

Seshamma is not altogether unhappy with her husband, mother and brothers. Years ago the mother decided that Seshamma was growing altogether too fond of the Christian hymns, and one day when the Biblewoman and I called, she told us that Seshamma was not at home, and that she herself was too busy to sit with us. A few days later there came a message—would I “show kindness” and come see Seshamma’s mother? I found the poor old body suffering from a torn lip, and learned that the day she told us Seshamma was not at home, one of the cows had attacked her, its horn had pierced her lower lip and torn it frightfully. The old body went on to say that this was direct punishment for the lie she had told me about her daughter not being at home, and I was now at liberty to see her as often as I would, and teach her as many hymns as I cared to. Before the lip healed, it became the custom for Seshamma to sing over, to her mother, every evening before retiring, all the hymns she had learned, and this continued until the old body’s death last year. Her dying request was for one of the hymns.

Seshamma still learns hymns and portions of scripture, and often I find her “singing of Jesus” (as she puts it) to a group of neighbor women who listen as they nurse their babies or comb each other’s hair. Seshamma is thus witnessing in her own quiet way for the Saviour she loves.

Ammayamma, a lovely young widow of the Kapu caste, kept house for her brother who had some position in the police department here in Akidu. She was then—in those early days—the only caste woman of my acquaintance who could read. She read the New Testament from lid to lid and was always ready with a question as to the meaning of this passage or the bearing of that, and she was being quite exercised over the question of Baptism, when her mother arrived on the scene. I called there the day after her arrival and the storm of abusive language she heaped upon me was simply awful. Later, that same day, she took her daughter off to a town some thirty-five miles distant. Ammayamma managed to send me word that they (the mother and another brother) had burned all her books and had made her a prisoner in the house, had even chained her to one of the supports so common in large Indian houses, and all this because they feared she would get away to Akidu and be baptized.

For years I heard no more of Ammayamma, except that the brother in the police had been moved to a town on the other side of the Godavery, and that the mother and Ammayamma had gone with him. Upon our return from the Conference in Cocanada last February I was met with the news that Ammayamma had come one evening, had asked for me and manifested great disappointment over my absence, and had gone again next morning at cock-crowing. The women all said they were sure she would have stayed with me had I been at home.

All I could learn of her whereabouts was that the brother had been moved again and in the moving she had ventured this way in the hope of seeing me.

Then there is *Soobamma*, a Sudra widow, who with her son and daughter-in-law live near to a large temple. The first time I visited her the Brahmin priests at the temple made a great fuss. Their temple was being polluted, they said, and they used most abusive language to Soobamma, and to the Biblewoman and me, and ordered us off the premises and out of the street. Seeing that it was in their power to make it very unpleasant for Soobamma, I rose to go, but she said “do not go. I invited you here, and this is my house, and my land, and I want to hear this new thing you talk of.” I admired her courage. Few Telugu women would have thus braved the anger of that company of noisy priests. We stayed and told the story of the Cross, and through all the years since that first visit we have invariably been welcomed in Soobamma’s home, and have watched with joy her ever-growing interest in God’s Word. Often she comes to the boat, and if I am alone will sit at my feet for hours listening to chapter after chapter from the Bible.

*Butchamma* is another widow of the Sudra caste, who without doubt knows the Lord. After my absences on tour she will come to the boat, and is so hungry for the Word that she seeks out the Book of books from my table and placing it in my hands says, “It is for this I have come; read first, then if there is time we will talk afterwards.” I have often tried to persuade her to learn to read, but she is a very busy woman, gets her living by pounding and selling rice, and has little of leisure.

There is also *Ratnamma*, a young matron with two dear little girls. She learned to read in a caste Girls School in Nellore, and a copy of the New Testament and a Hymn-book are her chief delight. We read and sing together and talk over what we read, and a visit with her is a real pleasure. She often speaks of openly confessing Jesus, but always it ends in her saying “but how can I leave my husband and babies—who would care for them and teach them?”

Then there is *Pullamma*, a young Mala woman to whom the Lord spoke through Deborah (the Akidu Biblewoman). She makes no secret of her faith in Jesus, and her neighbors bear witness to the change in her life. Her husband is a hard drinker and bitterly opposed to the Christian religion and forbids her being baptized or coming to the Sunday services even, but Pullamma says “let us wait; some day the Lord will draw him as he drew me. Meantime I’ll teach my boys (she has two dear little boys) to love the Saviour.”

Dear friends—pray for these fearful ones, that they may be made very bold, and pray for the scores of others in villages over the field, who are in like bonds; and pray for me.

Your co laborer,

FANNY M. STOVEL.