminist, Subaltern, and Post-colonial Feminist Reading. Besides, oral narratives were collected through the snowball sampling method during fieldwork. In this approach, the researcher asks the initial few samples typically chosen by convenience sampling if they know of any individuals willing to participate in the study with similar opinions or circumstances. The snowball approach reduces time and allows for increased connection between the researcher and the samples because the samples are already familiar with the first sample and are linked to the researcher.³⁰ It all started with one long conversation with Mrs. Leelavathi Guruswami. She narrated her story as a Bible woman and gave a good amount of information about her predecessors. She was a lady with immense knowledge and memory. She gave names and points of contact to collect the narratives of other women. I tried to weave back the story, meeting people and recording their narratives and experiences with the native women workers in the mission station. I had some engaging experiences during my fieldwork while conducting my interviews.

1.9.1. Insider or Outsider: Self Reflexivity

We are all a part of the specific histories and societies that shape our identities; neither the subjects we study, nor ourselves are socially neutral blank slates. This means that our study needs to be profoundly and vigilantly reflexive, mindful of the consequences of our viewpoint. We may start with voices and perspectives, both our own and other people's.³¹ Reflexivity is an essential methodological tool that feminist researchers have

³⁰ Mahin Naderifar, Hamideh Goli and Fereshteh Ghaljaie, "Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Research," *Strides in Development of Medical Education* 14 (September, 2017):2; <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.6767e> 67670.

³¹ Jon Nixon, Melanie Walker, and Peter Clough, "Research as Thoughtful Practice," in *The Moral Foundations of Educational Research: Knowledge, Inquiry, and Values*, eds., Pat Sikes, Jon Nixon and Wilfred Carr (Maidenhead, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003),102.

introduced; it challenges the researcher while also highlighting the researcher's prejudices. According to Harding, reflexivity is defined as follows: the researcher should stand behind the objects of inquiry and use theory and methods to look back at his or her own socially situated research project in all of its cultural particularity and relationships to other projects of the researcher's culture.³²

This type of reflexivity is essential to every research since it expands the research and, thus, the scope of knowledge. It draws attention to the research's limitations, conflicts, and power disparities. This perspective suggests reflexivity should not involve subjects, subjectivity, transcendence, or self-indulgence. An in-depth investigation of the issues surrounding reflexivity necessitates framing it as a method of confusing interruptions rather than as honesty, humility, or clarity.³³ Scrambled examples would be beneficial to feminist and qualitative researchers. These may not always be fruitful, instances that do not aim for a cosy, sublime conclusion but instead drop us into the uncomfortable realities of conducting involved qualitative research and seeking to interview Bible women and their families as authentic voices taking advantage of me as an ordained priest mirrored my reflexivity as an insider-outsider researcher.

The process of performing insider-outsider research yields important values. Being self-aware is essential to the effectiveness of this type of research. The idea of reflexivity is intimately related to this self-awareness. Reflexivity is a technique that lets researchers evaluate themselves and their work, recognizing the ethical dilemmas that arise during the

³² Sandra Harding, "Strong Objectivity" and Socially Situated Knowledge," in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 163.

³³ Wanda Pillow, "Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16, no. 2 (March, 2003): 192.

research process and affect the production of knowledge.³⁴ My position as a male-ordained priest was a blessing and a curse. The sense of comfort or belonging can be troublesome given how one may be perceived as an insider and an outsider while performing "home" research. Insider-outsider researcher positions are typically seen to bring some discomfort for the researcher.³⁵ Not all were open to questions on caste and gender. I was subjected to several challenges during my fieldwork. There were several scrambled examples, and they needed clarification on situations. I must navigate those situations carefully by revisiting the field and conducting multiple interviews. Gaining a critical understanding of a context from within can often be challenging; one must frequently be both "inside" and outside simultaneously. As Hooks states, "We looked from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the centre as well as the margin. We understood both."³⁶ This positioning gave me an idea about the privileged positions of men and the marginal status of women within the church, both in the past and present.

Further, in this research, some voices come from people I know and saw, but others come from the history I have researched in archives and collected from the field, which are adapted and assimilated. They may now resonate in the subconscious, even below conscious awareness.³⁷ As an insider, the researcher should be vigilant to reflexivity's ongoing requirement. A critical mindset regarding their relationships, procedures, and the

³⁴ Lori A. McGraw, Anisa M. Zvonkovic and Alexis J. Walker, *Studying Postmodern Families: A Feminist Analysis of Ethical Tensions in Work and Family Research* 62, no. 1 (February, 2000): 68.

³⁵ Binaya Subedi, "Theorizing a 'Halfie' Researcher's Identity in Transnational Fieldwork," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (2006): 546.

³⁶ Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1984), 9.

³⁷ Jane Ribbens, "Hearing My Feeling Voice?: An Autobiographical Discussion of Motherhood," in *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research: Public Knowledge and Private Lives*, eds., Jane Ribbens and Rosalind Edwards (London: Sage, 1998), 29.

calibre and depth of their data and analysis are essential for insider researchers.³⁸ I accept and understand certain limitations of myself as a man researching women's history. I also make sure that I am critical of my religion, faith traditions, and denomination, which marginalised women and their labour both in the past and present. I tried to be more balanced than being biased. Whether I am an insider or an outsider is a factual reality. When I discovered that my grandmother was among the kids her father left as an orphan at the mission station, I also felt more like an insider.

Feminist Historiography,³⁹ a subaltern reading of historical documents, helps us locate the native women and systematically construct their role and contribution in the past. A Postcolonial Feminist Reading also enables us to critically analyse the biased role of native and foreign men and women in neglecting the native women's presence and voices. Further, various archival documents will be closely examined, juxtaposing with the oral narratives of the community regarding the "mission history."

After thoroughly reading the archival records to locate the names, I studied the "role play" of the native women working within the CEZMS mission station in Khammammet. We cannot negate that all missionary correspondence is written to a particular set of audiences for a specific purpose. Missionary correspondence, letters, reports, documentation, and publication are usually done to encourage and edify their readers and provoke them to fund the mission work. The prime focus of Western missionary strategies is planting Christianity in India. However, closely reading these archival records helps us

³⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 137.

³⁹ Feminist historiography reconsiders historiography, rejecting the concept of women as something shaped by contextual factors. It thinks of gender differences as structured by the broad range of social interactions. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, "Recasting Women: An Introduction," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Zubaan Publishing House, 1989), 3.

locate and explore the 'role play' assigned to native women in their mission stations. I argue that native women contributed to the Bible and skill development in medicine and education. The native women's work was not confined to ecclesial roles for conversion but initiated social reformation among the native communities. By social reformation, I mean that the native women helped to rebuild the lives of their fellow women by training them in various fields. I analyse the conversations between the native women workers and the foreign missionaries found in the mission correspondence. An attempt is made to locate, recognize, and listen to the native women's voices in missionary conversations.

Much of the work is based on primary sources. Archival sources are used most, especially from Cadbury Research Library's special collections and archives at Birmingham University. This library holds significant correspondences and documents related to the Church Missionary Society, particularly the Church of England Zenana Mission Society and Khammammet Mission Station. The primary basic source material was the voluminous correspondence, manuscript letters, diaries, missionary reports, journals, plays, fundraising receipt books, and descriptive accounts from the field missionaries. These sources were again supplemented by the handwritten and family history narratives collected during the fieldwork. The material collected during the fieldwork is also treated as primary sources. Most are unpublished; even if published, they are limited in circulation. These materials helped in constructing the historical narrative from another end.

Reading through the primary sources gave me insights into the personalities, contributions, and characterization of foreign missionaries and native women workers. I attempted to allow foreign and native workers to speak for themselves without editing the

texts, as some are personal and complex. Oral narratives are used to a greater extent in the latter half of the dissertation. I gathered my oral narratives through one-to-one, group, and telephone conversations.

As my periodization is from 1880 to 1950, many of the family members of the native women workers are very old. One of the women I interviewed was visually challenged due to age-related issues and could barely hear. However, when we communicated with her, she tried to understand our questions and narrated many of her experiences. She recollects her childhood, her conversion to Christianity, and her later challenges. Her primary memory was crystal clear when she mentioned specific dates and events. She even corrected the other interpreter while explaining.

In another instance, I interviewed an old couple in their late eighties. The house's ambiance was disturbing as they were left in an outhouse in the hot summer. The man was known in the region as someone with immense knowledge of local history and events. During the interview, the man repeatedly cross-checked with his wife about the dates and the place names while explaining the narrative. This “collaborative” and collective narrative of both husband and wife about their mother, who worked as a medical worker in a Muslim location, was fascinating while documenting. The way both husband and wife complemented their memory and forgetfulness was an exciting fusion. All interviews are audio recorded, and some are video recorded with verbal permission from the respondents.

This research gave me an invaluable experience. I got an in-depth understanding of my religion and region. There were several hardships and confusion in this process. The field was not as welcoming as I was expecting. People were apprehensive when we discussed caste and gender issues, particularly concerning their conversion process. There

were frustrating moments when I travelled a long distance to locate someone, but they could no longer speak. The field has its surprises as we venture deep to extract information from multiple sources and make numerous attempts to meet people, mainly when I get a handwritten historical document or family history published for private circulation, separate from any mainstream literature or knowledge. Those moments were enriching and even exhilarating.

Finally, this research project helped me to locate my family's history and the role of a mission station, providing a survival space for my grandmother. My mother and grandmother have several memories and were in contact with missionaries till recent times. I could even locate all the missionaries who cared for my grandmother at Machilipatnam CEZMS mission station in records. Miss. Roe, Miss. Ledham and Miss. Higgins were the missionaries who cared for my grandmother and her two sisters after their father left them at mission stations before going on pilgrimage after his wife's death. My only question or dissatisfaction is why my grandmother or her two orphan sisters, whom a Brahmin priest left at the mission station, needed help finding a space in the mission reports or articles. I read several similar narratives written elaborately. The research continues to locate, if not in the mission archives, personal historical narratives written by missionaries for themselves.

1.10. Scope and Limitations

The research is limited to Hyderabad State, particularly the CEZMS mission station in Khammammet, predominantly under Nizam rule until independence. The role of native women's CEZMS is studied broadly in various centres in India, particularly in Khammammet.

1.11. Chapterisation

Chapter One introduces the purpose and method of the research. I will briefly elucidate previous research done related to this topic. I explain the importance of that specific periodization. I elaborate on the Hyderabad State context, which differs significantly from British India, and the various movements prevalent at the time in multiple locations. I elaborate on the work of different missionary societies in Nizam's State.

Chapter Two, as a literature review, is divided into three sections to explore the earlier works related to this field of research from various dimensions. Firstly, I review the literature about the research on similar topics from various perspectives in multiple countries, which provides us with the methodological tools to study and collaborate with different sources from the archives and fieldwork. It elaborated on the research techniques and conceptual frameworks adopted to collect the material. This section explains the research on the contributions of native Bible women in a specific context in India and abroad. Most of these works are theoretical and based on archival research. My work brings a new dimension to the existing knowledge as we create a space for the archival collections and the oral narratives to interact. The personal narratives constructed from the oral histories collected from the field become a new knowledge source.

Secondly, it provides the methodological tools to create an “interactive space” for all the materials collected. This section studies the literature related to post-colonial and feminist research to locate and bring women’s voices to the forefront of the historical narrative. Literature related to “memory” and oral historical research methods is studied to develop a good research framework for the current study. This exploration led us through

immense research work to document the voices of women subjected to oppression in different periods in various countries. The dialogue between the archival collection and oral narratives and the conversation between the female characters identified in both resources are studied.

Finally, I read the old literature published about missionary activities in India. Most of these works are about the missionaries' attitudes and activities in different regions. Their experiences and impressions of the natives in that mission field are recorded. All these works are related explicitly to native women to communicate their living conditions to readers back home. The literature studied in this segment helps us locate the native women's plight through the lens of a foreign missionary. These are written for a particular set of audiences for a purpose. However, this literature gives us an entry point into the women's world and work in that period. It also provides insight into foreign missionaries' challenges when contacting native women.

Further in this chapter, I explore the research on native women's contribution to Christian missions in countries like South Korea, China, and Japan. I can locate native women working in other countries by studying this literature. Whose lives and work were recorded in archival records and later became research topics.

In chapter three, I study the role of Christianity as a religion in shaping and standardising widows' roles and living conditions in a specific context. Christianity entered different cultural contexts and was transformed according to the context's demands and needs to make it relevant. Every country or region had cultural rules to confine women to specific spaces and roles. In this chapter, I explore the influence of women, particularly widows, in developing and establishing Christianity as a religion. As a religion,

Christianity is oppressive towards widows. However, widows created their spaces and contributed to the growth of the religion. In their writings, the early church fathers dictated the rules to the church. They were instrumental in confining the roles of widows in the church. This chapter elaborated on understanding the roles of widows in the early church – how their life and presence are misrepresented.

On the other hand, widows were divided into different segments, and their services were utilised for the church's growth. Like any other religion and tradition, the church hierarchy silenced widows' voices. However, despite this, widows contributed spiritually and economically to the early church. By studying the role of widows in early church fathers' writings, we can predict how the later mission agencies adopted them into their work. Native widows are the prime contributors to the mission agencies in the foreign land. In the same way, widows with spiritual vigour trying to eliminate the existing social discrimination opted and converted to Christianity.

Further, I discuss the life and the living conditions of women in England during the specific research period. Evangelism became a priority for all religious people from the beginning of the nineteenth century. It created both challenges and opportunities for women. The message about gender and family varied between classes. Middle class women were encouraged to cultivate their godliness in domestic ways. At the same time, working-class women saw the wider world as an appropriate space for their religious interests.

In chapter four, I study the historical initiation of the concept of Bible women as a vital workforce within mission history—the historical emergence of the thought and implementation in a specific context. Mrs. Ranyard's life and thoughts were analysed. She

was the Bible women's movement to serve the poor in the London ghettos. Bible women as a concept are much beyond our usual understanding. By exploring the historical foundations, we know the rules and the negotiations the native women made to work in a context. Historically, there was a distinction between native and foreign women and between class and race. Initially, it was all about Bible women; the Bible nurse came to treat the sick, and the Bible quilt to comfort the distressed.

Having studied the historical context and emergence of the Bible women, I move on to the role of Bible women in India in the next section. I confine my study to different CEZMS missions in India. Though the research is limited to the Khammammet region, I studied and recorded information related to other mission stations. Because mission stations do not work in isolation, there is a constant interaction and sharing of resources between the mission stations. The annual reports collected from the archives contain information about the conversation between foreign and native women as early as 1877. The conversations showed how foreign missionaries felt helpless when they did not have their native women helpers.

Further, there are instances where native helpers like Bible women are shared among the mission stations. In the same chapter, I also discuss the contribution of Bible women in Khammammet. Finally, this section documents and analyses some personal statements of both foreign and native mission workers. This work moved beyond the statistics to identify the names and construct a historical narrative.

In chapter four, I engage with various annual reports to locate and understand the roles of native women in different “spaces” within a mission station. The CEZMS annual reports supplement Indian Widows’ Union (IWU) reports. IWU is a group of widows in

Britain who work together to improve the conditions of Hindu and Muslim women in India. Four spaces related to a mission station are identified, such as the converts' home, Zenanas, hospitals, and lace schools, where natives contributed. Native women are first accepted into the converts' homes. Later, they are allotted to different spaces based on their creative abilities, understanding capacity, and spiritual conviction. Women's caste does play a role in some instances. All four spaces require native Christian women to teach, serve, and skill their fellow native sisters. These spaces provide the needed workforce for foreign missionaries. The role of a foreign missionary is usually confined to supervision and reporting. At the same time, the native women workers execute significant groundwork.

This chapter uses various reports to study the conversations between foreign and native workers. Moreover, this chapter narrates how native women are segregated into multiple spaces. The native women can sometimes decide which space to be accommodated in and contribute their skills. The chapter records the oppressive existential realities that the native women are subjected to, which made them knock on the doors of the mission station for their survival. The mission station becomes a source of hope to develop their skill. Spaces like the lace industry, schools, and hospitals developed the skills of the native women along with their spirituality. The skill training gave them the finances to support themselves and their children. During famine, floods, and epidemics, the mission stations provided work and paid the natives to survive. The mission stations through these spaces have created social, economic, and religious safe havens for women. There are narratives of the exploitation of girls and widows, which brought them into the mission stations.

The final chapter is from the information collected during the fieldwork by conducting interviews and collecting relevant historical documents like family histories, handwritten narratives, and local pamphlets. The fieldwork was conducted in and around the Khammammet region. The respondents are relatives or had some interactions or knowledge about the native women workers of the past. The native women narratives collected are confined to Bible women. However, women who contributed to medical, skill work, and education are also recorded. In addition, there were some lace women whose work was acknowledged and appreciated by both Nizam and the British rulers of that time. Oral narratives recorded in this chapter are open sources of information to study caste, gender, and faith relations in a specific context. In the Bible, women used a set of testimonies of men who got converted from high caste (Kamma and Reddy), communist, and Muslim groups. These testimonies are used as an entry point to begin a conversation before introducing the Christian faith to the people of that group. These testimonies are recorded to give a glimpse of creative methods employed by the native women to attract their fellow men and women to the new religion.

This thesis follows the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), seventeenth edition, notes and bibliography style for referencing and formatting.

Chapter 2

Reading Between the Lives and Lines: Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

Romila Thapar observes a rising realisation that the past has to be understood, explained, and reinterpreted, which might help us comprehend the present in more specific ways than it has in the past.¹ To write this chapter, I read through various materials to understand the role of native women and their contribution to the Christian Mission from the subaltern and post-colonial feminist understanding. Native Women's contributions, mainly Bible women's and their narratives, are a rare sight within the published literature of the mission boards. In these reports, the Bible women were confined to a "number" in the mission reports. There was no mention of the "other" women who contributed in various ways in the mission fields. Besides Bible women, foreign women contributed to the mission stations as nurses, teachers, skilled workers, and domestic helpers. This chapter reviews various academic materials to identify the methodological tools to study the field. I analyse the research work done in other locations related to Bible women's work. This provides us with the needed resources to locate the contribution of Bible women and other professional workers in various places in India, particularly in the Khammam region. At the same time, it engages with other academic works, which helps us to locate the "other" women in the mission fields. By "other," I mean the women involved in the lace industry or the domestic help of the missionaries.

¹ Romila Thapar, "Decolonizing the Past: Historical Writing in the time of Sachin—and Beyond," *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 14 (April 2005):1443.

The review of the literature is done in three sections. Firstly, most recent scholarly discourses are directly related to or in line with my research and other works that provide either entry points or further elaborate my arguments. Secondly, archives become the prime source that all traditional historians look up to; I deviated from the conventional method and attempted to construct a history based on life stories and memories. That does not mean I have completely ignored the archival material, but I had a “critical enquiry” juxtaposing with the community narratives I collected through fieldwork. This “critical enquiry”² requires a small leap of the imagination, and the leap takes off from critical enquiry. As Thapar puts it, this is the historian’s contribution to knowledge and an essential process in human sciences. Moreover, in making this contribution, the historian is aware that other evidence may surface, new generalisations may emerge, and knowledge is further advanced. To bring the ‘deliberately forgotten’ voices and contributions of native women in the mission field into the forefront, a small leap of the imagination is made in collecting, arranging, and reviewing the materials. Finally, I read through the early literature, which is directly related to and written about my field by the mission workers. It includes literature written by both foreign and Indian writers.

2.2. Reading “into” the Lives

By “reading into” the lives, I mean how contemporary research tries to locate the role of women in initiating, developing, and establishing Christianity as a religion in India. The researchers employed several methodological tools and took several entry points to document the ‘women’s role as representation and as representatives’ of history. In

² Thapar, “Decolonizing the Past,” 1444.

addition, they have attempted to read into the corpus of archival literature to bring the native Christian women's voices and contributions.

Eliza F. Kent's article "Tamil Bible Women and the Zenana Missions of Colonial South India" (1999) engages with the annual reports, tracts, and photographs of the work of Bible women to bring to light the three mediating roles the Bible women played in the mission field. Kent argues that Bible women have an attentive audience as they bridge Christian practices and non-Christian students' practices. Second, the Bible women interpret the popular religious practices of the students to destabilise the religious assumptions of the students. Third, the Bible women themselves changed in the process, serving as a bridge between the mission boards and the elite students, not becoming virtuous wives by virtue as the boards intended. But rather as representatives of a hybrid form of female respectability that drew from native and Western standards of appropriate female behaviour.³ Kent examines the cultural imperialism in the Zenana mission, where the Indian Christians improvised themselves more than the missionaries. She observes Bible women as consummate improvisers who expose the wrong meanings and propose suitable alternatives to the practices considered "superstitions," "ignorance," and "idolatry" by the missionaries. For Kent, the Zenana missions intend to train Indian women to be better wives and mothers by training their minds and bodies. This is done through reading instruction and training in needlework. The European tradition has a long association between femininity and needlework. The Western missionaries believed that sewing, embroidery, knitting, and lacework would instil a particular style of sophisticated femininity in Indian women. Kent's field was in the British Colonial domain and among

³ Eliza F. Kent, "Tamil Bible Women and the Zenana Missions of Colonial South India," *History of Religions* 39, no. 2 (1999): 120.

the higher caste women. In the Khammammet mission field, missionaries taught women skills to work as a means of survival in times of famine and flood.

In her later book, *Converting Women Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (2004), she studies how ideas of gender and masculinity are formed and negotiated in the Indian Christian cultural setting, focusing on the Nadars' upward mobility.⁴ She constructs her argument by articulating three specific areas: marriage, domesticity, and sartorial style. Kent elaborated on how the Bible-women are desexualized and made less desirable. In keeping with the commonly accepted marks of virtuous widowhood in its ascetic and asexual manner, they took off their diamonds and dressed in white saris. They frequently carried massive Bibles draped in cloth to signify their status as devout women. Kent quotes Eva Swift's thought that the chief qualification for a Bible woman's work was "age and ugliness."⁵ Kent's work focused on the Nadar's of Tamil Nadu and the work done by the American Madura mission. Her work is confined to archival sources and constructing a theoretical framework layered with rich research analysis. The work has a few limitations as the voices of the native women workers are not brought to the forefront. The voices of the native women are mostly muted or allowed to speak to prove the author's theoretical thoughts and conclusions.

James Elisha Taneti's *Caste, Gender and Christianity in Colonial India: Telugu Women in Mission* (2004) analyses "how Telugu Bible women, marginalised on account of their gender and social location, marshalled religious symbols and institutions in their

⁴ Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (USA: OUP, 2004), 12.

⁵ Kent, *Converting Women Gender and Protestant Christianity*, 150.

social struggles.”⁶ In addition, the book shows how Telugu Bible women used their resources to appropriate an alien religious organisation and how social dynamics and political situations played a role in this process. To elaborate on the complexities of how the Telugu Bible women worked, Taneti enters a global discourse on the work of Bible women in various places like Africa and China. The work was primarily focused on the Canadian Baptist Mission in the coastal Andhra region. He gives a biographical note on the various Bible women who worked in the area, which was documented by the missionary archives. The Bible women belong to diverse ethnic backgrounds and caste groups who sometimes had preliminary primary education from missionary institutions.

Taneti explains the recruiting process of a Bible woman and how their candidature has been analysed. The four primary things in this lifestyle are supposed to be evangelical. First, Bible women should believe in the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to salvation and be familiar with the Bible. Second, the Bible women should not lose their social credibility as people belonging to a particular community loyal to the traditional norms. The Bible women from a caste Hindu group can always use their caste as an entry point or an agency to approach and preach to their community. At the same time, she also gets easy access to the lower communities’ spaces because of her high caste. Third, before the Bible seminaries were established, the missionaries gave the Bible women continuous training in various forms through mission educational institutions. Fourth, the Bible women shared about Christianity by narrating multiple biblical stories and their testimonies. They communicated through various literature related to the Bible and songs. Singing played a significant role in Andhra’s social milieu as it drew the listeners’ attention and bridged the

⁶ James Elisha Taneti, *Caste, Gender and Christianity in Colonial India: Telugu Women in Mission (Postcolonialisms and Religions)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2.

various social barriers and caste prejudices. They multitask; their work was not confined to Bible work but to the maternity, mobile, and leprosy hospitals. They preached the gospel to the patients and their attendants. They also served as nurses. In some places, Bible women specialised in handling maternity cases as they are familiar with the physical process, social practices, and beliefs within a context. Taneti elaborates on how the Bible women had certain boundaries as they travelled to various places. Women were restricted from travelling or permitted to move with a particular locality, but Bible women crossed villages and community boundaries based on caste. Telugu Bible women's purpose was to encourage social change while extending an invitation to convert to Christianity. They viewed themselves as missionaries among and to the community. This work provides essential information about the Telugu context and conversion narratives in the Telugu region. However, the state politics of British India and Hyderabad are different and complex. Both Kent and Taneti's work provides methodological insights to study the gender and caste dynamics in the mission stations with a particular focus on Bible women's work. However, they heavily relied on archival resources and theoretical interpretations. In the process, "Bible women" became another topic of study as her identity and voice were not brought into the forefront.

Further, Mrinalini Sebastian's article "Reading Archives from a Post-Colonial Feminist Perspective "Native" Bible Women and Missionary Ideal," (2003) elaborates on the role of native Christian women amid the women missionaries and the other native women in protestant mission work of the Basel mission and the Wesleyan mission in Karnataka region. She elaborates on how the garden in the front represents the status of the native Christian woman in an alternative mode of living, indicating a mark of progress

wherein a new native Christian is derived. One of the mission reports states that the Bible women are silently working on the enormous task of educating the females of this country. Even if all the Bible women in India failed in directly converting a single female, but only in overcoming prejudice and disseminating sound Christian truth, their work would not be in vain.⁷ This work gives us methodological insights into the use of archival sources.

Though the mission administration constantly desired to employ women from a better class who are more inclined towards this profession, this rarely happens. However, this declaration of faith provides a livelihood for them to survive. Sebastian, the granddaughter of Tejaswini Amanna, a Bible woman, describes her writing of the history of the Bible women in the 19th century as a memorial and a means of communicating with the deceased. She never interacted with her grandmother about her work, so little is known about her life and work as a Bible woman. In this research, I attempted to construct my grandmother's narrative. She and her two other sisters were left by her father, a Brahmin priest, after her mother's death at the Machilipatnam CEZMS Mission station, which is closely connected with Khammammet.

Maina Chawla Singh's work, *Gender, Religion and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia* (2000), is another important piece of literature on women in mission fields.⁸ Singh's work is a debate between the various theories on colonialism and gender, interviewing the students of missionary-run educational institutions and reading through archival and secondary sources. She examines the life and contribution of Isabella Thoburn, the founder of the first Christian college for women in

⁷ Mrinalini Sebastian, "Reading Archives from a Post-Colonial Feminist Perspective: "Native" Bible Women and Missionary Ideal," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2003):16.

⁸ Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s – 1940s)* (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 2000).

India, and Dr. Ida Scudder, one of the pioneers of the Christian Medical College in Vellore. She also brings to the forefront the struggle of the missionary wives. Singh opines that missionaries observed the oppression of women in India only through the lens of indigenous patriarchies, not through colonialism. In liberating the oppressed women in the 'heathen lands,' the missionary women got their own feminist spaces to articulate and challenge the stereotypical sexual role within their context and the world. Missionary women's discourses on generosity, redemption, and inescapable power were situated on the subjectivity of the "oppressed" Asian woman and her ways of living and clothing. This can be noticed through the number of women missionaries appointed and the number of funds accumulated as funds. Singh's elaboration on Dr. Scudder's work at Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore provides information and tools to locate how the CMC pattern and work progress are replicated at Khammammet. Dr. Abraham was from the first batch of students trained under Scudder at Vellore. She came to Khammammet as a medical missionary and was the first native doctor of a mission hospital in Khammammet.

Jeffrey Cox's work *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (2002) concentrates on the mission work done by the Church of England's Church Missionary Society, American Presbyterian mission, and other small protestant missions in Punjab and Delhi region. Cox argues that the growth of the missionary work and the conversion of the natives is not just the work of the white male missionary but also the work of women missionaries and several native agents like the Indian men and women, particularly the Bible women. Within the imperial context, he brings to the forefront the issues involved with leadership, where the native people could not reach higher positions in the mission and church administration. Cox argues about the local community's

initiation for conversion before the missionaries' intervention, which led to the Dalit mass conversion in the region. He brings to the forefront the role of women missionaries in Zenanas. The Zenana work provided the English women missionaries space to develop their professional skills and employment opportunities that were absent for them in the homeland. The interwoven complexities between conversion patterns and imperial policies were well articulated. The missionaries wanted to promote religion through educational and medical institutions, while the government's policy insisted on neutrality when it came to religion. The Indian workers on the mission also faced inevitable confusion in accepting the imperial activities within the mission work, which were expressed in various councils by the local workers. According to Wadhwa, they brought wealth and the gospel to this nation. Thus, we have two gospels here: the English customs gospel and the gospel of our Lord Jesus. We are currently positioned between two grinding mill stones. On the one hand, the message of Christ and His Spirit and on the other hand, prevalent in English culture. What should we select?⁹ These crucial observations can be noted in all mission stations in India and worldwide.

Cox discusses the role of Bible women in the Indian setting, stating that they are assigned to take care of the needs of the Indian Christian community. This function is modelled after the army of paid and unpaid district visitors that flooded Late Victorian cities. Bible women are always "nameless Indians" who are recruited in large numbers, playing multiple roles and reflected in numbers in various statistical tables with no individual names but just as a Bible woman. Cox describes the day-to-day labour of Martha, an Indian Bible woman who worked for the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission in

⁹ Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, 16.

a Lahore branch under the direction of American Presbyterian Missionaries. She had ten people under daily training and spent all her early morning hours visiting. Her spouse expressed dissatisfaction, stating that she could not do home chores due to her overwhelming workload. Her basic medical and nursing skills were greatly appreciated. Cox's work provides observations and methods of interpreting the mission texts as I try to bring the native women's work to the forefront. This work locates the "nameless Indians" by their names and traces their identity and contributions to the broader Christian missions.

Conversion is critical to the whole mission enterprise. Gauri Viswanathan's work *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief Debates* (1998) the religious conversion to "historicism conversion not only as a spiritual but also a political activity."¹⁰ She examines the cultural patterns that made people convert and the social and legal pressures they faced later in the conversion process. She constructs her work by studying the conversion narrative of four prominent figures: John Henry Newman, who converted from Anglicism to Catholicism; Ramabai, a Hindu woman who was converted to Anglicanism; Annie Besant, an English woman who converted from Christianity to atheism to theosophy and Ambedkar's political protest by converting from Hinduism to Buddhism. Upon examining a range of written works, including speeches, autobiographies, letters, diaries, political tracts, and memoirs, she concludes that conversion need not be a process of assimilating into a preconceived reality, identity, or way of thinking. Viswanathan observed that the conversion process is dynamic and aims to construct the ideal system in which the convert wishes to exist. Going through the mission document and the field research, I can understand that every native man and woman has their

¹⁰ Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), xvii.

conversion narrative. It is specific with multiple complexities. Pre-conversion is history. It is a narrative of the journey towards knowing something. The post-conversion narrative is a witness. A narrative about what is known and how it influenced one's life as an individual and in the community. In the final chapter, I document the women's narratives and a few conversion narratives that Bible women used as a resource and shared as testimonies in their mission work, which attracted more people towards Christianity.

In missionary texts, Indians exhibit imbalanced emotions, either too much or too little, which indicates their emotional stress due to the acceptance of other faiths or challenges they face from their families. Only after complete acceptance of genuine faith and Christian traditions (baptism) are Indians considered Christians. Race and class hierarchies were defined in British imperial settings throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹¹ When I evaluated the research field, I noticed that "religion and notions of authentic feeling" were critical vocabulary terms proposed by Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen in their work.

Haggis and Allen observed that Mission reports are written through various lenses of observation and missionary prejudices. However, the standard template of the deathbed conversion story in the missionary genre constructs a common emotional field between the Indian subjects of these stories and their British readers. Their lives were also stalked by the random frequency of sudden, often inexplicable death. The missionary depiction of Indian women as fearful enslaved people to a heartless (even Satanic) caste Hinduism invites empathy. This sort of reporting is found in CEZMS medical mission reports wherein

¹¹ Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen, "Imperial Emotions: Affective Communities of Mission in British Protestant Women's Missionary Publications c.1880-1920," *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 693.

the Bible women reported the conversion testimonies at the time of death. These were recorded and later sent to the mission agencies by the lady missionaries.

Furthermore, they elaborate that missionary accounts are replete with hopeful inquirers swayed by Zenana missionaries and Bible women's teachings. However, who is prevented from taking that deadly step by kin machinations or an unwillingness to give up family and community? South India had strict caste divisions. The Bible woman illustrates the power of Christian agency in converting Hindu women. Those who had been benighted, enslaved, and entangled in the meaningless decadence of heathenism became decent Christian women, spiritually, morally, and personally ready to add their agency to breaking caste and religious boundaries. Furthermore, in the Bible, women are depicted as possessing all the traits that their heathen counterparts are thought to lack: kindness, compassion, and love, which are precisely the feelings that underpin the Christian agency of missionary women and their supporters in Britain. While reading the mission documents of CEZMS Khammammet and information collected from the fieldwork, I noted some of these observations as factually accurate, which will be discussed and elaborated on in later chapters.

2.3. Reading “Between” the Lives

The methodological insights for critical evaluation of the material can be identified in Joan W. Scott, in her work, states, “Reading” women's texts gives us another angle on political discourse; it reveals new interpretations, stresses different understandings of events, exposes hitherto hidden connections, and leads to new insights into how political consensus is achieved.¹² Reading through the mission document through

¹² Joan W. Scott, “Women and War: A Focus for Rewriting History,” *Women's Studies Quarterly* 12, no.2 (Summer 1984): 2 – 6.

the lenses of native women and the colonial politics involved in making the text gives us new insights. The concerns of political history and women's history can be joined around gender analyses in political discourse. By examining how political events are constructed in political discourse and how gender or sexual differences figure in those constructions, one discovers the interconnections between gender and politics. Scott elaborates that one can learn a new perspective on politics by studying women's history as a component of political history, including female experience, actions, expressions, and laws and policies created for them. One can also learn a new perspective by considering how women's history fits into the "larger" picture of national (or international) politics. Thus, the focus shifts to what the history of women during that time tells us about the politics of war rather than how the conflicts affected women. Between 1880 and 1950, Hyderabad State experienced World War I and II and the internal war post-independence. Khammam, a border state, had geo-political challenges because of its location. In all three wars, women played a pivotal role in missions in the CEZMS missions' stations.

According to Sharmila Rege, reading and mainly rereading an established culture or discourse can be interpreted as an effort to comprehend and influence the systems and procedures that support active dominance and subordination.¹³ When I try to locate the role and contribution of Christian women's role in the mission, most of the work stops by writing and documenting the women directly related to the mission work. Several other Christian women contributed to the mission work between the white lady missionary and the native Bible women. Particularly in the Khammam region, women's work through the lace industry was predominant, and it even received appreciation from the Queen of

¹³ Sharmila Rege, "Conceptualising Popular Culture: 'Lavani' and 'Powada' in Maharashtra," *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no.11 (March 2002): 1038 – 1047.

England. However, these women's work is either sparsely documented or wholly ignored. Since no written document is available, I need to read between the lives of foreign and native Christian mission workers through the oral narrative to locate them.

McEwan opines that ideas of histories are shaped in archives; the very concept of archives and its development is subject to debate. Furthermore, archives' material and symbolic spaces crystallise the link between knowledge and power. The agency of marginalised or subaltern women is eliminated from the historical record as a result of the gendered production and interpretation of archives. Building a post-colonial archive requires finding misplaced texts, oral histories, visual memories, or written documentation.¹⁴ McEwan elaborated on Amazwi Abesifazane's (Voices of Women) memory cloth program as a space where women articulate their traumatic experiences during the apartheid as an act to preserve and promote their painful memories and creativity. The memories are imaginatively depicted on cloth through embroidery, beadwork, indigenous work, and crafts. Beads are a cultural symbol, and ancient traditions have become part of contemporary national archives. Establishing post-colonial and post-apartheid national memory archives in three ways is essential. First, it preserves the various historical accounts rather than merely recording the few prevailing narratives of unity at the expense of neglecting the contradiction and fracture. Second, it offers the shared account and recollections of the traumatic incident to promote recovery. For a black woman, publicly telling her story in her language provides a sense of symbolic liberation. Third, the post-colonial archive will incorporate women's voices into the national building narrative erased earlier. Women claimed their space through their historical agency by

¹⁴ Cheryl McEwan, "Building a Postcolonial Archive? Gender, Collective Memory and Citizenship in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 3 (September 2003).

exposing their wounds. Exposing the wounds and having them acknowledged creates the possibility for the healing process to start.

Keegan argues, “In the narratives of ordinary people’s lives, we begin to see some of the major forces of history at work, large social forces that are arguably the real key to understanding the past.”¹⁵ Making private suffering visible enables individuals to reclaim their historical oppression and restore their dignity. The lace industry was a prominent institution in the mission that shaped women’s survival skills. This argument is the prime focal point of this work. Different women’s narratives and contributions in a mission field are collected from the field and weaved together to form a memory cloth.

A similar argument in a different context can be seen in the work of Rabia Umar Ali’s *Muslim Women and Partition of India: A Historiographical Silence*. The main intention was to bring to the forefront the impact of partition on Muslim women in sociological and cultural terms, considering their experience more casually and briefly. It attempts to question the traditional history wherein “the horizons have to be widened, and the focus narrowed.”¹⁶ Ali explains that conventional histories are sanctified by ignoring or silencing the traumatized violent past wherein millions are displaced, particularly women, who are raped and killed. Narrowing the focus to women's neglected past in the partition narrative can be done by focusing on literature and memory. It is a process to find a viewpoint that places women at the centre of the interaction of forces rather than on the margins. Bible women’s narratives and the contributions of the other native women in the mission stations fall at the same intersection of interplay forces between foreign men, white

¹⁵ Tim Keegan, *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa* (Cape Town: David Phillip Publisher Limited, 1988), 168.

¹⁶ Rabia Umar Ali, “Muslim Women and Partition of India: A Historiographical Silence,” *Islamic Studies* 48, no.3 (Autumn 2009): 432.

women, and native men. Women's histories interrogate the world we know and how we understand it.

Further, Shahid Amin's book *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* is an essential contribution to subaltern studies and post-colonial historiography. As part of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, the peasant volunteers set fire to a police station on 4th February 1922, where twenty-three policemen died. Gandhi distanced himself by labelling the act as a crime, which the nationalist narrative reiterated. The judicial narrative labels them as criminals instead of rebels against the empire. The nationalist narratives usually retell the sagas of memorable events as a triumph of good over evil. Indian nationalism is portrayed as a significant, nonviolent, disciplined people's response to the wrongs of colonialism. According to him, the issue was not one of comparing official accounts with local memory; instead, the process through which historians obtain access to the past is highly problematic, as is the connection between memory and record. Exposing these issues seems to increase the likelihood of developing a more complex story and detailed description. Further, Amin mentions that if he had just relied on the available archival records of judicial proceedings, he would have ended up with a barren archival book. By only doing textual analysis, he would have failed to unearth the exciting alternative accounts that would soon be dead to a historian. He employs "Historical field work" to reproduce specific, personalised, and often peculiar narratives. He has ranged, arranged, and rearranged these against the authorised texts of historiography like the court records, contemporary tracts, ethnological notices, and even the dictionary.

Amin's work is not to supersede the colonial or nationalist archives but to locate the "complex relationship of variation to the official record."¹⁷ When the historical recollection is done, there is an exaggeration, conflation, repetition, and redundancy; the voices are not so much "for colour but to delineate the ambiguities and tensions of an official record."¹⁸ Subaltern recollections of historical events are also historic because they are on record as law violations that did not go unnoticed or unpublished. He documented how the local people began and closed their retelling of the various incidents, again knitted together as a story. He examines the archival sources, juxtaposing them with the oral testimonies of Naujadi Pasin and Sita Ahir, the peasants' relatives. Amin's work provides a methodological tool for my work to locate the relationship between memory and record to knit the story of the native women using both archival resources and oral narratives.

Wendy Singer's *Creating Histories Oral Narratives and the Politics of History-Making* (1998) concerns how a historical narrative can be created through stories, storytelling, listening, and retelling. Singer constructs Pandual's history as a place in the north and their role in the peasant movement. Oral histories or narratives are usually momentary as they change with each retelling, and once they are brought in print form, they become static or fixed.

The primary goal of the work is to extract inherited narratives from diverse forms of information, such as land control records and village survey notes, by treating both oral and historical documents as trustworthy sources.¹⁹ The oral narrative is collected from the

¹⁷ Shahid Amin "Remembering Chauri Chaura: Notes from Historical Fieldwork," in *A Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986 – 1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: OUP, 1998), 197.

¹⁸ Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, 198.

¹⁹ Wendy Singer, *Creating Histories: Oral Narratives and the Politics of History-Making* (India: OUP, 1998), x.

persons considered knowledgeable about the past by the village or community. They are considered knowledgeable local historians who know how to construct and tell a tale they remember that others can retell or recite later. According to Singer, oral histories significantly shaped political reactions by influencing how events were eventually documented, recounted, and translated into written history. She suggests rallying between different kinds of oral and written voices that produce histories at other times, places, and perspectives and understanding how they interact in an organised and structured manner. The histories constructed through the oral form have a peculiar character of mutability as the same history tellers recite the story differently, each telling as they also consider the new audience, situation, and information.²⁰ This work gives a methodological entry point as I try to document several oral narratives about the women involved in mission work. In my field visits, I came across some local historians whom the community considers knowledgeable and reliable as they remember the accurate dates of the past—for example, Mr. I. P Satyanandam, who worked as a radio newsreader and son of Mrs. Mary Rajaratnam, a medical practitioner in a Muslim locality, narrates his mother's work and the socio-political conditions of Khammam under Nizam rule.

Antoinette Burton's *Dwelling in the Archives: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (1998) attempts to subvert archives by expanding its definition beyond official records and documents. She makes the analysis of literature written by three elite women of the 19th century, Janaki Majumdar (1886-1963), Cornelia Sorabji (1886-1954), and Attia Hosain (1913-1997) on the axioms of gender, memory, and history. She contends that each of the three utilised home space as an archive to create their

²⁰ Singer, *Creating Histories*, 303.

histories and document the contradictions of being an Indian woman in the setting of colonial modernity.²¹ Burton uses family history as evidence for an individual's life, and the memories written act as an archive from which alternative histories of colonial modernity can be developed. She argues that women's memories of the house and home as an archive should be considered constitutive, not supplemental archives of the past.

Burton opines that all published and unpublished materials, such as family histories, memoirs, and novels, should be prepared to serve as both historical sites and archives when we expand the use of homes as archives. They should be regarded as legitimate sources of information that can be questioned, just like other state artefacts, official policy documents, or other historical accounts. She demolishes the traditional idea of archives and brings to the forefront the importance of women's writings about domestic space as the material of history and precious records. These materials are evidence of gendered experiences of domestic life and family culture that help to constitute the political past, the national story, and the colonial narrative. Burton elaborates that Sorabji made such representations widely available to a reading public beyond the official Archive of India office by transforming the Zenana interior into a souvenir, no mere artefact of the past but an object manufactured expressly for consumption by contemporary critics of the brand of colonial modernity that had taken hold among primarily middle –class Indians. In my research, I collected a few family histories published for private circulation within the family to retain their ancestral narrative for later generations. The Indian middle class or the dominant caste converts only had the privilege of publishing their histories. The field

²¹ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archives: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford, UK: OUP, 2003), 5.

note carefully noted the ambiance and the responses to the living conditions, which are essential in the historical narrative.

Khammammet mission field had several single women who came as missionaries from the Anglican Church of England. Elizabeth Prevost focuses on the missionary work of Anglican women in Britain, Madagascar, and Uganda. To study how debates about singles and marriage forced a renegotiation of the metropolitan religious vocation, professional authority, and social relationships. The stress of marriage and calling also presented challenges for white missionaries working in the colonies. First, missionary work and a rural lifestyle made conforming to metropolis gender conventions impractical. Second, unlike official religious organisations, lay women's missionary activity allowed ample room for marriage, albeit at the sacrifice of these women's missionary self-confidence. Third, the missionaries modelled a Christian lifestyle centred on marriage and family for indigenous women. Thus, whether missionaries could or should claim evangelical norms of womanhood significantly impacted women's feelings of individual purpose.²²

This article examines the gender connection of marital status, a spiritual calling, and missionary professionalism to display the detachment between metropolitan promotion literature and the experience of missionary work and community life. It argues that missionaries must be "women for metropolitan purposes"²³ to professionalise women's missionary work, but not to work in the mission field. Local missionary institutions have constantly prioritised professional primacy over feminine ideals of evangelization by

²² Elizabeth Prevost, "Married to the Mission Field: Gender, Christianity, and Professionalization in Britain and Colonial Africa, 1865-1914," *Journal of British Studies* 47, no. 4 (October 2008): 797.

²³ Prevost, "Married to the Mission Field," 798.

legitimising the work and lifestyle of women missionaries and disregarding the evangelising ability of married women. This reorganisation of gender norms enabled women to exercise new professional and religious authority forms and limited their agency within the mission. The foreign lady missionaries were under constant pressure from the mission agencies and the native inhabitants about them being single and serving a cause.

Lee Ellen Strawn's work sheds light on the culturally authentic work of Bible women in Korea. It provides an overview of the Bible women's system, examining the importance of the *anbang* (internal women's quarters in a house) in women's daily lives. It discusses Bible women's spiritual agency there and analyses the functional similarities between women *mudang* and Korean biblical women.²⁴ Bible women, called *Chôndo Puin*, were untrained evangelists supported by missionary bodies, Korean churches, or self-proclaimed volunteer evangelists. The Bible women acted as linguistic and cultural interpreters for the missionaries. In addition, they had granted access to the secluded women's quarters of a Korean home. This *anbang* in Korea's strict Confucian society is inaccessible to men and foreigners. Although *anbang* is invisible to passers-by in the fields and alleys outside the house, life within the house walls radiates from the *anbang*. The interior was the domain of women. These are very much similar to the Zenanas in the Indian context.

Lee-Ellen Strawn argues that Korean Bible women were effective agents of social change for the women and families they encountered. They travelled throughout the Korean peninsula, sharing the message of Protestant Christianity and empowering women with new skills like literacy. It was comparatively easy for many Korean women to accept

²⁴ Lee-Ellen Strawn, "Korean Bible Women's Success: Using the "Anbang" Network and the Religious Authority of the Mudang," *Journal of Korean Religions* 3, no. 1 (April 2012): 117.

the biblical woman as a female religious leader who filled the void left by *mudang*. Bible women's Christian work may have appeared more Korean and less Western due to their responsibilities with *mudang*. Missionaries acknowledged that Bible women were uniquely able to reach Korean women. However, their access to the *anbang* is a privilege not granted to men, foreign or Korean, nor all foreign women missionaries.

Manpreet Kaur studied the mind-sets of women, indigenous hosts, and Western visitors in Punjab's Zenana quarters during the late nineteenth century. The entry into the Zenanas provided many opportunities for Western women to join mission societies. "Women's work for women" began when women caught up with mainstream mission work. As both loosely conceptualised the Zenanas in their discourses, Kaur writes about the intervention of women travellers and missionary visitors. For both, it became the "contact zones."²⁵ Unsurprisingly, the literature produced about Zenanas by Western pen offers just one side of the narrative. It is a warped version of the "other" that one sees. Because the writer and the reader were both from the West, what appeared in the texts would attract the reader's interest at home. As Kaur points out, books about missionaries' encounters with Indian women vacillate between truth and rhetoric. The women travellers and the missionaries have been primarily pro-British in their constructions. However, it is essential to note that these imbalanced narratives should not be interpreted as wholly divorced from a proper understanding of the Zenana.

According to Kaur, the mission texts served as a lens through which readers back home observed and formed their perceptions of the "heathen" regions. The other was the indigenous readers' texts, primarily published in heathen areas. Depending on their

²⁵ Manpreet Kaur, "Definitions and Perceptions: Accounts on 'Women's Work for Women' in the Late 19th Century," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 72, no. 1 (2011).

production conditions, mission texts, like other works in colonial languages, may thus be both an instrument of oppression and a source of resistance. However, for Kaur, the missionary women remained tenacious in their goal and applied the same enthusiasm to literature. As a result, they carved out a niche in a predominantly male church. Interestingly, like their Eastern sisters, they struggled to find space in their patriarchal homes and cultures and on Mission Boards. As a result, the missionaries' observations and writings reflected their "selves" in the "other."²⁶ The Zenanas were shown as a social area where indigenous and Western women interacted. Both were pushed to the margins of their cultures' patriarchal structures. As I read through several documents related to the Khammammet mission station, I found that these observations about native representations seem valid.

In her study, Birgitta Meurling compares Anna's written reports from her missionary work in South India with her later oral remarks from interviews in the late 1980s. In the interviews, concerns not included in reports are addressed, and differences are identified and evaluated. In addition, Meurling investigates the gendered features of missionary activity by contrasting reports and interviews. The central objective of reporting, according to Meruling, is "finance."²⁷ The early missionaries relied on financial assistance from missionary friends at home. Therefore, it was imperative to emphasise that missionary work was an essential responsibility in the service of God and a pressing need for the "heathens" with whom they worked.

²⁶ Kaur, "Definitions and Perceptions," 801.

²⁷ Birgitta Meurling, "Letters from the Field: The Stories of a Woman Missionary," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 91, no. 4 (2003): 603.

Anna tells Meruling in the interviews that being a woman in the mission field was not always easy. Her work sometimes conflicted with attitudes emerging from the local gender system and the Mission Board's guiding principles. In other words, the axes of gender and positional power diverged; whether a man or a woman achieves positional power as an expert in an area is usually considered professional employment. Men, on the other hand, can only have gender power. According to this idea, male missionaries have a stronger position than their female counterparts because axes of gender and position act in the same direction, reinforcing each other. They are giving males authority both as men and as missionaries.²⁸ Anna says you are subordinated in both Indian and Swedish culture (to varying degrees) as a woman. However, as a white, educated missionary, you are generally superior to most locals. Meruling's work gives us methodological insight into the missionaries' carefully printed reports and correspondences. The printed narratives in the report may sometimes be different. It is cross-checked orally.

Easter Maxton investigates the role of foreign missionaries and Bible women in the Japan Evangelistic Band (JEB) work, founded in 1903 by a group of evangelicals during a Keswick Convention prayer meeting.²⁹ This mission was established to evangelise Japan in collaboration with Japanese Christians and spread holiness teachings. The JEB's approach to women's ministry was shaped by Barclay Buxton's 12 years of mission experience as one of the mission's founders.

Maxton defined Bible women as Indigenous Christian women in ministry. Because they spoke the local languages, they could access homes close to outsiders and speak more

²⁸ Meurling, "Letters from the Field," 612,

²⁹ Esther Maxton, "The Contributions of British Female Missionaries and Japanese Bible Women to the Ministry of the Japan Evangelistic Band in the Early 20th Century," *Transformation* 35, no. 1 (January 2018): 44.

fluently, making their ministry crucial to the church's expansion. Bible women have been compared to male evangelists by missionary Thomas Winburn. They taught at Sunday schools, prayer groups, and Bible studies and visited people's homes as missionaries did. However, because most Bible women followed female missionaries, they became missionary servants. Female missionaries were matched with Bible women by the JEB. Because the Japanese women worked as part of a team, they were rarely given credit for their contributions individually. As a result, Bible women are seldom named in official reports. Instead, women were often placed together on prayer calendars.

Maxton tells the story of one remarkable Bible lady, H. Odaki, the only Japanese woman who has written missionary reports and is mentioned in the prayer calendar. Her initial name needs to be clarified because the JEB prefers to address people by family name, which is customary in Japan. Odaki survived the devastating 1923 earthquake that struck Tokyo, killing a significant number of people in the process. When and how she became a Christian and when she joined the mission are unknown. However, it can be assumed from her reports that she was a senior member by 1927. Her reports also provide insight into her personal life and a better knowledge of the lives of Bible women. Odaki's activity was broader than women's ministry.

In her work, Johnston clarifies that local missionary work and imperial concepts of race, gender, and domesticity are influenced by distinct ideas and influences from each geographic region.³⁰ Consequently, she argues that it is almost impossible to generalise about missionaries across various colonial environments. She focuses on LMS archives in terms of their uniqueness from other missions. LMS board's evangelical basis developed a

³⁰ Anna Johnston, *Missionary and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

distinct history from that of other comparable missionary groups. It speaks of a segment of British society preoccupied with class and identity. This unique past also results in a unique textual environment. Johnston observed that missionaries of the British Protestant faith were creative writers. Their goal as writers was to encourage people to give to missionary causes. To ensure that governments, organisations, and private citizens continue providing donations. To build a group of British citizens with similar views who would stand up and support missionaries. Several mission reports and testimonies I read in the later chapters are written for the same reasons. When I read the reports subtly, I sensed it was all about funds and finances. Bible women's work and native women's conditions have their purpose and price: the more painful and emotional narration, the more attention and funds.

While racial inequalities in the mission field are well-known, Rhonda Semple argues that at the end of the nineteenth century, maintaining racial distinction was one component that complicated discussions between men and women. In wider British society, professional identity was partly defined by structured training, though formal schooling became increasingly important. Being categorised as a member of the qualified classes required significant dependence on intangibles; race was only one of several social markers that denote respectability levels.³¹

She focused her research on three female missionaries who worked in these North Indian missions. Rose Marris was a British woman, Miss. Mackintosh was an Anglo-Indian woman, and Ruth (or maybe Lydia, Patti, or Janki) was a "native" Bible woman, nurse, or teacher. She argues that Bible women may not appear in the records since they were

³¹ Rhonda Semple, "Ruth, Miss. Mackintosh, and Ada and Rose Marris: Bible Women, Zenana Workers and Missionaries in Nineteenth-Century British Missions to North India," *Women's History Review* 17, no. 4 (September 2008).

generally hired for their ability to communicate in vernacular languages rather than English. As a result, fewer of them could have documented their experiences for consumption in the United Kingdom. However, one of the Presbyterian publications in the 1860s published an entire series about the labour of a Bible woman, signed 'Ruth.' Ruth was either a literate native lady (not impossible, but exceptional). Her writings had been translated, or her oral account had been written.

According to Rhonda Semple, women in the United Kingdom typically quit when engaged. They could only work professionally after being married in exceptional circumstances. She compares the three women's works. Although they were working wives and mothers themselves, native women were expected to further training and labour. They spent most of their time advising their constituents to seek domestic jobs. There was usually no provision for local women's transportation needs, such as a horse and carriage. The female missionaries monitored these Bible women when they said they "supervised" the activities of the schools and orphanages. Even these, the "best" of the native Christians, were not entirely trusted in their work ethic, moral standing, implication, or, at times, reasonably simple suggestion. Women were constantly disputing their place on the mission project's ladder. According to Semple, middle-class women in the metropole organised women's work, while the more educated ones created and attempted to dominate certain projects. She states that "They also maintained their professional status, considering incursions of locally employed women with various degrees of "whiteness.""³²

David Hardiman gives an interesting analogy of mission stations as little empires. The missionary enterprise was like a "little empire" within the colonial outpost - the

³² Semple, "Ruth, Miss. Mackintosh, and Ada and Rose Marris," 572.

imperial court. The mission station provided a visual demonstration of Christian colonial values. The church was preferably built in stone in the old English style. The hospital or dispensary provided “modern” medicine and demonstrated the superiority of Western technology. The school provided a Christian education, and the white missionaries’ large multi-storeyed colonial-style “bungalows” required considerable everyday maintenance by servants. All of these were kept neat and cleanly swept to demonstrate the inner cleanliness of Christian civilization.³³ These “little empires” acted as colonial outposts in the remote regions (unlike in big cities where these were insignificant), where the colonial powers were not that obvious. Thus, in some remote areas - the tribal regions, the missionaries were the only white people associated with the colonial state. In Hyderabad, the mission stations had dominance, per the agreements made with the British and Nizams.

David Arnold’s work *Colonising the Body* (1993) is a book on both medical and public health history and an anthropological treatise. The book has a somewhat atypical title and depicts the social and cultural interaction between a foreign invader and the Indian population. The chapter is studded with examples and exciting illustrations. The British used Western medicine as one of the instruments for colonising the Indian “body” with its mind and culture. Scientific knowledge, technology, and the authority of the rulers and associated hegemonies and coercive processes were also used in this endeavour. It is a good account of how Western medicine established itself. Colonialism used or attempted to use the body as a site for constructing its authority, legitimacy, and control.³⁴ Consequently, the history of epidemic diseases and colonial medicine both highlight the

³³ David Hardiman, *Missionaries and their Medicine: A Christian Modernity for Tribal India* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), 147.

³⁴ David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 8.

dominant and repressive processes of colonialism and show the broader scope of imperial power and knowledge.

Marcus B. Fuller explains the social context (child marriage, enforced widowhood, Zenanas, nautch girl, infanticide, and devadasis) in which Indian women survive. She elaborates on the government's position and what the missionaries and reformers have done to locate the real difficulties and remedies. According to Fuller, hundreds of our Indian reformers have no idea how real women's conditions are. The Indian women themselves are unaware of how deeply dehumanised they are.³⁵ It can be interpreted as a limited Western understanding of the Indian social context. She further elaborated that the priest greatly benefits from perpetual widowhood. A widow thinks her misfortunes arise from not attending to religious duties in her former life. Therefore, she must devote her time and wealth to pilgrimages. The priest devours the wealth of most widows. The widows, rich and poor, maintain the priest in luxury. Further, she notes that greater attention and respect is shown to them than to married ladies. Men, though, do not spend money on women's education. On the contrary, they waste large sums on nautch girls. Further, the English men and women did not understand the natural character of the nautch girls who performed before them. They felt it was a Hindu idea to give them pleasure, and they never understood the action and meaning of the girls' songs.

Fuller raises concerns about women being treated differently than men. An unwelcoming guest at a marriage pandal is a virgin widow, innocent as a dove and pristine as snow. Still, the mangalsutra must be tied around the bride's neck by a shameless prostitute who has sold her everything. What a hideous lack of consistency. Her work helps

³⁵ Marcus B. Fuller, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood* (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1902), 11.

her understand women's status in India during the early 20th century. Fuller concludes by stating that Christ and the gospel are interpreted as a natural remedy for the wrongs of Indian womanhood as it has elevated women in other lands. A woman can never rise to her position via culture and civilization alone. Everything valuable in Christian countries comes from the religion of Jesus Christ.³⁶ Though this work is written for a set targeted audience in the West, the introduction by Pandita Ramabai, which elaborates on the different social challenges women faced in that period, helps us to understand the context in which Bible women worked.

In her work, Helen Barrett explains the decisive role Bible women played in supporting foreign missionaries at various times. The Bible woman has become an institution. Her labour is essential; she increases the missionary's influence, goes before to prepare the path, and comes after to impress the truth. She is one of the humblest but also one of the most potent forces of the Cross in non-Christian areas.³⁷ Of course, the Bible women had their course study, which was the Bible lessons first and foremost, with lessons on health and home-making and some simple handicrafts. It was evident in the fieldwork that the Bible women were given some Bible training and basic medical information to help the congregants and seekers.

Winburn's work elaborates on the work of Bible women in Japan and how the Bible women who assisted missionaries later became evangelists and ministry professionals. The Bible woman was the female equivalent of the male evangelist. Chronologically, her evolution in Japan paralleled a similar development in China. She acquired a reputation as

³⁶ Fuller, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood*, 290.

³⁷ Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline of Fifty Years of Women's Work in Foreign Missions* New York: Macmillan, 1910), 114.

a personal servant to the woman missionary, so her efforts closely supplemented those of the foreigner.³⁸ It is noted that the Bible woman evolved later than the evangelist because of the relatively lower position of women in Oriental society. It was first necessary to effect the woman's emancipation before her services could be available or the Japanese community would respect her professionally.

Ruth A. Tucker's work "The Role of Bible Women in World Evangelism," (1985) articulates the role of Bible women in different countries. The education and training the native women received to become Bible women. She elaborates on how the availability of Bible women made the missionaries' work easy in outreach ministry. The Bible women received financial support through their testimonies, active work in the field, and the sacrifices they made in the process. Bible women developed their unique spirituality by contextualising the gospel and adopting the local vocabulary and songs.³⁹

There are ample contextual similarities between India and the Caribbean. Brereton gives some crucial insights and entry points for this research. The author examines Caribbean women's stories to shed light on aspects of infancy, parenting, marriage, and sexual assault that various women, free and imprisoned, white, black, or colored, experienced. The glimmers give us a chance to view Caribbean women who have struggled against the norms of femininity that have been imposed on them historically. It reveals the arbitrary divisions between women's private and public life when they were created. The records of women who have lived in the Caribbean that the author has accessed since the

³⁸ Winburn T. Thomas, *Protestant Beginnings in Japan: The First Three Decades, 1859-1889* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), 107.

³⁹ Ruth A. Tucker, "The Role of Bible Women in World Evangelism," *Missiology* 13, no. 2 (1985): 133–146.

1800s consist of memoirs, diaries, and letters. The autobiographical writing includes the extraordinary record of Mary Prince, a Bermuda-born enslaved African woman.

She states that oral history allows for retrieving life stories of women (and men) as they conceptualise and tell them: real people, real lives. Further, unlike oral history testimonies, she observes that written personal documents have an inherent bias towards the privileged: letters, diaries, and memoirs were much less likely to be generated by poorer women and were less likely to survive or to be published.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, they all permit us to listen to women's voices and experiences (mediated by national origin, ethnicity, and class), in contrast to the vast majority of written sources on the post-Columbian Caribbean that men have generated.

Contrary to this, women's testimonies, like oral testimonies, frequently depict life events as they were experienced by the subject, highlighting the events and feelings that were significant to her own lived experience. As a result, they may be rich in experiential information. Women's testimonies, whether written or spoken, frequently highlight the importance of interpersonal and familial ties in their lives and the vast array of experiences and feelings they produce. They often address the true nature and complexity of women's lives, primarily characterised by domestic and private domains of activity.

Hayden J. A. Bellenoit's work on mission schools and empire is unique as it elaborates on how mission schools are established and received by the natives. Mission schools were considered neutral because they were religious and were neither agnostic nor Godless. As the Education Department was weary of imparting natural morality and natural religion, mission schools would ideally avoid directly feeding Hindu-Muslims. Bellenoit

⁴⁰ Bridget Brereton, "Gendered Testimonies: Autobiographies, Diaries and Letters by Women as Sources for Caribbean History," *Feminist Review* 59, no.1 (Summer 1998): 145.

considers that English education contributes to social reproduction. Despite rhetorical attacks on mission schools, most of the north Indian elites were willing to engage with them, often demanding that new schools be opened and supporting them because they helped to reproduce not just the British and Christians but also Indian society's dominant, ruling ethos.⁴¹ Mission schools could never be as spiritual as they wished. Indians sought public moral benefits and supplements to their existing moralities rather than opportunities to review these afresh; they sought humanistic and ethical education, not the religious type missionaries propagated. Even though they were an explicitly proselytising agency, these schools were popular with Indian families. The missionary organisations' involvement in a wide range of activities, including educational, medical, industrial, and other charitable endeavours, inevitably led them into contact with the government, even though the relationship between the government and the societies was not always evident.

In his study, Basil Mathew observes that missionary educational institutions frequently emerged from modest beginnings with the main objective of training their converts to Christianity and expanding to include the non-Christian element. In other cases, there are no alternative ways to interact with the Hindu caste. However, in very few cases, if any, are they either purely educational institutions or purely Christian institutions?⁴² Further, he mentions the concern for the new converts, as they removed them from their natural surroundings and established "Christian" colonies, gently shepherding them away from harm. In later chapters, I have located how missionaries created spaces for new

⁴¹ Hayden J. A. Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 113.

⁴² Basil Mathew, *The Church Takes Root in India* (New York: Friendship Press, 1938), 123.

converts to survive in a new faith in my discussion of different spaces within mission stations.

2.4. Reading “of” the Lives

When foreign missionary women were exposed to the realities of native women in India, they started to document it. Apart from the annual reports, some missionaries wrote books documenting their experiences in the mission field. These experiences were shared with people back home to encourage them to become missionaries and support the mission agencies financially. “Reading for” the lives refer to reading for the early representation, how archival sources or the primary books related to the work of Zenanas document, the role of native women’s works. It is a preliminary inquiry to look at the representation of Bible women and other native women who contributed to the Christian mission work in Zenanas and schools, hospitals, and missionary bungalows. These are the usual “canonical” resources the researchers look up to as they are the foundation for any research on women’s role in the Christian Mission. Few books are elaborated more as they directly relate to Bible women’s mission work or the Khammam region’s mission work. These resources are directly related to the research field, which helps us to understand the context and provide the needed tools to map the field. Basic definitions and nature of the work of the native women in the mission station and the condition of women, in general, can be assessed from these works.

Mutual curiosity was a shared experience and expression in the interactions of foreign and native women. When missionaries came to India, particularly Hyderabad State, they had several cultural shocks. Emma Raymon Pitman expounds on the state of women in India throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries in her book *Indian Zenana*

Missions: Their Need, Origin, Objects, Agents, Modes of Working and Results. She narrates about the Hindu laws related to the woman and the rituals like suttee, child marriages and polygamy, infanticide, and the social bondage of Zenanas. She derives the word “Zenana” from the two Mohammedan words signifying “the place for women.” The word is used in different forms such as “purdah,” “Gosha,” or “anthakar,” all of which mean “curtained women” and the place of their seclusion. The elite maintained these seclusion spaces more rigidly for their women.

One of the missionaries mentions a woman who had yet to learn what a river looked like. The Zenana dwellers usually ask the visitors various questions about their native land, people, and localities in a childish manner. This is because of the dense and dark ignorance they have been kept in. Mrs. Ferguson, a missionary, mentioned her encounter with the wife of a Bengali barrister. “When my husband is away, I get his books and turn them over, wondering what is in them that interests him so much,” she confessed to the woman missionary. Do you think I will ever be able to read? ⁴³The curiosity of the native women is portrayed as ignorance in the mission literature. The men of those times were educated but preferred their wives to be in these secluded and dark spaces. The native Bible women will become the agents through which the foreign missionaries connect with the women in the secluded spaces.

Early women and missionaries considered themselves liberators of the natives from the clutches of various social evils. Pitman explains the mission objectives of the Zenana mission as Christianizing Indian women, elevating Indian women, and promoting the civilization of Indian women. Several native agents involved in the “Indian Female Normal

⁴³ Emma Raymond Pitman, *Indian Zenana Missions: Their Need, Origin, Objects, Agents, Modes of Working and Results* (London: John Snow, 1903), 16.

School and Instruction Society” formed in 1851 have incorporated five different agencies to reach the native women in the various strata of the society. They are the regular schools, Zenana visitation, medical mission, Hindu and Mohammedan female schools, and Bible women. The trained natives and the English native sent from England carry the Zenana visitation. According to Pitman, Bible women are native Christians with demonstrated talent and spirituality who labour in markets, jails, hospitals, and among the less fortunate women in the communities. The Bible women usually minister to fellow countrywomen whom the European missionaries could not venture into, in the marketplaces, by the water tank, in the fields, at the bathing places, and through house-to-house visitation. The women, being the locals, can easily overcome the heat of the climate. They can associate with the plight and the grievances of the natives more genuinely than the English missionaries as they share sympathy out of their shared experiences. Pitman states that the work of Zenana’s mission through Bible women and other agencies resulted in conversation and, at the same time, abolition of social practices like child marriage and other social rituals and remarriages of widows. The book ends with an appeal from the native women and the statistics about the number of missionaries involved in the mission, followed by the needs and modes of contribution to the mission work in India.

The conversations between the natives and the missionaries in these texts give a glimpse of the social reality and the psychological struggle native women face. Missionary women, though exaggerated in literature, relate to their lives. Alice B. Van Doren’s work *Lighted to Lighten the Hope of India* (1922) elaborates on the condition of women in India and how education has transformed women’s lives in certain sections of society. The work of several educational institutions in south and north India is documented and analysed

concerning their impact on women's lives. The book's initial chapter depicts girls and their conditions due to lack of education. School education gave girls a new perspective on life, which is different from the worldview of their mothers. I do not know what to make of my daughter; why is she not like her mother? This is a parent's complaint to her principal regarding her daughter's attendance at school. Do women find sewing and cooking to be insufficient? What is the reason for her peculiar thoughts regarding various activities that her mother did not like to undertake?⁴⁴ The schools allowed girls to widen their worldview and look forward to entering college.

Women abroad contributed to education, either founding or funding education, as they feel that women in India have the right to get educated. Three initial institutions that played a pivotal role in the higher education of women are Isabella Thoburn College (Lucknow – 1886), The Women's Christian College (Madras – 1915), and The Vellore Medical School (Vellore – 1918). Through these institutions, college women of America and India collaborated to share knowledge and do service. Some educational and medical institutions that started with very humble beginnings with the women missionaries' initiatives have attained a premier position today. The chapter "Women who do Things" brings to light five college women who were not as famous as Ramabai or Sorabji's sister in those times but made a significant impact in their context through their education. The author documents her journey with Mrs. Azariah, the wife of Bishop V.S. Azariah, the first India Bishop who worked in the Khammam and Dornakal regions. At Khammammet, missionaries started schools and brought more people into mission stations.

⁴⁴ Alice Boucher Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten the Hope of India: A Study of Conditions Among Women in India* (West Medford, Massachusetts: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1922), 40.

Irene H. Barnes extensively documents the work of the English missionaries in the Zenanas and the support given by the native Bible women in *Behind the Pardah, the Story of CEZMS Work in India* (1899). The book was written for a purpose: “This book will serve as a complete and satisfying answer, from the Christian point of view, to the question so often asked, why do we retain India?”⁴⁵ The work of the English missionaries at various mission stations highlighted the conditions of the Indian women as ‘suffering sisters’ who were blessed with the arrival of missionaries and their work. Several of these books written by the missionaries do not just communicate information about the mission field but create an image and awareness in the readers’ minds. Barnes observes that Bible women were pivotal in introducing the English missionaries to the natives. The natives had prejudices and queries when they saw the English women enter their homes. She constructs her argument by referring to various missionary correspondences and conversations.

Miss Owles and her Bible woman Rachel enter a house in a small village in Calcutta. The older woman in the house asks Bible women several questions about the missionary before directly interacting with Miss. Owles. A brief conversation follows: The older woman questions the Bible woman, pointing out to the missionary, is that a woman? Then, the Bible woman Rachel replied that the English missionary came to visit her from England. Out of curiosity, the older woman asked if that was a woman. The Bible woman then replied to the older woman by pointing to the missionary’s sun hat and her hair to convince her. Once the older woman was convinced, the white missionary was invited inside their house. Out of curiosity, the older woman asked about the white missionary’s

⁴⁵ Irene H. Barnes, *Behind the Pardah: The Story of C. E. Z. M.S. Work in India* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1899), iii.

hair colour and her husband.⁴⁶ After Miss. Owles answering their curious questions through the mediation of Rachel, the Bible woman, they introduce the new religion. This conversation shows the natives' curiosity about the lady missionaries and how the native Bible woman bridges the gap.

Barnes elaborates more on the conversations between the native women mission workers and natives. Her work provides information on the native women's role in medical and education work. In the Trichur region, there were around seven Bible women; Elizabeth and Rachel were noted among them. Elizabeth worked among the high-caste women. She used to preach the gospel to 4700 people in a year. Rachel focused on the oppressed community among the scattered houses and villages with a prime motive to win souls irrespective of their challenges. Through Zenana's mission activity, the missionaries successfully converted the high-caste women. Thankfully, there are a lot of educated, well-born Indian women among today's missionaries. The conversion of a Brahman is considered a miracle, and Bible women paved a path to enter the Zenanas to teach and later introduce the new religion and convert them with their consent. Barnes's work provides the necessary information to understand the context in which missionaries worked in Khammammet. Though there are some prejudiced representations of native attitudes, her work is very informative.

In her later work *Between Life and Death: The Story of CEZMS Medical Missions in India, China, and Ceylon* (1901), Irene H. Barnes writes explicitly about women's physical and medical conditions in Khammammet. Another work, *Until the Shadows Flee the Story of CEZMS Work in India and Ceylon* (1912), gives a picturesque description of

⁴⁶ Barnes, *Behind the Pardah*, 92.

India, its people, history, and living conditions with a particular reference to women and the work of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS). This book details the location and ministry of CEZMS Missionaries at Khammammet (today's Khammam). This book extensively narrates the challenging conditions in which Dr. Mary Longmire, a foreign medical missionary, worked in Khammam. Dr. Longmire's arrival brought hope to the community, which was worst affected by cholera. The missionaries tried their best to save the sick from dying. By then, there was no permanent place for a hospital. So, they used to travel, camp in the surrounding villages, and treat the sick. Dr. Longmire mentions the mass conversions in and around the Khammammet area and the persecution of some Christian caste converts. Before, the conversion was among the non-caste people, but later, some Shudra caste people also converted to Christianity.

The Village Education Commission report is an essential resource that narrates how Westerners assessed the education of the people in the colonies. Over the course of four months, the Commission travelled to the Philippines, Ceylon, Japan, and the United States. The Commission acknowledged that conditions in these nations differed significantly from those in India. It was firmly of the opinion that studying American and Philippine educational practices would be very beneficial to India. Further, studying Ceylon methods would benefit high school work and some types of village work.

The Commission was constituted with the objective of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the educational requirements of rural Indian communities. In addition, missionaries, government representatives, public leaders, and educators from various nations visited India in order to compile the lessons learned from their experiences. Furthermore, the Commission was tasked with advising the missionary societies back

home on how to make the most significant and effective contribution to furthering God's kingdom in India in light of this experience and the most recent analysis of the current situation.⁴⁷ Mission schools under CEZMS had their own specific educational methods that met the community's needs.

Our Medical Work in the Orient (1921) shows Baptist mission work in various colonised countries. There is specific information about the inception and challenges faced at multiple Baptist mission stations at Hanumakonda, Nalgonda, and other Baptist centres in Hyderabad State. Knowing the local language was crucial in the medical mission. In Hanumakonda Mission Hospital, hiring a head nurse added much to the efficiency of the staff, and her perfect understanding of Hindustani and Mohammedan impacted the vital class. As a result, they started to come more and more into our wards.

According to the missionaries, there have never been this many midwifery cases in their wards. Moreover, the high proportion of Mohammedan women patients in their wards was indicative of a notable shift in public opinion, given the prejudice against male doctors treating women. The patients typically come to the missionary instead of the government hospital, even though it has a female doctor on staff.⁴⁸ The native nurses and helpers have done very well, and the Bible woman at the hospital does excellent and efficient work. "There is so much suffering and work here in Nalgonda that I often wish we could have a qualified doctor, for we both could find enough work."⁴⁹ In Suryapet, Mrs. Hubert praises her native helpers, such as the native nurses, Bible women, and preachers, who have done

⁴⁷ A.G. Fraser, et al., *Village Education in India the Report of a Commission of Inquiry* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1920), 2.

⁴⁸ *Our Medical Work in the Orient* (New York: The General Board of Promotion of The Northern Baptist Convention, 1921).

⁴⁹ *Our Medical Work in the Orient*, 18.

a splendid job for us in the hospital. This literature provides information about the Baptist medical mission work in the Hanumakonda region, which I discuss elaborately in the later chapters.

Not all conversations and writings of the Westerners on the natives are prejudiced and biased. Some broad-minded conversations in various conferences recorded in Educational Papers supplement the missionary conference reports. Throughout all ages, learned Hindus and Mohammedis have devoted themselves to teaching with only a bare subsistence, and generous bequests have not infrequently been made for the permanent endowment of educational institutions.⁵⁰ There is a positive approach to understanding the natives and their beliefs. We no longer dismiss the Hindu people as heathens and consider their religion, philosophy, and social structure unimportant. We learned that when our ancestors were purely barbarians, they were at the pinnacle of civilization. We have come to see that behind the rocks and stocks to which he bows lies a distortion brought on by insufficient understanding rather than the blindness of ignorance. As a result, the missionary of the twenty-first century sees the world substantially differently than his predecessor did in the nineteenth century. Missionaries' work enters the work and organisation that have bequeathed them with very different conceptions of the nature of the task they confront.⁵¹

Srilatha Chatterjee's work narrates the influence of the tropical climate on the European mind and body, and the connection between susceptibility to disease and racial difference formed the main content of British medical texts written in the colonies. The

⁵⁰ South India Missionary Conference, *Educational Papers: A Supplement to the South India Missionary Conference Report* (Madras: Addison and Co., 1880), 14.

⁵¹ *Educational Papers*, 12.

medical men practising in the Tropics interpreted the complex relationship between race and disease in varied forms.⁵² From this concern for keeping the European body safe from diseases of the tropics, a broader notion of public health involving intervention in the spheres of the “native” public began to emerge from the 19th century. It involved controlling not only the localities inhabited by the “native” population but also controlling the “native” body through state legislation, medical policing, and sanitary rules.⁵³ The colonial attitude towards the native bodies is discriminative. The native bodies became a fertile space for colonial medical trials and research.

Chatterjee explains that the colonial clinics provided the opportunity to study the incidence of tropical diseases and identify their presence through symptoms visible in the body. There was a general belief that the hospitals for European patients needed to provide more scope for observing diseases of the tropics. Symptoms in the European body might differ, and European bodies’ susceptibility to diseases of the warm climates was different from the “native” body. While anatomical dissection was difficult to pursue in Britain until the Anatomy Act of 1830, in India, the easy availability of dead bodies made it convenient for European surgeons to open the patients’ bodies after they died in the military and native hospitals. Medical work is an essential wing in Khammammet mission stations. Chatterjee’s work helps us understand the medical missionaries’ work challenges and their prejudices toward the natives’ understanding of medicine. At the same time, the English doctors used the native bodies there to enrich their medical knowledge.

⁵² Srilata Chatterjee, “Healing the Body: Colonial Medical Practice and the Corporeal Context,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 76 (2015): 547, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44156620>.

⁵³ Chatterjee, *Healing the Body*, 548.

Research on Gender and Mission History concerning women's contribution, particularly in Hyderabad State, is an unexplored research area. I read through many resources and employed multiple methodologies. In this chapter, I divided the literature on the given research topic into three sections. Firstly, similar research was done on the related themes and issues in various locations in India and abroad. Secondly, the other research work done by multiple researchers provides the necessary tools to conduct our fieldwork, analyse the primary sources or archival materials, and draw our conclusions. Thirdly, materials and historical documents directly related to the field were written by foreign missionaries, their experiences and feelings when exposed to the native realities in a colonial context.

Chapter 3

Role of Women in Church: A Historical Perspective

3.1. Introduction

Women were essential in starting, shaping, stabilising, and establishing Christianity as a belief system and later as a religion. Jewish women were a significant contributor; they were the majority in numbers and financially supported the early church's growth. These women nursed and nurtured the infant faith group meeting in fragments and scattered ways. They open the door of their vicinity to conduct the house churches. In later history, these women were pushed into the peripheries when Christianity was established as a centralised religious institution.

In this chapter, I analyse widows' roles in the early church and the early church fathers' attitude towards widows, later established as the church's rule. A nursing mother is a powerful symbolic image depicting women's role and contribution to the early church. This image in this work deviates from the catholic church imagery of Mary and Jesus to illustrate the challenges women faced throughout their lives with historical significance but ignored or silenced. It implies the nutritional care of finances and space the infant church received through the support of women. Though the masculine religious traditions silenced their voices and deleted their presence, their contributions seep through the pages of history. These contributions are not just confined through their presence in the early church as numbers but as financers for the apostle ministry. They opened their houses for the faith community to meet and nurture their faith. They negotiated with the then-faith propagators and contributed to documenting biblical sources. They assisted the early church founders as deaconesses and teachers to attract more women and children to faith. Some women

embraced death so that the infant church survived through their sacrifice. I will discuss these in detail in the later sections. This chapter also elaborates on the historical emergence of Bible women in England and how it reached India through various mission agencies. This chapter explicitly documents the Christian native women working at the CEZMS mission station in Khammammet and India.

3.2. Women in Early Church

3.2.1. “Virgins” and “Widows”

Women were the “nursing mothers” for the infant community of faith. The early church was a home church in a domestic space, which provided women with a peculiar opportunity to serve. Wives and their husbands converted their homes into “house churches.” Widows kept their houses and properties at the people’s disposal to meet and understand the new religion.¹ The early church had a group of girls and women raised in church homes. They had no specific duties but were called “virgins” and considered general assistants. The women’s assistants had become a thoroughly organised office by the third century.

In the biblical book - *The Acts of the Apostle*, author Luke mentions several women who administered the church at various levels. This inclusion of women in his narrative does not just use women as an add-on but has a profound message. According to Ben Witherington, the author’s choice, stance, and content demonstrate a conscious effort to suggest how things should be.² Some women have worked as leaders in relief work, especially in helping needy people. Tabitha (Dorcas) was one woman who provided

¹ Thomas Bateson Allworthy, *Women in the Apostolic Church: A Critical Study of the Evidence in the New Testament for the Prominence of Women in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1917), 31.

² Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 129.

material for many people, particularly the widows. It later helped the church develop church offices focused on serving the needy.³ Although she was a widow, her prominent status in the community supported her fellow Christians. Witherington observes that Luke's narrative note about Tabitha reveals how women functioned as deaconesses and disciples. Her excellent work involved making inner and outer garments for needy women. She was presented as the one who maintains and builds her community with her exemplary life. St. Chrysostom remarks why St. Luke recorded her name as the name she bore corresponded to her character- as active and wakeful was she as "*Dorcas* or gazelle."⁴

Moreover, several wealthy women from upper-class Roman society had a lavish lifestyle with ornaments and glittering homes. An average woman could not afford education, but high-class Christian women in Rome often studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and had access to scriptures. Such women denounced their Roman lifestyle and started to support the early church and later the church fathers' work. Marcella and Paula played a pivotal role in the life and work of the early church father, St. Jerome. Jerome's letters to Paula, Marcella, and other learned women are preserved and collected.⁵ However, not a single one of these women's letters is preserved.

Further, women were assigned lower-level tasks than men in the early Christian churches. In some places, women were allowed to hold the presbyter position; some even rose to the bishop level. Although they could not serve as religious instructors, women were respected for their ability to help their husbands and dads. Numerous people had positions as widows, deaconesses, apostles, prophets, educators, or virgins. However,

³ Lorry Lutz, *Women as Risk-Takers for God* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 80.

⁴ Allworthy, *Women in the Apostolic Church*, 31.

⁵ Elizabeth Castelli, "Virginity and It's Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 1(Spring 1986): 62.

during the second century, women's positions faded and came under more scrutiny. The leading cause of this was the manipulations of influential theologians who propagated the notion that women should be subservient to males because they were a sinful and inferior species. One such theologian who made derogatory remarks about women was Tertullian. His fervent argument was that women ought to abstain from speaking in any church, as well as from teaching, baptising, making offerings, and holding any priestly position.⁶ Tertullian affirms that Christians ought to uphold virginity and celibacy as the standard. His top priority is maintaining purity. As a result, a man should avoid touching women at all costs. A virgin is the most sacred of all because she has no affinities with adultery. In addition to serving in house churches, certain women were traditionally appointed as bishops who oversaw metropolitan church groups. These could have been more traditional Christian groups or perhaps more Montanist in attitude.⁷ Through literature from the fourth century, we see confirmation from Epiphanius of Salamis on the unhappiness with women in the church in official roles. Tertullian criticises "Christian communities that allowed women to serve as presbyters and bishops."⁸ As a collective, women were considered inferior to men and not at all viewed as unique beings with diverse abilities.

In her article "The 'Virgin Widow': A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?" (1997), Charlotte Methuen proposes that the virgin widow breached ecclesiastical discipline and the entire social order concerning women. Commenting on these two citations of Tertullian, she notes at the outset that the term "widow," while

⁶ F. Cardman, "Women, Ministry, and Church Order in Early Christianity," in *Women and Christian Origins*, eds., Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 307.

⁷ U. E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 209.

⁸ J. P. Hallett, "Women's Lives in the Ancient Mediterranean," in *Women and Christian Origins*, eds., Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32.

sufficiently evident in English, is inherently ambiguous in Greek and corresponds more closely to “a woman who lives without a man” than to “a woman whose husband has died.”⁹ More significantly, Methuen speculates that unmarried women may have chosen the widow title and sought enrolment to gain autonomy and social standing in the early church.

St. Augustine, who was highly influential in outlining the contours of professed widowhood, affirms this in *De Bono viduitatis* (written c.a.413). A widow is not merely one who has lost her husband but has freely entered an esteemed state of life to dedicate herself entirely to the service of God and his Church. Without devaluing the dignity of marriage, he affirms that widowed chastity is the greater good. The woman who has bound herself by a sacred promise to this state of life must cultivate her widowhood through a life of reading, prayer, psalms, good thoughts, frequency in good works, the hope of the world to come, and a heart lifted upward. Moreover, widows are to cultivate asceticism, sobriety in using material things, and fasting.

John Chrysostom wrote, “A woman may have lost her husband, yet not be truly a widow.”¹⁰ The true widow had to be a model of feminine holiness. As the primitive church grew progressively institutionalised, patristic writers focused more on the functions that widows in the young communities performed, by which they earned their remuneration or “honour.” Chrysostom focuses much of this discourse on dissuading the “luxurious widow” who professes widowhood and continues to live entangled in worldly cares and vanities.

⁹ Charlotte Methuen, “The ‘Virgin Widow’: A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?” *The Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 3 (July 1997): 287, 296–297.

¹⁰ Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ii ad Timotheum* 13 in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 62 ((Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857), 566.

However, many people who choose to become widows do so after having children. Not to end the occasions of this existence on Earth but to improve them so they can act more freely and do as they like. Give yourself to your worldly lusts then with greater abandon; for thus it is said, she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. Would a widow rather live in luxury? Of course not. If a life of pleasure is not permitted when nature and age are weak and instead result in eternal death, then what can those who lived such lives say? However, he argues rationally that “she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”¹¹ Therefore, in obedience to Paul, let us command the luxurious widow not to have a place on the list of widows. For if a soldier frequents the bath, theatre, and busy life scenes, he is judged to desert his duty much more than the widows.

3.2.2. Women Martyrs

Apart from women who supported the church, some sacrificed themselves for their beliefs. Persecution by the Roman rulers instilled fear, and the context turned hostile to the new believers of Christianity. One of the best-documented stories of a martyr was Perpetua; she wrote her diary starting from her imprisonment, trial, visions, and dialogue with her father. It was a remarkable written document widely circulated in the early church, one of the earliest known pieces of literature written by a woman. In the second century, Carthage had a vibrant Christian community; Saturus and his five newly baptised followers were arrested. The early church father, Tertullian, belongs to this community in present-day Tunisia. Perpetua was twenty-two, the older daughter of a wealthy civil servant who was educationally and economically privileged, and the mother of an infant son. Her son stayed with her for a brief period in prison. Two enslaved people, Revocatus and Felicitas, were

¹¹ Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ii ad Timotheum*, 570–572.

also persecuted. Her father pleaded with her to renounce Christianity for her son and family, which she vehemently rejected.

The following is her conversation with Governor Hilarianus: “Everyone acknowledged their guilt when questioned. When it was my turn, my father suddenly showed up with my son, pushed me off the step, and urged, “Make the sacrifice—have mercy on your infant!” I stated in response, “I won’t.” Hilarinaus said, “Are you a Christian?” I answered, “Yes, I am.”¹² After this, her father was beaten with a rod, which did not influence Perpetua’s decision. Instead, she, her slave Felicitas, and a few other believers were sentenced to death, where they were thrown into the wild beast and later killed by the gladiators. An observer narrated her death when the two young mothers, Perpetua and Felicitas, were stripped and given nets to wear and thrown into the arena of a wild bull. When the animal trampled her down, she raised back to her feet and bound her messy hair to face death with dignity. After being brutalised by the wild animals, she was stabbed by a gladiator in her ribs. She embraces her death by bringing the gladiator's sword to her throat.¹³

Felicitas, as a slave of Perpetua, was not given much attention. However, she gave birth to a girl in prison before her death. She was eight months pregnant, and it was not legal to execute a pregnant woman. So, in the company of her fellow believers in death, she has an early delivery, which is extremely painful. An assistant queries her agonising birth circumstances: What will you do when you are cast into the beast’s jaws and left to suffer even more? To which she answered, “I go through what I am going

¹² Lutz, *Women as Risk-Takers*, 6.

¹³ <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/witness/perpetua>, accessed on February 6th 2018.

through right now, but this is just the beginning of my suffering for someone else.”¹⁴ She gave birth to a baby girl whom another Christian woman later raised. In their attempt to connect with Christ in his suffering, women would be able to transcend the potential constraints of their sex through martyrdom.¹⁵

Blandina is another servant girl who was martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the second century. She was cruelly tortured to the extent that her persecutors were exhausted. However, she grew in power and proclaimed her faith that she was a Christian and was not ashamed of it. She was hung on a post as a cross because of her continued prayers. She was later assaulted and killed by the wild creatures. However, according to Eusebius, one of the early church historians, she was not cast to the beasts but rather was celebrating and revelling at her departure, as if she had been invited to a wedding feast. The people declared that she represents the Christ who was crucified on their behalf. She had put on Christ, the invincible athlete.¹⁶ With a brief understanding of the role of women in the early church, we now move on to understand the role of evangelism in England and its influences on women.

3.3. Women and Evangelism in England

Susie Steinbach’s book *Women in England 1760 – 1914: A Social History* (1914) is an important work that elaborates on the role of evangelism and English women. She observes that religion, with all its diversities and complexities, plays an essential role in

¹⁴ <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/witness/perpetua>, accessed on February 6th 2018.

¹⁵ Gail Corrington Streete, “Women as Sources of Redemption and Knowledge in Early Christian Traditions,” in *Women and Christian Origins*, eds., Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D’Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 351.

¹⁶ Frederick C. Klawiter, “The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism,” *Church History* 49, no. 3 (September 1980): 260.

the lives of English society and women. Religion provided opportunities for women of all classes and faiths through imperial, personal, communal, and national engagements. Through various religious organisations, they worked tirelessly in crucial times globally. The church of England, also known as the Anglican Church, was the state church. The Anglican doctrine held that church and state were coeval and every citizen in England was technically a church member. The church and its members enjoyed certain official governmental privileges.¹⁷ Taxes supported the Anglican church, and its parishes were the local unit of government. The Church of England Zenana Mission is an Anglican mission. The Anglicans were richer than Methodists, who catered to working-class religious needs. Class, gender, race, and religion were vital in forming identities in English society.

She explains that both Anglican and Methodist focused on family as a religious unit. Upper-middle-class Anglicans assumed that women would refrain from working outside the home but expected them to infuse family and nation with their superior morality. This provided areas for women to be active, but strict limitations were imposed. Women read the Bible and stories for children at home and teach uneducated adults in Sunday schools. They supported the Anglican Girls' Friendly Society for poor industrial workers and were active in the Church of England Temperance Society. Conservative Anglican women played an essential role as mothers through the Mothers' Union, encouraging women to unite in prayer and see their maternal responsibilities as religious.

Steinbach further explains that when Methodism started establishing itself, it removed religious control from the pulpit. It gave it to those in pews as the church stressed individual salvations as their central religious experience. Women who felt isolated or

¹⁷ Steinbach, *Women in England 1760 – 1914*, 143.

subordinated in their daily domestic or working lives welcomed the opportunity to attend church.¹⁸ Working class civic and organisational events offered opportunities for fellowship to women than to men. Women found these religious communities more appealing. In middle-class circles, Gill opines that Methodism's hesitant acceptance of women preachers was seen as an instance of "that movement's espousal of an enthusiasm inimical to both religious and social order."¹⁹ Women made sure their children attended Sunday school. Middle-class volunteers offered to provide childcare during the services. However, women's roles were confined to good parenting in Methodism. They are not given an ordination or accepted to preach from the pulpit.

Steinbach observes that Clergymen's wives, daughters, and sisters were called 'unpaid curates' of the clergy. At the same time, some felt resentment at the responsibility entrusted to them by marriage. Many used this position to participate in the clerical profession as wives whose lives were subordinated to their husbands' careers. In the 1880s and 1890s, British missionaries spent 2,000,000 pounds per annum on missionary activities, equivalent to two percent of their annual government expenditure. This was the same period when CEZMS started its work in the Khammammet region, and other sister mission stations were already active in the field.

While support was received from people of all classes, most leaders of missionary societies, both men and women, were from the middle class. They regarded themselves as different from those they were serving and supporting. Ellen Raynard's London Female Bible and Domestic mission, founded in 1858, had working-class women as staff to reach

¹⁸ Steinbach, *Women in England 1760 – 1914*, 154.

¹⁹ Sean Gill, *Women in the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: SPCK, 1994), 40.

out to the poor in the London neighbourhood. Both non-whites abroad and people with low incomes in England were regarded as superficially but not spiritually different from missionaries. However, missionaries left their comfort zones to spread Christianity to the unreached through their services. In the later chapters, I have elaborated on Raynard's life and work in my discussion on Bible women.

Steinbach observes that Missionary work was one of the many opportunities opened to unmarried middle-class women. The Church Mission Society had ten women abroad in 1870, but by 1890, three hundred women worked in various mission stations abroad. Middle-class women's domestic purity qualified them for missionary work, but that also put them in danger. Roman Catholic and Anglican Sisterhoods became more prominent in the nineteenth century. Sisters were part and parcel of religious and evangelical work as they lived apart from each other. They dedicated themselves and worked for their faith uniquely. Sisterhoods began to flourish by 1900 CE. There were several thousand sisters in ninety communities. Working-class women became "lay sisters" performing the menial domestic work in houses. The upper and middle-class women with higher status become the "choir sisters."²⁰

She further explains that women's travel writings expose their uncertain role as the subordinated gender in the dominant race. Many positioned themselves precisely as female contributors to the library of travel writings; they paid much attention to landscape and native women and especially offered life in Zenanas or segregated women's quarters in the north, north-western, and eastern India. The elite status of travellers thoroughly shaped their experiences and perceptions. Travel was quite a luxurious affair, particularly to India.

²⁰ Steinbach, *Women in England 1760 – 1914*, 157 – 159.

The search for an Indian picturesque was critical to many female travellers' perceptions. This is evident when we read early books about missionary work in India. Many foreigners visited mission stations, including Khammammet. They hardly attempted to understand the context. Their language in which they address and explain things to the natives is too naive.

Most descriptions of the Zenanas stressed how little privacy the inmate enjoyed. At the end of the century, conservative women saw Indian women as embodying feminine virtues threatened by England by feminism. They praised the traditional Indian society, including Zenanas, and criticised British reformers and missionaries for modernising it.

In this section, I elaborated on women's roles in establishing the early church and the attitudes of men and early church fathers toward women's contributions. However, women in the early church contributed exceptionally to church growth. They are stigmatised as weak bodies because of their gender. Further, I discussed women's lives and living conditions in England, particularly Christian women. This will help us locate the context in which the concept of Bible women is developed, which will be explained in the next section.

3.4. Emergence of Bible Women and Bible Nurses

"Bible women" were an essential workforce in the missionary enterprise in the colonies. They provided the needed human resources to the new missionaries to the colonies by providing language, culture, and customs. A Bible woman uses her gender, colour, and language as an agency to accomplish the missionary's agenda. Bible women understood the peculiarities of the language and culture, which frequently confused missionaries. Homes that were closed to outsiders could now be visited by them.²¹ In this

²¹ Ruth A. Tucker, "The Role of Bible Women in World Evangelism," *Missiology: An International Review* 13, no. 2 (April 1985): 141.

section, I elaborate on the concept of the Bible woman from its historical emergence. We read through a few missionary documents to analyse how Bible women were manufactured, employed, and monitored among the natives by the foreign missionaries. The term “manufactured” is apt because a Bible woman was carefully picked up from the “seekers” group, monitored, and trained for a particular task. The task is to teach, train, and transform women of their community or caste. As discussed in the later chapter, women are picked up from “spaces” like converts’ homes, hospitals, lace schools, and Zenanas and trained as Bible women. Once trained, they are again sent back to the same spaces or different locations based on their creative ability to enlighten women with religious teachings. In the missionary correspondence and reports, we locate the Bible women and bring their names to the forefront. Because unless a Bible woman is exceptional in the specific context, she will not be mentioned by name in the mission documents. Names have their historical importance in a typical socio-political scenario. In the final section of this chapter, a statistical abstract of native and foreign workers is prepared from all the annual reports, and an analysis is made.

Mrs. Ranyard’s maiden name was Ellen Henrietta White, and she was born in Nine Elms in 1809. She came from a huge family of brothers and sisters and was the oldest. In June 1857, Mrs. Ranyard, accompanied by a retired physician, visited the poor ghettos of London. She describes an overpowering, musty stench as people walk past old clothing stores. This afternoon, hot and stinking air is coming from the residents in the cellars under the businesses. Lovers and hangers-on are clogging the streets. Unclean, lethargic women are showing off a recently purchased, recycled piece of shabby elegance to one other.²²

²² Ellen Henrietta Ranyard, *The Missing Link, Or, Bible - Women in the Homes of the London Poor* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1861), 114.

This statement does not just show the conditions of the people in that particular context but also the mindset of the people who access it. The white elite class viewed the poorest of society as someone who needed to be refined and cleansed. In this section, we will have a historical overview of how the concept of “Bible woman” emerged and was established. We explore how England’s class system contributed to this mission’s growth.

Ranyard developed the concept of the “Bible woman” when visiting St. Giles in 1857 because she was concerned about helping many underprivileged women. Bible Woman was an evocative name. Like numerous other Christian women, Mrs. Ranyard searched the Scriptures to find illustrations of women who could serve as role models for contemporary behaviour. In Phoebe and Dorcas, Ruth and Rebekah found purity, industry, compassion, and self-sacrifice in women. She took the biblical women characters, her experiences, and the context’s challenges to develop the concept of a Bible woman. According to Ranyard’s Bible, women identify with the ancient legacy of feminine offerings that predate Christianity. They are “native agents,” working-class people who live in the slums. They represented a creative community as paid workers, making thirty-two pounds a year in the 1860s. Their duties included providing domestic advice and selling Bibles on an instalment basis.

3.5. Rules and Regulations

Following are the general rules for “London Female Bible and Domestic Missions” framed by Raynard. The two main objectives are to supply the Holy Scriptures to the very poorest and improve their conditions by teaching them to help themselves without waiting for others’ help. Scriptures were sold at small weekly instalments, and assistance was provided to procure better food, clothing, and beds. Women of exemplary Christian

character with good habits and manners who grew up under family care are employed as Bible women. They reside in their respective districts in a centrally located room used for the general purpose of the mission. The superintendent pays the rent. Bible women are kept under the supervision of a Lady who resides in the district. To whom the Bible woman will submit her weekly reports. The Lady Superintendent will receive the report and pay the salary. Character, commitment, and cleanliness are the basic requirements for a Bible woman.

The following are the instructions framed for the Bible woman. The first principle at work is to identify the people who do not have a Bible and are willing to purchase it cheaply. Carry a bag with various Bibles and Testaments and encourage people to buy them, paying in instalments or in total. Since the Bible Society pays Bible women, they must understand who supplies and supports their work: “A Bible woman was expected to work five hours daily for Bible work, for which they received two shillings daily.”²³ Bible work and domestic work should not be clubbed together. Domestic work encourages low-income people to buy clothing and bedding in instalments, ensuring they no longer live in dirt and discomfort. Further, the Bible women instruct them on needlework, cooking, and hygiene. In their reports, a Bible woman records all her daily visits and elaborates on her experiences and challenges on the field.

Ranyard elaborated on the work of women workers, saying that the lady superintendents are expected to give a fair share of their time as they oversee the work of the Bible women. There is a strict distinction between Bible women and lady superintendents. Middle-class women observe working-class women who support the

²³ Ranyard, *The Missing Link, Or, Bible - Women*, 297 – 298.

emancipation of those from lower social classes. The Bible woman should never pay expenses or buy materials unless instructed in writing by her mistress. Superintendent Lady should become a member of the Ladies Bible Association. She should pay generously every month for the instalments received by the Bible woman for the copies of scriptures. They contribute their services and money voluntarily. The lady superintendents ensured that the Bible women would do either Bible work or domestic work one at a time. Each lady is given the responsibility of a Bible woman. The Lady Superintendent must register various happenings and take stock of all departments. Such as weekly visits to the clothing and bedding club, reading or speaking to the subscribers at mending or tea parties, purchasing clothing material, and fixing and giving out needlework—arrangements concerning bags of linen, soap making, timely loans, visitation of exceptional cases, etc. The superintendents are expected to raise funds for any temporary work in their region. They are expected to read scriptures frequently and pray with the Bible woman to find her effective preparation for her assigned work. Due to their class privilege and financial status, we can observe that they are appointed supervisors and supervise Bible women's work and reports.

Deborah Gaitskell makes the following observation after a study on Bible women in South African Methodism. Ranyard's style of administration was "an ingenious mixture of paid and volunteer, working-class and middle-class workers respectively." She enlisted "lady superintendents" who met the Bible women regularly to read their reports, pay salaries, and run mothers' meetings.²⁴ This two-sided, hierarchical, yet joint female religious venture came to be echoed in modern South Africa. Racial labelling superimposed

²⁴ Deborah Gaitskell, "Hot meetings and Hard Kraals: African Bible Women in Transvaal Methodism, 1924-60," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. 3(August 2000): 281.

the class divide between those who worked as Bible women and the women who paid and supervised them.

3.6. Nature of Work

3.6.1. Bible Women

By serving as the “missing link” between the underprivileged and the upper classes of society, Bible women restored at home Christianity. They were created to meet the needs of inner – city communities, which were devoid of middle – class residents and characterised by pervasive poverty and unbelief. The ministry brought in 234 Bible ladies in its first ten years of operation. A careful selection process ensured they were respectable Protestants with few family obligations. A three-month school on scripture, law, hygiene, and the tenets of the Charity Organisation Society was later offered to newcomers. They covered all the city’s many neighbourhoods and helped divide London into postal districts so that the courts and lanes could be more easily mapped out. They broke through the numerous neighbourhoods that spanned the city and assisted with the separation of London into postal districts, making it easier to map out the courts and lanes.

Bible women carried scriptures of various kinds and prices and sold them in instalments, a revisit to collect the payments provided space for Bible women to preach and teach to the people. Portions of scriptures are sold at one penny, and Family Bibles are as high as thirty shillings, all to be paid a penny at a time. The large-print cost two-shilling bible, a favourite of all. The Bible woman must call the buyer’s house twenty-four times before it is all paid for. Very good, a poor woman who would venture with a bag of Bibles into every room as a paid agent for the Bible Society and give an authentic account of her trust. Alldridge observes that the Bible woman adopted the orphan children from the slums,

providing them with proper nutrition and care and later shifting them to school.²⁵ The same can be observed in the Khammammet mission field. Rukmini Ammagaru's narrative was collected from her adopted son, Charles.

Alldrige further explains that Mrs. Ranyard spent a long time locating and appointing her first Bible woman, looking for people from the same localities with good character and lifestyle. **Marian B** was appointed as the first Bible woman. As did her one Bible woman, Mrs. Ranyard quickly discovered that many more items were required besides Bibles. A printed recipe for a filling soup that could be prepared for sixpence was sold for a halfpenny, and a pot was provided for the recipe's preparation.

They organised a sewing group and a clothes club and made different plans for each situation. Mrs. Ranyard soon realised it would be best to focus her magazine only on advancing her goal. She called it "The Missing Link," meaning the missing link between the poorest and the upper classes by that term, the Bible-woman.²⁶ It is with dirt that we first want our Bible women to grapple with disease born of dirt. For eleven years, the Bible women worked alone. However, the horrifying demand for skilled nurses to care for the sick and underprivileged grew increasingly pressing. The mission was expanded to include the Bible Woman Nurse. It was up to Mrs. Ranyard to start teaching her nurses independently. She managed to get them admitted to hospitals' medical and surgical wards, but not without some difficulty. Women with Bibles and rudimentary medical knowledge were always in demand in the mission stations. Missionaries prepare women to do multiple works in the field.

²⁵ Lizzie Alldridge, *The World's Workers: Florence Nightingale, Frances Ridley Havergal, Catherine Marsh, Mrs. Ranyard* (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1885), 100.

²⁶ Alldridge, *The World's Workers*, 124.

3.6.2. Bible Nurse

Mrs. Ranyard recognized the dangers of mixing temporal and medical relief and thus turned her mind to another specialist scheme: “Bible nursing.”²⁷ She believed that sickness must present possibilities in order to free that soul from evil. Her experiences demonstrated how offering medical assistance could open doors to Christian education that might otherwise remain closed. Agnes Jones had an impact on her. In 1861, she was employed by the Bible ladies. Later on, she was appointed head of nursing at Liverpool Infirmary. Mrs. Ranyard proposed that Agnes Jones tutor a group of Christian nurses in London after some early trials with untrained nurses in several London districts. However, this plan was shelved due to a lack of funding and Miss Jones’s sudden departure due to a family issue.

As adequate funds were not available to establish a nursing facility, the medical plan was delayed until 1868. Mrs. Ranyard started her Bible nurse scheme for the first time that year in collaboration with the existing mission work. Her nurses came from a decent working-class background. She did not disregard the appeal for middle-class women to pursue careers in nursing. However, she did not assume that ladies would significantly influence patients more than working-class women. Instead, she contended that healthcare personnel needed to be hired outside of hospitals, and it made sense to have a nurse who fit in with her environment. She noted that her nurses were simple, not without a trace of pride. However, in the 1870s, they were paid thirty-nine pounds a year. Compared to qualified hospital staff nurses, who frequently belonged to a higher socioeconomic status, they were paid about the same. Women from the working class do not have an opportunity

²⁷ Ellen Henrietta Ranyard, *Nurses for Need or Bible Nurses in the Homes of the London Poor* (London: James Nisbet & Company, n.d.), 33.

to become nurses because of their class. They became Bible nurses to get medical training and serve their community.

The Bible women were the first to become Bible nurses. Ideal volunteers for Mrs. Ranyard would be twenty-five to thirty-five-year-old single mothers, mothers of single students, or mothers who had lost a child. It was crucial to have both mental and physical endurance. It was stated that the finest nurses were those who could apply their skills to the situation at hand rather than those who had extensive book knowledge. It was vital that she needed to be a devout Christian. The ideal practical nurse would be a woman of great maternal wit, ability, kindness, and quiet demeanour who could combine practical and spiritual virtues. During the initial years of recruitment, three nurses were fired by the mission due to “moral fault.” Women’s character and moral standards were constantly checked as they were the priority in doing medical work.

At first, trainees at Ranyard were assigned to three different roles: a Bible woman, a hospital ward, and district probation. Each role lasted three months. Although the hospital course was shorter than what was then needed to become a hospital nurse, Mrs. Ranyard contended that it was sufficient “for our purpose?” Her medical purpose was to get low-income people to nurse one another, keeping with her motto: “to help people experiencing poverty to support themselves.”²⁸ The Bible nurses’ approach to home nursing combined preventive and restorative care, focusing on low-income families taking care of themselves as much as possible. Mrs. Ranyard wanted to expand the charity of people experiencing poverty to include proper medical attention and assistance with personal hygiene issues because she understood it was crucial for those living in the slums to survive.

²⁸Ranyard, *Nurses for Need or Bible Nurses*, 42.

The Bible nurses did not wear distinctive costumes in their early years because it was thought that poor people disliked uniforms. It was advised that they dress in a warm, black gown and wrap a tin basin around their waists with a flannel apron. By the 1890s, it was mandatory to wear a grey-blue outfit with a dark cloak and bonnet and a badge with the pen name L.N.R. (Lanyard) on it. Furthermore, a divided purse containing Bibles, passages from scripture, and Florence Nightingale's Notes on Nursing—the Bible of holistic nursing—was made available by the Ranyard Mission. Extras included scissors, knives, pins, needles, and thread—items not typically seen in the hands of people experiencing poverty. The mission also sent another gift with soap, sheets, towels, medication, and carbolic lotion. During her seven-hour duty, Bible nurses usually saw eight or ten cases. Weekly entries in her books would include fifteen to twenty patients, many of whom did not receive daily care. Although night duty was rare, it was frequently necessary to work on weekends because neighbours could typically be contacted to help in an emergency.

3.6.3. Bible Quilts

The mission placed a significant priority on cleanliness and hygiene, but it also paid attention to nutrition and general household help. In addition to making beds and dusting, the nurses cooked, cleaned, and cared for the sick. Scripture passages were sewn into the fabric of Bible quilts, also known as text quilts, a distinctive aspect of the mission known as the “silent comforters.”²⁹ Although the Bible nurses report about the text quilts, the text is not for a blind and paralyzed woman. Her daughter and husband read the texts for her, which is a great comfort. Sometimes, a quilt is shared between two cases. A patient with

²⁹Ranyard, *Nurses for Need or Bible Nurses*, 224 – 225.

rheumatic fever could hold a book, read the texts on her quilt, and be comforted. The Bible nurse thought she was seeking Christianity, but her husband opposed it. Still, the text on the quilt always caught his attention. The text quilts were used to bring the Roman Catholics into Protestantism and to accept “Jesus alone to salvation.”³⁰

Doing all they can for the body, Mrs. Ranyard counsels her nurses to help rescue the soul. Bible nurses provided highly individualised care, frequently investing extended periods of time in their patients’ company. The Ranyard nurses’ focus on the elderly impoverished during the twentieth century is intriguing. The elderly were more vulnerable to religious conversion than just needing medical care. At the end stage of life, people were given the care with the Christian gospel to accept Christ as their saviour.

By the end of 1868, fourteen Bible nurses made 5,000 visits to ninety-nine patients in their first year of employment. The figures rose to 111,601 visits to 4,392 patients in 1874. Forty-five districts had been planned, with fifty-seven nurses in service. Because they feared transmitting infectious infections, Bible nurses took a passive approach to treating them in the eighteenth century. That being said, they had no jurisdiction over measles, smallpox, or scarlet fever other than providing supplies, advice, and disinfectants. The remaining patients of the little under 10,000 cases treated in 1894 were subsequently divided into four categories: surgery, helplessness, consumptive, and confinement. The most frequent came under the following classifications: confinement, casuals, general medical, fever, surgical, and bronchitis.

Further, the Bible woman worked with the Bible nurses in the field. Ranyard narrates how Bible women and people are grateful for the services of their Bible nurses.

³⁰ Ranyard, *Nurses for Need or Bible Nurses*, 238.

Once, a nurse entered a room and saw a poor older woman left unattended for days. She requests the Bible woman to assist her. After taking off the towel covering her head, they discovered that the poor person was covered in dirt and rodents and was in a horrible condition. She had not had a bath in seven weeks. The nurse and Bible woman returned to their room, got hot water, soap, and towels, and then returned to wash her thoroughly. The places where Bible women's entrance is denied ensure they obtain entrance for her sister worker, the Bible nurse.³¹ The Bible nurse then attends to the families' medical needs and encourages them to purchase Bibles from the Bible woman.

In order to obtain a certificate, the nurses in 1893 completed a year of training at a general hospital before joining a specific hospital. This programme was followed in the districts by probationary training. They were thoroughly educated there in anatomy, physiology, and general nursing. They were examined by the mission at the completion of their first and second years. The twentieth century saw an uneasy relationship develop between religion and medicine, and the Ranyard Mission found it difficult to maintain the fervent religious fervour that had been its defining characteristic. The mission's spiritual message became diluted and was no longer appropriate for Bible women or nurses to wear on their uniforms. It was changed in 1917 to the Ranyard's Mission. During the First World War, the title "Bible nurse" was dropped in favour of "Ranyard nurse," likewise, "Bible woman" became "Mission worker." It is noteworthy to mention that following World War II, an average Ranyard nurse saw sixteen to eighteen patients per day. Eight to ten were recorded per day in the 1870s. Numerous theories can account for this improved workload. Still, many hours, if not souls, were saved by reducing the time spent reading the Bible and

³¹ Ranyard, *Nurses for Need or Bible Nurses*, 196.

converting to religion. For the Ranyard Mission and the whole charitable sector, 1948 was a historic year. The decision was made for the nurses to maintain their freedom while working in harmony with South London's health services.

However, in 1965, three years before their centenary, they were incorporated into the District Nursing Scheme of the Health Services. The mission members who stuck to Mrs. Ranyard's principles may have felt conflicted at this turning point. Her criticism of the state was constant, but she considered it a possible danger to self-help, Christian teaching, and voluntary work. An authoritative work on community nursing released in 1970 would not have been accepted by her. This text acknowledged a tragic deficiency in the gratitude of nurses for their role in providing home health care for the sick and dying.

All of the mission's cords were in Mrs. Ranyard's hands. She used to say to her people, "I give you a good long line, but remember, I have a hook at the end."³² She would smile dismissively. I can entice you in at all times. Still, she was the ultimate mistress of the circumstances, possessing the most profound humility and openness to picking up ideas from the most modest employee. She suffered a severe bronchial attack in February 1879, when she was seventieth years old. Nevertheless, she battled through it with a resoluteness that was typical of her.

3.7. Bible Women in CEZMS Mission Stations in India

In the previous section, I elaborated on the historicity and emergence of the Bible woman as a concept and person. In this section, I discuss Bible women's work in the Indian context, particularly in CEZMS mission stations. Bible women are identified with their names, and their nature of work is explored. I read through various mission reports starting

³² Ranyard, *Nurses for Need or Bible Nurses*, 125.

from 1883, confined to the Khammammet region and all of the CEZMS mission stations in India. The early reports are available in book volumes from 1883. Each volume comprises twelve-month reports from various mission stations.

In the beginning years of the Church of England Zenana Mission ministry, the missionary magazines had narratives of Bible women from different mission fields. A close reading of these narratives reveals to us the teaching methods of the Bible woman, the challenges they faced in a context, and the counter plans they employed. Reporting about mission work in Trivandrum Miss. Blandford writes about **Maria**, their first Bible woman, in 1873. Since joining, she has had a native agency for the mission school and Zenana teaching. She supported them for two months, visiting eighty-one houses to give scriptural instruction. By 1876, they appointed their second Bible woman, Martha, and, in 1877, their third Bible woman, **Salome**.³³ Though Salome died after a brief period of work in 1879, she impacted her pupils and missionaries greatly; her pure heart, genuine love for her Saviour, and joy in carrying out His job delighted all of her fellow carers, and we will always treasure her memory and benefit from her shining example.

Atchara and **Anna** are the other two Bible women in the band. In the same volume in a different location and year, the missionaries report their courage to deal with those who oppose them, their cleverness in argument, and their speech fluency with great appreciation. When engaged with Bible women, they observed the natives open their doors for them. It made the missionaries increase the native agency. They need more funds and support from home agencies to improve the number of Bible women. The testimonies and field reports of the Bible woman become crucial evidence for the missionaries to impress

³³ *India's Women: The Magazine of Church of England - Zenana Missionary Society*, vol.3 (London: James Nisbet & Company, 1883), 317.

and demand more support. Every CEZMS mission starts with a single native worker/Bible woman. However, as the years and pupils increase, the number of Bible women also increases.

Further, in the same volume, Miss. Branch's report from Jabalpur is about her Bible woman, **Adelaide**. She makes a powerful sermon using action and a smile to visually represent her points. The missionary provides a few examples of Adelaide's activities. Although she is not as skilled as she may be in teaching reading and writing, she is still a decent Bible woman. Bible women used their creative expressions with local examples and language accents to make the biblical narrative more understandable to the natives. These testimonies and narratives of Bible women have a good readership. So, the missionaries write them more creatively and dramatically to impress and inspire the donors to support more.

The mission station does not have or engage these native agents to feel the need and requests the mission agencies to appoint the Bible woman. A report from the Kottayam station appears in the same volume. The missionary notes that Mrs. Bishop frequently expressed her need for a Bible-woman to visit the girls in their homes and continue the work that was started in the schools. Still, she could never do it until about twelve when CEZMS gave a grant for a Bible woman's support; they started their work immediately. Following the request, they initially appointed a widow of a native pastor, a good woman. Fear and poor health, however, caused her to resign. Her suitability for the job was demonstrated. Bible women were in high demand, and if one departed, she was viewed as someone unreliable.

Later, **Ellichie** was appointed to visit the homes of all the girls she taught at school. After teaching the girls in the school, Bible women were expected to see the family of the girls. If the parents or the relative open their door, the Bible woman starts their class at home. In regular intervals, based on their report, the missionaries visit these homes to inspect their work and interact with the students. These conversations are communicated to the mission board and friends back home to receive financial support.

Bible women provided very cheap labour for the mission agencies. They were not confined to one space or activity but were involved in multiple mission engagements. Mrs. Beutel from Clarkabad requests to appoint Christian Bible women who work for Christian, Hindu, and Mohammedan women and visit surrounding villages. The Bible woman's pay for doing such Herculean tasks was only about eight rupees monthly.³⁴ The following is how one of the missionaries vividly describes the journey of a Bible woman in the same volume: the sun had set in the stunning west in gold and crimson, a night breeze blew through the tamarind trees, the fireflies gleamed among the shadows in their finicky way, and ten thousand star-lamps kept watch in their sky-home in the deep vault of heaven above the Southern Cross. A fast step along the river's edge signalled the end of the short Eastern evening twilight. The Bible woman was heading home after a long day of labour in the dusty city.

In the same volume, Miss. Catchpool narrates the initial days of her work at the mission station and her Bible woman. She was busy with language studies from the beginning as she had to pass the Urdu exam. She recalls that first, since I could not speak Punjabi and they could not understand Urdu, my primary responsibility was to wait on the

³⁴ *India's Women*, vol.3, 199.

Bible woman while she talked to the crowd. So, the Bible woman played the translator and interpreter for the missionaries. The two Bible women did exceptional work, increasing the number of Bible women to eight. When the women go in groups to bathe, they head to the big tanks to attract multiple people's attention at once. It was never an unsafe place to be. Bible women used every opportunity they got to preach. The local Christian ladies requested more Bible women than missionaries, as they taught them in their language and dialect.

Miss. Humphreys reports about her Bible woman, **Shorrno**: she has two sets of houses she visits each afternoon. When Shorrno visits, women assemble in each home and listen to her attentively. She reads and talks with them, and some raise questions regularly. People do not welcome her; sometimes, her report book says, "Such-and-such a house closed on account of objections."³⁵ Bible women submitted their daily reports to the missionaries through which their work was assessed. These reports give statistics on Bible women's visitations and the obstacles they faced in the field. In the later years, Shorrno was supported by the West Brighton association as the sponsors were impressed by her work. The number of visits followed by multiple visits decides the worth of a Bible woman. Although there were more attentive hearers, the missionary expressed her inability to accompany her regularly and search for an assistant. Bible women work hard, but they are paid relatively significantly less. They provided cheap labour for the foreign missionaries.

The women employed as teachers are also expected to serve in the mission field as Bible women. In the same volume, Miss. Haitz from Bhagalpur reports about two teachers. One widow is **Sarah Ratni**, and a married woman is **Sarah James**. Miss. Haitz tried to

³⁵ *India's Women*, vol.3, 20.

train Bible women by initially sending them to children's homes to prepare them for eventually taking up the role of Bible women, but not all women were comfortable becoming Bible women. Not all women accept and do what the missionary expects them to do.

The missionaries regularly visited the fields to access the work of the Bible women. Suppose the people in a particular place are not responding to the Bible women's teachings. In that case, they are shifted to a different location based on their needs. Miss. Lewis reports, "I was out in the villages four days last week, from half-past six on Monday morning to quarter-past six on Friday evening. I surveyed the work of the Bible women and was very pleased with the pupils."³⁶ But **Nyana Pakkiam** has to be shifted to a better domain because the women in that particular community are uninterested and unresponsive. As Mrs. Kearns was searching for a Bible woman, Miss. Lewis had corresponded with her regarding Nyana, who, as a young widow, preferred not to be sent to a completely heathen village by herself. Bible women are a vital resource that mission stations and missionaries shared with them as per the demand and need.

In the same volume, Miss. Thom from Jalandhar reports about two Bible women, **Jewihra** and **Azizan**. Jewihra comes from Hoshiarpur at the recommendation of Mrs. Chatterji, a knowledgeable woman believed to be a faithful Christian. Azizan is from Secunderabad, who also had high recommendations. Both come from different mission stations with solid recommendations to Jalandhar to be trained as Bible women by Miss. Thoms: "Miss. Thom Pens, we are now devoting much time to preparing these two." Even though this was all new to them, they believed that their time was worthwhile because

³⁶ *India's Women*, vol.3, 96.

educating native helpers is a crucial component of mission work. The recommendation of the respective mission station heads plays a vital role in accepting and training the Bible women. The mission board uses a similar method when missionaries are selected and sent to foreign lands. The Bible woman Azizan was sent from Nizam's State to north India to be trained as a Bible woman.

The CEZMS reports had information from Karachi's work among Sindhi. In volume seven, reports of 1887 were published, and Mrs. Ball reports opening ten Sindhi high caste Zenanas for a lady visitor. There was a great need for a native Christian Sindhi Bible woman. She says the number of doors opened or houses visited can be doubled if provided with a European missionary woman and a few native Christian Bible women. Bible women from the same caste group are readily accepted among that caste group. Miss. Neele's reports about her Bible woman **Nistarine**, being a high-caste convert, was always welcomed in the Zenanas she visits. She combines a little teaching of reading, etc., with her more direct work as a Bible-woman in some of them. Knowing the habits and feelings of the Hindu homes, she can get to the hearts of her hearers so much better.³⁷ We can see the same in Mary Seethamma, whom we discuss later. Many Kamma people got interested in Christianity because of her. Missionaries realised these caste inclinations and affiliations of native communities very early and catered to their needs accordingly. Sindh Mission also had an English Bible woman, **Miss. Pigott**, who died in 1887.

However, caste feelings among the Bible women created a much more challenging task for the missionaries to address. Caste inclination and caste affiliations are maintained and accepted in mission stations. In the same volume, Miss. Lewis from Palamcottah

³⁷ *India's Women: The Magazine of Church of England - Zenana Missionary Society*, vol.7 (London: James Nisbet & Company, 1887).

reports that in the past year, some of her Bible women have shown signs of caste feelings, which has caused her some difficulties. They had to suspend some temporarily because this significantly hurt the missionaries. However, everyone prepared to extend that sisterly love to their coworkers – as they ought to have done as fellow members of the same church – has been welcomed into our community.³⁸ The missionaries were strict with their employees about caste feelings. However, when it comes to the high caste converts, they ignored or maintained it as conversion was their priority but not caste.

The Bible women worked in very challenging climatic conditions. They must ensure the foreign missionaries' travel and stay are safe and comfortable. When the missionaries travel to the outstations to inspect the Bible women's work, they assist the missionaries irrespective of their social and climatic conditions. Miss. Catchpool narrates about her Bible woman, **Lizzie**, who helps her with her five-month-old baby and another child unprotected from the hot sun.³⁹ In Contrast, she also mentions how comfortable her stay was with lahars putting her under a large tree shade at the village entrance. Miss. Ling narrates about a Bible woman working at Coonoor Mission Centre, a favourite holiday destination for missionaries' furloughs. The Bible women working here are not all protected from the frequent rains.⁴⁰ Since the population is migratory, they do not have specific visitation. Above all, alcohol consumption was most prevalent among all classes. Bible women reach out and work in these harsh conditions. At the same time, missionaries monitor their work and send reports to mission agencies.

³⁸ *India's Women*, vol.7, 299.

³⁹ *India's Women*, vol.3, 45.

⁴⁰ *India's Women*, vol.7, 183.

The Bible women connect with the natives more quickly as they are familiar with the language and talk in the accent and style that attracts and impresses their listeners. They sing the hymns taught to them by the missionaries more informally. **Dubie** is Mrs. Williams's Bible woman about whom Miss. Collinson reports, "as I type this, about six or seven women have shown up at the tent's door, and our good 'Dubie' is sitting on the ground chatting earnestly, passionately, and spiritually. She will be singing one of the wild national anthems of Bengal, which she can sing and enjoy listening to. Having attended a Christian village school, she was one of them. These villages produced some Muslim parents for him. She speaks with a remarkable ability and does it well. Going to the villages with her was enjoyable. "I talk and read to the woman, and then she picks up the pace with such eagerness and sings hymns, moving her hands and head in a certain way. Instead of sitting idle, singing makes them more active and attentive."⁴¹ This is an example of how women taught in school are later employed to teach the gospel to their families and villages. Miss. Parslee reports about her "valued" Bible woman, **Begum Jan**. She occasionally visits nearby villages to make friends with people and inspect the work.

When missionaries visit the village, women gather in small groups to glimpse a white lady. Several times, the natives are confused about whether they are men or women. In the same volume, Miss. Collinson narrates how she explains to the native women that she came to inform them about the Bible and the guru who gives them salvation. However, women were fearful about losing their caste identity. The missionaries are not immediately welcomed; though they are attracted to the visible complexion, the invisible caste hierarchy

⁴¹ *India's Women*, vol.3, 64.

and privilege stop them. The Bible woman acts as an agent, and her constant visitation bridges the gap.

Bible women are the interpreters, translators, and facilitators between the missionaries and natives. The missionary doctors keep Bible women in their lobe to communicate with the patients. Some Bible women read scriptures to the patients while they wait for their turn to see the doctor. Miss. Sharp narrates how people participate interestingly when her Bible woman sings an Urdu Hymn while she checks the patients. It is pleasing to observe that many of them are receptive and willing to listen; yet, occasionally, amidst a sincere plea to them, someone will interrupt with a completely unrelated comment. They are easily satisfied and have a lot of youthful qualities to them.⁴² The missionary at the Golden Temple dispensary reports that Bible women at St. Catherine's and Karam Singh dispensaries are doing good work. However, her dispensary does not have a Bible woman. Because of this, whoever is medically treating the patients must read biblical literature for them in batches.

In some mission stations, with the growing work and increase in seekers and believers, missionaries were confined to the 'supervision work' of the Bible women. More Bible women were engaged and sent to various surrounding towns and villages per the need and request. Mrs. Lewis from Palamcottah reports how she was occupied with only the superintending of the Bible women's work with an increase in Bible women visiting the Hindu women in their houses and giving them salvation gospel. In the later years, we note the missionaries reporting about them inspecting the work of native Bible women. The missionaries travelled with the Bible woman to the nearby village; the Bible woman

⁴² *India's Women*, vol.3, 95.

informed them that only eight out of twenty pupils were available while preparing for some festival. The missionary reports, “We visited four houses. In the first two, the pupils’ progress was far from satisfactory; in the third and fourth, it was somewhat better.”⁴³

Women from higher strata of society were converted to Christianity and also converted their husbands without knowing the aftermath situations. For example, some women from the Zamindari families got converted. However, once their husbands died and became widows, they were brought to the mission orphanages and later trained as Bible women. Mrs. Beutel writes about **Elli**, a widow of a Zamindari who was brought from the Secunderabad orphanage.⁴⁴ **Bibi Muni** was also the wife of a Zamindari; both were trained to be Bible women. However, they needed to learn about the Christian teachings as they had been baptised with their husbands without knowing anything.

A Bible woman ensures that they train their successors in their last days. Mrs. Ball reports about her faithful Bible woman, **Mrs. Ilett**, who was ill and invested a reasonable amount of time in training a young Christian widow to fill her place. But a few days later, the widow married and left, and the missionaries searched for another woman.

In the Bible, women visit the wealthy, the high caste, and the poor. They regularly contact them when they preach on the streets and distribute Bible literature tracts. The Bible women visit them once a week in their houses, but many are not satisfied with that. The missionaries always search for women who go and live among the communities to spend their time and teach women regularly. The following are a few Bible women’s report extracts: **Annie**, a Bible woman at Ponagoody a few miles away from Palamcottah, reports

⁴³ *India’s Women: The Magazine of Church of England - Zenana Missionary Society*, vol.6 (London: James Nisbet & Company, 1886), 146.

⁴⁴ *India’s Women: The Magazine of Church of England - Zenana Missionary Society*, vol.4 (London: James Nisbet & Company, 1884), 196.

February 1884: “I went to Ponagoody village on Monday and read the first eight verses of 2 Peter 3. I explained to them the fig tree parable and how the servant begged the Master not to chop it down, demonstrating that the Second Coming of Christ is postponed to allow the unconverted to be converted. I explained the significance of the Saviour praying for us before God, the Father, just like that servant did. I said that God put us here so that we might follow the correct path and believe in the Saviour.” The Bible women explained the biblical text, which instilled new interest among the listeners.

In the same volume, there is a mention of the Bible women who had other literature apart from the Bible to encourage their listeners. **Jovanal**, a Bible woman from Tinnevely (presently known as Tirunelveli), writes about how she visits a police inspector's house where Munammal, her pupil, is ill and weak. She sat by her side and read a portion of *Loving Call* that encourages people to approach God confidently and earnestly. She knelt by her bed and prayed for her. Before leaving, she instructed her relative Somam to read religious tracts and scriptures to the sick person, wasting time in vain conversations. Another Bible woman, **Yundial**, reports reading and explaining from the book *Pilgrim's Progress* how a sinner's burden is removed when they approach Christ. It can be noted that the missionaries trained the Bible women to read and speak to the listeners according to their physical and mental conditions. Some are warned to accept Christianity as time is near, and some are encouraged to approach it slowly and steadily.

Some individuals exclusively support the Bible women work among the natives. In the same volume, the missionaries mention ‘funded individuals’ work in their reports.⁴⁵ For example, Miss. Anne Jane Askwith reports to Miss. Browne. The latter supports

⁴⁵ *India's Women*, vol.4, 291.

Thangammal, who works with Mohammedans at Melapalayam and is a devoted worker. She frequently faces great difficulties, including persecution, as the males hate Christianity and find it unbearable to hear the name of Jesus. But when the men leave for work, the Bible woman visits the women because they are happy to hear.

In the same volume, it is noted that Miss. Stokes sponsored five pounds (£5) for a Bible woman to work among the Brahmins. The missionary was very anxious to find a suitable woman. The Brahmins will not allow a low-caste woman to enter their houses. Since they did not see an appropriate person, they used the funds to support Annamai's work among Mohammedans. The women welcomed the Bible women; her bright lessons cheered their monotonous lives. Soon, the headman changed his mind and prevailed on all the others to forbid their wives from learning. Though the Bible-woman went, again and again, the doors were permanently shut against them. Soon, the missionaries identified a different location for her to work among the tailor caste. The Bible woman goes to them and teaches the Bible to women. Nine women started learning to read, but many gathered to listen to the Bible stories. It can be noted that irrespective of acceptance and rejection, Bible women were at work regardless of caste, religion, and location.

Bible women are not just confined to the works assigned by the missionaries. They help the women driven out of their homes to show interest in Christianity. In the following year, in the same volume, Mrs. Kearn from Sacheapuram reports about a woman who was thrown out of her home and has taken refuge in a Bible woman's home. She was kindly received even though the Bible woman had young children and was a "delicate woman." The woman started to support the Bible woman in her daily activities like fetching water, cleaning the house, and beating rice, as she did not want to be a burden. Mrs. Kearn writes

I found out that besides household duties, she had gone out with the Bible -woman teaching and singing to the people, and they listened most attentive to her. The little ones especially liked her to prepare them, so this seemed to me just the thing she could do, and I proposed to take her as a Bible woman. The missionaries always look for women who work comfortably at the grassroots level. Bible women make their work easy by identifying the right people. Bible women helped missionaries determine the right human resources, locating and providing women of good calibre and character to work in the mission field.

Further, when women visit their relatives in a different place, they coordinate with the local Bible women and missionaries to continue their learning classes. In the same volume in a different annual report, Mrs. Kearns inquired about the address of a nearby Bible woman after learning that her relative was travelling from Sivakasi to Verrudhupetti. Keeping her students in hand as they visited among their friends, she took her address and gave it to her Bible woman. Many signs in this town tell us to walk gently between the houses.⁴⁶ This allows the local Bible woman to visit new houses by visiting and teaching students from other regions. Mrs. Kearns reports about her Bible woman Ruth from Verudjupetti, a well-connected town due to railways: **Ruth** worked among the Brahmins and Vellalabs. There was a need for a second Bible woman as people were welcoming and willing to be instructed. As they are wealthy, they have enough time to learn and are eager to know about the “unknown god.” Ruth is wanted in too many places, and the people are jealous if she does not go to all their houses. New believers and seekers demanded more visits from the Bible women as they were curious about Christianity.

⁴⁶ *India's Women*, vol.4.

The resistance from the high caste Brahmins towards general education other than religion subsided with the consistent visits of the Bible women. While Miss. L Coleman from Trichur was seated and instructing students on the veranda of a Brahmin residence, a Brahmin approached her and saluted them. He remarks, "Teaching Brahmin women is quite new; a short time ago, it would have never been allowed. It surprises me tremendously to see you here."⁴⁷ Further, there was a mention of another Brahmin lady who, a pupil in past years, can read nicely. But had a severe stroke of paralysis, from which she has partially recovered. Since she was forbidden to read, the Bible-woman was always welcomed by her. She listens attentively and likes to have the New Testament and Bible stories read to her.

The Bible women's work and reporting are not confined to a single missionary. The reports show that there are many foreign missionaries in places where there is only a single Bible woman. The Bible woman should assist all the missionaries per their schedules, dates, and times. In volume six, Miss. S Mulvany reports about the Bible woman **Mrs. Gilbert's** work among the Mohammadians in Calcutta. Mrs. Gilbert, one Bible woman, has carried on her work satisfactorily. She goes on Wednesdays with Miss. Roseboom to Kidderpore, where she reads in the houses of the Sahrons (men connected with the shipping). On Fridays, when Miss. Martin goes alone to Matya Burj. She accompanies her on the journeys and reads the Bible in the houses of the Kahars or any among whom she could get a hearing.⁴⁸ As per the needs of the missionaries, the native Bible women moulded themselves and made themselves available. She accompanied multiple missionaries in accomplishing various tasks as part of Bible women's work and lifestyle.

⁴⁷ *India's Women*, vol.4, 312.

⁴⁸ *India's Women*, vol.6.

The Bible women's work and character remarkably influenced the native women. In the same volume, Mrs. Parson from Chupra describes her Bible woman, **Dubi**, as a priceless and living example of how a Bengali village woman, fired with the love of Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, can accomplish great things in the Church of God, even though she only knows her Bible. Through her teachings and influence, the character of women in one of the largest Christian villages is wholly changed. The crowds are attracted to her preaching and listening when she accompanies the missionaries. Her influence over our widows is precious; she unwaveringly tries to help them in their studies.⁴⁹ Bible women's influence on their communities attracted more people towards missionary teachings.

In the Bible, Zenanas used women to read and teach lessons to their pupils. However, whenever there was a shortage of school teachers, Bible women were used as school teachers. Miss. Haitz from Bhagalpur reports about her Bible woman **Sarah**, who was her only Zenana teacher, and Bible woman is now used in school work. Because four of her school teachers were dismissed, for which reasons were not mentioned. Further, the natives have limitations and prejudices about the work and influence of Bible women on their children. In the same volume, Miss. Hercule from Batala shares information regarding a mother's worry. The Bible woman was teaching a lesson from the New Testament when the mother of one brilliant and perceptive daughter commented. I fear my child may follow in your footsteps since she constantly brings up the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ Bible women as teachers directly influenced their pupils, who later got attracted to Christian teachings quickly.

⁴⁹ *India's Women*, vol.6.

⁵⁰ *India's Women*, vol.6, 137.

The missionaries started to teach students and Bible women about postal saving banks so that they could understand the value of money and be accountable as good stewards. Some Bible women save the little money they earn but do not know how to keep it. The missionary writes about what she heard some time ago. A Bible woman accumulates thirteen years of savings in a pocket handkerchief (amounting to Rs. 100) and hangs it to the roof of an outhouse. Bible women are unfamiliar with saving as the mission station provides everything, and whatever they earn is left unspent.

CEZMS partnered with other mission agencies like Bible Society to employ Bible women. In Raynard's work, we can also note the partnership between mission organisations and the Bible Society. Miss. Browne narrates the condition of Mohammedan girls in Ellore. She was concerned about the big girls, her mother, and other relatives within the community. She writes, why not apply to the Bible Society for a Bible-woman, one taken from the same class of society, if possible, to whom she would be sent, and whom the women would welcome as an equal? Her primary duty will be to teach and lead the community towards Christianity. In the later years, Miss. Browne narrates the transformation she saw in person from the Muslim community. Women were appointed with the Bible Society's financial support to cater to their communities' spiritual needs.

Further, Miss. Brandon reports about the work of CEZMS, which started eleven years ago with the missionary's wife teaching with assistance from a native Bible woman, and how the mission has expanded. The statistics are as follows: 2 European missionaries, four assistants, 13 native Bible women and scripture teachers, two native Christian men, and forty native masters for secular teaching. Ninety-five Hindu Zenanas containing 186 pupils were visited; 916 pupils were taught in connected schools. The Sunday- school

attendance of boys and girls was 620. Twenty-four Mohammedan Zenanas, containing fifty-three pupils, were visited, and the attendance of pupils at school was two hundred forty.⁵¹ A woman's Bible class was also held, and the hospital was visited twice a week. The above-said statistics suggest that the increased number of Bible women is directly proportional to the increased number of seekers and converts.

A Bible woman has difficulty getting entry into the Brahmin or Muslim household. This was a challenging space for the Bible to enter. The missionaries tried to convert women from the same community or caste and trained them as Bible women. The men of these communities are very cautious about their women's conversations with Bible women. Two Bible women worked at Putka Perlle, two miles from Tirunelveli. Two young Mohammedan women were learning with the Bible woman. This was not likely to continue as rich Mohammedans were sceptical about Bible women's visitations to their localities. There is a report about a Muslim Bible woman, a widow at Putugudi, a newly "occupied" region. The missionary writes that Bishop Sargent highly recommended her and suffered much persecution for Jesus' sake from relations. She seems to be the most earnest Christian; one trust will prove she is a faithful worker. In the same volume, Miss. Askwith reports about her Bible woman working among Brahmins in Kudulakuchte town. In less than two years, the Bible woman has gained an entrance into some good houses. One young widow is deeply impressed with what she has heard, though she cannot read. These houses are not Brahmins but Vellalahs. The women converted from a rigid community or caste are given additional care by the church's leadership and mission.

⁵¹ *India's Women*, vol.6, 269.

As the number of new seekers and learners increased, the missionaries appointed Bible women from the group of learners themselves. In the same volume, Miss. Askwith reports about Selvan's village, where **Sarah** offered to be a Bible woman. But since she is in the same town and is learning the same classes as others, she needs to know more about teaching. So, the missionaries decided to replace her, but since she had the support of the local bigger girl, they took care of needlework for sale. Based on the calibre and the contextual demands, Bible women were appointed to perform different tasks.

Miss. Gahan reports about her Bible woman, **Gnanammal**, who oversees the whole mission work in her absence. "Gnanammal was very diligent and, with a little help from me, kept them from closing. This Bible women's visits alone amount to 390 for six months of 1886."⁵² Miss. Neve from Kottayam Mission station reports about her Bible woman, **Ellichie**, who has been sick for the past few months. Miss. Neve narrates that Ellichie visits 108 different locations in Kottayam; of these is a Nambudiri (or Malayali) Brahmin, several are Tamil and Konkani Brahmins, and the rest are Nairs. Ellichie had never visited a Nambudiri's house before, but the house women requested her visit. They had heard some Nair girls read and were surprised and anxious to see the woman who had taught them. The Nambudiri women only go out occasionally to the temples. They are carefully guarded, so they know very little of the outside world. Ellichie found three women of different ages and one minor child in the house; they were delighted to see her, and now she visits them frequently.

The Bible woman and the local mission teachers collaborate and work. In volume seven, Miss. Gore reports about her Bible woman, **Bishom Ma**, who visits fifty-five

⁵² *India's Women*, vol.6, 304.

houses. After serving in the mission stations in various capacities and opening many doors for foreign missionaries to enter, a Bible woman develops an unusual emotional bond with the missionaries and the mission station. This is evident in their final stages of life as they depart. Miss. Gore tells us about her last moments; some of us felt she was going to die that evening. She said, “Miss. Gore, sing to me, “Abide with Me,” while I kneeled beside her bed. She particularly enjoyed this song, and occasionally, with an extraordinary intensity, she would join in as I sang it.”⁵³

Missionaries encouraged the Bible woman to write their reports in English. The missionaries shared these reports with the home agencies and supporters to assess their general studies and knowledge of English. Miss. Branch reports about her senior Bible woman, **Mrs. Emma Page**, and **Lizzie Shaw Charan**, who wrote their short reports in English. The missionary writes that she enclosed their little report this year, stating that she will be pleased to see how much they have studied to improve their English and how diligently they have worked. The language expertise a Bible woman attains will give the mission agencies access to the work of the missionaries. Bible women’s writeups are in high demand and appreciated by the donors who donate to the mission work.

Volume seven reports on the housing condition of the native workers. Within the mission station, the native workers are kept in tiny houses compared to others. To avoid the house rents, small boxes like houses are constructed where Bible women are accommodated—one of the missionaries reports about different buildings in a mission station with their names and significance. Sunshine is for younger workers, sunset is for older people, and Lampstand is for native helpers. There are three degrees of comparison:

⁵³ *India’s Women*, vol.7, 75.

“small, more petite, and most minor, and the bungalows look like Benaras boxes.”⁵⁴ The same can be noted with the Khammam Zenana quarters where the Bible women stayed. These houses were tiny, with no proper ventilation. Bible women were expected to be there only at night to rest as they were occupied with various responsibilities the whole day.

The Bible women were very strict with the literature they gave their pupils. Miss. Bassoe reports about a young girl who lost her religious books and wanted some secular literature. The Bible woman scolded her, and then the girl revealed the truth. The relatives feared that the girl might become a Christian as she started to show interest in Bible teaching. People were sceptical about their children’s interactions with Bible women and the literature they distributed. Initially, the missionary and Bible woman thought the girl was making mischief with the literature. But when the neighbours inquired, they expected her to become a Christian. There was significant resistance in the family, and the girl hid all the Christian literature.

In the same volume, Miss. Tucker reports from Batala about a Moulvie, a Muslim priest who converted eleven years ago. His wife worked as an **honorary Bible woman** in Batala. Instead of salaries, some Bible women received honorariums for their work. She obtained a costly present acknowledging her services in Zenanas as she was not paid monthly. Such converted women created easy access for the missionaries to reach the innermost space within a household.

The missionaries taught the students in the school but reached out to the parents with the help of the Bible women. Mrs. Browne reports how her two Bible women regularly visit certain houses. They now send their daughters to school. She writes that if she had

⁵⁴ *India’s Women*, vol.7,181.

enough workers, a Bible woman could devote her whole time to one school, spending the morning teaching the children and the afternoon visiting the parents regularly. She could have reached more people. It is evident that with the help of a Bible woman, children, and parents are simultaneously taught the new religion. Sometimes, parents realise this agenda and forbid their girls from learning. The missionary writes that the father was furious and forbade her from learning. When the Bible woman came the following day, she was greeted by a tearful face and the words, “My father says you cannot come to the house anymore: what can I do?”⁵⁵ Bible women often face the wrath of their relatives and community as they are more exposed than foreign missionaries.

In volume eight, a missionary narrates the condition of a married student, a Bible woman who was most intelligent and learned biblical texts from Psalms by heart. Whenever the Bible woman visits other houses, she reads the book *Angel's Message* (A short account of the Lord's life) to her neighbours. In the town of Striveigundam, there is another married woman whom the Bible woman taught. She wanted to leave her husband and be baptised with her little son. The Bible woman also urged her to convince her husband so they may all be baptised together. Now, the woman accompanies her husband to the Bible woman's house and talks to the husband about Christianity.⁵⁶ Bible women encouraged women seekers to win their families before accepting the new faith. There was a narrative about an independent, well-to-do widow and her daughter from Ambassamuttiram, who are among the learners of a Bible woman. The Bible women felt they were unsteady believers but willing to accept Christianity. In such cases, the Bible

⁵⁵ *India's Women*, vol.7, 102.

⁵⁶ *India's Women: The Magazine of Church of England - Zenana Missionary Society*, vol.8 (London: James Nisbet & Company, 1888).

woman expects some missionaries from the mission station to come and help her decide. These unnamed Bible women work significantly at a different location under the Palamcottah mission station.

In the same volume is a narrative about Achera, a Bible woman who continues her helpful work at the mission station. She visited and read the Bible in 43 different houses during a year. Since she was a regular visitor, she was expected and welcomed. Her work has practically no opposition: Miss. Neve, a missionary at CMS College Kottayam (presently known as Kottayam), writes, “I always hear Achera stressing the value of our education system. The Bible-woman is always welcomed by women who attended school as children. When reading a scripture chapter, she almost always shows intelligent interest in it.”⁵⁷ Alumni of the mission schools and people who benefit from the mission station’s work usually welcome Bible women without prejudice.

Some Bible women who worked among the high-caste people usually stayed among the low-caste people in the villages. According to one of the missionaries, her Bible woman has done everything she can to support their education both before and after her teaching hours. Therefore, we felt that we had a small part in the happiness when twelve men, women, and children were baptised in August. In the same volume, R. Coleman reports about her Bible woman, **Leah**, who worked with them from the beginning in Trichur. She taught several Brahmins to read the Bible. A woman with her daughter and two children has been brought out of “heathenism” and is now receiving Christian instruction. **Ayley** was another woman who was supported by the Bible Society and was successful in selling scriptures.

⁵⁷ *India's Women*, vol.8, 312.

Bible women's work among the High Caste Hindus is essential. In Sivakasi, the work amongst women was blessed, and converts were continually being added to the church. Some of the converts go out and teach others. Women pray for their menfolk as the missionaries wait for a movement of the holy spirit among Caste men. The missionary reports about one Bible woman who went out to work that year after completing her training. She was converted through the teaching of a Bible woman. She has little education, and often, missionaries wondered if she could teach. But her understanding of spiritual things amazingly increased, and missionaries put her in a "war trap" to open the work for several years. Finally, the Bible woman won her way into the houses. They were also praying for another Bible woman to come and teach. She proved herself a splendid teacher and now teaches to come off the highest caste houses. In most cases, the presence of the missionary makes it possible for the Bible women to access the high caste house.

Missionaries are usually stationed in a location that has proper transportation facilities. Bible women take care of the spaces that do not have appropriate facilities and are generally unrecognised. For example, the missionaries from Machilipatnam reported Juggapet, where there was no Bible woman, and the native Christian lady who was taught died. The lack of missionaries' frequent visits and the absence of Bible women in the region hampered the growth. As a result, there was a steady decline in the number of pupils in the Zenanas seeking the gospel.

In the same volume, another missionary, Eugenie, reports about the Zenana work by Bible Women in Coonoor. She explains how some of the changes they made were proving good. Moreover, she was extremely pleased when she examined the pupils during her visit. With the efforts of the Bible woman, the pupils were able to answer the questions

from the Bible stories in their own words, proving that they grasped the meaning. She mentions Marnikam, another Bible woman with a baby, and the students are fond of her teaching. Marnikam lost all her other children.

3.8. Bible Women at Khammammet

In the section above, we recorded the narrative about Bible women at various CEZMS mission stations in India, which is available in volumes. In this section, we narrow down to Khammammet mission station to name and narrate the Bible women's work in the region. The Annual reports from the archives, preserved in microfilms, are read to locate and name native women in Khammammet.

Khammammet was in a different area, 120 miles away from Machilipatnam. Early Missionaries and the native helpers avoided it as it was a far and complex workplace. Since it was a border region between the Hyderabad State and the British State, people were reluctant to work there. The missionary reports that one of the convert's wives of the evangelist, a CMS agent who lived in the town, took charge of the school and a few Zenana ladies who had more courage than their neighbours to start anything new. All worked well for several months with the aid of a respectable old schoolmaster, but he has now become ill. Another must be sent in his place. However, getting anyone to go there is almost impossible because the town is about 120 miles from Machilipatnam.⁵⁸ One might think it was another country, so many difficulties are brought forward as an excuse not to go. Many natives offer, but they have drawbacks when it comes to starting.

The peculiarity of Khammammet Mission Station is that it is in the Nizam territory, located on the railway line between Bezawada and Hyderabad. One of the earliest

⁵⁸ *India's Women*, vol.8, 254.

missionaries who visited Khammammet was Alexander; he rode down from the north on May 9th 1865. In his tour diary, he reports, “I do not know of any better place for the extension of the mission.”⁵⁹ The CMS had three stations in Hyderabad State at Aurangabad, Buldana, connected with the Western Indian Mission and Khammammet, Telugu Mission. In the 1870s, Khammammet grew rapidly; new bazaars were built, the municipality was established, a small government dispensary was opened, and rigorous efforts were made to advance education. Thus, a missionary centre needs to be established. Rev. J. Stone, along with the native evangelist, occasionally visited Khammammet.

Conversely, the gospel came into Khammammet from a different side. Job from Gorrapad learned the word of God from Raghavapuram and went on to preach in the neighbouring parts of Hyderabad States. He was an old, illiterate man, but even the caste people came to him during difficulties for prayer. Another boy who taught at Raghavapuram school visited his mother in Khammammet and brought the knowledge of truth with him. Khammammet was seen as a distant outpost of Raghavapuram till Mr. and Mrs. Panes took it up as their headquarters in 1888. It was in 1888 that CMS decided to occupy it permanently, becoming the youngest of the Telugu missionary stations. A boarding school was started with 11 boys and four girls in 1890.⁶⁰ In Khammammet, though the doors seemed wide open, difficulties were more excellent anywhere in British territory, and petty persecutions were worse, but the confirmer was strong. Certain people exhibit confidence and bring others back to the dispensary to pick up medications, which always gives hope and encouragement to missionaries. However, the English people are

⁵⁹ *History of CMS and Telugu Missions* (Madras: CLS Press, 1920), 20.

⁶⁰ *History of CMS and Telugu Missions*, 70.

not respected or given much thought. Since the region was never under British rule, the natives never considered or respected them in the initial days in the Khammammet region.

From the day the foreign missionaries started their work, Bible women played a crucial role in their ministry in Khammammet. The CEZMS' annual reports regularly mention the number of Bible women at work. However, there needed to be more elaboration on their work. In the 1903 annual report, it was noted for the first time that leaving Bible women by the name of **Ellen and Suhamma** took her place in December.⁶¹ In the following year, there was another report about not finding a suitable Bible woman dispensary after Ellen left and her husband went to a different mission station.⁶² The moment a Bible woman leaves a mission station creates a gap as they act as a bridge between the foreign missionaries and native listeners. Khammammet mission field has many Zenanas and goshas; Bible women visited the people who accepted them. In the initial days, they faced rejection because people were sceptical.

In 1904, an Indian woman, China's daughter, reported about two Bible women, **Nancharamma and Subhamma**, who were faithful to their work. "The women here are much slower and more challenging to teach than those in other parts of Telugu."⁶³ Very few Hindu women are interested in learning to read. Others prefer to listen to Bible stories. Muslim women were far behind Hindu women regarding education and intelligence.

⁶¹ *The Twenty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1903*, microfilm reel 97 CEZ GEL 1/1 1901-1904, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.63.

⁶² *The Twenty Sixth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1904*, microfilm reel 97 CEZ GEL 1/1 1901-1904, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 68.

⁶³ Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, *India's Women and China's Daughters* (December 1904): 217.

The resignation of a Bible woman has a significant impact on the mission work. In 1907, the resignation of the Bible woman was reported in June. Bible women played a crucial role in consoling and praying for the patients. To keep the work going, the nurse and the matron of the Bible school voluntarily gave Bible teachings to the patients in the hospital.⁶⁴ In the 1908 report, there is a mention of the conversion of young widow **K.S.** from a goldsmith community who got connected to the missionaries through the Bible woman. The families of the widows created massive protests in the form of the mission station. However, the widow refused to leave, fearing that she may be killed or burnt alive. Though the family left the widow with the missionaries, they were furious against the Bible women who thought **K.S.** For some weeks, the Bible woman must restrict activities by not going to some parts of town.⁶⁵ The Bible women faced much resistance and worked in a conflict zone. They often face dual challenges to satisfy both the missionaries and local families. The missionaries demanded daily reports and testimonies, and the native families were unwelcoming.

As time progressed, the labour of the Bible woman started to show results. The 1910 CEZMS reports the mass conversions among the Sudras, with around 480 baptisms and 200 confirmations of earlier baptised people.⁶⁶ Several of these conversions happened with the intervention of Bible women in various spaces, which we will deal with in the next chapter. There was a need for more Bible women from different villages and various

⁶⁴ *The Twenty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1907*, microfilm reel 98 CEZ GEL 1/1 1905-1908, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 52.

⁶⁵ *The Twenty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1908*, microfilm reel 98 CEZ GEL 1/1 1905-1908, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.75.

⁶⁶ *The Twenty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1910*, microfilm reel 99 CEZ GEL 1/1 1909-1912, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 78.

mission spaces. The Bible women's training class at Machilipatnam was reopened after being closed for several years.⁶⁷

Bible women's work flourished to such an extent that the Bishop of Dornakal came forward to help financially two Bible women who were now working under the Telugu Church Council by 1927. There was a mention of appointing more Bible women and providing them with motor cars to reach distant villages.⁶⁸ The Bible women faithfully gave systematic Bible teaching. Many secret believers visited the hospital for medication and scriptural teaching.⁶⁹

By 1938, Bible women were in great demand. They are sent to different places where women must be prepared for baptism and confirmation. The people themselves provide them with little space for them to live and teach them their Bible lessons.⁷⁰ Bible instruction, teaching, and preaching are given by Bible women to the out-patients in the morning and afternoon in the wards. Patients are ready to be operated on request for prayer, and some ask for prayer before leaving the hospital. A Bible woman gathered twenty children and taught them Bible stories and hymns in a Mala village; a blind woman from the town was baptised.

⁶⁷ *The Forty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1925*, microfilm reel 102 CEZ GEL 1/1 1924-1927, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 25.

⁶⁸ *The Fourth Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1927*, microfilm reel 102 CEZ GEL 1/1 1924-1927, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 39.

⁶⁹ *The Fifty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1934*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 26.

⁷⁰ *The Fifty-Eight Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1938*, microfilm reel 105 CEZ GEL 1/1 1937-1940, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 66.

Further, a study school was conducted for Bible women and evangelists to reach the increasing demand. They later helped study schools for wives of the pastors and teachers in their villages. This resulted in the conversion of two caste women who were baptised and sent to Bible training. As husbands taught the men, women were trained to teach women of their neighbouring villages.⁷¹ It is a way to reach the fundamental point of Raynard, helping people experiencing poverty to support themselves and leading the women to teach each other.

Conversely, the hospital has a double cure for body and soul. Faith mixed with medicine made people find different curative properties in medicine. A man hangs an empty medicine bottle in his house for the pain to depart. Some fill the empty medicine bottle with water and drink it when they have abdominal pain.

A new term, evangelist, was introduced for women. Two women evangelists were placed in different areas for “mobile work” to move around and preach as per the needs and requests. The Bible study schools were also very encouraging, as many women in these schools could read. As a result of the work done by the missionaries, Bible women, and later through the Bible study groups, the women of the dioceses are waking up, and it is a joy to help them become fully awake.

In evangelistic work, there is steady progress in the willingness of the church in India to undertake evangelistic work and anxiety on the part of Indian Christian women to train as Church workers. Miss. Bretherton reports that women’s work has been further developed by the appointment of Indian Church sisters to take on the Bible women. “India

⁷¹ *The Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1939*, microfilm reel 105 CEZ GEL 1/1 1937-1940, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 69.

is changing, and we must change to meet its needs, but our message will not change; it is what India needs most today.”

Women Fellowships were formed, a new organisation with the church of South India to unite all Christian women. There were separate groups like the Mothers’ Union for married women and the Girls’ Guild for unmarried girls. Members of these groups are also brought together. “Christian Home Movement” was one of the chief features of the church’s work. The movement seeks to train, guide, and encourage Christian women to make their homes genuinely Christian and bring up children in the knowledge of God. With Dornakal as the centre, this work is expanded to neighbouring regions like Khammammet and Bezawada.⁷² For the first time in the report of CEZMS, there was a full-page report about the importance and challenging ministry of Bible women in church and mission stations.

One of the essential branches in any mission society is the training and supporting Bible women. They devote their lives to visiting, teaching, and winning women and children in towns and villages for Christ. Lily Howarth defines a Bible woman as “she is what her name implies, a woman who takes the Bible, the Word of Life, into the homes; one who knows the Lord Jesus and his saving and transforming power and wants to bring this known to her people. Whether she is educated or uneducated is not the vital thing. What matters is that she should be called by God and filled with his Holy Spirit.”⁷³ Women are trained where they learn and live together with women of other castes. They will have

⁷² *The Seventieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1950*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 9.

⁷³ *The Seventy First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1951*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 14.

Bible study to know how to pass on to others the knowledge they have themselves. They memorise portions of scriptures to communicate the gospel in a learned way. Apart from working among the non-Christians, they are used in the women's meetings for the Christians and help in gospel work in congregations. They prepare women for confirmation. Through their tireless efforts, a constant stream of women genuinely committed to the gospel are brought into the visible church. Bible women teach the gospel to the patients and their relatives at the mission hospitals. Hindu temple authorities in Khammammet started to imitate and implement the Christian Bible woman's work style. The temple employed three women to visit the caste women in their homes and teach the stories to form their Hindu books, inviting them to attend the temple weekly for more instructions. Some caste secret believers are coming openly to church for the communion service.⁷⁴ Five recently baptised women are coming boldly to the prayer meetings and reading the Bible regularly. Prayer meetings occur in houses where there was opposition to Bible women's work earlier but now have a converted woman. A Hindu woman left Hinduism and joined Muslims, but now she believes in Christ and comes to church.

In 1952, CEZMS reported about various mission stations' wide-open doors for mission work. The report titled "Now – or Maybe Never." There is interest in the gospel everywhere, and people openly talked about baptism and salvation with freedom unheard of ten years ago. Opportunities and urgency are the terms used in reports of different mission stations.⁷⁵ For example, Indian election reports indicate less voting in villages, reflecting the importance of village work and education.

⁷⁴ *The Seventy First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1951*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ *The Seventy Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1952*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 25.

According to Dorothy Tate's assessment of Khammammet, there is much concentration on Zenana's work. Regular house visits are conducted, with around 370 houses having been visited. We are grateful to have a Bible woman working among Muslims who speak Urdu. Along with several Hindus, three Muslims are getting ready for baptism. She further states, "One of the speakers twice remarked on the response he felt he received from the Hindu women in the congregation- a real fruit of zenana teaching. The CEZMS Bible women do most follow-up work to these efforts."⁷⁶

Dr. Abraham reports, "The two Bible women continue to talk and pray with the patients daily. They work with the out-patients in the mornings and the in-patients in the afternoons and evenings."⁷⁷ The results of their labours often come to us in strange and unexpected ways. During the year, several of our patients, when leaving the hospital, have desired to buy Bibles, Gospels, and other Christian books.

3.9. Statistical Abstract of CEZMS Annual Reports of Khammammet

Year	No. of English missionaries	No. of Bible women & Native workers	No. of Teachers & Native workers
1901	2 – Miss. Rogers, Miss. White	3	1
1902	2 – Miss. Rogers, Miss. M Longmire	4	2
1903	2 – Miss. Rogers (F) Miss. M Longmire	4	2

⁷⁶ *The Seventy Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1952*, p. 26.

⁷⁷ *The Seventy Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1952*, p. 27.

1904	4 – Miss. Rogers (F) Miss. M Longmire, Miss. F Smith, Miss. Clift	4	2
1905	3 – Miss. M Longmire (F) Miss. Smith, Miss. Fraser,	2 Annamah (M)	2 Christian/Muslim
1906	3 – Miss. M Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss. Amy Lacey,	2 Annamah (M)	2 Christian/Muslim
1907	3 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss. Amy Lacey	2 Annamah (M)	2 Christian/Muslim
1908	3 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss. M Clift (Trained nurse)	3 Annamah (M)	Six teachers
1909	3 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss. M Clift (Trained nurse)	3 Annamah (M)	4 Christian Teachers
1910	2 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Amy Lacey	3 Annamah (M)	Two teachers Three nurses
1911	4- Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Helen Moore, Miss. Campbell, Miss. Amy Lacey	4 Annamah (M)	2 Teachers 3 Nurses One compounder
1912	4 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Helen Moore, Miss. Campbell, Miss. Amy Lacey	7 BW Annamah (M)	2 Teachers 2 Nurses

			Two compounders
1913	3 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Campbell, Miss. Amy Lacey	8 BW Annamah (M)	6 Nurses 2 Compounders
1914	3 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Campbell, Miss. Amy Lacey	9 BW Annamah (M)	5 Nurses 2 Compounders
1915	3 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Sister Helene Bjornstad	7 BW Annamah	3 Teachers 7 Nurses 2 Compounders
1922	3 –Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss. Campbell	7 BW	Four teachers 8 Nurses 2 Compounders
1923	3 – Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss. Campbell (Nurse)	6 BW Dr. Krupa Abraham, Sub Asst Surgeon	7 Nurses 3 Teachers 2 Compounders
1924	4 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. Smith, Miss Campbell, Miss. D.I Garlick	7 BW Miss. K Abraham	2 Non-Christian Teachers, 2 Lower Primary Schools
1927	4 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss. M Poulter, Miss. D. I. Garlick, Miss. M.A. Boalth	7 BW Miss. K Abraham	7 Christian Two non-Christian

			1 Helper, 2 LPS, three nurses, 8 Probationers, one compounder, 1 Matron
1928	2 – Dr. Mary Longmire, Miss D.I Garlick	7 BW Miss. K Abraham	4 Christian 2 Non-Christian Teachers, 2 LPS, 4 Nurses, 5 Probationers, three compounders, 1 Matron
1929	2 – Miss. D I. Garlick, Miss. A. M. Hardy (Nursing Sister)	10 BW Miss K Abraham	2 Christian, 2 Non-Christian Teachers, 2 LPS, 5 Nurses, 5 Probationers, 2 Compounders, 1 Matron
1930	2 – Miss. D. I. Garlick, Miss. A.M. Hardy	6 BW Miss. K Abraham	8 Christian, 2 Non-Christian Teachers, 3

		Miss. R David LMP	Primary schools, 8 Nurses, 2 Probationers, three compounders, five helpers, 1 Matron
1931	2 Miss. D. I. Garlick, Miss. A.M Hardy	7 BW Miss. K Abraham Miss. R David	9 Christian, 2 Non-Christian Teachers, 3 Primary schools, 6 Nurses, 6 Probationers, three compounders, 1 Matron, 11 Helpers.
1935	2 Miss. D. I. Garlick, Miss. A M Hardy	9 BW Miss. K Abraham	4 Christian Teachers, 1 Primary school, 6 Nurses, 7 Probationers, one

			compounder, 13 helpers.
1936	2 – Miss. D. I Garlick, Miss A. Hardy	8 BW Miss K Abraham	6 Christian Teachers, 2 Primary Schools, 6 Nurses, 8 Probationers, 2 Compounders, ten helpers
1937	2 – Miss. D. I. Garlick, Miss A. Hardy	8 BW Miss. K Abraham Miss. M. Andrews	5 Christian Teachers, 2 Primary Schools, 8 Nurses, five probationers, ten helpers,

Each mission station has a statistical date published at the end of every annual report. The above data is an abstract of consolidated information about the Khammammet mission station and its workers. The foreign missionaries' names are mentioned, whereas the native workers are confined to only numbers. The above report shows that it was initially medical work, and Bible women helped reach Zenanas. Later, with the establishment of schools, more native workers came into mission work. Between 1905 and 1907, there were both

Christian and Muslim teachers. There was more demand from Muslim communities for formal teaching, which Bible women did until then.

Though Bible women were there from the beginning of the mission station in 1888, it was only in 1903 that we could locate and name two Bible women in Khammammet. The name is not published in the annual reports but is identified in other journals printed during that period. All the names of the Bible women are collected from journals. Only in exceptional cases will a native Bible woman's name appear in a report. One native worker whose name caught my attention was **Annamah**, who occurred between 1905 and 15. I found no information about her in the journal articles, annual reports, or during my fieldwork. She was not a Bible woman, a nurse, or a teacher. Nowhere was there a mention of her whereabouts. In the handwritten history of Mission Hospital by Dr. Abraham, Annamah is mentioned. She was a native personal staff of Dr. Longmire, whom the mission agency directly supported.

Both foreign and native women maintained the Khammammet mission station entirely—native men were appointed to do manual work like bringing water from the well and other domestic work. Mission work was monitored and managed by women workers. Many of the foreign missionaries who worked in Khammammet were single women. It started with a single nurse, and with the addition of Dr. Longmire, the work went to a different level. Dr Longmire found a fitting native successor in Dr. Abraham, who made a profound, lasting impact on the minds and lives of the people in Khammammet. Dr. Abraham got good support from Miss. Hardy, a head nurse. Their partnership resulted in the establishment of a nursing school in Khammammet. The nameless Bible women and other native workers confined to just a number are the key players in the flourishing of the

Khammammet mission station. If we carefully observe from 1922, there is a steady decrease in foreign workers and a steep increase in native workers. There is an increase in the work natives are involved with, like teachers, nurses, matrons, compounders, probationaries, and helpers. The number of non-Christian workers in the mission stations is also clearly mentioned in numbers. The mission station included people from other religions, as sometimes they became entry points for those communities to give medicine and education before sharing the gospel.

Chapter 4

Women's Spaces in Mission Stations

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw the historical overview of women in the early church, women in England, and the emergence of Bible women as a concept and person. We read various mission reports and correspondences to understand the work and worth of Bible women, particularly in Khammammet, in Christian mission stations in India. In this study, I have found that women are identified and trained as Bible women from four different spaces. In this chapter, I elaborate on those four other spaces to understand how these spaces provide the needed women for the mission work. At the same time, these spaces offer women security, survival, skill training, and salvation in the context of strife and struggle. We read through various CEZMS annual reports and articles published in multiple journals.

The CEZMS started its mission in Telugu from Machilipatnam in 1875. It has two sister mission fields: Bezawada, which began in 1881, and Khammammet, which started in 1889. We were able to access the reports from 1901. Seven mission stations were active under the banner of the Madras and South India Mission: Madras, Bangalore and Mysore, Ootacamund and Coonoor, Machilipatnam with Bezwada and Khammammet, Ellore, Dummagudem, and Tinnevely. The annual reports of CEZMS comprise the mission's information, aims, and objectives, as well as knowledge of all mission stations around the world in every country and within countries' regions, and followed mission station information. Every mission station has one or two missionaries with home connections, local missionaries, Bible women, and other staff. The annual reports have information on

that year's activities, which are usually in "numbers," informing the mission board about the progress and achievements of the mission stations.

The Indian Widows' Union (IWU) is a band of Christian women (widows only) from England united to improve the conditions of Hindu and Mohammedan widows in India with three main objectives. Firstly, we should pray for the people to understand the Truth and liberate them from the bondage of superstitions. Secondly, funds should be raised to establish industrial schools for widows to support themselves and use them in the mission station in posts such as school staff, Bible women, medical assistants, and nurses. Thirdly, the works of these industrial schools are displayed for fundraising to promote widows' welfare. The annual report of CEZMS is attached with the yearly information and financial statement of IWU. The annual reports of IWU carried the testimonies of Indian Widows and their work in the mission stations.

The close reading of the reports gives us information about the complex conditions in which the missionaries worked in the mission stations. It contains immense details on the needs of women in India. In a mission station, the missionaries' intervention influences the women's lives through converts' homes, Zenanas, medical work, lace work, and schools. In this chapter, we see the interaction of missionaries and local women in all the earlier spaces. These spaces become entry points for the missionaries to enter the native women's homes and lives.

4.2. Converts' Home: A Rescue Space

Converts' Home is one of the mission station's most critical "spaces." Studying converts' homes provides multiple narratives about native women's lives and living conditions. It accommodates new seekers of the Christian faith, both men and women. The

missionary magazines and annual reports have a good amount of information about the activities in the converts' homes. Converts' home is the most challenging branch of the missionaries' work, which requires much wisdom, tact, and patience. Converts give up Hinduism and caste and believe in Christ; it takes them a long time to give up their old habits. In several cases, women strive to follow Christ, but they have unrest and struggle as they rally between the old way of life and the new faith.

Caste people are given priority in converts' homes as they are thrown out of their homes once they accept Christianity. It is like a rescue place and sometimes a refugee camp for new believers. The inmates were trained for various mission activities based on their interests and creativity. In Khammammet, there was no converts' home, but Machilipatnam had one. CEZMS and CMS mission stations all over India share their resources by accommodating new converts from one station to another. Miss. Brandon oversaw the converts' home in Machilipatnam in the early 1880s. Converts from nearby mission stations like Khammammet were sent to Machilipatnam.

The converted home provides space for caste women free of cost, and if the low-caste women want to enter, they need to pay. There is a mention of a widow from the low-caste who was anxious to join the converted home. But the missionary writes that "we do not admit low-caste converts, as they can live with their relations. Those of higher castes can do as much as we would encourage them to do so if possible."¹ Caste women were given special care, privilege, and preference when they joined in the converts' homes.

Based on the conditions of the woman's family and her obligations to her family, the missionaries even take a legal opinion before letting the woman inside the converts'

¹ Miss. Brandon, "Masulipatnam and its Environs," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (September, 1892): 411.

home. Miss. Brandon reports about a woman anxious to enter the converts' home. The mother wants to join along with her daughter and son. Since the daughter was married, though she was a child, she could not let her come in. We consulted a barrister and others, and they said it would be illegal for us to take her.² The converts' homes provide the needed "raw material" or human resources for missionaries' ministerial endeavours. The women were trained for different roles and given additional responsibilities based on their calibre. Once the converts pass the fifth standard examination, they are used as resources in various mission workspaces. Some of them teach in Mohammedan Zenanas in the morning; in the evening, they learn Hindustani and prepare for their examination in that language.

Brandon further explains how women are segregated into different spaces. The women who are not quick enough to comprehend languages have given up studying Hindustani and are made Telugu Bible-women. These women go out to teach both morning and evening and are welcomed in the Zenanas. Some women learn English and become trained teachers. There is a mention of a woman trained to be a teacher. She is young and lively, so allowing her to go to the schools or the Zenanas is hardly safe. She becomes a teacher in the Home. She is twenty-one years of age now, and it has been eight years since she lived with her husband. She had a little son who died.

By 1892, the building of converts' homes was in progress in Machilipatnam as they lived in the missionaries' kitchen and coach room. During the same period, Miss. Bassoe was ill with a lousy influenza attack and a relapse. Miss. Bossoe passed two examinations in Hindustani and Telugu and had been doing tremendous work for some years, as far as

² Brandon, "Masulipatnam and its Environs,"

lay in her power, the result of two missionaries. These converts' homes in Machilipatnam accommodated several women sent from Khammammet.

The women were trained in Bible reading, and Bible examination was conducted regularly to assess their concentration and interest in the new religions. Miss. Bassoe reports about the annual Bible examination conducted in October and November 1892 and states that the results were satisfactory. The best pupil was a woman called **Raghavamma**, who, for several years, had been a particularly eager learner. Although she has a large family, she is very regular in her studies and even at weddings and feasts; when other women do not read, she makes time for her lesson with Rhoda.³ **Rhoda** was the Bible woman who visited Raghavapuram regularly and taught her.

Inmates of the converted home had several superstitions to accept the widows even after joining in the converts' homes. Miss. A.K. Lacey narrates about superstitions related to widows. **Amelia** lost her husband and returned to her duties after the funeral rites. A specific caste refused to see her as they said no young married woman should see her until after her first three months of widowhood. There was a fear that they would lose their husbands if they saw the face of a newly bereaved widow. Even though they accepted the new faith, women clung to their old religious mindset.

The lack of social security, particularly for widows, made husbands let their wives join the converts' homes before their deaths. Miss. Brandon of Machilipatnam's home narrates Sagamma and her boy Ramayya, who joined the Home. About six years ago, her husband died. When he knew his end was near, he sent for someone to come from the converts' homes. On their arrival, he took his wife's hand and put it in their hand,

³ Miss. A. Bassoe, *A Despatch from Kristiania*, 414.

saying, “ I give her to you.” After he died, Sagamma was brought into the converts’ home. However, later, she was told to wait and take care of her daughter until her second marriage ceremony. “Sagamma is a trustworthy woman; we think she is a genuine Christian. She and her son were later baptised.”⁴ The native men had developed a sense of trust towards the mission station as a space where their women would be free from harassment and exploitation and live with security. Miss. Dawn of Ratnapur reports about a young Muslim woman, Rohini. Knowing that he would die soon due to his sickness, her husband said he wished to place his wife in the hands of the missionaries before his death as he was sure that she would be well taken care of. Later, she expressed her wish to become a Christian and get instructions for baptism.⁵ Men had a fear about the social security of their women and girls. They found the converts’ homes a more secure place in their absence.

As mentioned, women and widows from different mission centres were sent to Machilipatnam converts’ homes. In the 1915 Annual Report, Miss Blyth from Palamcottah sent one of her converts, **Mariammal**, an older woman. She was well educated in Tamil, and it was easier for her to learn quickly as she already knew a little Telugu. In the same annual report, Miss Jennings sent her first convert from Bezwada, **Narayanamma**, from the Razu caste. She was about eighteen years old, attentive to her Bible lessons, and had excellent knowledge of salvation. She gives no trouble. She was also baptised.⁶

⁴ Miss. Brandon, “The Converts’ Home,” *India’s Women and China’s Daughters* (October, 1895): 450.

⁵ *The Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1915*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK.

⁶ *The Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1915*, p. 75.

Miss Morris wrote to Miss Brandon from Khammammet to receive a woman in whom Mrs. Panes was interested. Miss Brandon went to meet and bring her. She was twice nearly caught by her relatives. She was married as a child, and her husband became Christian when she was nine. He waited for some years to join him, but he later obtained a divorce and married a Christian. "Singamma, I fear, would never learn enough to be a teacher. Therefore, I am teaching her Madras stitching so that she might eventually support herself," writes Brandon. "She is pretty slow to introduce new concepts, even at seventeen."⁷ As mentioned earlier, women were taught different things in the converts' homes for living and survival based on their intellectual ability and interests.

Further, in the Indian context, women who lost their husbands as part of widow rituals go on a pilgrimage to different holy sites. When they cannot finish their journey due to health or financial constraints, they leave their children with some reliable people they meet on the way or at mission stations. In March 1985, a shepherd caste woman handed over a Brahmin girl of about ten, Sethamma, to the missionary in Bezawada. Sethamma was born in Benares; her father died when she was very young, and her husband was killed after marriage. Then, her mother, sister-in-law, and Sethamma, all three widows, started a pilgrimage to cover 600 miles. The sister-in-law died, and the mother became ill. When the mother knew there was no hope for her recovery, she called the heathen old mill-woman who attended her and begged her to take and send Sethamma back to Benares. The mill woman did not know the child's house name and was afraid to trust anyone. She kept her with her, brought her to Bezawada, and asked a Christian to adopt her. Since he already has three little daughters, he spoke to Miss Jennings about her, and she was accepted into the

⁷ Brandon, "The Converts' Home," 451.

converts' home. The missionary wrote that Sethamma spoke a language never heard in South India. But she quickly learned Telugu. She was bright and always smiling. She cooked well and assisted everyone who needed help.

In her article "The Converts' Home," Miss Brandon narrates that missionaries planned and started inquiries' homes when there were more requests from people to be admitted into the converts' homes. Inquirers' home is to put new arrivals with those already under instruction. The women must remain until they are baptised, or the missionaries see an excellent reason to change them to another home. The missionary penned this: "We specifically ask for prayer for these seekers to hear the gospel and live pure, dedicated lives. We seldom know what terrifying temptations a native woman faces—mostly from people in her household. No one can assist or pull her back before it is too late if she makes one mistake."⁸ Missionaries were sensitive towards women's security, looking to the challenging conditions they encountered.

There are reports about people from different stations who are taught, trained, and prepared for baptism at Machilipatnam converts' and inquiries' homes. **K. Seshamma and Narayanamma** were baptised and were sent from Bezawada. **Ramalingamma, Verabayamma, Lingamma,** and Imam Bi were baptised on Easter Day. **Imam Bi** was the first Mohammedan woman from Bezawada baptised in Machilipatnam. Just before Baptism, Imam Bi shared that she could not take baptism as she had hatred against an older woman, Papamma. The missionaries counselled her by speaking to her constantly, and for three days, she felt a 'holy peace' resting on her and forgiving everyone.⁹ In teaching them new

⁸ Brandon, "The Converts' Home," 452.

⁹ Miss. Brandon, "Masulipatnam: A General Survey," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (October, 1896): 230.

faith, missionaries taught women to adopt the new way of life by accepting others without discrimination.

The women's life narratives from the convert's homes had a significant readership in the mission magazines. The missionaries prefer to write the survival stories of women sent to converts' homes from the home respective mission stations. Miss Jennings from Bezawada Zenanas asks her Bible women what they should write to make this year's Bezawada letter very interesting. "Oh! Write about Blind **Siramma**, **Tarama**, and especially **Kautama**."¹⁰ The missionary takes the advice of the Bible woman and narrates the life stories of three women who joined the converts' home.

Kautama is a young widow who, as a child, was forced to live with her mother-in-law, who mistreated her. Kautama always longed to be where she could live a better life and learn. She has a five-year-old daughter who was married as an infant and was not wanted by her husband's people. Kautama pleaded with the missionaries to accept her and her daughter. Since the husband is the legal guardian, they cannot get her without his consent, which he did not give. Kautama was very disappointed but accepted the reality. She said she would give her little daughter to God, knowing He would protect her. She was sent to the converts' home in Machilipatnam to be under Miss Brandon's care. She further narrates about **Siramma**, who became quite blind due to smallpox. She remembers her texts and Bible stories nicely and supports housework and sometimes even cooking. Tarama was one of the most promising students, and missionaries enjoyed giving her Bible lessons and talking to her about what she read. Suddenly, she died before she came out for Christ; nobody knows whether she died believing in Christ. All three women's narratives

¹⁰ Brandon, "Masulipatnam: A General Survey," 231.

are valuable as the mission agencies and the donors read them. These women have created their own space, developed their skills, and contributed to the growth of the mission work.

The women who joined in the converts' homes were either joined with their husbands after their conversion to Christianity or were later married to other Christian men. The missionary reports about the first convert, **B. Subbamma**, joining her Hindu husband after nine years of separation. He was baptised on Easter Sunday, and they united again. Missionaries are instrumental in getting the widows remarried after a proper conduct check of the bridegroom. There was a request for a bride for a widower with three children. The missionaries recommended Kautamma, mentioned earlier, who had to leave her daughter behind as she became a Christian. Her face lit up when she heard of motherless little children, and she immediately consented. Miss. Wells narrates that it barely has to be said that the bridegroom's missionary conducted the negotiations and gave him a solid recommendation. "If not, we would not have been able to accept him as our son-in-law with this much ease."¹¹ **Seshamma** was another woman married to a man she and the missionaries knew. The missionaries left the decision to her, and once she consented, they conducted the marriage. Some men expressed their interest in marrying women from the converts' homes who were educated. Miss Wells further narrates about a sincere guy who **requested Narayanamma** from a far-off region, and the two got married. Since he is the only Christian in his hamlet, his family won't allow him to reside with them. Despite becoming their leader and being indispensable to them in running the farm, he is no longer caste bound and must reside in a separate small house. Missionaries used these married widows as entry points to take the Christian faith to new villages and communities.

¹¹ Miss. Wells, "Khammammet: The Story of the Year," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (October, 1898): 235.

Consent of the widow is essential before they are remarried. Sometimes, missionaries conduct several interviews with the bridegroom and meetings with the bride to get her consent. Miss Brandon from Machilipatnam in 1905 annual report narrates about a widow from the famine orphan school, one the cleverest who was taught English was married to a respectable man in merchant caste who was a convert and trained evangelist. During an interview session with both sides and the widow, there was a special mention of how thrice the widow was given considerable time to decide, and her consent was given prime importance.¹² There is mention of a high-caste Hindu widow from Khammam Met with her three children who came begging to take her and her children so that they might grow up to be good. She was sent to the inquirers' home to Miss. Brandon in Machilipatnam. In the same Annual report, Miss. Brandon writes that we should be pleased if someone is willing to sponsor even one of these kids, which costs four pounds yearly. Many English households have a lot of empty chairs. Would a mother who reads this adopt a child in honour of a child who is now in heaven? The missionaries encouraged the people back home to support the children of the new converts.

Miss. Brandon's missionary from Machilipatnam, in 1901, reported that widows are married to Christian men and get a better life while others join Bible classes to prepare themselves to become Bible women. The widows who cannot be educated become helpers or nurses in hospitals to support themselves.¹³ There were different ways in which widows were allowed to opt for a new life through the missionaries' intervention. There is a

¹² *The Twenty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1905*, microfilm reel 98 CEZ GEL 1/1 1905-1908, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.68.

¹³ *The Twenty First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1901*, microfilm reel 97 CEZ GEL 1/1 1901-1904, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 99.

mention of four widows who are not just given boarding and teaching but also clothed by the funds received through IWA. **Nirmala**, a young widow and convert who came to the mission station nine years back, was married to a Catechist who is also a widower with two children, and the widow's wedding expenses were met through IWU funds. There is a mention of a Bengali widow becoming a Bible woman. There is a special mention of a Hindu widow in a 1905 report whose child comes to school; the missionary uses her as *bulanawala* (a woman who calls Hindu girls to school). She was very interested in reading and finished a book for which the missionary gave one rupee and a needle book as a prize. The women were employed in different jobs to assess their convictions towards Christian religious teachings before they were accepted into the mission centre.

The CEZMS mission station in Baranagore, Bengal, built unique cottages for widows with grown-up sons as it is difficult to accommodate them along with missionaries and young widows. The missionaries created Christian habitats to accommodate widows and their grown-up boys and to separate and protect them from joining their old practices. In the 1907 Annual Report, there is a request to provide “eight hundred pounds to make a Christian habitat so the boys can stay with their mothers and will not return to their previous religious practices.”¹⁴ Converts' home becomes a rescue space for sexually exploited widows. In the 1909 Annual Report, Miss. E. Mulvany's Home for Homeless Indian Women welcomed a widow who was a Hindu and belonged to a higher caste—the Brahmins. After seven years of being a long-term widow, she was taken advantage of by a man who was giving birth to a child, but she had no bad intentions. According to the missionary, “If she had not been adopted into the mission home, she would have had to

¹⁴ *The Twenty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1907*, p.73.

lead a very different life because her family would not have been able to accept her back because of their caste.”¹⁵ In 1928, Mrs. Bannerji from Howrah reported about a new widow, Rani, who shared her plight of being ill-treated by her brother’s wife and cast off from home. The missionaries let her into the mission station as she is an attractive girl at eighteen, which may lead to the wrong path.¹⁶ In 1924, Miss. Boileau from Ratnapur reported about a young Hindu widow who was taken away to her father’s house but later ruined by her brother-in-law. Since her father could not keep her in the house, she wandered for a year and came to the mission station with a baby girl.¹⁷ The missionaries accepted and cared for her by providing her with space and work.

In the 1935 Annual Report, Miss. Bennerji from Howrah reports the plight of a five-year-old little girl. She was staying at the mission station with her mother. Once, when the little girl visited, her grandfather took it as an opportunity to get the grandchild married without her mother’s knowledge. When the mother came to know, she grieved in pain, poured kerosene over her, and burnt herself to death. The little girl is now studying in one of the mission schools.¹⁸ Another missionary reports about a poor Hindu widow who was left with a little daughter and was exploited by her male relatives, and when her condition was known, she was cast off by the family. “She came to Howrah and was met by the

¹⁵ *The Twenty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1909*, microfilm reel 99 CEZ GEL 1/1 1909-1912, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 81.

¹⁶ *The Forty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1928*, microfilm reel 103 CEZ GEL 1/1 1928-1930, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 52.

¹⁷ *The Forty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1924*, microfilm reel 102 CEZ GEL 1/1 1924-1927, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 48.

¹⁸ *The Fifty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1935*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 51.

missionary in the hospital. After leaving the hospital, she returned to the mission station with two children and prepared for baptism.”¹⁹ Through the funds received from IWU, the missionaries settle these widows by creating space for them based on their expertise and the needs of the people. Some Christian widows are sent to respectable Bengali families to care for their children.

The CEZMS mission station in north India had converts’ homes for Muslim women. In the 1910 Annual Report, Miss. Dawe from Ratnapur reports how several Muslim widows were accepted into their converts’ homes. There was a cast-off wife of a Muslim man and her baby girl. Both were baptised after months of teaching and testing. Another mother and daughter from a good Mohammedan family who were baptised as **Ruth and Rebecca** were trained in lace-making. Rebecca is to be used as a Bible woman, and Ruth is to enter the junior teachers’ training class. Though the families protested initially, seeing how these women are shaped in the mission homes, they stopped hating them. Similarly, another Hindu widow now works as a hospital nurse.²⁰ Though the family was angry earlier seeing her present respectable situation, they now come and stay with her.

The 1911 Annual Report had missionaries reporting about the plight of the widows joining converts’ homes. The widows who join the converts’ homes are neglected or deserted by the family members. The missionaries take utmost care when the widows are remarried or sent to other work professions. They do not want women to face any

¹⁹ *The Forty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1922*, microfilm reel 101 CEZ GEL 1/1 1920-1923, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.41.

²⁰ *The Thirtieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1910*, microfilm reel 99 CEZ GEL 1/1 1909-1912, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK.

difficulties that they have encountered before. Missionary Dawe from Ratnapur says that two widows will be remarried, and she expects to establish a mutually agreeable alliance. To protect these converts' spiritual lives, she was conscious about the houses these people entered. According to Miss. Peddar, widows in Jabalpur, become "not wanted" by society as there are often no male relatives in their homes. Miss. Bardsley of Katni Marwara says about five widows and a poor deserted wife.²¹ They are all flawed, and the missionaries provide them with work, whether helping with cooking or gardening; two working in the garden have only one eye.

The converts' home encouraged women to choose their fields and celebrate their progress when promoted. In the 1913 Annual Report, Miss. Davidson from Karachi reported the excitement among widows about one of them being upgraded to teacher. Once promoted as a teacher in any school, they are entitled to a wage of sixteen rupees a month. Professional progress makes women financially independent. Before joining the converts' homes, the women were traumatised. Miss. Davidson also narrates the trauma of the past that the widows carry within themselves, which hinders them from learning. She mentions a young widow who struggles with her regular lessons. Others laugh at her stupidity, and she laughs at herself. One day, the widow, with tears, explains her condition, "Madam Sahib, it is because my heart is so sad; there is no room in it for letters. It is filled with sorrow."²² In the same report, there is a mention that Some widows are rude and arrogant and quarrel among themselves. Miss. Elwin from Trichur describes how unruly the widows

²¹ *The Thirty First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1911*, microfilm reel 99 CEZ GEL 1/1 1909-1912, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 80.

²² *The Thirty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1913*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 77.

can be, fighting among themselves and with words unless officials immediately check them. With these feeble, uneducated natures, I find that strictness is the purest form of kindness more and more. The widows adhere to the Hindu beliefs that sorrow is the result of sin and that, regardless of whether both of them are widows, women who bear sons are always enslaved and childless. She tells the story of two widows baptised under the names Mary and Martha. While the missionaries' initially believed Martha was childless, they discovered that Martha had a son and stopped him from travelling to the mission station. Mary had two little daughters.²³ There is a sense of insecurity among women to bring their boys to the converts' homes as the boys may lose their inheritance.

Further, in the 1929 annual report, Miss. Graham reports about an old convert who took up nursing independently and earned much money. Realising that money is not everything, she joins the missionaries in the village twice a week without taking any payment but living on her earnings.²⁴ Miss. Loader from Machilipatnam reported in 1934 about a baptised widow who desired her three children to be baptised. Since Indian law does not allow a mother to be the guardian of her children, the stepson, who is the guardian, became furious about the mother's baptism. He beat his mother and took them from the mission station to Secunderabad.²⁵ The teaching and work help them to forget their past for a brief period. In many cases, they experience the past haunting them, and missionaries work in very complex conditions as the women come from different religious, caste, and social needs.

²³ *The Thirty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1913.*

²⁴ *Notice of Removal - The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1929*, microfilm reel 103 CEZ GEL 1/1 1928-1929, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 58.

²⁵ *The Fifty Fourth Anniversary of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1934.*

It is not all about preaching, teaching, and medical work. The widows stay in the converts' homes and contribute by doing various duties. Miss. Evans's 1914 report narrates about an old widow who grinds spices for curry powder, but when she was seventy-five, she requested to be released from grinding and would like to take charge of an orphan girl (Nehar). The girl grew up in her care, and the widow loved her so intensely that she could not sleep when the child was away for a night. With the increase in age, the old widow had a seizure and became childish. The missionaries financially support some widows in their old age as a pension. In a 1920 report, Miss. Anna Bassoe of Machilipatnam reports about six feeble Muslim women who received the assistance of one rupee; months prior, they worked in the industrial school.²⁶ When the school was closed, they identified the feeblest, oldest, and childless widows and provided them with a little pension. If the widows receiving the pension die, the missionaries give that to their daughters. Miss. Bassoe of Machilipatnam reports how Miss. Jennings has taken her place and continues to help the poor widows. "**Kamru Bi**, a widowed pensioner, died last year. Her daughter is now receiving her pension as she has some large white spots on her body, supposed to be some like leprosy."²⁷

Missionaries were very careful when they accepted the inmates. They check whether women join for food and social security by assigning them some duties before accepting them. Miss. Hall of Jabalpur, in 1915, reports about a woman who taught earlier but later returned to the mission station after becoming a widow with the two little boys

²⁶ *The Thirty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1914*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 74.

²⁷ *The Fortieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1920*, microfilm reel 101 CEZ GEL 1/1 1920-1923, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 15.

expressing her wish to become a Christian. The missionary did not accept her, thinking she converted for food's sake. But gave employment as a punkah coolie and taught her biblical lessons.²⁸ Missionaries provided different duties to the seekers to access their spiritual convictions. The missionaries were in touch with the women who taught in schools or trained in industries. Several women return to mission stations when they become widows; missionaries readily accept them by providing space and work. Miss. Bardsley of Katni Marwara reports in 1919 how the number of widows in the mission station increased by joining three (one with a baby, second with three babies, and third with another baby) girls she had earlier trained and now became widows.²⁹ Missionaries helped their pupils in times of personal crisis.

The converted widows had a special bond with the missionaries and mission station, which made them be there and contribute till the last breath of their lives. In her final days, Miss. Evans from Baranagore reports in 1923 about a converted widow, **Shorogini**. She used all her final moments as a God-given opportunity to help the new converts learn at the mission station. Shorogini once saved an English lady, Miss. Fogget, from drowning while bathing in a tank. She risked her life and protected Miss. Fogget from drowning and waiting for the final call from God.³⁰

Widow converts from higher castes in some areas were problematic and went to courts for their children's custody. Miss. Cowley from Trichur narrates in the 1924 Annual

²⁸ *The Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1915*, p. 74.

²⁹ *The Thirty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1919*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 15.

³⁰ *The Forty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1923*, microfilm reel 101 CEZ GEL 1/1 1920-1923, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 44.

Report the trouble with a Nair woman, stating that the high caste women are most challenging to handle, particularly the Nair women. She wanted to leave the mission station with her three children; the eldest was nine years old. The children begged to be allowed to stay in the mission station, which the mother refused.³¹ The magistrate also gave custody of the children to the mother. After a brief period, the mother was willing to send the children back to missionaries.

The converted widows were resourceful for the missionaries as they knew their old religion and taught the new religion to the seekers. These widows share their conversion experience, comparing the old and unique religious lifestyles. Miss. Max from Palamcottah reported in 1930 about converted widows and child widows. All five converts are from Hinduism and are the most valued workers as they know what Hinduism is and how to reach their Hindu sisters. A high-caste Hindu convert widow in Bible training school will become a valuable worker³². Miss. Kendell from Trichur reports about **Chinnamma**, a high-caste widow with two children growing in her faith and trained to be a Bible woman. As she was well-versed in the Hindu sacred books, she refuted others from the Christian point of view.³³ The testimonies and conversations of these women have a more significant influence on the native women than the missionaries' biblical stories and teachings.

The converts' home becomes the 'source station' that produces Bible women who are later employed in different spaces to promote gospel and missionary activities. Miss.

³¹ *The Forty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1924*, p. 48.

³² *The Forty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1927*, microfilm reel 102 CEZ GEL 1/1 1924-1927, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 50.

³³ *The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1930*, microfilm reel 103 CEZ GEL 1/1 1928-1930, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.66.

Bretherton from Machilipatnam reports in 1930 about **Venkayamma**, a Bible woman supported by the IWU fund. “She came to the mission home as a widow who converted and is now faithfully supporting the mission station.”³⁴ In the same report, Miss. Max from Palamcottah reports about Jabapushpam, a widow in the mission station who is studying and is very reliable. Her converted widow mother now works as a Bible woman and a successful teacher. The mission stations, in particular the converts’ homes, are seen as spaces of transformation for Indian widows who are subjected to various forms of discrimination in society. This space provides them with fundamental human identity and dignity. Mrs. Underhill reports about how the status of widows in India, who are treated as enslaved people or seen as a curse, changes when they enter the mission station as they become bright, efficient Christian workers. **Varamani**, a Tinnevely widow from a good caste, has experienced all the shame and disgrace of a Hindu widow who went through all sorrow and loneliness. But now, she is a Bible woman who started a life of independence and rejoiced as she shared knowledge with others. Miss. Taylor from Trivandrum reports in 1931 about a Brahmin girl whose parents married three little girls to three older men as they did ask for much dowry. The three older men died, and the three girls were treated as a curse. The girls are now trained in midwifery in the mission station.³⁵ In the same report, Miss. Morris from Palamcottah reports about a woman training in the mission station. Earlier, she was a “devil dancer,” dancing before the shines with five lightened torches in her mouth. She acted like a possessed, receiving a special gift from God.

³⁴ *The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1930*, p.66.

³⁵ *The Fifty First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1931*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.46.

Converts' homes provided women with space and work during the famine. Miss. Garlick, in 1937, reports **Tarali** from Khammammet, who, during the famine, was taken as a child into the missionaries' home and, at a good age, married to a teacher. Her husband and two children died, and she married again.³⁶ Since her husband mistreated her and returned to Mohammedanism, Tarali returned to Khammammet; she is active and energetic and has forty-one Zenana houses for her regular visitation. Missionaries have a constant influence on the lives of native women. At the same time, the converts' home is a place of hope where they can enter during times of crisis.

4.3.Lace Industry: A Skill Space

The industrial school was pivotal in nurturing the social and spiritual life of the native women and early Christian converts. Lace-making impacted native women's lives by making them economically independent in times of flood and famine. This made women self-supportive by shaping them to be submissive to contextual liabilities and sharpening their creative abilities. On the other hand, lace-making is viewed as gender biased, where the exploitation of women's labour cannot be denied. It restricts women to specific spaces and social conditions, confining women to certain patriarchal notions. This section explores the historical and political understanding of lace-making as a gendered profession. We analyse the role of Industrial schools in shaping women's consciousness in a specific mission context. We refer to both Khammammet and Dummagudem mission stations with Lace schools to understand their influence in supporting and shaping women's consciousness in that context.

³⁶ *The Fifty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1937*, microfilm reel 105 CEZ GEL 1/1 1937-1940, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 96.

4.3.1. Lace Schools

A small pamphlet of CMS gives a historical overview of lace industrial homes in CEZMS mission stations. The first CEZMS industrial homes were started to help convert widows and their mothers. In the later period, every CEZMS mission station had an industrial school based on the needs and proficiency of the people in the region. The weaving of carpets and rugs, lace and embroidery, and the making of chutney, curry powders, jams, and jellies are some of the most flourishing industries.³⁷ Queen Mary from England accepted and sent a note of appreciation, sharing her admiration and interest in the beautiful lace made in Khammammet. The lace-making industry in Dummagudem helped solve the people's problems at the famine relief centre. Baranagore station in Bengal is famous for carpet making, which had a wide sale. The white carpets made in this centre are used in royal durbar, and the centre won a gold medal at the Wembley Exhibition. Ratnapur Centre in Bengal is known for wool weaving and cotton spinning. The industrial homes in Karachi, Sukkar (Sindh), are famous for coloured embroideries by poor widows and deserted women.³⁸ In Bangalore, Mysore, and Channapatna homes, poor Mohammadan women specialised in gold and coloured embroideries. Elderly girls in the boarding school make pillow lace and curry powder. The Trichur (Cochin) home is suitable for basket-making as the rushes grow abundantly on the riverside. The mission stations established specific skill development schools based on the raw material available in that region. The local women had particular skills, which the missionaries polished and helped them make goods with international standards. Sometimes, women lack the skill or cannot

³⁷ Church Missionary Society London, *CEZMS Industrial Mission – A Pamphlet*, microfilm reel 120 CEZ GEL 1/10-15 (1900 -1950), Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p.1.

³⁸ Church Missionary Society London, *CEZMS Industrial Mission – A Pamphlet*, p. 2.

comprehend what the missionaries tried to teach. In such times, missionaries introduced alternative skills or used the women for missionary activities.

The Pamphlet explains how women bring their children to mission stations. The women convert and bring their children to the mission compound. Some orphan children lost their parents in famine and were enrolled in mission orphanages and schools. In the mission station, these children are taught doll making, bead chains, baskets, and needlework to make them self-supportive as adults. Palamcottah and Mylapore stations have deaf and mute boys and girls who are taught plain needlework, knitting, embroidery, cooking, and housework to lead an independent and dignified life. Women are taught to read and write and become teachers and Bible women in the mission field wherever possible.

4.3.2. Historical Overview of Lace Making

Beginning in the 1860s, lace books helped their readers imagine another economy, an economy run by women for women to make crafts and work at home. This was a way to resist industrialization morally, physically, and aesthetically. These texts construct a gender inheritance as an implicit treatment of consciousness and identity, tracing the feminine tradition of embroidery and uniting all social classes. Embroidery and lace-making are historically significant, reflecting women's silences in secluded spaces. Lace-making becomes an expression for a socially silenced person with limited access to public spaces. According to the historians Leonor Davidoff and Catherine Hall, in the 19th century, the silence of female life was undoubtedly complete with embroidery. From the long flat seams of bed sheets to the cushions of embroidered chairs, from the making of boy suits to the exquisite velvet slippers made for fathers at Christmas, middle-class

women keep sewing, and their daughters have been taught to do so since they were young. The age at which they can hold the needle.³⁹ Girls were trained from a very young age to be skilled, and this skill kept them busy and confined to their silenced space.

Thomas Wrights observes that in the eighteenth century, English “people not only liked to be married in lace, bedded in lace and executed in lace, they also liked to be buried in lace.”⁴⁰ Like many other Victorian handicrafts, handmade lace was also a means of economic development for rural women from the First World of the nineteenth century. It also became a means of economic development for rural women in the twentieth century. At the same time, the urban conventions of femininity are not static. While extensive feminist research into Victorian women and first-wave feminism has been demonstrated, the 19th century saw tremendous changes in the female economy and how women lived.⁴¹

Wright further states that lace-making was a gender-based and biased work. The craft lace industry primarily employs women and girls whose “soft, nimble fingers”⁴² are needed for the finishes. The machine-building industry employs highly skilled men: they operate mainly because the work requires considerable physical strength. Marx considered these domestic industries to be temporary forms or organisations of production that the factory system would eventually absorb. In the conditions of absolute brutality of being overworked and working at night, people faced various obstacles that could not be overcome.⁴³ These women’s working lives, spanning from age eight to seventy or eighty,

³⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1878), 387.

⁴⁰ Thomas Wright, *The Romance of the Lace Pillow* (Olney, Bucks: H. H. Armstrong, 1919), xx.

⁴¹ Jane Haggis, “Ironies of Emancipation: Changing Configurations of ‘Women’s Work’ in the ‘Mission of Sisterhood’ to Indian Women,” *Feminist Review*, no. 65 (Summer 2000): 110.

⁴² Wright, *The Romance of the Lace Pillow*, 628.

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capital Production* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Company Limited, 1906), 466.

are prolonged in addition to the working day. Until they pass away, the ladies who make lace hardly ever stop working. There are no set working hours when there is no work. Many women favoured doing it for fun during their free time. Nevertheless, labour exploitation results when someone performs the same task out of a “lack” of resources to survive.⁴⁴ There are no set working hours; since women at home do it, it is not considered professional.

Mies opines that Lace is a product made by women for women. But it is the perfect expression of alienated work, the alienation of workers from their products, skills, and humanity. Lace has absolutely no use value to its producers. However, it also symbolises the alienation of its consumers. As a kind of use value, lace cannot satisfy any basic human need but rather a symbol of beauty, luxury, and leisure for the non-productive women of that class.⁴⁵ Lace-making has its own exploitative identity as a profession. It caters to the people’s wants by exploiting the people in need.

Mies explains further that lace-making manifests the hypocrisy and repressed sexual desire of a particular class man. Lace has always been and will remain an essential ton of underwear and clothing. Its function is simultaneously to cover and expose certain parts of the female body. The sexual orientation of bourgeois males largely depends on maintaining this contradictory appearance of the female body. Therefore, the reserve of use value mainly has a symbolic function.⁴⁶ It covers women in a way to please the male gaze, portraying them as sexually desirable objects. Lace shows (a) the class superiority of the

⁴⁴ Maria Mies, *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market* (London: Zed, 1982), 174.

⁴⁵ Maria Mies, “Dynamics of Sexual Division of Labour and Capital Accumulation: Women Lace Workers of Narsapur,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 10/12 (March 1981): 488.

⁴⁶ Mies, “Dynamics of Sexual Division of Labour and Capital Accumulation,” 488.

non-productive class and its domesticated women and (b) the possession and alienation of the bodies of these women as sexual objects. When poor peasant women in India and other places produced lace for Western consumers, they faced alienation and made the alienation symbolise women wearing this lace. This does not mean this alienation is in beautiful things like lace. It is the result of business relationships and capital accumulation.

Mies gives a historical overview, stating that the beginning of this industry is a female issue. A woman is an initiator, the producer is a poor woman, and commercialization is carried out by social ladies in Scotland and England who volunteer to do charity work to support the missionaries. None of the women involved in this process work for profit or earn a living from primary producers. The women of the early Christian converts were taught lace-making because society resisted their families after conversion, and their men did not engage in any work, such as farm work or shoemaking. The missionary first gave the women yarn, taught them the crochet technique, and sent the finished lace products, tablecloths, tablecloths, etc., to their friends and relatives in England and Scotland, and they would sell them. Girls and women entirely make crochet at all ages. The mothers taught their daughters to make simple patterns when they were about five or six years old, and then they persisted until they grew up or their eyes became blind because they had to use the dim oil lamp light to make lace at night in their cabin. Many women complain of poor eyesight, headaches, and muscle aches.

As a missionary enterprise, the charitable work of the missionary wives, their fundraising activities in England and Scotland, and the “free time” work of impoverished Christian women from Harijan are the foundations of this stage. At this stage, not only were the women taught a new skill, but organisational and ideological changes made these

women become homemakers and workers simultaneously. In addition, the first market connection with foreign lace importers was established. However, the entire production and marketing process was still in the hands of women.⁴⁷ In one of the annual meeting reports, there was a mention of the fund-raising event; it was a well-attended meeting of the Union in a donor's place. The work by the Indian widows was displayed and sold, and a much larger scale was anticipated in the next meetings. The missionary testimonies inform about married children under five years of age and becoming widows at a very young age. Further, they do not allow them to remarry and be subjected to exploitation and harassment from a close relative.⁴⁸ The testimonies were shared, and the handmade lace was exhibited for people to buy and support the mission stations.

Haggis, in her work, explains that within the religious context of the British evangelical movement, the "sisterhood mission" served as a central unifying theme. It was employed in various ways to promote widespread support for the empire's missionary endeavours and underscore the need to attempt. Liberating their pagan sisters on a social and spiritual level is the goal of the Women Abroad Mission.⁴⁹ The re-education of Indian women is also a key component of the taming mission, and it occurs within the intricate and multifaceted framework of the discourse and material transformation that form the foundation of colonial Indian society. The transition of marriage and maternity customs to an accepting colonial setting was not an easy task.

Haggis states that the lace industry allows missionary wives to change this gender working model and expand their Christian influence. Lace production is believed to

⁴⁷ Mies, "Dynamics of Sexual Division of Labour and Capital Accumulation," 499.

⁴⁸ *The Forty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1928*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Haggis, "Ironies of Emancipation," 109.

provide more suitable and decent employment for poor Christian women, especially by removing them from the power of Hindu employers. This relationship can encourage regression by imposing high caste authority and coercion. As a condition of employment, all Lace women must be literate, and internship graduates often retake priority. Lace's income is the "reward" for continuing to attend school. Boarding schools are frequently the only place that provides skills guidance, and all lace workers are hired through the wives of the missionaries who run the industry. The missionary's wives saw the lace industry as another opportunity to instil the "habits of order, cleanliness, and diligence" considered the core of a good Christian family.⁵⁰ If you want to keep employment, lace work must be clean and occur regularly. This reinforces the concept of women's "private" sphere: working from home is considered more appropriate than manual or other public work. The sewing and lace making is in keeping with the missionary's wife's idea of the "respected" and "useful" skills of Christian housewives. The Dummagudem lace industry is a classic example of how missionary wives played an essential role in influencing native lives through lace making.

4.3.3. Dummagudem Mission Station and Lace Work

In July 1860, a letter was published in the Church Missionary Intelligencer from Col. Arthur Cotton asking CMS to send missionaries to the Kois. He was in charge of irrigation works in Dowlaiswaram, and one of his assistants, Capt. F.T. Haig had his headquarters at Dummagudem, close to the Koi tribes. He stopped at the place to survey the bed of the river. He got the upper and lower waters, the depth and rapids of the currents, and at last, began planning to divert the waters into a canal. He found the Dummagudem

⁵⁰ Haggis, "Ironies of Emancipation," 116.

village opposite the river, cleared the forest, and put up sheds for their residence. When the Kois saw the white man in their minds, they moved on to the interior. The natives had apprehensions about the white man's presence in their space.

Sir Cotton said that two things are needed to make this country a garden: the natural water and the water of life. He was provided with government support in the former, and in the latter, he appealed for the CMS.⁵¹ Mr. Haig did not wait for missionaries but started prayer meetings with his workers, and the first caste convert was Venkarama Razu, a Kshatriya by caste working there as an overseer. When he found he was earnest, he was sent to Machilipatnam with further instruction, and Rev. J.E. Sharkey baptised him. Machilipatnam has the converts' home, accommodating believers thrown out of their families. Once they are baptised, they are again sent to the mission fields. He returned to Dummagudem, resigned from his government job with a monthly salary of Rs.60/-, and began to preach the gospel.⁵² Rev. John Cain joined in the year 1873 as a resident missionary, and Miss. Cain joined him in 1882 after marriage.

Subbayya explains that the mission's motto was "To the Koi first and to the Malas." The work among the Kois was not fruitful, though the mission benefited hundreds. The number of converts was minimal. Cain writes about Kois: They exhibit timidity, suspicion, and restlessness. A few schools opened with time, but none lasted long enough for the boys to receive anything beyond rudimentary schooling. Sadly, Mr. Darling performed the first baptism in 1869. Most of those quickly moved out of the neighbourhood and settled

⁵¹ V.S. Azariah, "The Late Mrs. Cain the Bishop's Letter," *Dornakal Diocesan Magazine*, microfilm reel 123 CEZ GEL 5/12-19 (1855-1948), Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 6.

⁵² S.S. Subbayya, *History of Dummagudem- A Report 1935*, microfilm reel 123 CEZ GEL 5/12-19 (1855-1948), Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 4.

somewhere off-limits to the workers. Few women were baptised because they were adamant about sticking to their traditional ways, which led to a combination of tribal and familial pressures that made the men revert to their former ways. Their conversion to Christianity resulted in a social decline.⁵³ The ministry was successful among the Malas as many accepted Christianity and got baptised.

Rev. Cain died in March 1917. Subbayya narrates how Mrs. Sara Cain single-handedly headed the mission station from then. She had at one time two Australian CEZMS missionaries to assist, but for many years, she had only one assistant, Miss. Clara Wallen joined the mission in 1901 and helped her till her death. Following is a brief note on Mrs. Sara Davis, the first lady missionary from Australia: When she was twenty years old, she attended a missionary meeting where she was very impressed by the need for missionary work in India and offered to be a missionary. She had no money, and while still thinking, a lady came to know her desire, put a ten-pound note in her hand, and encouraged her to go as a missionary. With the support of the local church and friends, she raised the money to cover the expenses of her outfit and passage. She was a lion to those who mistreated her children, a deity to the Hindus, a mother to the Christians, and a friend to government officials, all without exaggeration.⁵⁴ She helped the government throughout the Great War, and in recognition of her services to the nation and empire, she was named an MBE (member of the most excellent order of the British Empire), the third-highest honour.

When Mrs. Cain came to Dummagudem in 1882, she trained the older girls in the lacework in a tiny way. From the early days of her service in India, she wished to do something for older girls in school to work outside of their schoolwork. She tells the story

⁵³ Subbayya, *History of Dummagudem- A Report 1935*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Subbayya, *History of Dummagudem- A Report 1935*, p. 7.

of her first encounter with lace work: “This is the exact thing I wanted,” she thinks, as she recalls seeing the women and girls working on knitting when we were waiting for the steamer in Cotta, Ceylon, in 1882. Mrs. Cain says I learned several stitches from the ayah. She understood even though I was an idiot and offered me rough sketches of several designs on paper.⁵⁵ They procured some net and darning thread from London, and a few older girls soon learned some initial work.

She says that a lame Koi youngster who had become lame from using crude medication was the first worker outside the school. He was the local headman's son from nearby. He was a good, healthy child until he was struck by a cow and had treatment until his leg was completely useless. One physician used a piece of iron to burn the leg in order to reduce the swelling, and he left the incision open using live mercury until every joint hurt. Once a child was demanded as payment, the doctor proceeded to bleed the area and implant buffalo horns on both sides of the swelling. The knee ligaments were severed by the previous medical attendant. The missionaries carried him to the mission compound, where he was cured after many days. He learned to do the lace work during his stay. He was later baptised, supported himself with the lacework for five years, and died.

Mrs. Cain narrates about the elderly girls who married and left, but some of the older girls from school continued to do the lace work. They taught their children to learn and do their best work. Lace was imported six yards of net and half a pound of darning cotton from London at a time. They used embroidery cotton and then lined flourishing thread. Mrs. Cain says, “I used to prepare every piece of work with my hands. They can now duplicate and enlarge designs from nearly any little illustration thanks to the patterns

⁵⁵ Sarah Cain, *The Dummagudem Lace Industry – A Report 1934*, microfilm reel 123 CEZ GEL 5/12-19 (1855-1948), Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 1.

two men make on specially ruled paper.”⁵⁶ The missionaries taught them lace work during the 1897 famine instead of feeding people experiencing poverty.

For a month, people were provided, and the lace classes were taken on the veranda. All the collars, cuffs, etc., had to be cut out precisely, and the pattern had to be drawn and then pasted onto the strong paper on which the knitting work was done. The employees could have performed better, and it was not easy to justify keeping the work area tidy. An experienced worker instructs a new employee on maintaining a clean workspace. The instructions include buying a piece of soap and keeping a clean cloth close at hand. They also state that if you stop working to wipe the sweat off your face, you should rewash your hands; if you scratch your head, you should wash your hands thoroughly; and so on. According to a Christian convert, the benefits of lacework are threefold: it brings us money, prevents our ladies from chatting up strangers, and provides them time to clean their homes instead of rushing to their neighbours' houses. Men saw it as a benefit since it kept women confined to the house and restricted their movement.

The girls in the boarding school were paid for every piece they made; this made them financially strong. The money they use to buy their books, some older ones have saved enough to purchase a cow by the time they are married. The school was a place of learning and earning, making girls economically strong and self-supportive. They were proud to buy their books; the first thing a girl saves for is a Bible. The poor women say that many would have died if they did not have the lace work. The people begging earlier now earn enough to support themselves and their families. A good worker is paid around six to eight annas. In 1927, workers were paid Rs. 53, 025/- as annual salaries.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Cain, *The Dummagudem Lace Industry – A Report 1934*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Cain, *The Dummagudem Lace Industry – A Report 1934*, p. 4.

Several disabled people lost their legs due to a lack of proper medication and were trained in lace work. The missionary narrates about a disabled boy. Arriving hobbling for work, a poor boy who was hounded by a crocodile and had his leg amputated by his companions in 1900 is overjoyed to earn a living. He hobbles away, keeping his work neat and perfect, tying it up with a cloth and hanging it over his shoulder. They were just another destitute, ugly boy who came to study and became a Christian thereafter. He had to learn how to hold his needle, which was initially difficult for him. He was also restless due to the fine work because he was not used to sitting still.

The workers give some offerings to the church from their earnings, and some non-Christians also bring some offerings, saying, “Take this for God, please.” As people sent wedding presents for Princess Mary, all workers came together to make a table centre and mates for the polished table, which was graciously accepted and acknowledged. Many known and unknown friends helped sell the finished products in different parts of India, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The lace industry won several medals at various exhibitions and events. They exhibited twice at Wembley and sold over 400 pounds.⁵⁸ At the Madras Fine Arts Exhibition in 1931, the lace industry got the first prize, and the work was highly appreciated and recommended. Most of the workers were Christians, but others were allowed to learn. There were about one hundred Koils at work. They are aboriginal tribes who live in the jungle and are hardworking, rough cultivators. The women help their husbands cut and sell the firewood, visiting door to door. A few caste women are seen by the teacher’s wife throughout the week, but on Sundays, other

⁵⁸ Cain, *The Dummagudem Lace Industry – A Report 1934*, p. 6.

ladies go to a Bible class. Most of them attend church, where a Bible woman instructs the women while they wait to be assigned to tasks.

The general depression hit the lace industry, reducing work and workers. Prices remained the same because customs duties and postage charges were higher. The Christian widows with no other means of support had to work with us on holidays and were paid four annas daily. Since grains, food, and clothes were much cheaper compared with the famine years of 1919 to 1923, people were not as poor as they could afford.

In another small write-up for a mission magazine titled *The Beginning of CEZMS Lace Industry in Khammammet South India*, Miss. Florence Smith narrates what led her to start the industry, the initial hurdles, and the later good results. The initial hurdle was the peculiar postal arrangement of Khammammet, as it is a native state. There is no British post, so no parcels or money can be sent or received outside the state. All this work should be done through Singareni Collieries, thirty miles away, or Bezwada, fifty miles away; the famine years from 1917 to 1922 adversely affected the living conditions of all communities, particularly the village Christians. These people had nothing to eat as there was no work on farms; they used to go to the forest to find some roots and insects or go into the town to beg. Miss. Smith writes that Christian women never beg for charity but for work. Women were coming to the mission stations pleading with the missionaries to provide them with some work to survive, or they would die at their doorstep. The missionaries' primary challenge was teaching needlework to the people who had never seen a needle and knew the art of embroidery.

In 1919, during her Christmas break, Miss. Smith, with the help of the wife of the local teacher, gathered six poorest women from the Christian hamlet to make lace and fine-

drawn thread handkerchiefs. As the work progressed, women were paid per piece, and the efficiency of the work increased. Their earnings were usually double of what they earned in the fields. Skilled women even made three to four times higher. The women shared their gratitude, 'formerly, we often had only one meal a day or sometimes one meal in two days. But now we have two good meals daily, and we and the children have decent clothes instead of rags. There was a condition that every woman coming to the lace industry must learn to read.⁵⁹ Women went to the lace school for several weeks and sometimes even months before they were trusted. Only then are they allowed to work from home without a supervisor.

Since the village women had no exposure to world knowledge and were stuck with their superstitions and mythical stories, biblical and Christian stories were read in the afternoon. **Mary**, a widow of an Indian Clergyman, read these stories to open their minds to a new world and gave them principles and new ideas of Christian womanhood. The lace industry rescued several young widows and orphan girls from the stress of famine by not engaging in any immoral acts. They had an honest means of livelihood to lead a respectable life. The relatives were ready to shelter them as their feeding was cared for by their earnings.

The year 1912 reports that during the famine, the lace industry provided a means of livelihood for many women.⁶⁰ There is a special mention of the lace industry in Khammammet as it was productive, and fifty women were earning their living.⁶¹ Miss.

⁵⁹ *The Twenty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1919*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 20.

⁶⁰ *The Forty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1922*, p. 41.

⁶¹ *The Forty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1923*, p. 44.

Gregory was appointed superintendent for the lace industry as Miss. Smith left for England for health reasons. The lace industry was providing a livelihood for eighty women. It had an excellent Christian influence, which they carry to their village.⁶² The lace industry flourished with sixty workers and was greatly honoured as Her Majesty the Queen accepted a few samples made in Khammammet.⁶³

Lace making was introduced because it is well known that there is a great demand for high-quality lace. However, women's fingers are clumsy and can only grow a few inches a day, so they cannot compete with people with flexible fingers. Try thin line work and handkerchief making, but these women who were once Hindu have never used their eyes for any close work or reading; therefore, their eyes caused many problems, and they often had to be taken to an Eye hospital for treatment. An additional difficulty lies in the female character. Because they are not born workers, sometimes they pretend or exaggerate illness to avoid work.⁶⁴ However, the booming industry was finally discovered. The idea that they started making mango chutney for export to the UK has been a paying industry from the first try. In addition, jam and curry powder are added to the production. Guava jelly, orange marmalade, and gooseberry marmalade from the corner sell very well near Kolkata. Following the janitor's advice, they began making Mirzapur rugs. The work is simple and mechanical, so women and children learn quickly and can create beautiful carpets. To save the price of wool, they started to learn how to dye wool so that now they could buy yarn from the back of the sheep and turn it into a beautiful carpet. It was

⁶² *The Forty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1924*, p. 38.

⁶³ *The Forty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1925*, p. 26.

⁶⁴ Daniel Johnson Fleming, *Building with India* (US: The Central Committee on United Study of Foreign Missions and Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1922), 139.

successfully introduced that people who use seeds to sew and make necklaces can do this job.

Fleming explains that the missionaries are proving that the Eastern mind is not unpredictable; it can accept change, and administrative wisdom can ensure progress. Especially is there a call today in India for the relief of women's sufferings and the terrible wastage of infant life? "Ah," said a Hindu woman, "your God must be perfect to send a doctor to the women. None of our gods ever sent us a doctor."⁶⁵ Many missionaries opened "sewing schools" to help poor widows. Clothes made here are sold all over the world nearby. Indigenous women in Zenanas also enthusiastically perform similar sewing jobs. Here, there are apparent differences in the attitudes of Western women. Although the missionaries describe it as an extension of Western taste, for women like Mary Billington, the event appears to display the "vulgar display" of Western appearance. "When I saw that display, however, I did not grasp what I had seen, and that is, that in no branch of Indian art has British influence been so mischievously detrimental as in needlecraft."⁶⁶ She held the missionaries responsible for passing the western wool work to the natives, who had adopted and perpetrated it in the "vilest form."

In Khammammet's mission station, the lace workers visited different villages along with the Bible women, giving up a day's work and being paid. They also go out to preach on Sunday evenings. The school that opened on the outskirts is an example of a "self-supporting, self-propagating church," as the teachers were entirely supported by the free offerings of Bible women, teachers, and lace workers.⁶⁷ The women in the lacework are

⁶⁵ Fleming, *Building with India*, 139.

⁶⁶ Kaur, "Definitions and Perceptions," 797.

⁶⁷ *The Fifty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1937*, p.66.

taught to prepare other women for baptism and to tell Bible stories. As many of these girls later marry village teachers, this training will enable them to help their spouses in the evangelical work among the Sudras.⁶⁸ The lace school prepares women for other training like nursing and Bible training. The girls entirely do the hostel work. They learn to cook and look after the house.⁶⁹ Older women do the Zenana visitation, and the younger ones go out to the villages, prepare Sudra women for baptism and confirmation, and hold meetings for Hindus in the evening.

4.4. Hospital: A Healing Space

The plagues entered Nizam's State towards the end of the 19th century through the passengers who travelled by train from Wadi to Secunderabad. The infected persons were identified and sent to various quarantine centres at Nampally, Malakpet, and Basheerbagh. Mosques, temples, and dargahs were converted into refugee camps where plague-affected patients were accommodated. The government banned the transportation of dead bodies buried in the nearest available areas. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Hyderabad State was infected with deadly and contagious diseases like plague, malaria, smallpox, measles, cholera, and influenza/Spanish flu, killing lakhs of people. It is estimated that around ten lakh people were killed in Hyderabad State from 1900 to 1920. In 1918 - 1919 alone, 3, 50,000 people died from influenza. There was a three to five

⁶⁸ *The Fifty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1938*, microfilm reel 105 CEZ GEL 1/1 1937-1940, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 68.

⁶⁹ *The Fifty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1939*, microfilm reel 105 CEZ GEL 1/1 1937-1940, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 70 – 71.

percent decrease in population in Hyderabad due to the plague and influenza in the same year.⁷⁰

The hospital is an important space where foreign missionaries and natives meet and interact. The foreign missionaries had cultural shocks when exposed to the native medicine and healing methods. The medical services and the personal availability of missionaries instilled trust in the natives. This section elaborates on the natives' attitudes towards treatment and diseases. We read through the mission reports of various medical stations. In the process, we see how women who came for medical help later got converted and became Bible women and served the mission stations.

4.4.1. People's Attitude towards Disease and Death

A missionary narrated the roles of Bible women amidst peoples' indifferent behaviour towards missionaries and medicine. One night, we went to a nearby community where there was a home of a Bible woman. Many non-Christians were in that village, and she found it challenging to work with. They do not even want to hear. However, following the pandemic, she claimed to have a different outlook. She told us how I wished young people and doctors would visit every village where I served. The young people's arrival astonished many, even if it was not their job. Furthermore, it is said that any religion that inspires us to help others in that way is worthwhile to learn about. The Bible woman's experience of changing her villagers' attitudes toward her is not unique.

In informal ways, natives get glimpses of Christian service. The natives started to appreciate the missionaries' availability to help and heal them. The mission hospital staff's service-oriented attitude greatly influenced the villagers who visit their relatives as patients

⁷⁰ Satyanarayana and Dyavanapalli Satyanaryana, *Telangana: History Culture*, 351.

or attendees. The fact that the hospital staff even do menial work impresses them. They understand their commitment and carry a Christian message back to their villages through that work.

John Spencer elaborately explains the context conditions and attitudes of the natives towards medicine.⁷¹ Many orthodox Muslims in Hyderabad State believe it is predetermined what day they will die and from what illness. Then why should they do something about it? If it is God's will, they will die; if not, they will not. Would not accepting the means of prevention be an attempt to change God's will instead of submitting to Him? (Islam means submission). Many Hindus believe they must sacrifice to appease the god or goddess who is angry and kills people. If, as far as they know, why are they busy with rats, fleas, and vaccines? Many Christians share a similar belief to the Mohammedans, but as a group, from a Western perspective, Christians had more opportunities than others to educate themselves about diseases and prevention. There is a tendency to place all responsibility on God, with a more significant number eager to get vaccinated and to cooperate with other preventive measures. Some Hindus offer their sacrifices and then come for the injections as well. However, a growing number of people from all religious groups started to agree with missionaries that God wants us to do everything possible for ourselves and others to the limit of the knowledge that he has given us.

4.4.2. Modes and Methods of Native Medication

Spencer explains that Pregnancy and childbearing were utterly a woman's affair. Women handled it themselves with the help of the local midwives. The midwives used the native methods, which usually work on a trial-and-error basis. He documents a missionary

⁷¹ John Spencer Carman, *Rats, Plagues and Religion* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1936).

narration of the ordeal of a pregnant woman ready to deliver a baby. Rutnamma was from the Komati or merchant caste. Their caste prevented them from helping a woman in labour, even one of their own. Moreover, none of them knew anything to do for her if they had been willing to break the caste. It may have been different if the woman's mother was alive, but she had died four years before when Rutnamma's youngest brother was born. Polamma, the mother's sister, thought of this now and wished they had somehow managed to bring the midwife along. The midwife suggested that they take the girl to the Mission Hospital, which was in Hanumakonda. Rutnamma had been in labour there in the village for almost two days, and despite frequent examinations, the midwife could not manage to hasten the labour or discover the cause of the delay. She defended herself, saying it is her first child, and first labour is always the most difficult. She would be fine, I reasoned. But I am not sure anymore. It would be best if you rushed her to the Mission Hospital. The doctors there are said to have delivered babies after even the greatest midwives had failed.

The family takes Rutnamma to the mission hospital. But going to the mission hospital in town was always a grand family affair. All people who want to see the city also travel with the patient. The bullock cart was so full that there was no place for the midwife to assist the patient in an emergency. Someone told the midwife, "There is no room. You will not be needed at the hospital. Never fear, older woman. You will get your rice and the new sari we promised."⁷² More than the pregnant woman's safe delivery, people were more excited about the visit to the town. The patient was brought to the hospital after a long struggle travelling on the rough road. She was given the required treatment and delivered the baby. After regaining consciousness, she asked, "Where is my son?" He told her she

⁷² Carman, *Rats, Plagues and Religion*, 173.

had a wonderful baby, but it was a girl. Immediately, she began to cry and drifted off to sleep again. Even in her sleep, she continued to murmur the same lament: “Ayyo, also, another girl!”⁷³ Women had the pressure to give birth to a male child. The midwives had challenges delivering the baby with limited resources and time. Mission Hospital is the last option, as people are prejudiced about foreign methods and medicines.

Arley Munson documents a missionary narrative about people’s attitudes towards missionaries and medicine in the Medak region. The sick girl, staring at us with dazed, frightened eyes, crouched in a far corner with the beseeching cry, “Do not take me to the hospital!”⁷⁴ We relieved her of her fears by laughing at her; the little girl was most afraid when word got out in the village that the English were going to sacrifice a human being at the hospital in the hopes that good fortune would find the place. Finally, she took the medication we gave her and went to sleep. Fear was generated by the rumours propagated by the soothsayers and local medical practitioners, known as Hakims.

A hakim had informed a patient with a rheumatic fever that poisonous thorns planted in her skin by bad people were the source of her discomfort. He had examined her and demonstrated his diagnosis with a bunch of thorns, which he had faked to remove from her arm. The girl remained convinced that the thorns were in her arm. But the missionaries questioned why she did not feel better after they were removed. Another boy, Rama, a thirteen-year-old Brahman who had sensitive hands and feet, was unable to walk for two years due to weak, damaged feet similar to polio. His father was an Indian herbalist known as hakim, and he disliked the Mission out of jealousy, both professional and spiritual, after

⁷³ Carman, *Rats, Plagues and Religion*, 177.

⁷⁴ Arley Munson, *Jungle Days: Being the Experiences of an American Woman Doctor in India* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1913), 60 – 61.

he had tried in vain to heal the boy. He brought his son to the hospital, left behind all pride and jealousy, and asked the missionaries to heal him. A major operation was performed, and it was successful. After his son was allowed to play with other boys, the father appeared to set aside his final prejudices and mistrust of missionaries and their medical work.

Will the Indian hakims ever understand how much their ignorance is to blame is the missionary's question. A young girl was brought to us with almost completely burned eyelids due to simple discomfort. When the missionary asked her mother what other treatment the eyes had received besides the burning, she replied: "The *hakim* has done everything known to him. The last treatment was to rub red pepper into the eyes every hour."⁷⁵ The missionary explains about another two cases. A baby boy was born a day later, struggling in his mother's arms as the pain became unbearable. His abdomen's delicate flesh was so severely burned that the bowel protruded slightly, indicating that his death was inevitable. When Mahomedan Midas, then five years old, was brought to us, one of the violent Indian horses had bitten him, tearing open his cheek from nose to ear and down to the bone. The infant was very unwell because the village hakim had thoroughly poisoned the wound with crude dressings. Every day, he had to undergo excruciating treatment.

I observed that the local medical practitioners and the foreign doctors had their understanding of medicine and healing. The local medicines and practices are seen and interpreted as crude and primitive. There is a conflict between religion and medicine, faith and superstitions, and herbal and scientific medicine. Natives had their doubts about

⁷⁵ Munson, *Jungle Days*, 71.

foreign missionaries and their medicines. Similar conditions prevailed throughout Hyderabad, and in such a context, missionaries started their work at Khammammet.

4.4.3. Medical Work at Khammammet

Khammammet is a secluded and unhealthy Hyderabad station where medical work is precious. A few months ago, smallpox raged there, and hundreds of people were said to have died. The locals believed that the disease was transmitted by the goddess Mutyalama. His poor little temple is near the church. People dare not take medicine, and every morning and evening, they can see those bringing offerings, praying, and pouring our water basin to calm their anger.⁷⁶ This section explains the role of both foreign and native workers in the establishment of Mission Hospital in Khammammet. We elaborate on a few individuals whose untiring work brought more people to the mission station.

Dr. Abraham's handwritten history of the mission hospital is a rich resource I collected during my fieldwork. She meticulously wrote and documented it. In 1888, the Nizam government granted the land of St. Mary's Mission Hospital to Miss. Brandon on the condition that medical work be carried out. The entire Khammammet area and the surrounding villages are under the rule of Nizam. As Muslims, these women are strictly in Gosha, and women among women are in high demand for medical work. Miss. Brandon oversees this land and has placed a fence of thorns around it to mark it. A few years later, she built two bungalows for the missionaries and let them live in the same place to treat patients. Miss. Brandon and two or three other missionaries tried to meet the medical work needs by providing medicine and simple treatments for women and children.⁷⁷ Medicine

⁷⁶ "Medical Mission Page: Khammammet," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (August, 1903): 172 – 173.

⁷⁷ Krupa Abraham, "History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital - A HandWritten Document," p.1.

was an entry point to reach the most secluded spaces within a house where women are usually kept or caged securely. Missionaries entered with medicine and later introduced education to these women in Zenanas.

Elenor Pegg writes about the beginning of medical work by Nurse Miss. Penny and Miss. Wells in the Khammammet region. Miss. Penny returned home after a short period; she earned the trust and love of people in a wide range of areas. Later, a lay missionary continued her work, distributing the medicine in the best way. Miss. Wells came with another nurse in 1898. No hospital or qualified doctor exists, but Miss. Wells worked during the terrible cholera and plague epidemics. Her presence and work during that period positively impacted people's minds, thus generating trust in the community.⁷⁸ People started to trust the missionaries and appreciated their work during a crisis.

In 1898, Khammammet faced a severe water shortage. Although the Khammammet region has not been declared a famine zone, Christians, Mohammedans, and Hindus have been severely affected in many places. Supplies were scarce, and grain was low even at mission stations. Cattle died in the hundreds; many had to remove their thatched roofs to feed and keep the cattle alive. Miss. Wells narrates about the people's attitude during a pandemic like cholera. When the monsoon started, a severe cholera epidemic erupted, and Khammammet and the surrounding villages were severely affected with high mortality. Superstitions and rituals to please the goddess "Mahalakshmi" dominated the place. In a single day, 1200 animals were sacrificed, "the most heinous thing we saw was that outside a specific small temple, people were staring at a wooden stick, and on it, they were beating

⁷⁸ Elenor Pegg, "Channels," *Looking East India's Women and China's Daughter* 63, no. 10 (October, 1943): 156.

live pigs and left them screaming at death or eaten by hungry dogs.”⁷⁹ They predicted that the goddess was satisfied after six weeks and fled the scene. Another significant event was a departure, with a clay figure immobilising her in a decorated cart and with a big procession carrying it into the jungle and smashing the image on their return; they party and drink alcohol; this makes cholera worse than before. Many students died, and many left this place for neighbouring villages and never returned. Miss. Wells reported that no one on the mission station or the workers was attacked and that there were only five cases among Christians, all mild and curable.

Miss. Wells asked for a lady doctor as she struggles with complex cases and is only a trained nurse. She spoke about one of the hospitals in the remote Gosha region, which was expensive for the rich and where the poor could not be treated. She asked for medical duties among the women of Mohammedanism. The wife of a wealthy Mohammedan undergoing surgery in Madras needed some of the post-operative help she asked from Miss. Wells and she visited her. Lacey initially greeted her but then sternly refused to learn. After a while, she became a student in an industrial school and learned to read Urdu and the Bible with her stepson in the house. **Subbacuma** is a low-caste woman who has come to ask for medicine for her child because she is not from Khammammet. Seeing her interest in Bible lessons, the missionaries asked her to visit her even when the baby no longer needed the medicine. She goes to church every day and regularly. When she returned to the village, she and her husband became open-minded and eager to prepare for baptism. The missionary wrote that Subbacuma’s husband became interested in Christianity a few years ago. Still, his parents forced him to marry a pagan daughter to avoid the distraction from

⁷⁹ Wells, “Khammammet: The Story of the Year,” 240.

Christianity. But now, the same girl brought him to Christian teaching as a faithful servant of Christ.

Dr. Abraham elaborately writes about the committed work of Dr. Longmire. The CEZMS London sent Dr. Longmire to start medical work in Khammammet. She came to Bangalore in 1900 after two years of studying Urdu. She came to Khammammet in 1902. Dr. Longmire stayed in one part of the building, using it as her living room. She shared the room with an Indian compounder, **Annamma**, whom she brought from Bangalore. Annamma was a great help to Dr. Longmire both in her medical and domestic work. The second part of the building is used for outpatients, and in another aspect, they keep four beds for inpatients.⁸⁰ With the increase in employment, more staff were added, and more space needed to be created. More rooms were built for women workers from the general fund, which the Zenana and medical workers shared according to their needs. Mission-trained nurses and a couple of Bible women stayed in these rooms. Dr. Longmire visited patients in their houses in the afternoon free of cost, which helped many patients have confidence in her. Despite several inconveniences and obstacles, she never returned from work and visitations. People had several prejudices about a white woman doing medical work.

Dr. Longmire reported in an article that she was initially frustrated with the mission field due to people's ignorance and prejudice. She said that they left things until the last minute, they tried various local medicines and amulets, and when the patient did not get better, they went to see a doctor. As they naively described it as "a last resort." Longmire explained how she visited the mother of the prominent businessman who had been ill for a

⁸⁰ Abraham, "History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital," 4.

few days and was receiving local treatment. She found out she had double pneumonia, told them what to do, and gave them medicine. In the evening, she revisited the patient with Miss. Rogers, and found that she had neither food nor medicine. They could not provide it to him until his local doctor confirmed if the missionary's medicine would mix with his. Eventually, the patient died. Another caste girl fell into a well. There was no protective wall in the well. The doctor gave her preliminary medical treatment. But the soothsayer said there was a demon in the well, which had to be pleased. At the next visit, the doctor saw that everything he had done for her was in vain, and the girl fell into crazy delirium and died within a few days. Longmire was very discouraged. She says, "I felt discouraged and began to wonder if I was the right person to start this job at Khammammet."⁸¹

The hot weather caused the poisonous thorns in the jungle to cause unpleasant ulcers and wounds. The wound is not cleaned and left unattended, and it will soon develop into ulcers and gangrene. People from afar came to the mission station during a one- or two-day trip and brought their food to cook at the mission station. As the crowd grew, the missionaries had to ask them to find some rooms in the city. Dr. Longmire described the two initial surgeries she performed in Khammammet. A girl had white spots on her fingers; to cure it, her person burned the back and palm of her hand. When he got to the hospital, they broke his finger down to the first joint and repaired two gangrenes on one side of the burn. The smell is unpleasant, and the hands are black and swollen. The girl was in pain for days without sleep. At first, staff were concerned that he might lose his hand, but he recovered. As her condition improved, relatives stayed with her; only her mother and baby stayed with her. After realising the benefits of the staff for her mother, the girl ran to the

⁸¹ Mary Longmire, "Our Medical Mission Page: Khammammet," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (August, 1902): 175.

missionaries to play. She had shrieked when she saw the white lady for the first time. This black child came running up to us and took our skirts so he could wear them. This is an excellent place for new patients to find surprises and enjoyment. The other, before she went, was born in the gospel. Interestingly, if a woman does not want to listen, she will blame them. She was one of the first patients to be hospitalised for over a month. Missionaries believe investing time and treatment to influence castes will help them reach more people on their way to town.

Another surgery is done on a girl whose gypsy is very peculiar in the territory of Nizam, known as the Lombard. The girl slept in a hut in the jungle, where Nizam beat the tiger, and the tiger came and took her away. The beast walked a distance with its mouth in its mouth until a bitch belonging to its tribe followed and attacked it and then threw the boy to the ground. After three days of travel, they brought small wounded and people in poor health. He has extensive wounds on the right and back of his head, like a tiger's head between the jaws. He had a big scar from a paw and several more minor wounds on his back. They cut her hair, cleaned and dressed, and she came everyday until she got better. When his wounds healed, he was brave. He received a banana every day as a reward for his patience.⁸² Since then, more and more people have come here, bringing more relatives from the tribal forest village. The missionaries initially earned the trust of individuals who later led the community to the missionaries and medicine.

Dr. Longmire reports about a native nurse, "From what I have seen and heard, she leads a very consistent life among the people, and they show her respect and affection."⁸³ She is just as much of a missionary as we are because she moved from her home region

⁸² Longmire, "Our Medical Mission Page: Khammamet,".

⁸³ Longmire, "Our Medical Mission Page: Khammamet," 175.

and enrolled her kids in a mission boarding school so that she could come to carry out this task. Although her salary was fantastic, she could have earned just as much in a healthier location close to her kids if she had not felt the need for this location. She mentions what the native nurse feels, that God has taken such care of her children since she joined the mission hospital, referring to her little girl, who used to be weak and delicate but is now much more robust and healthier.

The nurse's duties include handling the urinal and washing others' feet while giving baths. The feet are usually filthy because the combination of dusty roads and bare feet or sandals has apparent effects. Therefore, it is no wonder that although many people from all walks of life and groups aspire to become doctors or pharmacists, nursing is not very attractive for caste people and even for outcastes whose ancestors are street sweepers. In Christian communities in India, parents usually only consider sending their daughters to receive nursing training when they are not qualified to prepare for teaching or so-called "Bible work." Similarly, pharmacy training is more prevalent among boys than male nursing.

The great event of 1914 was the opening of the new hospital, for which the government made a grant to the building and remitted the customs on the drugs used in hospitals and dispensaries.⁸⁴ The hospital work was very influential as famine, cholera, influenza, and malaria occurred in the same year.⁸⁵ Epidemics open spaces for missionaries to reach more people. Dr. Longmire retired after twenty-eight years of service, developing

⁸⁴ *The Twenty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1914*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 47.

⁸⁵ *The Forty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1922*, p. 34.

all hospital buildings to carry out medical work. In recognition of her devout services, the Nizam government honoured Dr. Longmire with the *Kaisar-I-Hind* gold medal.

The 1922 Annual Report informs about how Dr. Abraham was put in charge of the hospital. Dr. Poulter, who served under CMS in China, offered to help and was appointed to succeed Dr. Longmire. Dr. Poulter started village work, wherein a doctor, nurse, and compounder went out daily every week. Dr. Abraham introduced a small fee for those who can afford medication. The money is used to construct an extra ward and buy medicine.⁸⁶ However, there was initial resistance from the community to the change in hospital leadership from foreign to Indian doctors. Over time, people accepted Dr. Abraham with several apprehensions.

The hospital accommodation was increased to fifty beds by converting the old dispensary into a maternity ward and building an isolation block. With the funds raised, Dr. Poulter was instrumental in erecting the new buildings, which were a much-felt need then. The Indian nurses and Dr. Abraham, the Sub-Assistant Surgeon, helped her.⁸⁷ The 1929 Annual Report informs that many caste women came forward for baptism along with the patients in the hospital and dispensary, keen on gospel messages. There is a mention of a male evangelist who was added to the staff to speak with the many men accompanying their women's relatives.⁸⁸

Mission Hospital, as a "space," gave access to the medical staff to cater to the patient's medical needs and introduce religious teachings to the attendee's patients. Caste

⁸⁶ *The Forty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1927*, p. 39.

⁸⁷ *The Forty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1928*, p.38.

⁸⁸ *The Forty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1929*, microfilm reel 102 CEZ GEL 1/1 1928-1930, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 42.

women usually assisted their relatives in the hospital. When Bible women visit the patients to pray, they interact with the usual female attendees—many secret believers and seekers among the caste people as there is an intense search for truth. The hospital had a steady increase in patients, creating a need for a children's ward, a stock room, and a laboratory for research work.⁸⁹ Unprecedented openings among the caste women, the beginning of a new laboratory, some wards were enlarged, two private wards were added along with a children's ward, and a training school for nurses was started in Khammammet.⁹⁰ Patients who received treatment and were cured returned to support the hospital's needs. New equipment was bought with twelve pounds donated by a patient; another Parsee family provided a covered path from the maternity block to the hospital because many of their children were there. Dr. Abraham reports about a woman who, relieved from pain, refused to say as she wished to hear more gospel teachings. She later expressed her wish to be baptised. There is a mention of two converts from the fisher caste, Peter and Andrew, who were baptised and built a house.⁹¹ There was also a Komati convert who was preparing for Confirmation.

There has been an increase in both inpatients and outpatients despite the opening of private clinics and state hospitals. The children's ward and medical care for the children were highly appreciated. Dr K. Abraham reports about the gift from H.H. the Nizam's Government, with which a new operating theatre and the surgical ward were added to the

⁸⁹ *The Fifty First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1931*, p. 36.

⁹⁰ *The Fifty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1932*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 22.

⁹¹ *The Fiftieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1930*, microfilm reel 103 CEZ GEL 1/1 1928-1930, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 47.

hospital. The hospital became a recognized centre for training nurses, and five nurses completed the training.⁹² The Nizam government contributed to the hospital's growth at regular intervals. Khammammet becomes a mission station under the Dornakal mission and other Telugu region centres. Miss. K Abraham reports on the progress in hospital work despite the growing number of private practitioners. The new operation theatre has made it possible to do major and minor operations. The hospital was busy with maternity cases, newborns, sick babies, and mothers. The people appreciated the hospital service as it was open throughout the summer. There was an inspection from the government that respects the appearance, maintenance, and uncompromised cooperation between nurses and doctors to serve within limited resources and space.⁹³

Two new dispensaries were available for out-patients: one was in the town centre, and the other was connected to the hospital. According to Miss. Hardy, people think a stethoscope works wonders and love to have their ears tested. After the stethoscope had been placed on their chest and back, they were confident that they were much better and that breathing was easy. Bible instruction, teaching, and preaching are given by Bible women to the outpatients in the morning and afternoon in the wards. Patients are ready to be operated on request for prayer, and some ask for prayer before leaving the hospital.⁹⁴ This greatly influenced the caste people as many women were introduced to Christianity and later returned and accepted the new faith. Seethamma and Rukmini, whom we discuss

⁹² *The Fifty Sixth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1936*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 49.

⁹³ *The Fifty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1937*, p. 66.

⁹⁴ *The Fifty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1938*, p.68.

in the later chapters, got attracted to Christian teachings through these interactions and prayers in the hospital space.

Mrs. Hardy reports the growth of the hospital with proper statistics and the influence of Dr. Abraham's work in the past sixteen years. The hospital work was systematically grown, with different wards added regularly as needed. Dr. Abraham was the first batch student of Dr. Scudder, the pioneer of CMC Vellore. A close reading of both hospital growth reports shows that Dr. Abraham replicated the work of CMC Hospital at Khammammet Mission Hospital. Maternity hospital care and treatment for mother and child were highly regarded. Twelve nurses were reported to be in training, and Bible women talked and prayed with the patients daily. The hospital has a double cure, both for body and soul. Faith mixed with medicine made people find extra curative properties in medicine. A man hangs an empty medicine bottle in his house for the pain to depart. Some fill the empty medicine bottle with water and drink it when they have abdominal pain.⁹⁵ A special ward set apart for the care of babies whose mothers have repeatedly lost children after birth. As prices rose due to the war, the town branch dispensary was converted into a much-needed child welfare centre.⁹⁶

A report about the pre-natal care given at Khammammet Hospital resulted in healthy childbirth. "We have lovely babies born nowadays. We rarely have the 4-lb and four ½-lb babies who used to be normal. Our babies make us happy with 7lb, 8 lb, and we have even had 9lb born."⁹⁷ A dispensary opened as a memorial to Dr. Longmire, and the

⁹⁵ *The Fifty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1939*, p. 70.

⁹⁶ *The Sixtieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1940*, p. 38.

⁹⁷ *The Sixty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1942*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 32.

old dispensary was converted into two wards, one for men. The first male patient in the history of that hospital was a West African military lorry driver who was seriously injured in an accident to recover. She was a Christian and was given a military burial with Christian rites.⁹⁸ The medical needs of the Army and Navy, the patriotic urge, and the attraction of high-rated pay have drawn many Christian nurses into services for the duration of the war. Others with a real sense of missionary vocation remain firm and continue to work in missionary hospitals. There was an acute shortage of doctors and nursing staff, and mission hospitals in some stations were closed. At Khammammet, improvements in the hospital continued to cover ways to link up all the buildings and wards. The hospital now has a vital training school for nurses, which is essential to Christian witness in the medical sphere as it touches a wide village area.⁹⁹ A kitchen building has been converted into a ward, and a new nursery has been added. The urgent needs were the appointment of a second doctor, at least one nurse, and another Bible woman.¹⁰⁰

The sense of “release” was experienced throughout India, but the relationship between Indians and Europeans became stronger. A missionary was told, “You are no longer our rulers; you are our friends now, and so, double welcome.” During the unpleasant outbreak of communal strife and frustration, Christians of both British and Indian nationality were untouched. They helped and comforted the wounded and terrified people. Dr. Abraham reports that there has been an increase in patients despite the growing number

⁹⁸ *The Sixty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1944*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 28.

⁹⁹ *The Sixty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1945*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ *The Sixty Sixth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1946*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 20.

of private medical practitioners in town. Patients believed that all things are possible with God, and a recognised hospital is a place where medical service is based on faith. God often rewards their faith and trust and blesses our simple remedies and prayer. Two nurses who are now engaged in language study were recruited.¹⁰¹ She also mentions that two nurses (Miss. Cicely Jones and Miss. Gwen Parks) were recruited and are engaged in language study.

The changing scenario was as India and Pakistan gained independence from British rule. The word “change” recurred from all the missionary reports from various mission stations. The missionaries shared the joy of freedom in schools and hospitals with planned services and sports, processions, and festivities. But the joy was followed by the suffering feud between Muslims and Hindus. Also, Sikhs broke out afresh. Each side was guilty of fearful deeds of shame and atrocity. Missionary schools and hospitals have become the means to save several lives. The year was filled with fear and panic. There has been significant harm done to both Muslims’ and Hindus’ lives and property throughout Hyderabad. “Fear not, for I am with thee” is what we rely on to keep us going confidently through all of the upheavals, disturbances, and challenges we face here, writes Dr. Abraham. God fulfilled his pledge with faithfulness. Everything we needed was provided, and we were kept safe.¹⁰²

Miss. Hardy writes, Although the war between the Indian Union and Nizam’s armies has ceased, there is a continual conflict between the communists and the

¹⁰¹ *The Sixty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1947*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 10.

¹⁰² *The Sixty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1948*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 20.

government. The communists are doing much harm, causing trouble and stirring the people. Life is held so cheaply that murders are committed for the slightest thing. All this affects the life of the hospital. The ward will be packed to overflowing for a time, so we hardly know where to put the patients. Then, a sudden scare will cause many of our patients to disappear, not realising they are safer in the hospital than in their homes. Fifteen nurses received training despite all the challenges, and four more completed their midwifery and general training programs and are now employed by the hospital.¹⁰³ As a hospital, the maternity department is still relatively new. Though continually growing in every manner, we have breached our walls.

We have been encouraged recently by the interest Hindu patients have shown in the message; many have asked for Bibles, and one patient continued to call on the Lord Jesus Christ and identify Him as Saviour while under anaesthesia, according to Cecily Jones. She subsequently remarked, "I always pray to him." In response to my question about where and when she first heard, she mentioned attending a CEZMS school. Despite the difficulties members of the Merchant Caste face in sharing their faith, she genuinely believes in Christ. Distribution of Scriptures is taken as a priority; there was a readiness among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsees to study the Bible for themselves. Most non-Christians had an open-minded attitude towards Christianity, particularly in South India.¹⁰⁴

Missionary doctors were directly involved in evangelism work, meeting several patients from various caste groups. Some doctors, through their patients, create entry points in their respective villages. Medical talks followed by some biblical stories are the usual

¹⁰³ *The Seventieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1950*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ *The Seventy First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1951*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 15.

format. Dr Bamber's 1951 Annual letter progress sheet narrates Adventures in Evangelism and raises an important question: Is a Kamma Caste movement on the way? He elaborates on how the gospel is introduced to the Kamma caste people.

The patients who visit the hospital become the entry point for village evangelism. Bamber narrates how they make friends with the Sudra people and the local village teacher and conduct public health care lectures in the villages, followed by religious preaching. The public health talk included posters, pointed to health and spiritual laws, and introduced Christ's relation to the law. Any public medical lecture has the following sessions: information on the public with health film strips, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and other Bible stories, and finally, the life of Christ. Bamber narrates the mass movement among the Kamma caste people in Gollapudi village.¹⁰⁵ Many meetings were conducted using film strips, particularly in Gollapudi village. A Kamma man named Anjayya offered space for meetings in front of the house. Sadu John, an interdenominational preacher, conducted big crowd gatherings. Kamma people had been going there to hear the preaching and were too healed of their sicknesses. Many Kamma, Vadera, and well-digger caste seekers are in Bezawada and Khammammet.

Dr. Bamber narrates about a high school headmaster who refused to be baptised but held healing services in Christ's name for many who came to him. There is a mention of Mr. Subbarao, a healer who prefers not to be baptised or enter the church. He says, "If he becomes a Christian, he will lose the following of orthodox Hindus and Muslims who even now look upon the Christians as an outcast."¹⁰⁶ Caste people are proud and cannot be

¹⁰⁵ D.M. Bamber, "Is Kamma Mass Movement on the Way?," *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections (UK: University of Birmingham, 1951), 1.

¹⁰⁶ Bamber, "Is Kamma Mass Movement on the Way?," 2.

influenced, nor will they enter the church. However, these people are more influenced or inclined to the preaching of caste-converted Christians or European missionaries. In Raghavapuram, a Kamma farmer says they used to hear the gospel preached when the missionaries resided there. Their only source of faith is Jesus. Around eight Kamma families became Christians due to the work of former missionaries and caste converts.

Dr. Bamber offers insightful insights on social advancement and supports the campaign for it. Converting middle-class individuals, like those in the Kamma community, to Christ is the next step. Employers and employees won't genuinely work together to support one another unless their shared love for Jesus motivates them to do so. The missionaries conducted several outreach meetings with a group of boys and preachers from the same caste in the caste people locations with the help of the local believers from the Kamma community.¹⁰⁷ They utilised the converts from the same caste to preach in those locations. The seekers from these groups also influence their relatives scattered in other Kamma villages to organise more outreach programs.

Dr. Bamber states that every missionary doctor should synthesise being a good doctor and evangelist. To press the gospel upon a sick man is not always advisable medically. However, Dr. Bamber wants all his patients and villagers to see him as their 'doctor' and win a place in their hearts through medical work. He writes, "My first eighteen months were spiritually silent because three hours of language study and eight hours of medical work did not give me much time for gospel."¹⁰⁸ Our policy is to show pictures in public meetings in the middle of Hindu quarters. Although the same was done in the Christian quarters, few Hindus responded due to caste customs. Since the film shows and

¹⁰⁷ Bamber, "Is Kamma Mass Movement on the Way?," 3.

¹⁰⁸ Bamber, "Is Kamma Mass Movement on the Way?," 4.

public medical talks, many fruitful missionaries began to hold smaller family meetings in the houses of Hindu friends. For example, Mr. Sagrey, Dr. Bamber's Brahmin teacher, gathered around thirty of his neighbours and a Brahmin priest in his uncle's village next week. A meeting was also conducted in a road contractor's house. By conducting meetings in all different caste groups, the gospel is spread to all and does not make anyone feel singled out.

These methods resulted in some places; a Hindu Teacher trainee was healed due to prayer healing service inclined towards Christian teaching but not baptism. Because when a family is baptised, it means ostracism when a whole group of families is baptised. It is an event full of happiness.¹⁰⁹ These social groups and support networks were facilitated through family meetings. We believe in Jesus and hold His name in the highest regard, but more work needs to be done before we and many others come forward when the topic of baptism comes up. The Hindu teacher training students have a Bible class for them as an option. Dr. Bamber started to read St. Luke's Gospel with the students. There was a steady increase in interest and attendance. The gospel reading sessions created much interest and curiosity among the caste Hindus. He says, "There is such a hunger for the gospel amongst the caste people that it is sad to see how little is being done, in many places, to meet their needs."¹¹⁰

Furthermore, an older man came to the hospital with a chronic leg ulcer for two years with Bismuth injections; he was cured in five weeks. Soon, many people started coming to the village hospital for medical help. Medical missionaries used this opportunity,

¹⁰⁹ D.M. Bamber, "Rural Dispensary and Mobile Van," *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections (UK: University of Birmingham, 1951), 1.

¹¹⁰ Bamber, "Rural Dispensary and Mobile Van," 2.

and with the help of the medical van, they organised a program of medical care and gospel preaching in the village, which is rich with finely built houses. There was a good gathering with half Hindus and half Christians. The van visiting a town was a big excitement that helped draw more crowds.

In this section, we have explained how women were instrumental in establishing the mission hospital in Khammammet. It was a woman's contribution, both foreign and native, to help the native women. They faced several challenges and issues they addressed, but they made a historical contribution with their committed work. Medical work opened the doors to spaces for the higher caste people. We have elaborated on the Kamma caste converts, which is a significant thing. In the following chapter, we explain more about it from the oral narratives collected from the field.

4.5. Zenanas: An Educational Space

Indian homes are different from English homes, divided into two parts: the men occupy the outer or public rooms, and the Zenana (women's apartment) is separated from them with a curtain or door. When a young bride becomes a member of the Zenana, she must be obedient to the mother-in-law. The grey-haired grandmother rules the young wives. There is often much jealousy as each wife wishes to be a favourite. Behind the curtain, there will be an untidy courtyard and some twelve to fourteen rooms in two stories with narrow verandas. The Zenana's windows are all facing the courtyard, and shutters are used to keep all of the exterior walls safely closed.¹¹¹ The majority of these women endure boring, routine lives, are illiterate, and have little interest outside of their needs.

¹¹¹ CEZMS Pamphlet, "An Indian Zenanas," *Picture Papers*, no. 15, n.d., 1.

A CEZMS mission picture paper explains women's significant influence over the husbands and sons, and their ignorance often hinders the men from accepting Christianity. Mothers much influence the boys who grew up in Zenanas as they train boys and girls to worship idols and do the heathen rituals. Except for men connected with Zenanas, no men are allowed; only women can visit these homes. With the help of Bible women, the lady missionaries, teachers, and nurses enter these spaces to reach the girls and women whose lives are dominated by aimlessness, oppression, and suffering. Some pupils in the Zenanas have their favourite missionaries, and when the missionaries go on leave or to hills during summer, the students inquire about their arrival. The whole population in the village comes out to have a glimpse at the white ladies when missionaries go for their village visits. Miss. Brandon narrates that the Bible women will guide and walk before the missionaries as they have unique gifts for telling stories and attracting a great crowd. Bible women are occupied with their work in Zenanas as there were more inquiries. They are troubled by the crowd, and sometimes, women are not satisfied with their visits once a week and request more visits. The teachers complain that when they go to the house, women will not leave them but keep them for hours, singing hymns and teaching Bible stories. The men in the house listen to the conversation from the inner rooms but never trouble or interrupt.¹¹² These conversations help them to pray in times of sickness and trouble. In one of Hannah's Zenanas, a child was ill and in a state of death. When the Hannah Bible woman visited the child two days later, the child was fully recovered. The grandmother continued, I prayed to Jesus to heal the child, and he heard my request. I thought of all you had told us about

¹¹² Miss. Brandon, "Masulipatam: A General Survey," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (October, 1896): 229.

Jesus, how he healed the ill and raised Lazarus from the dead, and I knew he could do the same today.

Miss. Wells narrates about the Mohommedans living inside the fort wall who always opposed the gospel teaching, and children from the Fort area were not allowed to attend school. Hunger and a shortage of food drove them out during famines. We provided grain to poor people and orphans. We do not give out grains if they are absent from the Bible lessons. We thus believe that the master had made room for His word by opening the unyielding door. A student says, “You are providing food for those who would have nothing to eat but forest leaves and roots.”¹¹³ When the famine ends, will you bring all the children to England aboard ships? The student was relieved when Miss. White said we have no money to take such an expensive trip.

Miss. E.F. Turnbull joined Miss. Spencer at Khammammet in July 1891. Turnbull says by no means are these folks anxious to educate their girls just yet, the author says. They have such strong feelings against women going to school that they have a superstitious belief that all educated females will undoubtedly end up without husbands.¹¹⁴ The other school that Nizam’s government opened was a mixed school of boys and girls. They had several boys but a few girls of the dancing caste. This indicates that people object to a school where Christian instruction is given and do not care for education. When missionaries tried having only Christian women teachers in one school, all the girls left, and only eight or nine attended. But when a Brahmin master was brought to teach, slowly all pupils returned; “It is a long time before a school recovers from such a shock.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Miss. H.C. Wells, “The Needs of Khammammet,” *India’s Women and China’s Daughters* (August, 1900): 269.

¹¹⁴ Miss. E. F. Turnbull, “Kummammet,” *India’s Women and China’s Daughters* (September, 1892): 416.

¹¹⁵ Miss. Jennings, “Bezawada: Zenanas,” *India’s Women and China’s Daughters* (October, 1896): 231.

Margaret Clift reports about the school work, which was going through a challenging phase. After getting married, one of the previous students stopped attending because of people who influenced her parents, telling her that it was not customary for a young married girl to walk around so freely.¹¹⁶ But without family knowledge, she often assisted the missionaries in their Zenana visits, where she would sing and answer any questions asked of the women.

Through education, the missionaries maintained a cordial relationship with the higher officials and the government. The officials sometimes showed interest in educating their wives and children. Miss. Bassoe reports about the new Zenana bungalow in Khammammet, which Miss. Haddock occupied. It has a splendid view of the picturesque old fort crowning the rock in the middle of the town. The highest official in the city, the Talukdar, similar to a collector in the British district, was a Mohammedan. He was a brilliant and advanced man; his wife was Miss. Haddock's best student. The lady was very thoughtful and intelligent but also very reserved. The talukdar and his wife gave a cordial reception to the missionaries from other mission stations who visited Miss. Haddock. They even called the CEZMS bungalow as the missionaries' thought being friendly with the highest officials would be a great advantage. Two schools were functioning, one in the bungalow and another a Zenana school in town. Education becomes a means for missionaries to get the support of influential people. At a meeting of Police Semindahs, a resolution was passed that there was some good in the mission people's work. Some people mentioned in the meeting about the mission station, "For see in this famine time how many hundreds must have died, but for them, there is something in it."¹¹⁷ There is a mention of a

¹¹⁶ Longmire, "Our Medical Mission Page: Khammammet," 175.

¹¹⁷ Miss. Bassoe, "Khammammet," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (October, 1896): 232.

Hindustani-speaking Bible woman who could not manage to visit all homes as she taught the Bible in school. Miss. White visits and teaches at the best houses in the town but finds that the poorer ones need the gospel.

Missionaries visited Zenanas regularly, even during cholera, but very carefully visited the places in the cleaner part of town. Since the Zenanas were secluded, women were more excited to share their burdens with the missionaries. It is more of sharing and comforting the women's concerns through prayers. Women were welcoming, and many shared their sad stories of death due to disease. The work among Hindus was new, and many new homes were open for teaching. The school in town also had an increase in students. The missionary writes, "We may have more Hindu children if we employed heathen teachers, but so long as we can keep the school without them, it does not seem right to put them in."¹¹⁸

Khammammet Mission Center was quite diverse and complex when it came to education. Miss. L White, who arrived to assist with the mission, writes that the Mohammedan centre Khammammet is unique and intense. She needs to learn Urdu; I started working on it with my Munshi a few days after I moved here, and I am making significant progress. She hears the Bible women's lessons and attends the Mohammedan Zenanas afternoon sessions.¹¹⁹ These teachings are not religious but some general topics related to health, hygiene, and baby care. Missionaries and Bible women gave moral support to their pupils in Zenanas if there was a death in the home. The pupils had a special bond with the Bible women who visited them. Miss. Haddock reports about her second

¹¹⁸ Miss. Wells write up titled Khammammet: The Story of the year. India's Women and China's Daughters October 1898. Pg 240

¹¹⁹ "In School and Zenanas: Khammammet," *India's Women and China's Daughters* (October, 1901): 89.

year of work in Zenanas. She writes that Mohammedans are more particular that Christians should not be near when their people are dying. When Gharky Bee, a bright girl from Zenana, died last year. Dava Ruma, one of our most earnest Bible women, sat by her when she was dying. However, her people would not usually allow it. Not all of the women in Zenanas can read, and some do not even have the desire to learn. But the hymns attract them all. But among Mohammedans, it is not considered proper for women to sing, and they have no hymns, or their songs are unfit for singing.¹²⁰

Further, a severe cholera epidemic was reported in 1907, so the mission work was stopped for a few months. There was a steady increase in students in both schools and Zenanas. Miss. Lacey writes about the joy of receiving a Mohammedan woman who “came out” to confess her faith in November openly.¹²¹ Through education, missionaries introduced the Christian faith to women in secluded spaces. When they openly admitted, the missionaries sent them to the converts’ homes to protect them from harassment by the families. Even during epidemics, missionaries visit the Zenanas to teach their pupils. Seeing their commitment to educating women, more people welcomed them into their homes to teach their women and children.

In 1927, there was a mention of diseases like smallpox in spring and cholera in autumn, causing anxiety and interruption in regular work. There were 216 women under instruction in seventy-one Zenanas.¹²² With the continued effort of the missionaries, the natives started to trust them and sent their daughters to schools for further learning.

¹²⁰ Miss. Haddock, “Zenanas,” *India’s Women and China’s Daughters* (October, 1895): 452.

¹²¹ *The Twenty Seventh Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1907*, p. 51.

¹²² *The Twenty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1925*, microfilm reel 99 CEZ GEL 1/1 1909-1912, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 55 – 56.

Prominent Mohammedan families have opened their Zenanas for Christina to teach and began to learn English.¹²³ Elderly girls in Telugu and Mohammedan schools show great interest in learning. There was also a request for the school girls and the teachers to come early to read their lessons so they could assist their fathers in the fields.¹²⁴ The education of the young girls was not the priority of the natives, as they helped them with their labour work and supported their families through their earnings. Though there were open doors in the previous year, 1911, they saw significant opposition from some influential Mohammedans, which decreased students' attendance for a brief period. Despite opposition, 122 Zenanas were visited.¹²⁵

The missionaries' work consistently creates a special bond between the women in Zenanas and the missionaries. They were systematic and meticulous with numbers, as it reflects their work in reports. By 1912, there were 183 Zenanas under visitation with 512 pupils. Along with Zenana visitation, the missionaries strived to educate the non-caste people. There was a report about opening a school for the non-caste in a part of town, a village with fifteen students enrolled. The non-caste children are not allowed in the caste school. The two other girls' schools also made good progress.¹²⁶ The missionaries concentrated on all groups of people by opening schools to meet their needs and demands. Women in Zenanas were educated, caste people were educated, non-caste people were educated simultaneously, and girls were also educated simultaneously. The government school opened in 1912 and was closed due to a lack of teachers, and the missionaries were

¹²³ *The Thirty First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1911*, p. 56.

¹²⁴ *The Thirtieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1910*, p. 57.

¹²⁵ *The Thirty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1912*, microfilm reel 99 CEZ GEL 1/1 1909-1912, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 29.

¹²⁶ *The Thirty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1913*, p. 50.

asked to re-open it. Soon, many students enrolled. There was an increase in the eagerness of the people to learn, and many new Zenanas were opened for visitation¹²⁷. In 1915, one of the schools was closed due to a lack of funds, and epidemics like smallpox, cholera, and heavy rains hindered the work.¹²⁸

Some parts of mission work had to face hurdles due to Mrs. Besant's propaganda. With the increase in demand for education in Khammammet, several Indian Christian women volunteered to help in the Zenana work in villages, so several families have been baptised.¹²⁹ Increased Zenana visitation, and many women were baptised in one of the mission centres. Indian workers started to volunteer for additional work as their responsibility towards the mission.¹³⁰ Women educated by the missionaries came forward to support the missionaries in reaching more women in the Zenanas. These women were familiar with missionary modes of work and approach and had easy access and a good influence on women in secluded spaces. In 1922, the number of Zenana pupils increased significantly, with good use of scripture portions and other Christian literature. Christian literature in leaflets is regularly disturbed by the women in Zenanas. Further, in the same year, a good amount of famine relief work was done in Khammammet with the funds received from friends in New Zealand.¹³¹

¹²⁷ *The Thirty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1914*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 47.

¹²⁸ *The Thirty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1915*, p. 48.

¹²⁹ *The Thirty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1918*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 20.

¹³⁰ *The Thirty Ninth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1919*, microfilm reel 100 CEZ GEL 1/1 1913-1919, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 15.

¹³¹ *The Forty Second Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1922*, p. 34 – 35.

This led to an organised opposition toward Christianity as many women, through education, became attracted to the Christian religion. There were precise shreds of evidence of people longing to get baptised. There was a deepening of the spiritual life among the Christian women.¹³² Schools were also established for the differently abled, like the deaf and blind. Reports about the increase in interest in the Bible were everywhere, and there was a spirit of eagerness among the women. Forty years ago, when the mission started, there were hardly six Christians; today, it is 6,850, and in some other Telugu districts, 5,000 people were baptised.¹³³ Like other spaces like converts' homes, hospitals, and industrial schools, school spaces contributed to the conversion of men and women in Khammammet.

The regular visits to the homes and educating women led to schools opening exclusively for the pupils of Zenanas. In 1924, a Zenana school opened at Khammammet with two Indian Teachers in charge. Around twenty-five young women and girls attended.¹³⁴ This made the women leave their secluded space and go to a public space. Despite several travel restrictions, women and girls were brought in fully covered carts. The mobility of women and girls increased through education. There was a steady increase in hospital patients and students in the school. There was a request from the neighbouring villages to open new schools, but more trained teachers are needed to allow for this.¹³⁵

With the increase of students to school and requests for baptisms, there was some opposition from Muslims, and the school had to be closed, but the children gathered on the

¹³² *The Fortieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1920*, p. 20.

¹³³ *The Forty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1923*, p. 36.

¹³⁴ *The Forty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1924*, p. 38.

¹³⁵ *The Forty Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1925*, p. 25.

school veranda for their Bible lessons.¹³⁶ The mission station veranda as a space had a multi-purpose usage per the need for teaching, lace work, and school in crisis times. As mentioned, missionaries opened schools for different caste groups as needed and requested. In 1935, Miss. D.I Garlick reported about opening a school for Christians from the robber caste, with around fifty students. An educated Brahmin lady was baptised, and girls went to the villages to teach and preach with the Bible women.¹³⁷ The school girls assisted the missionaries and Bible women when visiting neighbouring towns. In the school space, the girls learned their lessons, and in village visits, they became teachers to educate native women.

Since the mission schools were located in Hyderabad State, the government frequently inspected them. The inspector who visited the school gave a good report, as the standard of teaching is higher than that of the Hindu schools. The state lays down the syllabus, which differs from what is taught in the other regions. Further, direct evangelistic work in Zenanas and among village women is now more focused on training Christian women, both workers' wives and others, to read their Bibles and to witness non-Christians. As time progressed, more women got educated, and study groups were organised in various places for this literacy campaign, which was evangelistic. The uneducated ladies of the hamlet became more motivated to share the gospel with non-Christians as they gained more knowledge. Mrs. Garlick notes that as a result, the educated women are showing their

¹³⁶ *The Fifty-Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1934*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 27.

¹³⁷ *The Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1935*, microfilm reel 104 CEZ GEL 1/1 1931-1936, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 49 – 50.

illiterate sisters more concern and teaching them to read using the new techniques. The advancement is striking in certain instances.¹³⁸

During the time of war, missionaries cooperated with leading Indian ladies in forming a women's ARP Corps, and workers were trained to visit homes and instruct women what to do in case of air raids. Fear of invasions had emptied schools and closed many Zenanas. The missionaries and the workers stayed in their respective posts, calming the women and children and teaching them what to do if danger and trouble arose.¹³⁹ The intensive teaching given to Christian village women and girls through various literacy initiatives bore fruit as many came forward for confirmation and reading the Bible.

After initial schooling in Khammammet, children were sent to Dornakal, where a "post eighth standard class" was opened for borders to give further religious training and practical instruction in home-making in preparation for marriage to those girls who were unable to enter teachers' or nurses' training classes after completing their middle school. It was a long-felt need. They were shaping and preparing good homemakers for trained evangelists and pastors.¹⁴⁰ Over time, the education system revealed its gendered agenda where girls are ready to be good helpers and wives as per Christian morale. World wars and the Indian freedom struggle followed by independence influenced the natives. On May 8, 1945, news of the war ended in Europe, and on August 15, in the Far East. Before the first atomic bomb was launched on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, all these days became

¹³⁸ *The Sixty First Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1941*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 33.

¹³⁹ *The Sixty Third Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1943*, microfilm reel 106 CEZ GEL 1/1 1941-1957, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, University of Birmingham, UK, p. 30.

¹⁴⁰ *The Sixty Fourth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1944*, p. 29.

meaningless. Further, nations and missionary enterprises are in turmoil because of intense nationalist thoughts, the continued spread of Marxist philosophy, the threat of famine, and the aftermath of war. To make the Indigenous church more independent and self-supportive, new bishops were consecrated for Travancore and Calcutta.

On the other hand, a growing desire for education, especially among girls, was manifested. Non-Christian parents continue to prefer Christian schools due to the emphasis on character training. As a rival to the Christian mission, a revived or modernised form of Hinduism and the Muslim faith have developed. There was a growing willingness among the Indian staff and senior girls to assume more responsibility and leadership, which is a peculiar thing identified this year.¹⁴¹ Reports surfaced regarding the shifting circumstances following India and Pakistan's independence from British domination. All of the missionary reports from the various mission stations contained the term "change" repeatedly. The missionaries shared the joy of freedom in schools and hospitals with planned services and sports, processions, and festivities. But the joy was followed by the suffering feud between Muslims and Hindus.¹⁴² Also, Sikhs broke out afresh. Each side was guilty of fearful deeds of shame and atrocity.

There was an emphasis on training girls to be real Christians, to stand on their feet and give their best to their homes and country. Women Fellowships were formed, a new organisation with the church of South India to unite all Christian women. There were separate groups like the Mother's Union for married women and the Girls' Guild for unmarried girls, and members of these groups were also brought together. 'Christian Home Movement' was one of the chief features of the church's work. The movement seeks to

¹⁴¹ *The Sixty Sixth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1946*, p. 27.

¹⁴² *The Sixty Eighth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1948*, p. 12.

train, guide, and encourage Christian women to make their homes genuinely Christian and to bring up children in the knowledge of God. With Dornakal as the centre, this work is expanded to neighbouring regions like Khammammet and Bezawada.¹⁴³

Rev. R. D. Budgett worked as Secretary and Treasurer of the Khammammet church council in the new diocese of Dornakal. He was also treasurer for the Mulugu mission, which is locally supported. He extensively writes about the complexities of the Hyderabad State's education system, particularly the Khammammet region. Since the beginning of the last school year, Independence has come to India, and Hyderabad state has separated from the State of the Indian Union.¹⁴⁴ Hundreds of children have been sent to school in another country this year. The official school language in that country is different. It is something like English parents sending their children to schools in France. There are five boarding schools in the diocese, and all children can be mailed to these schools, but the parents find it too expensive. The Indian government gives a grant to mission schools, which helps to defray the cost of Teachers' salaries, whereas the Hyderabad state government gives practically nothing. Thus, the Dornakal Diocese schools cost more than those over the border.

Khammammet is a border state, and for years, many students from the Khammammet School have gone to boarding schools in British India. After education, they were attracted to the Government and high salaries and continued to work there. The present educational status of the church in the Khammammet area reveals the seriousness of this one-way traffic. That particular year, though, 126 Khammammet students passed

¹⁴³ *The Seventieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1950*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Robin Budgett, *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections (UK: University of Birmingham, August 1947), 2.

out of boarding school in Bezawada, and only three Christians returned to work in Nizam's States. Two are clergy, and one is a teacher. The other children are not necessarily lost to the church, but they are lost to the church in Hyderabad State, which hampers the growth of the local church. This is one of the reasons for the shockingly low educational standards of the village teachers. All the brightest children have gone into the Kistna (presently known as Krishna) boarding school's rat trap, and only very few return to work in Khammammet when they pass out.¹⁴⁵ Because of low educational standards, the future clergy will be people with inadequate general education, or there will be clergy for other regions. Either way, it is not suitable for the growth of the local church.

Rev. Robin Budget explains Nizam's education system and how different it is from the neighbouring states. He explains that we are starting to realise that the Kistna district is in a distinct nation and is flying a different flag than our own, and we now know what our flag looks like. We are also subjects of the Nizam. Furthermore, the border separating the two nations will also serve as the border between the Union Church dioceses. Everyone should assist us in shifting our focus from Kistna to Hyderabad. It is clear to the missionaries that money spent outside the state on the education of Khammammet children, however good the education may be, will not raise the educational level of the Khammammet area. The budget suggests that some of the money allocated to Kistna schools should be used for Khammammet children and spent on their education within the state.¹⁴⁶ The partnership with other Methodist and Baptist missions to establish hostels so that Khammammet children can attend a government training school within the state.

¹⁴⁵ Robin Budget, *Friends of CMS, Khammammet Municipal and Jungle News – A Pamphlet*, no. 5, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections (UK: University of Birmingham, July 1948), 2.

¹⁴⁶ Budget, *Friends of CMS, Khammammet Municipal and Jungle News – A Pamphlet*, 4.

The official language of Nizam's States is Urdu, the language of all Mohammedans. The majority of Christians speak Telugu, and not many of them are Urdu literate. Only a few can tell, and people are reluctant to learn. Christians cannot read official documents, correspond with government officers, or even fill in official forms. If Christians are to prosper in the state or contribute to public life, there must be at least some who are literate in the official language and many who can speak it. Only this will the gospel be presented to Mohammedans, and only thus can we hope to build the economic basis of the church.

In this chapter, we identified four different spaces within a mission station that were made for women and managed by women. The converts' homes provided security; the lace industries shaped their skills; the hospitals gave them medical services, and Zenanas and schools taught them survival tools. It is to be noted that the native women's contributions are not just confined to Bible women; several other women contributed in all four spaces.

Chapter 5

Women's Narratives and Conversion Testimonies

5.1. Introduction

This chapter records the native Christian women's lives and works collected through fieldwork. Multiple interviews were conducted with individuals and groups to gather information and construct their narratives. Some handwritten history booklets, family history journals, and pamphlets were collected during the fieldwork. Conversion narratives of few men are included as these testimonies are widely circulated among the communities. The native Bible women used these testimonies to grab the attention of their hearers before introducing them to the gospel. The native women and their narratives are not treated as subjects of study but to learn from the negotiations they made and the survival tactics they employed.

5.2. Dr. Krupa Abraham: A Native Medical Doctor

Medicine and hospitals are two essential elements that helped the natives trust foreign missionaries. The care and healing they received made them come back again and sometimes even stay back in the hospitals. Most caste women were influenced by the medical ministry and attracted to the Christian faith. Initially, men and women in Khammammet were suspicious of foreign medical workers. Their work and services impressed them so much that they were not ready to accept native medical workers later. Dr. Abraham's life and work exemplify native women's commitment and contribution to the Medical Mission.

Dr. Abraham was born to high-caste Hindu parents, who became Christians soon after her birth. Thus, she was brought up in a Christian atmosphere. From childhood, she had the ambition to become a doctor. Therefore, she started her medical training at Missionary Medical School at Vellore. Dr. Abraham is one of Dr. Scudder's first students at the Vellore United Medical Training School.¹ In January 1923, Dr. Abraham joined as an assistant to Dr. Longmire. Though she faced opposition from her relatives, she believed in the call for missionary service. Therefore, she accepted an invitation from Dr. Longmire to join her at Khammammet.

Dr. Abraham writes,

After graduation in 1922 and while waiting for a passage to Baghdad (Arabia), I had a letter from Dr. Longmire together with a letter from Dr. Scudder, both asking me to help Dr. Longmire if possible while I was waiting....I clarified that if I helped, it would be just for three months. When I arrived in Khammammet early in January 1923, I was overwhelmed with disappointment and discouragement and regretted coming even for the three months.²

As she started her work in Khammammet, she saw more attractive opportunities to serve despite many challenges and problems. In 1926, when Dr. Longmire went furlong, she worked with Dr. Poulter, who was in China and offered his help in the absence of Dr. Longmire. The assistant doctor carried out the 1929 village medical work with a nurse, a Bible woman, and a compounder going out once a week. They visited different villages every week, taking simple medicines for treatment and spreading the gospel message. It

¹ Pegg, "Channels," 158.

² Abraham, "History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital," 4-5.

was done to keep in touch with the patients and their friends. Who had already visited the hospital and can become new converts. Dr. Abraham was part of this team as the assistant doctor.

In 1929, when Dr. Longmire retired, she was appointed to be in charge of the hospital. Dr. Abraham writes that one of the most hated months of my life was June 1929. One factor was spending the preceding six and a half years as the two competent and experienced doctors' assistants. However, managing the work they could do effectively was a whole other story. The local people and church leadership never considered her abilities or trusted her efficiency. This made her more inferior to accept the responsibility. Dr. Abraham writes, "To start with, I was more than conscious of my inability, inefficiency, unworthiness, disqualification, and all other weaknesses. Then other circumstances did not encourage me."³ The bishop, clergy, and missionaries believed Dr. Longmire was not wise enough to leave the work to inexperienced hands. The townspeople and old patients felt Dr. Longmire did not love them enough to escape the job to someone so young, inexperienced, and, above all, an Indian! Finally, people got so attached to foreign doctors that they were not ready to accept any Indian ladies in charge of the hospital.

In the same year, 1929, Miss. Hardy joined the staff as nursing superintendent. She brought her operating table, pressure steriliser, microscope, and an ample cupboard filled with enamelware and other hospital requisites for CEZMS London. Miss. Hardy and Dr. Abraham developed the hospital together in the later years. Dr. Abraham took charge of the hospital despite all the negativity and discrimination. Until 1930, the hospital was closed for six weeks during summer as English missionaries used to go to the hills for

³ Abraham, "History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital," 8.

vacation or furlongs. It was soon realised that people missed hospital care so much that they sent a petition. Now that an Indian doctor is in charge of the work, there is no need for the hospital to be closed and let the people suffer. As a result, the hospital remains open and never closed again for summer vacations.

Another significant area for improvement arose with funds after Dr. Longmire's retirement. The big annual drug grant from England and a few other donations through Dr. Longmire's friends stopped. There were few special remittances they received through CEZMS London and other than that, there was only a small balance of two hundred rupees in the bank. So, to stabilise the finances and smooth functioning of medical care, the fees and medical charges have to rise. People blamed Dr. Abraham as an Indian doctor; she wanted to make money for herself. However, people later realised where the money had gone when new wards and equipment were added to the hospital regularly.

Dr. Abraham had a challenging time with the local tax collectors. They started to get distressed by threatening to remove the doors and other things. They began to put a tax on the buildings of the mission hospital. However, with the help of a local Muslim official, the hospital buildings were exempted from taxes. On the other hand, Dr. Abraham, with the service and hard labour of Miss. Hardy nursing standards were raised by giving regular lectures as the South Indian Board of Nurses' training standards. After five years, in 1935, the Madras Nurses and Midwives Council accepted the hospital as a recognized nursing training school. This gave mission hospitals the privilege of having trained nurses on their staff.

With her constant efforts and plan in 1935, the Children's Ward (Prince Elizabeth Ward) was completed. Dr. Abraham approached mission agencies and local governments

to support the mission hospital. CEZMS London gave the cost of the building on a request. In 1936, a new operation theatre with an adjacent sterilisation room, which was necessary, was built. Two other private rooms next to the theatre were also built, and the cost of the whole block was gifted to the hospital by the Nizam. Since most Muslim communities benefited from the hospital, Nizam funded it.

Dr. Abraham was at the forefront of treating people affected by cholera when the pandemic hit the Khammamett region. On the other hand, people wholly ignored their health and hygiene and started celebrations to please their goddesses. They had three processions to drive the devils of cholera out of town, each worse than the previous one. In the first procession, pigs were sacrificed; in the second, goats; and in the third, buffaloes. On the last procession day, there was gun firing as a war against the devils of cholera. All these led to more spread of infection; hundreds were affected as each procession ended with people dancing and getting drunk. She used to joke with the outpatient men and women who firmly believed that cholera is a disease from the devil. Dr. Abraham used to tell them, “Why don’t you drive all the cholera devils into our compound and then build us a ‘high wall’ all around? We will keep the devils safe for you. We will not let them escape and come amongst you.”⁴ The hospital required a high compound wall for proper security.

Dr. Abraham expanded the medical work within Khammammet by opening small medical centres. There were two minor compounds in the town belonging to CMS that the hospital took on rent for a few years. One of the houses was used as a clinic for a couple of years as the cost of medicine was high due to war conditions. The house was employed as a child welfare centre and closed later as hospital work increased rapidly. The hospital

⁴ Anne Hardy, “Today in Khammammet,” *India’s Women and China’s Daughters* 58, no. 617 (June, 1938): 152.

rented another house for Mrs. Mary Samuel, who looked after the clinic and the child welfare centre. Mrs. Samuel was a trained compounder with some hospital experience. She was one of the girls sent to Dr. Longmire from the CEZMS orphanage in Machilipatnam. Dr. Longmire took charge of her, trained her, and married in 1926 before leaving for a furlong.⁵ Dr. Abraham used the available resources and local people to establish medical help at various places.

After nine years working in Norway and England, Dr. Longmire died on 15th February 1938. Dr. Abraham initiated the Dr. Longmire Memorial Fund in loving memory of her pioneering medical work from 1902 to 1929 in Khammamett. Old patients, acquaintances, relations, and friends in India and England donated money. Dr. Longmire's memorial dispensary was completed and opened on 15th February 1943 by Bishop Azariah. During the inauguration, the bishop mentioned his disappointment when he first saw Dr. Abraham and how she proved him wrong later.

The bishop said he was dissatisfied on his first meeting with Dr. Abraham when she joined Dr. Longmire, who greatly needed help. She was a thin, young, and fragile girl, and how much she could help her senior foreign colleague was doubted. However, through all the years until now, God has wonderfully blessed and used her. Since the entire charge had been in her hands, he had watched building after building go up until this latest dispensary crowned her achievements.⁶ Two years after the inauguration of the dispensary, the much-needed nursery for the babies adjacent to the maternity was built. The cost of the

⁵ Abraham, "History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital," 15.

⁶ Hardy, "Today in Khammammet," 153.

building was gifted by Medla Cherla Lakshmi Narsamma, a Komati caste woman, in memory of her children born in the hospital.⁷

Dr. Abraham took good care of the hospital and the patients during a crisis. Though there needed to be more funds or trained people, she always worked overtime and helped in the growth of the hospital. During the Second World War, there was a depletion due to growing fear and panic in Khammammet. People in all parts of Hyderabad State were prevented from leaving the villages and towns. The political conditions of the Hyderabad State were grave for a couple of years. The Muslims greatly appreciated the help and protection the hospital rendered to them at the time of the invasion in 1942.⁸ Whether it was disease or war, Dr. Abraham was always available to provide medical help to the people. Her coworkers, patients, and the residents of Khammammet, who look up to her as a friend and mentor, all have the utmost regard for her. Dr. Abraham is a fantastic surgeon and physician who never lets a “case” stump her when a thorough examination might yield an answer. On the other hand, faith and prayer are applied in each situation.⁹

Dr. Abraham was instrumental in the hospital's electrification. Finally, after many attempts and applications in 1955, they could get electricity from the hospital to the outpatient department despite high costs. The same year, Dr. Cranswick and his wife joined the medical team. He started a well-equipped and much-needed laboratory and trained a young man (James) to work with him. His arrival added a shadowless lamp, electric fan, suction apparatus, screens charts, oxygen cylinders, X-ray machine, and many more. Dr. Cranswick's ability and ambition greatly improved hospital work.¹⁰ On Dr. Abraham's

⁷ Abraham, “History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital,” 17.

⁸ Abraham, “History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital,” 16.

⁹ Mary Longmire, “In Memoriam,” *India's Women and China's Daughters* 58, no. 617 (April, 1938): 63.

¹⁰ Abraham, “History of St. Mary's Mission Hospital,” 24.

retirement, he states the hospital will seem very different without her because she has contributed so much to its development over the years. The workers, the church, and the patients in this district suffered a profound loss. All adore her for being a selfless servant who illuminates God's love in everything she does and helps us through our difficulties. Real spiritual force is closely associated with her close walk with God. In addition, she has been handling a tremendous amount of medical work, equivalent to the workload of three persons, in addition to her roles as hospital manager and medical superintendent.¹¹

Dr. Abraham elaborates on her medical journey in Khammammet in one of her last reports. I came here as an assistant to Dr. Longmire after training in Vellore. I did not come by accident. It is the very place God meant for me, and the six years with Dr. Longmire were a time of invaluable experience, professionally and spiritually. In 1929, when Dr. Longmire retired, she left a hospital of fifty beds in my care. The same year, Miss. Hardy joined me. Although we were from two nations, East and West, God wonderfully undertook for us and united our hearts in love for the hospital and its work: the growth, alterations, and improvements we have watched with joy. Miss. Hardy got the hospital recognition under the government of Madras as a training school for nurses and midwives. Dr. Abraham had an excellent bond with Dr. Longmire, Miss. Hardy, and native workers. In the oral interviews, many respondents who met Dr. Abraham shared about her untiring work. She was always approachable and available. Since she was a spinster and stayed in the hospital compound, people had easy access to her. Dr. Abraham's heart was in the village medical work while Dr. Longmire was in charge. Many people in the surrounding villages of Khammammet acknowledge her work. She kept track of all her patients and

¹¹ Dr. Cranswick, "Changes at Khammammet," *Looking East India's Women and China's Daughter*, 76, no. 4 (August, 1956).

supported them to grow spiritually in faith. She will teach them while she treats them and later connects them to the hospital's Bible woman. Dr. Abraham and Bible woman Rukmini shared an excellent bond; they introduced the gospel to many people. She writes that to introduce our country's people to Jesus Christ—the only one who can save them and provide them eternal life through his death on the cross and resurrection—we want to bear witness to God's omnipotence and love truly.

5.3. Bible Women's Narratives

5.3.1. Leelavathi Guruswami

She was born on 20th November 1945, as per the date of birth on the certificates. The date of birth was not given based on the date of delivery. But the height and size of the person during the time of admission to the school. She smiles, "I am maybe a little older than that, as my teacher randomly put the date." She married Guruswami in 1955. He was a Noble High School student in Machilipatnam and studied up to the tenth class. After marriage, he was a school teacher but lost his job in the "Vishalandhra movement." Not-trained teachers lost their jobs. He and his friend decided to do church ministry and approached the local pastor. He was first appointed *Pantulu*/ evangelist at Govindhrala with a monthly salary of Rupees Fifteen only (Rs. 15/-).

In 1962, Mr. Guruswami and his wife were sent to divinity training in Dornakal. Mrs. Guruswami has a powerful memory. She remembers that year's sixteen trained members and their surnames and places. Sixteen evangelists were trained that year and were given one bicycle after their travel into interior villages. The wives were trained in scriptures and little medicine. By then, Leelavathi had given birth to two children and left with someone when she attended any class. In 1963, Guruswami got his first ordination

and was posted as a deacon at Kalakodema. Mrs. Guruswami remembers all people and their surnames even today. Mr. Guruswami usually visits sick people with a thermometer to check for fever and give them some essential medicines. Suppose someone has to be given an injection. In that case, he would immediately call and send his wife as he was scared of administering an Injection. Mrs. Guruswami says that the people in Kalakodema are very good. The Kamma people are amicable. I have a friend named Thatha Achamma. A Kamma lady used to send what they cultivated in their fields and sometimes even cook some evening snacks and send them with her servants.

After two years of ministry in Kalakodema, the couple and their children moved to Khammammet. Prabakar, her elder son, is studying in first class in one of the local schools. Kamma caste people maintained the school in the village in their sheds. Mrs. Guruswami says, “My elder son discontinued his studies because the Kamma people made non-caste people sit far or outside the shed. As a result, he needed help to hear or understand what the teacher was teaching.” Later the following year, the boy was admitted into the mission school in Khammam. In the earlier discussion, she said Kamma’s are friendly. However, caste differentiation is maintained regarding schooling and sharing a shared space.

Mr. Guruswami was a deacon who assisted the then-English missionary and his wife with translation and preaching. She says, “My husband speaks and translates English well. In those days, he used to talk to Rev. Pullen in English. He helped Mrs. Joy Pullen to translate the sponsor letters from Telugu to English.” Mr. Guruswami passed away in 1974 until Mrs. Leelavathi assisted and worked with the women’s fellowship. After Mr. Guruswami died, a widow with five children struggled to find a place to stay and continue church ministry.

The local Chairman of the church expressed that they cannot take any recruits, particularly women, as they are struggling to raise funds to pay for the male clergy. She was in a dilemma about how and where to proceed. Mr. Yadala Kanthiah, a man from Allipuram village five miles from Khammammet, requested the local church chairman. I want to arrange for someone to pray and care for the village church. The Chairman told him about the shortage of pastors and suggested that he check with Mrs. Leelavathi if she would come and help them. Mr. Kanthiah requested that she go to his village and care for the congregation's spiritual needs.

Mrs. Leelavathi took it as a God-given opportunity, and on the same night, she had a dream in which she felt that her husband was requesting her to take up this challenge. Mr. Kanthiah asked her to believe in him and promised to care for her and her children. He said, "I have ten children; you will be treated as one among them. I have grandchildren, and your five children will be like me". So, five days before she received the notice to vacate her house in Khammammet, she shifted to Allipuram. Allipuram had twenty-five to thirty families to visit.

From 1975 to 1980, Leelavathi worked in Allipuram as a caretaker of the congregation. The church did not directly appoint her, but she was a self-supported church worker. At Allipuram, her first task was to repair the thatched roof of the church. The church and the pastor's house were together in the same place. The roof repair cost is around Rs. 1500. Those days, the thatched roofs in villages are covered with paddy reeds, corn reeds, long straws, or water reeds. Mr. Kanthiah suggested that Leelavathi approach all the Kamma families in the town and request them to give the reeds from their farms to cover the church roof. He sends his servant Venkati with Leelavathi for help. Every day,

Leelavathi visited four to five Kamma families in the village, saying, “I am ammagaru, and came to Kristianpeta to help with church work. We want to cover our church roof. Kindly provide the reeds from your farms.” Mrs. Leelavathi, even today, remembers all the people with their names and surnames and how many bundles of reeds they contributed. She collected reeds worth Rs.1000, and Mr. Kanthiah donated the remaining money.

On Sunday mornings, she used to conduct worship services in Allipuram. In the evening, she visited another village, Ramakrishnapuram, five miles away. Lingala Mariyamma used to help her with house visits and church service in Ramakrishnapuram. Mrs. Leelavathi knew Garre Seethamma and the Anjiayya family of Ramakrishnapuram before visiting Khammammet Hospital for treatment. When she assisted her husband in Khammammet, she noticed Seethamma in the hospital crying as she had to undergo surgery the next day. Mrs. Leelavathi checked with the nurses who gave moral support to Seethamma, which is only a minor surgery and not to fear. On her surgery day, she was with Seethamma, prayed for her, and supported the family until all surgery procedures were finished. Remembering Leelavathi’s support in their crisis, the Seethamma family helped her provide food and accommodation when she visited Ramakrishnapuram. The family even gifted her a buffalo to support her family.

She worked hard to repair the church and the house and started to stay in that place. Mrs. Leelavathi noticed an anthill at the centre of the house. She used to close by pouring cow dung water and mud regularly. One day, a Kamma enquired if there was an anthill in your home. Be careful; there is a giant cobra inside it. Mrs. Leelavathi responded to her, saying that it is a simple anthill and, usually, sometimes snakes reside in them. I do not fear, as all my fears are gone after my husband’s death. Surprised, The Kamma woman

said, “You are a fearless woman; you will survive here nicely.” In the five to six years of her stay, Mrs. Leelavathi never saw a snake. However, people reported finding the cobra in the house the day after she left.

As she narrates her life and ministry, Mrs. Leelavathi refers to the Widow of Zarephath from the book of 1 Kings in the Bible. It is a miracle story of a widow who shares a small piece of bread with the prophet during a famine. When she did that, her flour jar and oil jar always remained whole, and they survived the famine. The church did not pay her any salary. The neighbouring church pastor took all the offerings received in the church as he was also in charge of this place. Allipuram was under the Vepakuntla Pastorate, of which Mr. Kanthiah was a committee member. All the church offerings and grains received are carefully recorded and submitted to the pastorate chairman.

Mr. Kanthiah suggested that she keep a small, petty shop on her house premises and sell some chocolates and sweets as she only has a little work in the morning. He gave her an initial investment of Rs.30/- to start the shop, and Mrs. Leelavathi survived. She says, “I never even took a handful of grains given as offerings in the church. All the offerings are entered into the register and submitted to the pastor. I only survived with the small earnings from the petty shop.” With little earnings, she served faithfully in Kristianpeta of Allipuram village. Though her work blesses the people in the Kristianpeta, she was always considered a non-local, an outsider who came to serve them. She says, “It is only Christians who troubled me.” When she applied for a government house plot, the village president, Kamma, included her name as beneficiary. However, one of the congregation members forced them to remove her name, saying, She is neither from our village lady nor one among us. She only came here to live, survive, and pray for us. She is

not supposed to get any benefits as local as non-local. However, Mrs. Leelavathi was always satisfied by serving the people with reverence.

After five years of serving the church independently without any salary, in 1980, the church appointed her as matron for the girl's hostel in Madiripuram. She is unwilling to join that place as her heart and soul were in church ministry. After two months of work as matron, she was appointed Bible woman for Khammammet St. Mary's congregation. Mrs. Ruthamma, the then-Bible woman, was sick and bedridden, and she was appointed in her place. Mrs. Leelavathi was overwhelmed with joy; her first salary as a Bible woman was Rupees Seventy only (Rs.70/-). She was paid Rs.120 as a matron, but Mrs. Leelavathi opted to be a Bible woman with a seventy rupees salary and serve the church.

In September 1980, she was appointed a Bible woman. Her work involves visiting houses, praying, and maintaining a regular record of her visits. After the church service, she met the people, got their names and addresses, and visited them on weekdays. She used to walk or take a local bus to see the families in the surrounding places of Khammammet. The places she stayed in the past now have congregations and churches.

In 1982, she was in an accident while crossing the railway track near Khammammet railway station. She was on the same route the train was coming, which she had realised lately, and she jumped to the other side just before being hit by the train. The train stopped, and all the people came rushing, thinking she was dead. She was shocked, slowly regained consciousness, took her scattered Bible and songbooks, and left. The track supervisor warned her not to walk on the railway track as some unknown power protected her that day.

Mrs. Leelavathi served in Khammammet as a Bible woman for thirty years. She was forcefully retired in 2010 from her duties as a Bible woman without any preliminary information from the church authorities. She feels disappointed and discouraged that she was removed but left God as the vindicator. She started her journey with a salary of seventy rupees. In 2010, before her retirement, she was getting Rs.2014/- as a salary. Now, she receives a pension of Rs.2000/- from the church, which is not regular.

5.3.2. Rukmini Ammagaru

One important group of people attracted to the gospel preached in the mission hospital is the patients' attendees or caretakers. The morning prayers in the hospital wards and the regular visits of the Bible women gave the patients comfort and the attendees some strength. Rukmini Ammagaru was one such person who came as an attendee to one of her relatives, got influenced by the gospel, and never returned.

Rukmini Ammagaru belongs to the Gowda caste from the Hyderabad region. The family was involved in the silk sari business during the Nizam period. The family was famous for their trade. At the age of 13 years, as a widower, she came to Khammammet Mission Hospital as a caretaker for one of her relatives who was admitted for treatment. While helping her sick relative, she heard the gospel for the first time and was impressed by everyday singing. She was attentive to the daily preaching and felt something new and liberating in this teaching.

When the relative completed his treatment, the family planned to leave Khammammet. Rukmini Ammagaru declared to her relatives that she was not returning with them. She decided to stay back and embrace the new religion. There were many family struggles, but she was steadfast in her decision and stayed with the missionaries. She was

sent to the converts' home in Machilipatnam and trained to be a Bible woman in the initial years. In Khammammet Mission Hospital, she was appointed as a Bible woman. She was sent to Bhadrachalem in Dummagudem areas in her early days of ministry.

As she was young, soft-spoken, and looked delicate, the missionaries cared for her by not involving her much in village ministry. She was familiar with some Urdu and Hindi languages from Hyderabad. The missionaries gave her training in the Urdu language. She preached in Urdu and distributed Urdu tracts and new testaments to the Muslims who came for the treatment. Due to her Urdu language fluency, many Muslims secretly invite her to their homes for prayer. She visited Muslim localities like the quila/fort area and Jonnalagadda for zenana prayers. She was a biblically trained Bible woman in the Urdu language. During the unrest, Nizam refused to join the Indian Union and the military action in Hyderabad State. Many Muslim families were rescued by keeping them in the mission hospital compound. Mrs. Rukmini ammagaru, a known person in the Khammammet Muslim community, gave shelter to a few people.

People from the Brahmin and Komati caste communities quickly and carefully listened to her preaching in the hospitals. She was very close with Dr. Abraham, Mrs. Mary Rajamma, and Dr. Garlick. In those times, the missionaries adopted orphan children in impoverished homes who used to be their caretakers. Dr. Abraham and Dr. Garlick adopted two girls from the orphan home.

When Dr. Garlick left for her country, she gave her girl to Mrs. Rukmini. She accepted the girl as her daughter got her married to a man from Warangal. The daughter's husband died, and she returned to Mrs. Rukmini with her five children. Mrs. Rukmini took care of her and her children, and the youngest child shared Mrs. Rukmini's life

narrative. He says “she was a dedicated person.” We are staying in the house which belongs to her. The moment she wakes up, she is busy with some work. She will pray, prepare food, go to the hospital, do some outside work, and return. She will never sit in the hospital or during visits and sings songs very loudly so that more people can listen to the gospel. She never gossiped about her work and spent much time praying.

Several times, her relatives requested her to return as several properties were related to her husband. However, she never accepted their request. Once and for all, she gave testimony in the court of law that she was not interested in any properties. As a Bible woman, her first salary was two or three rupees. She served as a Bible woman for about seventy years; she continued her work even after retirement. Her salary by the time of her retirement was seventy rupees.

The other Bible women who worked with her in the Zenana mission were Penugonda Naomi, Pakalapati Kamamma, and Rojamma. Penugonda Naomi did her ministry in the Maddilapalem area. Kamamma and Rojamma assisted Dorothy Tate.

5.3.3. Makkapaati Seethamma/Mary Seethamma

Makkapaati Seethamma was born in Sanatana Hindu tradition at Jedugu village in Amaravati town, Guntur district. She was brought up under the traditional care of her grandmother. She was very ritualistic, as she was born into the Kamma caste. They used to be very superstitious, visited many pilgrim centres annually, and celebrated all festivals.

At nine, to avoid the Sarada Bill, which tried to enforce eighteen as the marriageable age. She was hurriedly married to her mother's younger brother, Manchineni Venkatrammaya, who was twenty then. Unfortunately, the husband died after twelve months; at the age of ten, Seethamma became a widow. A few years later, her sister married

her dead husband's brother, which made her return to her hometown. She started to help her father by taking care of the hundred-acre farming.

Once, at a pilgrim centre named Vykuntapuram, she was taking a holy dip in the Krishna River. The day was considered very auspicious as it was a Monday and Ekadasi. So, anyone who dies on this day will be directly entering into heaven. Since the water currents were high, she wanted to die by going away with the water. However, someone noticed her drowning and pulled her to the river bank. People thought she was dead but were astonished that she did not even drink an ounce of water or get hurt.

The initial encounter with Christianity was in the mission hospital in Guntur, where Seethamma's husband died. It was Christmas, and seeing the happiness of the Christian nurses, her mother wept for her daughter's fate and prayed that she might have joy like theirs. Years later, when Seethamma's sister Annapurnamma was ill with T.B., her mother suggested taking her to a Christian Healing service in Guntur. Seethamma's first reaction was, "These Christians are Untouchables." She feared that she would have to go through rebirth if she touched such people because of the Hindu teaching.¹² Then, however, she heard a Vysya caste woman sharing her testimony about how God healed her from leprosy in that healing service. After that, Seethamma remembered her grandmother, who suffered from leprosy, was kept out of the home, and died with great agony and loneliness.

Seethamma wanted to know God and the people with compassion towards the diseased. That day, she bought a Bible and started to read and pray regularly. After fifteen days, she got an answer to her prayers. Her sister Annapurnamma, who had been suffering from TB for the past two years, was completely healed. Her father was surprised by the

¹² Dorothy Tate, *Chosen by God* (Bombay: GLS Press, 1988), 13.

healing. However, he warned Seethamma not to openly speak about Christianity as it is a “religion of untouchables” and may be excommunicated from the caste. Seethamma continued to read the Bible and pray and sometimes attended prayer meetings. Her brother and maternal uncle warned and threatened her, and her father did not even like to see her face.

Disheartened by the conditions, she planned suicide by hanging herself in their cattle shed one night. In the middle of the night, her sister and mother noticed her neck tangled with rope, unconscious. They immediately cut the cord, and she came into consciousness only the following day. Her father had no idea about her attempt to commit suicide. Until she became a Christian, and they reconciled with each other. Seethamma’s life became more miserable as one of her aunts was found dead in the water well. The village people thought that Seethamma did it. Seethamma kept fasting for fifteen days, living only on buttermilk. During this time, she has a vision of being taken to a beautiful home. Fearful that the owner would not receive it, she went; a very old man appeared to her and said, “This is my home, and you are my child, and in three months, I will receive you.”¹³

Taking a Bible with her, Seethamma went to live with her married sister. A few days later, her brother informed her that her mother was sick and in critical condition. Mary went to be with their mother, promising to accept and serve Christ if Christ restored her mother. Her father organised a big Hindu Thanksgiving ceremony when her mother healed and returned. Seethamma refused to participate and told her decision to join the Christian Ashram. However, her aunt mocked her, saying, “Once all the gold in her body is finished,

¹³ Tate, *Chosen by God*, 14.

she will search for her home and return.”¹⁴ When she heard that, Seethamma took her gold chain and bangles, broke them into pieces with a stone and gave them to her father.

At the ashram, she met Father Devadas, a very old blind leader who was the man she said earlier in her vision. She agreed to work in the ashram as a cook and help with other work. However, fifteen days later, her father and brother forced her home. They told her they would forgive her for going to the outcasts but tried to promise that she would stop reading the Bible and praying. Since she refused, they kept her confined to the house, put her between her parents' beds, and left her only one sari to wear. After praying for some time that night and sleeping, she felt someone touch her shoulder. She prayed and heard a voice, “If you serve me, I will be more to you than father or mother.” She felt comforted and thought, “I am now completely in God’s hands; whatever happens, I will be ready and will not fear.”¹⁵

Looking around, she saw her brother’s clothes. Taking a stick dressed as a man, she crept out and walked six miles to the bus in the dark. Father and brother followed her in a cart but did not recognize her. She hesitated to sit amidst men even though she was in a man's dress and was afraid of sitting amongst women, for she dressed like a man. So, I took a corner seat on the bus. She went twenty-six miles to the garden where the healing meetings were held and hid for three days without food, sitting in a tree at night with the fear of snakes. At the same time, Father Devadas saw a vision where he heard God saying, “Save this Child.” As per God’s command, he accepted Seethamma into the ashram. She has stayed there for Bible and theological training for three months. She was prepared for

¹⁴ M. Vijaya Laxmi, *Seethamma Jeevitham lo Maarina Viluvu* [Telugu] (Narsapur: Jeevan Jyothi Press and Publishers, n.d.), 7.

¹⁵ Tate, *Chosen by God*, 15.

baptism, and on 11.09.1952, she was baptised with her new name, Mary. On that day, Seethamma became Mary and was known and called Mary Seethamma from then. On her baptism day, her mother secretly expressed her happiness for her daughter's conversion. Father expressed her unhappiness by saying, "If you have faith in God, why must you express and confess it publicly? Why do you need to mingle with untouchables? Instead of staying with the outcaste, I will build a prayer hall, and you be the pastor." He was ready to donate two acres of land for the expenses Seethamma denied.

Ten days after her baptism, her brother came to her request to return home, promising her space and freedom to pray and read the Bible. However, Father Devadas did not accept sending her as he felt their intentions were wrong when he prayed. As per his advice, Seethamma stayed back and saved her life. Her brother wanted to bring her home from the ashram. He had planned to kill her as their family honour was at stake because of her conversion. The relatives criticised the brother as his sister was converted to an "outcaste religion." Unable to bear the insult, he killed his twelve-year-old brother and tried to commit suicide. However, police arrested him before he committed suicide for killing his brother. Seetamma's father was devastated. He lost both sons as one died, and another got imprisoned. At that time, he prayed to Christ for his son's release and gave a grandchild to continue their family lineage. The judge was kind enough to understand the father's struggle for his son and release him after a few days. Several other miracles happened in Seethamma's family, which made her father believe. In the later period, all her family members got baptised. It was in 1987 that her maternal uncle, who vehemently opposed her conversion, was baptised.

Seethamma was an ashram for twelve months, and Father Devadas sent her with Azariah to Khammammet to start evangelistic work among the people of a caste background. They later joined the CMS missionary, Miss. Dorothy Tate. By 1988, they planted congregations in 64 villages with nine church buildings, and thousands were baptised. When the church missionary society (CMS) provided them with a jeep and generator necessary for transportation, they went around villages showing Life of Christ film strips. As sixty – five percent of the population was illiterate, and there was no competition in towns from cinemas, etc., they would sit for hours. It proved the best way to introduce Christ's life and allow them to compare it with the lives of Hindu gods. Healing still played an essential part in introducing the medical team to Khammammet and modern medicine.

As individuals came forward for baptism, slides were made and shown; after the film, the name and village were given, and the listeners were told how and why they became Christians. Sometimes, the converts themselves came along and told their story. The number of people requesting baptism increased. Still, suppose they were known to associate and worship with people from a low caste. In that case, new converts fear being removed from their families and caste communities. "They wished to show that they had not lost caste but found Christ in becoming Christians. Their society problems were great, and they were advised to read Bibles and pray to Christ for guidance."¹⁶ Worship spaces were exclusively created at Jamalapuram and other sites; caste people were encouraged to come monthly to the meetings and bring their friends and relatives to see and hear for themselves, meeting others in similar circumstances.

¹⁶ Tate, *Chosen by God*, 11.

In 1953, Father Devadas protected Seethamma from her family's killing plan. She faced terrible sickness and death several times, but death never won over her. She was paralyzed twice and was also diagnosed with cancer. She met many accidents in her ministerial journey but never compromised with her work.

5.3.4. Sarojiniamma

In those days, Jamalapuram was a small village near Khammam, a well-known pilgrimage centre for Hindus with a temple dedicated to Venkateswara. Christians in the town were not allowed near the temple as they were considered untouchable. Because most of the converts are from the low caste, people of other castes look down on their God, Jesus. Jesus was the outcast's God and, therefore, unsuitable for different castes. Yesurathnam, a small Christian community leader, visited Khammam Mission Hospital regularly as he had leprosy.

Yesurathnam heard about a new Christian convert, a lady from a high-caste community called Seethamma, who was willing to help people from her community who came for treatment. He talked about this to Sarojini, a caste woman in Jamalapuram. He advised her to take her sick relative to the hospital. He assured them they would stay with Seethamma from their caste and food, which was a significant arrangement. In the year 1956 Sarojini amma came to Khammammet. Rev. John Mark narrates an interesting incident on her arrival in Khammammet. Sarojoniamma planned to cook and stay with Seethamma, but Seethamma was away on her arrival at Khammammet. Sarojiniamma was reluctant to enter any home due to caste prejudices. Later, Mrs. Ruthamma, another Bible woman in the Zenana compound, has to convince her to stay until Seethamma's arrival. While staying with Seethamma, she made her read the Bible and pray daily. So, she came

to know about her faith and Christianity. The life of Christ impressed Sarojini, and she bought a copy of the New Testament. She read it to her mother on her return to her village, and they started praying together.

Sarojiniamma gave a copy to another friend, Gnanamba, an orthodox Hindu. Her first reaction was, “This book belongs to low-caste people; why should we read it?” However, Sarojiniamma replied that this book was for all castes as it was God’s book. By reading it, they could learn about Jesus. Gnanamba was impressed by the verse in the Book of Hebrews: “Without shedding of blood, there is no remission for sins” (Hebrews 9: 22). These two women were reading and talking about the Bible to others interested in religious books. They felt the need to invite the evangelistic team to their village for the distribution of Christian literature and to pray for the sick.

Gnanamba narrates that our first visit to the village was in 1957. There was so much interest among the women and some elders. So, arranging a meeting for Christians and interested Hindus in the town was decided. Unfortunately, there were no suitable roads to travel or houses for the visiting evangelist team to stay in. So, everyone, including Bishop Solomon, has to travel by bullock cart or barefoot. The meetings were held for several days; on the last day, four caste believers from Jamalapuram and six others from other places came forward for baptism. During Christmas time again, a team visited social difficulties that always prevented the heads of families from inviting them into their houses. Usually, they were offered space in their cattle shed with a thatched roof.

There needed to be more clarity in identifying the particular place for worship. It took work to buy land or property in the centre of a Hindu community. One of the village elders helped purchase a small hut and started conducting prayer once a month—new

Christians from the nearby villages who were lonely and faced difficulties used to come for worship. When the English missionary went on leave and her mission partner, Mr. Azariah, went for studies in 1964, Seethamma started the church building work in Jamalapuram. Sarojini, who had some money received from her husband's people, donated one-fourth of it towards the cost of the church. The three ladies prayed together and laid the foundation on 1st November of the same year. As there were no decent roads, gathering all the materials necessary to construct the walls was challenging. Bullock carts have to be hired by the local farmers. Seethamma has to make many night trips with the carts to gather all the needed material. Seeing the women work so hard, eventually, some men took pity on them and helped with the heavy material. Mary's father, who was still a Hindu, was pleased to see his daughter doing such an excellent task and bought and gave the necessary timber for the roof. The church was dedicated in May 1965 and was named Christ Church. Jamalapuram had already become a centre of evangelism for six villages. More people were coming for fellowship, worship, and study. When more villages started to arrive, the people from different villages decided to take turns and provide food for all that gathered. People usually take a new name to emphasise their new life in Christ at baptisms. The name is generally chosen from the Bible or connected with Christ, such as a servant or Jewel of Christ.

5.4. Mary Rajamma: A Medical Missionary

On 27/05/2017, a hot afternoon at around 2 PM, I met Iruvanti Purushotham Satyanathan, son of Iruvanti Mary Rajamma, to collect information about his mother. He was 87 years old by then, sitting in his bed. Many suggested his name as a person with immense knowledge of Urdu, Telugu, and English during my other interviews. His

memory was sharp and profound, but he clarified immediately with his wife, Vedha, to get in right when he had any doubt. Multiple interviews were conducted to collect and formulate Mrs. Rajamma's narrative.

Mrs. Rajamma was a trained nurse specialising in health care in an entirely Muslim locality. Missionaries opened health care centres in some places in Khammammet town to cater to the community's needs more efficiently. Rajamma was in charge of his centre, catering to Muslims' medical needs by staying in their neighbourhood.

I.P. Sathyanathan starts his discussion by explaining how Urdu is not a language many people understand. He says, "Urdu is a language, and Laskar means a soldier. It is a spoken language of soldiers and does not have a written script. The writer's script, which is claimed to be Urdu, is Persian."¹⁷ He studied at Nizam government school, where he had Persian as his second language. Cap, coat, and shoes were necessary when they went to school. They have to wear a sherwani for graduation. Conditions in school were stringent, and the medium of instruction and prayers were in Urdu. He still recites some of the prayers as he shares his experiences. Irrespective of religion, people were expected to learn and recite the prayers.

Rajamma was born in Vijayanagaram in Andhra Pradesh. Her parents died early, and the missionaries brought her up in Machilipatnam's home. Iruvanti Purushotham Samuel was a converted Brahmin, and missionaries got her married to him. She was trained

¹⁷ He too believes in the popular myth that Urdu is a 'camp language' or 'Laskar Zaban' because it originated in the army camps of the Mughals. People who hold this view consider Urdu as a Turkish word which literally means 'Laskar' or army or army camp. It's believed that Urdu is a mixture of words from various languages like Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hindi. <https://www.dawn.com/news/681263/> Urdu's origin -it's-not-a-camp-language, accessed on 30/05/2021.

in general medicine and health care at Christian Medical College, Vellore. He was working in the police department and taught in Madras. Dr. Abraham requested that she come to Khammammet to help her with medical work for Muslims. She provided a house in the Muslim locality and space for a medical centre.

Muslims never allowed other religious people to enter and stay in their localities. However, since she was helping them with medical care, they accepted the family to remain where they are today. Her service during epidemics like Cholera and Swine flu increased people's confidence in her. For flu patients, they used to keep a medicinal tin boiled in hot water on the chest. It was strenuous work to make people understand contagious diseases as they need to maintain proper hygiene. The disease spread like wildfire, and many died due to the family's negligence. After cremating one body, they used the wrapped mat again for home purposes. It infected the whole family, and people died. Rajamma lived in the community, taught them the necessary precautions, and gave them medical care. The swine flu medicine made many come to the hospital. Rajamma handled two deadly diseases and saved many people from death.

They had sung in their compound since they could not preach or teach the gospel every evening. The surrounding people secretly participated in the singing and prayers from their respective homes. People requested Rajamma to pray after receiving the medicine. I.P. Satyanathan believes that people consider prayer to be a mantra. If they get a positive response to the prayer, they used to come back and ask again. There were no Dalits or Muslims who got attracted to the gospel. However, some caste groups like Mudipativaru from Komati and Kancharla Nagaya secretly listened and accepted the

gospel. They used to come every day after evening prayer to spend time in prayer and discussions. The house stood on medical care and the ministry of Rajamma.

I.P. Satyanathan shares the situations in Khammammet during the Military invasion of Hyderabad State. The Sikh military came, and people did not know how to behave during the military rule. There was great chaos as conflict arose between the army and locals, Hindus and Muslims - Major General Chowdary was in charge of the operation. Many were looted, and many incidents wherein fundamental human rights were violated. Aeroplanes used to come and bomb, and people covered their houses and roads with white saris, expressing their willingness for peace. A red cross was lit on the mission hospital to indicate a civilian's location. It was a big blow for Muslims as local people, and the army looted many families. They have not got back to normal even today. After the military, the special armed forces (SAF) came from Madras. Since Rajamma knows Tamil, she spoke with SAF people and protected several Muslim families from arrest and atrocities. People remember her medical help and how she covered them during the invasion. I have immense respect for the family even today due to her services.

As a family, they used to join the CMS missionaries during the village visits. She assisted Dr. Abraham in medical work in the villages. satyanathan, familiar with synchronisation, assisted Miss. Tate and Seethamma's group in screening films on Christ-life in villages. Dr. Abraham had a gramophone; the music was carefully synchronised with the film strips, which was technically complex and hectic. Though medical help was accepted, Christian religion and missionary work was not received. Nizams could have been more helpful to missionaries. Muslim people were very suspicious of Christian's presence with the fear of conversion.

5.5. Rose Narrates the Story of Her Mother, Rachel

In a casual talk about my research work with my mother, Rose expressed that her mother has a similar experience with the mission station at Machilipatnam. I was surprised to realise that my grandmother was also left at the mission centre, which was very similar to the narratives I found in the archival documents I discussed in the earlier chapter. I had conducted multiple interviews and conversations with my mother and her siblings to document this narrative. Dharmapuri Kishtaiah, a Brahmin priest, reached the CEZMS mission compound in Machilipatnam with his three daughters sometime in the 1930s. The eldest girl was three years old, the second was eighteen months old, and the youngest was three days old. His wife, Adhi Laxmi, died after giving birth to their third daughter. Kishtaiah left his three daughters under missionaries' care and went on a pilgrimage to different holy sites. The missionaries named the elder one Miriam and the second Rachel. The three-day-old daughter is given for adoption to a Clerk working in the Coal belt area in Kothagudem. His name was Suraiah, and he named his adopted daughter Suramma.

Miriam and Rachel (01-09-1926) grew under the care of the then missionaries, Miss. Roe, Miss. Leedham and Miss. Higgins. Miriam was weak in her studies and failed in the eighth standard; she was in the converts' home, supporting the missionaries' work. The missionaries took her consent and married a rice mill employee in Guntur. Rachel stayed under the missionaries' care for a much more extended period. When Machilipatnam was affected by cholera, all the girls were shifted to Khammammet mission station for a while. She passed the eighth standard at Sharkey School. Since she was good

at studies, missionaries sent her for primary school teacher's training, and she started to work as a teacher.

David John Subbarao (13-05-1926) is Kambham Premanandam and Kanthamma, a first-generation Christian couple who converted from the Komati caste. They both were government school teachers. Subbarao was a student of Noble High School, and Rachel was at CEZMS mission station working as a teacher. Rachel was the Choir leader, and Subbarao saw her while she led the English service songs. He liked Rachel and informed his parents, who approached the missionaries with a marriage proposal. The proposal was accepted with Rachel's consent, and the missionaries conducted the marriage on 31-03-1948.

Interestingly, the missionaries spent fifteen days with the couple to ensure the in-laws treated their "daughter" appropriately after the marriage. As foster parents, missionaries make sure their children are comfortable after marriage. Therefore, missionaries regularly visited Rachel's place and spent a few days assessing her situation. Missionaries took their role as foster parents seriously. When Subbarao's mother was affected by cancer, she was advised to be brought to Madras Hospital for better care. Her admission was denied because of a lack of beds. However, with the recommendation of the missionaries, they were able to get her a bed. The missionaries taught Rachel that she should give all her salary directly to her husband even if she earned it. Rachel continued it even after her retirement when she received the pension.

After Nizams joined the Indian Union and Telugu became the official language, there was a need for people who could learn the Telugu language, creating many job opportunities. Suramma requested her sister Rachel to shift to Kothagudem. Rachel, by

then, had given birth to three children, and one died during childbirth. Rachel moved to Kothagudem with her elder daughter, Rose, and son. She was carrying her third child at that time. She got a job as a school teacher but later lost it. In the meantime, Subba Rao got a job in security at the Kothagudem main hospital. Rachel then went for midwife training and got appointed as a midwife. When she was transferred to Hyderabad, she requested that the concerned authorities appoint her as a teacher. She was nominated as a teacher in government as she had her teacher's training and was a trained midwife. Working as a security person, Subbarao passed PUC and the clerical test and became a clerk.

Rachel was scared of injections and tubectomies. As a result, she was blessed with fourteen children, nine girls and five boys, of which seven girls and four sons survived; others died either during or a few months after birth. Rachel was in constant touch with missionaries and vice-versa. Rose, the elder daughter, and the narrator had memories of missionaries coming and staying with them. The whole neighbourhood was curious to see a white lady coming and residing in their locality. In one such visit, the neighbour told her to go and ask the missionary where her husband was. Rose, as a kid, innocently asked the same missionary. Prejudice about missionaries' marital status was common among natives, as several single women worked as missionaries. Nevertheless, until her death, Rachel was in touch with all the three missionaries who adopted her, married her, and supported her in crisis times.

5.6. Krupa Lenora: A School Teacher

Krupa Lenora was named after Dr. Abraham, a retired school teacher. In 1930, she studied at Bishop Azariah Girls' School and A.C College in Guntur and joined Andhra Girls' School. After marriage, she went to Pune along with her husband. She later joined

as a teacher at St. Mary's Mission School in Khammammet. When she joined, her initial pay was sixty rupees. She retired as a school teacher in 1988. I met Mrs. Lenora multiple times at her residence to construct her narrative as a person familiar with mission schools and the education system.

Mrs. Lenora's grandfather was Narayana Rao Naidu, a landlord converted through famous Hindu caste convert Christian Purushotham Chowdary. Narayana was a pearl merchant who travelled up to Singapore. He met Christian missionaries and heard about the gospel and the Bible during his travels. Later, he met Chowdary, who baptised and married him to Venkata Mahalaxmi, another caste converts. Chowdary then sent the couple to Bishop Elliott to serve the churches and local mission stations. Lenora's father was an ordained pastor. He served along with Bishop Elliott.

She was named after Dr. Krupa Abraham as Krupa Lenora. Dr. Abraham's Life and committed work always inspired her. Dr. Abraham stood as her spiritual guardian during her baptism. Mrs. Lenora saw Dr. Abraham very closely; "sincerity never fails" is her statement about Dr. Abraham. Letisha, the adopted daughter of Dr. Abraham, visited her mother's tomb every year to take Lenora for company. Dr. Abraham remained a spinster and served both in church and hospital.

She narrates about the missionaries and the Nizam education system as a teacher. St. Mary School was a Telugu medium. However, they had English subjects from sixth to tenth class. She taught general English from sixth to eighth class and English grammar for ninth and tenth classes. During those days, the medium of education was in Urdu, as the area was under Nizam's rule. Mrs. Lenora mentions one of her aunties, Mrs. Bhagyamma, who was the then headmistress of Urdu Medium Girls High School. Girls were taken to

the school in a bullock cart fully covered. Mrs. Lenora shares an exciting experience she had during her visit to an Urdu school at the request of Mrs. Bhagyamma. On that day, a medical team came to vaccinate all the girls in the school. The teacher sent all the girls into a room and locked the main door. Then, the girl's hands were kept out through the window one after the other, and vaccination was done. A strict purdah system was followed for girls in government schools.

Mrs. Lenora narrates how Government-supported all the church and school activities. The local Muslim leaders attended all the official programs both in church and school. There was a cordial relationship among both Christians and Muslims. She explains how Muslims used to come in big groups when someone got admitted to a mission hospital. The Bible women used this opportunity to share the gospel. The Muslim visitors listened carefully to the gospel taught in the mission hospital; many accepted Christ but secretly maintained their faith. All the Komati families who did gold business in Khammammet used to bring their pregnant wives for deliveries to the mission hospital.

Mrs. Lenora was familiar with Ruthamma and Rukminiamma, the Bible women who worked in the mission hospital. She visited several surrounding villages along with Seethamma and Miss. Dorothy Tate. Tate and her Bible women were staying at the hospital compound. Miss. Tate even took some of them to England for further studies. Post-independence, when the missionaries started to develop the women's groups in Khammammet, Mrs. Lenora worked as a local women's fellowship in charge. As a result, there was increased demand for Bible women, which created more opportunities for ordinary church-going women to lead their services voluntarily.

Mrs. Lenora explains that caste discrimination was prevalent in villages. To avoid discrimination, converted daily boys and girls are sent to different mission stations' schools and hostels. In the school spaces, caste people had a sense of caste and religion. However, when it comes to the hospital, all come together for medical help and are spiritually nurtured. All patients were accepted and treated equally. Healing was the priority for all. Mrs. Lenora remembers the Razakar atrocities in the villages where they tortured an ordained priest while returning from their regular prayers. His name was Buddha Bhushanam; they knocked him to the ground and kicked him with their boots. The rugged metal in the boots pierced his back, and the wound got septic. He later died after being brought to the mission hospital.

5.7. Caste Converts and their Conversion Narratives

In the informal group interviews, some caste converts' conversation narratives influenced people to accept Christianity. People identify themselves in these narratives, which are shared. When Bible women visited caste people's houses, they shared these testimonies to inspire people. Seethamma usually narrated her conversion experience. She was instrumental in converting many high-caste Hindus from Satyanarayanapuram and Gollapudi. She later established churches in both places. The following conversion narratives were widely shared among people in the past, which people still remember today.

5.7.1. Venkateswarlu: A Kamma Convert

Satyanarayanapuram was a stronghold for communists. Venkateswarlu was a young leader doing good work in the village while leading young men into the forest to steal the wood. Sudarshanam was the region's forest officer. One night, he met a young

group of men coming with their bullock cart full of wood. He reminded them that he was in charge of the forest and that they were stealing government property. So, he ordered them to take the bull, leave the cart with the wood, and leave the place. There were many young boys, and some instigated Venkateswarlu to give the order to kill the officer. However, Venkateswarlu untied the bull, left the wood, and went home.

Sudarshan is from a lower caste; though he was educated and held a government job, he lived isolated. He was not welcomed into the village houses and resided in a small hut half a mile from where the outcast lived. One night, Venkateswarlu visited him to ask the secret of his courage for the way he stopped his group in the forest. The forest officer handed him the Bible and said the secret lay there as he knew his God would save him. Venkateswarlu requested a copy of the New Testament and was very impressed. So, he gathered young friends around him every evening, taught them to read, and bought more copies when they were ready.

Venkateswarlu heard about the prayer centre in Jamalapuram, which was about ten miles away. This was started by Seethamma and her group of Bible women. It is where new high-caste Christians meet monthly, having a meal together as a Christian fellowship. They began bringing their wives and families, and the group eventually asked for baptism. Venkateswarlu was given the name Prabhudas (servant of the Lord). He faces a great deal of opposition. His close relative no longer invites him to functions, seeing him as having lost his caste status through association with low-caste Christians. The irrigation water was cut off from his field, preventing him from growing rice. He sold a piece of land to buy a water pump for essential irrigation but was burnt by some culprits during the night. He has endured much persecution for converting to the outcast's religion.

Prabhudas had five daughters but prayed to God to give him a son so the people criticising him for becoming Christian would see that God blessed him. After a few years, he had a son, followed by another. He had seven children. Arranging marriage for the girls was difficult as he wanted to organise a Christian wedding. However, very few people from his caste background were interested in Christianity. Finally, after two years, a distant relative was willing to become a Christian and marry his eldest daughter. In 1967, they had the first Christian wedding in the community. The bride went to live in the groom's village, where no believers existed. Although her husband was illiterate, she continued reading the Bible to him and praying. She also begged for the sick villagers, and since the hospital was miles away, people would come to her for prayer. Seeing her concern for the sick, they also became interested in Christ. In this process, there was a request for baptisms from another new village called Badava. Other daughters of Prabhudas also eventually married Christians and became witnesses of Christ in three different towns.

5.7.2. Venkateswara Rao of Gollapudi

A wealthy farmer and an influential village politician, very religious, went on an annual pilgrimage to Tirupati every year. His sister, an orthodox Hindu, lived in another village. She has poor health and grieved because she had no children despite praying to many gods. A Christian school teacher lived next door. She interacted with the school teacher as her husband suggested learning about Jesus and praying for him. After attending meetings led by her neighbour, she started to address her prayer to Christ. After a few weeks, she felt better about her health, and later, God blessed her with a son and a daughter. As a result, both she and her husband were baptised and became Christians.

When her brothers Venkateswara Rao and Rama Rao visited her, she gave them copies of the New Testament. Rama Rao, who suffered from mental depression, was impressed and started to pray to Jesus for his healing. When Seethamma and her evangelical team visited the village from Khammam, they were told about Rama Rao's desire for baptism and went to see him. He wanted to encourage his wife to read the Bible, which she gladly did, and in 1969, he and his wife, three sons, two daughters, and his mother received baptism. The elder brother Venkateswar Rao did not like this development. He thought his brother had changed his faith because he had a mental illness. He challenged the evangelical team's right to encourage people to change their faith. When asked to read the New Testament, he replied that he could find it all in the Hindu scriptures. Seethamma and her team persuaded him to "consider the Bible," read it, and compare it with his scriptures. As he read in Jesus, he found a compassionate God and a sinless person willing to forgive sinful people and pray.

There was some murder in the village during the same period. The Venkateswara Rao group was held responsible for the murder. All the group members were arrested; although he was not directly involved, he was convicted and given one year of imprisonment. Before he went to prison, he asked for baptism, and the same day he was taken to jail, he and his wife were baptised. He was given a new name, David. In prison, he talked with others and encouraged them to read the Bible and ask forgiveness. He then requested that the film *Life of Christ* be shown to the prisoners. The jailer agreed, and the evangelical team was invited to show the movie in the Warangal jail. The day the film was shown, the prisoners were given their evening meal half an hour earlier than usual. At 6

PM, the prison gates were opened for the team to enter with their jeep. It was an hour-long film, and around 800 prisoners watched it.

More prisoners attended the worship service the following Sunday; many asked for Bibles. David asked the evangelical team to supply more New Testaments and other literature. Venkateswara Rao/David made a significant impact during his imprisonment. After eight months, he was allowed to go home because of his excellent behaviour and blood donation. After his release, he attended a three-month Bible training course and started to help the local churches. He was later ordained as a full priest in the church. He gave part of his land to build the church in Gollapudi. In 1977, the building was dedicated to Christ Church, and now Gollapudi has become another centre for twenty-two villages. Most of them are new Christians from high-caste backgrounds. They bring their neighbours and relatives to Jamalapuram for healing prayers and scripture learning.

5.7.3. Syed Zia Ul-Hussain: A Muslim Convert's Narrative

Syed Zia Ul-Hussain was born and raised in a Muslim family in Hyderabad. His people wished him to become a priest of their faith. He was sent to Deoband in Uttar Pradesh to the College of Arabic to learn, which enabled him to read the Koran. He was taught that the Bible was also a God-inspired book, but disciples have falsely changed the story of Jesus. Wishing to examine the New Testament to see how this change has been made, he visited a Christian reading room in Hyderabad. There, he met a Muslim Convert to Christianity. The latter had also become a pastor, helping him compare the New Testament and the Koran.

In a comparative study, he gradually became convinced that the New Testament was perfectly suitable; Jesus was the servant to God and decided to follow him. He started

attending the Urdu-speaking Hindustani Church in Hyderabad. His people did not like him attending the reading room and threatened to take his life. He escaped them by joining the British Army during the Second World War. The Sermon on the Mount and St. John's Gospel significantly impacted his religious thinking. He was baptised at twenty-one as Samuel and joined the army in 1942.

With the completion of the war, he found it difficult to live among Muslims as he was still threatened with death. Since he was a motor mechanic in the army, he joined the police force. He was kept in charge of all the district police vehicles, and he felt secure being there. The missionaries working among Muslims arranged his marriage with an ex-Muslim young lady whose father died, leaving the daughter with the missionaries. She grew up in the missionary's care. Samuel wished to live among Christians but found it difficult because of their low caste background and different customs. He could not live with Muslims because they would not tolerate him as a Christian. So, he was in the company of the missionaries and preachers studying the Bible.

He had a daughter named Ruth. When the time came to arrange for her marriage, difficulties started as Christians were from different backgrounds, and Muslims would only marry Muslims. So, he requested all his Christian friends to pray. A few months later, a Methodist minister expressed his willingness to marry Ruth. After retirement, he wanted to remain in the fellowship of the Christian workers and help them in their work. Since he knew about vehicle maintenance, he joined to look after the vehicles of Seethamma's evangelical team. He played an essential role in Christ's mission to reach several Muslim communities where films were shown and literature was distributed to thousands.

5.7.4. Veera Reddy: A Communist Convert's Narrative

Veera Reddy was a member of the communist party and was actively involved in group rivalries. Belonging to the Reddy caste, his name meant Reddy of valour. There was a fight between two political groups, and they planned to kill the leader of the opposite group. Arrangements were made to quickly go to the big city after the murder to admit himself to the hospital to avoid suspicion. As he started with the revolver to accomplish his task, he heard a voice saying, "Do not do it, do not kill him, go to church on Sunday." Since he was a non-committed Hindu and a communist, 'going to church on Sunday' was something he had never visualised, and he was confused about why it was mentioned.

On the other hand, his family was completely broken because of his political ambitions and rivalries. He was married to Thimmaka from a well-to-do family; he was made to live in his wife's place. Most of his time was spent either working against the rival political party or getting involved in certain violent activities of his party. He has three sons and two daughters, and his daughters died due to ill health. He had to go underground for years to fear being arrested and imprisoned by the government. His wife planned to drown her sons and herself in the open well but was saved by the villagers. Two of his younger sons got smallpox a few days later, and the younger child died.

In this bewildering state, he heard mysterious words suggesting that he go to church on Sunday. With no peace of mind, he went to see a Christian police officer who was friendly and helpful whenever he was involved in petty cases. His name was Sikhamani, and he explained to Veera Reddy about a similar incident in the Bible. The experience of Paul hearing the voice of Jesus while he was on his way to persecute Christians on the road to Damascus. Sikhamani gave him a copy of the New Testament so he could read and learn

more about Jesus. His voice prevented him from murdering his opponent. As he read through the Bible, he felt the need to go and seek forgiveness from his opponent. Seeing him coming, the other man closed the door with the fear that he might harm. The change in Veera Reddy's voice and his appealing words surprised his enemies. In 1955, he joined the Christians for worship and fellowship. He decided to share his experience with the political parties (Congress and Communists) and encouraged them to read the Bible.

When his relatives heard about his conversion, they felt he brought shame to all his family members by becoming followers of Christ and joining the Christian community, as most Christians are outcasts and untouchables. As he could not go to his own family, he went to Kurnool, where he met a Christian in an important government position. He accepted and helped him feel that he was one of the Christian faith and Christ's family. After his conversion, his uncle planned to kill him with a knife, but his swift anticipation helped him save his life, leaving a wound on his thigh.

His wife learned about her husband's conversion and wanted to know whether Christ was a faithful God. She used to pray to several gods to know her husband's whereabouts. One day, she felt she should pray to Jesus about her husband as a true saviour. On the same day, she received a letter from Veera Reddy saying he would be happy to take her and the family to Hyderabad. She immediately decided to go away from her relatives and sister, live with her husband, and follow the same God who brought a significant change in her husband's life. Many Hindus and Christians came to their home; she showed motherly care to them in sorrow, disease, and loneliness. They were instrumental in bringing many people to the knowledge of Christ. Veera Reddy's life testimony helped several high-caste Hindus to consider Christ and read the Bible. His wife's family prevented

her from taking her share of income from the land she owned in her village as she converted. Lack of finances, proper rest, and nourishment affected her with TB. She was hospitalised. She told her husband that God was calling her to go to him and informed him where and how her funeral should be conducted in the hospital. On her funeral day, more relatives and friends had the opportunity to hear the gospel preached by Veera Reddy than at any other time during her life. Veera Reddy continued his ministry as an evangelist for over twenty-five years, bringing many high-caste Hindus, particularly from the Reddy caste, into the knowledge of Christ.

Conversion testimonies of people are the entry points that create curiosity among people of that particular caste or religion. Bible women used these testimonies to attract their listeners. “One among you” and “among us” are common conversation phrases. The Bible woman used to say that those who were “one among you” are now “one among us.” The listeners also used to think that when one “one among us” is among them, why not try this new religion?

Further, marriage within religion and caste is a common phenomenon. After conversion, all caste converts struggle to find an apt alliance from their caste for their children. This created a sort of Christian caste ecosystem. Caste converts of the same from different regions coordinate and have wedding alliances. Sometimes, people wait for someone from their caste to convert and get married.

One of the respondents shared that Mr. Azariah, who worked with Mary Sethamma, was well known for arranging marriage alliances among the caste converts. There was systematic coordination between the mission stations and Bible women to identify the right

people. There is a fear among the missionaries and the new converts that if they marry non-converts, they may return to their old “sinful life.”

5.8. Khammammet during Independence and Internal War

The people in Khammammet had a challenging time; being the border town in the Hyderabad State, there were many disturbances. The missionary letters to the board and personal correspondence between 1947 and 1950 narrate the conditions of the people. The Native agents like the Bible women, teachers, and pastors were also tortured and killed. There was uncertainty, and people lost trust in the rulers and political parties. The Khammammet Mission Hospital gave both Hindus and Muslims space in such situations. Bible women were essential to the lady missionaries as people trusted their work and commitment. In this section, we read through some of the missionary correspondences during that period to understand the challenging conditions in which Bible women worked.

Rev. Budget narrates the conditions in Khammammet on August 15th, 1947, on the day of Indian Independence: “August 15th saw us gaping at each other and asking which of the several flags for sale was ours. To fly the Indian Union flag would label us disloyal to the Nizam. We did not wish to appear under the extreme Muslim Leagues’ banner.” However, it was the Nizam’s Flag. The city was silent and suspicious, and small bazaar groups watched and waited anxiously.¹⁸ The demonstrators were arrested immediately; Shops closed, and traders fled for fear of unrest. The Protestant Church across the state invited government officials (Muslims) and others to a service on Independence Day. On August 15th, the principal government officials and all Christians in the Church were in Khammammet.

¹⁸ Robin Budget, *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, 1.

The service was a declaration of the Christian duty to be loyal to Nizam under God and pray for his government. While it was not a significant event in the city, it made it clear to outsiders that Christians “fear God and honour the king.” After the church service, we asked the officer about the national flag, and a flag was bought and displayed in our homes. In his letters to Campbell in 1948, Rev. Budget writes about the political conditions and how Nizam soldiers, the Indian National Congress, and communists harassed Christians. In that particular year, no concrete decisions were made on the role of India in the state of Hyderabad, except there was a one-year standstill agreement. The provisional government was formed with four of the fourth non-Muslim members. Congress refused to participate in the government because of its apparent weight on Muslims. Of the sixteen million Muslims in the state, only twelve percent occupied great power in the provisional government. As it did not meet the requirements of the state convention, agitations began with renewed vigour. It was an organised revolution in which the police lost control, and the police also contributed to the chaos. The government was of the Ittebadul Musalman party, which was very partial.¹⁹ The opposition to the government is three parts of the Congress of the State, the smallest deviated group of the Congress and the Communist. The state congress had men with a vision of what was right, made, and suitable for everyone. They wanted to earn peace through peaceful methods, but there were very few. The Communist is a considerable force that believes in violence and creates chaos. The deviated Congress and the communists are intimately mixed and work together. Even the President of the Congress of the State is considered the Communist in favour. The field during the day seems peaceful, although there is fear of weapons and rumours of looting.

¹⁹ Robin Budget, *News Sheet: CMS Mission Share Plan* (1948), 2.

Nobody can take a firearm, but people rarely see a non-armed Muslim.²⁰ At night, tranquillity disappeared, and police lost control except for the railway line that was powerfully saved. The gangs of the Communists and Congress go to fury at night.

Rev. Budget writes that in two hundred districts, village heads have either been driven out or killed. Any labourer, teacher, or anybody else suspected of supporting the government faces death, house burning, cow slaughter, or a warning to leave under danger of these actions.²¹ Customs and police houses get burned often, and the personnel are usually murdered. My favourite activity is cutting down the government trees and burning the Karman's records of the village lands. One of our teachers has been murdered for suspected collaboration with the government. Two pastors have received notices that they will be dealt with. Christians, as peace-loving people, are frightened. Many went to India (neighbouring states), and others spent their nights in fields and jungles, feeling much safer there than at home.

The local police and other officials pressure the Christians to act as village guards, CID agents, and spies for the government. The assistant district superintendent of police got very angry with the bishop as he did not encourage Christians to undertake these jobs. In the following days, in a particular incident, the police removed the sporting guns of some Christians in Dornakal. Specific food permits were refused, and the police selected two Christians for execution. The execution occurred at a village a few miles south of Dornakal. The Communists arrived, cut trees, burnt the village records, and fled. The police came under a responsible officer who selected one or two men from each community, including

²⁰ Robin Budget to Campbell, *Personal Letters*, January 27, 1948, 1.

²¹ Budget to Campbell, *Personal Letters*, 2.

two Christians. They shot thirteen of them by making them lie on the ground. After that, they looted several houses and left. The police knew those responsible for the tree cutting and burning for the records were a mile away before reaching the village, but the innocent civilians were punished. When the Bishop and the doctor went there the next day to do what they could for the Christians and Hindus, the local officials were not allowed inside. Their request to help victims was disapproved.

Our stance is impartiality. The government must be seen as little more than a political party. The other group's struggle has a great deal of justice. They both employ terrible techniques. Both sides have a false impression of Christians. We have tried contacting the appropriate leaders on both sides to convey our goals. When I visited Hyderabad last week, the Home Secretary assured me that district officials would be directed to respect Christians' neutrality and not pressure them to work for the government.²² The Congress leaders responded positively and kindly accepted to inform border congress leaders that Christians had refused to act as government spies. The primary demand of Congress is that the government shall be elected representatives of the people, and Hyderabad shall join the Indian Union. The utmost thought of Christians was their safety. However, the teachers, pastors, and nurses set an example with their services during times of crisis. The CEZMS hospital has had an armed congress lorry drive through its compound once or twice, and most people seem scared to bring patients to it. The police in town are reported to be looting the houses at night—the commotion in the city and frequent visits of the political vehicles created panic among patients and staff.

²² Budget to Campbell, *Personal Letters*, 3.

In 1948, the Annual letter had a more personal narrative of native agents. The following are a few pastor Statements in the missionaries' letters: Thirteen out of twenty-five congregations in my parish hide in the forest at night; getting them together for prayers is tough. Bandits came to our village and took a levy of grain and money from every house. Another native worker reports, "They have killed two men, and everyone is terrified. Eight of my congregations are now scattered. The pastor was residing with the congregation in the parish."²³ About twenty armed men searched the shed I was camping in last night. An army gang burned the village land records and looted the rich people's houses, and everyone has been too afraid to sleep since.

Budget narrates about another native missionary travelling experience, "My train was attacked and burned, and all my luggage was lost. As I was walking home, robbers searched for me but found nothing. I was ambushed by the river bed but rereleased."²⁴ Many armed gangs, many of them communists, were active that night. The Hyderabad state government employees and rich people are their chief objects of attack. They visit the villages and terrorise the people. On the other hand, the Hyderabad state forces have been like an arrow by day. In theory, this arrow was aimed at the communists, but it seldom found its mark, and in actual practice, it has been law-abiding citizens who have suffered, being easy targets to hit.

Rev. Budget writes that these two opposing armies have been harassing our villages day and night for the past nine months, and the number of night raids by the armed gangs has increased. In retaliatory raids, the state troops arrived when the offenders were far

²³ Robin Budget, *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections (UK: University of Birmingham, August 1948), 1.

²⁴ Budget, *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, 1948, 1.

away, beating and shooting innocent men, raping and looting peace-loving people, and setting their homes on fire. There has been a lot of panic, rumours, swords, firearms, and terrible reality throughout the countryside. When people fled into the forest and fields, the teachers and native workers lived alone for several weeks till Hindus and Christians gradually returned to villages.

Rev. Budget writes about a native teacher; there is Dasari David, an elderly educator wearing spectacles, who is quiet and somewhat blind yet has a deep understanding of his people. He played tunes on his harp to entice some mischievous Razakars, and they left in silence. There was no danger to the congregation. The missionaries did not leave their station and supported the people during struggle and turmoil. The British High Commissioner's office telegraphed about the evacuation of the Europeans, but none of the missionaries went away. The Bishop took the lead as a shepherd to his flocks in trouble, with a vision to guide those in trouble so that his diocese has a great leader of confidence in times of stress.²⁵

With the entry of the Indian troops into Khammammet, the situation changed gradually. There has been the rumble of distant gunfire from early morning as the Indian forces advance. An unusual stillness has settled over the town. This was followed by a few days of extreme excitement and a few nights of intense apprehensions. Then came the day when Indian troops drove into Khammammet; the whole of Hyderabad state was occupied. We were able to release the building tension of the preceding weeks and months, breathe easily once more, sleep soundly, and receive supplies of food, medicine, paraffin, and

²⁵ Budget, *Annual Letter Progress Sheet*, 1948, 4.

money to be brought again. Postal services were reinstated, and buses and trains were operating.

The internal war created invisible wounds and a visible divide among the people. The whole struggle of the past year has created a divide among the Hindus and Muslims. With the coming of the Indian Union, the Hindus knew their day had come and that Muslim power had ended. During the days following the occupation, perpetrators of violent deeds were searched and arrested. Many harmless Muslims suffered greatly. Not only the guilty but the innocent had their houses looted, and those who had been quite rich were found drinking from pieces of broken pot. It was done in retaliation for what had happened under the Muslim regime and done chiefly by hooligans. There were scenes of hunger and growing dread.

In such a situation, the Khammam mission station and mission hospital played a pivotal role in protecting and providing help to the people. About forty Muslim women had fled from their looted houses to seek shelter in the mission hospital. They had neither food nor money, and we were too frightened to work. The Christian doctor quietly spoke to the Hindu patients' relatives about the Muslims' plight. Before long and gladly, the Hindu women brought cooked food for the Muslim women to eat. "Outside, the looting and harassment continued, but inside the hospital, at least some women of three creeds were living as God meant them to – In Christ is neither Jew nor Greek, Muslim or Hindu."

In the CMS compound, thirty Muslim men had just arrived. Some faces were puffy with fear and sleeplessness, and some were worn and grey. A Hindu man came searching and, seeing an aged Muslim, said, "Come grandfather, I will take you home." When the missionary questioned why he was Hindu searching for and helping Muslims, he replied,

“Should I not help the aged father of our street?” Miss. Hardy writes, Although the war between the Indian Union and Nizam’s armies has ceased, there is a continual conflict between the communists and the government. The communists are doing much harm, causing trouble and stirring the people. Life is held so cheaply that murders are committed for a minor thing. All this affects the life of the hospital. The ward will overflow for a while, so we must figure out where to put the patients. Then, a sudden scare will cause many of our patients to disappear, not realising they are safer in the hospital than in their homes.²⁶ Amidst all the difficulties, fifteen nurses are trained. Four others completed their general training, finished their midwifery, and enrolled in Hospital staff. In her 1948 report, Dr. Abraham writes that there have been many upsets, disturbances, and difficulties here, but we rely fearlessly on God.²⁷

In my conversation, several respondents shared about the significant role of foreign and native missionaries. Even today, Dorothy Tate is remembered and regarded for her timely interventions in supporting the Indian army. When the Indian Army entered Khammammet, the people in the fort area, a Muslim-dominated location, were closed entirely. Fear of death, looting, and lack of trust in the Indian government shut their localities. In such situations, Miss. Dorothy Tate went along with the Indian Army General, knocking on each door and asking them to come out as the Indian government assured their safety. All respondents have some memory of these disturbing times.

²⁶ *The Seventieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1950*, p.8.

²⁷ *The Seventieth Annual Report of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1950*, p.9.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

The present research was initiated to trace by “name” and identify the native women and their contributions to the Christian missions in Hyderabad State, explicitly referring to a CEZMS mission station in Khammammet. The search to locate women by ‘name’ has opened new horizons to multiple unexplored spaces in the previous research. My initial thought was to document the life and work of Bible women in a specific region and period. Bible women were the agents through whom foreign missionaries entered the native homes and impacted the lives of the people in the colonies. Pursuing native Bible women revealed various ‘other’ women who contributed to and supported foreign missionaries in the mission stations. We located women from different professions and skills who emerged from other spaces within a mission station. The converts’ homes, lace industry, Zenanas, and mission hospitals are the four spaces where native women got access points to meet and interact with the missionaries. The annual reports, journal biographies, memories, circulars, magazines, receipt books, testimonials, travelogues, and other material in the CEZMS archives were closely read.

Through these reports, we can access the conditions and context in which Indian women lived from 1880 to 1950. Several social issues led the native women to identify the mission station as a refugee space. The missionaries used this as an opportunity. While protecting the native women, the missionaries interacted with them, introduced them to new spirituality, and taught them survival skills.

By bringing to the forefront individuals like Bible women's everyday affirmations that do not claim or seek to make any fundamental shift in the social surroundings into the realm of resistance, this research effort opens critical possibilities for feminist historiography. The analyses not only refocus our "sight" away from the noteworthy and dominant subjects of conventional historiography and towards the unstable and marginal subject positionalities, but they also mark these "sites" as venues of alternative history writing.¹ The lived experiences of the native Christian women and their life narratives and testimonies provide a unique understanding of women working in a mission station. This study is based on one particular CEZMS mission station in Khammammet, a border region between Hyderabad State and British India.

In the introduction chapter, I mapped the field. The context has several layers that must be closely studied to unravel its intrinsic complexities. The politics and geographical dynamics of Hyderabad state differ significantly from those of British India. Missionaries were accepted into the region as they provided medicine and education to the communities. Missionaries had their due share of challenges regarding the propagation and promotion of Christianity. There was initial resistance from the locals, but plagues, floods, and famines created opportunities for missionaries to win the natives' trust. Hyderabad State is known for its abundant natural minerals and financial resources. However, during plagues and pandemics, the missionaries provided the needed medication. In times of flood, people received shelter and food during famine.

¹ Upasana Mahanta, "Does Feminist Historiography Have An Emancipatory Potential?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 54, no. 31(August, 2019): 1 – 7.

Hyderabad State was known for its social reforms, literary movements, and guerrilla warfare. However, women were restricted to specific spaces and exploited in multiple ways. Due to the exploitation of labour, heavy taxation, and the caste system, several groups within the social system seek their fundamental human rights and dignity. Native women were the initial contacts of the missionaries to engage with such communities and reach the women in the secluded spaces. The Dalit and other oppressed caste groups benefited from missionary work. Women found the mission stations as rescue homes. Foreign missionaries used these native women as agents to enter the native households.

We read through several pieces of literature written on Christian mission, Gender, and colonial history in different contexts. This literature provided information and tools for my research. They also laid a path to read through and unravel various layers and issues related to my field of research. Researchers have worked in this field in multiple contexts, both in India and abroad. This research can be seen as the first of its kind as it concentrates on the work of Christian Native Women in Nizam's state. Research that happened in line with my thoughts or related to this field usually occurred in the context of British India. This research's uniqueness is that information is gathered through fieldwork documenting the oral stories of the native women who worked in the CEZMS mission station in Khammammet. The information collected from the field is juxtaposed with the reports in the archives in that specific period of that location. During the fieldwork, oral narratives and testimonies from the native Christian women workers' families are collected. Some handwritten history documents that some women documented for themselves were in the process. Family-published historical narratives were also published and circulated

privately among family and friends. The missing links within the archival documentation were connected through the information gathered from oral histories and other information collected from the field.

As mentioned earlier, this research identified the native women working in the various CEZMS mission stations in India by their names. From the names collected, the following observation can be drawn. When native women enter the mission station, their initial identity will be their names. Usually, their native religious names were replaced with Christian names. The names are in line with their ability to work and their spirituality. Martha's name is given to duty-minded women. If there are two sisters, they are named Mary and Martha. If it is daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, it will be Ruth and Naomi.

Some Christian names were given entirely new names. However, the Christian name was added as a suffix or prefix for the women converted from a dominant caste, retaining their caste names. Sometimes, this format can even be observed when women convert from the Muslim community—by having their caste or religious names. Missionaries use these women as a point of entry to that caste or religious people; for women converted from Malas-Madigas and other Dalit communities, a new Christian name is given without reference to the original name. These names gave them a new identity and a positive move to eliminate their discriminated self and embrace a dignified self. Some women's names were not fully mentioned, but only abbreviations like B.S. or K.S. were used. The researcher tried to get their full names in the field research but could not get their original or full names.

Some foreign missionaries adopted children from orphan or destitute homes within the mission stations. Many of them are single women who came to India as missionaries.

When they returned to their country, they kept the native Bible women or other native workers as caretakers or guardians. During the fieldwork, I had the opportunity to meet some of the kids adopted by missionaries, and their narratives were documented. I collected some handwritten documents that were not available in the archives. Through one handwritten copy, I could locate the identity and contribution of one woman, Annamma, who appeared in all annual reports but was not mentioned anywhere.

Further, the challenges women faced in England, in one way or another, were similar to the discrimination and challenges women faced in India. The form and execution of discrimination are different. To escape those discriminative social structures, several English women opted to go and work as missionaries in British colonies. The foreign missionaries may appear superior to the native women by social and administrative hierarchy—however, foreign missionaries identified with the native women with various issues. Gender discrimination is the same, but only the modes of discrimination change.

Middle-class English women opted to work in the mission fields as they acquired respectability through their work. Mission stations provided foreign missionaries with space and a band of workers working to make their lives comfortable. They cannot even dream of this luxury in their own countries. Their work was seasonal. They had their summer break at hill stations and furloughed yearly to their respective countries. On the other hand, native women work throughout the year in all seasons with a meagre payment.

As observed in the literature review, several methodological tools are employed from the previous research. They are used to study the field and the narratives collected from it. Interviews were conducted both formally and informally and sometimes as a group. I have been to the field for some information with some ideas, but a piece of totally different

information may have emerged during the interviews. What is reported in the archival reports is usually correct but very superficial or filtered. They are partially written, and several native women's identities are entirely ignored.

The main focus of this dissertation is writing women's narratives that have been gathered through various interactions but are not discussed or documented in the archival reports. Reconstructing another discourse is necessary, as Foucault proposes, to reclaim the incessant speech that emerges from within the voice that one hears, the silent murmurs, and the tiny, invisible text that flows between and occasionally collides with them.² I tried to locate and identify the muted voices considered insignificant at a given point in time and history. If these life narratives are not documented now, we may have lost them forever. The resources collected from the field are cross-checked with documents from the archives. In the process, it was noticed that Bible women who are alive in people's minds today are not recorded or given their due recognition. Their voices and life stories are now documented as they did not find space in the missionary correspondence.

I also included a few of the conversion narratives of men who converted from various religious, political, and caste backgrounds. Native missionary women used this conversion narrative to attract people of that group by sharing their testimonies. Some women even use their own caste identity to enter the homes of people in their communities.

When the thought or zeal for missionary work started to sprout in women's minds in England, they initially chose the ghettos within London as their initial field of work. In Raynard's work, we can observe class division and gender discrimination within a mission agency - elite-class women collected or held the funds and supervised middle-class

² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 27.

women's work. The middle-class women were the supervisors for the working-class women who were encouraged to work in their locations to sensitise their communities. There were so many trust issues due to the class differences and backgrounds they associate with. Most foreign women missionaries' women who opted to work in British colonies were from the middle or working classes. But when they came to the mission stations in India, the foreign missionaries enjoyed comfort and respect like the elite class, which they could not expect or afford in their own countries.

The missionary reports found in the archives are closely examined to determine the degree of portrayal of native Christian women in these writings. Texts are global, as Edward Said notes; they are events to some extent, and although they may seem to reject it, they are a part of human existence, the social environment, and, of course, the historical periods in which they are situated and understood.³ I also problematized the minimal way in which their contribution is limited, their presence is blurred, and their voices are muted. These realities should be taken into consideration using critique and critical consciousness. Further, we cannot club and conclude that the mission work is part of the imperialist agendas. Several committed missionaries fought against the imperialists and casteists.

Postcolonial critiques focused on how colonial ideologies are traced in mission documentation, publishing, and preservation. However, mission documentation cannot be viewed entirely as colonial text. Initially, missionaries entered the colonies with a Eurocentric mind-set. Their long-term interactions with the natives changed their attitude. Some of the personal correspondence and reports have these interactions. Their exposure

³ Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 4 – 5.

to the natives brought multiple complexities concerning their work ethic and beliefs to the forefront.

India being a land of multiple religions and philosophies, the dominant caste Hindus vehemently opposed Christianity. Families were broken when dominant caste men were converted to Christianity. Women were seen as stumbling blocks or hindrances to men. A woman whose husband accepted Christianity is considered a widow. Due to rigid social and caste structures, the men and the families were expelled from the community or the caste. The mission stations become a refuge space for those rejected from the community. Khammammet mission station had several men and women from other mission stations. At the same time, people from Khammammet were sent to different regions, such as Kerala or even northern India. We located the family history of a man who was kept in the mission station for a few years. The wife did not have access to her husband, but after an extended period, she got united back with her husband. Women faced a lot of shame and sadness when their husbands converted to Christianity from the family and community. On the other hand, the conversion narrative on the Dalit communities was the opposite. They were converted as masses, families, villages, or caste groups. Converting a Hindu caste was a colossal task accomplishment for missionaries. That is why their conversion stories are elaborately narrated with names and locations.

The missionaries struggle when they document the conversion narratives because these narratives must influence the funding agencies and donors. The report they construct is not just for information or to impact the people's faith but to inspire them to fund more mission activities. Several reports are reedited multiple times to make them more attractive to the readers.

Though they promoted love and brotherhood, racial hierarchies were part of their writing and living. There is a clear segregation of power between foreign–native, women, leader-followers, etc. The natives were nameless and faceless figures in the mission documents. The foreign missionaries were sometimes pressured to write emotionally packed pathetic narratives. The images on the fundraising receipt books with short records depict the painful conditions in which the natives survive. The more painful the narrative and the more pathetic the picture, the more it impacted the donor. The narratives usually have adventurous content. They do not report negative accounts and failures. On the other hand, gruesome religious practices and social evils like caste and sati are elaborately reported.

Four women spaces are identified in the mission stations, providing the needed workforce for missionaries. The native women entered different mission compounds as victims of exploitation or refugees. As time progressed, when they became Bible women, they became rescuers of foreign and native women. Bible women were the translators and primary language teachers for the missionaries. They are the source of entry to the native households. Bible women rescue their fellow natives by helping them escape the clutches of disease, poverty, and exploitation. Native mission workers and Bible women had the agency and space to negotiate with the missionaries on behalf of their fellow natives. They recommend various works within the mission station to the missionaries. As observed, the converts' home is the initial entry point for native women into a mission station. From there, women are outsourced into different spaces based on their identity (caste) and intellect. Higher caste women are usually employed as Bible women in Hospitals or as school teachers, e.g., Rukmini ammagaru and Seethammagaru. My grandmother Rachel

was a choir leader in the mission church and was later sent for teacher training in Machilipatnam.

At Khammammet Mission Station, Dalit women, destitute women, and disabled women are the primary workforce in the lace school. In my initial interaction with Mrs. Leelavathi, she mentioned a differently abled woman, Chapidi Miriyamma, who was a dwarf. She used to sit in a corner of the mission hospital and stitch the torn bed sheets and other clothes in the hospital. I tried contacting various sources to document her narrative but found none. But I located a distant relative, her cousin, and had a phone conversation. This respondent was very old and knew very little about Miriyamma. She was surprised when I enquired about her sister's life and work. She vaguely remembered that her sister was left at the mission station due to her disability. Through her sister, they received medical help.

People have vague memories of some women in mission work working in the Khammammet mission stations. Following are a few names collected during fieldwork. Saramma, Ruthamma, Jayamma, and Kamalamma are other women workers. Sometimes, the women's names are pronounced differently, and people find it difficult to identify them. Due to a lack of information, their narratives are not written. I even approached some families based on their surnames but could not get much information about them. Malogi Bhushamma worked as a Bible woman at Lacy School. Her family has some memories of her sharing about how the lacework of the Khammammet Lace Institute was sent to the Queen of England.

The steady decline in the number of foreign missionaries and a steep increase in the number of native workers can be observed in the statistical data prepared. The mission

hospital was usually closed in the summer, and the missionaries went to the hill station for vacation. During this period, the Bible women and other native workers continued their house visits and gave basic medical help to the needy. However, with the increase of the native workers and the appointment of Dr. Abraham, the hospital was kept open even during the summer season. Despite their tireless work in all seasons, the native workers are looked down on by the locals. Dr. Abraham mentions in her narrative the struggle she faced when she was made in charge after Dr. Longmire's retirement.

The locals started to demand and dictate as the in charge was a woman and a native. Foreign medical staff, both men and women, have the highest regard. Locals judged and accepted medical staff based on their colour. Even though people do not understand English, they prefer to be touched and treated by a foreign doctor. However, with the increase of native workers in the mission stations, there were more opportunities for others to be involved and work in various spaces. People within the mission station are trained and placed in respective spaces per their needs and demands. Later, the foreign missionaries were confined to more indoor and administrative work. Native workers handled fieldwork and other outdoor activities entirely, and foreign missionaries were invited to special occasions like baptisms and other official ecclesial activities.

Caste was an essential and exciting feature within a mission station. The uniqueness of Khammammet mission station is that, for the first time, there is a mention of 'Kamma Mass conversion.' Mass conversions are usually attributed or associated with Dalit or tribal communities in India. People from the Kamma caste group were attracted by missionary work, and many converted to Christianity. Many Kamma community people got baptised in villages like Gollapali and Venkatapuram. These are first-generation converts from that

particular caste. During my fieldwork, I observed and noted that second and present-day third-generation people disassociated themselves from Christianity. Reasons are not mentioned, or the respondents restrained themselves from responding. 'Marriage' can be seen as a reason for the later generations to move away from Christianity. The field report noted that Seethamma was known for finding alliances for people within particular high-caste groups. Kamma people from other villages stayed in her quarters in the mission hospital. Caste was prevalent, active, and well-maintained even though people got converted to Christianity.

Bible women's adventures and tear-filled emotional narratives have immense demand and readership. They are always expected to be healthy, active, and available at all times and in all seasons. If any woman was inactive or showed disinterest, they were labelled unfit or moved to a different field of work. Native women provide cheap labour for mission agencies. In their initial years, they are supplied with basic food and shelter. They are paid an honorarium instead of a regular salary. As years passed, the native workers received wages based on their work. Lacework provided several natives with steady incomes during the time of famine. On the other hand, foreign missionaries, both men and women, had salaries and other privileges like paid travel, holidays in hill stations, and retirement benefits after returning to their homeland. Mrs. Leelavathi, in her closing words, expresses her deepest pain about how she abruptly retired without any retirement benefits.

Not all women were comfortable or positive about becoming Bible women or working in the mission stations. They are shared within the mission stations for two reasons: firstly, to train them with other women to improve their language expertise.

Women from Hyderabad were sent to other north Indian mission stations as they knew Urdu and Hindi. Secondly, to move them away from their families who force them to return to their religion. Widows, in particular, find solace in mission stations as they face immense exploitation in society and at home.

The following are the five characteristics of “native women” that help us understand their contribution to CEZMS and the Christian mission in Hyderabad and India.

6.2. Women of Work

Native women, mainly Bible women’s work, are the foundation for the success of missionary engagements in India and other parts of the world. Though they faced discrimination due to gender and caste, they accomplished their work with vigour and vitality. Dalit women face discrimination because of their caste. The higher caste women do face discrimination because of their widowhood. But still, they were the channel through which many high castes and Dalits converted to Christianity. They work in conflict zones where they are attacked or threatened when people get converted.

6.2. Women of Worth

Native women workers like teachers, medical staff, and lace workers in the mission station are valuable to the missionaries. They are an asset to the missionary and the whole missionary society. Their absence is noted in the mission reports when missionaries complain when a Bible woman cries when they die. More funds were demanded from mission agencies for the appointment of native women workers. There were mission stations that were revived with their appointment. They are valuable because they provide cheap labour, and their reports influence the donor.

6.3. Women of Witness

Native women workers have their testimonies of witnesses. After joining the mission station, how have they been transformed, and how have the missionaries' influences and training transformed them into new beings? Missionary journals have some of these transformation narratives documented with photographs. Some reports narrate the astonishment of families and the community when they saw their people as medical workers and teachers. Though people were suspicious of the missionaries and their work, witnessing the native women's transformation, they got confidence in them.

6.4. Women of Wisdom

Native women enter mission stations as ignorant or illiterate people. With the opportunities provided and the various training they receive, they turn into women of wisdom and multitasking. The majority of women who are trained in the mission station have both Bible and medical knowledge. When they go to the field, the native women workers cater to the medical needs of the people. They provide essential medication and refer them to the mission hospitals if needed. Mrs. Leelavathi had some training in herbal medication, and people used to come to her for prayer and medicine. They have the basic skills of embroidery and lace-making. This makes them self-sufficient to survive on their own in a crisis. Even though they did not know how to read and write, some women workers memorised several Bible verses and songs just by listening. These women are not just knowledgeable but also creative.

6.5. Women of War

This particular theme is not elaborated on in this work. The mission pamphlets at war communicate the “mixed feelings” of the natives towards foreign missionaries. During the war, the missionaries made unique pamphlets to narrate how native women thought and supported their men at war. The pamphlets carried information about the native mind-set, conversations with missionaries, and their support to their masters. There are questions raised by the natives about when the war ends and why Christians are fighting among themselves.

However, women in the mission stations played a crucial role during World Wars. They worked overtime and encouraged local women to work to provide food and clothing supplies to the men in the warzone. The Bible women played the role of counsellors for the bereaved families who lost their people in war. They worked as mediators between the locals and the foreigners to get information about the whereabouts of people in war. Women from various CEZMS mission stations in India send curry powders, spices, and blankets and contribute to the war fund from their meagre earnings. The missionary reports have information about the natives’ curiosity about war news during the First and Second World Wars. The internal war between the Nizam and Indian Union between 1947 and 50 revealed some interesting facts. The missionary reports and personal letters in this period depict the political conditions and the role of missionaries, mainly native agents. Bible women and native workers played pivotal roles during military operations. Local people have immense trust in the mission station and missionaries. When the Indian army marched into Khammammet, it was local lady missionary Miss. Tate walked with the mission workers, requesting the locals leave their houses.

Further, though missionary wives labour alongside their husbands equally, their representation and role are confined to the role of a good mother and supportive wife. The subaltern native representation and a white lady representation in reports look identical. Because their contribution is commendable, but representation is confined. This research study provides some key ideas which can be worked on for future projects. Several women's names were identified from the mission reports. Historical narratives can be constructed around each woman, specifically in that period in that mission station. This research concentrated more on CEZMS mission stations; the methodological insights can be used to explore other denominational mission centres.

I further intend to explore the gender discrimination white women missionaries faced in India and England, focusing more on single white women's contributions to the Khammammet mission station. I have now begun to question whether the white women had the same freedom as the native women, particularly concerning their mobility. Native Christian women gained freedom, exited their restrictive spaces, and moved freely. At the same time, white women were confined to mission stations or travelled only through specific routes.

For future research, the four spaces identified within a mission station can be exclusively worked upon based on the region and politics of that time. Different denominational mission fields within Hyderabad State can be studied from a historical gender perspective. Hyderabad State is a land of social movements. Several social reformers were educated at the mission stations. Their contribution and influence in that socio-political context concerning the missionary education system can be explored.

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Shame, Survival and Social Security – Life of Manual Scavengers – A Case Study

John Basy Paul,

Research Scholar - Ph. D Gender Studies University of Hyderabad

Abstract:

Yemmiganur is a town in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh, this particular community of 20 families which I am going to present involved in scavenging work for generations. They are basically called Safai Karmacharis or manual scavengers; in a crude native language they are called 'Paaki'. They belong to the *Madiga* community, a sub caste in the Dalits, the point to be noted here is *Malas* and *Madigas* are considered as marginalized communities as they are Dalits, because of their profession this particular community is considered as 'marginal' by both *Malas* and *Madigas*. Men do the job of cleaning of the septic tanks and drainages whereas the women basically clean the toilets in the schools, panchayat offices, theaters etc. They are denied of their human dignity and the work they do is always considered as 'Dirty'. Children do face various sorts of discrimination and they don't even reveal their identity because of the shame and discrimination they face once they reveal their identity.

This paper is an attempt to understand the core ground realities in which the Manuel scavengers survive. It expounds the various forms of discrimination they faced in the society, occupational hazards and exploitation of Labor. It also critically looks into the various government campaigns and how the manual scavenging community perceives and interprets these campaigns.

Qualitative research is done through personal and group interviews to understand the 'lived' realities of the people. The community plight is analyzed through the methodological concepts like 'intersectionality' to unravel and understand the various layers of discrimination they face on the basis of caste, marginalization they experience in social localities, stigmatization they undergo because of their profession and exploitation of their labor.

Key words:

Manual Scavengers, Marginalization, Discrimination, Intersectionality

Introduction:

This paper provides an overview of the life and living conditions of manual scavenging community in Yemmiganoor mandal, Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh. It is my experience of working and interacting with this community a decade ago that led me back to the same field to interact and understand their conditions in contemporary times. The paper discusses the change in modes of discrimination and exploitation the community faces today. It investigates the factors that confine them to this profession irrespective of the low income and high risk at work. The primary aim of this paper is to bring into forefront the voices of the community not as 'numbers' in a survey but as the 'members' who contribute for our societal survival. This paper is an attempt to understand the core ground realities in which the manual scavengers work for their survival. It expounds the various forms of shame, stigmatization and discrimination they faced in the society, occupational hazards and exploitation of labor. It also critically looks into the various government campaigns and how the manual scavenging community perceives and interprets these campaigns. The research is done through informal personal interaction and group interaction within a particular community of 20 families. Intersectionality as methodological tool is used to study and unravel the various layers of discrimination they face on the basis of caste, marginalization they experience in social localities, stigmatization they undergo because of their profession and exploitation of their labor.

Merchandized Mission:

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) with its iconic logo of Gandhi specs which was launched on 2 October 2014 was one of the most projected and proclaimed projects of the current government. The whole country started to campaign and contemplate on 'Cleaning India'. 'Cleaning' got a celebrity touch and was made fashionable with the brand ambassadors campaigning and media hype. The main aim of the campaign was to make India open defecation free (ODF) and construction of maximum toilets in both urban and rural India. Pledges were made, billions of rupees are invested, a million of toilets are constructed. Several communities stood still as silent spectators particularly the Manual Scavengers when celebrities along with the government official started to do fashion parade with brooms and baskets.

The Gandhi specs frame in the logo is also problematic as it reiterates and supports the caste ideology and caste-based professions. The government resurrects and instills this thought back into the people's minds in a different form. As Bezawada Wilson rightly said Swachh Bharat Mission 'represents the toilet users there is no concern for toilet cleaners. He further stated that Swachh implies 'pure' and it is scheme for 'pure' people which does not include people cleaning India for the past thousands of years. It is basically an ideological problem where the 'pure' represent the dominant caste and 'pollution' represents the dalits.¹ The government ended up making yet another merchandized mission where there were billions of rupees wasted in

¹ <http://www.governancenow.com/views/interview/swachh-bharat-represents-toilet-users-not-cleaners-bezawada-wilson> (accessed on 23/03/2018)

propagation and promotion. In such a context the life, living conditions and survival mechanisms this particular community of 20 families employed in a particular location brings into forefront several issues related to Manuel scavengers.

Location and Life:

The community which I am discussing in this paper is around twenty families who are staying in this particular location for the past four generations. Their typical residential locality has no proper roads, drains, water supply, electricity or even proper toilet facilities. There is usually no supply of piped water and where it exists; there are not more than one or two water outlets for the entire colony. The basic residential needs of the community are never met by the municipality. The location is unhygienic it is a segregated caste-based inhabitation. The elders do remember their work in dry toilets at several parts of the town. Dry toilets don't have proper water flushing system people use them and manual scavengers have to clean. The equipment they use for cleaning was very primitive, such as simple brooms, baskets and spades. The community is located nearby open gutters and drainage canals. Majority of present generation are illiterates or drop out from the school between 6th to 10th classes. When enquired a youth why he dropped out of the school, he narrates about how his father became sick because of the scavenging work and he has to take up his father's work to support his family. The average life expectancy is as low as 45-50 years and even if they cross that age they are affected with some terminal illness. The children of scavenger community will join parents in scavenging work even before they complete 14 years of age and consequently drop out from schooling. Generations after generation of manual scavengers have engaged themselves in manual scavenging as their traditional job.

Modes and Methods of Work:

Midnight Job (Septic Tank Cleaning)

The modes and methods of work are very primitive in its nature. Usually in the urban context there are professional septic tank cleaners who come with sophisticated equipment like the sucking and jetting machines and do the cleaning. Septic tank cleaning particularly in this area is done between 11pm and 4am and it is done manually. They explained the cleaning process as follows, "at around 11 pm around 4 to 5 of us will form as a group. This is a convenient time because the roads are clear and there will not be much disturbance. First, we rent a rickshaw and two big drums (container), buckets we take from our home (pointing out to one of the buckets nearby). With the small buckets we fill the big drums manually lifting the filth from the septic tank and pour into the big container once it is filled, we will take it in the rickshaw and empty it in the town outskirts. The process of emptying septic tank continues like this till everything is cleared it's a time consuming and painful. To avoid the smell, we all consume alcohol then only we can get into the septic tank. Even though we labored the whole night when it comes to payment there will be a lot of bargains. The amount we receive should be shared among four or five of us along with the rickshaw charges and big

containers rent. After working for a whole night when all expenses are deducted, we hardly get 400 to 500 per head.”

On the other hand, as per the Rules under the employment as Manuel Scavengers Act and Rehabilitation Act 2013 no person shall be allowed to clean manually the septic tank. As per the law any person who engages directly or indirectly are punishable and imprisoned up to two years or fine or both. The recent incident in Bengalure when an apartment people engaged three men to clean the manhole and all the three died due to asphyxia. An FIR was registered against the association members under IPC 304A (causing death by negligence) read with section 34 (acts done by several person in furtherance of common intention)². As per the Manuel scavengers act they should be given equipment such as gumboots, gloves, masks soap and disinfectant like Dettol. This community people usually clean their body with kerosene to avoid the foul smell and skin infections. But excessive usage of kerosene and alcohol contributes to terminal illnesses and early deaths.

Theatres and Schools:

The youth within the community form pairs and clean the toilets and bathroom in cinema theatres in the town. Every theatre has 3 to 4 cinemas show per day, before and after every show they have to clean the toilets. They are paid monthly around Rs 3000 – Rs 4000. The youth who opted for this work are usually dropped out from the school to support the family. One of the youths explains, “When my dad was seriously ill I took this job to support the family now apart from this I don’t know any other work to do. If at all we are absent for our work there will be a deduction in our salary. So, we request our friends to go on our behalf, by all means we make sure our work is being done.

Sulabh complex and Individual homes:

The community people also engage in cleaning the Sulabh complex which is public toilet complexes established for the community health, hygiene and sanitation on pay and use method. This is the only place where they feel a sense of safety and security at work as there is continuous flowing water and they are provided with all required tools, toilet cleaners and lotions. Apart from these they also clean the individual house toilets for which they are paid a very meager amount. Like the theatre few of the youth also engage themselves to clean the school and college toilets in the town. The contractors who own the bus stand contract employ these people to clean the toilets. The average pay in the Sulabh complex, schools/colleges and bus stand if it is on a daily basis is around Rs3000- Rs4000.

² Sarayu Srinivasan, “Know the Law before you call someone to clean your sewage line and septic tanks”

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/know-law-you-call-someone-clean-your-sewage-lines-and-septic-tanks-48012> (Accessed 24/03/18)

Occupational Hazards:

Those who survive doing this work day in and day out frequently contract skin diseases, colds, asthma and tuberculosis. Scavenger's handling garbage, human excreta, filth and other similar substances run the risk of death and diseases. The risk factor of their work is greater as compared to other workers. "How many days they could not bring food to their lips; how the stench of the shit was constantly in their nostrils; how they were constantly spitting out of shame and indignity"³. Further they mention about two of their relatives who died recently as follows "one of our uncles who was alcoholic had a severe breathing problem because of the constant inhaling of the foul smell. Another woman had a liver enlargement problem and they were not able to afford the medication and just waited for her to die. She was working as a Manuel scavenger for the dry toilets for a long time.

Role of Women:

In the past there were dry toilets in the various parts of the town. The members of this community are allotted to clean the dry toilets this job was particularly done by women. Though the dry toilets does not exist anymore those particular places are still know by the woman's name that used to clean the toilet. The community still has the distorted memory of the women carrying the human excreta in baskets on their head. But now the men of the community claim that their women are not allowed to go out and working as scavengers anymore. One of them says, "We now prefer our women to stay home and take care of the family we will earn and bring they have to look after the home and children. If and only if the husband is expired very young and a woman have little children who cannot work, then such women can work till the child grow and take up the work. If we if prefer our women to be home." This is in interesting development I noticed with is different from my early visit. The community still has the historical memory of the places which are named after their foremother who cleaned them. On contrary to to today's men discouraged their women from doing this heinous work.

Egalitarian community:

This community of 20 families is closely knitted which provides social security for every individual. They marry within the community and relatives so that they all stay together. They share their resources, work and wages. The people who are in need are supported by giving more work to earn more. There is no greed factor but there is much of mutuality. The youth are encouraged to study if they don't, they are also allotted some work to earn and support the family. They celebrate all the major Hindu festival but if at all there are some clashes or disturbances during any festival, they will not do it again considering it as a bad omen.

³Geetha Ramaswamy. *India Stinking: Manuel Scavengers in Andhra Pradesh and their Work* (Pondicherry: Navayana Publications, 2005) viii

Methodological intervention and analysis:

Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality theory in 1989 to explain the interconnected nature of being black and being women to discuss black feminism. Intersectionality provides a framework for explaining various social divisions and elaborates on how these social divisions like race, gender, age and citizenship among other positions people differently in the world. Intersectionality as a tool can be used in different context with different struggles against the oppression of structural violence. Collins and Bilge elaborates “intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of the social division, be it race or gender or class but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves”.⁴ They refer to the work of Savitribai Phule who political activism surpassed all the social divisions. She was not confined to one category but several axes of social division like caste, gender, religion and economic disadvantaged or class were confronted. Collins and Bilge observes that the pioneer of intersectionality theory Kimberle Crenshaw “is clearly advocating for intersectionality as a social justice construct, not as a theory of truth disconnection from social justice concerns.”⁵

When the work and living conditions of the community are studied through the lens of intersectionality theory, we can have a more in-depth understanding of the interconnectedness of various social factors and divisions that push them to the fringes of the society. The community belongs to the schedule caste *madiga* sub caste but because of the nature of the work they are discriminated by both *malas* and *madigas* communities. The community still carries a sense of historical shame as they narrate the work of their ancestor in dry toilets, which is the most heinous job that denies an individual’s his/her human identity, rights and dignity. Caste is the prime factor of discrimination and profession allocation. The interconnectedness of caste with the societal location, stigma attached to that particular location, an individual experiences from birth and nature of work they do contributes to the shaping of a individual self and identity. The youth of the current generation though make and attempt develop the family demands push them into the same job for survival.

⁴ Patricia Hill Collins, Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality Key Concepts* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016)

https://books.google.co.in/books?id=wWUnDQAAQBAJ&pg=PT3&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed on 22/03/2018)

⁵ Kalpana Kannabiran, Padmini Swaminathan, ed. *Re-Presenting Feminist Methodologies: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis group, 2017) 3-4

Gender is important as men who are involved in this work do share their experiences where their masculinity goes unacknowledged or ignored because of their profession. It is usually women who employ them to clean the toilets at homes for which they are meagerly paid after a long bargain. The profession and nature of work strips off men their masculinity which they extensively exercise at home and in community. On the other hand, though women contributed to the family income in the past by directly involving and sharing the work load. In the present times men confines women to home space, making them dependents by restricting their wider social interaction and mobility.

In the recent times there are several private people from other places coming in doing the same job with sophisticated equipment which in turn directly effecting the livelihood of this community people. The communities though have all the skills but lack of resources both financial and technical makes them vulnerable.

To conclude though India claims to move towards digitalization it is still considered as the one of the dirtiest countries in the world. Construction of toilets doesn't solve the problem but aggravates it. The government's merchandized mission needs to have a perspective change. Where they get rid of their caste teachings of purity and pollution and socialize everyone to learn to respect and clean the plate they eat and the commode they shit. The political indifference and societal discrimination do not restrict the Manuel scavenging community survival. The community lives by their rules as Malcolm X rightly said "Don't let anyone who is oppressing us ever lay the ground rules. Don't go by their game; don't play a game by their rules. Let them know that this is a new game, we've got new rules."⁶ Bezawada Wilson reiterated it different when he denied the Padma Award "you make my own people clean your shit and offer me the Padma award. How can I accept this? I am fighting for liberation of my own people and that liberation will liberate the whole India. We want this azaadi (freedom)".⁷ Though they carry the historical shame from the past they survive in the present in midst of insecurities with their egalitarian ethos. They not just clean but also teach the society, their ghettos have a historical importance and global significance.

⁶ Virginia Fabella, Serio Torres, ed., *Doing Theology in a Divided World* (New York: Obris Books, 1985), p. 99.

⁷ <http://www.governancenow.com/views/interview/swachh-bharat-represents-toilet-users-not-cleaners-bezwada-wilson> (accessed on 23/03/2018)

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