PRAYER BELL
INDIA

Honeysuckle Family

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RAMABAI MUKTI MISSION
March – April 1959
AND NOW WE ARE TWELVE IN THE
HONEYSUCKLE FAMILY

By Lillian Doerksen

Eight little Blossoms and an older sister were woven with the young new 'mother' and myself into the garland which became our Honey flower family three months ago. Since then, one more Blossom joined us and now we are twelve. Each one with a different background has a fragrance of her own and we would like to share a bit of it with you. Starting with rolly-polly Suwerna (Precious Gold) our sweet baby Blossom, it is hard to visualize her as the little bundle of skin and bones that her sad mother left us two years ago.

Three-year-old Nilprabha (Blue Light) who was given to us by a Hindu woman of the warrior caste, is fragile and very fair. Her happy songs and cheery giggles make the walls of our new home ring from morn till night. We pray that her beauty and sweet disposition may shed forth heavenly light.

Ruth, the matron-mother, was brought twenty years ago by a widowed mother unable to work in the fields and keep her baby too. She was named after the river Ganga, but when she came to us her name was changed to Ruth. No name could be more suitable for she serves her Master and these little ones with a devotion of the faithful figure in the Bible whose name she bears.

Satyabhama (Truth), dark but bright and full of fun, is nearly four. Her mother died and her father brought her here. She often thanks the heavenly Father several times in family prayers for her new home and us.

Nirmala (Without Soot), the next on our garland is the oldest Blossom. She is our song leader, storv teller, eager beaver about all the chores to be done in the home and a source of happiness to all.

Suhasani (Good Laughter), or Chubbie, as some remember her, is next. It is impossible now to imagine her the withered, almost dying Blossom she was six months ago. Her pleasant, affectionate nature, and her response to spiritual things make a sweet contribution to the fragrance of our honey garland.

Tara (Star) just three years old, was a miserable little mite when her mother left her. She thrills us continually now with her melodious laughter, songs and chatter, for she could not speak a word when she came into our family three months ago.

Shalini, who has just turned five, looks more like a three-year-old. Being in the family has helped her to blossom into a happy youngster with sparkling eyes and a winsome smile quite irresistible.

Sulochina, came from a Hindu festival town where thousands of pilgrims gather, a weak little thing whose mother had died of smallpox. The big sister in the family, she is loved and appreciated for her quiet help both in my room and in her care of all the little ones.

Three-year-old Yeshodhera (successful one) has big sparkling eyes,
THE STORY OF THE SHARADA SADAN SCHOOL

By Vimalbai Dongre

It's beginning and growth. On March 11th the Sharada Sadan School will celebrate its 70th Anniversary. It was founded in 1889 by Pandita Ramabai, the great pioneer and saint of India. Our school had a very small beginning. There were only a few high caste Brahmin widows as pupils. Ramabai was the only teacher. From Bombay the Sharada Sadan School was shifted to Poona, where more widows joined the school and more teachers were needed.

Manoramabai: 1903–21—Ramabai's daughter Manoramabai, who was well educated, was the first principal of the school here. It was her great longing and dream that the girls and women of Mukti should be educated, so that they would be able to be independent and take responsibility. The girls, about 2,000 of them, who were rescued during the great famines had to be educated. How to tackle this question was her problem. She taught brighter girls who in turn used to teach other girls in the afternoon, so some were both the teachers and the taught.

Gradually the school began to grow as boys from villages started coming. Soon the need of opening a high school was felt. It flourished and many graduated from our school. Some now are holding places of authority and they always speak proudly of Sharada Sadan as their own school.

Krishnabai Gadre: 1927–39—After Manoramabai died she was succeeded by Krishnabai Gadre. She held several degrees and was especially trained for educational work. Greatness is not measured by stature. Though she was but a little woman, she was every inch a lady and though a strict disciplinarian, she was gracious and kind and was greatly loved. Not only did she keep before the children the challenge of doing their very best in order to be worthy leaders in their country, but she strove to present them with Christ in order that they could become a great power for God in our land.

SHARADA SADAN TODAY

By Lillian Doerksen

Today the Sharada Sadan School continues to be a thriving institution. Recognized by the government as one of the finest schools in the district, with fully-qualified, trained teachers, who are mostly Mukti girls, with filled classrooms, it is supervised by Miss Vimalbai Dongre, one of Mukti's own girls who is ably qualified. Holding two degrees, she testifies to the inspiration received through Krishnabai Gadre who was her principal.

Not only does the Sharada Sadan School continue to be an active institution of learning, but it is also a power for God, bringing light and life to many from the villages who stream into its halls of learning. Through the Bible classes and strong Christian testimony boys and girls continue to find that the Lord Jesus Christ can bring true light to their souls, and eternal life, if they will put their trust in Him.
Sharada Sadan School

In charge of Bible School, Home of Peace, Rose Family

Bhimabai Harishchandra

In charge of Family Housekeeping and Stores

Sonubai Anda

FRUIT

Sharada Sadan School

Nurses and Medical Helpers

Mothers of our families

Bible Women (several from among our Blind)

THE

School

Kamalbai Deshpande

In charge of Adult Literacy, Queen of Night Family, Guests

Vimalbai Dongre

In charge of School, Orchid Family

YEARS

Teachers
The following words appeared in a Mukti Prayer Bell of 1903—

'We desire our friends to pray earnestly, first that God may raise up and send forth into this great field men and women of God who shall faithfully preach Christ, and second, that the Holy Spirit may convict the people of sin and incline them to turn to the Lord with all their heart'. This vision of Ramabai's continues to be fulfilled in the hearts of those whom God has called to follow her in this work. We have rejoiced greatly in the past six weeks to see labourers being thrust fourth into the harvest, and experiencing the joy of reaping.

Early in January camp was set up in a mango grove in a village about twenty five miles distant from Mukti, a place where hearts were hungry for the gospel. The Lord's presence was a reality as He went before and made the rough places smooth. Though often large boulders or deep ruts had to be negotiated on our way to the villages, not once did the jeep suffer any serious harm throughout the many, many miles.

In a remarkable manner the Lord led us in many villages to park the jeep right near a school just in time to catch the children before the school bell rung, giving them an opportunity to be contacted. We were also interested to note the number of young men who said they had read or owned some part of the Bible. In a land where the Bible is not the basis of religious faith, it was a cause of special rejoicing to us. One young man said he had read quite a lot of the Bible in a public library. There are many seekers of the truth among the young educated people of this land. We must pray for them.

Each day we set out early and sang our way to the various villages. The keenness of the Bible women was an inspiration. Although the sun was quite hot they would visit from house to house for several hours, not stopping for food or rest until one or two o'clock. Many women listened keenly and responded when contacted in their homes. We were conscious of the continuous chain of prayer in Mukti, and of your prayers, too.

In a few villages we met isolated Christians where there are no churches or opportunities of fellowship with others. As a special treat on Christmas Day one Christian family said they had been to church in a distant city. The remembrance of these souls is with us constantly.

During the six weeks almost 1,700 gospels and a large number of other helpful books were sold. We know that this Word is able to make the recipients wise unto salvation as we continue to pray. During this season of constant preaching, the Word was spread far and wide over an area of about two hundred and fifty square miles.

Will you pray with us that this precious seed sown in hearts will spring up to eternal life, and will you also pray that a young Indian couple may hear God's call to go forward and continue this good work?
A MISSIONARY MOTHER'S IMPRESSIONS

By Mrs. Nicholson. (Virginia Nicholson's mother, missionary in Japan)

What a thrill to be in Mukti! What a joy to receive the royal welcome here as a representative of one of the mothers! How we praise God for the wonderful work He has done here through Pandita Ramabai, who humbly yielded all her God-given talents to Him for those less fortunate, and for what He is doing now through those who follow in her train! As one pauses in the room where Ramabai lived and died, one is greatly impressed—one feels the presence of the Holy Spirit who guided and continues to guide and enable other yielded lives in this precious but difficult service.

I was impressed with the worship service here, too. What a privilege to worship in the huge church, beautiful for its absolute simplicity, where hearts are quiet to hear God speak through the dedicated life and words of the pastor! During the service, fascinating, chattering little sparrows flew in through the open doors of the church. Even though they chased one another back and forth past the pulpit and hopped saucily right up to where the children were sitting on the floor in neat rows, the girls refused to be distracted from the message.

How precious this whole family is! One's heart is filled with love for them all. Problems? Yes, of course. One sees that they are tremendous, but God has the tender but firm answer for them all. A family of fifteen girls even with a devoted matron's help, takes much time and energy. Then each one on the missionary staff has other responsibilities and all sorts of extra calls. I have been greatly impressed, too, with the gracious way in which they go without some of the things we call necessities. Long before darkness disperses at seven o'clock you see their lanterns burning. Time alone with God must be taken long before the day with all its pressing duties begins. I wondered as I saw the lanterns burning in the mornings and as I realised the short time they are able to have the electric light at night, how much we have of these conveniences that we consider necessities. Surely there are many who have much who could share some so that these might have even a little more light. How I long that they might have sanitation facilities, too, which we also take for granted.

What gives the marvellous lift here are the frequent, regular times of prayer, in the families as well as among the missionaries, who are completely one in Christ. The spirit of the whole group impresses you. Without it, the tremendous pressure of the powers of evil and darkness would seem to crush one.

How wonderful to see lives here changed and blessed through the power of Christ. Many precious girls and women have been saved from degradation and misery to become lovely and useful for Him. Many in the surrounding villages, near and far have heard and are hearing the message of new life through Christ as groups go out regularly. Desperate lives receive new vision, and, in turn, this great, busy family is blest. We also may be blest as we pray, trust and share.
and a disarming smile which had made her a great favourite but had also helped to spoil her. She has been helped the most of all. Her need was met with love and perseverance and she now sheds forth a fragrance in her own sweet way.

Asha (Hope), who is six and who came to us last month, completes the family circle. Though she had a Christian background, her need was very great. Her mother’s death, separation from her grandmother, and now from her own home had all left their mark of pain and insecurity. When we brought her home, we waited sympathetically as all the frustration in her heart kicked, stamped, screamed and pounded its way out of her system and then we loved her into a place of true security and happiness in our garland family.

Of all the happy times in each day, six-thirty is most precious, when all the little ones in their night dresses, gathered with us in a close circle on the floor, are ready for family prayers. Little songs of praise, a story from God’s Book, a verse and then baby prayers arise so sweet and simple. Ours join their little ones in praise for what God has done, and petition that each one in our garland family may always adorn and give Him ‘sweeter than honey’ joy.

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