RAMABAI MUKTI MISSION

PRAYER BELL

PANDITA RAMABAI

MAY—JUNE, 1948

KEDGAON, POONA DISTRICT
INDIA
THE GOSPEL HALL BELL RINGS OUT

Every Wednesday at 5.15 p.m. the big bell at the Gospel Hall rings out to call the children to Bible Club. Some are there long before the time. All are eager to pull the rope and ring the bell. This pleasure is given to a different one each week, and as the others stand by to watch it swing, they call out, 'Ring it loudly, ring it loudly' and together make the motions of pulling the rope. From all directions the children come scampering into the Hall. Pritibai and Kamala from Bartimi Sadan lead the singing, while Muktabai, Loisbai, and Maryabai help keep order, take the roll-call, and sometimes teach the lesson.

The numbers vary from forty-six to ninety-six. Choruses are sung with real joy and Scripture verses are memorized. At the end of four weeks, those who had been present each time received a Christmas card with injunctions to put it safely away and bring it back after four more weeks to receive a star on it for regular attendance. How they skipped off home to show their cards!

The topic of study is now the 'Plan of Salvation,' as shown by visual aid charts. Those who can repeat the memory verses correctly come up in front and hold the charts which have been studied in previous lessons.

The bell again peals out at 8.00 p.m. on Wednesday nights when Prabhakar leads the weekly meeting for Hindu men working on the farm. Here again great interest is shown.

The Hall is a great source of delight to the Christian families nearby. Two of the young men see to the sweeping and general cleanliness of it. The Christian men have their meetings on Thursday and Sunday evenings. The Postmaster helps in this work. The women’s class is also well attended.

At all of these meetings we have interested onlookers, as they peer through the open windows and door. Some come in, sit down, look around, and listen.

The Hall has begun its work of spreading the light of the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you join with us in this ministry by praying for all who come within sound of the bell ringing in the tower?

JANET CALLAN
THE CLOSING OF SUPA

Slowly the Bible women filed out of the bungalow, slowly they climbed into our bullock tonga, which for three months had travelled the rough village roads carrying the Good News 'to those who sit in darkness.' Slowly they started on their way back to Mukti. Tired? Yes, but more than tired: there was a heaviness because of a task unfinished. They had watched sad-faced Bapu say, 'Salaam,' adding, 'It just won't be the same now,' as he echoed the words of the villagers. On the way to the bus, I thought of the nine long months that would pass before there would be any more witnessing in Supa. What about the children who loved to gather for Sunday School? What about the mothers who used to bring their sick children for treatment? What about those who used to gather at the end of the day for evening devotions? Empty for nine months.

I thought of the day we went to Murti-Mundwa (Idols and the Place of Skulls). People had gathered on the main street to hear the gospel. And we had not been told to stop talking and go as had been the case a year or two ago. We had received an invitation from the Schoolmaster to come and speak to his children in the afternoon. What a surprise awaited us there. The one-room building was filled with merchantmen, the children, and others eager to hear more. For an hour they sat and quietly listened, and then we gave out Gospels and tracts. Afterwards Dharmibai said, 'Everybody was so quiet and listened so well, it was just like being in church.' When we started homeward, one man said, 'When you first came here, we tore up your books and drove you away, but now we want to hear more. When will you come back?' Sadly I had to explain that we were leaving Supa, and it would be nine months before we would be able to visit them again. He spread his hands and answered, 'How can we learn if you only visit us once or twice a year?'

Thus, year after year, the cry has been, 'Don't go! When are you coming back?' Truly the fields are white already to harvest, but where are the harvesters?

GLADYS FLETCHER
Mahableshwar is a place of coolness and refreshing from the heat and parching dryness of the plains. And at night the moon transforms our small corner of the world into a fairy-land of shadow and light. Missionaries from different stations come to Mahableshwar each year for language study and for the hot-season holidays. They find physical refreshment here and, above that, they find spiritual refreshment.

But not only missionaries are here. There are many Indian folk, Parsees, Moslems, and European folk as well. All experience the beauty and the uplift of the forest coolness but how many can see with spiritual eyes the One who gave this beauty, the One whose heavens and firmament declare His glory? How many of the hundreds of people up here know and trust the One who died for them and rose again? Because of Him, because of His Word and His compelling power, a work of evangelism is going on in Mahableshwar. It is being carried on by the language students.

Will you look for a few minutes at these different pictures—pictures of work among the children, the youth, the adults.

It is Sunday. By ones, by twos, language students have gone out to find children. At one home, the answer is a flat, 'no.' 'No, you may not take our children with you.' At another place the house seems empty. The students turn to go away when the dull, whirring sound of grinding is heard. The sound seems to be coming from the back of the house. They go to the back compound. A young wife comes to the door carrying her small son. But she comes slowly and hesitatingly. Fear is written on her face. 'Yes, I have other older children, why do you want them?' She is told about the children's class where her children may come and hear Bible stories. But she is still afraid. Perhaps another day she will allow her children to come and listen. Clutching the small son more tightly, she turns and goes back to her grinding.

The students go to another house. This time the answer is 'yes.' 'One of your number gave my little girl medicine when she was very ill. She is much better now. Yes, our children may come to hear of your Jesus.' A group of children is finally gathered together to hear of the Lover of little children. Four other classes are held on the same day in other sections of the town.
A second picture is this. A group of between 350 and 400 people gathered in and around the tennis court at the end of the bazaar. Most of them could understand English, and it was for this group that the meeting was planned.

Hubert Mitchell and Dawson Trotman from America were the speakers. Hubert Mitchell, with his accordion, led the group in singing, 'Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life'. Many listened intently as the gospel was presented. And some stayed afterward to learn more about this One who had died on the cross that they might live. Among these was one of the leading citizens of Mahableshwar.

The third picture. It is Sunday again. On this particular afternoon we walked along with the crowd past vegetable stands, tailor shops, sari shops, on down the street until we came to a white building in the centre of the bazaar. It was the bazaar chapel. The chapel doors were open and as the folk heard strains of music coming from inside, they began coming through the doors. Some were older men with deeply wrinkled, sin-worn faces. Others were women. Some were Christian women, and, as they came to the doorway, they adjusted the pudders of their saris over their heads—their way of showing reverence as they entered the house of God. Young men were coming in too. Then the children—ten-year-olds carried two-year-olds six-year-olds pulled four-year-olds after them.

An Indian evangelist gave a simple gospel message. At the close he asked all those to come forward who wanted to know more of this Christ, God's Son. As the group of 100 or more sang a Marathi hymn, one by one Indian folk came forward, not a large group, perhaps ten in all, but the Holy Spirit had been speaking to hearts.

Many Gospels and tracts are distributed at these meetings and at similar ones during the week. The Word of God is placed in the hands of many in their own language.

Will you pray that as the missionaries go back to the plains, there may be a real, Spirit-filled, Indian Christian witness carried on through the year in Mahableshwar?
The big day to which all the school children eagerly look forward is March 11. It is our school's birthday, and every year there is a picnic or a trip to some exciting place.

This year we went to Nangaon, a place where sugar cane is processed. When the bell rang early in the morning, we all gathered on the school playground. I wonder how many had any sleep that night. It was 5.30 A.M. when we started. The little girls were taken by bus, while the older ones walked. A cool wind was blowing, so we started out fresh and happy. By the time we reached Bori, the nearest village, the sun was rising, and we enjoyed the scene before us. The road was crooked, dusty, and up and down. But we did not mind the dust. Singing, laughing, and chatting, we reached Nangaon at eight o'clock, a bit tired from the long walk. We went first to the place where the sugar cane is processed. The Manager was very kind, and gave us all sugar-cane juice to drink freely.

Then we went to the riverside. A place under the shade of a big tree had been cleared for us. We were very hungry, and after a while the carts bringing the food arrived. Immediately we settled down for lunch. All the children were very happy as the teachers served them their favourite food, mutton and rice. The children sang, played, swung, and sometimes rested.

Then a question arose about the wood needed to make a fire, that we might have tea. But the problem was soon solved, as the Manager of the sugar-cane place gave us all the wood we needed. The distribution of sweets made it an extra nice tea for the children.

There by the riverside in the shade of the tree, we had a short service. After singing some hymns, one of the teachers read a portion from Daily Light, Bhimabai spoke a few words regarding the school and its progress, and then the service was closed by prayer.

The children were singing and laughing as we returned home by bus. It was a dust-covered, tired, but happy, laughing, singing group that was greeted by the missionaries waiting at the Mukti gate to welcome us 'home.'

VIMAL DONGRE
"HE LAID HIS HANDS ON THEM"

An expectant hush pervaded the church as three of our Krupa Sadan babies were carried in by their mothers to be offered back to Him, whose they truly are. It was a solemn moment when the pastor took each one in his arms and presented them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Although these poor little mites have entered this world by the wrong door, we trust that as they are brought up in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord,' they will grow up to love and serve Him.

The first one to be dedicated was Paulus. The Lord has done a wonderful thing for him in delivering him from the power of the enemy. A Hindu woman put a curse on Paulus, and immediately thereafter he fell ill. His sickness simulated poisoning, but though we made a careful search, we could not find any trace of poison. As we cried to God and pleaded the power of the blood, our almighty Lord put forth His hand and healed the little one, who is now a fine, healthy baby, and we trust has a wonderful future in the service of the One who healed him.

The next baby was Sedansend, whose mother came to the Lord since she has been staying with us. She confessed with tears that while her father and grandfather were Christians, and even though she had been baptized, she had never been born again. She prayed God to forgive her sin, save her, and help her to live for Him. Her subsequent behaviour has proved her sincerity in her desire to please the Lord. She has now had the opportunity of training for dispensary work, and we are praying she may make good for Him.

The third little one was a wee girl whose name is Prabhavati, which means light. We trust that she will grow up to be a light for Christ in the darkness of heathendom, and that her light may be the means of bringing many to Him, who is the Light of life.

MURIEL ASBURY

'This is the promise that I claim for these
Whom Thou hast given me, O Lord, to guide.
Strong, straight and beautiful as living trees,
Here in Thy house I'll set them side by side;
Down to the solid rock of Truth I'll go,
Press close the soil of Faith with hands of Love,
Out of its depths—magnificent—shall grow
These that shall flourish in Thy courts aboves.'

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MUHTI'S DAUGHTERS

To our girls who have grown up in the sheltered life within Mukti's walls, a trip to the city for the Government school examination is an exciting experience. Recently a group, under the care of Jayabai went to Baramati for such an examination. Girls from far and near came to take the examination, girls from other Missions, other schools, other villages, girls with varied backgrounds. It was a joy to our hearts to receive this letter regarding our girls from the lady in charge:

Baramati
10th April, 1948

Dear Bhimabai and the other Ladies at Kedgaon,

I do not want the week to slip by without letting you know how happy we were to have your girls here for the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination. Their behaviour was exemplary, and Jayabai was positively lovely with the girls. They were so spotless and so well behaved, they all do you great credit. . . . I feel that your girls were very happy, and I am very glad. I hope that they all pass well. . . .

Sincerely,

EDNA WASSER

We wish to thank each of you who are praying for our girls. Will you remember the teen-agers, those girls who are growing into womanhood and who have come to the time when they must decide what they are to do with their lives? As they go through the emotional changes and problems that face teen-agers, will you pray that each might find the Lord’s perfect plan for her life, that each might be a daughter all glorious within, ‘corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace’?

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