KATPURNA "MELA"
"People, people everywhere, and such crowds! We never remember anything like it. We have visited many countries but this is something different." We hear this comment from visitors to India or from missionaries returning after some years of absence.

Yes, people for whom Christ died! There are nearly 500,000,000 people in India today. Before you finish reading this article the number of births in India will be staggering.

Prices are high, food is scarce, political positions are shifting, people are turning from orthodox Hinduism, (many young people would say they are atheist), family systems are breaking down and India is not standing still. There is change everywhere. Many children, even in small villages, are attending school, young people are seeking and obtaining higher education both here and abroad, industrial work has taken many from the village to the city and there is great advance in this country.

What does all this mean to the Church in India? Challenge! This challenge comes to the village lay-preacher to the church-supported pastor in larger cities—The challenge of the multitudes. Are we able to meet this challenge with answers that satisfy the hungry village families or the highly educated young people of the city? Do our daily lives and attitudes as Christians witness to the all-sufficient Christ we preach?

Our challenge in the city of Bhusawal among people from all over India who work there in government jobs is being met by three congregations, English, Marathi, and Hindi language mediums. But there have not been many added to the Church in the past year. If we meet the challenge in prayer the good news of Christ might spread all over India as those who live there witness to their relatives.

The challenge of over 200,000 people in Amraoti, many of them college students, has not been adequately met. Have you prayed? The Alliance church there and it’s pastor needs our support.

Jalgaon, gives us the challenge of a district town with government offices and colleges. The church has never lacked for aggressive ideas but revival is needed.

The challenge of giving has been met by the Akola church. In 1942 their annual offering was Rupees 400 but in 1964 the annual giving reached Rupees 9,000! Could not this same response be reported in the salvation of souls in this great city in the months ahead?

There is not space to mention each church or Christian group that needs an awakening to become a true witness for Christ in India. Could we believe God for the impossible and have it recorded “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14).
KATEPURNA MELA

Katepurna is known as a Christian camp meeting or "Mela" where souls are saved, believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and hundreds receive rich spiritual blessing. It also has become a centre where friendships are renewed, marriage arrangements are made and where the Christian and Missionary Alliance Marathi Synod holds its annual meeting.

Over 25 years ago the late Rev. K. D. Garrison felt the need of a place for camp meetings or conventions. He spoke to the missionary of the Akola District and ask him to search out a place that was central, had plenty of water, easily accessible by train or other transport, and plenty of shade for the hot season months.

After some time a place was found and on looking it over it seemed ideal. About that time a gift of rupees 100 was sent to India and the giver wrote, "Use this gift where you have the most need." The need just then was to buy the 16 acre plot. The money was applied and this was just the beginning of God's provision for the camping site. The field is full of beautiful spreading mango trees and the neighboring Hindu farmers loan sites under their mango trees for campers to build little bamboo shelters for their families.

After the purchase of the land a well was dug. With the exception of one year ample sweet water is obtained for the "Mela". We have a pump there now and faithful missionary repairmen keep it in working condition. Sometimes they have to leave a meeting or get out of bed in the early morning hours but there is water.

Our Alliance Mission and Synod hold their annual camp meeting in March of each year. For some years it has been expanded tri-annually into the "Mela" of the Berar-Khandesh Christian Conference; four evangelical mission-church groups co-operated in this effort. This year the Church of the Nazarene friends supplied and erected their beautiful large meeting tent, the Conservative Baptist and Nazarenes brought equipment for showing pictures every night, while the Free Methodists provided the generator and electrical equipment to supply current for the meeting tent, projectors and public address system.
Two weeks before the "Mela" Alliance men cleared the grounds of cotton stalks and corn stubble, erected the hand pump on the well and hauled in tents and bamboo mattings and firewood. The general plan of the camp was mapped out and Operation B.K.C.C. "Mela" for 1965 was on its way to being born. Tents were erected in rows under the beautiful shady mango trees. One of our retired pastors, frail in body, requested a shady spot in camp as this might be his last "mela". He was one of the first four Indian pastors to be ordained in our area. Another request for a tent came from the little woman about whom you read in the last issue of the India Alliance—Sagunabai.

People began coming the day before. They came from city, town and village. Whole families arrived, some with tiny babies of two months or less, some with children suffering from the currently prevalent epidemic of chicken-pox, measles and whooping cough; but they came, and they came to attend the services and to receive God's messages. We estimate the crowd between 1,500 and 2,000—the largest attendance to date at any, B.K.C.C. "mela". Tents were all taken and bamboo matting rooms filled to capacity. Hastily we erected more bamboo huts. Simple housekeeping arrangements were set up; an open fireplace to cook, an earthen jug or tin bucketful of water, ropes strung up for clothes and bedding, and a sling for the baby's hammock and people were ready for the first meeting. Although clouds and winds threatened storms a number of times, God was good and kept us dry. What a mess that ground can become with heavy rains!

A hotel was set up to provide simple, tasty Indian food. It too had bamboo matting roof, walls, and flooring. There was a book store tent doing a thriving business in Christian literature. The commodious prayer tent was made good use of, and off in a corner under a magnificent mango tree was the children's meeting tent. It gave them ample opportunity to clap and sing as loudly as they wanted without disturbing the adult services.

One villager brought his milk buffalo, another his goat and still others, their
bullocks. Some must have brought their chickens for we received 6 eggs in the offering, but that is not all—the total of the “Mela” offerings was rupees seven hundred and seventy. Such generosity in the offering plates means spiritual victories in the people’s hearts. The pastor who ran the hotel told us of many who came to have their meals overflowing with praise to God for the working of His Spirit through the messages at the “Mela”. A Bible School student ran to his teacher saying, “I’ve got the victory! I’ve got the victory!” For some time he had been seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. A village woman came with tears in her eyes and said, “Pray for me, I still have not gotten through.” Prayer was made just then and we believe the victory was won in her life too.

On Sunday at 5:30 A.M. two men went up and down the rows of tents and bamboo matting huts that composed our camp-village ringing the rising bell reminding us of the 6:00 A.M. Communion service. In the meeting tent, sleeping men and boys were aroused in order to prepare for the service. Ten ordained brethren, representing the co-operating missions and churches, assisted in celebrating this solemn, moving commemoration of our Lord’s death—“Until He Come”. More than four hundred people from city and village partook of the bread and wine. Teachers and students from our Khamgaon schools quietly and efficiently helped wash and refill communion cups.

The Sunday 9:30 A.M. meeting was the climax of the 1965 “Mela”. There was a moving of the Spirit of God in lives as they re-dedicated themselves to help spread the Gospel in this part of our great land. People returned home as they had come—by train or bus, bullock cart or on foot. A number of families walked as far as ten miles to attend the five day “Mela”, carrying all their chattels with them. They walked home again with joy.

Prayer cells have been meeting all over this part of Maharashtra for months, and thus, hearts prepared by fervent prayer came with high expectancy that God would visit us with revival.

The B.K.C.C. Evangelism-in-depth committee planned the “Mela” and Rev. Ian North of Australia was the main speaker. Other messages were brought by Indian pastors and missionaries. God used all of these to bring conviction for sin and re-dedication of lives. There was a spirit of quiet order and joyfulness about the camp. We continue to look to God for a sweeping revival. Will you join us?
With the closing of the large annual camp-meeting in March 1965 the first year of Evangelism-in-Depth has been completed. Over sixty revival campaigns were conducted among the churches. We have not seen the hand of God in over-turning power but we do see the Church awakening to its responsibility to be a witness where it is living. A belief in the effectiveness of persistent prayer has been born and many have had their eyes anointed to see the possibility of new things in Christ. We have seen among pastors and laymen alike the growth of a new eagerness for the working of God.

Now we stand at the beginning of a new challenge, namely, to give the printed Word of God, with a word of personal testimony, into as many homes as possible by systematic house-to-house visitation. The devil is opposing this from the very start. The organization which had gladly offered to supply us with the necessary literature was faced with difficulties just at the time of its first shipment to us. Therefore at the last minute we are having to print material by the hundreds of thousands of pieces. Due to expense and shortage of time these will be smaller pieces of literature than we had hoped to use.

This challenge is new, and it is frightening. This is where we count on you. We need prayer for the efficient, sufficient supply of Scripture portions and tracts. Church members will need fervent intercession for the necessary courage to go from door-to-door, often to people of higher educational, social and economic standards than they. They will need courage to persist in the face of indifference and rebuffs. We ask you to claim with us the working of the Spirit of God to bring souls to Christ as Maharashtrian believers seek to be obedient to His will in witnessing.

J. F. Derr

*Pray for the woman with child in the center of photo above. She has been seriously ill. Her husband is in his second year of Bible Training School.
The Lord called Miss Marthena Ransom to India in January 1919. God performed many mighty miracles, doing the impossible in bringing her to India in 1925. Proof of His calling has been renewed daily as physical strength was imparted to serve her Master in varied activities. A great love for the Marathi language and wisdom in acquiring a working knowledge of the same assisted her greatly in the Boys' Boarding School, Workers' Summer Schools, Short Term Bible Schools, and working with village Christians and inquirers. She has toured in the districts and lived in tents for many weeks out of the year.

My introduction to village India will never be forgotten. I lived for several weeks with Miss Ransom and watched her hold daily classes for children and adults, Christian and non-Christian. After three or four such classes during daylight hours she would take her flannelgraph board and pictures and walk to a near-by village for an evangelistic meeting that night. These meetings would be held in a large court-yard and most of the village would attend. Men, women and children welcomed her to their village. A hut might be decorated with flowers, simple food prepared for us by a lonely Christian family and all the neighbors were invited to come, see, and hear. Many believed.

Many of our missionary family have received much from one whom we love. Miss Ransom was honored with a special tea party and a farewell gift from the missionary family during our Conference days in Akola in January. In response she said, "After nearly 40 years of service I would still like to be young again to enter the wide open doors in our area."

HERE AND THERE

1. Graduation . . . March 1965
   (1) Women's Bible Training School, Khamgaon:
   Regular—3 year Course (requirements for entry is 7th standard) . . . 2 graduates.
   Volunteer Course—2 years (entry requirement—literate) . . . 3 graduates.
   (Six Missions represented in Student body this past year)
   (2) Men's Bible Training School—Nargaon:
   Men Graduates . . . 4
   Women Graduates . . . 1
   (Nine missions represented in Student body this past year)
   (3) Union Biblical Seminary—Yeotmal
   Graduates . . . 28 (B.D. Degree . . . 10)
   (Church or Mission representation . . . 21. Countries other than India-4 States within India . . . 11).


3. We appreciated the visit of Rev. L. L. King, our Foreign Secretary, in January.

4. Pray for Nurses' Retreats throughout India.

5. Pray for Lay-Workers' Institutes held in Chikalda.

6. Pray for Short Term Bible Schools in July, August, and September.
MARATHI FIELD MISSIONARIES CONFERENCE—January 1965

Left to Right: Front Row: J. Derr, Rev. and Mrs. E. Eicher, Rev. and Mrs. G. Carner, Rev. L. L. King (Foreign Secretary of C.M.A.), Rev. and Mrs. A. Eicher, F. Schelander, N. Dongre (National Church Delegate). (Seated on ground: K. Lewellen, S. Amstutz, J. Dyke)


Third Row: F. Roth, J. Amstutz, D. Cartmel, R. Perret, H. Dyke, J. Derr, E. Lewellen, W. Bell, D. Capps, G. Vandegrift. (Mrs. F. Schlinder absent due to illness)