

Monarch of Telugu Christian Literature

Purushottam Chowdhary

Author

Babu John Chowdhary

(Telugu)

Translated into English by

Dr. K. Job Sudarshan, Ph.D

Biography of the Monarch of Telugu Christian Literature
Purushottam Chowdhary

by
Babu John Chowdhury (in Telugu)

Translated into English by *Dr. K. Job Sudarshan*

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Foreword

Praise be to our Almighty Lord God.

Purushottam Chowdhary, the Bard, Poet, Lyricist, Writer, Catechist, Pastor and Evangelist, is a familiar name for most of the Telugu speaking Christians all over the world since his Keertanalu are sung in all established Churches. He is known as “Andhra Kraistava Kavi Sarvabhoomudu” (Emperor of Telugu Christian Literature) and “Andhra Kraistava Kavita Pitamahudu” (Father of Telugu Christian Poetry).

Several writers and historians, both Indian and English, have written the life histories of some Indian Christian servants of God. But almost all of them were ignorant of this famed Telugu Christian servants of God. So, many of the historians/readers are not aware of the works of the poet. This may be because this poet’s life history was written in Telugu by his grandson, Babu John Chowdhary and was published in the year 1902. This book is available in the archives of the British Library in London.

This 1902 edition was revised by the author and was published in 1933, the Centenary Year of the Poet’s baptism. This revised version was reprinted several times, and the latest was published in 2015 by my cousin James Jayasheel Chowdhary. Earlier he has published all the works of the poet-writer in two volumes on the event of Bi-centenary celebrations of the poet in 2003-04.

In the light of the foregoing brief content about the poet, I have ventured to get the life history of the poet-writer translated and published in English which could enable the historians and readers to know about the poet and his service to God facing many odds and hostile events in his life.

I express my sincere gratitude to Bro Job Sudarshan and his associates Mr Elia Tadikonda, Mr Praveen Dasari and Mr Prabhat Kumar Kaki, for their excellent translation and my heart-felt thanks to all those who have cooperated in publishing this work.

With my loving greetings and to all readers.

Dr. Sudhansu Kumar Chowdhary, M.B.B.S

President

Prasanna Memorial Baptist Church trust

Jeypore, Orissa

Introduction

By Sri Sri Rajah M. Bhujanga Rao Bahadur, F. A. U
Zamindar of Lakkavaram, Vella, etc., Estates.

(Ashtavadhani¹, author of a 100 Telugu works, Obtainer of Royal appreciation and a certificate of merit from the Government and a Gold medal for translating the New Testament into Telugu verse).

I read almost all the works of Rev Purushotham Chowdhary. He is a true Christian of the highest order. The very fact that almost all the different Denominational Churches of Andhra Desa adopted many of his devotional songs in their worship, is a clear proof of his great merit and non- sectarian Christian spirit. In Telugu, he proved himself a poet of the classical order. His verses are lucid and run like a natural flow on an ebbing river. He is able to express his thoughts very clearly and no where can we find him blinking to find a suitable word, or phrase to express his inner thoughts. He has done a great service to the Christian community and to the Telugu public at large, and I am sure his name will last in this country as long as the Telugu people exist. It's the duty of every Andhrite to join hands in commemorating his name to perpetuity.

The work Mr. John Chowdhary, his grandson, enlightening the aristocracy of India with Christian principles, is well known to all the general public, as the Founder and Honorary Secretary of the Mission to the Aristocracy of India. It is quite fitting that this God loving grandson should take up to write and produce the life of so great a grandfather whose name is well known to all the Telugu Christian public. I sincerely wish that the publication of the work proves a great success. I also pray that the Lord would spare Mr. John Chowdhary, for many years to come to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and his Countrymen.

Ellore 2.2.1935

S/d *Rajah M. Bhujanga Rao*

-
1. *A scholar who faces 8 learned men and women, answering their questions about descriptions, teasers, speaking out poems line after line, answering unconnected witty speech, a total of 8 highly complicated procedures, over a period of a few hours extempore.*



A sketch of the late Rev Purushotham Chowdhary

The late Rev Purushotham Chowdhary who was a minister of the gospel for 55 years both in Andhra Desa and Orissa, was born in 1803. He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, in Madanapur of Parlakimidi taluk, Ganjam. His ancestors migrated there from Midnapore district of West Bengal and some worked as Court Poets, Revenue Officers or Mirasidars of Tembur muta under the then Rajah's of Parlakimidi. They belonged to the gotra Bhardwaja, Angeerasa, and Barhaspatya of Hindu Rishis of Gowda¹ Brahman sect, known as Sistas or orthodox people.

Purushotham Chowdhary was a poet in Andhra language and was conversant with Oriya, Bengali, Hindustani. Very early in life he studied Vedanta literature², denounced caste system and decided to become a naked sadhu (Avadhoota).

But God wanted him for the furtherance of His kingdom. In 1825 he found a Christian tract probably one from Carey's press at Serampore (*Sri Rama Puram*) and made a persistent search after that religion. Mrs Helen Knott of Srikakulam Regiment, gave him a copy of the gospel of St Luke when he visited her in 1833.

He found Christ more fully thereby and was introduced to Major Brett, the Commanding Officer at Vishakhapatnam, the same month. He gave Purushotham a copy of the New Testament, which he read with great pleasure, and against the wishes of his relatives he decided to become a Christian. His wife Radha Mani Devi Chaudharani gave her consent to follow him after some time.

In those early days, there were no Missionaries between Madras and Cuttack. On the invitation of Rev Charles Lacey of Cuttack Orissa Baptist Mission Purushotham Chowdhary decided to travel the 300-miles and removed his sacred thread on the 10th June 1833 and gave it to Major Brett. He travelled about 20 days and reached Cuttack and was

baptized by Rev Charles Lacey on the 6th October 1833, in the big tank called Gonga Mondir in Cuttack. He composed here his first Telugu hymn.

After staying there for some time, he went back to Vishakhapatnam, preaching the gospel at Puri and other Oriya centres, along the grand trunk road. He was met with bitter persecution while preaching the gospel and bore patiently. In 1834 he went to Madras, 500 miles with Major Brett, and preached the gospel there amidst great persecution.

He also travelled from there to Bellary over 400 miles and was there for some time with Rev John Reid of London Missionary Society (LMS). Towards the end of that year, he travelled over land from Bellary to Parlakimidi, nearly 1000 miles, preaching the gospel in all the towns and villages on the roadside, which were not then visited by any Christian Missionary or Preacher.

On his return, he was the guest of Captain Richard for eight months at Vishakhapatnam. In 1835, when Rev J. W. Gordon of LMS came there as Missionary, he helped him in preaching the gospel. His relatives treated him badly, but he was firm in faith. In 1836 his wife and little daughter Shanti Kumari Chowdhary (who afterwards became the wife of the late Ghonoshyam of Cuttack), followed him to Cuttack, where Mrs. Chowdhary was baptized on 3rd April 1836, by Rev A. Sutton.

Babu Purushotham Chowdhary was ordained on 24th April 1836 in Cuttack and was sent to Berhampur to start missionary work there. In 1836, he was invited by Justice E. Story of Srikakulam, to start missionary work there. And while he was working there accordingly, Rev S. S. Day of the American Baptist Mission arrived, to whom Purushotham was the first assistant. He returned to Berhampur in 1837 and worked there for 7 years and worked there with Rev. Isaac Stubbins.

He had a greivous temptation there but overcame it. He then composed hymns and poetry with great contrition of heart. He was invited back to Andhra Pradesh where he lived from 1845 to 1870.

His Children were employed and married at Cuttack.

Rev Purushotham Chowdhary travelled thousands of miles during those 27 years up to the end of Godavari district and preached the gospel. Many became believers of Christian faith in those years and he wrote several hymns and poetical works in Andhra language by which he had been known as the “Immortal Purushotham Chowdhary” and a memorial hall was built at Parlakimidi to perpetuate his memory.

He was Pastor of Orissa Baptist churches both at Berhampur and Cuttack, and his sermons in Oriya and Telugu as well as the earliest tracts and the new Testament he was given 100 years ago, have been still preserved.

He travelled long distances in Orissa also, as he had several relatives all over there. He was called to rest on the 24th August 1890 at Cuttack. A complete life of the poet is being prepared in English also.

New Orissa

16-12-34

1. *Bengali.*

2. *Sacred Hindu Religious literature found at the end of each of the four Vedas, otherwise known as Upanishads.*

Preface

My heavenly father who is rich in all glory and mercy, according to his exalted will, chose our humble Chowdhary family and gave the means of incorruptible salvation and heavenly dwelling to our ancestors, who strived to attain spiritual bliss by means of man-made ceremonial traditionalism and beliefs. He counted them worthy of the blessed and admirable state through faith in the propitiatory work of Jesus Christ. I have described briefly in this book, how God was pleased to bestow salvation to our ancestors in those dark and ignorant days.

Citing superiority of Clan, Gotra¹, Sutra², Pravara³, Veda⁴ and other causes of pride, a man possessed strong views in his own undisputed pre-eminence. This story is about how the light of Christ molded him into a worthy devotee, due to the glorious light he received. I heard the biography of my grandfather through my dear father in my childhood. Desiring to write the detailed story, I came across the condensed biography written by LMS missionary, Edward P. Rice, and was greatly encouraged.

When I came to Kakinada in 1900, I collected more instruments and autobiographical details, brought from Cuttack by late Rev Jonathan Birder, the grandson on Purushotham Chowdhary. In 1901, I could finish a sort of Biography and got 300 copies printed in Methodist Press in Madras.

However, some pet names of the family members were printed in this account, and there were a few other mistakes. Due to this, our relatives in Cuttack did not completely approve of this version. I had to travel thrice to Cuttack, and Berhampur, once to Nellore, nearly three thousand miles to gather more information and to get the biography written in English.

I pleaded with God constantly, for the success of this endeavor. During the time of Rev Hovel in Cuttack, I found an important instrument in the Mission library. I examined all the records of Purushotham, and acquired some essential items from my auntie Martha Burder. I obtained another

item from Mr Antarvedi's records from late R. Paramjyothi in Nellore. Oriya and Bengali people do not have surnames. Our poet was called Chowdhary Purushotham in those lands. This is not according to the tradition on the Bengalis. Hence on the request of the family, name of the poet is mentioned as "Purushotham Chowdhary" in this book. We do not have any relation with the 'Kamma' Chowdharys of Godavari area.

Since a part of this history was ready two years ago, if any detail is mentioned time and again I crave the pardon of the readers. Adhering to the Hindu doctrines and tenets for some time, Purushotham Chowdhary turned to Vedic contemplation, wore loin cloth, became an ascetic, and followed the extreme form of Saiva⁵ rituals.

He roamed burial grounds, caves and other lonely places, practiced Yoga, seeking to attain peace of mind. With no Missionaries or evangelists available, Purushotham had a vision of the divine light of the great Guru⁶. He renounced everything and the way in which he could find the "choicest pearl" and the "buried treasure" is truly amazing. Rev Archibald, the then Missionary in Srikakulam, wrote this to encourage me in this endeavor:

I highly appreciate what you are trying to do, to perpetuate the influence for good of such godly men as Purushotham, Jagannatham and Antarvedy. In this good work, we will help you with our prayers and by the purchase of your books when published (2nd August 1902).

This fired my enthusiasm, and I took pains to write and publish biographies of those men of God. I heard that a portrait of Purushotham in his old age is with Mr Dessa, a Missionary in Calcutta. It seems someone murdered him thus making it impossible for me to obtain the picture. After many prayers, I wrote to Mrs Dessa in Ongole, thus paving the way for this portrait to reach Cuttack from Calcutta. My brother Babu Daniel Chowdhary (Senior) sent it in my name. Messers Wheel and Cline, portrait painters in Madras carefully took a replica of this picture and sent it to me. I got the picture of Purushotham with the head gear from Madabathula

Brahmaji. I thank God for it. When the Andhra Christian Mahasabha decided to celebrate the birth centenary of the poet whose devotional hymns the Telugu Church had been using in worship, I have decided to publish an illustrated memorial biography.

In addition to this, much expenditure was incurred to enlarge the portrait, publish unpublished manuscripts, reprint “Nistara Ratnakaram,” “Kreestu Paratatvamu and Idol making,” to collect pictures, to pay the writers and proof readers of the biography, and other items. While I was praying for God’s help I was comforted by the advice and help of my dear friend Junior J. P. Kotilingam.

I am thankful to the following people who contributed towards the printing of the hymns and prose of Purushotham Chowdhary, on this occasion-

(Some of the contributions are shown in rupees, annas (16 annas per rupee, and paisa)

Rev F. C. Sackett, Methodist Mission. Rs 50

Dr. Dhanaraj Chowdhary, Cuttack. Rs 5

Ms. Dessa, Ongole. Rs 5

Srikakulam Baptist Church. Rs 5

Rev E. B. Bromly, Koyyalagudem. Rs.2

Sr K. G. Paul. Rs 5

Rev M. Narayana Rao. Rs 1

Dr Dayanidhi Patro, Amudalavalasa. Rs 5

Rev B. Subba Rayudu. Rs 1-9-00

Rev T. B. Joseph, T. B. Church, Rangoon. Rs 6

Ms. M. E. Archibald. Rs 5

G. John, Kakinada. Rs. 0-8

M. Nagabhushanam, Vishakhapatnam. Rs 3-2-00

Dr Satyanandam Jacob, Anakapalli. Rs 1-9-0
L. C. Horwill, Esq. ICS District Judge, Ganjam. Rs 12-8-00
Ongole Baptist Church. Rs 2
Vishakhapatnam Baptist Church. Rs 5
Narisipatnam Baptist Church. Rs 3-2-00
Rev J. B. McLaurin. Rs 5
D. Samuel, Tekkali. Rs 1-9-0
P Prakasam. Hasannabad. Rs 1
G. Paramanandam, Secretary, Dondapadu Baptist Church. Rs 6-4-00
Gooti London Mission. Rs 20
Challapalli Chinna Adeaiah, Challapalli Jangaiah. Rs 5
Mrs Prasada Rao. Rs 1
Mr and Mrs T. Purushotham. Rs 4
V. Ch. John. Peddapuram. Rs 1
Sri T. K. Mohanthy, Vishakhapatnam. Rs 5
Vizianagaram Baptist Church. Rs 3-6-00
Lutheran Church, Guntur. Rs 10
Christian Church in Kakinada.

In the Centenary meeting led by A. T. Palmer in the Christian Church on 16th December 1934 in Kakinada, Rs 27-0-6 were collected and donated by Rev L. E. Milton, Divan Bahaddar Sir Dr. R. Venkata Rathnam Naidu, College Principal P. Rama Swami, Ms. S. I. Hutch and others. The Christian Mahasabha met in 1934 in Vizianagaram, and promised to send 25 rupees from their area for the success of the Centenary celebrations. It was suggested that all his books be included in the biography, but it was not possible due to paucity of funds. Moreover, a few popular hymns written by the poet, could not be included.

I praise God for our family has got the legacy of these hymns, poems and prose from our grandfather. A poet is more precious than a king.

After a brief break, Mr. P. Seshagiri Rao Pantulu, Proprietor of George Press took up the task and finished printing with great responsibility. I thank him and his staff.

I am indebted to the Rajah of Lakkavaram Ella Estates and District Educational Officer Sri Rajah Mantripragada Bhujanga Rao, Zamindar and the dignitaries who sent their opinions, Sri Sri Jayapura Maharajah, and Canon Dhannavada Anantham.

I dedicate this book to the service of God.

Kakinada

25-1- 1935

John Chowdhary

-
1. Progeny of an ancient Sage belonging to the Gotra bearing his name.
 2. A sutra is a Sanskrit word that means “string, thread” worn by “twice-born” high caste Hindu.
 3. In Brahmin Hindu culture, a Pravara (Sanskrit for “most excellent”) is a Brahmin’s descent from a sage who belonged to their gotra (clan).
 4. Vedas are the primary Holy texts of Hinduism.
 5. Cult of Hindu God Shiva involving secret chants and mystic practices.
 6. Teacher

CHOWDHARY GENEALOGY

GANGADHAR 1746

BUDDHIRAJ

KURMANATH

JAGANANTH (1795-1866)

PURUSHOTTAM (1803-1890)

CHAKRAPANI
LOGESHWATH
SETHURAMA
APPALANASWEEHA

SAMUEL (1850-1889)

ADITYANARAYANA

DAVID (1840-1875)

GOPINATH

JEVVARATNAM
वरेषवरत्तनामुनी
(जैसिनबाबू)

JAMES
JOHN (1)

BAPTISED 11-2-1864

KRUPARAO

JOHN

DANIEL (1878-1965)

BUDDHURAJ
DHANARAJ

DANIEL

PRASANNA KUMAR
PURUSHOTTAM
1906-1967

JAYARAO

BIMAL
DAVID
PARUSHOTTAM

HIMANSU
Dr. SUDHANSU (3)
SAMUEL
PRASANTH

JAYARAO

MOHITKUMAR
AITRANJAN
BRRIKRAM
PRADIPTO
KUMAR
PRASANT
KUMAR

SONS
SAMUEL
PRASANTH

JAYARAO

JOSEPH
WILLIAM
BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN

DAUGHTERS
AMULYA
NIRUPAMA

JAYARAO

RAMOLLA
MAYA
ROSALIN
ANNU

SESIKUMARI
RAJAMANI
SANTABAI
JAMUNA

JAYARAO

PADMINI
NALINI
SOROJINI
PANKAJINI
MINU
MRINALINI
KUMUDINI

(1) Author of Poet's Biography, (2) Published works of poet in 2003-04, Reprinted poet's life history in 2015, (3). Published poet's biography in English

Purushottam Chowdhary's All Descendents Live in Orissa

Poet

Rev. Purushotham Chowdhary

Life Story and His Message

(Centenary Memorial Edition)

Chapter 1

A family called and immersed in God's service; a royal household devoid of the flame of Truth and holding a position of authority.

...look unto the rock from where you are hewn. Isa 51:1

Details of the Sojourn

India, a land decked with priceless gems, riches of grain and wealth, brimming with precious metals like gold and silver; Sindhu, Ganga, Yamuna, Gautami, rivers and streams that descend from the lofty mountain slopes; Merchant ships laden with precious merchandise; Gorgeous forests teeming with peacocks, parrots and cuckoos and their little ones resounding with their mellifluous songs; Lush and vast grass lands radiant with bountiful herds of cattle; Ponds brimming with shoals of fish, turtles, and swans; Opulent orchards and green farmlands weighed down with munificent fruits and crops, waving merrily in the gentle breeze; Bedecked with a riot of colourful flowers, intoned and extolled as the queen of nations by myriad poets.

Innumerable nations had an eye on this prosperous land, at the same time infighting among its sons was also widespread. Sen dynasty ruled the Gowda¹ land in those ancient days.

When the people were scattered in the face of the invading Mughals, the ancestors of our hero resided in Mithunapura² district in Bengal for some time and later migrated to Kalinga, the modern Utkal (Orissa) Desa. In Muthunapura district Bengali, Oriya and Hindustani languages were spoken. The then state of Kalinga had Mukhalinga and later Parlakimidi on the banks of Vamsadhara river as its capital cities.

The kingdom was ruled by Gangavarapu Dev dynasty.

Parlakimidi Dynasty

Just as the Egyptian Pharos to Moses and Joseph, King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, and the Babylonian Kings to Daniel, the Rajahs of Ganga dynasty were supporters of the Chowdhary's. For this reason, we need to know briefly the history of that royal line.

According to history, a king by name Gangeya established a kingdom in the west, with Kolhapur as its capital. A king in that dynasty Kamara Nava Deva sent out a General for conquest. He entered Mahendra Desa, defeated the local ruler Bal Aditya and constructed Kalinga Nagar, also known as Mukhalinga on the banks of river Vamsadhara in the 8th century. The Kings of Ganga dynasty ruled there for 3 centuries. Rajendra Choda Ganga Dev, a king of that dynasty, went down to Godavary area into the Choda Desa and defeated Vimaladitya in 1075³.

His son Anantha Varma Choda Ganga Dev conquered Utkal land in the 11th century. In the 12th century, Kapilendra Dev marched against Parlakimidi and due to a rebellion in Orissa, returned to Kalinga Nagar. A history book written in Oriya about this clan was with our family for a long time. When we presented it to Sri Parlakimidi Rajah Sahib, he was very pleased. We are not particularly concerned with the Kings that ruled since then.

During the 12th century, many from Bengal and Orissa migrated to Parlakimidi area. During the 15th century, these Gajapati kings conquered the stretch of land between Mahanadi and Godavary. This is indicated in Indian Imperial Gazette. Then Pratap Rudra Dev ascended the throne.

Chowdhary Clan

We do not know when the Chowdhary clan joined the royal court of the Parlakimidi rulers. However, for many years, they had been in the service of these Zamindars. The northern Circars were under the rule of the Mughals for some time.

My father told us that there was a time when many villages were under the administration of Chowdhary's and they, just like the present-day Collectors, collected tax on behalf of the government. In return they were given lands and acted as Mirasidars.

Chowdhary is not a surname. Bengalis, and people of Orissa do not have this kind of names. The Bengalis say that the name Chowdhary is a derivative term from "Chaturdhary," and it is a title for those that have dominion over four provinces or villages. Just like "Chattopadhyay" the name Chowdhary is also a title for those that acquired mastery over the

four Vedas. This was explained by Rev. Anama Chandra Patro who wrote Chowdhary Purushotham's biography in Oriya language.

When the Northern Circars were under the Muslim war lords, they gave some titles such as 'Mazumdar' to a few working under them. In the 18th century, when the Northern Circars were handed back to the East India Company, those land holdings remained under the Zamindars. In 1726 when Anwar Uddin Khan was "Fouz Dar" of Srikakulam, Buddhi Raju Chowdhary was his contemporary⁴.

Buddhi Raju Gangadhara Chowdhary, and Kurmanatha Chowdhary, Purushotham Chowdhary's grandfather and father respectively, were in the royal court of Parlakimidi rulers.

The family members chanted Vedas and served as court poets. They were Mirasidars of many villages in the twelve clusters of Tembur, surrounded by Asura Sagara nearly 18 miles from Parlakimidi. They collected taxes, and enjoyed the lands given to them. They made Madanapuram the headquarters of their activities, regularly visiting Parlakimidi, also known as 'Pravalakamundi' and attended to their responsibilities.

As per the 'Sishta' tradition these families chant their 'Pravara'⁵ as under.

"Bharadwajanam, Angirasa, Barhaspatya, Bharadwajetitrarsheya, Pravaravita, Bharadwaja gotra, Samaveda Sakhadhyayi, Katyayana Sutra, Purushothama Chaudharae Abhivadaye!"

And in the family, Brahmanic rituals such as Pumsavanamu⁶, Seemanthamu⁷, Jatakarma⁸, Namakaranamu⁹, Vahir Nishkramanamu¹⁰, Anna Prasanamu¹¹, Chowlamu¹², Upanayanamu¹³, Vedarambhamu¹⁴, Samavarthanamu¹⁵ were followed with great fervor, .

From that time, since the court proceedings were done in Telugu language in Parlakimidi, the family was well versed with Telugu, and Oriya which is equivalent to Bengali. Bangla, which their ancestors spoke took a back seat. Some in the family adopted "Vydika" profession (performing Puja, and other Brahman rituals), others were involved in 'Niyogi' calling (looking after the village records and writing of legal documents). For this

reason, although not everyone was adept at “Purana Kalakshepamu” (Ballad singing), some certainly took it up as a profession, and some employed themselves in writing the ancient Hindu sacred writings on Palm leaves and earned handsomely.

The Parlakimidi royal family was usually affected by infightings and intrigues. Sri Rajah Jagannatha Gajapati Dev, brother of Sri Rajah Gajapathi Dev, was temporarily entrusted with the administration by the East India Company.

But when they removed him in 1780, he colluded with the Bisoi, a fierce tribe, and started a rebellion. On 13th April 1799, Col. Fothering set out to Parlakimidi with a force numbering 5000 to put down the rebellion. Rajah Purushotham Dev and his uncle Duga Raju remained loyal to the British.

Contemporaries

At the death of Sri Rajah Gajapati Dev, his son Sri Rajah Purushotham Dev became the king, but died after 3 years on October 29th 1805. His one-year old son Sri Jagannath Gajapati Narayana Dev ascended the throne. He was one year younger to our Purushotham.

Sri Duga Raju was *in loco parentis* and looked after the administration of the estate.

It was a regular practice of Kurma Nath Chowdhary to take his two sons, Jagannath Chowdhary and Purushotham Chowdhary into the royal presence, and their scholarly skills were tested. Sri Duga Raju managed the Zamindari until 1813 smoothly, and left for Banaras that year and died within a short time there.

His son Rajah Padmanabha Dev was the steward of Parlakimidi until 1832. It was during this time Purushotham had maintained close relations with the royal court.

-
1. *Bengal.*
 2. *Present day Midnapur in west Bengal.*

3. *Encyclopedia. Madras Presidency &c 1920-21.*
4. *In 1789 Sri Rajah Gajapati Dev was Zamindar of Parlakimidi. (Russel's Report No XXIV Vol 1. Page 3).*
5. *Genealogy of a Sage or patron saint. Pravara contains the lineage of the sage to which he belongs, and the sutra which he follows. Whenever he meets with elders he has to close both his ears, bow down from the hip level and the Pravara chanting should be stated to the person whom he offers his "Namaskaram" (obeisance).*
6. *After the conception was ascertained, the child in the womb was consecrated by the ceremony named "Pumsavana. Pumsavana was generally understood as "that rite through which a male child was produced." Vedic hymns recited on this occasion mention Puman or Putra (a male) and favor the birth of a son.*
7. *Ceremony performed for the expecting mother usually in the sixth month of pregnancy. Literal meaning of Srimantham is "parting of the hair" to assure safe delivery of the child. The parting of the hair of the expectant mother is ceremoniously performed by her husband. The proper time to perform this ceremony is the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. The elaborate ritual, involve seating the pregnant woman on a chair or padded stool, facing east. Then a specially prepared kurcha (dharba grass of three strands gathered together), denoting prosperity and growth, are moved over the parted hair of the pregnant woman by her husband, starting from the fore head to the nape.*
8. *The ritual to be performed by the father for the new born. On hearing the birth of a child, the father of the child has to go to tataka i.e. river/tank/well and have to jump into the same from height with clothes adorned. After the bath, he has to perform "hiranya" (giving money, rice, vegetables etc. as danam- alms) to please the ancestors. Jaata karma is nothing but greeting the ancestors of the clan and praying to them for upliftment.*
9. *Naming ceremony. This is to be done on 11th day or 29th day or after that within one year. This ceremony is only to name the*

child according to vedic rites so that the same name will be referred even after his death in all ceremonies. During this time if the child is born in stars that will harm the health of the child, Shanti also is to be performed (appeasement). Naming is to be performed by keeping rice in a big plate and three lines are to be drawn in it, the name is to be written by the father three times.

10. *Normally when child is born, the child will not be brought out for 10 days from the room of birth. In olden days a separate room was segregated for child birth in the house and that room will not get either sun rays or other light energies other than the oil lamps lit in the room. The main purpose is to avoid bacteria from nature as well as the child is in the mother's womb for nine months without light and it should come to normalcy to accustom with light of nature. Taking out of the new born from the room on the 12th day is called Nishkaramanam. During the third month, the child is brought to other areas of the house and early morning sun light is subjected to the child's body. After one month, the child is subjected to have moon rays also and after that the child will be taken to the temple first before visiting other places.*
11. *This ceremony is to be done in either the sixth or the eighth month when the child is able to digest the hard items from liquid and semi liquid items. The child should be made to consume curd, honey and ghee mixture initially from the hand of the mother only.*
12. *This ceremony is to be done at the commencement of the third or the fifth year. It involves shaving on all four sides of head leaving a strand of hair at the back of the head. This he has to keep throughout the lifetime.*
13. *Though we are born from mother's womb, this is the second birth to have Duality of birth. This ceremony is to be done after completion of the seventh year, and should be performed before attaining the age of 16. Upanayana means to take the person to Guru (the teacher) to bestow Brahma Gyana (Divine Wisdom). The first part of the upanayana is adorning the boy with sacred*

thread called Yagyopaveetam. This should be worn from left shoulder to navel. During this time his lineage (i.e. Pravara) will be introduced to him and the sutra to which he belongs.

14. *On this day he has to offer puja to the ancient authors of Vedas. From that day, he has to learn the Vedas from a Guru.*
15. *This is the completion of the bachelor stage. To compete this, a minimum of 12 years are to be spent in Gurukula (abode of the teacher) for completion of his vedic education. After performing this ceremony, he is eligible for “gruhastarama” i.e. to marry or he can continue as bachelor, or become Sanyasi (ascetic).*

Initially, he has to offer “Guru Dakshina” a gift or payment to his teacher according to his status. Guru will never ask for any Dakshina from his disciples. On completion of this ceremony, he has to pray to elders of his family and friends to choose a suitable girl for him to marry.



Chapter 2

Birth, Education, “Upanayana” (installation of the sacred thread and initiation into adult Hindu life style), Apradakshanam, Marriage, Fanatical interest in Hinduism, Failure of the attempt of pilgrimage to Kashi, Quest for Brahma Gnana, Yoga practice, Avadhoota Ashram, Devotion to wrong Dharma, Dedication to false teachers and ministrations to them.

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. Jer 1: 5

Birth of the Poet

When George III was ruling over England, our hero Purushotham Chowdhary was born on 5th September 1803 in Madanapuram, Tembur Mandalam, Ganjam district, as second son to Kurmanath Chowdhary and Subhadra Devi Chaudhurani¹.

The 21st day after the birth of a child was considered auspicious in the household. Relatives were called to “Barasala²”, a sumptuous meal was prepared, they named the child Purushotham and laid him in the cradle. “Sidhantis” (learned Pundits) wrote his “Jatakam” (Horoscope) and took away generous gifts from the father. As per the pure Vydic practices of Bengali and Utkal traditions, “Vahir Nishkramanam,” “Annaprasanam,” “Chowlam” (tonsuring the head, leaving a single tuft of hair at the back of the child’s head) were performed.

On attaining 5 years of age, the celebration of “Aksharabhyasam” (initiation into education) was conducted. The child was taught Oriya and Telugu. Within two years, the child had shown proclivity for learning. He learned many slokas from his father at home.

In the 7th year, “Upanayanam” was held and according to the Gowda Brahman ritual, sacred thread was laid, declaring him a Brahmin and the “Gayatri mantra” (a highly-revered chant from the Rig Veda. The mantra is an important part of the upanayana ceremony for young males in Hinduism)

entrusted to him. It has the following meaning- ‘Personification of the ‘Om’ sound, Self-existing one, The Sorrow-less one, Omnipresent, Creator of the Universe, who bestows all riches, Worthy of complete acceptance, The Holy one, Giver of all comforts, may we be adorned with His image; May the Master of the universe, ignite our minds!’”

Purushotham learned this mantra as a toddler and about the holiness attributed to it.

Passion for Education

Growing up, Purushotham learned not only the Puranas and Itihasas, but also recited Vedas. He blossomed into a sharp young lad, complete with all daily Hindu rituals. Books written in his hand writing are still with the family. He mastered the Sanskrit Amara Kosa (Compendium of Sanskrit etymology of words) and similar manuals of Telugu language.

While the children during winter play by the fireside, it is said that Purushotham used to be with his books. In a single winter, he finished reading Bhagavatha thrice. His father being a great scholar in Mahabharata, Ramayana and Bhagavatha, explained the meaning of these Hindu scriptures, while Purushotham heard him with rapt attention and acquired the skill himself.

Great Calamity Averted

During his student days Purushotham once went to a pond in a village called ‘Kanige’ along with a Dasari boy. Both intended to swim across the pond to the other side. The cloth Purushotham tied to his waist got loosened and twisted itself to his legs. Unable to swim, Purushotham drowned and started swallowing water, but managed to stand on his toes in great distress. The other boy fled in fright. Incidentally two Telagas saw the Purushotham’s face on the surface of the water, jumped in, and rescued him.

One day in his childhood, Purushotham went to a relative’s place. Some people asked him to bring fire to light their cigars. He rushed to the neighbor’s house and asked a lady of that Kapu household for fire, who was pounding grain. The pestle slipped from her hand and hit him under her right eye-brow making the blood flow. People started weeping and

some burned cloth and applied it to the wound. This injury pained him for a long time. He did not lose his eye at that time but 60 years later his eye sight went down much in advance.

Another time, he suffered from fever for 3 months. Quacks who believed that 'fasting is the greatest medicine,' treated him and one night when he was panting with thirst, they refused to give him water in spite of repeated pleadings.

He lost consciousness and his eye balls floated up. People standing by, started weeping but none gave him a little water. Fortunately like in the previous calamities, someone dared to sprinkle some water on his face and pried his lips open and poured some water in his mouth and Purushotham got revived. Praise be to the name of Lord Jesus who is always merciful and of immediate help. Jesus rescued the boy from a certain death. Knowing the wonderful future ministry to be taken up by Purushotham, God kept him from danger that way.

Saravakota was very near to Madanapuram. Purushotham, at the age of 15 years sang narrative ballads of Puranas in the house of Gandham Narayana Das in that village and could save some money.

His Fervor in Hindu Religion

Purushotham since his childhood was devoted to Vishnu, worshipping his idols. He was deeply interested in meditation, holy dip, and pilgrimage. According to the Vaishnava tradition he got the Chakra(disc) and Sankhu(Conch) symbols tattooed on his two shoulders. Chanting the Mantras, he learned for his Gurus, and singing "Tirunama" praises, were his habits. True to the axiom "Fruit of your learning is your submissive respect," Purushotham was respectful of his elders befitting his erudition, and earned appreciation of everybody.

Position of the Poet Laureate

We have already mentioned that Rajah Padmanabha Dev, son of Sri Duga Raju fulfilled the executive responsibilities of the Regent in place of the boy king Sri Rajah Jagannath Gajapati Narayana Dev, as per the order of the East India Company from 1813 to 1832.

Around 1820, Purushotham Chowdhary's father Kurmanatha Chowdhary had an altercation with his own brother Rama Krishna and Radha Krishna over the lands under their control. Purushotham stayed with the Parlakimidi Royal Court on his own for some time and earned a few villages from the Royal administrators. He was brilliantly witty and like the legendary Tenali Rama Krishna, entertained the Regent with his amusing conversation.

Before the construction of the beautiful palace on the banks of Sita Sagara in Parlakimidi by the Italian Engineer Chijalam, there used to be a palace near the Saturday market. The Regent convened the royal court here, invited the poets of the land and asked them to describe the palace. All the poets routinely pronounced praises of the palace, whereas Purushotham said something that meant, 'the palace cannot hold a candle to his own house!' Both the king and the poets were taken aback. They questioned him unable to grasp the inner meaning. Purushotham replied, "I can see the sun, moon and stars lying on my bed in my house, I cannot see them from inside this palace" and finished the stanza of the poem. The whole company broke into laughter at the indirect humor. My father used to narrate to me this incident.

Purushotham was 20 years of age. Incestuous marriage traditions prevailed in Gowda Sishta clan, and marriage after maturity of the girl are prohibited. For this reason, it was arranged that Purushotham at the age of 20, to marry Radhamani Devi, then a girl of 9 years, daughter of his paternal uncle Raghunathpal.

The elders decided on the alliance and performed the 7-day marriage with great pomp and ceremony. Thus, Purushotham crossed over from "Brahmacharya" (bachelorhood) to married state. Later his father Kurmanath Chowdhary breathed his last. It is said that mother of this gentleman worshipped Sri Kurmanatha in Sri Koormam shrine in Ganjam and got her son and probably named him after the deity as per the tradition prevailing in Andhra and Utkal lands.

After the death of his father, Purushotham's mother Subhadra Devi Chaudhurani and elder brother Jagannath Chowdhary showered much

affection on him and seeing that he was a scholar par excellence, coupled with respectful attitude and great devotion to Hindu faith and tradition, they treated him with great love and fondness.

Purushotham writes Hindu Books

The death of his father pushed Purushotham even deeper into Hindu piety. According to his capabilities in language and literature he wrote seven or eight hymns in the name of Vishnu, one in the name of Shiva, a philosophical hymn in his Teacher's name. He also wrote a Krishna Leela, a hundred-poem collection with the title "Dasaratha Rama," and another profound poetic rendition by name "Neelachala Vilasamu." All those that heard these poems highly appreciated the delicate and intricate selection of terms and his poetic brilliance.

Purushotham was determined to go to Kashi for further study. He joined a friend, and the two planned to go without informing thrie elders. They gathered a few essentials and hidden the package among some bushes. However, it was stolen. Thus, this effort did not materialize into action.

In his memorial book, Purushotham confessed to reading with great relish in his youth, many ancient poetic works depicting sexual love.

Craving for "Brahma Gnana"

Our young poet continued to worship his chosen God Vishnu, extolling him as the deity of Moksha, and one that bestowed bliss, gaining the approval of his fellow men. However, his devotedness started taking a strange turn.

Those days, an employee of the Raja Yoga sect of the Parlakimidi Brahma Gnana religion, called Purushotham Chowdhary and gave him a philosophical book by name "Rama Stava Rajamu" requesting him to read and explain to him its meaning. After reading, it remained vague in Purushotham's mind. But he did not give up, and finding a certain charm in it, he borrowed it and carefully read it from cover to cover.

Not satisfied, he copied the whole book for himself and ruminated and meditated on it. The book told him that this mortal world is like a fast-flowing stream, and he should find a Guru who will reveal to him the

difference between body and soul, permanence of the spirit, and the means of unifying the mortal soul with the immortal. He read that unless he does that, he will never attain liberty of the soul.

After reading this book it appeared to him that the Hindu ritual traditions are utterly useless and acts of devotion hopeless. For this reason, a craving started taking root in him to rescind the practices of his Caste tradition, family and relatives including his own wife and become a “Brahma Gnani.”

Striving in this direction, he came across similar books such as “Vedanta Saramu” (Essence of Vedanta), “Shiva Yoga Saramu” (Essence of the Yoga of S iva), “Atma Bodha’ (Enlightenment of the soul), “Vignana Deepika” (light of Wisdom), “Jeeva Prabodha” (Teaching for life), “Bhagavat Kathalu” (Stories of the gods) from Bhagavatha Purana (One of the ancient Hindu texts), “Para Tatvamam” (Philosophy of the transcendental), “Parama Hamsa Dharmamam” (Duty of an enlightened man) and so on.

He meditated upon these and other books even in Oriya language which he wrote by hand for his use, and searched for the mystical meanings thereof. These books which he copied in the thick green and blue paper, available those days, were made available to me in Cuttack.

Especially he copied “Avadhoota³ Charitramam” (History of an Avadhoota) on palm leaves, cut them in the shape of a flower and hanged it around his neck. He pondered up on its contents day after day with great enthusiasm.

Not satisfied with this, he went in search of a guru who would lead him to the process of merging his soul with the immortal soul. He did not experience the truth in the adage, “Gurus say many things to satisfy their diciples, but it is difficult to find the true Guru, who can dispel the pain in the disciple’s heart.”

Finally, seven false Gurus gathered around him. Their antecedents are not known. He learned from them Yama, Niyama, (Yama means ‘taking a vow’ while niyama is the second limb and means ‘rule of conduct’), and other Ashtanga Yogas (Ashtanga means eight limbs or branches, of which

asana or physical yoga posture is merely one branch, breath or pranayama are the others).

He also attempted to learn other more advanced accomplishments such as “Anima” and “Chinmaya Mudras,” to some extent.

Devotedness to False Teachers and Yogic Practices

Excepting one Uppu Ramalinga, the rest of his Gurus taught him to eat despicable things, and perform detestable acts, saying that unless he does that there is no way he can attain salvation. We include here some of the experiences of Purushotham from his own writings about this period of his life.

“I ate disgusting things, did appalling deeds, I cannot write them here because they are too repulsive. None among these 7 Gurus were fit to give me what I craved for. And I tell you a shameful thing. In one of the books, it is written that in extending hospitality, if any one gives his wife to a guest for the night, great would be the result.

*One gives up his father or teacher
Kills or gives up life for one's wife
If with such wife one serves a guest
He can conquer Divinity or Deity*

I tried this. There was a “Matham⁴” in Kothapalli near my village. The kings installed the idol of Krishna in it. Two villages were allotted for its up keep. There were two stewards and a priest. Often some ascetics used to stay in this Matham. I used to serve them.

I befriended a “Bairagi” (ascetic) and was very obedient to him. Once I told him my intention of serving him with my wife. He agreed. I told my wife lovingly in secrecy. She was outraged and said, “Would you drag me too into these dirty things you do?” She could not tolerate such a proposal.

Thus, on reading this kind of philosophy and practice of Yoga, my feeling of self-renunciation increased. I tried to love and be merciful to all the living creatures. To practice this, I would lie on the floor without covering my upper body, and when the ants or mosquitos bit me I refrained from killing them, gently pushing them away, according to the ideal “Ahimso

Parama Dharma” (non-violence is the highest virtue). If anyone strikes at any animal or kill any insect, I could not bear looking at it. To get rid of the Caste prejudice, I ate with friends of other castes. I lost interest in having conjugal love with my wife. Often mingling with people who practice Yoga, I thought the water used to clean their feet as holy, sprinkling them on my head, and on my tongue. For some time, it became my practice to share my meal with a dog, sitting side by side.

Bath, daily sacred ablutions and fasting declined. I stopped brushing my teeth. I to the world and the world to me looked mad. My own household on seeing my actions considered me insane, and often made derogatory comments. I never got angry with them, not answering, remained unmoved. My wife and mother used to grieve at my condition.

Avadhoota Ashram

Finally, I decided to belong permanently to the Avadhoota Ashram. I, alone or with a couple of friends, practiced Yoga in lonely forests or hills. Once when I was climbing a hill I found the remnant of an animal skin left by an animal among the stones. Telling them that we should eat it without any hesitation, started eating it myself. Then my disciples and friends attempted eating it half-heartedly.”

Our worthy poet obtained a sort of training in “Bhakti, Gnana, Karma, Vairagya, Raja Yoga” and other practices.

Those days, among those who strived for Raja Yoga, there were wicked women. They are called “Mukti Kanthas⁵.” There were Aghoras⁶, Corpse eaters, Avadhootas, Naked Sadhus and so on in India. Purushotham summed up the characteristics of Avadhootas in a poem.

When a boy among Purushotham’s relatives died, they buried him instead of cremating. Our wise Purushotham dug the dead body up, kept it in his lap for some time, assuring himself that he is not afraid and buried it back. Father of this author once told him this. People of this land are under the false premise that such practices are the means of reaching heaven, and ignored the true way for the washing of the of soul.

Many men of Yoga in our country are slaves to intoxicating drugs. It was usual practice to perform heinous sexual acts. As per the saying “If

the heart is impure, then it is against everything that is done by the man.” Impure in heart and doers of dark deeds, how can they be good teachers? Under this condition, who knows how many times Purushotham Chowdhary tried to wriggle out of untruth, darkness and death crying out, “Oh God, lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness into light, from death to immortality,”

Eventhough it is made clear by Patanjali, that Yoga practice is for the purpose of binding the human will to God’s will, in the experience of our Yogi Purushotham, due to the sinful occupations, he could not bind his will to the will of God. It is Christ alone who could bind the human will to the Heavenly Father’s will. He intended to teach Purushotham his equanimity.

God’s word is truthful and sure- “Those that search for me will find me.” We realize this as we look at the forthcoming events.

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1. In Bengali and Oriya, feminine names take the suffix ‘Ani’
 2. Celebration connected to the birth of a child, and the ceremony of laying him in the cradle.
 3. Avadhûta is a Sanskrit term from some Indian religions referring to a type of mystic or saint who is beyond egoic-consciousness, duality and common worldly concerns and acts without consideration for standard social etiquette.
 4. A monastery or an abode of ascetics.
 5. Sex with these female ascetics is thought to be a means and path to heaven.
 6. The Sanskrit aghora are Shaiva ascetic. They are known to engage in post-mortem rituals. They often dwell in charnel grounds, have been witnessed smearing cremation ashes on their bodies, and have been known to use bones from human corpses for crafting skull cups for eating, and jewelry. Because of their practices that are contradictory to orthodox Hinduism, they are generally opposed by other Hindus.

Chapter 3

The result of Missionary Movement. A hundred-year-old Tract, The Value of News Letters. Background of the district of Ganjam, Rescue from danger, Reiteration of pledge.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined whom He predestined, these he also called; Whom he called; these he also justified; and whom he justified, these he also glorified.” Rom 8:29-30

In His self-affirming will, God carry out things in ways that are mindboggling; Multifarious are His manifestations!

Missionary Movement

Missionary movement was spreading across the nation at that time. In the 1800's, William Carey arrived in Serampore near Calcutta and started printing some translations of the Biblical portions. Rev Des Granges, sent by the London Missionary Society, reached Vizag in 1805, learned Telugu and translated the gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke into Telugu, before he died on 12th August 1810. And these were printed in Serampore in 1819.

Another Missionary by name Prechette translated sections of New Testament at Vizag which were printed in Madras in 1819. Perhaps they were reprinted by the Bible Society in 1829 in Madras. We shall look at the amazing impact of these printed publications.

Those Missionaries who came to Vizag, died rather too early; consequently, the good news did not reach the vast regions from Calcutta to Madras as much as it could have been. However, Roman Catholics established themselves in some pockets of this region.

The Godliness of the Battalion Chiefs

In view of the national safety and to contain intermittent rebellious activities of the natives, the East India Company retained battalions at Vizianagaram, Srikakulam, and Berhampur towns. The 41st Battalion was stationed in Srikakulam, which had the God fearing British Officers like

Major Buxter, Captain Keeting, General Taylor, Lt. Fair, Captain Campbell, Captain Richardson, and Adjutant Evelyn. These officers were instrumental in the activities in the fields of Education, and the spread of the gospel. And Major Brett, a godly man was in Vizag.

No. 9 Christian Tract- Lt. Hill

With crude printing, done on very cheap paper, the no.9 Christian Tract carried the caption: “A leaflet from Christian Missionaries to all people in the region.” A copy of this was given in 1825 to Purushotham Chowdary by his well educated elder brother Jagannadh Chowdary. Purushotham read it but could not grasp the message and he dropped it in his tin box.

As though by divine prompting, in those days Lt. Hill, an Engineer went to Parlakimidi to survey the mountainous region of Madanapuram. When Purushotham saw the white man, he felt a surge of electricity and remembered the tract he dropped in his box 7 years earlier.

That was nothing but God visiting Purushotham. He promptly searched and retrieved the tract and started to read it. Previously he could not grasp the message. That letter carried the supreme teachings that God is one and the other gods are virtually useless.

Here below is the translation of two extracts from this tract with all its archaic literary style and printer’s devils retained:

“At the command of the Lord of the universe, we the teachers of this faith desire to proclaim to all in this nation, the saving message, which can rescue you from ignorance and put you on the path of eternal life.”

“There is only one God and only one mediator between God and men. And that is the man Lord Jesus. And the most distinct characteristic that makes him unique is the fact that he is sinless. He is the son of God. He lived as incarnate man with the name Jesus for thirty-three years on the earth teaching the Biblical truths. In the proof of what he taught, he performed miracles, and led a perfect life. Out of sheer grace he gave himself up to be tortured and crucified so that he could reconcile man with God, bestow forgiveness and heaven to

all that are saved. By dying, and by getting up out of the tomb with resurrected life, he showed himself to his followers for 40 days to prove that he is the savior of the world. He then entrusted to his disciples, the unique task of spreading the gospel to all nations. Then he took them on to a mountain, blessed them and ascended to heaven as they watched Him in wonder. If anyone wants to be saved, he has only one savior- Lord Jesus. If anyone is interested in knowing more about the gospel, he is advised to see us in person. We are always ready to answer any questions regarding the gospel.”

Purushotham weighed the implications of the invitation to Christian faith and its fundamental doctrines. He took note of the invitation of the writers of the tract to come and know more about this way.

Despite his oath to stay put in the ‘Avadhoot Ashram’ decided to put aside his own conviction for the time being and look more carefully into Christianity. So, he started gathering opinions on Christianity. Some said it was good and others said that he would lose his religious identity.

However, he continued his investigations into Christianity. Probably here he got hold of three more tracts circulated by the officers of the battalion, namely “The details of creation,” “The way to heaven,” “Message of truth by the Teacher that shows the right path” with the help of his friends in other villages.

By reading these, he came to learn about Satan, and the advantages of following Christ, things he did not learn from the earlier tracts he read. He realized that Christianity is superior to the Path of Brahma Gnana. Purushotham found a prayer at the end of “Message of truth by the Teacher that shows the Right Path” invoking love for God. It was nothing like the ‘Guru Guhya Mantra’ because it expressed heartfelt love for the transcendental God.

On the same day Purushotham whole heartedly owned this prayer and revoked his old faith that says “Teacher is Brahman; Teacher is Vishnu; Teacher is Maheswara; Guru is the transcendental Brahma personified; for that reason, I bow to the Teacher.” He rescinded “Gayatri Mantra,” and “Sandhya Vandanam¹.” He took an oath on the prayer mentioned in

the tract, considered it the highest mantra, chanting it 40 to 50 times a day in all contingencies and conditions.

Inquisitiveness for the Way of Truth

Even if an enlightened man owns monotheism, shuns caste, and hates idolatry, where can he find forgiveness of sins in the man-made philosophies? How can men who desire sinful pleasures know secure and auspicious ways?

As Purushotham moved into the Christian ethos accepting the God-made, and appropriate ways, he gave up the idea of turning into an ascetic which made his friends and relatives glad. But they were not aware of his deep religious involvement with Christianity.

In 1832 he went to a Roman Catholic temple in Vizag to find out more about Christianity, where he spoke with someone there. The idols he saw inside the temple, were not in agreement with what he heard. There were no missionaries there at that time as the only one- Rev James Dawson of London Missionary Society had just passed away.

Rebellion Offers Invitation

According to Russell's report, there was a spell of rebellion which Raja Jagannath Gajapathy Narayana Dev was heir apparent to Parlakimidi royal state. There was a misunderstanding between the queen consort Patta Maha Devi and Queen Mother Swagee Devi on the issue of Court of Wards. In July 1822, the then Governor of Madras Sir Thomas Munroe visited Parlakimidi.

At that time, rebellious factions were engaged in open street fights. And the provincial ruler Raja Jagannath Gajapathi Narayan Dev and his consort desired to be under the Court of Wards and appointed a warrior named Rekhani Chandrudu in charge of the Court affairs.

The king's household went underground. The rest of the household colluded with the Bisois and started looting. Rekhani Chandrudu, on his part, given the authority by the queen, started exalting himself having 1175 soldiers at his beck and call. The mansion he constructed in Rekhani street in Parlakimidi hundred years earlier, stood strong to this day. One day

there was a “Purana” recital in his house in which the balladeer went wrong in his recitation. Purushotham passing by, heard it, went in, corrected him and told him the right order.

From that time onwards this household developed great respect for Purushotham. They urged him to read the Puranas and interpret them, since his voice was sonorous. Until recent times, old man Rekhani Mukuda Das was in the practice of extolling the physical stature and good looks of Purushotham Chowdary and the good old days.

A Teaching Position in Parlakimidi and Christian Religious Discussion

In 1832, Purushotham opened a school in Parlakimidi with his brother’s permission. He used to take his meals in the Kings Devi Mutt and sleep on the paved verandah of the house. While he was there, he wrote a letter containing issues regarding Christian faith and sent it to a white missionary, a Priest in Barampura through a servant. The servant happened to give it to a Roman Catholic and was told that the Priest was away at Vishakhapatnam, and his name was Deun Jeujevier De Attai De, and if he liked, he could go and see him, and if his return was delayed, there were two missionaries in Cuttack one of whom had come to Berhampur and distributed some tracts.

The man also told the servant that there was no relation between their faith and the faith of the Roman Catholics. When Purushotham received the answer, he found the very name of the priest which was too long, repellent and did not respond to it.

And in the very same year, i.e. 1832, on 20th June, Queen Victoria took the royal throne of England.

Honorable G. E. Russell Arrives

In view of the increasing unrest around Parlakimidi region during 1832-33, East India Company sent the Hon’ble George E. Russell, a senior member in the Revenue Board and member of The Madras Governor’s Council. Russell was appointed Commissioner and was sent to Parlakimidi. He reached Parlakimidi on 18th Feb 1833³. Purushotham sent an enquiry letter on Christian faith to him and waited for a reply.

Because Parlakimidi was at the foot of Matsyagruha mountain (popularly known as Boyeedi Konda), even as early as in March the climate tended to be very hot and people in general slept indoors despite the heat for the fear of rebels.

That night our 30-year old well-mannered householder, fair in complexion, completed his daily ablutions, dismissed his disciples, had his dinner, prayed with all intensity seeking salvation and went to the portico of the Rekhani household to sleep.

He said his evening prayers he read some time ago, written in the tract “Message of truth by the Teacher that shows the right path.” He wondered why the battalion arrived in Parlakimidi, and what surprises would ensue. Then he entrusted himself to the Savior he found and slept.

Danger Averted

On 9th March 1833, the 41st (N. I.) regiment under the command of Captain Logan moved from Srikakulam to Paralikimidi in aid of Commissioner Russel. That very night the soldiers planned their strategies to capture the rebels, and at the dead of the night carried out a surprise attack on the house of Rekhani Chandrudu. Purushotham, who was half-asleep in the portico got up and tried to escape (like king Jehoshapat, 1 kings 22:32-33).

When the soldier hit Purushotham with a cane, he tried to ward off the blow with his right hand, and it broke his little finger on the right hand. Then they took Purushotham to stand before Russell, despite his protestations. But Russell understood that Purushotham was the person who sent him a letter regarding Christian faith, and released him.

It was not acceptable to release any one that was caught in the house of a rebel, but just because of divine intervention, Purushotham was set free on the grounds that a devout Christian cannot be a rebel. While God had a different purpose with Purushotham, how could soldiers bind him? The same God who rescued Peter from Herod, now miraculously rescued Purushotham for a greater purpose. Whatever the pain Purushotham might have suffered that night with the broken finger, the finger remained bent for

the rest of his life. People say to this day, that children of that time, good naturedly made fun of him with bent fingers saying “Grandpa, salaam!” I heard about this episode from my father and Mr Kirti Steven, who heard this from Purushotham. What made Purushotham unhappy was not the broken finger but the fact that he lost the opportunity to discuss Christian faith with Russell.

As the saying goes, the barriers that Purushotham was encountering in the way of faith were just in order to make him more steady and robust in his quest.

Preparation for a Trip to Madras

By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season... (Heb 11: 24-26). Purushotham, likewise considered it great to be with Christ than to be under the royal shelter of Parlakimidi.

He was never discouraged but very determined in his purpose and thought for a long time and arrived at a plan of action. In those days, there was not a single protestant missionary between where he was staying and Madras.

Therefore, he made up his mind to somehow reach Madras, in order to have the good fortune of visiting a good teacher of the gospel, and hear the excellent narratives of the Lord Jesus Christ in detail. He was wondering how he would make such a long and arduous journey and started to explore ways and means.

Even though there weren’t any who embraced Christianity in that area, some religious conservatives were spreading propaganda that the white people were all Christians, that they did not have any rites and rituals; that they did not care whether a person was Mala (one of the untouchable castes in Telugu area) or otherwise; that they were employing the untouchables unabashedly as cooks; that the caste system would be polluted by conversion into Christianity; gradually the Hindu temples would fall into ruin; and the priestly vocation would disappear, taking away the livelihood of the priestly class.

Thus, fearing, some people started spreading malicious rumors that the religion of Christ was ‘Mala’ religion. Those who converted, would be spat upon, and their mouths would be stuffed with beef. They taught that those who said that the idols that were consecrated by Brahmins were not Gods, would have their eye balls explode in their sockets. Thus, many untrue tales were spread.

In those days, there were educated, intellectual and pious people, who just like uneducated ones, strongly believed that the Hindu Dharma should prevail, and not the strange traditions of the white people. This new religion would not be beneficial to the people. Some were even abusive of the new faith. They made it a point that the very name of the Christ religion should not be uttered in their households.

Jagannath Choudhry, the elder brother of Purushotham was a learned man, and well-versed in Hindu traditional literature. He was the “Tembur group Official Steward and Contractor with twelve people groups and many villages under his jurisdiction. He was an accomplished overseer acting on behalf of the government. After the demise of his father, Purushotham Chowdhary, excepting in matters of religion, was in obedience to his brother. Jagannath Chowdhary used to look after all the family expenditure and affairs.

Our Hero, used to keep securely what was left from the rupee that he earned from his students in the school, tied it at the end of his ‘dhoti’ (a rectangular piece of unstitched cloth, usually around 4.5 meters (15 ft) long, wrapped around the waist and the legs and knotted at the waist) and pushed under his belt. This was not known to anyone. His intention was to use the money for his needs as long as it lasts on his way to Madras, whenever opportunity presented itself. And for his upkeep in the strange place of Madras, he felt that he could beg for alms. Thus, he was determined to make the 400 to 500-mile journey to Madras, and have consultations with the Pastors and obtain enlightenment about the religion of Christ.

A Rare Opportunity Presents Itself

As the saying goes, “Good things come to those who wait.” By the will of God, Jagannath Chowdhary had to go to Srikakulam on a legal

matter. Probably Purushotham in the month of April 1833 went to Madanapuram from Parlakimidi. He convinced his relatives saying that he would attend to the work to be done by his brother, and left for Srikakulam. Attending to the task at hand, he managed to send his relatives away beforehand. The rupee he kept secretly was with him intact. He took along with him the four tracts he found, the letter written by the Catholic man and his own letter to Mr. Russel.

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1. *Sandhyavandanam literally means “salutation to Sandhya” the twilight. Thus, Sandhyavandanam may be defined as the ritual “salutation to twilight or the solar noon.”*
 2. *Russell’s Report No XXIV, Page 36*
 3. *Russels report No. XXIV Vol 1 page 43*

Chapter 4

Introduction to Ms. Helen Knott, Adjutant Evelyn, and Major Brett; Purushotham's tenacity; Elder brother's distress; Arriving back home; Wife's first arrival and exit; Trip to Vishakhapatnam; Trip to Cuttack; Acceptance of Christian Faith.

“Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he will be receiving for an inheritance, obeyed and he went out.” Heb 11:8

During the last days of William Carey who ‘expected great things from God and attempted great things for God,’ his missionary efforts for India were gradually proving fruitful.

Religious Teaching by Ms. Helen Knott

There used to be bungalows inhabited by the white people of the regiment, on the banks of river Nagavali, downward to the present missionary bungalow in the area called ‘Balaga.’ Devout Christian whites used to live there. Purushotham thought that it would be right to see if anyone had the knowledge of Christ religion, before setting out to Madras.

As he enquired, he came to know that a Ms. Helen Knott, wife of Captain Knott, established a couple of Andhra Girls Schools educating the children, and was distributing Christian tracts. Purushotham heard that she was a generous and kind lady. He was filled with great joy and relief, and wanted to share with her, his desire of heart about the Christian faith.

One fine day in April 1833 at noon, Purushotham Chowdhary stood at the entrance of the house of Ms. Helen Knott, in scorching heat and hot wind blowing and howling around him. While Purushotham was standing in the sweltering sun, Ms. Knott happened to see out of her window and kindly sent for him to come in. He went in and greeted her. The lady spoke to him in Hindi about his condition and what brought him to her place. After listening to what he had to say, she gave him a leaflet entitled “Divine test of Hindu Faith” and asked him to return the following day. Having read the leaflet, the seeker of truth being the wiser, went back to the lady and spoke to her about his understanding of the Christian faith. Ms. Knott

did not initially trust him and thought that he came back to her with a hidden agenda. Then Purushotham discussed in detail his past struggles, for the salvation of his soul, showed to her the leaflets, the letter written by the Catholic gentleman from Berhampur and a copy of his own letter of appeal to Mr. Russel.

She had those documents read to her, and joyfully believed him. Then the kind lady tested him telling him about the struggles, losses, pitfalls and temptations that would beset him if he embraced Christian faith. Purushotham replied saying that he would withstand all those trials and temptations by the grace of God. On hearing his answer, she was glad and gave him a few more tracts, the Gospel according to Luke and a book entitled “Voyage to Heaven.” She urged him to visit her every day, and to read the books to know new things about the faith.

Purushotham was filled with joy and gratitude towards the kindhearted white lady. As if a pauper found a great treasure, he went back to his place with a smile of contentment. He read the material and learned things that were hazy to him earlier.

He discovered the nature of sin, that it cannot be purged by any good deed that man does. Expiation is possible only through God’s unmerited grace in which He sent His Son Jesus Christ to become man. He shed his blood, became propitiation and through his merit, makes the sinner blameless. This and other vital things became clear to Purushotham. Thus, our seeker after the truth experienced joy and his resolve to follow Jesus was strengthened.

Adjutant Evelyn’s Loving Reception

One morning, Ms. Knott sent our new seeker to Adjutant Evelyn who was in the regiment. He spoke to Purushotham and asked him, “are you willing to go to the Missionary Pastors in Madras, if I send you by ship?” Purushotham with great excitement replied, “not only to Madras, anywhere you send me, I am ready!” In great joy, Evelyn raised his eyes to heaven and said, “God has lit a lamp in this dark land.” He asked Purushotham “Have you got any close relatives?”

Purushotham said he had.

Evelynn said “Do they know what you are about to do?”

“No,” Purushotham replied.

“Are you willing to inform them even at this stage?” Evelynn asked.

“I am ready to do whatever you think right” Purushotham said.

“I think you should keep them informed. You can write a letter and send it to them through someone. I will pay him his wage.”

Then Purushotham wrote a letter to his brother Jagannath Chowdhary.

Elder Brother’s Cry of Despair

On reading the letter, Jagannath Chowdhary was shaken. He along with Ramakrishna Kali Mohanthy, Poet Laureate of Kallikota regency and a few relatives rushed to Srikakulam in great anguish. They embraced Purushotham, wept and pleaded with him not to enter Christ religion.

Seeing that they could not sway him with their sorrow, they took him to Ms. Knott’s bungalow and bitterly disputed with her. Many words were exchanged. Jagannath, overwhelmed by grief took up a heavy stone, saying that he will break his own head in front of Ms. Knott.

Finally, the lady entrusted Purushotham to them and explained for how long he had been entertaining the idea of becoming a Christian, and showed them the Berhampur letter and other papers. They were taken aback and stopped accusing her and turned to Purushotham with words of reproach. His brother, not able to contain the grief, fell on his feet prostrate and cried out “Oh my dear brother, my only brother, what do I do now? How can I bear this?” He rushed to the market saying that he would swallow ‘vasanabhi,’ a poisonous herb and die.

Rest of the relatives too rebuked and scolded him, but they could not change his conviction. They left him. None of them had anything to eat and drink the whole day. That evening, Jagannath and another relative met Purushotham intending to convince him with some ruse. Jagannath crying heavily, said in a self-effacing manner “brother, our mother and your wife on hearing what you wrote in the letter, did not eat and drink since then. They are at home grief stricken. Show yourself to them just once and you could get back. So please come home with us.”

Thus, Jagannath beseeched his brother with tears. Tears of grief can dissolve the hardest of hearts. Our seeker after the truth, moved by the appeal and disposition of his brother, considered this plea and said he would go with them.

His brother was greatly comforted. That night they cooked a good meal for themselves. Purushotham went to Ms. Knott and told her that he would go home and get back in a week. Next morning, he left with his brother and relatives for Madanapuram, his home town, about 20 kilometers from Srikakulam.

Meeting his Mother

On seeing Purushotham, his mother and wife cried bitterly. Innumerable relatives and friends surrounded him and spoke harshly. Some blamed him, some rebuked and some abused him. Some planned to bind him and shut him up in a room.

Released From the Tyranny of the Relatives

All their plots failed. Having seen his equanimity unchanged and further noticing the remarkable meekness in Purushotham, their attitude took a turn for the better, and they treated him kindly. His wife Radhamani Choudhurani planned to go with him, but went on postponing their travel, thus delaying Purushotham for 14 days.

Thereafter, when our poet urged them earnestly, his wife and their 2-year old daughter Shanta Kumari, accompanied by a relative followed Purushotham to Srikakulam. Since Purushotham was yet to rescind his caste, the relatives consulted among themselves and allowed his wife and child to go with him without any fuss. They sent a relative with them, just for her sake. Radhamani Devi, however, was feeling depressed on leaving her household and wanted to go back to her family.

In the meanwhile, Ms. Helen Knott was anxious about Purushotham's delay in getting back. She therefore sent two men with a letter, enclosing a rupee in a white paper. She instructed them to deliver the letter in secret to Purushotham. The two men searched for Purushotham in vain and returned to Srikakulam on the very day Purushotham and family got back. They found him by providence and recognized him, since they happened to see

him with Ms. Knott before, and gave the letter to him. Purushotham opened and read the letter.

To,

Babu Purushotham Chowdhary,

Sir, we have been expecting you every moment since the end of the agreed time. If you are held against your will, by your people, write a compliant to the District Collector on the white paper I am sending you, and send it to me through these men. I will forward it to the collector and see that you are released. If, on the other hand, you find a way to escape, please write to me. I can secretly send you a cart or a horse. Use the rupee I folded herewith for your expenses.

Yours

Helen Knott

Return of His Wife

Purushotham was extremely glad for Ms. Knott's kindness and Christian goodwill.

On hearing about Purushotham's arrival, Ms. Knott went on a cart to see him, his wife and daughter. She was immensely happy to see them and spoke a few words of encouragement to Mrs. Radhamani Devi, since Radhamani was in great worry regarding Purushotham's entry into the new religion and giving up relations with his family. On the third day, her mother in law and brother visited them. This had considerably lifted her spirits.

Noticing her state of mind, Purushotham thought it best to send her back. She was over joyed at this and promised her husband "*I would join you when you are totally settled in the religion of Christ and return home.*"

Next day, Purushotham's mother Subhadra Devi Choudhurani and her brother took Purushotham's wife Radhamani Devi Chaudhurani back to Madanapuram.

A firm Plan of Action

Then Ms. Helen Knott and Adjutant Evelyn discussed what could be done in Purushotham's case. Those days the believers in the Army regiment were very much concerned with the missionary work. Thus Adj. Evelyn in great love, continued to assist Purushotham.

Life in Vishakhapatnam, Death of the Officer Evelyn

Missionaries of the London Missionary Society, Rev George Crane, and Rev. Augustus Des Granges, who reached Vishakhapatnam in 1805, died not much later in 1809 and 1810 respectively. It was not known when Rev. James Dawson arrived, but he might have distributed the gospel tracts printed by Carey of Sirampore in these parts. Previously when our hero Purushotham went to Vishakhapatnam, Mr. Dawson was indisposed. At the time of his death in 1832, he entrusted his two sons to the care of Major Brett, an army officer in East India Company.

At that time, Maj. Brett was looking after the affairs of London Missionary Society. One of the sons of Mr. Dawson, William Dawson was put in charge of the Mission Schools. At this time, Adj. Evelyn and Ms. Knott, thought it best to write a commendation letter in the name of Maj. Brett. They kept the letter in a leather pouch, gave it to Purushotham and sent him to Vishakhapatnam in the company of one more person.

Purushotham reached there in May 1833 and handed the letter to Maj. Brett. The good Major felt happy on seeing the letter, welcomed this new seeker and comforted him with all Christian love and concern. He provided Purushotham all amenities. After a few months, Adj. Evelyn went to Vishakhapatnam, fell ill and died. The help Purushotham was getting from Evelyn stopped.

Now Maj. Brett and William Dawson loved Purushotham. William Dawson, though very young, kept our hero in his house as his guest and extended hospitality for many months.

1829 Edition of the Bible

God wonderfully equips those he has chosen to invite into his glorious kingdom. God knows that his servant Purushotham needs a copy of the

Bible. So, God established the Bible Society in Madras, within a few years of the birth of Purushotham. Rev Pritchett translated New Testament in 1818 in Vishakhapatnam. And it was printed at Madras the previous year with the financial help of the Calcutta Bible Society. In 1829, Maj. Brett gave a copy of the New Testament printed in Madras by the Madras Bible Society to Purushotham.

He read it with rapt attention from cover to cover, underlining important parts with a pencil (We can see it even today)¹. Maj. Brett showed the verses of the Bible and explained Biblical truths with great clarity, thus taking trouble to encourage Purushotham.

Discarding of ‘Yagnopaveetam’ (Holy Thread)

Purushotham having had a very close and critical look at the essential differences between various old faiths he had held on to and Christianity, took appropriate decisions step by step.

He left his family circle. He abandoned caste with all its rituals. He considered it hypocritical to discard some and keep some of them. The “sacred thread” that stood for the Hindu concept of ‘twice born,’ bestowed upon him by the Brahmins on the day of his “Upanayana” (Sacred thread laying ceremony) with injunction “yajnopaveetam pramam pavitram” (sacred thread utterly holy) and that which was considered consecrated by the people of his clan, was still around his neck. He felt that adorning the name of Jesus, while yet keeping the thread is not pure devotion.

Thus, on June 10th, 1833 with great courage he removed the thread and handed it over to Major Brett, thereby openly renouncing his caste.

He was the steward in the clan, poet laureate in the Parlakimidi royal court, he belonged to the superior clan of Bhardwaj, a member of the Mythili Panchagowda group, custodian of “Katyayana Sutra,” and professor of Samaveda. Instead of boasting about his caste, clan, and Pravara, Purushotham (like the man of God Paul who considered those that are beneficial to him as trash for the sake of the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ), decided to stand alone on the side of Jesus whom he loved, the first person to do so among his family and caste groups. Later,

in 1853, he wrote a tract named “Analysis of Caste and Ritual,” and added the following poem at the end.

*“Caste of Human kind is one,
Yet many are the names and creeds
A two-edged sword this is!
The Lord sanctioned this grace to His servant Purushotham”*

And this hand bill had sold in thousands assisting the seekers after the truth.

In addition to the caste system, he whole heartedly abhorred idolatry and wrote the popular tracts “Illustration of the way to heaven,” and “Building idols” thus demonstrating his dislike for Hindu religion.

Journey to Cuttack

Now Purushotham was deeply committed and desirous of taking Baptism and mentioned this a number of times to Major Brett. He, in turn tried his best to send Purushotham to Madras to the missionaries by ship. But because of the onset of monsoon, there was no way the ordinary sail boats can undertake such a voyage.

This too had the divine providence. As if in response to the prayers of the saints, Helen Knott received a reply from Orissa Baptist Missionaries in Cuttack about Purushotham. They wanted him sent to Cuttack. Ms. Knott sent this letter to Vishakhapatnam. Major Brett read it, spoke to Purushotham about the invitation from the missionaries who would be happy to Baptize him.

Purushotham was excited at the news and hastened to go. The very next day Major Brett made arrangements for the journey, wrote a note to the missionaries and sent him along with a servant. Purushotham might have launched on this journey most probably towards the end of June or beginning of July, 1833.

They had to pass through dangerous jungle tracks of land infested with cruel animals, snakes, monkeys, robbers, and uncivilized tribes. There were no safe highways those days. It took about two to three weeks to

cover a distance of 300 miles. On the way, they crossed Chilka lake and reached Cuttack.

The details of Purushotham's baptism in Cuttack are included in the book "Orissa and its Geographical History in connection with the General Baptist Mission History" (Orissa, its Geography, Statistics & c P. 229) written by the then Secretary to Bengal government Mr. Andrew Sterling and Rev. James Pegg, page 229.

The City of Cuttack

At that time, there were not many Christians in Cuttack. It was sheer grace of God that Purushotham should have an opportunity to enjoy fellowship with them. The Baptist missionaries started preaching of the gospel on 12th February, 1822. Cuttack was in fact a sort of island between Mahanadi and its tributary Cutjodi. The city had a lane with 12 shops, known as "Bara bazaar."

Until 1912 under the administration of Delhi royalty, Cuttack was in the State of Bengal, and home to thousands of Telugu people. It was the capital city of the modern 'Utkal' state. Bengali and Hindustani were widely spoken. By then, there were a few Christians (one of them being Babu Doitari Naik, who subsequently came into Purushotham's family by marriage). These Christians joined the missionaries in welcoming Purushotham.

The social and religious reforms that were taking place in Calcutta, Serampore and other places helped Purushotham to assess and distinguish between some profound Hindu rituals and Christian sacraments. During the purification bath (Viraja snanam), the candidate would say-

*"For the sin of knowing (the wrong things)
and not knowing (the right things)
Hereby I take this holy bath..."*

Purushotham clearly understood the difference between this and the Baptism in Christ, denoting a new birth. During this time the great Bengali Reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy died in England on 27th, 1833. At the very same time Roy was denouncing idolatry and Caste system,

Purushotham, by the help of the new life in Jesus, acquired the power to perpetuate such reforms until the present day.

Churches of the English Baptist Mission in Cuttack examined the steadfast faith of Purushotham and admitted him into their Church. Rev. Charles Lacy who baptized him on that glorious day described the event in his book.

Chowdhary Purushotham's Baptism

It was decided to baptize Purushotham on 6th October 1833- a Sunday. The circuit judge had graciously given permission for the use of a large pond (called Ganga Mandiram) in the city.

The choice was appropriate for this holy act, and significant because it was centrally located by the side of the high way on the main Bazaar. They sang a song in Oriya, prayed and proclaimed the good news with a thousand-strong audience present. After the opening prayer, the crowds sat comfortably on the grass around the pond.

This was a spectacular sight. The people maintained a reverential silence. The Priest Rev. Lacy and the candidate Purushotham Chowdhary went down the steps into the water, and Purushotham was given immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, intoned in English and the vernacular.

There were several reasons for conducting this event in a public place. The first was to attract many and preach the message to them. The second reason was to dispel wrong understanding created by the opponents of the faith among the common people about Baptism.

London Mission's Labors of Love- the Value of Gospel Tracts

“Our brother Purushotham could approach, recognize and acknowledge the grace of God in Lord's supper that very evening. From that day, until the day of his departure to his place, we could see, by his words and deeds, reason for a good hope about him. Now he was obedient, and was proficient in reading the word of God, and enthusiastic in proclaiming the word to others. He was the first fruit of the efforts of our brothers on the coast.

When he first went to Vishakhapatnam to confess his Faith in the savior, James Dawson was unwell but was alive. He (Purushotham) gave a good testimony about so many in his close circle. It appeared that it was not difficult to add some more to the flock of Jesus from among these people.

We see a new dimension here. While we keep dying off one by one, not seeing even one (of the natives) turning to the Lord, lamenting that our efforts are in vain, there are those happy few, who not only seek the way of the Zion, acquire the saving knowledge through a gospel tract distributed by us. We toiled as laborers in our savior's vineyard. Unknown to us we created many means that led many to Christ.

How great is this encouragement! How blessed is the proclamation! How joyful is such visitation! God knows how we can become fruitful, and accordingly he makes our success directly or indirectly as he finds it appropriate. All that we need to do is to leave our burden in his hands and move forward. We cannot imagine the bliss involved in such surrender.

We are also looking at an intelligent young man who captured the truth of Christ through the tracts he received. Even without an opportunity to speak with any Christian, he could get all the knowledge and comfort he required in his new faith, just through the tracts he received.

The results were marvelous. The young man is going to start preaching to his own countrymen. Through the grace shown to him, and the redemption granted him, he can be a guide many seekers, if he is steadfast in his faith.

He left Cuttack on October 21st (1833) for his home state. I sent one Radhu to accompany him on his journey, as Purushotham was visiting seekers from his own family and many others from Berhampur. He (Purushotham) was extremely unhappy to part with the local Christians who have been close to him while in Cuttack. He was not an ordinary run of the mill type of Christian. He will be unusually helpful to all Telugus in the state and to the Coastal London Missionary Society.”²

A Priceless Gem

As mentioned earlier, the Orissa General Baptist Missionary Society said the following on Page 20 of their report: “On close consideration of the London Missionary Society’s missionary labor, they had God’s blessing in which they could bring in Purushotham, who is as priceless as the gem in the mediatory crown of Lord Jesus. [report of the General Baptist Missionary Society 1834 P. 20]. Purushotham, as appeared from the preceding narrative is a gem added to the Savior’s mediatory crown, by the divine blessing on the efforts of the London Missionary Society.

The following facts were written covering the baptismal ceremony of Purushotham in the book entitled “Orissa, its Geography, History, Religion, and Antiquity.”

Biography

Among those who joined the Church this year, 1833, the case of Purushotham from Vizag is encouraging. This is what is said in the society’s report. “. . .Last year a good number of Hindus turned to Christ and started preaching and witnessing Christ facing all sorts of sorrow and suffering. Among them Purushotham was one.

He appears to be the first of the labor of London Mission Society missionaries. This young man has demonstrated his wonderful conviction and witness. In the past, he was engrossed in blind rituals and idolatry. While he was still in those hateful practices, he had a spiritual prompting and awakening to seek the true Savior.

He happened to receive a tract earlier, he read it and threw it away. Later he read three or four more. They showed him the means of redemption. After some experiences and searching, he decided to be Christ’s disciple. The missionaries who initiated the quest in him died without witnessing the fruit of their labor. Through the help of Army officials, he was to be sent to Madras for getting baptized - about 400 KM away. What a pity that a Hindu, wanting to become Christian, cannot get in touch with a clergyman within 300 kilometers! A deplorable state of affairs! Shortage of Missionaries in India- how miserable! This zealous Hindu

described his experiences how the savior took care of him, before he could join his Christian friends-

“Lord Jesus in his unmerited grace looked upon me and helped me to grow in faith and wisdom, though this mortal body kept me in sin and darkness, and I was fighting against Satan’s minions. But eventually I got the salvation from my great saviour.

This way, God rescued me from these two types of enemies. On witnessing the inexplicable change in my faith, my close relations, my brother, mother, wife and friends started scoffing at me and hurting me. Some rebuked, some scolded, and some used sharp language. Some tried to keep me bound. Others teased me in several ways.

However, I was given poise and wisdom to stand upright without fear and despair. All this was given to me by the One whom I recognized as divine master in whom I had full confidence and thereby deal with patience and peace who were persecuting me. I steadied and separated myself from those who were keen on hurting me. And I praise the Lord for his grace that kept me going, kept me safe from those trying to persecute me.³

While in the Christian fellowship in Cuttack, Purushotham wrote a hymn about his spiritual gratification. This was the first of his hymns written 100 years ago (from the time of writing this biography i.e. 1903).

First Hymn About the Spiritual Experience

I found a hiding place in my Jesus Christ- My soul ascended my great savior’s peak

- 1. My sin was visited first- my heart confessed to all of them- my spirit lamented- a path found to dispel doubts. #I found#*
- 2. My ears heard the good news- foolish doctrines left and fled- I got the virtuous Christian intercourse- myriad gods turned into poison. #I found#*
- 3. Faces of preachers of pain- turned away with great shame-folk tales and myths ran away- my spirit yearning for purity- hastened to Jesus’ feet #I found#*

4. *My heart found the deep mystery- boundless solid sin emptied away- Jesus gave his life as a favor-with his death destroyed heaps of my sin #I found#*
5. *Devious doctrine of caste and creed died- diabolic demon's chains loosened- exalted eternal peace of the cross bearer-came to roost in my core #I found#*
6. *Desire to change others into my state- out of love for my fellows- heart consecrated to God- changed soul found the heavens glory #I found#*
7. *Echoes and thuds of evil emotions- silenced and lost their charm- dumb images crushed down- ways of all wisdom are but weak earthen pots- sinful thinking lost its footing #I found#*

From the second verse of the Hymn, “*I got the virtuous Christian intercourse,*” we can understand that he wrote it while he was in Cuttack in fellowship with the Christians there. This was included in the Andhra Christian Hymnal as the Centenary hymn.

Here is a song about Hindu God Rama written about 1820 while he was still a Hindu following all rituals of “Sandhyavandanam” (morning prayers), Gayatri chants and praising his favorite God.” Kali Mohanti Deenabandhu Patha Naik, and Kali Mohanti Krishna Chandra Patha Naik used to sing this in Parlakimidi. Some of the stanzas are missing here.

1. *Considered you my father O Rama- you are my only way- doing many rituals- in this human incarnation- I see no use.*
2. *Despite boundless hopes and empty expectations- not even a piece of thread will come with us in death- dear children and wife, hoarded riches- can they accompany in my eternal sleep?*
3. *Six bodily traits persecute me- you did not come to my rescue- am I yours or not? - extreme mischievous child I – crave your abundant mercy.*
4. *Transcendent Srinivasa Varadacharya- trust in the succor of the teacher's feet and worship- and the teaching of the resident deity of Madanapuri*

The uncertainty of salvation in this hymn and the assurance seen in the previous one, are strikingly in contrast and are noteworthy. Purushotham wrote this hymn having recognized the power behind Christ's sacrifice and the unimaginable impact of his resurrection. The readers should compare this with the other hymns written by Purushotham and set their lives straight.

As said earlier Purushotham turned to Christ on 6th October 1833 in Cuttack, received the letter Rev Lacy wrote to Major Brett, and travelled for 20 days reaching Vishakhapatnam on 17th of the same year in the month of November. This date is supported by the letter written to me by Rev Young. The letter Rev T. Baily wrote to me, support the date of baptism as Oct 6th 1833.

It was sheer providence that Purushotham, our ancestor, 100 years ago was wonderfully saved by Christ's redeeming work and received this exceptional and auspicious status. Let us now see how God used his unworthy servant in the wide and great ministry of the gospel in this country.

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1. *This copy of the Bible is now with the grandchildren of the author of this book in Kakinada.*
 2. *See Orissa and its Geography Statistics History Religion and Antiquities by Andrew Sterling Esq; late Persian Secretary to the Bengal Government etc. P. 230.*
 3. *Orissa, its Geography, Statistics...P. 230.*

Chapter 5

“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” - John 15:20

Purushotham’s voluntary evangelism begins; Missionary trip to Madras with Major Brett; Attempt to kill the poet by anti-Christian elements; Blows of various kinds; Trip to Bellary; Long evangelistic tour.

First Evangelistic Service in Vishakhapatnam- Kicks and Beatings

Though tired, with a face aglow with new life, our hero Purushotham reached Vishakhapatnam in the month of November, 1833. He met Major Brett and gave him the letter from Rev Lacy. From the letter, Major Brett understood all that took place in connection with Purushotham’s conversion to Christ and the holy boldness he showed for Christ.

Brett thanked God and looked at Purushotham with joy and said, “Rev Lacy writes that the best thing for you is to take up preaching of the gospel to the people in this region than look for any other job. And that is exactly my opinion, as well. I will write to Madras to arrange for a salary for you.”

Purushotham with all sense of gratitude and contentment said, “Don’t you worry sir, about any salary and all that. I am single, and all that I need is food and clothing. I don’t need any salary as such.” To this Brett agreed and said a few kind words by way of encouraging him. It is nothing but sheer grace of God that a European army official to have this kind concern towards an ordinary Indian.

Though Purushotham did not speak English, he could manage his affairs with white men using Hindi and Telugu.

He started his evangelistic work in Vishakhapatnam and Srikakulam and the villages around them. Purushotham would stand up in the midst of the crowd and preach Christ to them, who were anything but sympathetic to the Christian faith.

He preached in the streets and market places, where people chased him angrily, beat him up and kicked him. At some places, they would accept the Christian tracts, and promptly tear them up to pieces and scatter them on Purushotham's head in mock blessing.

Remembering what Jesus said, "Men would persecute you as they persecuted me, and also remembering a Hindu aphorism: "the purpose of our body is to be useful to others," he managed to remain calm when persecuted. He went on preaching and the seed fell into thorny bushes as well as on good soil.

At one time, three men seemed to have been convicted. Leaving their religion, they took part in eating and other acts with Christians and got interested in the word of God, and read it. Surprisingly they turned from Christian faith and went back to their past faith and life. Purushotham, however, was not at all disturbed by this set back, but went on preaching.

Missionary Trip to Madras and Evangelism There

About this time, Maj. Brett was transferred to Madras. Purushotham because of his zeal, was accepted by Brett to be taken into the yacht to go to Madras. During the crossing, the wind was against them.

Later in life Purushotham used to narrate this ordeal to his children. For 18 days, they suffered, staying afloat, eating only biscuits, which Purushotham was not accustomed to. He, however spent time reading the Bible and said to Brett on one occasion, "How many wonderful things there are in the Bible!" To that Brett's encouraging response was, "a blind man can see many wonderful things as his eyes get opened."

At last they reached Madras after voyaging 500 miles. They stayed in Purusuwakkam. Purushotham stayed with Brett and went out alone every day preaching in the streets and market places of Madras where for a long time both Telugu and Tamil languages had been in use. Here Purushotham met Rev. John Smith and Rev. W. H. Drew along with other Indian Christians. But Purushotham could not learn much about Christian faith, because of the language barrier.

Purushotham spoke about Christ to the Telugu speaking people while in Madras. But unfortunately, people persecuted him and even tried to kill him. We can gather the following details from his records.

Persecution at Madras

One evening in Madras I was preaching at George Town square for a long time and I thought that I should stop and get back to Major Brett because it was getting late. Some young men who were listening to me suddenly got up and said, "Continue, don't stop." Then I said, "It is getting late, and I must go a long way, I need to leave now." Then they jumped on me, held me strongly and tried to drag me into a by lane. I shouted loudly as I have a premonition that they were intent on hurting me.

Then suddenly two Tamil Christian young men came on the spot. There was an exchange of words between them. The Tamil young men tried to rescue me, but in vain. Then they said loudly, "if you don't release him we would go and report to Major Brett and imagine what would happen to you then."

People in the surrounding houses came out, chased the wicked youngsters away and saved me. As I was hurt in the struggle, I was unable to walk. So, the two Christians carried me to Major Brett's house. And I thanked God for saving me from danger."

Major Brett was wondering what had happened, as I was not home yet. As he was waiting for me, the two youngsters carried me into his presence. He was shocked on seeing me in that condition. He heard from the two young men what had happened to me. In true Christian spirit, he decided not to take any revenge on those fanatics and spoke to Purushotham consolingly.

Purushotham was not the type that would lay his hand on the plough and turn back. Though the people of Madras were against him, he was full of compassion for them, like Paul, who showed compassion to those in Lystra. Though the Broadway crowd hurt him, Mount Road mob insulted him, he was not at all intimidated.

He wrote thus about the intolerance of the people of Madras: “One day I spoke in a street, many gathered and heard me. But when I started giving out tracts there was a stampede. They pushed me around, loosened my ‘Dhoti,’ plucked my hair, trampled on me with their feet, pelted me with stones and pushed me along the street calling me foul names.

Someone from a house rushed out, shouting like a devil, took his foot ware to hit me on head, but by God’s grace he could not harm me. I cannot write down the foul language they used. I spent three months experiencing this sort of treatment in Madras. It was terrible. But “No servant is greater than his master” (John 15:20). Dwelling on the words of Jesus, Purushotham wrote a poem on Christian virtues of poise and long suffering in tribulation.

Insults are good gifts

Abuses adornments

Hustling ornaments

Buffets pearly jewels

Curses fine garments

Laced with choicest perfumes

Kicks anointings and

Rebukes necklaces of gems

For the best of Christians

With their mind at rest

Series of calamities are like riches

Since Gods words nestles inside

Scoffers taunt, cannot snuff

The Joy of the message in mind

Accusers together persecute

Peace of mind is undisturbed

*Violent men chase and abuse
Comfort of heart stays intact
Presence of persecutors
Great riches of spirit never decrease*

*Who can rob the love and devotion of
Those that tasted the sweet grace of
The overlord of the unique heavenly joy
Jehovah the high God of unparalleled glory*

Purushotham's Trip to Bellary

In 1824, London Mission in India started evangelism in ceded districts starting from Bellary. Purushotham heard that a certain Missionary Rev. Havel of the Telugu Church of Bellary could preach in Telugu and therefore he wanted to go to see him. When he expressed his wish, Major Brett said he would consider it. Brett was a prayerful man; some believed that miracles happened when he prayed.

As though in response to their prayers, Rev John Hands happened to go to Madras from Bellary. Mr John Smith, Mr W. H. Drew and Major Brett met Rev Hands and discussed the future of Purushotham. They decided that it would be better for him to go to Rev John Reeds in Bellary. Major Brett gave everything needed for Purushotham for the journey and sent him on his way.

At that time, there was only a rough army road -about 440 km long- connecting Madras and Bangalore and Bellary (but the present Railway line between them is only 307 km long). So Purushotham took that road touching Arakkonam, Renigunta, Cuddapah, Gooty, Ananthapuram, and Guntakal reaching Bellary (First rail road in India was between Bombay and Thane in 1853). When he met Rev Reeds, he was exceptionally kind to Purushotham and welcomed him heartily. Purushotham had heard Rev

Reed was extremely comfortable in using Telugu and learnt many new things from him.

With a fresh zeal, Purushotham started preaching the gospel to the Telugu people around there. He, on appointment supervised some schools there. During this time, he happened to get in touch with some important Telugu Christian leaders such as Rev. Samuel, and catechist Burder. Unfortunately, around this time, Purushotham fell seriously ill and stayed in bed very weak. But Rev. Reed looked after him with fatherly care and Purushotham got well soon.

Purushotham having tasted the saving grace of God, was now very keen on leading his wife, child and all his family circle to the Lord. He did not therefore want to stay at Bellary any longer but wanted to get back to Vishakhapatnam. When he mentioned this to Rev Reeds, he did not like the idea of Purushotham leaving Bellary. On reflection, considering the strong reasons Purushotham had in taking that decision, Rev Reeds agreed and arranged for him to journey back to Vishakhapatnam.

Home Coming, The Great Gospel Trip, Reaching Vishakhapatnam

When Purushotham accepted Lord Jesus as his saviour, he started a mega missionary journey covering 1300 miles from Cuttack to Bellary, via Madras, preaching to thousands of Oriya and Telugu speaking people. And now on his route back there were so many towns and villages with people who had not heard about Jesus.

With that zeal of Paul who said, “woe unto me if I don’t preach the gospel,” Purushotham left Bellary, and reached Machilipatnam touching various towns like Guntakal, Ananthapuram, Madanapalli, Renigunta, Gudur, Nellore, Kavali, Ongole, Guntur, Mangalagiri, Bezawada, and Vuyyuru, preaching the good news and distributing tracts at all these places. At several places, he was rudely insulted. While preaching at Mangalagiri, we are told that a Brahman family accustomed to hospitality, showed him great kindness, receiving him with all courtesy, decorating their house in order to ceremoniously receive the guest and gave him a sumptuous meal.

On arrival at Machilipatnam Purushotham handed the letter from Reeds to Justice Watson. The judge was so kind that he gave Purushotham 20 rupees. Purushotham thanked him, and took leave of him and continued his journey to Vishakhapatnam touching Bhardrachalam via Eluru for ministry.

He continued preaching in towns of Rajamundry, Samalkot, Kakinada, Pithapuram and other villages covering nearly 1000 miles. At Vishakhapatnam, Purushotham stayed with Ms Helen Knott's son in law, Captain Richardson as a guest for 8 months, preaching at various places. In a brief period of 18 months, Purushotham covered nearly 3000 miles on a missionary journey which exceeded that of Paul.

During that time, there were no protestant mission stations in this region up to Cuttack except at Madras and Bellary. And it appears that Purushotham was divinely appointed as a travelling missionary.

On 9th June 1834, the Baptist missionary at Srirampur, William Carey passed away and there was a need for poet cum writer cum preacher like Purushotham. In the book "Christianity in India," on page 89, we can see it recorded how different missions established themselves at several places: in 1840 at Nellore, in 1837 at Narsapur, in 1841 at Machilipatnam, in 1842 at Guntur, in 1844 in Rajamundry, in 1880 at Hyderabad, and in 1874 at Kakinada.

Our hero, Purushotham, in comparison with these mission establishments, was way ahead of them in terms of both time scale as well as geographical reach in our country.

Gospel Preaching to Blood Relations

Purushotham, like apostle Paul, was intensely zealous for his blood relations to come into Christian faith and he preached to all of them with all sincerity. But they looked down upon him as an untouchable and an outcaste. Their contempt for him and his new-found faith was so strong that they served him food near the dung heaps and other dirty places outside houses. Where ever he stepped, they thought the place was contaminated and

therefore needed ceremonial cleansing, which they promptly did. He had the grace of God to comfort himself by taking all their insults as if they were wedding feasts.

He hired a house around this time at Madanapuram and from there preached covering the towns like Saravakote, Tembur, Tilar, Urlam, and Parlakimidi. In response to these insulting experiences, he wrote the following hymn towards the end of 1834 comforting himself.

Boldness in the Lord Jesus Christ

What if the world belittles you- what is it to you? – When Christ who makes sinners holy- for you, built a heavenly abode?

- 1. Who will take you to the other side of the endless sea of mortality- who will douse the wrath that ignite the conflagration of hell- who will establish your heart in knowing divine meaning of the eternal salvation- only the incarnate merciful one Christ who gave his life for you- bestowing divine favour.*
- 2. Who will turn your mind around going towards evil time and again- who will kick and punish Satan and extend a helping hand to you- Who will break the thorn of death planting comfort in your soul and pronounce his loving kindness- the sweet name of Christ who suffered on the hill outside Jerusalem*
- 3. Who will release your heart from grief and endless strife- who will give you peace and prod you saying ‘this is the way to heaven’- who will utter soothing words of everlasting fellowship, promising never to leave you- who will day by day make you glad- Gentle Christ according to scriptures aiming to make you an inhabitant of the heavenly realm.*

Two years earlier Purushotham’s wife Radhamani had secretly told him that she would like to become a Christian and in fact she was willing to follow her husband in his preaching mission. But she was not bold enough to cut herself off from the family and caste and told her husband “Sir, I am not able to come with you at present.” Purushotham therefore left her

there and went to Srikakulam. He met a kind British Engineer by name Armstrong and stayed with him. Within a couple of days Armstrong received a letter from Captain Richardson.

Arrival of J. W. Gordon

Captain Richardson said in that letter that Rev Gordon, a missionary from London has arrived eight days earlier and was eagerly waiting to meet Purushotham. Armstrong told Purushotham about the contents of that letter. Purushotham was very happy, left promptly for Vishakhapatnam and met Rev Gordon.

A Split in the Joint Family

Let us now turn to the interesting episode in Purushotham's family. Purushotham's elder brother Jagannath Chowdhary left the joint family in Madanapuram and started living at another town by himself. After Purushotham's departure, there was some political unrest in Parlakimidi.

Under General Taylor's Command, the 21st Battalion arrived at Parlakimidi, between 16th and 18th January 1834. About 8 miles away from Parlakimidi in the region of river Vamsadhara, rebel leaders Tati Raju, Sardar Jogi Raju, Sardar Fakir Raju, Savara Gurnel and others tried to attack the British army near Akulatampara, Vallada, Bhamini, and Labha.

General Taylor and Hon'ble George Edward Rasool fought with the rebel hoards who joined forces in rebellion, on January 30th, 1834 in the morning with canons, and subdued them. Subsequently, that year on the 12th April, Sardar Fakir Raju decided to take sides with the British and betrayed the rebels. Akulatampara region which had been confiscated was given back after obtaining permission from the Government and Court of Wards, to the rebels on 9th December 1834. This was recorded in Russel's report no. 24 P 64 and 65.

After the battle, the Government held a royal meeting at Lakshminarasapuram, to which Jagannath Chowdhary was invited. Fakir Raju, who happened to attend that meeting heard Jagannath sing and was

fascinated by his mellifluous voice. Fakir Raju spoke to him with great affection in Oriya and said, now that the government has given back the confiscated region, he would like to keep Jagannath's sons as stewards and entrust lands to them. Jagannath was very pleased at the offer and left Madanapuram probably towards the end of 1834 or in the beginning of 1835 taking his wife, Rekhamani Chudharani, first born Appala Narasimha Chowdhary, last son Gopinath Chowdhary, and his daughter Bhanumati Devi. He left behind in Madanapuram his other sons, Chakrapani, and Adinarayana. Thus, the departure of Jagannath's family to Parnasagarapuram created a split; however, resulted in some interesting spiritual benefits. The readers would later see the ministry done by Purushotham there.



Chapter 6

Resuming preaching with Rev Gordon at Vishaphapatnam; Great sacrifice of Radhamani Devi; Second trip to Cuttack; Radhamani accepting Christianity.

“Now separate to me Baranbas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Acts 13:2

We have already read that Rev. James Dawson died in 1932. Three years later Rev J. W. Gordon of London Missionary Society came to Vishakhapatnam as a missionary. Gordon’s message sent through Armstrong brought Purushotham to Vishakhapatnam. Gordon and Purushotham were so loving and kind to each other, they naturally made a wonderful team and started gospel work like Barnabas and Paul. What a link between Vishakha and London! God’s purposes and plans are inconceivable. There was a lot of scope for gospel work in Telugu speaking regions of the country. It was sheer providence, they got teamed up for the job at hand.

Earlier on, with the financial support from the London Mission, twelve schools were started with 500 students, with Hindu teachers, under the supervision of Major Brett. With Purushotham at hand, Rev Gordon asked him to oversee the schools as well as to propagate the gospel. In fact, Gordon wanted to arrange for a regular salary for him. But Purushotham was not at all interested in any salary and said as he was single, he would not need more than two annas (12 paise) and four paise according to the expenditure of those days, as he told earlier to Major Brett. Some discussion ensued. And finally, Purushotham’s decision was accepted. However, they preached the gospel together for about one year with one accord.

In 1835 Purushotham went to a place about 80 miles away from Vishakhapatnam to visit his family. By then, his mother had passed away. As a result of fervent prayer of Purushotham, Mrs Knott and Major Brett Purushotham’s wife Radhamani Devi, daughter of Babu Raghunathpal

Mohanti dared to believe in Christ. The relatives as usual continued to abuse Purushotham and discriminate on the basis of religion.

Around this time, something very significant happened at noon on 22nd December that year. Purushotham got ready to go somewhere and was waiting for a servant to join him sitting on the mud bench outside his house. As arranged, Mrs. Radhamani Chaudhurani arrived there fully decked out wearing a yellow sari, all her jewellery, particularly the jingling anklets. To top it all, she wore the sapphire dot on her forehead that shone like the full moon, the symbol of status as a married woman and feminine prosperity.

The situation was so conspicuous because it was forbidden for a family woman to appear in public, that too talking to her husband out on the street. She, being a person who had never been out in sunshine, stood there in front of Purushotham like a shining sword drawn out of its sheath. Having walked out of her house all alone, she stood in front of Purushotham, bowed down her head and said in Oriya language, “My master, what an awful experience you are passing through! I am aware of the way my family is persecuting you, which I cannot tolerate any longer. I have accepted Lord Jesus as my saviour just as you have. Let us go away from here and I am ready now to go with you wherever it takes.”

Attracted by this unusual scene on the street- a family woman talking to her husband in the open- men and women gathered in a large crowd. Some farm hands chose to stay back and watch the developments instead of going to their harvesting work in the fields. Among the crowd was Radhamani’s mother Lavanyavathi, her brothers Bhaskar Mohanti, and Rajamohan Mohanti and many other relatives. They all raised a rumpus.

One of the brothers cried, “Radhamani, your husband hasn’t come to our house, but you went out to his without telling any of us. How dare you do this! We are a respectable family. You trampled on our family reputation by making a scene on the street here.”

Radhamani answered softly but firmly, “Brother, I have been in your house without seeing my husband for two years and a half. Because I was

not bold enough, I did not go with him eventhough he called me a number of times and you are quite aware of that. Now I have made up my mind. Whatever way he chooses I will follow him. You cannot stop me. I don't need your caste and religious rituals. I give up all that. If my husband becomes a king, I am a queen, if he becomes a beggar, I become one. So, permit me to go with my husband.”

Deeply disturbed by these words, her brother said, “Dear sister, is there any shortage of food or clothing while you are with us? Now I am even willing to give out a village to you to administer, you can live on the revenue it brings, but don't choose to go for that untouchable food and life.”

To that Radhamani said, “Brother, I am sure you can give me all that and much more, but you can never give me my husband. Imagine what the society will think of me if I stay back alone. I am going, do not try to stop me.”

Listening to all this emotionally charged exchange of words, her brothers, relatives and everyone gathered there were moved and some even started to cry. Suddenly her brother produced a small knife and threatened to stab himself if she chose to go. Radhamani saw that it was merely a ploy to win her over. So she said, “I cannot help you brother, if you choose to kill yourself. There is nothing I can do. I take leave of you. Where is my daughter Santi? Give her to me, I am going.”

On hearing this, a huge lament went up among the men and women among the group of relatives. Their cry of anguish was heard from afar off. Someone had hidden the daughter, thinking that Radhamani will stay back for her sake. Pushing aside the traditional propriety and family prestige, Radhamani walked through the crowds to her husband, who was waiting for her, all set to travel. She told him that someone had hidden their daughter. Purushotham replied, “Don't you worry dear, they will bring the child to us before we cross the village border or else, they will appear before the court in Srikakulam.” She replied, “So, let us go” and they started walking.

Every one gathered there was surprised at her resolute will. Not even a hint of thought seemed to occur to Purushotham regarding the property he was going to leave for good. The couple who had lived apart for two years and a half, are now together and Purushotham rediscovered in Radhamani the legendary role of a virtuous wife- who must be a maid in serving, a minister in advising, an angel in looks, mother earth in showing patience, a mother in long suffering- all rolled into one.

Purushotham felt extremely thankful to God for bringing his wife into Christian faith and making her a co-believer. They both started to walk along the road with the servant leading the way. We do not know whether it was because of the harvesting season, or the villagers were against Purushotham's new found faith, no one offered them a bullock cart for transport. Radhamani with her head covered went behind her husband. Relatives and others cried aloud. Even before the couple walked about ten yards someone handed over Shanti, their daughter to them.

It was late in the afternoon. The sun started to set with saffron and vermilion hues on the forehead of the evening sky. The splendour of the setting sun reflected on the yellow saree worn by Radhamani- a grand display of light and colour. Someone wicked shouted aloud, "Look at the woman who is going into the burning pit along with her dead husband!" With all that happened in Madanapuram village, Purushotham penned the following hymn.

Come ye, oh people, come dear ones, to the eternal and excellent salvation- having considered the pros and cons come boldly to join the path to Christ.

- 1. Shunning all misgivings, come to find Christ who has given up his life for us, out of mercy that knew no bounds, to save us, come to serve him.*
- 2. Commissioned by God to bear our sins, taking the form of man, performing marvellous deeds and going to the cross, come to join that great one.*

3. *Christ the strong benefactor, has cut down the burden of sinners, in great patience he came alongside of them, bearing their curse to save them.*
4. *Boastings of the vile flesh, harms the soul, know that the flesh is fleeting, shedding your desires of the body, come to see our Christ*
5. *The omnipresent, formless pure spirit, the only master of men, the lone mediator between mortals and God, come to see the one who came as the saviour.*
6. *Who is sinless among men, and blameless? Struggling in their mundane frustrations, lacking wisdom, all of you come*

While they walked along, Purushotham felt happy at the strength of conviction in his wife, and went on teaching her about the futility of all ornaments, upon which she promptly removed the jewels including the bangles which the traditional Hindu women consider sacred. She thus learnt a few spiritually significant points.

As you read this, I am sure you are reminded of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, where the Christian walks away from the city of destruction. As Christ said, "Let the dead bury their dead. You follow me." The two pilgrims, Purushotham and Radhamani took up their individual crosses and followed their Saviour. It appears as though they are still singing that song as they did on that day in Madanapuram, for us Telugu people now.

On 23rd December, our two pilgrims along with their daughter reached Srikakulam, stayed there for four days reflecting on their future.

There were a few Indian Christian women in the local discussion group at Cuttack. Radhamani was not comfortable with Telugu language. So, she wanted to find an Oriya speaking group. Purushotham felt the same. After some correspondence with Rev Gordon and other friends, Purushotham along with his family left Srikakulam for Cuttack in January 1836. The fact that a rich and traditional Indian lady converting to Christ

and coming to Cuttack filled the hearts of the missionaries and those in the Christian circles with joy.

Radhamani learnt a lot of spiritual truths at Cuttack fellowship and wanted to be baptized. And she was duly baptized on 3rd April 1836 by the Orissa Baptist Missionary Rev. Amos Sutton. The following account was written in the Annual Report of the General Baptist Mission – June 30, 1837:

“This young lady, receiving Christ as her Saviour at a time when there is a shortage of evangelists, is very comforting. She is deeply convicted and has openly accepted Jesus as her Saviour. She has travelled for 20 days to come here and declared her faith. What a surprise! What commitment for a woman caught in a traditional and ritualistic frame, to come out into the open declaring her faith in Jesus, is singularly marvellous. She is exemplary not only to her family members, but also to many.”

Around this time, Rev Sutton having married an American lady, had to leave for America. He shared his concern and scope for evangelism in Andhra region with his friends there. And in response to Sutton’s appeal, Rev S. S. Day was sent to India, by the American Baptist Mission. This was reported in “the Enterpriser.”

1. *Report of the General Baptist Missionary Society 1837, page 15.*

Chapter 7

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. 1 Timothy 1: 12

Anointment; First administrative position in Orissa; Evangelism under the care of Judge Storey; First helper to Rev S. S. Day.

Purushotham Receiving Anointment- Plan of Action

After his wife's baptism Purushotham prepared to leave for Vishakhapatnam, but the missionaries at Cuttack did not want to part with him. Consequently, the couple stayed back at Cuttack. In recognition and appreciation of Purushotham's zeal for Christ, the missionaries decided to appoint him as an evangelist. So, on Sunday 24th April 1836, after the Church service, three missionaries laid hands on him and consecrated him as an evangelist. At the same time Babu Doyithari Naik, who would later become Purushotham's relative was also dedicated.

Regarding this, the Orissa Baptist Mission Report said the following: "All concerned were extremely pleased to witness the anointing of the competent indigenous missionaries for the second time. The consecration service of Doyitari Naik and Purushotham separated them for the Lord's service. This took place on the day of our Lord (April 24th) 1836, immediately after the Cuttack Conference. Sutton read out the scripture, prayed dedicating the two men, and entrusted them with the lord's work from 1 Timothy chapter 4. W. Brown spoke a few words of introduction in Oriya and said the closing prayer. Ramachandra said the opening prayer and helped the 3 missionaries- Brown, Sutton and Noel at the dedication ceremony.

The native worship session was held in Oriya. The conference was excellently organized and wonderfully timed. May the Indian brothers witness many such dedication ceremonies. Now the Society has four anointed preachers."

Purushotham Goes to Berhampur as the First Auxiliary Missionary

The English Baptist missionaries wanted to start their work at Berhampur in Ganjam district. So, they appointed Rev W. Brown as missionary and Purushotham as an auxiliary missionary. Purushotham therefore moved with his family to Berhampur. As a result of his teaching, an Oriya Brahmin called Balaji Sahu and his wife turned to Christ. His family, still remains in the Church. As Rev Brown had to move to Calcutta, Purushotham took Rev Brown's place and started evangelization around Berhampur and Balaji Sahu¹ worked as his assistant.

At that time, the district Collector of Ganjam named Stevens Esq. was a devout Christian. On hearing about Purushotham and Balaji, he sent a note asking Mrs Brown to send the two gentlemen to him. It was a welcome invitation and they both travelled about 10 miles and reached Seetharampalli, also known as Chatrapuram.

They met the Collector camping there. The Collector asked after their welfare and revealed his intention to them saying in chaste Telugu, "Both of you, with your families come and stay with me. Fourteen Kodu (name of a tribal group) young boys kept to be sacrificed to their Gods, were rescued by the government and they are now under my care. Mr Balaji Sahu, I will entrust them to your care. Mr Purushotham, you can preach to the Telugu and Oriya speaking people living in the villages around. I will meet all the needs of your families. I will construct good houses for you. I will also construct a Prayer Hall for your worship. I will send for tracts, books and all the things that you need from Madras. If any of your relatives convert to Christianity, I will arrange for their housing and provide them with employment as per their qualifications. Therefore, please consider my request and come to me."

Purushotham and Sahu knew beforehand that this white man was God-fearing. For the time being, they did not give any word to the Collector but took leave of him, saying that they would think over and get back to him within four days. They stayed for the night and set out for their homes in the morning. That very night, something dreadful happened. The Collector

died of acute diarrhoea that very night at 12. They heard this shocking news from Mrs Brown as soon as they reached and were bewildered by the uncertainty of human life.

Invitation from Justice Storey

Justice E. Story was the civil sessions Judge in Srikakulam at that time. He happened to hear about Purushotham through the army officials and wrote to Purushotham to be with him in Srikakulam and do the Lord's work. Purushotham wrote about this to the missionaries in Cuttack and took their approval. He went to Srikakulam with his family and Balaji and his family, along with the Kodu Children from Chhatarpur. All of them stayed with Justice Storey for some time, preaching around Srikakulam.

One-day Judge Storey offered Purushotham an important job in East India Company, that of officer in-charge for the accounts in the court with a hefty salary. Purushotham politely turned it down like Moses considering preaching Christ more important than all the wealth of Egypt. I heard this from James Chinnaiah, relative of Purushotham's daughter Martha Burder, when I went to Cuttack in 1902.

Care of Meria Children

We have already read about the children belonging to Kodu tribe. The Kodu people lived in the forest region of Ganjam district. It was their practice to offer their children as sacrifice to two demonic goddesses called Burapennu and Tarapennu.

The government would rescue the children from their captors and hand them over to the missionaries for safe custody. Some of these rescued boys believed in Jesus and were thus attained liberty of the soul too. The Kodu tribe also kidnapped children of other tribes for sacrifice. These children are called 'Meria Children.' Such children too came to know the Lord Jesus through Purushotham. Some of the progeny of these children are still among us.

There was another providential aspect that brought Purushotham to Srikakulam at that time. The American Telugu Baptist Mission wanted to start their ministry in Andhra region with Rev Samuel S. Day as their first

missionary. He arrived in Vishakhapatnam on 7th March 1836. He was with Rev J. W. Gordon assisting him in holding English worship service. Because there were over a hundred Indian girls, Mrs Gordon and Mrs Porter started a boarding facility for the girls.

That very year, the first Andhra Christian Church building came up and a printing press was established in Vishakhapatnam. There were about 150 children attending Sunday School classes. The booklet “Testing the Validity of Caste Rituals,” must have been printed at this time¹. Rev Day did not want to stay in such a developed place, and wanted to stay in a place where there were no missionaries. Thus, he moved 70 miles away to the banks of river Nagavali, with his family and started learning Telugu language. Rev Kanakaiah had this to say:

Evangelism with Rev Day

“At that time, Purushotham was very helpful to both Rev Day and Rev Gordon, establishing schools and evangelising around Srikakulam. This was stated by Purushotham himself. As there were no road ways, they were carried in chair boxes by men and their belongings by bullocks.”³

This way Purushotham was used by the Lord to be the first helper to the Telugu Baptist Mission. Rev F. W. Armstrong said, “The first preacher who was raised up in the American Baptist Telugu Mission to assist their pioneer Missionary Rev Day². Around that time a young boy by name Venkata Prasada Pathanaik attended the Sunday school started by Mrs Day. Influenced by her and later by Purushotham, the boy got strengthened in his faith, threw away his sacred thread and got baptized during the time of Rev Dawson. And this young boy was none other than Josiah Burder. This name was adopted by this boy because Josiah Burder was his foster parent.

The American Baptists did not enjoy the fruits of Mrs Day’s ministry. Patnaik who took the name of Josiah Burder worked as a preacher in London Mission for a long time and was called in 1874 to be the pastor of Kakinada Church. After his conversion to Christ, Josiah married Purushotham’s second daughter Mary Sundari. American Baptist Mission

may not have known that this had happened during Rev Days' time. "You sow, but who knows who will reap?"

Rev. Day, somehow did not consider Srikakulam as his permanent mission field. He therefore left it on 7th March and arrived in Madras and started his missionary service there.

On the banks of Nagavali near Srikakulam, there was a mansion. We can never imagine how many times in that mansion Rev Day, Justice Storey, their families and Purushotham must have prayed for the salvation of the people of that region! We can see the fruits of their prayers today.

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1. *The History of Telugu Mission (Lone star) P. 28.*
 2. *Canadian Mission Report for 1877.*
 3. *The first quinquennial Report of A. B. M. and C. B. Missions.P.6*

Chapter 8

Arrival at Berhampur; Hatred of the soldiers for Christianity; Extensive gospel preaching tours; Comfort of European Friends; Meeting with Mrs Helen Knott again.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel.” Rom 1:16.

After Rev W. Brown’s departure, there were no missionaries at Berhampur. The missionaries at Cuttack decided on Rev Isaac Stubbins as a missionary to Berhampur, and Purushotham as his helper. They wrote to Justice Story about their decision and asked him to send back Purushotham. Justice Story sent not only Purushotham and his family, but also Sahu and his family and the 14 Meria children along with necessary help, to Berhampur which was 80 miles away from Srikakulam. At Berhampur two languages were in use- Telugu and Oriya.

At that time, it was a cantonment area. Even though the appointed missionary was yet to reach Berhampur, Purushotham started preaching there. After a couple of days on arrival, Purushotham and Balaji Sahu went to the market town between Berhampur and Bahapuram to preach Christ.

Some soldiers gathered around and listened to them. But some wicked ones said “Are these two not thieves? Did they not kidnap children giving them sweets? Yes, you are indeed those thieves. Now we have caught you. We will take you to the police station. Come!” Saying this, they grabbed the two evangelists by force shouting “Look, we caught the thieves! Some shouted “bind them!” Some said “beat them!” The mob handled them roughly pulling them and pushing them, plucking their hair. They dragged them to Bahapuram police station.

The police officer was rather kind to them and asked Purushotham, “Who are you, why did the soldiers bring you here? What have you done?” Purushotham and Balaji recalled the events of Lord Jesus having to stand before Pilot and Paul before Roman officials. They and told the officer that

they were preaching Christ. Then the police officer looked at the soldiers seriously and said firmly, “These men are not thieves. They are only preaching their faith. You brought these two men wilfully, though you know fully well they are innocent. Release them.” When the officer said that, some wicked soldiers shouted back at him like the Jews of Jesus’ time who shouted at Pilate, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” This made the peaceful officer rattled. He told them “You will not heed my words, so let us go to my higher officer.”

He led the two to the Subedar’s house nearby. When the Subedar heard what had happened, he rebuked the soldiers severely in anger and said, “don’t you know that preachers like this are with Church priests. If you don’t clear the place quickly, I will take you to the Colonel for suitable action against you.” At this, the crowd dispersed. Then he looked at the two tormented preachers and told them gently to go back home.

To this the two replied, “Sir, it is getting dark. The wicked men may attack us again. So, kindly give us escort.” The officer arranged a couple of soldiers on security duty to accompany the preachers. On the way, some wicked soldiers surrounded them, pulled off their clothes and hair, and started kicking them. Someone kicked Balaji so hard that he fell down crying “Oh, I am dead!” The escorting soldiers drove the mob away and lifted Balaji up. The soldiers walked with them until they moved out of the army lines. Balaji, in fact was not badly hurt, but he cried and fell to the ground just to avoid more serious injury.

Rev Isaac Stubbins’ Arrival

When the top officers of the Battalion heard about what persecution the soldiers subjected Purushotham and his associate, they sent out serious warnings to all the concerned with instructions not to meddle with Christian preaching. Then on, no one dared to do anything against Christian activities. Our two preachers were extremely happy with the warning sent out. On 6th March 1838, the missionary Isaac Stubbins arrived at Berhampur and stayed there for 5 years.

Baptist Church at Berhampur Established

A Telugu man namely Aaron was converted to Christianity those days. Along with him, Balaji Sahu and his wife, With Purushotham and his wife, their eldest daughter Shanti Kumari Chowdhary who took baptism by that time, four foreigners, a total of 8 people, Rev Stubbins established Berhampur Baptist Church on April 1st 1838. Purushotham was initially made the first Deacon and later he took over the administrative as well as clerical responsibilities such as conducting the Lord's Supper and Baptisms.

Purushotham and Stubbins went around the whole district of Ganjam preaching the good news to hundreds and thousands of people, distributing gospel tracts. Every year in the month of June, at the Chariot festival, Purushotham would travel long distances to be present at Puri Jagannath, where he would distribute tracts boldly and openly. The field of operations was geographically very large and there were no bicycles or motor vehicles. They would walk the distance with a servant helping or on a bullock cart.

It is a matter of interest that during those days on August 9th 1839, John McLaurin was born in Anved, Ontario in Canada. The aphorism- "Hard work would surely yield fruit," was amply proved in the growth of the Church membership.

At that time Prafulla Kumari, Purushotham's adopted sister, lost her husband. Both Purushotham and his wife prayed for her salvation. Prafulla moved from Parlakimidi to Berhampur to live with her brother's family. One day in 1840, as Rev Stubbins was preaching, Purushotham to his great surprise, he noticed tears rolling down the Prafulla's cheeks. All present acknowledged that there was God's miraculous presence in that meeting.² Later, Prafulla was established in the Lord, became a staunch believer and joined the Berhampur Church. At that time, Purushotham baptized six people.

Considering the stress and strain involved in Purushotham's wide evangelistic travels on foot, Rev Stubbins, out of his natural generosity, got him a horse and took care of his maintenance as well. While

Purushotham and Radhamani were living in Berhampur, they had a son and named him David Chowdhary and three daughters- Mary Sundari, Martha Manorama, and Helen Hemangini. Rev Stubbins in his report (1839) said the following about Purushotham:

“Mr Purushotham is known by all to be a man of honour as an individual and as a Christian. He is widely acknowledged as an exemplary man. Purushotham is extremely helpful to me in my travels as well as my missionary service. I thereupon gave a testimony many times about Purushotham’s interests and activities, and his concern for the spreading of the gospel. Concerning the personal behaviour and conversations of Purushotham and Balaji, I can see that they are men after God’s own heart. Purushotham is a skilful and a godly preacher, a wonderful man.”

In the same report Ms Kirsman says, “Last week, Purushotham was in Cuttack. I couldn’t meet him because he had left Cuttack for Berhampur before I reached Cuttack. He appears to be a godly man. The message he gave on Sunday was very brief. I am extremely happy about the holy boldness and intense perception of Gangadhar’s and about Purushotham’s tender love and tenacity of purpose.”

Many in the East India Company had love and respect for Purushotham. So, Justice Story, Collector Mr Konvoy, Captain Milher and Mrs Helen Knott together arranged for the construction of a house with tiled roof for Purushotham in Berhampur. As he was settling there, his elder brother Jagannath Chowdhary claimed that Purushotham must pay a loan amount of 120 rupees to settle a family liability as a member of the undivided family. Justice Story and Major Brett, then at Madras together, paid off the debt.

Five years later, before leaving for England, Rev Stubbins made arrangements for Purushotham to look after the Church matters in Berhampur. Later, when Rev Henry Wilkinson came to Berhampur, Purushotham joined him in preaching for a couple of years.

A Visit to Calcutta

When Mrs Knott arrived in Srikakulam from Molman, she wanted to visit Purushotham's family. So, she sent a box cart for them and they visited her and stayed with her for a few days. There he learned to read and write Bengali which is considered sister language of Oriya. There he made friends with some Christians. Helen Knott was so loving towards them that she gave her name Helen to the youngest daughter of Purushotham.

When Purushotham's eldest daughter reached marriageable age, they gave her in marriage to a believer from Cuttack by name Ghanasyama Babu. He was the son of Doyitari Naik.

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1. *Balaji Sahu died on 3rd June 1875.*
 2. *Mission report 1840.*

Chapter 9

Our pilgrims overcome Apollyon after being injured; Excellent experience of the wisdom of heart, and streams of devotedness penned in the form of Hymns.

“Lest I should be exalted ... a thorn in the flesh was given to me.” 2 Cor 12: 7

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Cor 12:9.

The Pilgrim’s Enemy

“Agony follows ecstasy.” The aphorism proved true in the triumphant journey of our Christian pilgrim Purushotham. Having run a missionary race so wonderfully for 10 years, Purushotham had to face the vicious arrows of Satan in 1844. The angel of darkness Apollyon shot arrows of temptation at him and grievously injured him. He had to check his full armour of God for some time and withstood the attack. He described this experience and how he managed to get out of it:

“I am living in Berhampur spending time in Lord’s service. I painfully realized how Satan would be on your heels to trip you over just to show that you cannot truly work for the Lord. Satan promptly harped on the fleshly desires in me and I fell into sin. My fall was both deep and dreadful. Because I was not cautious, Satan came like a roaring lion to devour me. Because I gave room to Satan, he came into me. My minds’ eye was closed and I fell into the deep, dark pit of sin.”

Though he fell into sin, by the power of God’s grace, he was able to get out of it through genuine repentance as it is said “Repentance alone purifies.” We can understand this through the hymns he wrote around that time.

Pilgrim's Fight

During the spell of Purushotham's temptation, Wilkinson remained so kind and understanding. But Purushotham felt extremely uncomfortable in spirit to be with him, because of his sinful experience. He therefore went to the Cantonment area in Cuttack hiding himself in the low-lying areas near the banks of River Katjodi. He spent days without end in praying, crying, prostrating before the Lord. One day hiding in a cave he wrote the following hymns and poems on repentance.

Song of Repentance and Sorrow

Save me Master Christ- have mercy on me- I approach you saying your feet alone are my refuge.

- 1. Slave to my worthless bodily passions- full of woe I fell into grief- heap of my sins grow as I dig deep- I got tarnished in this manner- oh what can I do!*
- 2. Having a shameless mind, devoid of devotion towards you- I have done many appalling deeds- hand in hand with the king of demons- I did his works and thus fell into sinful life.*
- 3. Lacking in fortitude, not an iota of truth in me- I became an expert in uttering falsehoods- straying from the straight path- I fell speedily into the grievous dark pit of sin, woe unto me!*
- 4. On the brink of reaching you, eternal bliss at hand- many accusations beset me- you gave my heart confidence, to overcome despair-rescued me from all dangers- oh, how I praise and adore you!*

From Pancha chamara Poems

Pilgrim's Lament

*Not fixing my eyes firmly on Jehova
I allowed layers to grow, foolish, reckless,
Lusted after an image of dust, earned sin, what great iniquity!*

*Master Christ, incarnate God, saviour of the oppressed
Even if I bow my head in shame for ever,
Beating my chest, tears rolling down
Speechless, harping on my crime,
Master Christ, incarnate God, saviour of the oppressed
Destroy all my sin with your holy blood
Even a drop suffices, consider my heart
I believed in you, you are my witness
Master Christ, incarnate God, saviour of the oppressed*

(There are 50 poems like this with 'ra' meter in Telugu language)

From the Satakam (Compilation of 100 poems)

*I am endlessly sinful, wicked, and cruel
Great offender, ungrateful, vile
You are humble, shower your grace on me
Look upon me, alter me Jesus my master*

*First born of the evil doers, heap of depravity dung
Target of woes and sorrows, propagator of malevolent ways
Deserving the lowest hell, O ocean of mercy,
I approach you, make me your slave Jesus my master*

*Like the bee thirsting after honey hidden in the rosy red.
Let me draw near to your bleeding lotus feet
In my soul, I drink the nectar of ultimate bliss
My God, Jesus Christ, my Lord!*

*Like inky clouds disperse on a dark day by the windstorm
From behind the rain cloud canopy the Sun blazing
In his blistering glare, thus showing yourself to me,
destroy my sinful dead state, enlighten me O Lord Jesus*

*O Holy Spirit, threshold to the untainted house of Dharma,
O city of heaven, abode of wisdom, unpolluted pond of grace,
O contemplation of the devotees, source of heavenly insight
I acclaim you imploring for my sins to be forgiven*

*In the whole wide world, there is none more despicable than I
When I search far and wide, find no greater saviour than you
I draw near to you, rescue me, all creation praise you,
Your status stands intact in the three worlds*

One who genuinely believes in the atoning work of Christ comes naturally to repentance. In two sets of 100 poems each, Purushotham described his experience of redemption from sins, assurance of salvation and steadfast faith.

The Pilgrims Treasure of Experience

It is true that temptations or demonic instigations can put a fence around a man to subdue him. “A strong man conquers the members of his body; a scholar learns easily the deeper things.” But there is a superior power- the divine power of God through Jesus Christ- which does not leave the man in his fallen state. It not only pulls him up but provides him with the poise and comfort he needs at that time.

*Strong and mighty the Satan may be
He cannot drag man by force
May entice showing allurements
It cannot subdue by force*

*Can show wrong path and pull
It cannot win by crooked plot
Fleshly desires and lusts
Cannot subdue the spirit*

*For the sake of the Saviour of souls our Lord
Fight on, never surrendering
Blaming others is never befitting
Nor just for a good Christian*

*One can play with the fangs of the serpent
But cannot mingle with the wicked
One can subdue the rising tide of the sea
Cannot ignore the evils of human nature
One can sink foundations underground
Cannot move the roots of malevolent will
One can take the bolt from the sky into ones' bosom
Cannot withstand the sinful fury of man*

*Alas, how often the worthy Christian
Struggle with these forces
Downtrodden, crestfallen and tearful
Look to the grace of God with patient hope.*

Rescue from Punishment

The striking difference between Christianity and other religions can be clearly seen in the life of this man of God, as written by himself in his "Light of Christian Ethics." Jesus came down to earth to save us. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all kinds of sin. Those who believe in this

Biblical truth, are redeemed from punishment, become victorious and be full of eternal joy. After the period of temptation, Rev. Charles Lacey, who gave him baptism visited Purushotham regularly and asked after his welfare. And some of Purushotham's old friends watched him closely wondering what his restoration would look like. One day talking to an English man, Purushotham expressed his despair that his sin could not be forgiven ever. To this the gentleman said, even the doubt that Lord Jesus does not forgive certain sins itself is a deadly sin. And this statement cleared the haunting doubt in him and this is indicated in this poem.

*The worst sin is the doubt that Christ will not
Forgive my worst sin, this is the last sin of man
On hearing a devout man saying this, I come to you,
Oh, graceful one, save me master Jesus*

Then the Englishman asked Purushotham a riveting question, "Brother Purushotham, are your sins greater than the value of one drop of the blood of Christ?" This question penetrated his heart and all unbelief vanished. He wrote the following hymn in 1845:

Strength that Comes After Contemplation. Heb 13:5

My soul, why do you grieve, is this fitting? The one who has saved you until now, will he leave you now?

- 1. Examine your bad deeds from the beginning, he held your hands while you were running helter-skelter. He crushed down your proliferating corrupt doings, driven away your enemies. Did he say, he cannot do it anymore? Why doubt?*
- 2. In a place where you cannot hold your head high, he gave you beauty and made you stand. Many a time, he knew your needs and supplied them. When you are weak, he gave you fortitude, driven away myriad pains. Did he say this is the end, that he cannot do it anymore?*

3. *The one who said, 'not even one hair will fall from your head, I am your succour,' and taught you his word, who rescued you from your persecutors, who offers his helping hand to tide you over difficulties, did he say you don't have the right anymore? Never will he excommunicate you.*
4. *Jesus selected you beforehand, purchased you with his blood. The pure one who dispels guilt is your witness. The father, object of your worship is your watchman all around. Your protectors surround you. See, the endless joy is coming close.*

Around this time, Purushotham also wrote the following hymn sung in places like Africa, Burma, Molman, Rangoon, Hyderabad, Kharagpur, Tata Nagar, England, and Canada where Christian missionaries spread themselves:

Sinner Approaching Lord Jesus

Just as I am, I come to your feet. Countless sins on my back, press me down, see I stumble, I cannot walk. Have mercy on me.

1. *O ocean of compassion, my saviour Jesus, shedding your body blood, calling me to your side in abundant grace; All this is due to your love that has no reason, nothing else in me makes me to deserve this.*
2. *Hordes of my sins cover my soul like charcoal, leaving stains. I realise it is your blood alone that cleanses each dark spot, all murky trash, and purify, so I come, seeing your cross without hesitation.*
3. *Battles outside, fears inside, robbing me off my peace of mind. Tired and beaten this way and that, with many doubts and struggles, wounded and strength depleted, here I come.*
4. *I am wretched, poor and blind, lying wasted and corrupted. Heal my disoriented mind, and give sight to my sightless eyes. My saviour, I come to get all that I can get from you.*

5. *Believing your promise, casting my burden on you, I found the way of life. Out of your unique love, forgive me, take me unto you, purify my thoughts, bestow occasions of joy.*
6. *Impossible for me to describe your vast and delightful love. You broke all obstacles that hindered me. Now I come to become yours, yes, truly yours.*

It is believed that Purushotham wrote the above hymn incorporating his own experiences after grasping the meaning of the English hymn “Just as I am...” with the help of Rev John Hay.

Struggling with earthly matters through a series of temptations, Purushotham wrote the following hymn in a self-alerting attempt:

Self-Exhortation

Shun O my soul, narrow minded ways, elder among elders and the Holy one Christ corrects you, never trespass his boundaries of love.

1. *Keep out despicable thoughts, and diabolical Satan, vilest of the vile; walk hereafter as a worthy child of the Lord.*
2. *It is good to be blamed without reason. Never forget the lovely covenants of your Lord who shines in you.*
3. *Keep your hope on Jesus, who purged you of your sins and carried you; Do not go astray from the true servants of Jesus.*
4. *Do not bend, stand erect, when Jesus your generous father is for you, why dampen your spirit?*
5. *Do not give up nor lose heart, difficulties rush at you in throngs, keep eyes on the Lord who breaks their strongholds.*
6. *Choose the best traits, look to the Lord who destroys your deception of pride and evil ways.*

When our great Christian pilgrim got out of the city of perdition after being wounded by the enemy’s arrows, he now writes the following poems.

Fruits of Spiritual Experience

A Christian alone

Faces sin, struggles with it

Seeking victory

By the help of the true saviour Jesus

This battle experienced in heart

He is truly valiant,

But to false Christians,

this is unknown

Our saint of God wrote the ‘One hundred poems on Jesus our master,’ collection of a hundred poems on Jesus Lord,’ and ‘Pancha chamara Poems’ denoting his repentance. Purushotham got multiple copies of these titles and sent them to Rev W. Dawson in Srikakulam, and Dr Hay and Rev Johnstone in Vishakhapatnam by post.

At the end of 1845 Regional Missionary Convention, Purushotham’s name came up for discussion. Though many were happy with Purushotham’s repentance and recovery, Rev Sutton, the missionary Secretary, was adamant that Purushotham should be put through some more tests and his wages should be reduced. Experienced believers swayed between two opinions whether it was Sutton’s lack of Christian love or was it a providential action God through Sutton.

If Sutton had not been so stubborn, Purushotham would have stayed there, missing the services he could have rendered to other Christian Churches. Because it was God’s will for Purushotham to serve in other areas, God made Sutton firm in his resolve about Purushotham. In his dilemma, Purushotham prayed for a direction, whether he should stay on with Sutton, who is known to be rather harsh, or go to an unknown place where he would be welcome. And God showed him several alternatives.

Things have miraculously changed. William Dawson and others after reading the hymns and poems sent to them, asked Purushotham to visit them at Srikakulam. Purushotham looked at this invitation as God sent. He and his wife weighed the invitation prayerfully and wanted to see the people at Srikakulam, to see if things went well. Otherwise, they would get back to Cuttack and take up the job specified by the Missionary Secretary.

He then left the family at Cuttack and went to Srikakulam alone.



Chapter 10

Invitation to Srikakulam, six years there; First compilation of Hymnal by Dawson and Purushotham; Passing away of Purushotham's wife; Twelve years at Vishakhapatnam; Book writing; Gospel ministry in Godavari districts.

“Woe is me, if I do not preach the gospel.” 1 Cor 9:16

Gospel ministry in Srikakulam

After the departure of Rev Samuel Day and Purushotham, upon the request of Justice E. Story, who was quite intent upon evangelism, London Missionary Society sent Rev. William Dawson as missionary in April 1840. When Purushotham reached Srikakulam towards the end of 1845, Mr Dawson and the congregation there, were very kind towards him. Dawson asked Purushotham to be with him and arranged for the up keep of the family. So, Purushotham joined the congregation and brought his family from Cuttack.

Dawson made it convenient for Purushotham to preach the gospel and to serve the Lord. Gratitude in the mind of Purushotham started to grow on seeing the spiritual nurture and victorious Christian life. He kept praising God for answering his prayers and probably towards the end of 1845, wrote this hymn pregnant with unparalleled devotion to God:

Joy born out of answered prayers

*Jehova heard my plea- and counted me worthy of his great mercy.
Wretched I am, He paid heed to my cries of woe and took mercy.*

- 1. Demolished the valour of Satan, made me stand under his protection. Led me to the dawn of peaceful and pleasing fruits of His word, and comforted me.*
- 2. My stubborn heart like the rogue elephant, He subdued with the goad of His word of light. Cut short all my wild desires, hewed down my sin and took me to a safe haven.*

3. *Removed my garment of unrighteousness, dipped it in the blood of Jesus; launched upon a novel work of salvation; showed me a love, unheard of.*
4. *Lend His ear to my laments, dismissed my distress; dragged me onto a rock and established well-being and comfort in my heart.*
5. *Did not push me away as a banished sinner, did not hide his son for my sake. In great sacrifice assigned him to the cross, and blotted out the penalty and grief marvellously.*

First Church Hymnal

In those days Purushotham used to assist Dawson in administration, and these two worked hand in hand in bringing out the books necessary for the Telugu Christians. Dawson was well acquainted with Telugu literature. A Hymnal bearing the names of these two, was printed and a few of the old timers still have this volume. In the third edition brought out in 1869, there were 89 hymns written by Purushotham.

At that time, Dawson's residence was in Balaga in Srikakulam. The same compound has houses built for his helpers. The adage "Towns on the river banks are blessed," was true in case of Srikakulam. From here Purushotham regularly visited his elder brother, the appointed revenue official and his relatives. Many times, he preached the gospel prayerfully to them.

Secret Prayer Habit

Purushotham practiced secret prayer. Since he did not have a separate room for prayer, he made it a habit to go to the sand dunes on Nagavali river bank for prayer. After dinner until mid-night he used to pray at the riverside. A faithful dog seeing him going, used to walk ahead of him. As Purushotham kneeled to pray, the dog would sit watching like a guard at a distance. Sometimes it would stride around and follow him back home.

As the Christians from Balaga compound go for Sunday service to the Church in the town, the dog would walk ahead of them, sit at the back silently as if listening to the sermon. As the worshippers sing, the dog too,

would join them raising his voice. His love for listening to the traditional hymns was obvious to everyone. Occasionally when on the upper room, Dawson gathered the evangelists and addressed them, this dog would join them. He was a trusted lieutenant to Purushotham, and a model dog.

As Purushotham went into the bushes and underbrush for prayer, he used to fear snakes and scorpions, however he always assured himself saying ‘not one hair would fall without God’s permission.’ Whenever he felt lazy, he used to tell himself “I must go if Mr Dawson calls, then, O my soul, why are you sluggish to seek the joyful presence of God Himself?” He used to warn himself saying, “Arise Christian, come out of your sleep, seek the essence of prayer, do not waste the opportune time.”

The experience of readiness for the Lord’s service coupled with spiritual joy in Purushotham’s life was the result of his steadfast attendance in the presence of God. Many were the hymns written on the banks of river Nagavali. Those days, Purushotham wrote “History of Salvation,” and some of those hymns were added to the Church Hymnal.

Evangelism in Mandadi

Mr Dawson acquired some land in Mandadi near Srikakulam and gave it away to the Christians. Our hero was asked to visit these families off and on, to tell them Bible stories. One day he went out to a burial place for prayer and knelt to pray. The villagers mistook him for hyena, a cruel animal and went out with sticks. They recognised Purushotham and went home chuckling to themselves. It can be said that there was no village in that area that Purushotham did not visit to evangelise.

Daughter’s Marriage

During these days Purushotham and his wife gave their second daughter Mary Sundari to Josiah Burder in marriage. This young man was none other than Venkata Prasada Pathanayak, who came to know the Lord ten years earlier in the Sunday school run by Mrs Day in Srikakulam and later became a Christian through the teaching of Purushotham.

Church Dedication

Dawson constructed a Church in the Chowk Bazaar street, spending about 6,000 rupees in 1846. On the occasion of its dedication, Purushotham Chowdhary wrote the dedication hymn “Jehovah, this is the place of your glory; Jesus, your lovely abode.” Rev Dawson dressed like an Indian with jingling bells tied to his feet, strumming Sitar, came in a procession from Balaga residence. They were singing this hymn going around the Prayer Hall, and dedicated it. Dawson, Hay, Purushotham Chowdhary, Pulipaka Jagannatham, Josiah Burder and others spoke on the occasion. This hall is still being used for worship.¹

Religious Zeal of Radhamani Devi

Our Radhamani Devi was very zealous in matters of faith and took great interest and responsibility. Some from Chittivalasa town and Mr. Issac Fuller told me once that she also used to preach the word.

Death of His Wife

The youngest son of Purushotham, Samuel Chowdhary was born in Srikakulam on 31st December 1850. Nine months later, that is, in September 1851, Radhamani Devi slept in the Lord there. She was buried on the premises of the English Church in front of the present day high School. Purushotham, then 47 years old, did not consider second marriage. After spending six years in Srikakulam he took leave of Mr Dawson and towards the end of 1851, left for Vishakhapatnam for the purpose of good education for his children. His sister took the responsibility of the household chores.

A Generous King

Our poet admitted his children in the school established by Dr John Hay. Rev J. S. Wardlaw was there with his wife. Mrs Wardlaw habitually took Purushotham’s youngest daughter Martha Manorama to the residence of the late Maharajah Gode Gajapathy Rao and taught her English along with the Maharajah’s daughter late Vadwan Rani. The Maharajah used to give Manorama the same clothes that he gave to his own daughter.

Occasionally he would call Purushotham for a tête-à-tête. As Luke wrote to Theophilos the royal personage, Purushotham once wrote a letter to Maharajah Gajapathi Rao a letter.

Publishing of Books

During those days, Mr Hay started Bible translation, and Purushotham helped him. Purushotham published in the Mission press situated there, his books namely- Salvation History, Pathway to Heaven, Mind is the Source, Dispelling the Darkness, Superstition of Smallpox and Clarification, Test of Jagannath, and Test of Caste Tradition. Mr Buckland printed them. A copy of this old print survives to this day. In 1841 itself, Purushotham wrote his “Blaze of Christian Righteousness,” a one-scene poetic work.²

At that time in the town, Pulipaka Jagannatham, Lala Shanmukha Ram, Mr Samuel Paul, William Berry, Mr and Mrs Steven Gooky, Mr Buckland, Mr Shepherd, and others were the members of the congregation. Purushotham relished their fellowship very much.

During the 12 years that Purushotham and his wife lived in Vishakhapatnam, he travelled among the ‘Jamindaris,’ and villages extensively and preached the gospel. Occasionally he went down to Godavari areas. Missionaries of those days gave Purushotham a tent and helpers, so that he could preach without any hassles.

Travels of 1860

When I was in Cuttack in 1902, we searched his belongings, and extracted some reports and books written with his own hand. One of these journals bore the writing “Important copies.” We found various accounts of evangelisation in 30 villages such as Chodavaram (the present-day headquarters of the Mission), Vaddadi, Anakapalli, Syamalapalli, Peddakadilodu, Southuvada, Sriramapatnam, Rolugunta, Kothakota, Kotapadu, Madugula. Purushotham toiled in these areas for 17 days and sold New Testaments and gospel tracts. Purushotham, on knowing that the post office of Madugula is situated in Veeravalli, sent to the missionary in Vishakhapatnam (probably Dr John Hey) a letter on March 3, 1860. The following were the contents of the letter.

“We reached Vaddadi after spending 3 days in Chodavaram. We will stay here today and by tomorrow evening plan to reach Madugula. After tarrying for 3 or 4 days in Madugula, we intend to proceed to Narisipatnam, and reach Anakapalli by a different route. Thus, we visited these 30 villages during these 17 days. We are staying for 2 or 3 days in each place and doing our work. People seem to be listening well to the gospel and some of them are paying attention. At some places people are giving us rice and money. By the grace of God, we are in sound health and before God, we are working in full strength.

People are buying tracts... as I travel, I see a number of villages on both sides of the road, and people in these villages never saw the light of the gospel of the Lord. Oh, what agony fills my heart! How can a fire fly reach anywhere without wings? How can it show forth its light? Thus sighing, I look to God, what else can I say? Even if this district has a hundred worthy workers, I feel that the work remains unaccomplished. What can I do? May the Lord arise and come for his work himself. May God stretch forth his holy hand for the glory of his holy name.

The contents of the following letter written to Rev J. S. Wardlaw reveal to the readers Purushotham’s spiritual thoughts.

From
Purushotham Chowdhary
Narisipatnam

10 March 1860

To
Mr Wardlaw,

Dear gracious Father,

It is 25 days since I and Rangaiah left Vishakhapatnam. We have been travelling the west side taluqs, and preached the gospel in 45 villages so far. We have reached Narisipatnam now. We will stay a few days this

side and go down to Anakapalli and get back to Vishakhapatnam by the end of this month.

In the villages and hamlets, many people are gladly lending their ears to the good news. It is God's work to bring all this to fruition. It seems to my mind, even if we visit one village per day in this great district, even 5 or 6 years may not be sufficient. In such a sprawling district a small firefly like me, glowing feebly, how can I run from one corner to the other? What kind of light can I show to this vast population? Men are needed to preach the gospel. For this purpose, intelligent people from among the native Christian congregations can be selected, trained in this work, named as Evangelists or other, and sent. Then Lord's kingdom will spread... I hear that many saints in Europe contribute to establish many schools in India, thereby spread Christ religion, doing good to Indians. This is indeed a noble deed... for some people traveling the land and preaching Christ to the masses in the villages, this, to my mind is a better work. Evangelists can wander the whole country. Elders, children, men and women, come to listen to them unhindered.

The light will be kindled far and wide. I don't mean to say, we should not establish schools. Schools are essential. But evangelism efforts should be four times greater to establishing schools... If you wish, please translate this letter and read out to those who wish for the spiritual welfare of India... You and Mr Hay are adequate for this great task. Isn't Mr Hay leaving for England in a few months' time? I wish you would come in the place of Mr Hay. I came to know through the letter from my eldest son David Chowdhary in Vishakhapatnam, that my family and all the Christians are well.

I am writing this after we unpacked and taking rest in the shade of a mango tree. We were hit by the heat, dust and small irritating insects. It is time to stop writing and set out to work.

Your humble servant, who desires your wellbeing

Purushotham

In those days, this old man of God, prayed under those trees while travelling in this area. Because of this prayer in October 1892, Rev G. H. Borough occupied the mission field of Narisipatnam. Now, there is a Church here.

Travels of 1861

More details can be obtained from Purushotham's report of 1861. From 21st January of that year to 27th February, a total of 38 days, he preached the gospel in 46 towns and villages in Vishakhapatnam and Godavari districts. I report some details in the hope that they will be useful to the present-day preachers. Purushotham Chowdhary along with another brother by name Rangaiah, launched on this great travel carrying a tent.

They visited Nawab Peta, Anakapalli, Yalamanchili, Dharmavaram, Munibalunipalem, Kotturu, Rayudu Thota, Debbalapalem, Payakarao Peta, Tuni, Ontimamidi, Tondangi, Ramanakka Peta, Pithapuram, Samal Kot, Bhimavaram, Sabbavaram, Kakinada, Jagannayakapuram, Korangi, Mogulupalem, Peddapuram, Venkatapuram, Madigapalli, Rajamahendravaram, Palakolanu, Narasapuram, Narendrapuram, Talluru, Madhuramala Peta, Raghavamma Peta, Jaggamma Peta, Dharmavaram, Annavaram, Gopalapatnam, Nakkapalli, Upamaka, Vijayaramapuram, Lakshmidevi Peta, and Aganampudi.

On 22nd February 1861, people in Anakapalli heard the gospel and purchased some books and tracts. Many in Yalamanchili bought tracts. In Nakkapalli, gospel was preached despite the town being affected by Smallpox. On 28th, in Tuni and Payakarao Peta, many heard the gospel. Purushotham wrote, "One spoke in a loud and brash voice about Vadanta and the nature of the body. A Muslim youth purchased the New Testament."

In Ontimamidi, after Purushotham's message, a Brahmin entered into an endless argument and asked for written material. The evangelists gave him "Muktimarga Pradarshana" (Illustration of the way to Heaven). When another Brahmin requested for another tract they gave him "Hindu Mata Daiva Pariksha" (Test of the Hindu Deities). On Monday the 28th, many

people joyfully heard the gospel in Pithapuram. Many Brahmins gathered around. No one opposed the message. Many people purchased the books.

Disturbance in Samal Kot.

On 29th and 30, four messages were preached in Samal Kot and Bhimavaram. “Many heard the gospel with joy. A Tamil man, dead drunk and with red eyes, pushed forward like a demon, stood in front of us, raining wrath from his blood shot eyes, screaming abuses and meaningless words, preparing to attack us. Some people interested in hearing the message, told him that he is not in his senses, and tried to send him away with peaceful words. The man not heeding them, growing more ferocious, intending to deal roughly with us, hurling abuses at us started coming upon us.

A law and order official who had been listening attentively, stood for us and dragged that ruffian out of the crowd and warned him. When everything calmed down, the people showed interest to hear more. So, I started the word of God again. After some time, that thug entered the crowd once again, stood in front of us, started speaking in a more reconciliatory voice. Taking hold of my hand he said, “Uncle, your finger is twisted, why uncle?” He hurled another abuse at me and showed his violent self again. The people standing by could not tolerate him anymore... and we quietly left the place.”

“In Bhimavaram in the evening shanty, we preached the gospel of grace, many people heard with attention. Twice that day, Father Laz accompanied us and stood by our side while we spoke the word.”

Thursday the 31st. “Today on our way to Kakinada we stopped at a place called Sabbavaram and went into the village, it was a Brahmin Colony. Standing in the centre of the village, I read out the tract, followed by message by Rangaiah. Then I spoke on the holy and righteous tenets of God, the way in which men worship idols, thus deserving the wrath of God, and on the uniqueness of Christ above all Hindu Gods. Some Brahmins gathered, and silently started looking at one another. It looked as though they were in agreement to all I said. When I offered a tract, one said “What use is it to us?”

Ministry in Kakinada and Jagannathapuram

February 1, Friday. “We spoke four times in Kakinada and Jagannatha Puram. Multitudes gathered and listened with joy. This day is the big market day in Kakinada. People from surrounding villages came. So, many people heard us with joy. At one place the entire tract of “Kulachara Pariksha” (Test of Caste and Rituals) was read. A man pleaded with us to give him a book that will speedily take him to heaven. Kakinada is a beautiful place.

Saturday the 2nd. “We crossed the rivulets and reached Korangi. We spoke in the name of the Lord three times during the day. Many people gathered and heard joyfully. Some argument ensued between me and a Brahmin about Religions, Shatras, Faith, sun, moon and stars. Nowhere else so many tracts were sold as we could sell here. On the way, we spoke at Mogalapalem.

3rd. Sunday. “We spoke the word of God in Kakinada and Jagannathapuram. Many people gathered to hear us.

4th. Preaching once again at Samal Kot.

5th Peddapuram. “We reached at Peddapuram in the morning. We spoke twice in this great village about the message of life. Many heard. Many Brahmans too gathered around. Two of them argued a little. I gave them the gospel and explained the treachery of the Brahmins that made them ashamed. Common people heard with rapt attention.

6th. “A woman heard us with folded hands. On seeing us warm and thirsty, she asked us whether we were thirsty, went home and brought us butter-milk.

7th Thursday. “One in Rajanagaram purchased “Muktimarga Pradarshana” (Illustration of the way to Heaven- This booklet is not available now), and felt very happy. He needed more of these tracts but we ran out of stock. He said he would copy the contents in a note book and give to his relatives.

Visiting Palakolanu and Narasapuram

On Friday the 8th we crossed Rajamahendravaram and reached Palakolanu on Saturday the 9th. We stayed there for three days i.e. 9th, 10th and 11th. We visited Mrs Bowden and the Church. We preached twice in the market street. On Sunday, we spoke on Mathew Ch 4, verse 4 in the Church.

On Tuesday the 12th in the evening, we accompanied Mrs Bowden on boat and reached Narasapuram by 7 P.M.

On wednesday and Thursday, the 13th and 14th we preached in Narasapuram streets five times. Many people heard the gospel. Some listened peacefully. At two places, some people started arguments. On 14th Thursday, we conducted a worship service at Mrs Beer's residence. In a congregation of many Christians, I spoke on Mathew Ch. 11, v. 28. At that time people from surrounding villages came to Narasapuram to pay taxes. Many people heard the message of God and bought many tracts.

Preaching in Rajahmundry

Rajamahendri. "We started our boat journey on 15th Friday from Narasapuram and reached Rajamahendravaram the next morning. On 16th evening, we preached God's word in Chinna Bazaar. But some drunkards gathered and abused Christ's religion and us. One said, "Just one more year, you will see what will happen to you."

17th Sunday. "Pastor Hyney conducted the service. Many Christians and Hindus came to the Church. Pastor Hyney spoke for some time and then I spoke. In the evening, we visited Christian homes and inquired after their welfare.

On Monday the 18th we spoke the word of life at Rajamahendri Pedda Bazaar. Many gathered to hear the word. One asked "How is the word of Christ better than the deeds of Bhishma and Krishna?" In reply, I proved from those very books that they are not Gods. And when I explained the humanity and divinity of Christ, he agreed to some extent and appreciated me, but did not accept the Lord.

19th Tuesday. “We left Rajamahendri, stopping at two villages in between, we reached Tallur, Madhura, Malapalli, Raghavamma Peta, and Jaggamma Peta. We preached to innumerable people in these four villages. Mr Naidu of Raghavamma Peta heard us joyfully, bought some tracts and gave them to his sons. He provided us with material to cook our meals.

Friday the 22nd. Many heard the gospel in Gopalapatnam, and Annavaram.

Conversation with the Raja of Tuni

“On Saturday the 23rd, we preached at four places in Tuni. Many people listened joyfully. This evening some people gathered near our tent, and heard us with great interest. While they were listening, the Raja³, with his entourage, many Brahmins, the Police Head, and many others were passing that way. On seeing the Raja all the people including myself stood up in respect.

Raja: Who are you?

I: Sir, I am a Christian, I came here to preach Christianity.

Raja: I saw you a few times, but could not speak to you⁴. Now I desire to hear the salient features of the religion of Christ. (Thus saying, he sat in the ground in front of our tent, bidding his men to sit down. More than 50 people were accompanying the Rajah).

Raja: (Starting with great respect) What are those books you hold?

I: These are tracts that teach the tenets of the religion of Christ.

Raja: What is the benefit of taking the religion of Christ?

I: Forgiveness of sins and joy of eternal life.

Raja: What is the proof, what evidence will you show?

I: One must firmly believe the words of the book written by Godly men, inspired by the Spirit of God. Sir, is it fair to ask for evidence? You too, took some religion and believed in God. Who is the figurehead of that religion? You never saw that God, how can you ask for proof?

Raja: In that case your books are the evidences of your religion. Then can't we go to heaven by believing the Gods Siva, Kesava, Rama, Krishna and others. What is special about Christ over and above them?

I: Without prejudice, the Gods you mentioned, when compared to our scriptures cannot measure up to Christ. The reason is, a blind man for a blind and a guilty person for the guilty, are useless. Other Gods cannot save a sinner. Christ is sinless, worthy as both man and God. There are many proofs to say that he was appointed by God and came down to earth, as God incarnate.

Raja: You covered up all the miracles of our Gods. Is it proper to mention only their misdeeds and blame them? We don't criticise your Christ. We say that both religions are good. Then why do you criticise our religion?

I: Sir, I have never criticised, not once. We say the truth and never create any untruth. Even though some poets ascribed some miracles to incarnations of Rama, Krishna and others, they also mentioned that they have sin and punishment for sin. Such people cannot perform miracles.

Raja: The reason for the wrong doings and taking punishment, is that they are mystically whimsical in their doings. They showed a model to the people that they should not commit such deeds and if they do, they will receive punishment.

I: That is an inappropriate model. A divine person will never act like that. For example, imagine an officer of a village gets fully drunk, gets intoxicated, wallowing in the mud on the way side and generally making himself a butt of ridicule. He says, 'O villagers, remember, no one should drink. If you do so, you too like myself will be spoiled. Moreover, I will punish you. Can you imagine the villagers listening to him? Will they take heed? Will they fear him? Hence according to the saying, "Like god, like devotee," people walk the same path as their God and they cannot attain moral rectitude.

Raja: Are the people following Christ religion walking the straight path?
Are there no wrong doings among them?

I: Not all English people are devoted to God. Many who bear the name of Christ are wicked. They have their own punishment. Neither I nor you, sir, need take note of them. They are all mere men like us. But the present conversation is about the incarnate Gods who can save us. So, unless they are sinless they are of no use in this regard.

Raja: Why was Christ nailed to the cross if he has done no wrong?

To this we told him briefly about the standards of God's justice, and about grace. We told him about the decision of God that Christ should die for the sins of all mankind. We also told him about the foretelling of the prophets that Christ will come and all those prophesies coming true. We also told him that Christ will come a second time, raise all the dead from the dust to judge them. After telling all this I told him firmly that Jesus Christ alone is the saviour. When the king and others heard this, they spoke among themselves many things, saying all this is against their own religion.

Then the king said, "It is getting dark, let us go." At this, all the people left.

The presence of the tent made it convenient for people to gather and discuss these things.

Sunday the 24th. While preaching in Nakkapalli, Upamaka, they received news that Rangaiah's daughter died. So, he left. Purushotham reached Vishakhapatnam on February 8th after visiting the remaining villages. At the end of this report, he wrote "May God bless this tour program." During the life time of Purushotham, many towns turned into Canadian Mission stations and as an answer to the prayers of those elders, many Churches were planted. It is a matter of great joy that a few years ago, one of the grandsons of Chowdhary Purushotham the author of this book, presented a gilt-edged Bible to the daughter of the afore said king Sri Rajah Jagapati Subhadrayamma Bahaddar, in a meeting on behalf of the Aristocrats Mission.

Younger Daughter's Marriage

During the 12 years of Purushotham's stay in Vishakhapatnam, his evangelism and literature work proliferated. He gave his younger daughter Martha Manorama in marriage to Titus Burder, brother of his second son in law. Both of them were in Srikakulam in 1860. On October 1st 1860, Purushotham received a reply to the letter he wrote some time earlier to Rev S. J. Wardlaw. In it, he expressed his intention to return to India. Purushotham wrote back encouraging him to return. This letter was sent on 10th. A copy of this letter is preserved, but we are not including it here.

Death of Major Brett; Children return to Cuttack

During Purushotham's stay in Vishakhapatnam, Major Brett, the man of God, who taught Purushotham the way of the Lord in the beginning, died on February 26, 1857. He was buried in the cemetery of the army officers. Son of Purushotham, David Chowdhary received his education in Vishakhapatnam London Mission High School. He had some penchant for Telugu language too. He wrote the hymn "Why did you forget love of Jesus-Why." His brother Samuel Chowdhary was also educated there and both the brothers left for Cuttack in search of jobs. David became a police officer and married a well-mannered Anglo-Indian girl Emelia. She was a good daughter-in-law to Purushotham. Thus, both the Children went to their native land ahead of him.

There was another letter written to Rev Wardlaw towards the end of 1861. This was written in pencil. By this, it is known that on September 20th 1861, our poet left Vishakhapatnam and with the help of Rangaiah, travelled for 28 days to the north-east to Parlakimidi, some 120 miles, and preached to the multitudes in 46 villages.

A certain employee from Parlakimidi, like Nicodemus, continued correspondence with Purushotham as a secret Christian. It is also known from this letter that Dr Rev John Hay, intending to travel that way, wished to see Purushotham. Likewise, Rev. John Hay, Rev J. W. Gordon, Rev Pulipaka Jagannatham, Rev Purushotham Chowdhary, Josiah Burder, and a few other men of god travelled to Parlakimidi area, stopped in Akula

Tampara village where Purushotham's elder brother Jagannath was the revenue authority. There they preached to the revenue stewards. Jagannath not willing to have the shade of the outcasts fall on his house, made them stand outside. He was angry that his younger brother polluted his caste.

It was the will of God that Purushotham should take up the burden of the Church in a different place.

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1. *Rev J. R. Hutchinson purchased this hall in 1884 for the Canadian Mission.*
 2. *In 1872 Rev Das Antarvedi got a 1000 copies of this book printed in Madras. Later, on the advice of Rev Edward P. Rice, C. L. S. printed 200 copies.*
 3. *We are told that this man is Sri Rajah Vatsavaya Venkata Surya Narayana Jagapati Raju Bahaddar, Jamindar of Peddapuram, Gollaprolu, Kottayam and Tuni estates.*
 4. *By this we can infer that Purushotham made this kind of long gospel tours before 1861 too.*

Chapter 11

Church eldership in Chittivalasa village. Preaching of the gospel. Joining of an important group in the Church. Home coming.

“He that sow in tears shall reap the harvest joyfully”

Purushotham Chowdhary was sent to Chittivalasa town adjacent to Bhimunipattanam as the elder of the Church, and he did the Lord’s work for eight years there. Honorable Madabathula Brahmajee, who accomplished great things as the steward of the local factory, was edified by the teachings of Purushotham Chowdhary. He reported in 1904, the following:

Conditions of Chittivalasa

“Chittivalasa is a village on the banks of Gosthani river in Bhimunipattanam province. Messers Arbutnot and Company established a Sugar factory in the village. One Mr. C. S. Minchin was the manager of the factory. Desiring for a gospel worker for the Telugu people working there, he wrote to Rev J. W. Gordon (a preacher for the Telugus), Rev John Hay (in-charge of Education and Printing establishments), and to Rev J. Murdock (Preacher for the English) requesting them that a preacher be sent.

They duly sent Purushotham to Chittivalasa. Those who saw the man of God, were impressed by his piety and his propensity to love others as he loved himself. They loved him. Elders used to call him ‘sir’ or ‘Babu,’ and children ‘thatha’ (grandpa) in reverence. Many treated him as their own relative. Since he loved the local Christians as his own children, they loved him.

In those days, the two families living in Chittivalasa no doubt never forgot his love. They can testify that as a result of the love of God abiding in him, he has great love in him for his fellow men; and that he has shown his love through deeds. He carried Christian children on his shoulders as a shepherd carried the lambs.”

Ministry in Polipalli

Purushotham used to go to the neighboring villages regularly in the evenings to preach the gospel. He often went to one Singivalasa Agraharam, a settlement of traditional Vaidika Bhahmans. Seeing that the inhabitants of another hamlet, Rajapulova were obedient to the Word, he used to call it “my beloved Rajapulova.” Kshtriyas (kingly caste) and Brahmins used to live in the adjoining hamlet called Polipalli. Purushotham visited this place every Sunday, taking along with him a couple of brothers who could accompany him.

There was a certain learned Brahmin who was headstrong and crafty in this village. Despite this and other men speaking offensively, Purushotham spoke to them methodically and with restraint. Purushotham was well versed with Hindu religious scriptures since childhood. He had the gift of quoting poems and slokas and teach acceptably to all and sundry. He was adorned with a sympathetic disposition and a loving, courteous temperament. He influenced audience so much that they would often criticize their own scriptures and approve of the Christian faith.

Esteem of the Masses

The riff raff quarreling and using foul language on the streets, on seeing Purushotham pass by, would caution each other “here comes Purushotham garu Esq., stop the squabbling!” In turn Prushotham on seeing people like this would rebuke saying, “Children, you are tainting your own hearts by this uncouth speech. None of your maledictions harm the others, they harm only you.” It was customary for him to conduct worship service in the church in Chittivalasa on Sunday. He formed a prayer class and taught how to pray in the congregation, family and personally. After people prayed, the errors were shown and corrected.

Various types of ministry

Upon the request of C. S Minchin, Esq., owner of the factory and R. Read, Esq., Purushotham gathered the factory workers in the Church, taught them the “History of Salvation.” Once while going on gospel work

on a bullock cart, he lost everything in the flooding of the river and came back alive.

According to the Vishakhapatnam Mission report of 1869, a few Christians used to work in the Chittivalasa factory. Purushotham established a Women's Bible Class and taught "Pilgrim's Progress" to them every week.

Fruits of Ministry

There were two or three families who were enlightened by Purushotham. Basani Appadu a rich man was one of them. He testified, "I have obtained the dawn of Christian faith through Purushotham." He was so devoted to Purushotham that he got his photograph taken sitting at the feet of his 'guru.'

"While Purushothamayya worked as preacher I was the first one to be baptized by him in Chittivalasa" wrote Mr. Brahmaji in a letter to two Christians, Bhagawan Behara and Bandi Jogi Naidu dated January 25, 1879. Madabattula Brahmaji, hailing from weaver's caste, and Basani Appadu from Periki caste, were notable householders who maintained correspondence with Purushotham as long as he was alive. These families have the same affection for Purushotham even today. They contributed towards construction of the Purushotham Memorial Building. While at Chittivalasa, Purushotham Chowdhary along with Isaac Fuller, used to preach the gospel in Vizianagaram, Gajapati Nagaram, Salur, Bobbili, Parvatipuram and other places.

Towards the end of 1861, Purushotham Chowdhary on his way from Vishakhapatnam to Parlakimidi on a gospel tour, met not only some of his old friends such as Rekhani Mukunda Rao, but also the Village Munsif Bandi Jogi Naidu in Kommanapalli, eight miles from there; his own brother Jagannath Chowdhary and his eldest son Appala Narasimha Chowdhary, and other revenue officials of the area, sowing the seeds of the gospel among them.

Appala Narasimha Chowdhary, a devotee of goddess Durga, wrote hymns on her. However, when his uncle (Dada) Purushotham Chowdhary preached to him the loving gospel of Lord Jesus, and followed it up through occasional letters, a new flame of religion was ignited in Appala Narasimha. He kept reading the tracts of Christian faith, and came to the conviction that Lord Jesus alone is the Savior and kept faith in Him. For nearly 30 years, Purushotham kept praying for his relatives, that they might receive Lord Jesus, as he did. How can the fruit of prayer go waste?

Results in the Family

In February 1862, unexpectedly, a man came to Purushotham's door in saffron clothes with a golden bracelet. Having walked 70 miles, this small fair looking man stood on the threshold and called, "Dada, Dada!" Surprised, Purushotham recognized this voice as that of his brother's son Appala Narasimha Chowdhary. He asked "Son, is everything safe and sound at home?" Happy after receiving a positive answer he called his elder sister (a cousin) telling her to give water to the visitor to wash his feet, and some material for him to cook his own meal (the relatives stopped eating with Purushotham, since his conversion). Appala Narasimha said, "No, no, Dada, I will eat with you." Purushotham got suspicious at that, thinking that he came away quarreling with his family.

After some conversation, he realized that the gospel seeds sown prayerfully came to fruition. He thanked God. Appala Narasimha, like his Dada, was not someone who would step back and drag his feet once he took a decision. He was the revenue officer (Tax Collector) for a few villages. Nevertheless, he considered everything trash for the sake of the excellence of Christ and decided to serve the Lord with a monumental faith. In those days, no Baptist Church existed in the northern Circar districts.

Therefore, when Appala Narasimha Chowdhary decided to meet the people of London Missionary Society and expressed his faith in Christ, Rev J. W. Gordon went to Chittivalasa from Vishakhapatnam and gave sprinkling baptism on February 11, 1862, that is 15 days after Brahmaji's

baptism. Who could describe the grief of Jagannath Chowdhary on knowing that his son accepted Christianity? Added to the grief, he was furious with his brother Purushotham, because Purushotham was instrumental in his son's act of relinquishing the daily rituals and removal of the sacred "Yagnopaveetahm."

Wrath of the Elder Brother

After a few days, Purushotham went to visit his elder brother taking Appala Narasimha along with him. Jagannath boiled with rage on seeing his brother and son. With a pounding heart, and trembling all over his body with anger and hatred raining from his eyes for the religion of Christ, he shouted, "You scoundrel, villain of the clan, spoiler of the family prestige, like a spoiled monkey you are ruining the whole orchard" and abused him.

Purushotham smiling serenely at these dramatics, answered his brother with pleasing words and pacified him. Jagannath looking at his son said, "Appala Narasimha, what did you do to me? What a deception!" The son kept a respectful silence. The two spent a few days there. Village officials Sardar Fakir Raju, Sardar Jogi Raju, and the secret believers of that place, Challa Appaiah Naidu, Bhagawan Behara, Pandita Bandi Jogi Naidu, Gopinath Chowdhary, and others rejoicing about the curtain raiser of Christianity in their village, visited Purushotham despite fear of relatives, and learned the mysteries of the spiritual truths of Christ.

Owing to the absence of Church missions in those days, activities of London Mission were wide spread. Their preachers were spreading the gospel for months at a stretch. Purushotham stayed there for a month and strengthened the secret believers. When he started his journey back, Shantimaya Chaudharani, wife of Appala Narasimha was ready to set out with her husband. This led to the utter sorrow of Jagannath and his wife Rekhamani Devi. Some of the relatives objected. Nevertheless, since the lady was determined to go, they could not do anything.

Purushotham took his brother's son and daughter-in-law and arrived at Chittivalasa. Shantimaya Chudharani became a servant of Jesus Christ. However, the couple could not take their eldest daughter Kanya Subhadra

Devi along because she was already married before attaining maturity to Deenabandhu, the son of her aunt Bhanumati Devi and Pandita Ramakrishna Kali Mohanty. After some time, Appala Narasimha, along with his wife, went back to his native place and not counting the stand off attitude of his father, started touring the villages of Parlakimidi area, and became an evangelist like his Dada, Purushotham.

Purushotham continued to write letters to his brother explaining the manifold spiritual mysteries of Christ.

Witty letter

A devastating cyclone and massive flooding hit Machilipatnam on November 12th, 1864. My father told me that in the aftermath, our Purushotham wrote to his brother Jagannath, the following:

“Brother, the sea boiled over and flooded Machilipatnam. People met with a watery grave. Your Gods also could not escape the deluge. The wooden gods floated, stone gods sank and clay gods melted. They could not rescue themselves, how can they save you? So, think of what you must do.”

The truth in this letter did not escape Jagannath. Even though he gradually started seeing the way, his ancient and hoary rituals continued to bar him from believing the truths of Christian faith.

The seeds of the gospel sown prayerfully in those days by Purushotham in Chittivasala, Bhimunipatnam, Polipalli and the nearby areas germinated and it was a matter of great joy that this labour of love turned these areas into a fertile Christian land. Praise God!

Until the age of 67, Purushotham continued to tour far flung areas up to Bhadrachalam. Owing to this, and other Church ministry, and writing work, he became physically weak. His elder son Babu David Chowdhary was getting a good salary in Cuttack district as a Police officer. Titus Burder, the younger son-in-law was an employee of the Engineering Department.

When all of them invited Purushotham to Bengal Land, flesh drew Purushotham towards this position of comfort. Therefore, he took voluntary leave from the London Missionary Society, took his old sister and left Chittivalasa on December 3rd, 1870. For his 27 years of ministry, the London Missionary Society did not give him any pension. In the 1870 report, the following was written about Purushotham's ministry:

A Tribute by London Missionary Society

“At Chittivalasa and neighboring villages, our Catechist Purushotham has diligently labored in preaching to the Christians and the heathen. He received considerable encouragement from people who heard the truth from his lips. We regret to say our little Christian community has suffered a great loss in the departure of Catechist Purushotham to Cuttack to end his days in the bosom of his family. He has now grown old in the service of Christ, and in consequence, loss of sight in one eye and other infirmities, he is unable to work any longer as a Catechist, and so his connection with Mission ceased; he has labored faithfully and successfully in connection with this Mission for many years and is much loved and respected by all classes of natives; he is a man of considerable ability; some of our best and most popular Telugu tracts and hymns were composed by him; and his name and character will be long remembered and appreciated by all who know him.

He left his sphere of labor on the 3rd December 1870. May he enjoy, till the end of his earthly course all the consolation which he used so acceptably to administer to others; and at last be welcomed by the savior's plaudit, “Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

Probably while Purushotham was still in Chittivalasa, around 1866, his brother Jagannath Chowdhary died in the village of which he was the revenue officer. He remained a Hindu. The following year two believers, his younger son Gopinath Chowdhary and Bandi Jogi Naidu started for Chittivalasa to accept Christ.

After travelling 25 miles, they were captured at Amudalavalasa and were taken back. Therefore, in order to see them and strengthen their faith, Purushotham visited Parnasagarapuram², and spent a few days there. He strengthened the younger son of his brother Gopinath Chowdhary, daughter-in-law Ratnamayi Ammal Chaudhurani. He also met Appala Narasimham, who was struggling in faith, his wife, their little daughter Sara Devi and their maid Jangam Gangamma and took them to Cuttack via Parlakimidi and Berhampur. Josiah Burder, Purushotham's second son-in-law was in Cuttack with his wife at that time.

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1. *Report of the Vizagapatnam Mission in Connection with the LMS, 1870).*
 2. *Parnasagarapuram is otherwise known as Akulatampara. The Church built there was the first Church on Canadian Baptist Mission. The village is completely washed away in a flood of Vamsadhara river in 1978*

Chapter 12

Arriving at Cuttack from the Land of Bengal; Introduction to Rev Das Antarvedi, Long journeys with him and failures; Answers to prayers; Propagation of the message in Puri; Writing of Books; Sending the son-in-law to Kakinada; Death of the son; Services of various kinds.

Reaching Cuttack

It was 1870. After two weeks of long journey, the bullock carts laden with household articles stopped in front of a house in “Sutahat.” How can one describe the joy of Purushotham’s children! But with the change of region, the language too changed. Those who surrounded him that day, started speaking to him in their mother tongue Oriya.

Introduction to Rev Antarvedi

Within two or three days after reaching Cuttack, a certain follower of Christ stood in front of Purushotham and greeted him. He was 50. He was wearing a white head gear, and pyjama. This was none other than Mr. Das Antarvedi who read Purushotham’s tract “Testing of Caste Tradition,” turned away from Hindu religious traditions, realized the merits of the religion of Christ and embraced Christianity in Vishakhapatnam around 1848 and took ‘sprinkling’ baptism. He took immersion in Rangoon in 1860. He was 19 years younger than Purushotham. He joined as the mess writer in 41st Native Battalion and came to Cuttack by 1868. He, thus came into contact with the local Christians two years prior to Purushotham.

During those year-end days, Das Antarvedi invited Purushotham’s family for dinner and watch-night service of the new year. That night Purushotham could take the measure of the faith and devotion of Das, loved his guileless and pure Christian life. He established contact with the Christian Church that had 32 members attached to the Battalion, and started enjoying the happy fellowship.

While they were at Cuttack, Appala Narasimha Chowdhary, his wife Shantamayi Chaudhurani, their servant maid Jangam Gangamma, realizing

that immersion was more proper than sprinkling baptism, took immersion in 1871 by Rev Antarvedi in Mahanadi, and returned to their native place. In their fellowship, Gopinath Chowdhary, Oriya scholar Bhagawan Behara, strongly believed in the gospel they had been hearing from Purushotham and Appala Narasimha Chowdhary. They insisted on Purushotham's arrival to baptize them, failing which they would consider that Jesus Christ did not come to save sinners at all. Thus, taking an oath they wrote letters to Purushotham and Antarvedi.

Another Missionary Journey

In 1872 at the behest of Purushotham, Antarvedi Das took leave of the elders of the Battalion Church and started upon a journey along with Christian soldiers and havaldars on bullock carts. They travelled 300 miles, preaching the gospel on the way, and entered Berhampur, singing hymns, that made the town resound. They preached the gospel to the masses for three days. Rev. Baily used to attend their campaigns. They travelled to Akulatampara via Parlakimidi. Baptism arrangements were made for the above-mentioned people and Bandi Jogi Naidu, Challa Appala Naidu, and Lalaiah Sathpathi in addition. But due to stiff opposition from family and relatives they stepped back. Purushotham and his friends in no way got discouraged, continued to preach the gospel with great force. They strengthened these men and travelled to Vishakhapatnam via Gulshanabad (Srikakulam), Vizianagaram and Chittivalasa and returned to Cuttack.

As they were going, the District Collector of Ganjam, C. G. Master Iscoer invited them and gave them money for their expenses. That day, they preached in this area. One Gobbi Surya Narayana accepted Christ. At an advanced age Purushotham, probably for the sixth time undertook this long missionary travel to Cuttack. He and his friends did not stop praying for the new believers spread over these 300 miles stretch. They constantly encouraged them through letters. It took two weeks for this missionary journey.

On Wednesday July 13th 1872, it started pouring heavily creating a horrifying deluge, with deafening sounds like the howl of elephants, driving

winds like the galloping horses, as if the flood gates of heavens were open. In the down pour, Gopinath Chowdhary (father of this author) and others were on the verge of getting drowned in the torrent, Gopinath prayed “O God, if you deliver me from this calamity, I will go to Cuttack, and let any one say or do any thing against my will, I will take open Baptism in the name of Jesus.” At that time a hay stock floated towards them and rescued their boat from capsizing. He praised God and in accordance with his prayer, he was determined to go to Cuttack to his Dada Purushotham Chowdhary to accept Christianity. He wrote to Purushotham and Das Antarvedi. The two prayed for him and others; thus they were strengthened in the spirit.

Two Pilgrims

In 1873, Gopinath Chowdhary, and Pandit Bhagawan Behera reached Cuttack and in the presence of Purushotham took baptism on July 1st in Mahanadi by Das Antarvedi. later they went back to their place. This was the result of the prayers of Purushotham since the day he became a Christian. He prayed unceasingly for 47 years for his relatives, may the reader take note of this blessed fact. One Tatavarthy Narayana Swami faced many troubles after his baptism at Cuttack. Purushotham, Antarvedi and other believers prayed fervently in a room on the premises of the Battalion, and this resulted in dispelling of the trouble.

Let us look at Parlakimidi once again and the banks of river Vamsadhara. In October 1873, the families of Chowdhary, Bhagavan Behera and another Christian woman, a total of five, came together as a Church in Akulatampara, probably on the 28th of that month. This was the same time when Dr John McLaurin got a telegram summoning him to go to America. The group received a letter from Cuttack that Appala Narasimha Chowdhary should act as an elder. Thus, in that month the Canadian Mother Church was established.

This again was due to the efforts of our poet Purushotham. Moreover, when Gopinath Chowdhary and Bhagavan Behera were returning to their place, Purushotham Chowdhary, Das Antarvedi and a few other Christians

went along with them upto Puri. On that day, Ragolu Janaki Ramaiah was taking baptism in River Moosa and a crowd gathered to witness the event. Purushotham preached the gospel to them in Oriya. After Purushotham left the London Society, his eldest son and police inspector, Babu David Chowdhary, and son-in-law Titus Burder helped him in these long and tedious missionary journeys.

Publishing of ‘Christian Moral Glow’ - Spirituality of Christ

‘Christian Moral Glow’ was written in Vishakhapatnam in 1851. And the 100 poems was written in 1845. Both were sent to Madras in 1872 for printing in one volume. A thousand copies were printed. Purushotham sent a few copies to some of his friends. On November 12, 1871 Purushotham gave to Appala Narasimha Chowdhary probably on the eve of his leaving Cuttack, a hand-written book. In this, he discussed many Hindu philosophical concepts such as ‘Monism and Dualism,’ and added the ‘Essence of Christian thought’ from page 157 upward. This was the Spirituality of Christ known as “Satya Veda Sara Sangrahamu” (Essence of the Book of Truth). A look at this hand-written book, would suggest that Purushotham wrote ‘Spirituality of Christ’ in 1871. He summarized the proof of the deity of Christ along with instances from the Bible in poetic form. One can see this in the following poems:

Grace and truth came together in one form of man

*Taught the divine truth with examples in an endearing manner
Gave his life to rescue the mortals who are drowning in the ocean of sin*

*Resurrected, He sits on the high and holy throne of heaven,
embodiment of truth*

Vow of Disinterested Silence

*Brightness upsurged, lost its sheen
and was engulfed in the greatest light*

Waters rose, lost their force

And drowned in great waters

Wisdom expanded, reduced into ignorance

And lost itself in the greatest wisdom

Topics faded into irrelevance

And lost themselves in the greatest topic

The four forces thus found peace

Blissful and transcendent

The pure soul, that is true ecstasy

Creature who finds peace in Christ is the Christian

The father will be born on earth as son

The word will become flesh

True to the heart Christ is son of God

What doubt is there to say that Christ is God?

Paul said, "When I am weak, I am strong." Purushotham in his old age in Cuttack churned out poetry with greater dexterity.

Dividing the Truth

In 1874, Purushotham, upon the request of Das Antarvedi, wrote poems in "Kanda" meter and style, that lends itself to extolling God, for the use of the Battalion community. Among them, "Did He not give Comfort?" and "Lord of the Universe Jesus" are widely used. Among the hymns he wrote while in Cuttack are "Oh this depraved heart, how corrupt!" "Release from all sin comes to good Christians in this world," "Why O soul, you have wasted life until now?" "Son of God of gods, bless us our King," and others were getting published in 'Hitavadi' magazine during 1884.

Sending the Son in law to Kakinada

In December 1873, the second daughter of Purushotham Mrs. Mary Sundari, wife of Josiah Burder, died in Cuttack. First born of Josiah Burder

was working in Calcutta and he too died. Josiah Burder was employed in the Public Works department and he was conducting church services in Oriya. Hence a godly Engineer asked him to continue this ministry, and that he would help him financially and encourage him. In the meanwhile, Purushotham received news through Antarvedi Das that Dr John McLaurin, who took charge as Missionary in Kakinada on March 12th 1874, was looking for an evangelist.

Back in 1865, that was four years after Purushotham himself worked there and left, it seems a certain Telegraphist Thomas Gabriel, before his death on January 1st 1875, advised McLaurin to invite Josiah Burder as helper of the Mission. Accordingly, when McLaurin wrote to Cuttack, Purushotham sent Josiah Burder with his blessings to Kakinada in the beginning of 1875. As the psalmist, King David said, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psalms 34:19), yet another calamity confronted our old poet. His eldest son Babu David Chowdhary, working as Police Inspector, who was taking care of the family, went to be with the Lord in December 1875, leaving his son Babu John Chowdhary (senior), Sundari Chowdhary, his daughter and Emelia Chowdhary his wife. Even though it was a devastating piece of news to Purushotham, considering the blessed hope he consoled himself. He wrote this letter to Appala Narasimha Chowdhary:

Cuttack

6th January 1876

To,

My dear son Appala Narasimha,

Son, I trust you all got the sad news through Antarvedi Ayya garu’s letter about your brother David’s demise. That was the will of god, what can we do about it? Daniel said, “No one can hold back his hand, or say to him, ‘what have you done?’”

Job also said, “The Lord has given, he has taken, let His name be praised.” Even though David lamented saying, “My son! My son!” about his son Absalom, he said at another place “Can I bring back what is gone? I will go to him but he cannot come to me.” Had God not healed my sinful heart with the great medicine of his divine Word, I would have been crushed under this great burden of grief, and could not have written this letter to you. But our Father, an ocean of mercy, and Christ, are consoling me with their glorious Word. I am at His feet under His care. Also, all members of our household are around me. They are now in the sea of grief and are slowly getting back to normalcy. Your younger brother, Sami (Samuel Chowdhary) went to Kendrapara and brought home Emelia (daughter-in-law) and all the household things. All of us are together finding solace. May the glorious name of the Lord be praised. As mentioned in Isaiah 14th chapter verses 8 and 10, the Lord for whom everything is possible, has wonderfully revealed His righteous right hand to me, his chosen servant.

On the third day after burying your brother David, Pastor Miller, the President of the Oriya Church here, summoned me and consoled me, encouraged and entrusted the Lord’s work to me, that is the work of preaching the word in the Church. This is not to tour the villages, just to deliver sermons in the Church and to preach the gospel from time to time in the streets to the Telugu and Oriya people of this town. This is something I did not ask. He summoning me and giving me this work by himself is nothing but the wonderful hand of grace revealed to me. I realized this, praised God’s name and I was inducted into the congregation from the beginning of January.

Cutting down David my branch, God has arranged for me to be provided for, under the great tree of Oriya Mission Society. How can I praise Him for this miraculous grace? How can I give thanks? As King David said, “Weeping in the night and joy comes in the morning,” the Lord has done this for me. What else can I say my son? They say that the Battalion will arrive at the end of February, I am yet to receive orders. We believe that I will get intimation by the 15th. I desire to come down to

Parlakimidi and visit you, taking the help of Rev Antarvedi. But due to many impediments I doubt whether I can do that.

I am closing this letter today, the 10th. The weekly meetings end this night. Rev Antarvedi's family is doing well and they send their loving greetings to you. All our family members are sending you loving kisses. Convey my loving greetings to our dear brother Bhagawan Behera, his wife, and to Gangamma. To the Rajus (Jogi Raju, Fakir Raju, Nilakantha Raju, Syama Ghana Raju) our respectful greetings. Your younger brother Sami (Samuel Chowdhary) leaves for Guttani on his work. That is all for now. God willing, I can write another letter to you soon. Loving kisses from all of us to Shanti, Gopinath, and Ammal.

Your loving Dada,

Purushotham Chowdhary

By this, readers will realize that for peace of mind, and familial love, the propitiatory blood of Christ alone is the key. The Christian never goes across River Vytarani¹ holding the tail of a cow as Hindu scriptures teach. The fore fathers of Purushotham might have believed this out of blindness. But their grandchildren did not believe those lies. They believed that only the blood of Christ, the incarnate God as the savior of mankind could save them from their sins. And they found eternal peace in this truth. They renounced the blind faith in Cycle of endless births, and believed that the new birth alone is the way to heaven. Blessed are those who are dead in Christ.

Those days, the youngest daughter of Purushotham, the wife of Titus Burder was with her father looking after his welfare. Even though she was more familiar with Bengali, Oriya and Hindustani, since she gained proficiency in English during her childhood in Vishakhapatnam, she helped her father in writing and translating letters between her father and his old friends in England such as Wardlaw, Tailor and other missionaries. She looked like an English lady not only in appearance, but in English pronunciation and writing. Titus Burder too knew Telugu, Oriya and English and was a great help to his father-in-law.

Separation of Mr. Antarvedi

Rev Das Antarvedi left Cuttack for Vizianagaram along with his Battalion. Of the 155 members of the Battalion Congregation, 55 stayed back in Cuttack permanently. To them and the Church in Cuttack, Purushotham continued to be the elder and preacher.

Many in the Oriya and Andhra Baptist Church were baptized by him and they joined the Church. The sermons delivered by this old preacher were recorded in their hand writing.

Yet another missionary journey

On October 23rd 1876, Purushotham with a few helpers travelled to Bhadrakoti in a boat named 'The Herald' in Mahanadi river, 150 miles away. According to the Orissa Missionary's report, they turned into a canal of Mahanadi, called High Level Canal and reached Brahmani river. They preached in Oriya language in many villages on either side of the river. When they reached Bholpour, they came to know of the breakout of Cholera and the party turned back.

There were nearly 3000 Christians in the Oriya Baptist congregation. The prayer hall was very large. An old lady related to Purushotham, who got baptized by him, is still alive in Berhampur.

Knowledge of Bengali language

That year among the gifts Purushotham received was a Bengali large print Bible. A white man called Dessa gave it to Purushotham. Writing to Hitavadi magazine in August 1884, Purushotham mentioned that he read the entire Bible in Bengali. He was in the habit of reading Bengali newspapers. In fact, despite the differences in the script, and pronunciation, Bengali and Oriya are sister languages with their roots in Sanskrit. On and off, a few from outside India used to send cash gifts to Purushotham. Every Christmas, his dear disciple Basani Appadu used to send him gift fit for a Guru.

Appreciation of Rev Jewett

Since the day Purushotham became the first helper of Rev Samuel Day in Srikakulam, Purushotham was in the habit of sending money now and then and was in correspondence with the people of God. This is known from the letter written by Rev Jewett from Roypet in Madras on 20th December 1876. He mentioned the names of Mr. Morgan, Ms. Mobin, and Mr. Prius, all acquaintances of Purushotham. He wrote that he was leaving that day for Nellore to witness the damage done to the Ramayapatnam mission properties due to a cyclone. Various memorials indicate that Purushotham had contact with Batchu Raghavaiah, Rev Martin, Rev Bullard and other personalities of the Baptist Mission.

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1. *The mythological Vaitarna or Vaitarani river, as mentioned in the Hindu religious texts, lies between the earth and the Naraka (hell), the realm of Yama, Hindu god of death and is believed to purify one's sins.*

Chapter 13

Eldership of Berhampur Church; Last journey to Parlakimidi; Lord's ministry in Puri; Last correspondence to Ms. Helen Knott; Last two hymns; Death of the son; Entrance into the abode of Joy.

"I have finished the race... there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness" 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Eldership in Orissa Baptist Church, Berhampur

In 1877, there were some well-known employees and educated Christians such as Babu Daniel Mohanthy, Laban Mohanthy, Peter Mohanthy, and Rueben Mohanthy. Purushotham was sent to this town nearly 120 miles away from Cuttack to take charge of the Orissa Christian Church. He was 74 years old at that time. A note book is discovered containing the sermons given by Purushotham in Oriya language in his own hand writing. Brief sermons on the following scripture portions were written in it- Matt 10:14; Eph 3:18; Heb 12:1; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Isa 35:3, 4; Rev 1:17-18; Isa 55:6; 1 Cor 3:9; John 18:30; 1 Cor 15:49. In the last-mentioned sermon Purushotham used an illustration of Moody.

Last visit to Ganjam

The Lord answered yet another prayer request of Purushotham. His younger daughter in law, Rathna Ammal Chaudharani, wife of Gopinath Chowdhary, Rathnamayi Beharani, wife of Bhagawan Behera, Mukta Behera, his daughter, have been praying, seeking to enter the kingdom of God. Now they had decided to join the Church openly. In May 1877, Pastor Appala Narasimha Chowdhary wrote from Akulatampara (also known as Parnasagarapuram) inviting Purushotham Chowdhary from Berhampur, and Pastor Antarvedi from Vizianagaram. On 28th June 1876, Rev F. W. Armstrong sent along with his wife as missionary by the Canadian Baptist Mission, received the invitation and reached the picturesque Parnasagarapuram situated on the banks of River Vamsadhara, in the first week of June 1877. On 10th of that month, the three cloistered women came to the river in full view of the people, to receive Baptism in the name

of their Savior, Lord Jesus. Witnessed by Purushotham, other Christians, and Hindus, Rev Antarvedi gave them Baptism and handed them over to Mr. Armstrong and the eight-member Church. Mr. Armstrong wrote in the 1877 Mission report:

“The season was the more interesting through the presence of the aged Purushotham, the first preacher who was raised up in the American Baptist Telugu Mission to assist their pioneer Missionary the Rev S. S. Day. He is very aged but still active and deeply interested in everything connected with the spread of the gospel of Christ.”

Thus, Purushotham for the last time visited Parlakimidi field and returned to Berhampur.

Rev Pike’s Opinion

Rev J. G. Pike, who assisted Pastor Purushotham wrote about the services of Purushotham to Rev I. C. Archibald on 22nd May, 1905 during the building of Purushotham Memorial Church in Parlakimidi:

“My memory of Purushotham is simply of a very delightful old man who helped me much in the years 1877 and 1878 when I was comparatively new to the work. I was at Cuttack for three years and was then sent for, to fill a gap at Berhampur and Purushotham was sent as my right-hand man. He was a man of good ability but it was his sterling Christian character that won my admiration and love. He was so genial and kind that everyone loved him. In 1879, I moved off to start with brother Herbert to the Sambalpur Mission and I saw very little of our brother Purushotham. Still I know him for some years as a patient sufferer, glorifying God in his weakness, as he has sought to do in his younger days by his service. I always regarded him as a very superior man and he has doubtless received his Lord’s “Well done!”

In 1879, after leaving Berhampur he took leadership of Oriya and Andhra Baptist Churches in Cuttack and continued his gospel tours far and wide.

Gospel work in Puri

A few facts about Purushotham are known from his letter to his youngest daughter, Martha Burder from Puri on 7th and 14th October, 1881. He stayed in Puri for a month. It was raining cats and dogs the whole time. His shelter was dripping with water. They continued their ministry bravely for the Lord. Seeing the devastating cyclone lashing the city, the fisher folk used to ask him about the end of the world. Day after day, the Telugu people too, who settled in Puri, used to listen to him gladly. He requested the family not to miss the family prayer and asked them to pray for him. He wrote in the letter dated 14th, "I am learning to be content with what He (the Lord) as granted me, hence I have peace of mind. Therefore, I have comfort and safety in my spirit. Dear Child, even though this flesh is now experiencing grief, if I have the peace of the Lord by His grace, I will have no complaint even if all my well-being is turned into sorrow. Those who have the peace of God will realize that whatever the heavenly father gives, it is all for our welfare and not to our detriment. Oh, may God grant such glorious peace to me, to you and to all your household through the Holy Spirit! Let us lay prostrate at the feet of that magnificent Lord and praise him profusely. He expressed these very sentiments in the immortal hymn, "What treasures are more precious than peace of mind!"

Sermon points

The following list of sermons delivered in Cuttack Church is found:

16th November 1879- "Turn to me and be saved all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." Heb 45:22

12th June 1880- Heb 13:8

31st December 1880 Sunday- Gen 47:48-49

26th October 1879- John 17:3

2nd November 1879- Rom 8:34

9th January 1881- 1 Peter 4:8

31st December 1881- Psalms 103, including a few other good teachings of the Bible.

29th January 1881- Jer 17:5

6th Feb 1881- Rom 10:9

Also available is the sermon “Lo the Man!” (John 19:6), and sermons on the Second Coming.

The following sermons are written in his own hand writing-

13th April 1851- 1 Tim 1:15

25th February 1863 Wednesday- Matt 22:4, delivered in Chittivalasa.

During his sermons, he used to sing in a mellifluous voice brimming with Christian experience. Listening to these sermons, on Sunday the 12th September 1880, Narasamma and Seetaiah; Guraiah and his wife Peramma, and Simon- these six individuals took baptism by Purushotham. The same year on 7th November, five Oriya people got baptized.

By 1880, Purushotham started experiencing weakness of body. His eye-sight was fading. Those days, he was using a magnifier to identify alphabets and read slowly.

When it is needed to preach on Sunday, people used to carry him in a cart. A brother named James Chinnaiah or someone else would lead him by hand and make him stand at the pulpit. There Purushotham would deliver the message. The Cuttack Baptist Church was very spacious. In those days, there were 2000 members in the congregation. And Purushotham would speak up in a melodious tone with a delicately sonorous style. Many old timers of his time testified to this. James Chinnaiah used to write the hymns and poems dictated by Purushotham.

Purushotham on hearing that Rev Pulipaka Jagannatham met Ms. Helen Knott who led him to Christ, wrote on 4th March 1880, a letter to Jagannatham, and asked for the address of Ms. Knott. On receiving it, in his 77th year, on 4th March 1880, Purushotham Chowdhary wrote a letter to Helen Knott. We include some portions here:

Cuttack 1880,

March 4th

Respected Ms. Knott

My honored mother,

I praised God joyfully on knowing that you are still alive. Two weeks ago, Pastor Jagannatham wrote a letter to me from Vishakhapatnam. He told me that he and Rev Hay saw you in Bangalore, and you asked after me, and told them to inform me that you are still alive. Oh, dear mother, you are still alive! A long time ago someone spread the news that you died. I was very sad.

Even though my eyes did not see any letter written by you, this letter of mine is reaching your presence! When you see this letter, you can also rejoice that I, your son whom you labored to bring to Christ, am also alive.

Oh, all the persecutions you endured for my sake in Balagameda in Srikakulam, your prayers for me, your pains to establish me in faith, and the efforts you made, favors shown, are still before my eyes. In those days, sending me to Major Brett you gave me a sturdy leather bag with letters. It is still with me. I kept it safe. Every time I see it I think of you. I show it to my children and tell them about you. Now by the grace of my Father, I am working as usual. I am also advanced in years. Nevertheless, God has granted me some strength. So, I continue in His ministry.

Kind mother, how are you in Bangalore? Where is your daughter and her children? I would love to hear these things, hence kindly arrange for these things to be written to me. I urge you to remember me in your prayers. I will await a small letter with your blessings.

I, your humble servant,

Purushotham Chowdhary

To this letter, Helen Knott, then 90 years old, spiritual mother of Purushotham, sent a reply. A few excerpts from this letter:

3, Rose Lane,
Richmond

April 1880,
Town Bangalore

My good friend Purushotham garu,

I received your kind Christian letter from Cuttack in good time. I felt very happy. Especially I thank you for expressing your Christian love towards me, so undeserving. I understood your letter to some extent, but I had to wait for some time for a translator. At this time, I will not write a big letter, but I will tell you something about my family. Col Richardson is no more. His wife, my daughter is in England. All my sons died. I would like to see you, but Cuttack is far away. God has prolonged my life for a good purpose. When I look back I feel sad how I have dealt with such a sweet Lord, but for this, there is no other complaint. My good Christian friend, what else remains for us except reaching into the hands of our dear Lord. He will not abandon us in the end stage of our life. I trust you will pray that there will be no darkness between my soul and my Savior, everything would be crystal clear.

Convey my love to Shanti. Will you give me some news about my old friends in Srikakulam? How did Ms. Kalpappi die? After losing contact with you, I have been to England twice. Forgive me for being in a hurry, because unless I write now, I may never be able to write at all. Pray that I may lean on Jesus and die in peace. With immense Christian love.

Your friend,

Helen Knott¹

Devoted ladies like Ms. Knott who led Purushotham to Christ, are needed in the present-day India. We made many efforts to trace her relatives.

In 1882, Purushotham became very weak due to old age. His eye sight became very feeble. He always maintained the cleanliness found in all poets. He used to feel with his hands whether his bed is straight or not.

In December 1882, in the middle of the night, our old poet called out to his younger daughter Martha Burder in a very frail voice, saying, “Child, bring a sheet of paper and a pencil. I will dictate a hymn.” She replied “Bappa², say on. I will write.” Thereupon the daughter wrote the hymn as her father dictated interspersed with long intervals in broken narrative. She told others that she finished writing by 1 O’ clock in the night. This is none other than the lovely and popular hymn approved by Christians of all ages. With a fragile voice, the ailing father after saying, “Members of my body, your work is done, time to leave me,” he told his daughter, “Child, wait, I will think a while.” After sometime he said, “Child, write, Like a stunned young hart...” and he finished the thematic line.

Old age hymn of the man of God

Members of my body, your work is done, time to leave me- Like a stunned young hart, alas, I was captured- get away now, my Savior Jesus came to save me.

- 1. My five senses, you lost your strength, deceive me no more, no longer fight with me, consider- it is no easy task for you to move me from the grace of God.*
- 2. O organ of hearing, your power kept declining. You heard many news, now became deaf. Vitality lost, go away, I will hear Christ in reverence, that's my comfort.*
- 3. Eye pair, your light faded, you cannot see as before anymore. Glorious Lord is opening my eyes to show me his throne of grace, See, the time has come.*
- 4. Organ of taste, your period of faintness has come, tirelessly you scattered words. Your sharpness blunted, you are done O tongue, I will spend my time drinking the nectar of Jesus' mercy.*
- 5. Skin that covered my whole body, you sensed everything that came in touch with you. Your glowing close-fit loosened, pouches hang. Go away, I will be clothed by Jesus' likeness!*

6. *Organ of smell, you rejoiced with myriad odors and breath of life. The best is past and all stench assail you, I go to my savior Christ, I will give up life for him and find comfort.*
7. *I walked a long way, path grows increasingly hard. Gone are the impediments that hindered me, my boatman waits at the river of death.*
8. *Path ahead is more horrifying than the course I finished. River of death flows with the deafening roar of its waves, In the wink of an eye, I reach the other side.*
9. *What joy is there in this world, vain hope it is, nothing permanent. Jesus Christ, God the Father, radiant Holy Spirit-in grace, shall provide eternal home to their slave Purushotham.*

Correspondence regarding the Hymns

This hymn was printed in Hitavadi magazine during 1883. A brother named James Chinnaiah copied it and sent for publishing. Despite Purushotham's preparedness, God extended his life journey. At the time of printing of the Andhra Christian Hymnal by American Baptist Mission Purushotham wrote a letter dated 6th July 1876, to Rev E. Bullard in Nellore. He informed him about the hymns he wrote. In 1888, Rev W. W. Stevens wrote asking for information about the hymns written by Purushotham. In reply, Purushotham himself sent him a list of nearly 80 hymns with a request not to alter any of them. On the occasion, Mr. Stevenson, writing a foreword to the book published by Christian Literature Society (CLS), said, "Mr. Purushotham will long be a household name among Telugu speaking Christians." Later, the family felt sorry on seeing some of the hymns were printed with a few alterations, after the poet's death.

During this old age, a grandson of Purushotham committed an error in the government office. Purushotham exhorted him that he should confess his mistake even though he took the punishment. He was never found lacking in hospitality. At times, he used to send money for God's work. On

Tuesday the 20th December 1881, it is recorded in his list that an amount of 15 rupees was sent to Mr. Bowden of Narsapur.

It can be known that Purushotham had regular correspondence with various people. For example, Rev J. W. Gordon wrote from Coonoor on 24th April 1872. There was also a letter written from Madras dated 18th August 1887. A letter by Rev. A. V. Timpani dated 19th June 1883, letter from Rev I. C. Archibald dated 24th December 1888, letters written by Rev P. Jagannatham, some foreign missionaries, Rev D. Antarvedi, and others vouch for this fact.

Reprint of the Tracts

The Canadian Baptist Missionary Conference on 15th January 1884, decided to reprint “Mukti Marga Pradarshanam” (Path to heaven Revealed), and “Kulachara Pariksha” (Test of the Caste Tradition). They asked Purushotham for permission through Rev J. R. Hutchinson, and he slightly modified it and permitted for reprint.

In the first week of September 1888, the eldest son in law of Purushotham Babu Ghonoshyam Naik died. They told Purushotham in the morning fearing that Purushotham, if told that very night this distressing news, may be crushed in sorrow due to old age. He went from Cuttack Sutahat to Petiny street and found his daughter sitting beside the dead body weeping, he said, “Foolish child, instead of rejoicing that God took your husband to the blissful peace, why are you crying? No, rejoice that Ghonoshyam Babu reached the abode of God. This was told by her grandson Babu Mahendra Naik. The second son of Purushotham, Babu Samuel Chowdhary, working as an employee of the government hospital died on October 23, 1889. At that time Purushotham did not shed one tear. When Ms. Dessa of Ongole went to console him, he told this illustration to her. Two men went to bathe in the sea. One stood straight against the waves. He fell back. The other bended under the waves and the waves passed over him. Therefore, against the waves of joyous and sorrowful circumstances, one should bow down. The lady was amazed on hearing this illustration.

During this ripe old age, those Christian people who were benefitted by his hymns and tracts, sent a cash gift to Purushotham. He was regularly telling his children about the visions of God he was seeing. He was in the habit of knowing the mysteries of heaven through these visions. On this occasion a providential thing happened which is instrumental in our getting to know this history. Around 1888, Rev Edward P. Rice who served as a London Mission missionary in Bangalore, heard the contents of the poems in “The Light of Christian Righteousness” through the Bellary Christians.

He thought of compiling the biography of the poet and wrote to Cuttack. When his daughter Martha Burder insisted, Purushotham narrated all that he could recall, and it was taken down by James Chinnaiah. It was sent to Rev Rice. Had this not happened, it would not have been possible to report many details with exact dates. This is a priceless thing done by Purushotham Chowdhary. Rev Rice once wrote to this author about this:

Ripe old age, failing eye sight... it is not difficult to imagine what it is like for a child of God to have contact with Christ under these conditions. Looking at the “Song of Life” written by the English Poet Longfellow and the song of Purushotham given below, may the readers see the parallelism between the two, in strength of thought, sweetness of soul, and hope for future. This hymn was written under similar conditions as “Members of my body, your work is done...” that is, as the poet was narrating extempore, his daughter wrote it down.

Final Song of the Soul’s Journey

I have set out to the presence of your feet, Jesus Christ be with me, thine humble servant, lead me in your grace. Lo I see death coming at me with a lion’s roar, dispel my fear.

- 1. As I go my way, many troubles accost me, hinder my path. O merciful one, be with me to break the thorn of death, push aside disasters, I come under your care, who else is my refuge?*
- 2. God, with your right hand protect the humble ones. It is time to keep your promise, your word is the basis of my life. You are my God, mother, father, benefactor my all in all. I trusted in you, lead my journey to conclusion.*

3. *Enjoying in your devotion, my heart rejoicing, many doubts beset me, hurry to lead me in my path, walk ahead of me, as the bright sun disperse the deep dark.*
4. *Time is up, the appalling death comes like the dark cloud, rattling the staff of time. As I stand in the presence of death, grant me in my troubled state, your embrace of mercy.*
5. *Meditating on your glorious appearance, comfort of the pure heart, nectar of my Lord's love, give to this slave always. Take away my weariness, take me to your abode with firm foundations; that has no beginning nor end.*
6. *The mirage of earthly luxuries will soon pass, grant me your endless bliss, keep me your servant Purushotham where you are.*

This hymn was published in September 1884 in Hitavadi magazine. This is the soul travel song told by Purushotham. From this time, Purushotham Chowdhary was looking forward to reaching the eternal heaven as if a day is a year. Like Paul, he felt that *"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give to me on that day, not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing."* (2 Tim 4: 7-8)

*Did I not get the sacred blood that washes away its sins?
 Did I not feel in my heart your grace and mercy for this life?
 Did I not gain strength to fall at your feet with devotion?
 Did I not attain everlasting heaps of joy, Jesus my master?*

As Purushotham Chowdhary awaited every moment with peaceful morning joy and a heart blossomed in bliss, finally on 23rd August 1890 midnight at an age of 87 years he ended his earthly sojourn and closed his eyes here to open them in the world resplendent with holy glory. Angels with shouts of triumphant delight walking him in the streets of the dazzling city of light; and we can well imagine, singing the hymn written by Purushotham Chowdhary:

Description of the heavenly city

Lo, the city resounding with shouts Holy, Holy, Holy; Come, all my dear ones. God reigns there, eternal, glowing, sturdy and beautiful it is.

- 1. No need for the sun, the moon that makes the lotus bloom, or a plethora of lamps. Christ lives there in eternal radiance, praiseworthy, glorious and celebrated.*
- 2. Shortage, any kind of calamity, or deceit hardly exist there. The prince presides over providing living water gently to its inhabitants.*
- 3. Flowing from the throne of the King, the auspicious river gives luxury. Trees on either side provides propitious fruits resplendent in look and taste.*
- 4. No birth or death, earthly joys or sorrows exist in the city. Our God lives there wiping away tears for whom he suffered to make them righteous.*
- 5. Priceless, immovable great crown of life is bestowed in that city. God grants the desires of his children whom he invites to the wedding feast of their master.*

And-

You fulfilled the tasks entrusted

You have overcome the enemy in the warfare

Come, own incomparable blessed state

Unlimited distinction and ecstasy in the divine city

When the heavenly hosts bring Purushotham to the presence of the King of Heaven Jesus Christ, the Lord says, “Well done faithful servant!” and admits him into his eternal rest.

Thus, Purushotham Chowdhary went away to heaven at the age of 87. His mortal remains were laid to rest in the grave yard in Cuttack attended by about 2000. Rev Sam Sahu Babu performed the burial in Oriya language.

Missionaries witness

On the occasion, Cuttack missionaries Rev William Miller, and Rev T. Bailey wrote the following in the 1890 Orissa Baptist Mission report:

“Rev William writes: I had much Christian intercourse with Bro. Purushotham in his declining years and last illness; his end was eminently peaceful. Three times I was summoned when it was supposed he was dying. But he revived for a while. On my last visit, he remarked prayerfully, “I sometimes think the Lord has forgotten me.; He seems so long in coming.” His death was like that of the righteous, and his memory is fragrant and precious to all who knew him. “

Rev T. Baily writes, “In the death of Purushotham Chowdhary, a notable member of the native Christian community has passed away... There is a small Telugu congregation in Cuttack to which our brother ministered with great acceptance as long as health permitted, but he was known to us principally for his labors in Oriya, and in this language also he was a persuasive preacher, though the sweetness and pathos of his prayers are more specially dwelt upon by those who were accustomed to hear him...” Our brother was light in complexion with fine features and figure, peaceful in disposition and very courteous in manners, one of nature’s true gentleman.”

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1. *Ms. Helen Knott died on 13th August 1892 in Bangalore, aged 102 years.*
 2. *‘Bappa’ means Daddy in Oriya*

Chapter 14

Fruits of the hundred-year ministry of Purushotham; Construction of the memorial building; Spread of his Church Hymns, Hundred poems compilations, and tracts; Unpublished writings; Opinions and Birth Centenary memorial.

“...through it, he being dead, still speaks. Heb 11:4

Review

Let us review the hundred years that have gone by. When there was no missionary in the area, Purushotham came to know the saving grace of Lord Jesus in 1825 through tract no. 9. In all probability, this tract must have been written during the time of William Carey in Serampore, and got printed there. We have preserved it until this day. From Cuttack and Puri to Bellary wherever Purushotham preached the gospel, there are many Churches today. There are numerous people who heard the gospel through him, or his hymns, tracts and poems and were benefitted.

In Dhumagudem a certain Hindu stumbled upon a tract written by Purushotham namely “History of Salvation,” meditated upon it every day and became a Christian.

This tract, snatched away by a kite, fell in front of a merchant’s house in Godavari district. He continued to read it and happened to go to Rajamahendravaram, and came to know of its meaning and became a good Christian. Someone wrote this in “Satya Duta” magazine. In Yaddanapudi village in Guntur district, a land owner belonging to Kamma caste Mr. Poda Rangaiah happened to read “Christian Light of Righteousness.” He accepted Christ and we were told in a meeting that he is an evangelist now. We can know from the opinions expressed in this chapters how Purushotham’s literature ministry continues to give fruit to this day.

Now let the readers know how the memorial building came into existence in the name of Purushotham who received this wonderful gift and Rev Antarvedi Das.

History of the Memorial Building

I published Purushotham's biography in 1901. Next year I went to Cuttack and gathered the biographical details of Antarvedi Das. Then I felt that it would be fitting to keep pictures of these two in the Churches. I wrote and got the approval of Rev I. C. Archibald, Rev R. Sanford and others.

However, like the flash of a lightening in rainy season, I got the idea in May 1903 that it would be more fitting to construct a memorial for these two. Then I drafted an application and took the signature of F. W. Ditmus, Secretary of Maharaja of Bobbili- I was tutoring him in Telugu language- and reached Vizianagaram on the 7th. I shared my thought with Rev Sanford and took his approval. On the 12th that month, I was sharing a meal in Mr. S. Jacob's house in Parlakimidi.

One of the other guests, Dr P. Devadattam, on hearing the proposal, felt happy and promised a donation of 100 rupees. A few discouraged me. Still I was determined that prayer will prevail. Putting all burden on the Lord, on 16th June that year, I made known my opinion to the Missionary Conference in Srikakulam. Rev W. V. Higgins Informed me of his consent through a letter dated July 21st. He indicated that this should be an entirely native initiative.

Although I didn't have any money on me, I got a few publicity leaflets printed in Madras. The package was delivered to me. At that time, the Head master of Bobbili Mission Girls School, Tejomurthula Venkatesam, called me to the verandah and pressed three rupees in my hands saying that it was for the memorial I intended to build.

Immediately, I claimed the package from Madras, and with the remaining annas, I mailed the leaflets to a few places. First, Madabattula Brahmaji, Basani Appadu, among the disciples of Purushotham Chowdhary sent 35 and 10 rupees respectively. Christian Church in Bapatla also contributed. Thus, I could gather about 300 rupees. At the Christian Convention in Parlakimidi that took place in January 1904, I got a confirmation from Rev P. David. Everybody agreed to the idea of

constructing a memorial jointly in the names of Purushotham and Das Antarvedi, because Rev Antarvedi came to the Lord through reading the tract “A Test of caste Tradition,” by Purushotham; He accompanied Purushotham in Parlakimidi, and baptized many and planted churches; it is fitting to build the memorial for both. Due to the attachment of Rev I. C. Archibald with Purushotham because of their correspondence regarding the hymns, we formed a committee with Rev Archibald as President and I remained an un-named member. Nevertheless, since I was strong in the body at that time, I took the trouble to write hundreds of letters to Rev Archibald and many others, about the construction of this memorial.

The members of the committee were spread far and wide. People from Orissa Mission, American Baptist Mission, London Mission, and other outfits, were familiar with Purushotham. They kept sending donations. Many Churches contributed.

Loving Ministry of Rev I. C. Archibald

Rev Archibald of Srikakulam tirelessly corresponded with many people day and night and sent out appeals. Among his helpers at that time were Rev P. Jagannayakulu, D. Amruta Lal, Rev D. V. Jagannatha Rao and others.

The Canadian Mission purchased a piece of land adjacent to the western wall of the college property belonging to the Raja of Parlakimidi. Parlakimidi is the birth place of Purushotham. When Rev. H. Y. Corey told us that he could give us that place if the memorial could be built there, the Committee felt that it would be fitting to build it there. God’s will as it was, it also came out in a wonderful manner from the correspondence between Purushotham and Das Antarvedi. Writing from Rangoon to Purushotham in Cuttack on 13th November 1879, Das Antarvedi said that if the 41st Battalion was disbanded, he would settle down in Parlakimidi and continue his ministry. I found this letter in 1902 in the boxes of Purushotham. Replying to this on 12th December 1879, Purushotham said that he was enthusiastic to join him when that happened, and spread the gospel in those areas. I went to Nellore to meet Mr. R. Paramjyothi, the

grandson of Das Antarvedi, and searched his library. I found the letter written by Purushotham. The transcendental God who knows the intentions of men, gave this excellent awareness to the Memorial Committee. Without knowing what transpired between these two, the Committee had decided to build the Memorial in Parlakimidi.

Foundation Stone laying ceremony

On 5th August 1905, in the presence of the representatives of all Denominations in the Parlakimidi Bungalow, Mr. P. Veeracharyulu sang the life story of Purushotham. He rendered the hymn “We found a hiding place in Jesus Christ...” and explained its meaning. Dr. P. Devadattam told the history of Das Antarvedi. When I read these two letters, those gathered were astonished seeing that the place was predetermined. After the meeting, Dr. Poladas Devadattam, on behalf of Antarvedi’s Church, Babu Daniel Chowdhary (senior), grandson of Purushotham from Cuttack and many others laid the foundation stone after much worship and prayers. On that occasion, this author, the beginner of the idea of this memorial, President of the Committee Late Rev. I. C. Archibald, the local missionaries, Rev George Churchill, the zamindar of Belgaum, near Parvathipuram, Mr. E. Kanakachalam, his teacher, Dr. Gidugu Rama Murthy Pantulu were among the invited.

Donors

This Memorial was in the shape of an inverted ‘T.’ The dimensions of the central room was 48 feet long, and 23.5 feet wide. The side rooms were 23.5 x 18 feet. The roof was arch shaped standing on iron girders. When the walls were done and it was still roofless, the money ran out. One day, I arrived from Bobbili, stood among the walls and wept like Nehemiah. I pleaded with God for financial help. As an answer to that prayer, we received money and the building was completed. The tower was constructed under the supervision of Rev. B Subbarayudu.

To procure money and details of the biographies of these two men of God, I had to travel up to Cuttack in north and to Nellore in south. Late Subedar G. Samuel toiled to gather up to 400 rupees. Our families too contributed.

E. Augustine of Madras has drawn the oil painting of Purushotham, and one third of this cost was borne by Purushotham's disciple Basani Appadu. Part of the cost was sent by senior Babu John Chowdhary from Cuttack. Ms. Tencate from Nellore promised 50 rupees and probably sent the money to Rev Archibald directly. Dr G. Devadattam and Mr. M. Sudarshanam belonging to the Church of Das Antarvedi, contributed 100 rupees each. Rao Sahib Dr T. Narayana Swami Naidu, Dr. M. Raja Rao Das, Dr Perimbangaru (Tirunelveli), Diwan Bahaddar William Venkata Ramaiah (District Judge), James M. Bhaktul, Lala Gokul Das, Rev M. Prakasam, Imandi John, Rev McFarlane (London Mission), helped towards gathering the money. Canadian Missionary Society helped with an amount of more than 500 rupees. Orissa Mission also helped. Rev R. E. Smith, Ms. M. Robinson, Dr Ms. Hewlett, Rev I. C. Archibald, Ms. Archibald, Ms. Peck, M. E. Harrison, Rev R. E. Gallison were among those who gave more than 10 rupees. Rev H. Y. Corey gave 150 rupees. Parlakimidi Church gave 183 rupees, more than any Church. Bobbili, Palakonda, Vizianagaram, Bheemunipatnam, Srikakulam, Tekkali, Akulatampara, Pithapuram, Samalkot, Peddapuram, Yalamanchili, Kakinada, Vuyyuru, Ramachandrapuram, and other Churches gave contributions.

Mohammad Fazil of Ichchapuram gave 25 rupees. This was the only Muslim who contributed for this task. Wife of Mr. David Smith, Railway guard in Calcutta, has sent a good amount. A list of contributors was with Rev S. C. Freeman in Parlakimidi. I am not including it here. Thus, the amount accumulated, nearly 4, 177 rupees went into the construction of the memorial for our two elders Purushotham Chowdhary and Das Antarvedi. Rev J. A. Glendening, Mr. Sukriya Behera, members of Purushotham's family, and his friends helped in the construction work.

Dedication of the Memorial

The pictures of both men of God were installed in the building. Das Antarvedi's picture was drawn by Messers Raghupati Venkaiah Brothers of Madras. 16th August 1908 was the appointed day for the dedication.

Eleven missionaries, and representatives from Churches arrived. Subedar G. Samuel, all the way from Secunderabad, Rev N. Abraham from Samlkot, Rev Dr. J. R. Stillwel from Ramachandrapuram, attended. Dr P. Devadattam, Sub Magistrate M. Sudarshanam who contributed 100 rupees along with their families, and Havildar M. Sattenna came on behalf of Das Antarvedi's Churches. The grandsons and grand daughters of Purushotham Chowdhary were present. By the grace of God, Rev Archibald and I were also there.

Fulfilment of intent

Rev B. Subba Rayudu, Rev S. Abraham, and M. Sudarshanam participated in the worship service on Aug 15th 1908, Saturday and Sunday. Accounts submitted by Rev I. C. Archibald were approved and a further contribution of 400 rupees were collected. On 16th Rev John Rupert Stillwell while dedicating the building, spoke on Rev 3:12. Rev H. Y. Corey made the dedication prayer. That afternoon Rev Corey and spoke in Telugu on some thoughts of dedication and Rev Archibald spoke in English on the topic 'Salvation.'

On 17th morning under the supervision of Dr P. Devadattam, M. Sudarshanam, and Rev N. Abraham spoke on the biography of Rev Antarvedi. Likewise, under the supervision of Subedar G. Samuel, Mr. Samuel himself and Rev P. David explained the biographical details of Purushotham Chowdhary. Havaldar Sattenna gave the biography of Antarvedi. That evening people from the town also gathered. Rev Stillwell spoke beautifully on Christian doctrine in English language. The building was blessed by the love all these people have for Purushotham and Antarvedi.

This Memorial was now kept under the stewardship of Parlakimidi Baptist Church. They conduct worship services there. After a few years, K. Sannaiah Naidu, Municipal Manager, arranged for a marble plaque bearing the two names and installed it on the stage of the hall. Any who love the two men of God can see their respective dates of birth and death on the copper plates as given below.

In Memory of Rev Purushotham Chowdhary

The Immortal Christian Poet

Born 5th September 1803 at

Madanapuram, Ganjam,

Died 24th August 1890 in

Cuttack. Rev 3:12

In Memory of Rev D. Antaravedy of

41st N. R. Baptist Churches

Organizer of Churches

Born 1822 at Chittoor

Died 9th December 1881 at

Quilon Rev 3:12

There is scope for the building to be extended towards north. The tower should be rebuilt. A bell is needed. Donations can be sent to the Baptist missionary in Berhampur. On the Dedication of the memorial, Mandapaka Parvatiswara Shastri, family member of Purushotham penned laudatory poems.

Strange are the decisions of God in saving people for his ministry. Tracts printed by William Carey in Sirampore, Bible printed by the Bible Society, and Ms. Helen Knott, wife of Captain Knott, were instrumental in the salvation of Purushotham. One Antarvedi got enlightened by the tract “A test of the Caste Tradition,” written by him, through Antarvedi one Thomas Gabriel, a Matangi Adinarayana, one Dr Narayana Swami, getting saved, Churches planted, through them the arrival of the Canadian Mission...all this was the divine will of the omniscient God, what else? Let those who love this history and know this appendix, will accompany this history and stand until the end of the earth and return of our Lord.

We have quoted hymns written at various times including their context. In different circumstances, Purushotham aligned his will with that of God and out of the devotional experience he wrote these hymns to comfort himself in his sad times. He used to tell his daughter Martha Burder that in the poetry in Oriya and Bengali, the only rule was the ending of the stanza. Whereas Telugu poetry has well-knit prosody and that he should toil at Telugu poetry.

The giant print Bengali Bible is in Cuttack. We also have his sermons written in Oriya. An Oriya hymn was published in 'Hitavadi' in July 1883. Purushotham seems to have rebuked a rich friend in Vishakhapatnam through a hymn, "Gone, gone, the time is gone."

Opinions

We include the opinions expressed by various people about the poems and prose of Purushotham:

Rev T. Baily

The late Rev W. R. Stevenson of Nottingham in a letter to me dated 23rd 1888, remarks, "I was surprised to learn from the Rev Dr. Lyman Jewett, one of the American Baptist Missionaries in the Telugu country, that Purushotham Choudhari of the Orissa Mission, is the author of thirty-eight of the choicest Telugu hymns in use and his name appears on the title page of Dawson's Telugu hymn book as having assisted Mr. Dawson in the preparation of that book.' (Orissa Baptist Mission Report for the year 1890, P. 39)

"Rev W. W. Stevenson, serving in Gooty has sent a few hymns and asked Purushotham for the names of the authors, he said most of them are his own, so that our brother could add name under the those hymns. He wanted to send a copy of this new edition. As it was on the way, he died peacefully.

Edward Rice wrote in page 10 of the 1890 Orissa Baptist Mission Report.

“The hymns were written more for his own pleasure and not for publication, and a glance at the title shows that the peerless perfection and infinite love of Christ were the themes on which he most delighted to dwell.” Dr. Lyman Jewett in the Andhra Christian Hymnal he composed, described the hymns of Purushotham “the choicest Telugu hymns now in use.” Dr. A. J. Curtiss writes, “. . . No hymns are so frequently sung in our meetings, and none contribute more to spirituality than those which bear the name Purushotham.”

Great man of God, and grand old man Rev Canon Dannavada Anantham writes from Bangalore, “I never saw Mr. Purushotham, but when I was publishing Hitavadi magazine, that is about 60 years ago, he wrote to me a couple of times and encouraged me in that endeavor. Now and then he used to send his poems and hymns. Hearing the news of my marriage, he has sent a silk saree for my wife from Cuttack. Even after his death, his name and his ministry to the Christians are taken in great reverence. The hymns he wrote are being sung in all Churches. Hundreds of hymns were written by various people, but no one can match the devotional spirit or poetic excellence on Purushotham. I gave one of his writings “History of Salvation” to a scholar who taught me Telugu and Sanskrit seeking his opinion, he likened it to Andhra Bhagavatam and told me that it is equal to the poetry of Bammara Pothana and has the taste of grape syrup. Those who read the poetry compilations written 90 years ago, “Yesunayaka Satakam,” “Yesuprabho Satakam,” “Pancha Chamara Pannamulu,” Light of Christian Righteousness,” can easily understand how this man of God refused to leave the presence of the feet of his dear Savior. Especially when he realized his condition of sin, how bitterly he wept and confronted his Savior, for the forgiveness of sins; How he wrestled with God like Jacob, saying ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me,’ and like Rama Dasu who sang “I will not let you take one step, I will not leave you unless you assure me.”

Mr. A. F. Tyaga Raju of Kings College, London writes-

“Almost the only Telugu hymns I love are those written by Chaudhari Purushotham. For the beauty of language, depth of thought, and true

expression of the heights of Christian experience, they are unsurpassed. The poet always impressed me as one who realized that the deepest longings of human heart are not satisfied by Hinduism. They find satisfaction only in Jesus Christ. (A. F. Tyaga Raju, Bombay, 25th September 1933).

Maharaja Vikram Dev Varma, king of Jayapura read the booklet “Christian Light of Righteousness” and sent the following opinion:

Fort Jayapore, 5th October 1933.

Dear Sir,

His highness received a copy of your grandfather’s poetic work sent by you. He looked into the book here and there and found that it is in easy flowing style. He wishes wide publication to it amongst the Christian community.

Yours sincerely

C. L. Narasimham

Private Secretary.

A. T. Palmer, Head Master of McLaurin High School wrote:

Chowdhary Purushotham’s Telugu Christian hymns have charmed me from my childhood. My father’s favorite hymn “Entho srungaramainadi” and my mother’s favorite book “History of Salvation” bring back to my mind exceedingly pleasant memories and the great poet’s name has been a household word in our home as it is in the homes for many a Telugu Christian family. Purushotham’s hymns are so superior in style, diction and thought, and they can be distinguished from all other Telugu hymns. In his hymns, he has made use of all the music and the rhythm that Telugu language can produce. One often wonders what the fate of the Telugu Christian hymnology would have been but for this genius of a poet Purushotham. Almost all the Telugu Hindu tunes that are familiar to every Andhrite, have been used by Purushotham in his compositions. Purushotham’s Christian experience and spirit-filled enthusiasm enlivens and uplifts many a drooping heart. Till God gives another man like Purushotham to the Andhra Christian Church, Purushotham’s name will reign supreme.

A.T. Palmer,

Cocanada, Jan 8- 1934

Rev J. A. Curtiss, wrote in the first issue of the Baptist Missionary Review printed in November 1933:

The major part of our Telugu singing is still done with the lyrics composed by Chowdhury Purushotham. From his baptism hymn, dated 1833, full of joy of pardoned sin, till his two well-known hymns of farewell to life, dated 1885, for fifty-two years, he was the sweet singer of the Telugu Israel. His poems and hymns are cast in all the familiar Telugu poetical forms and they have a devotional and literary quality and a rhythm that has commended themselves to the taste of successive generations of Christians. Though written in the very early days of congregational singing, most of the hymns continue to be favorites in congregations of all communions. New and attractive tunes are found again and again for the old favorite; the excellent writing of our newer poets displaces them very slowly. Mr. John Chowdhary, Founder and Secretary of the Mission to the Aristocracy of India, a grandson of the poet-evangelist and himself a Telugu poet, announces through our news columns this month the Centenary celebrations of Purushotham's baptism in 1833. It is planned to produce a memorial volume and in other ways to make the incalculable influence of these lyrics during the hundred years. One good way of celebrating would be to revive in our schools the teaching of these substantial old pieces and revive in our workers the practice of using their searching truth in evangelistic work.

Rev Ch. Bhanu Murthy, Head Master of Jeevamruta School, Kakinada writes:

Purushotham Chowdhary, a king among the Telugu Christian poets, needs no introduction. His mellifluous hymns, and messages continue to influence and elevate people in this area for the last 100 years. No poet measures up to him to date. No one has ever explored the essence of Christian life as he did. Anybody who once taste his poetry, so delicate, melodious, and full of spiritual meaning, cannot forget it. His books take

the first place in preaching Christ in a way appropriate to Hinduism. His poetry can be likened to Pothana and his hymns to Thyagaraju. The very life of Purushotham is his poetry. Those who hesitate to tell the educated people about Christ, can do so with ease, if only they have the books of Purushotham in their hands- the books speak on their behalf. His books are suitable for scholars and commoners alike. His style is like the grape juice and easily understood. However, his thoughts are deep, and helpful no matter how experienced you are. They explain in easy terms the humanity and divinity of Christ, and appeals to the heart of the readers. There is no better book than “A summary of the essence of Bible” for anyone to understand the characteristics of God. It is the bounded duty of Andhra Christians to encourage the works of this worthy poet and make them available to all.

Chetti Bhanu Murthy.
20-12-1934.

Rev V. S. Azariah, Bishop of Dornakal wrote the following in this book published by C.L.S in 1933:

“The book “A Summary of the essence of Bible,” was written by Chowdhary Purushotham nearly 90 years ago. Christians and non-Christians alike appreciate its style and content. Rev Canon Anantham took it upon himself to write the commentary of these poems. Due to old age and failing eye sight the task is difficult for him, still he persevered due to his love for this poetry. He gave me this commentary and asked me to include it in the next edition. A grant is made available to us from Indian Literature Fund, and hence we are able to reprint the book and include Rev Anantham’s Commentary. As told by Rev Anantham, may this unique book be a daily companion to the Christians and a tool of growth of their spiritual life.”

The poetical books of Purushotham Chowdhary are- Light of Christian Righteousness, History of salvation, Summary of the essence of the Bible, Construction of Statues, Dividing the Truth and so on. Thousands of copies were published and distributed by the Vishakhapatnam London

Mission, and Christian Literature Society in Madras. No rights of any of these books are given away to anybody. This author is seeking to correct the printing mistakes found in these books and publish them. There are a few unpublished manuscripts of Purushotham in existence.

His ‘Test of Caste Tradition’ is waging a relentless war with the demon of caste for more than hundred years. “Revelation of the path to heaven” compares the Hindu deities and emphasizes the sinless nature of Christ, including a brief biography of Jesus. Many came to know the truth because of this booklet. His “History of Salvation” was written in ‘Yaksha Gana’ style depicting the sweet story of Jesus Christ. This can be termed Purushotham’s gospel in the same manner of Mathew’s gospel, Mark’s gospel and soon. In it, we can find the sermon on the mount in the form of ‘Dandakam.’²

1. *see “The Enterpriser.”*

2 *Dandakam is a literary style of poetry seen in Sanskrit and Telugu languages, characterised by racy and robust literary rendition. Dandakams are mainly of descriptive and laudatory purpose, extolling the God or the subject.*

Chapter 15

The following is taken from the “Biography of Purushotham Chowdhary” by John Chowdhary published in 1902.

In Memorium

Purushotham’s Centenary

By Mallela Solomon George

*Jubilee chimes! There lies the laurell’ d head,
A youth to fortune and to fame well-known
The singer of undying songs is dead;
I wish his soul doth dechth’ eternal throne,
Lo times may change, the skies look strange the birds,
Depart the winds they drift, the grove decays
Empires dissolve, may die at all lowing herds-
The poet lies; his strains ne’er pass away
The pen is oft the cause of the nation’s fame
Here is our bard of race divine
Purushotham in nature as in name, “Thou art
A David for the new psalms to impart
His hymns and songs for two and fifty years
Did he sing sweet in literary grace?
In Kerk, in public street and wanted spheres;
Thus, he usurped great Thyagaraja’s place
From natures shrine he took the muses live,
His music sweet all castes and creeds did greet
Alike the linnnet sang the verse alive;*

*Since bid his talents at His blessed feet
Rapt tho' he from us Milton greets
Him, Shakespear bids him welcome home, Lord
Tennyson salutes him, praises Keats;
And God-like spirits hail the guest restored*

People say that Purushotham was ruddy in color, sturdy in body and of medium height. He did not recognize me. He usually wore white clothes. He was a loving, gracious, and long suffering person.

He never procrastinated. He never liked the term 'tomorrow.' In his old age after answering a letter, he used to ask his daughter to write "Replied" on the envelop. The Hindu scriptures he wrote 100 years ago are well preserved. In 1869, a list of all his correspondence during his Chittivalasa sojourn was found. Also found are the tracts he came across in 1825 and 1833.

Every three months, after receiving his salary, Purushotham used to divide the amount under various heads and took care not to get into debts.

He was in the habit of reading Bengali, Oriya, and Telugu Bibles. When he lost his eye sight due to old age, Martha Burder, his widowed daughter or Mr. James Chinnaiah used to read the Bible aloud to him.

In his solitude or in a remote place, he used to sing one song that is so dear to him, a song he wrote himself, "Show me once my master Jesus, I will lay prostrate at your feet." While singing the old man of God used to bring his palms together in obeisance, nodding his head, as if he has his Lord before him and enjoyed the real presence of God. Our relatives in Cuttack told me this. He always maintained clean habits.

Purushotham Chowdhary desired that his writings be published without any changes. We communicated this to the Baptist Missionary Review magazine in 1903 October. Since I am in Andhra, my family in Cuttack entrusted his books to me and asked me to take care. After his death, some people published his hymns with changes, without the consent of

the family. Seeing this, Rao Sahib Dr Rev T. Narayana Swami wrote in the 'Christian Patriot,' published on 2nd January 1896:

“He changed the best words, phrases and clauses of some of our greatest hymns composed by a very eminent poet like Purushotham Chowdhary. I humbly ask him to let me know on what authority he did this. I don't think he would attempt to mutilate Shakespeare or Milton as he has done with our poets.”

Books written by Purushotham after becoming Christian. Works of Poetry

Yesunayaka Satakam (1845), Yesu Kreestu Prabhu Satakam (1845), Pancha Chamara Pannamulu (1845), History of Salvation (1846), Nistara Rathnakaramu (1846), Vighraha Nirmanamu (1846), Radiance of Christian Righteousness (1851), Essence of the Bible- Deity of Christ (1871), Dividing the Truth (1874).

Tracts

Test of Caste Traditions (1833), Path to heaven Revealed (1846), Dispelling the superstition about smallpox (1852), Mind is the Root (1863), Destroying the Darkness, The Divine Wisdom, Test of Jagannath, etc.

All the children of Purushotham died, His grandchildren and great grandchildren are scattered all over Bengal, Orissa and Andhra. We eternally thank and praise God for bestowing this divine salvation to us through this patriarch of ours.



Appendix

-James Jayasheel Choudhury

Based on the year of Baptism of the poet Chowdhary Purushotham (6-10-1833), the Centenary Celebrations took place in 1933. An account of this was briefly given in Chapters 14 and 15.

Based on the poet's date of birth, many of us conducted Bi-Centenary Celebrations during 2003-2004 in Andhra Pradesh. We have included descriptions of those events in the Telugu version. Also included are the poems written in appreciation of the Poet by those that were influenced by his writings and hymns.

In Srikakulam, the Bicentenary celebrations were conducted in 12th and 13th October, 2003 under the aegis of the District Christian Welfare Society by Sri D. L. B. L. Kumar. Mr. Jaladi Raja Rao (Film Lyricist) was invited as the Special Guest. Mrs. Pydisetti Jayanthi, Municipal Chairperson was the Guest of Honor. Rev B. D. P. Rao (Rajamundry) was specially invited. In the evening meeting, Rev Gode Samuel spoke on the writings, literature and life of Purushotham Chowdhary.

In Vizianagaram, the event took place during September 6, 7, and 8, 2003; it was conducted by the District Celebrations Committee. A hymn competition was conducted by Y. Robertson, G. Prasad, V. Masilamani, T. Shanta Kumar, Rev P. Theophilos, and pastor Alajangi Vijaya Kumar. Dr. S. T. Gnanananda Kavi (Kakinada), Sri Pratipati Devasahayam (Guntur), and Rev Dr. D. V. Daniel (Vijayawada) were felicitated. A special memorial edition was released on the occasion.

In 2009, SIMS Baptist Church conducted a musical night of Purushotham's hymns. Dr Ravela Joseph (Hyderabad), Rev B. D. P. Rao (Rajamundry), Sri M. D. Sudheer (Chairman, Minorities Corporation) participated as special guests. Sri Vara Lakshmi, Tyagaraya Music and Dance Kala Niketan, rendered Purushotham's hymns in chaste Karnataka style.

Poet Purushotham Chowdhary served as a pastor in Chittivalasa from 1862 to 1870. Under the auspices of the London Mission Society

with which he served, the Bi-Centenary celebrations were held and Sri J. J. Chowdhary, and Dr. D. D. Chowdhary (Fifth generation grandson of the Poet) took part in the event. And Rev M. Paul Augustine (Secretary, B. E. M, Hyderabad), and Bro A. Jenny Christopher (Khammam) preached. The program was conducted by Dr D. J. Mohan Kumar (President, Christian Welfare Association, Chittivalasa).

Under the leadership of Babu John Chowdhary, the Antarvedi-Purushotham Memorial Hall was constructed and dedicated in 1908. As the building, has reached a dilapidated condition, it was demolished and a new structure came up in its place. Dr S. S. Chowdhary (son of the great grandson of the Poet) along with Dr Ravi Mohan and Dr Pradeep Kumar took an active role in this. The re-dedication took place on 05-09-2003. Rev D. V. Daniel (Former Director of Suvartha Vani, Vijayawada), and Rev G. Babu Rao (Hyderabad), Sri David K. Sharma (Vishakhapatnam) participated.

Usually the Centenary or Bicentenary is celebrated just before the actual birthday throughout the following year. The Vishakhapatnam Y. M. C. A. kickstarted the Poet's Bi-Centenary on a grand scale. Dr. S. Jaya Kumar Rao, Sri Roland Williams, and Sri G. Mathew Peter conducted the meeting. Dr. D. V. Daniel spoke briefly. Dr Nittala Sudha Rathnanjali for her research on the writings of Purushotham Chowdhary, Rev Dr B. D. P. Rao, for his collection of about 16,000 hymns, were felicitated. Late Dr R. R. Sundar Rao was posthumously conferred an honorary title for his research volume, and it was accepted by his eldest son, Prof R. D. Sampath Kumar.

On 5, 6, and 7 September 2003, Y. M. C. A. conducted a celebration in Gurajada Kalakshetram. Volume one of the compilation of Chowdhary Purushotham's Hymns was released and the first copy was given to Sri John Newton Chowdhary (Deputy Director, retired, Animal Husbandry Department, Government of Orissa).

Chowdhary family members celebrated the Bi Centenary on 6th October 2003. Rev Dr D. V. Daniel and Rev Dr B. D. P. Rao took part in it.

Rev Dr Ravela Joseph, President of the Institute for Inter-Church Growth and Leadership (IIGL, Hyderabad) started the Bi Centenary celebrations. Rev R. Jaya Paul, and Bro V. Henry conducted the various events. Singing Competition of the hymns written by Purushotham, Theological debate on the literature of the poet, reading of poetry on the life and ministry of Purushotham (in which Dr Yendluri Sudhakar acted as the judge) were held as part of the celebrations at various times.

Birth celebrations of the Poet were held in Harihara Kala Bhawan, Secunderabad. A famous poet Dr C. Narayana Reddy, Bishops and Pastors of the twin cities, and leading Christians participated. Dr Ravela Joseph, Dr G. Samuel and other Christian Professors spoke on the occasion.

On 22-08-2004, The Andhra Christian Forum conducted a meeting in which Dr Das Babu and Dr Ravela Joseph introduced the Compilation of the Volume of Hymns and it was released by Most Rev Dr Marampudi Joji. The then Minister of Andhra Pradesh for Technical Education Nayani Narasimha Reddy felicitated Sri James Jayasheel Chowdhary, Sri Gidugu Rama Murthy, and Mohammad Ghouse. Sri Swarnjit Sen, I.P.S., Sri Stanley Babu, I. R. T. S., Pastor Nalla Thomas, and Rev B. D. P. Rao graced the occasion. Bishop Taranath Sagar of the Methodist Church spoke. Dr Das Babu, Sri Vijaya Sikhamani, Dr N. J. Prabhakar conducted the meeting.

The exit meeting of the Bi-Centenary took place on 05-09-2004, conducted by I. I. G. L under the leadership of Dr Ravela Joseph, and Rev Ravela Jaya Paul. The Chief Guest, Sri Gopi Nath Reddy inaugurated the website on Purushotham Chowdhary.

Celebrations were undertaken at Madanapalli, Bellary and other places in which various modern poets read out appreciatory verses on Purushotham Chowdhary. Pieces of poetry and prose written by Rev D. C. Gideon (Baptist Church, Lankela Palem), Sri K. Prasad (COREED, Kavali), Sri Mallavarapu Venkata Rao (Best Teacher Awardee, Chimakurti), Dr D. N. Purushotham (Founder Employees Prayer fellowship), Rev Kumar Thomas Siripurapu (Vishakhapatnam), and Rev Bondla Simon (Church of South India, Dornakal Diocese, Khammam) are included in the Telugu version of this book.

“Yehova ma thandri gada” (A.C.H. 435)

Tune: A mighty Fortress is our God (Old German Melody)

1. *Is not Je-ho-va our pa-rent
And Je-su our dear bro-ther?
The Holy Ghost re re-vea-ling
Mys-te-riou-sly re-la-ting,
Our home in Bue-lah Land
Arch-an-gels are our friends
Long-ing to re-ceive us
These pains we glad-ly bear
For one day sure we'll me-et there!*
2. *A-br-aham and Da-vid the great
And saints of the old co-ve-nant.
The Peter and all a-po-tles;
Suc-cee-ding pro-phet, mar-tyrs.
As we will ga-ther there
What glo-ry un-fore-seen?
Je-sus ran-sum for us
And has us, for-given
Joy-ful when peo-ple blame us!*
3. *Our names are in the Book of live;
Sealed with the blood of Je-sus
Who else dare e-rase there our names;
Nor could see pro-mised trophies?
Such bliss in con-vin-cing
Our place in Pa-ra-dise
The Lord's re-wards a -wait
Why care we earth-ly deeds?
They dare not rob our joy there!*

- Translated by Rev B. D. P. Rao.

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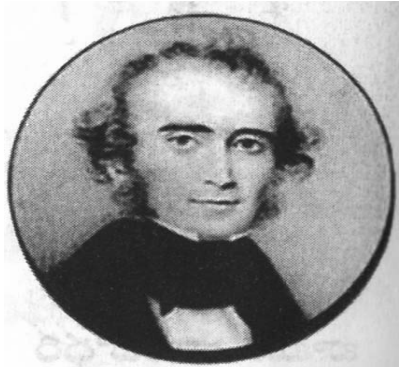
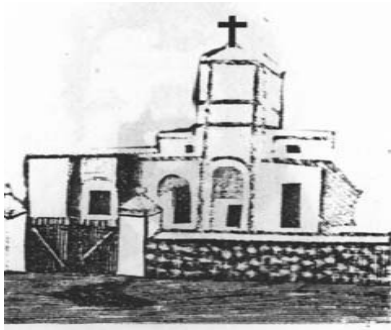
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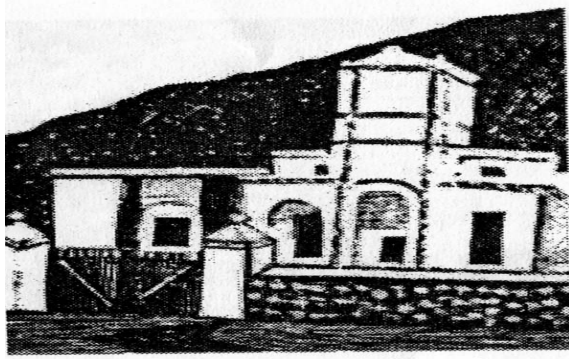
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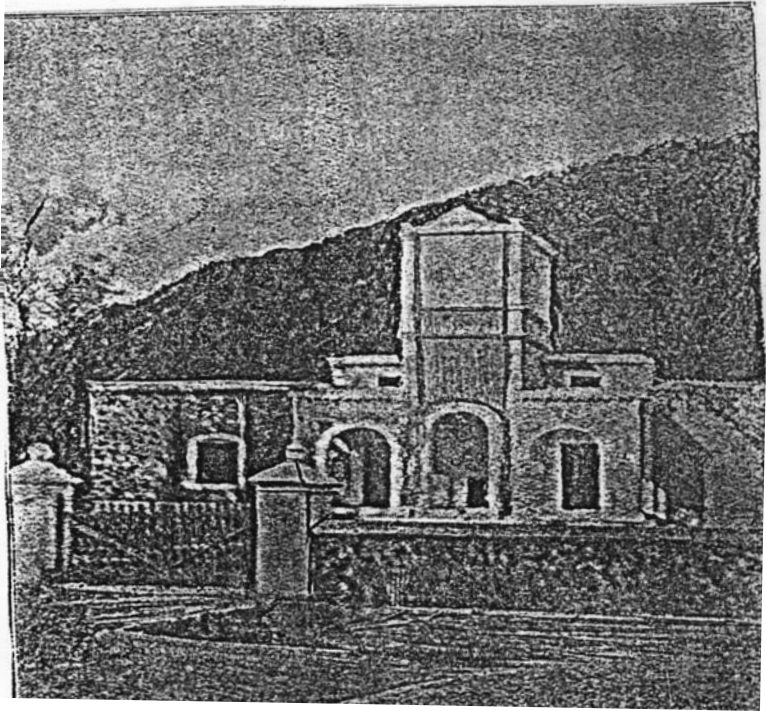


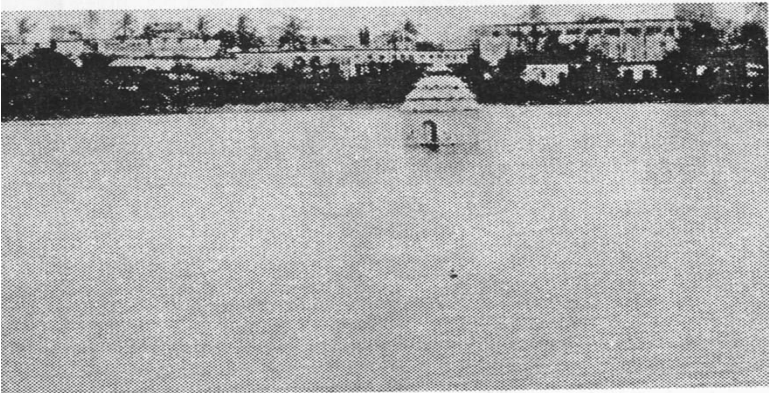














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of Parlakimedi

Published Poet Purushottam Chowdhary's
Works in Two Volumes during the
Bi-Centenary Celebrations of The Poet
(2003-04)

Reprinted Poet's Life History in 2016

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Map showing the Poet-evangelist's Gospel Journeys (Places)

Part of the Map of India

(1833-90)

Telugu Speaking Areas

Main Cities/Towns Around which the Poet Preached the Gospel

(Recorded 126 places)

