RAMABAI UKTI MISSION

PRAYER BELL

KEDGAON, POONA DISTRICT
INDIA

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1948
DAYS OF POLITICAL CHANGES

Quite often we are asked what effect the change of government in this land is having on our work, and up to the present we have been able to continue as before. We realized, however, that although India granted religious freedom, it was quite probable that the Provinces might annul it. Now word has come that the Central Provinces and Berar Assembly has recently passed a new ‘Maintenance of Law and Order’ enactment, which includes the provision that before conversion a person must apply to the District Magistrate for sanction. This is to outlaw forced conversions by Moslems, but will react on us also, especially if the Bombay Government passes such a law.

Throughout India Moslems and Hindus are struggling for predominence in leadership. It is, therefore, a surprising turn of events that placed a Christian in the position of Governor of Bombay. Sir Maharaj Singh succeeds Sir John Colville of England, and will be the first Indian to receive this appointment.

Sir Maharaj Singh is a graduate of Oxford University, and his reputation as a lawyer is well known in Indian circles. He was knighted in 1933. He served as President of the Christian Association in 1944.

Recently in addressing the All-India Conference of Indian Christians he asserted ‘that his community was not behind any other in its burning desire for a self-governing India in the immediate future, and while they were Christians and proud to be such so far as their faith was concerned, in all other matters they were Indians first and Indians last’.

We rejoice in those who are loyal to Christ and loyal to their own country. India needs more leaders in the national forum who are, in the words of Sir Maharaj Singh, ‘Christians and proud to be such,’ and who are strong in their loyalty to their own people and in their desire to lead India out of darkness and chaos into light and peace.

In the sections of India where there is trouble between Moslems and Hindus, the Indians must declare their faith. Will you pray that this may be a time when the Christian church of India may stand firm and strong and true to the Christian faith. We ask prayer that the many secret believers throughout India may stand forth at this time for the Saviour who is longing to confess their names before the Father which is in heaven.
The words of the doctor kept ringing in the missionary's ears. 'The children's eyes are in bad shape. Some of them will have poor eyesight all their lives.' Visions of whole lifetimes handicapped by poor eyesight came before the missionary. There were the twins, Mary and Martha, there were Krupa, Umedi, Shanti . . . one by one the faces of the Blossoms seemed to appear. Difficulties in school, difficulty in finding a life work, difficulties . . . difficulties . . . difficulties seemed to rise like mountains before the faces of the children, obliterating them from lives filled with happiness and usefulness. The missionary went to Nurse Callan. 'Why do so many of the Blossoms have such poor eyesight?'

'Come with me', was the nurse's reply. They went together to the baby room where lived the little Buds. As they walked through the open doorway, they were met by a din of chirping. About two dozen sparrows were flying here and there over the heads of the sleeping babies. The place became bedlam as the nurse tried to shoo the birds through the doorway. When the last sparrow had gone, the places where they had picked the wall to pieces were visible on every side.

'How do the sparrows get in?'

'Through the open doorway.'

And then they looked at the Buds sleeping in their little cots. Their eyes were covered with eye flies. As the nurse waved the flies away, she said, 'Now you see why the Blossoms have such bad eyes. When they were Buds, it was impossible, as it is now, to keep the eye flies away.'

The missionary gasped, 'But can't anything be done?'

The nurse looked at the open doorway and unscreened windows, 'Screens would keep them out'.

As the missionary walked back to her room, her heart burned within her. Did the people at home, the people who daily prayed for the children at Mukti, prayed that they might grow up unto the honour and glory of our Lord, did those people know that many of the children would be handicapped all their lives by poor eyesight because there were no screens on the baby room? The missionary picked up a pencil and wrote, wrote straight from her heart to the hearts of the people who were praying for the Mukti children. She knew there were those among them who would care.

CAROL TERRY.
When the gospel band arrived at Supa, they were given a hearty welcome by Bapu, the caretaker. On every hand were evidences of his thoughtfulness. He had put the necessary ingredients into the well to purify the water, arranged for some farmer woman from another village to bring us milk each day, another to bring firewood, another to bring fodder for the bullocks, and another to bring fruit. He had planted some flowers in the front yard, and informed the people about our coming. No sooner had we arrived than people began coming to the dispensary for medicines. Through the war years people have come more and more for medicines. They are not slow to accept new methods of medical treatment, but still hesitant to accept Christ.

For our devotions we chose to read and speak on the book of Acts to the groups that came to the bungalow every evening. It seemed very appropriate for Bapu to be reading the Acts of the Apostles, showing how the early church gladly and willingly endured persecution for Christ. Bapu is ready to take the step of baptism, but his wife and mother have very little conviction, assenting with the mind but hardly realizing what it is all about.

Wednesday in Supa is always a day of prayer. Krishnabai started an early morning prayer service, because, as she said, ‘These people worship the sun as it rises. Let us let them know how we worship a living Christ.’ Therefore we take our Bibles out in the open, and our praises reach those in the fields round about.

One day in a distant village the people listened very attentively. One woman said, ‘Do please give us a picture of Jesus, so that we can pray to Him’. It is difficult for them to understand that they can pray to a God they cannot see. One hundred and fifty people were witnessed to that day. Many said to us, ‘What you say is true’.

Another day we were in the carpenter’s yard at Supa, and an elderly man there said to us, ‘If it were not in our minds to worship the true God, we would not call you to come and tell us’.

In another village we found a Brahman man who had received a Bible twenty years ago, and he has read it through the years. He keeps it very carefully in a special place, and quoted to us: ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’
EVANGELISM

Near our bungalow lives a very kind woman, a gardener who year after year brings us fruit. We made a five-mile trip to her mother's village and took her with us. Because of this kindness, the people received us with great hospitality, and listened very well to our message. They bought some Scripture portions, served us tea, and gave us vegetables from their fields. As they received us, we prayed that they would receive Him.

In another village a crowd was attracted by our singing, and one of the Bible-women gave a Spirit-filled message on the atonement of Christ on the cross. Eternity will reveal how many of those listening were touched by the Holy Spirit. One old blacksmith, trying to work off the conviction he felt in his heart, said, 'Why don't you make your Jesus' way clear to us like the gods Tukaram and Ram made theirs?' I replied to him, 'When you were helping build Ramabai's church, didn't she make it plain to you? You are not willing to give up your many gods, therefore you refuse to see the way. Remember to call on the name of Jesus when the demons of hell come for your never-dying soul, for no one else can save you.'

We set out early one morning for the festival at Karati. Almost every home was welcoming their relations from distant villages. We went to the temple of the god Yeshuba, and just one look inside that temple, six feet by six feet, saddened my heart. What was there to see? Just one big round stone painted with bright red paint. At the back was another little shelter for his two children, which were two more shapeless stones painted red. The crowds poured to that little temple of the stone god, sheep without a shepherd.

The gospel band came home for Christmas and will be going out again the first of January. Do pray there may be many sheaves won to lay at the Saviour's feet.

ELDA AMSTUTZ.

'Oh for a heart that weeps o'er souls,
Weeps with a love in anguish born!
Oh for a broken, contrite heart,
A heart for sinners rent and torn!

'Have Thou Thy way whate'er the cost—
In death I live, in life I die;
Thy way, not mine, dear Lord, I pray—
Souls, precious souls my ceaseless cry.'
DAYS OF CHRISTMAS HAPPINESS

The message of the Nativity in all its holiness, beauty, sanctity and loveliness was presented Christmas day to 1,000 people in the Mukti Church. As we bowed our heads before a Saviour, manger-born, our hearts joined in a hallelujah chorus of joy and praise for the eternal love that gave to earth in Bethlehem, eternity's most precious gift. Because your prayers and your gifts made possible a full Christmas for the Mukti family in every way, we want to share with you also the other joys of the holiday season.

For weeks before Christmas the practising of songs and drills could be heard from every school room and every compound. Cart loads of vegetables, meat, and other foodstuffs poured into the kitchens. Fires flamed under huge caldrons as the Indian women measured and stirred goodies for family and friends amounting to 1,000 people. Letters, handkerchiefs, ribbons, dresses, and parcels of every size and shape tumbled out of stuffed mail sacks until tables and chairs and floors were covered. Lights burned late as the missionaries selected and marked gifts for the Mukti family, gifts for the outsiders who work for us, gifts for the villagers who would accept our invitation to the worship service.

The day before Christmas was a day of parties, a day when the children gathered around Christmas trees with all of the excitement that red and green balls and silver tinsel cause in the heart of a child. They were unable to sit still, but up and down they jumped, shaking their hands and drawing in their breath when they saw the new dresses, the bright ribbons, the coloured handkerchiefs. They looked with awe on the envelopes that had come clear across the sea with their very own names on, and they rubbed their fingers up and down the surface of the satin ribbons. How they loved that smooth, slippery feeling! With tummies and hearts full, they snuggled down under the covers early to sleep, eager to wake before dawn for the carolling.

Christmas morning just before dawn groups went from door to door of the missionary rooms to wake the ones they loved by songs of His birth. By the time the sun was up, the singers had finished their carolling and were in line to receive sweets from the hand of the Superintendent.

There seemed to be a never-ending stream of people
coming into the church for the worship service. By song, by message, and by prayer the Lord was worshipped. As the people filed out, the arms of the children were filled with colour books, colours, rubber balls and sweets, while the older ones received clothing. Children and grown-ups surged all over the gaily decorated compounds throughout the day. When the visitors had left, the grown-ups had retired, the children were sleeping, and all the work of the day was finished, the missionaries sat down to their own Christmas dinner. Later they gathered around a candle-lit tree and exchanged gifts and opened those that had come from across the seas.

All of Mukti joins in thanking you for a completely happy Christmas. For your prayers and for your gifts we thank you, one and all.

DAYS OF BUILDING

One of the most interesting spots in Mukti these days is the site where the new hospital is to be built. 150,000 new red bricks are stacked neatly ready for use. 10,000 red tiles are ready to be used for the roof. 4,000 Rupees worth of lumber is on its way from the lumber yards. The hardware is on hand. Everywhere one looks there are materials ready for use, and one wonders why the work does not start. The answer comes that the materials have been purchased, but the labourers must be paid. It is necessary that at least part of the hospital be finished before the next rainy season. Now is the time to build. The materials are on hand. The workmen are waiting. Will you pray that that which is needed for wages may be supplied in His time?

JULIA WOODWARD.

WHEN SCHOOL GIRLS PASS

We have received the good news that Dayawanti Pawar, Shewanti Kondalikar and Moti Sathe passed their School Leaving Certificate. This means that these girls may continue their education in the fields of their choice. Do pray that each girl may be guided into His chosen field for her.
FAMILY NEWS

We are glad to report that Mr. Barratt, the husband of our former Treasurer in England, is improving in health and strength. Prayer was asked for him, and now we offer thanksgiving that he is better.

Our prayers surround Miss Laird, our Treasurer in Scotland, whose father recently went home to be with the Lord. Mr. Laird was ninety-seven years of age.

Word has just been received of the Home-going of Mr. H. P. Smith, our Treasurer in Australia. He was taken ill on Boxing Day while attending the Upwey Convention, which he founded thirty years ago and of which he was Honorary Secretary. We extend to Mrs. Smith and those dear to her our sympathy, and pray that the comfort that only the Lord can give may be hers.

Due to the increasing need for the Prayer Bell and the availability of printing materials, it will be published bi-monthly during this coming year instead of tri-monthly as heretofore.

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