

## What happened to the Christians of Andhra Pradesh

*There have been often doubts about the number of Christians counted in the Indian Censuses. It is speculated that a large number of Christian converts—especially from the Scheduled Castes—choose to hide the fact so as to continue enjoying the special privileges available to members of certain Castes among Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. The total number of Christians in India estimated by international demographic scholars associated with the Church are often much higher than those counted in the Censuses.*

*Andhra Pradesh is a special example of this fuzziness associated with the number of Christians. Their number here was rising consistently up to 1971, when it reached its peak value of 18.23 lakhs in the then undivided State. After 1971, their number began falling sharply, dropping to 14.33 lakhs in 1981 and to 11.30 lakhs in 2011. The share of Christians in the total population had risen from 1.68 percent in 1911 to 4.39 percent in 1971; it dropped to 2.68 percent in 1981 and has come down to 1.34 percent now.*

*This sharp decline in the number of Christians in the Census counts in the State is directly related to a corresponding rise in the number of Scheduled Castes. This can mean two things: Either, the converts to Christianity are choosing to deny it before the Census and other secular authorities; or, they have chosen to revert to their original faith. The former seems more likely from the great divergence between the number of Christians counted by the Census and those estimated by the international Church.*

*The rise and decline of Christianity has been much larger in the Andhra component of the undivided State than in Telangana. Within the Andhra component, Christians are particularly concentrated in the coastal pocket of West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam districts. In 1971, nearly 10 lakh of the total 14 lakh Christians counted in Andhra Pradesh part of the State were in this pocket; they formed nearly 15 percent of the population of Guntur and 11 percent of Krishna districts. The presence of Christians in this pocket remains relatively high, but their population in 2011 is only 3.63 lakhs and their share in Guntur and Krishna is now reduced to 3.22 and 1.84 percent, respectively.*

*The presence of Christians in Telangana has always been much lower than in Andhra. Of about 18.23 lakh Christians in the whole State in 1971, only 3.36 lakh were counted in this part. Decline in their population after 1971 has been much slower than in Andhra Pradesh. More remarkably, while the number of Christians in Andhra Pradesh has continued to decline, it has begun to rise in Telangana since 1991. Between 1991 and 2011, their number in Telangana has increased from 2.79 to 4.47 lakh.*

*Unlike Christians, Muslims have a relatively higher presence in Telangana than in Andhra. In 2011, there are 36.18 lakh Muslims in Andhra Pradesh and 44.65 lakh in Telangana; they form 7.33 percent of the population of the former and 12.69 percent of the latter. Within Telangana, Muslims are particularly concentrated in Hyderabad, where they 43.45 percent of the population; and, their growth during the last few decades has been extremely rapid in this Capital city of Telangana.*

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## Rise and decline of Christianity in Andhra Pradesh and its component States

In the Table below, we have compiled the number and share of Christians in undivided Andhra Pradesh—and the two components of Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Telangana (TL) into which it has been recently divided—as counted in the eleven Censuses from 1911 to 2011. The pattern of rise and fall in the undivided State and its two components has been quite different; we analyse the data for the undivided Andhra Pradesh and for the Andhra and Telangana components separately.

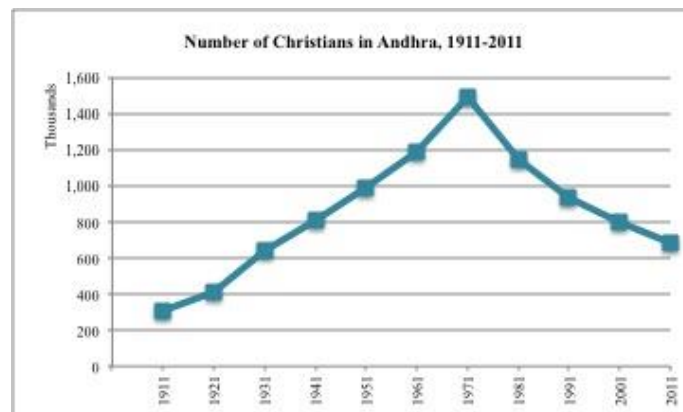
**Growth of Christianity in Andhra Pradesh and its componets, 1911-2011**

	Number of Christians			Percent Share		
	Andhra	Telangana	Andhra P +Telangana	AP	TL	AP +TL
1911	3,07,068	53,242	3,60,310	2.18	0.73	1.68
1921	4,11,694	63,830	4,75,524	2.85	0.92	2.22
1931	6,40,747	1,45,883	7,86,630	3.98	1.80	3.25
1941	8,13,008	1,88,657	10,04,235	4.53	2.02	3.68
1951	9,85,341	2,44,698	12,32,621	4.87	2.25	3.96
1961	11,84,081	2,44,648	14,28,729	5.09	1.92	3.97
1971	14,87,364	3,36,072	18,23,436	5.37	2.12	4.19
1981	11,47,223	2,86,104	14,33,327	3.44	1.42	2.68
1991	9,36,970	2,79,378	12,16,348	2.32	1.07	1.83
2001	7,97,544	3,84,373	11,81,917	1.76	1.24	1.55
2011	6,82,660	4,47,124	11,29,784	1.38	1.27	1.34

### *Undivided Andhra Pradesh*

As seen in the Table above, there were only 3.60 lakh Christians in the undivided State at the beginning of the twentieth century in 1911; they formed 1.68 percent of the then population. But their number and share in the population were both rising from decade to decade. By 1971, the number of Christians had grown to 18.23 lakh and their share in the population had reached 4.19 percent. In the following decade, however, there was a sharp decline. The number of Christians counted in 1981 was nearly 4 lakh less than their number in 1971; their share in the population, therefore, declined to 2.68 percent. In the subsequent decades, their number has continued to decline, though not as abruptly as it did during 1971-81. The decline seems to have slowed down during the last two decades; between 1991 and 2011, the number of Christians has fallen by just about 7 percent.

The pattern of rise and decline in the number of Christians in undivided Andhra Pradesh that we have described above is shown graphically in the figure below.



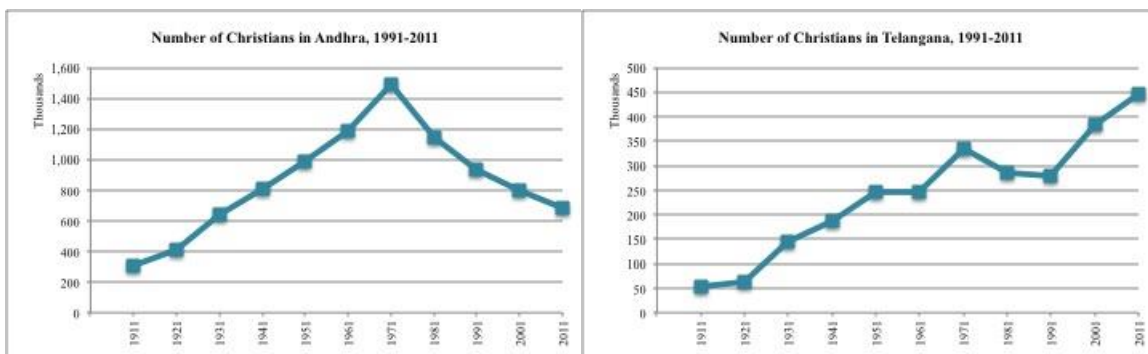
### *Rise and decline in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana components*

At the beginning of the last century, the number of Christians in Andhra Pradesh component was much higher than in Telangana. But in the following decades, the growth of Christians in the latter was somewhat higher than the former. Between 1911 and 1971, number of Christians in Andhra Pradesh multiplied 4.84 times, from 3.07 to 14.87 lakhs. In the same period, their number in Telangana multiplied 6.31 times, from 53 thousand to 3.36 lakhs. This higher growth of Christians in Telangana occurred in spite of a slight decline in their numbers during 1951-61.

Total population of the two components in this period of 1911 to 1971 had grown by merely 1.96 and 2.16 times. The share of Christians in the total population thus rose from 2.18 to 5.37 percent in Andhra Pradesh and from 0.73 to 2.12 percent in Telangana.

The pattern of growth in the two components became even more diverse after 1971. During 1971-81 and also 1981-91, there was a decline in the number of Christians in both the components, but the decline was much more steep in Andhra Pradesh than in Telangana. And after 1991, the number of Christians in the latter has begun to rise, while it continues to decline in the former.

The differing pattern of the progress of Christianity in the two components is clearly seen in the graphs below.



These graphs show a steady rise of Christianity in Telangana, with a slight dip between 1971 and 1991. In Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, there has been a continuous decline in the number of Christians after 1971.

*Andhra has lost 8 lakh Christians since 1971 while Telangana has gained a lakh*

With this pattern of rise and decline of Christians, Andhra Pradesh has lost as many as 8.05 lakh Christians, between 1971 and 2011. This amounts to a loss of 54 percent of the Christian population in 1971. Telangana lost about 57 thousand Christians between 1971 and 1991, but has since gained 1.68 lakhs, thus marking a net gain of 1.1 lakhs since 1971. The decline of Christians is a very significant social phenomenon; to understand this unusual phenomenon, we look at its various aspects in the following.

## Distribution of Christians in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

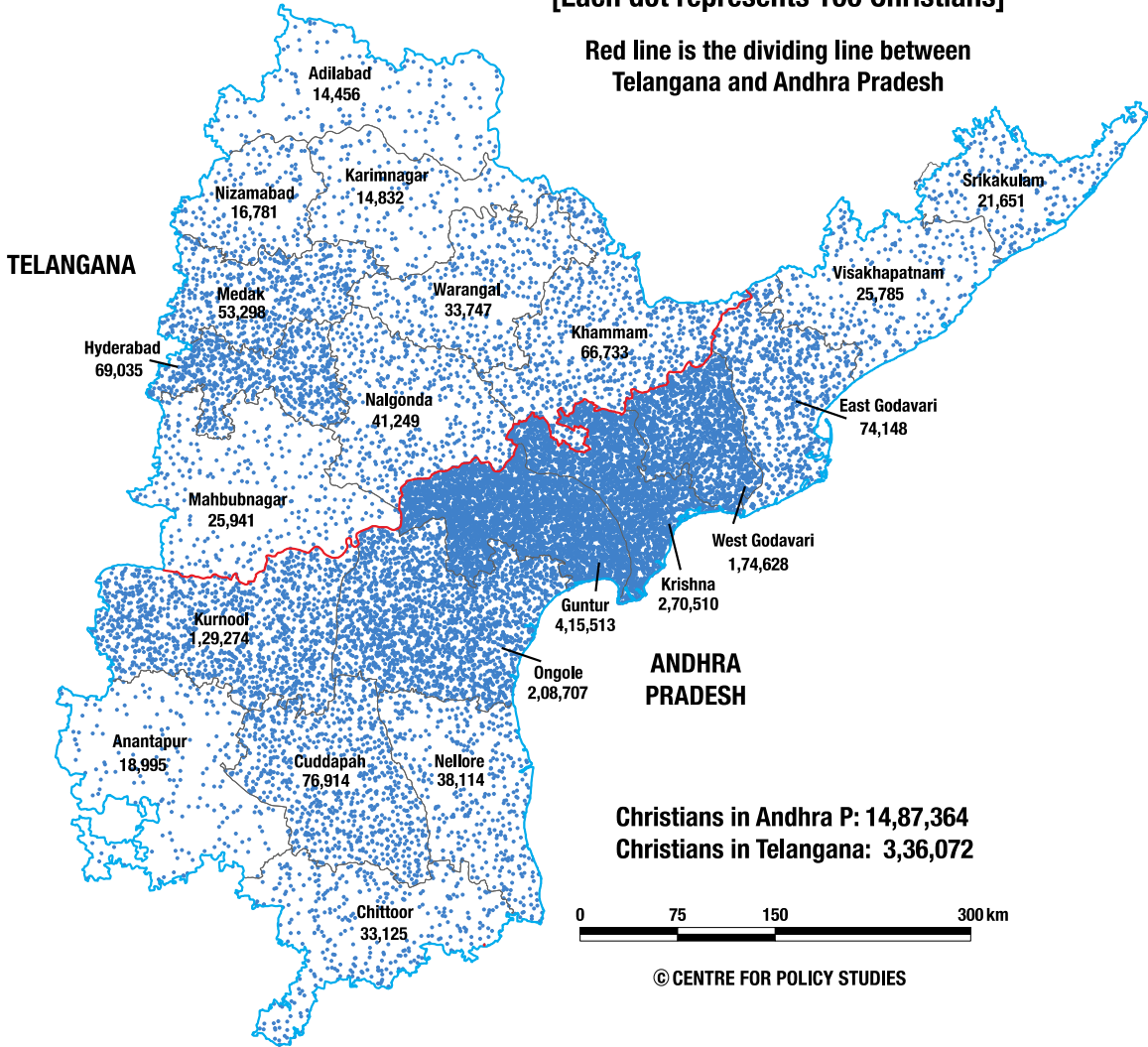
The Maps below give the distribution of Christians across the districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in 1971, when the numbers had reached their peak, and in 2011.

*Christians are concentrated in the central coastal districts of Andhra*

As seen in the Maps, Christians Andhra Pradesh are concentrated in the central coastal districts of West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam (Ongole). To some extent, the intense Christian presence in this region spreads also to the neighbouring Rayalaseema districts of Kadapa (earlier spelled as Cuddapah) and Kurnool. The share of Christians in Krishna and Guntur had reached 10.85 and 14.65 percent, respectively, in 1971 and it has declined to 3.22 and 1.84 percent now (See, Table below).

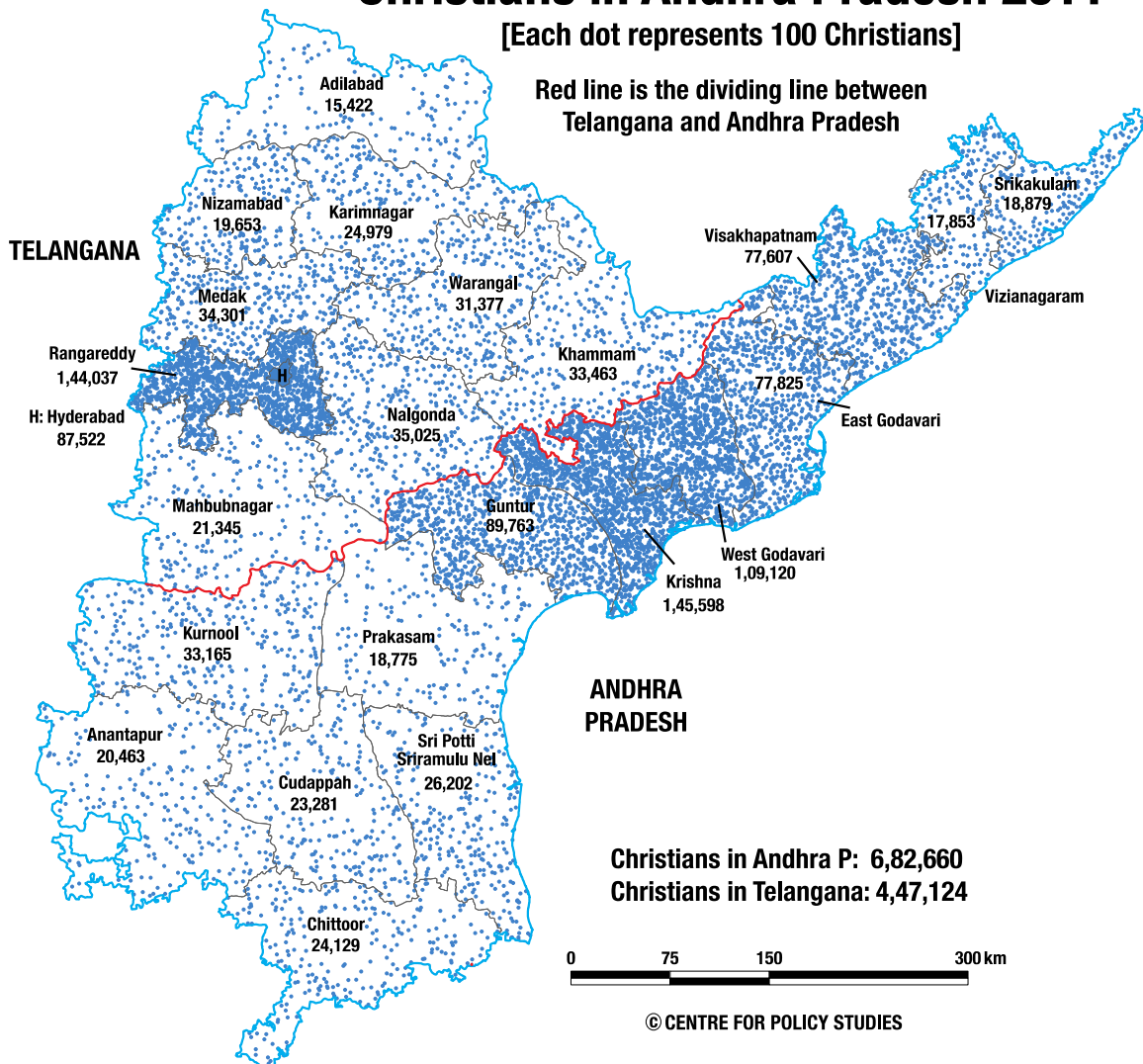
### Christians in Andhra Pradesh 1971

[Each dot represents 100 Christians]



# Christians in Andhra Pradesh 2011

[Each dot represents 100 Christians]



*The decline of Christians has happened mainly in the coastal region*

Of 14.87 lakh Christians in Andhra part of the State in 1971, 9.96 lakh were in the four central coastal districts of West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam (Ongole) and there were another 2.06 lakh in Kurnool and Kadapa. Decline in the presence of Christians is the most visible in these districts of the highest Christian presence; of 8.05 lakh Christians that Andhra has lost since 2011, 7.83 lakh have been lost in these six districts. The loss is especially steep in Guntur, Prakasam and Kurnool, where the number of Christians has declined from 6.80 to 1.42 lakh. The decline is the sharpest in Prakasam district, where their number has declined from 1.35 lakh to 18.8 thousand, and their share from 7.05 to 0.55 percent.

Districts of Christian concentration in Andhra  
Number %Share

	1971	2011	1971	2011
W Godavari	1,74,628	1,09,120	7.35	2.77
Krishna	2,70,510	1,45,598	10.85	3.22
Guntur	4,15,513	89,763	14.61	1.84
Prakasam	1,35,422	18,775	7.05	0.55
Kurnool	1,29,274	33,165	6.52	0.82
Kadapa	76,914	23,281	4.88	0.81

*Christianity has been present in this region since long*

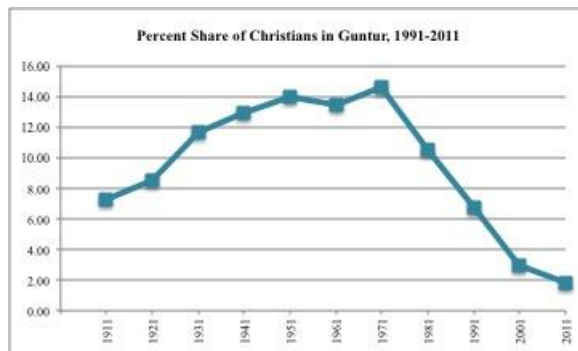
It needs to be underlined that the Christian presence in Guntur, Prakasam and Kurnool region had been high for several decades before 1971. As seen in the Table here, in Guntur, the share of Christians had already reached 7.29 percent in 1911, and it had then slowly grown to the level of 14.61 percent in 2011. It is more difficult to get long time-series data for Prakasam, because the district was created only during 1961-71 by taking out parts of Nellore, Kurnool and some bits from Guntur. Even otherwise, the districts in this region have been extensively reorganised. However, we can get long time-series data for the combined districts of Guntur, Prakasam, Kurnool, Nellore and Chittoor. In this large region, Christians formed 3.97 percent of the population already in 1911, and grew slowly to 7.75 percent in 1971, before beginning to decline to very low levels. Thus, it is not as if the Christian presence in this region had suddenly increased around 1971 and then declined; Christians had been here in fairly large numbers since 1911.

	%Share of Christians	
	Guntur District	Composite Region
1911	7.29	3.97
1921	8.48	4.78
1931	11.68	6.32
1941	12.90	7.06
1951	13.96	7.58
1961	13.40	7.50
1971	14.61	7.75
1981	10.53	4.66
1991	6.68	2.77
2001	2.95	1.52
2011	1.84	0.99

The region includes Guntur Prakasam, Kurnool, Nellore and Chittoor districts. Guntur of 1961 and 1971 are slightly different.

*Has the flock been hidden or has it deserted the Church*

The figure here graphically shows the phenomenon. This graph is for Guntur, but it is probably representative of the whole region. Christians had been present in this core region of theirs for long; they retained a significant and rising presence up to 1971 and then their numbers and share suddenly and sharply declined to inconsequential levels. This makes the phenomenon more difficult to understand. It is not a flash in the pan; there is something systematic that has happened here. As we have mentioned, either the Church has allowed its flock to represent themselves as non-Christians to the secular authorities or the flock has deserted the Church. The issue can be settled only through detailed micro-level surveys in the Guntur-Prakasam-Kurnool region. It is indeed a comment on the state of social sciences in India that no effort has been made to understand such a glaring social phenomenon.



## Christians in Telangana

*Christians in Telangana are concentrated in Hyderabad region*

As may be seen in the Maps above, Christians in Telangana are largely concentrated in the Hyderabad region, comprising the districts of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Medak and Nizamabad, and they seem to be getting further concentrated within this region. In 1971, of 3.36 lakh Christians in Telangana, 1.39 lakh were in this region; in 2011, of 4.47 lakh Christians, 2.86 lakh are in this region.

*Christians in Hyderabad region are growing quite rapidly*

The number of Christians in most of the districts of Telangana, except the four in the Hyderabad region, has either declined or has increased marginally between 1971 and 2001 (See, Maps above). Their number in the Hyderabad region—comprising the current districts of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Medak and Nizamabad—has, however, been steadily increasing. Even during 1971-81, when there was a sharp decline in the number of Christians everywhere in the State, including the Telangana region, their number in this region had shown a slight increase. During the two decades since 1991, there has been a considerable increase in the number of Christians in this region, leading to a corresponding improvement in their share in the population.

**Christians in the Hyderabad Region**

	Number	%C
1911	19,479	0.80
1921	23,810	1.05
1931	55,357	2.16
1941	66,917	2.16
1951	97,526	2.59
1961	1,02,512	2.38
1971	1,39,114	2.50
1981	1,39,165	1.90
1991	1,57,694	1.58
2001	2,33,663	1.88
2011	2,85,513	1.93

**Decline of Christians corresponds to a rise in the share of Scheduled Castes**

It is not possible to determine the causes of this rapid decline of Christians, especially in the Andhra Pradesh component of the undivided State, without a detailed micro-level survey and study. But, there is a surprising correspondence between the decline in the share of Christians and rise in that of the Scheduled Castes. This gives a strong indication that the steep decline in the number of Christians is related to the converts to Christianity from the Scheduled Caste. It seems that many of the Scheduled Castes who had converted to Christianity and were being counted as such in the earlier Censuses, began to be counted as Scheduled Castes after 1971. Whether this amounted to their giving up Christianity or merely hiding their affiliation from the Census and other secular authorities cannot be determined on the basis of Census data alone.

Below, we give the numbers that establish the correspondence between the decline of Christians and rise in the share of the Scheduled Castes. We also give other indicators related to different aspects of this phenomenon.

*In undivided Andhra Pradesh the correspondence is exact*

As shown in the Table here, the decline in the share of Christians in the population of undivided Andhra Pradesh corresponds to an almost equal rise in the share of the Scheduled Castes. The match between the loss of Christians and the gain of the Scheduled Castes is uncannily exact. The sum of the share of Scheduled Castes and Christians together changed only slightly during 1971-81 and 1981-91, and has remained unchanged for the last three decades.

**Share of Scheduled Castes and Christians in undivided AP**

	%SC	%C	Sum
1961	13.82	3.97	17.79
1971	13.27	4.19	17.47
1981	14.87	2.68	17.54
1991	15.93	1.83	17.75
2001	16.19	1.55	17.74
2011	16.41	1.34	17.74

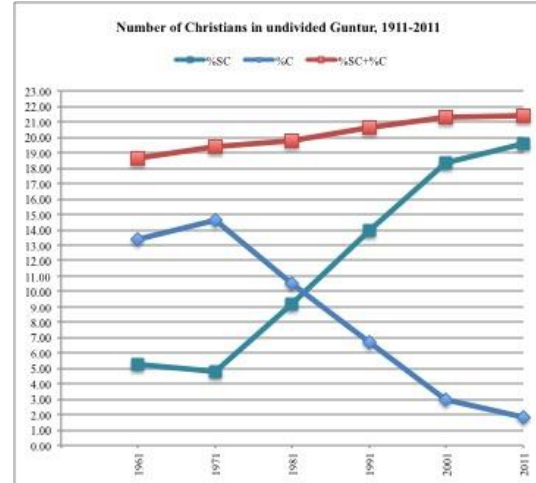
*The correspondence is also nearly exact in Guntur*

The phenomenon of rise in the share of Scheduled Castes in step with the fall in that of Christians seems even more convincing in a district like Guntur where the decline of the latter has been very steep after 1971. As seen in the Table here, the share of Christians here has declined by 12.8 percentage points between 1971 and 2011; and, the share of the Scheduled Castes has

**Share of Scheduled Castes and Christians in Guntur**

	%SC	%C	Sum
1961	5.24	13.40	18.65
1971	4.80	14.61	19.41
1981	9.22	10.53	19.75
1991	13.96	6.68	20.64
2001	18.32	2.95	21.27
2011	19.59	1.84	21.42

correspondingly risen by 14.8 percentage points. This has led to a rise of 2 percentage points in the sum of the share of Christians and the Scheduled Castes, which could be related to higher fertility of the Scheduled Caste population or to out-migration of other communities from this district. The figure here graphically depicts this correspondence in the fall of Christians and the rise of the Scheduled Castes in Guntur. The correspondence is quite close and similar in other districts also, except for some rise or fall in the sum of the share Christians and the Scheduled Castes related to factors like migration and fertility.



*Christianity has become more urban after 1971*

Urban ratio of Christians in Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) has greatly increased in the four decades since 1971. In 1971, only 20.8 percent of the Christians of the undivided State were urban; in 2011, the urban ratio has risen to 55.5 percent. In this period, the urban ratio of Christians in the Andhra component of the undivided State has risen from 18.8 to 46.7 percent; in the Telangana component, the rise has been from 29.7 to 69.0 percent. This is partly because of the increase in Christianity in the Hyderabad region, but it is also because of the decline in the number of Christians in rural areas.

*The decline since 1971 has been entirely in the rural areas*

The decline that we see in the number of Christians since 1971 is confined almost entirely to the rural area. As shown in the Table here, the number of urban Christians in undivided Andhra Pradesh has actually increased from 3.80 to 6.28 lakhs, while that of rural Christians has declined from 14.44 to 5.02 lakhs. The decline in rural Christians and increase in the urban has happened in both parts of the undivided State. In the Andhra component, the number of rural Christians has declined steeply from 12.08 to 3.64 lakhs, while that of urban Christians has increased from 2.80 to 3.19 lakhs. In Telangana, the number of rural Christians has declined from 2.36 to 1.39 lakhs, while that of urban Christians has increased rather steeply from less than a lakh to 3.09 lakhs.

Rural and Urban Christians Undivided Andhra Pradesh		
	1971	2011
<b>Total</b>	18,23,436	11,29,784
<b>Rural</b>	14,43,674	5,02,264
<b>Urban</b>	3,79,762	6,27,520
Andhra Pradesh		
<b>Total</b>	14,87,364	6,82,660
<b>Rural</b>	12,07,514	3,63,754
<b>Urban</b>	2,79,850	3,18,906
Telangana		
<b>Total</b>	3,36,072	4,47,124
<b>Rural</b>	2,36,160	1,38,510
<b>Urban</b>	99,912	3,08,614

*Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh are relatively more rural*

This increase in the urbanisation of the Christians is probably because the phenomenon of Christians giving up or hiding their Christian affiliation is largely confined to the Scheduled Castes, who happen to be predominantly rural. Of the total Scheduled Castes population of 1.38 crore counted in undivided Andhra Pradesh in 2011, 1.08 crore is rural. The urbanisation ratio for the Scheduled Castes is 21.8 percent compared to 33.4 percent for the total population. Scheduled Castes are thus largely in the rural areas and the decline in the number of Christians is also a rural phenomenon.



*Christianity among Scheduled Tribes has increased*

Unlike for the Scheduled Castes, the Census does collect complete data on the religious composition of the Scheduled Tribes. This data indicates that there has been a distinct rise in the number of Christians amongst the Scheduled Tribes of Andhra Pradesh. In 1971, there were only 6,723 Christians among 41.99 lakh Scheduled Tribes in undivided Andhra Pradesh. In 2011, the number of Christians among the Scheduled Tribes has risen to 57,280 in their total population of 59.18 lakh. The Christians now have a significant share of nearly 1 percent among the Scheduled Tribes of the undivided State. Thus while there is a steep decline in the total number of Christians in the State and the decline seems related to the converts from the Scheduled Castes, Christianity does remain active among other groups, including the Scheduled Tribes.

**Muslims in Andhra Pradesh**

*Muslim presence is relatively higher in Telangana*

There are 80.82 lakh Muslims in the total population of 8.46 crore of the undivided State. Of these 36.18 lakh are in Andhra Pradesh and 44.65 lakh in Telangana. The share of Muslims in Telangana at 12.69 percent is considerably higher than the figure of 7.33 percent in Andhra Pradesh. But, this is mainly because of the high concentration of Muslims in Hyderabad district; the proportion of Muslims in the rest of Telangana is only 8.80 percent.

	Total	Muslims	%M
Undivided	8,45,80,777	80,82,412	9.56
Andhra P	4,93,86,799	36,17,713	7.33
Telangana	3,51,93,978	44,64,699	12.69

*Muslims in the State have been growing slowly and consistently*

The share of Muslims in Andhra Pradesh, unlike that of the Christians, has been consistently rising, though the pace of growth has not been very high. In the hundred years between 1911 and 2011, the share of Muslims in undivided Andhra has increased by about 3 percentage points; the increase is somewhat lower in the Andhra component and higher in the Telangana component. There was an unusually high increase in the Muslim share in Telangana during 1981-91; and, during the last decade, there has been an unusually high rise in the Muslim share in the Andhra component. During 2001-11, Muslims in Andhra have registered decadal growth of 15.45 percent, while the Indian Religionists have grown by only 9.19 percent. The decadal growth of Muslims in the Andhra component in this decade has been more than 3 percentage points higher than in the previous decade, while that of Indian Religionists has been more than 3 percentage points lower.

	U	A	T
1911	6.65	5.19	9.45
1921	6.64	5.35	9.31
1931	6.89	5.66	9.33
1941	7.83	5.95	10.95
1951	7.75	5.98	11.12
1961	7.55	6.18	10.04
1971	8.09	6.57	10.76
1981	8.47	6.83	11.17
1991	8.91	6.85	12.10
2001	9.17	6.93	12.43
2011	9.56	7.33	12.69

U: Undivided State, A: Andhra Pradesh, T: Telangana

*But they are concentrated and growing rapidly in Hyderabad*

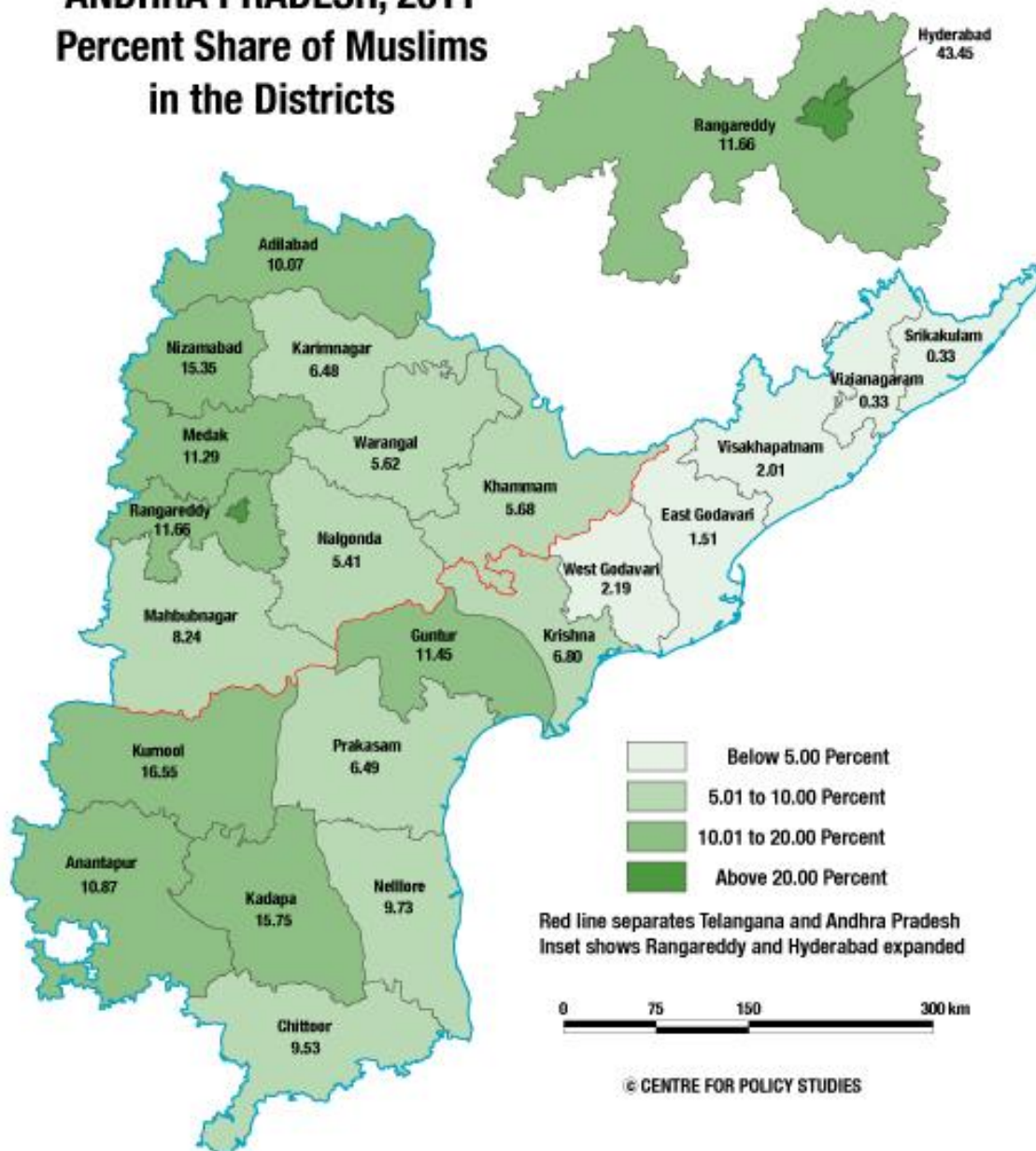
Of 36.17 lakh Muslims in Telangana, 17.13 lakh are in the current Hyderabad district. Muslims of Hyderabad thus constitute nearly half, 47.4 percent to be exact, of all Muslims in Telangana. And, as seen in the Map below, their presence in this district is much higher than anywhere else in either Telangana or Andhra components of

	Number	%M
1981	8,11,787	35.91
1991	12,38,074	39.35
2001	15,76,583	41.17
2011	17,13,405	43.45

Hyderabad of 1991 is not fully comparable with 1981

the undivided State. Not only do they have a high share in the population of Hyderabad, their share in this district has been growing rapidly for the last several decades, and has now reached 43.45 percent. During 2001-11, decadal growth of Muslims here has been fairly low at 8.7 percent, but Indian Religionists in the district have registered negative growth of minus 0.83 percent.

## ANDHRA PRADESH, 2011 Percent Share of Muslims in the Districts



## Summing Up

### Christians

1. The number and share of Christians in undivided Andhra Pradesh, as also in both the Andhra and Telangana components, had been rising steadily up to 1971.
2. Their number in undivided Andhra Pradesh was 3.6 lakh in 1911, it rose to 18.2 lakh in 1971; and their share in the population rose from 1.68 to 4.19 percent.
3. Of the 18.2 lakh Christians in 1971, 14.9 lakh were in the Andhra component of the State, where they formed 5.4 percent of the population. Only 3.4 lakh were in the Telangana part, where they had a much lower share of 2.1 percent.
4. After 1971, there was a sudden and steep decline in the population of Christians in the whole of Andhra Pradesh, but especially in the Andhra component.
5. Between 1971 and 2011, the number of Christians in this component has declined by more than half, from 14.9 to 6.8 lakh and their share in the population has declined from 5.37 to 1.38 percent.
6. Within the Andhra component, the Christians are concentrated in the central coastal districts of West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam and to a lesser extent in the neighbouring Rayalaseema districts of Kurnool and Kadapa. Of 14.9 lakh Christians in the Andhra Pradesh component in 1971, about 10 lakh were in the first four of these districts and another 2 lakh were in Kurnool and Kadapa.
7. Share of Christians in this region had reached very high levels in 1971, when they had a share of 14.6 percent in the population of Guntur and 10.8 percent in that of Krishna.
8. The decline in Christianity seen in Andhra Pradesh after 1971 is mainly because of the near collapse of Christian population in this region comprising West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Kurnool and Kadapa districts. In these six, their total population has declined from 12.0 to 4.2 lakh between 1971 and 2011.
9. The greatest decline of Christians has occurred in Guntur and Prakasam districts. Their number in the former has declined from 4.2 lakh to less than 90 thousand and their share has dropped from 14.8 to 1.8 percent. In Prakasam, the number of Christians has come down from 1.35 lakh to less than 19 thousand and their share from 7.0 to 0.5 percent.
10. Christianity in this region was not a new or recent phenomenon in 1971. There was considerable Christian presence here already in 1911. Christians then had a share of 7.3 percent in the population of Guntur; and it grew to 14.8 percent in 1971.
11. The sudden decline of Christianity after 1971 in this region is therefore a significant phenomenon that needs to be understood.
12. This decline in the share of Christians in Andhra Pradesh as a whole, and particularly in the central coastal districts of Andhra and a couple of neighbouring districts of Rayalaseema, after 1971 is matched by a corresponding rise in the share of Scheduled Castes. The correspondence is uncannily exact in the average for the whole undivided State and in many individual districts.
13. The decline is almost entirely in the rural Christians. The number of urban Christians has in fact increased since 1971, and the increase in Hyderabad district is substantial. This is another indication that the decline in Christianity is associated with the converts from the Scheduled Castes who are predominantly rural.

14. Available data strongly suggests that after 1971 a large number of converts to Christianity from the Scheduled Castes have chosen to be counted among the Scheduled Castes rather than the Christians.

15. This decision is perhaps motivated by the fact that the privileges associated with that caste status are not available to those who convert to Christianity. It is remarkable that while the number of Christians was steeply declining in Andhra Pradesh, there was a significant increase of the Christian numbers among the Scheduled Tribes, who do not lose their privileges on conversion.

16. It is important to know whether the decision of the converts from the Scheduled Castes to be counted as non-Christians amounts to a withdrawal from Christianity or merely hiding of the fact from the Census and secular authorities. But this question cannot be answered on the basis of the Census data alone.

17. This large decline in the number of Christians in a relatively small region, where Christianity had taken roots several decades ago, is a phenomenon that needs to be studied in detail at the micro-level to determine its nature and its causes.

15. The phenomenon strongly suggests that there may be large numbers of hidden or lapsed Christians in other parts of the country also. International scholars associated with the Church generally estimate the number of Christians in India to be much higher than the numbers counted in the Censuses. A study of the phenomenon of the sudden decline of Christians in Andhra Pradesh would help in clarifying this mismatch between the Census numbers on Christians and the international estimates.

### **Muslims**

16. Muslims in undivided Andhra Pradesh are concentrated heavily in Hyderabad district, where they now form 43.5 percent of the population. Their proportion in this district has been rising rapidly during the last several decades.

17. Muslim presence in the rest of Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) is low, though there are eight districts with Muslim presence of above 10 percent. Growth in the share of Muslims outside Hyderabad has been also fairly slow.

The major issue related to the religious demography of Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) is the sharp decline in the population and share of Christians after 1971 and a corresponding rise in the share of the Scheduled Castes. This phenomenon needs to be studied in order to understand the dynamics of Christian growth outside the regions dominated by the Scheduled Tribes.