Small Rural Congregation

“Come my beloved, . . . let us lodge in the villages.”
Song of Solomon 7:11.

OPPOSITION

Anjangaon.—The uniting of scattered village Christians into organized churches in rural areas like Anjangaon has been extremely difficult. There are long distances between villages with no means of transportation. There is no means of communication for consultation. Tithes for pastor’s support are based on the meager wage scale of twenty one cents a day. Most of our Christians are agricultural laborers and must depend upon the uncertain climate and the changeable whims of wealthy land owners for employment. Added to this is the opposition of Buddhism. Its resurgence is in the name of authoritativ religion but it is a reform movement among the depressed classes seeking social and political recognition. These factors have delayed the formation of churches.

Forty-five trained men are still seeking employment as laymen in a village area. Many of these members are railway employees co-operating with the zealous churches at Bhusawal. The Indian Church, growing in this present period of transition, “development problems” must be solved more speedily than they have been in the past and that “stability in which progress can be begun” and especially for the laymen who in this indigenous church is beginning to see their responsibility and in many places are rising to the occasion.

Betty and Herbert Dyke, Jr.

ZEAL

Bhusawal.—Three city churches using the languages of Marathi, Hindi, and English, respectively, are energetically carrying on in Bhusawal. Since this is a railway junction, there is usually a number of Christian students sent to the Bhusawal Training School. An earnest group of these students has been attending a Sunday afternoon Bible class. From studying the Word of God, they became interested in accepting the Saviour. It was with deep joy that we prayed with them for personal salvation. Let us pray that as school closes and they return to their homes that they may be witnesses in their new environment.

The Sunday Schools are all well attended and many of the teenagers and young men have indicated their purpose to take Christ as their personal Saviour. May these young people grow up to be true servants of Christ and witness in their homes.

Thank God for the interest shown for the opportunity of co-operating with the zealous churches at Bhusawal. The Marathi and Hindi churches are both fully self-supporting and are making plants to raise funds for the partial support of one evangelist to work in a village area. Many of these members are railway employees with incomes yielding tithes and offerings far above those of church members in rural churches.

Anna Lou and Jonathan Amstutz

INDIA ECONOMICALLY UNDERDEVELOPED

Two India-United States conferences have convened on the government level in the months of May “to examine India’s problems of economic growth” and “social development” during the last ten years period of two Five Year Plans. These bi-national meetings have brought the attention of the world the fact that India’s “development problems” must be solved more speedily than they have been in the past and that every “in which progress can be made” must be created at once if India is to remain a free nation.

The Indian Church, growing in this present period of transition, is also facing these problems of “underdevelopment” and “economic instability”. Our Christian and Missionary Alliance churches, after eight months of concentrated effort to raise support for pastors through tithes and offerings, have been able to give the full support of fifteen out of sixty pastors and evangelists. The other forty-five trained men are still seeking employment in order to support themselves and their large families.

The greatest factor from which India suffers economically and over which she has no control is the unreliable rainfall of her wet and dry type of tropical climate. Not only is rainfall uncertain but there is a wide fluctuation in the amounts from year to year. “The McGrew Hill Series in “Elements in Geography” state that, “One year may bring such an abundance of rain as to flood the fields, rip the crops, increase the ravages of infectious insects and fungi, while the following year may witness even more severe losses from drought.” In the same book there is a chart showing “variations in amounts of annual rainfall over a twenty year period at Nagpur, India (the general geographical area in which the Christian and Missionary Alliance is located), which reveal the fact that seven of the twenty years had rainfall below normal and ten of the twenty years had rainfall above normal. India has suffered again this year from this unreasonable precipitation and only fifty per cent crops have been harvested throughout our area.

Tropical diseases, too numerous to mention, relentless high temperatures because of the nearly vertical rays of the sun the year round, acute fertility losses (because nearly all the manure has to be utilized for fuel in the preparation of meals), undernourishment (to the extent of two hundred fifty persons per square mile) are other vital factors related in and determining the economic development of the Indian church.

Visualize these stark facts and appreciate the demands they make on your Indian brethren as you read these notes from the Annual Reports. “Except the Lord build the house” in India, “they labor in vain that build it.” Psalms 127:1. (Editor)

Published by The India (Marathi) Field of the C. & M. A.; Chairman, A. C. Eicher, Akola, Vidarbha, B. S., India. Editor: Lacy Les Carter.
have you ever noticed this phrase, "besides women and children?"
The Christian women have been feeding upon the Bread of Life.
Yes, they too, had a satisfying portion from that prayer chain. This vision spread until one village woman, the only Christian in her village, asked, "May I have an hour to pray each month?" Other village women's groups became inspired and began to join until now there are twenty-two of them who can read the scriptures.

"Christian Doctrine" by the President of the Marathi Synod, is used as a guide to their Bible study. A regular system of memorizing Bible verses is being started. Some groups make regular trips to surrounding villages to witness, to distribute tracts and to visit the sick.

In Poona, there are signs of a new attitude among our individual church members towards their responsibility to give support to their church programs. Recently the Jalgan Sunday School planned a Sunday School Rally and invited three Sunday Schools in neighboring towns to attend. There was an excellent response and a record attendance. Seeing the big crowd the treasurer of the church left the meeting, quickly secured a public address system, arranged for its transportation to the church and installed it with outside loud speakers. This enthusiastic cooperation added to the enjoying of the program and the rally proved to be a success attended with much blessing.

The other church has just been organized. It is a small group that has just received their church charter. They have made plans to build a new church building and have been receiving many visits from the home country to support them.

In the other church, the members have entered wholeheartedly into all the other activities of the church. The church is growing and the church is able to visit all the villages except two in Jalgaon district. Earnest efforts are being made to attract these people to the church. The church has pledged to fully support their pastor.

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