SONG OF INDIA

GUJARAT

SPRING 1969
FAMINE!

Famine! each year villagers whisper the word in fear, hoping that the monsoons will not fail to quench the thirst of their tiny planted seedlings. This season their fears were realized. In north Gujarat the rains did not come. Burning sun scorched pastureland and crops of cotton and grain; ponds and lakes dried up. As flocks began to hunger and thirst, shepherds started driving them down country. But the long 300-mile journey was exhausting and animals began dying along the way. Many were sold for a pittance to more wealthy people who could afford to buy fodder. Others were turned into the ‘old cows’ home’ in our village of Radhanpur. But with a sudden influx of hundreds of cattle there was not enough food. One day we counted 18 carcasses lying in the dry lake bed, covered with a solid moving mass of 200 or more vultures, who took over after the outcasts had removed skin, horns, and meat, and the dogs had gorged themselves. This continued for more than a month.

The remedy? The government set up wayside stops where men and their beasts could obtain food and drink en route. Then as farmers also began gravitating to towns and cities to obtain jobs which would bring in the money lost from their crops, there were projects organized to help them earn and at the same time remain in their own area. Village lakes were dug deeper, roads built, canals cleaned and repaired. Relief from worry and fear was realized.

Famine! These same shepherds and farmers are also suffering from spiritual hunger and thirst. Their hearts are as dry and barren as their fields. They are perishing daily.

The remedy? Jesus, the Bread of Life, provider of Living Water. Villagers nod in agreement as we sing, ‘Why are you dying of hunger when there is plenty of food here?’ We are tending the ‘wayside stops’ where men can obtain food and drink. The Word satisfies, bringing relief from the fear of death.

—THE EDITOR
CLOSED CHURCH REOPENED

The most rewarding ministry of a busy Field Chairman is proclaiming the Word of God in the national churches. Recently in one month we had opportunity to preach to five village and three city congregations.

More than fifty years ago, the late Rev. S. P. Hamilton had a very fruitful ministry of evangelism in and around the village of Alindra. Many were converted and today not a few Christians, with their children, are scattered in our larger churches.

In 1927 a lovely church was built and named the Hamilton Memorial Church. Subsequently many Christians left Alindra for employment in the city of Ahmedabad. Anti-Mission agitation followed and eventually local quarrels among the believers closed the doors of the church.

Early in 1968 the National Church and the Mission Chairmen dissuaded the District Church Council from permanently closing the church and selling the property. God worked a miracle. The local quarrel was resolved. God's house was completely renovated, redecorated and on December first, reopened. The Mission Chairman was invited to preach, first at a baptismal service for four conducted by the national Church Chairman, and afterwards in the church, where five children were also dedicated. There were about 100 out-of-town guests present for the occasion.

This group of rejuvenated believers at Alindra merit your prayers.

We recently held an afternoon worship and communion service at the village of Gamadi, where a church was organized earlier in the year (see Song of India, April 1968 issue, page 7). Among fruit witnessed in Gujarat in 1968 is one new church and one closed church reopened!

—Rev. Paul L. Morris
Kedeshpur V.B.S. Program

VILLAGE V.B.S. WINS ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE

A call for a personally-conducted V.B.S. to be held in the village of Kedeshpur meant weeks spent in the preparation of leaders and materials. There are no 'make-it-yourself' kits in Gujarat!

This was a small village school and the rice harvest kept many young people in the fields. But that the minds and hearts of the children and of their new teachers had responded well was evidenced in the fine program, held out of doors, and exhibiting what they had learned. A new dimension was added to the Bible teaching and missionary stories: that of literature distribution. Harvest time made it impossible for the children and their leaders to go to other villages with the gospel. But sales totaling fifteen rupees (two dollars) were made among the village Christians who normally buy few books.

As usual, it was a joy to see the children led to Christ, three dedicating themselves to the Lord for His service. But the greatest thrill was the tremendous interest and ability shown by the new staff being trained to do the job of spiritual instruction and soul-winning. Even the pastor, Rev. Nathalal, over 80 years of age, kept rejoicing over his first V.B.S. Laljibhai Talati, a convert from Hinduism, could not thank the Lord enough for what it meant to him.

Having seen the response of both pupils and leaders, one takes courage in the ministry of preparing Gujarati materials and leaders for these classes. Pray for a great corps of lay workers who will hold weekly children’s classes in their residential areas. It is our God who has said, ‘ask anything in my name, I will do it’.

—MISs LOUELLA C. BURLEY
The enthusiasm of the students is most gratifying. Many ask questions which reveal a grappling with the problems inherent in serious Bible Study. Many also show their appreciation of the courses and their concern for others by ordering and paying for text books to be sent to their friends. Others send money in advance of the publication of forthcoming texts to make sure they get their copies as soon as possible.

One of our students has introduced the suggested Bible reading plan from the course, 'The Wonder of the Word,' to people of the colony where he lives. He relates amazing incidents taking place in his neighborhood through the power of the Bible applied to lives. A Catholic, so impressed by changes in the lives and spirit of Bible reading neighbors, is now pursuing the reading plan in the Bible given him.

While studying 'Christian Foundations,' one young lady confided that she had always tried to be a Christian but had never had assurance of salvation. Appropriate Scriptures were listed for her to study and she was counselled by correspondence. At the end of her final examination, she penned her joy and thanksgiving in these words: 'I was lacking the knowledge of God's Word to establish me in the Christian faith. That knowledge I have received through this course and now I have full assurance of my salvation'.

Our students are proving the power of Scripture to effect God's purpose: 'the engrafted word...is able to save...' (James 1:21).

—REV. PAUL C. HAAGEN

Interest continues at a high level. The office staff answered 339 personal letters this year. Some types of letters received were: six requests for jobs, three for marriage, two for financial aid, one from a movie company. Letters like these brighten up the office routine; others are a matter of real prayer concern.

Four students wrote expressing their desire to become Christians, two of them very earnest. One man wrote: 'I want to become a Christian and I will teach many others like myself'.

We have a continued ministry outside India. A dedicated Police Inspector in Tanzania is doing fine work in enrolling students there. Two applications came from Rhodesia and there is one Indian student in England.

Last year we requested prayer for a young man who had taken our course and came to the office saying he wanted to become a Christian. We believe these prayers have been answered. We have prayed and counselled with Bhansial and encouraged him to attend a young people's camp. His family opposed him and told him that if he went to the
camp he should not return home. Four days later he returned directly to us, overflowing with a new experience: 'I have come back really born again!' were his first words. He has been coming regularly to the bungalow for prayer and fellowship. Not long ago he excitedly told us that his family members listened thoughtfully as he told them about Christianity. Pray that he will stand firm and become a reproducing Christian.

—REV. JAMES L. EVANS

OPENING DOORS

'Behold I set before you an open door.' Coming to Mehmedabad District after furlough, I listened to reports of closed and dying churches. I was inspired to request an appointment for Bible Class work, and was granted permission to do women's work among the churches. I worked with the pastors' wives and when a co-worker joined us we enlarged the ministry to include Junior church. A third member is needed on our regular team—an Indian to work just with the youth.

At present we are ministering in five churches:

1. **Kedeshpur**, where there is a well established group of Christian women.
2. **Hebron**. Recently several stayed for prayer and a young high-school girl consecrated herself to the Lord.
3. **Akalacha**. Two earnest and spiritually hungry women wept as they prayed for the Lord to help them live for Him. A new believer is asking for baptism.
4. **Alindra**. (See article on page 3) This village is an open door and we eagerly anticipate the development of the work there.
5. **Vernsar**. Several months ago we were asked to reopen the Sunday School. Now it is being conducted regularly by a local national. We still go on Sunday mornings for Junior church and visitation work.

Future openings include work in the Vasna and Dharoda churches. May we see a second harvest from this once fruitful district. Let us pray and believe to that end.

—MISS RUTH E. BLEWS

OPENING HOMES

Last year radio reception had steadily improved after F.E.B.C. increased its power to 50,000 watts. This affected the amount of correspondence received from listeners. It became almost a daily event to receive a post card or letter from someone who heard one of our seven programs. Many of the letters were answered by Manubhai Joshi, a converted Brahmin who is talented in writing to young Hindu lads. This response revealed how effective the radio ministry can be if the programs can be heard consistently with reasonable clarity.
This year, interference by Radio Lebanon and subsequently by Radio Pakistan caused considerable difficulty and a corresponding drop of listener response. We can finally identify our program again and with some effort follow the message. We are continuing to pray and trust that this battle of the air waves will be won for the Lord's glory.

The construction of the new radio station on the Seychelles Islands is in progress. They hope to have the first test transmitter of 3,000 watts on the air by the middle of 1969. Tremendous obstacles have hindered the work. We can expect opposition commensurate to the effectiveness of the programs. But with a clear and strong signal the Church in India will have a voice in thousands of homes that were closed to it before. Pray that the Lord will grant fruit that shall remain.

—REV. ELMER J. ENTZ

OPENING HEARTS

The monsoons failed! We experienced for the first time the dreadfulness of a real drought. Outside our house runs the main highway from Kutch and surrounding areas of North Gujarat. Each day we saw refugees trudging past, leaving a few behind to protect their villages. Many families were moving south in search of food and fodder. India worships the cow and this poses a problem: who will preserve the millions of cows in this area? Each day a dozen or more carcasses are thrown out on the city dump for vultures and dogs—a sad sight.

In the midst of such conditions we have launched out with the gospel. With Samuel, Nathan, Oliver and other laymen we have been enabled by the grace of God and your good support to penetrate into 45 unreached villages. Many hearts were opened to us as we told them of the love of God which sent His son to die for them. We met no opposition in our preaching; rather, eager listeners pressed in tight crowds about us, enthralled with the message of promised peace and the possibility of sins forgiven. The basis of most messages was, ‘Why has the famine come?’ with the answer, ‘God is angry and seeks sinners’ repentance’. The majority of the people gave quick agreement to this argument. ‘Yes, Sahib, we have felt His wrath. Our fields are burned up, our children are hungry. We have no work. We are desperate’.

With open hearts like this, the gospel finds ready soil for its seed. Will you pray with us that we will see the seed take root and produce fruit? One man from Kutch pled for his people: ‘If you will come, many will turn to Christ when they hear your message’. We give ourselves to this task.

—REV. EDWARD G. JACOBER

‘There flows from Calvary a stream for every sinner's pain,
And he that drinketh, Jesus said, Shall never thirst again.’

—M. A. STEPHENS

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Pray for . . .

1. Dedicated national workers who are needed for pastoral and evangelistic work in the churches and for various ministries in the mission’s program (in the radio studio, correspondence course office, bookstore, youth work).

2. The Bible Training School, which is in the first term of the second year under Church administration . . . for the committee, the staff, and students . . . that truly gifted young men might feel the call of God to a full-time pastoral ministry.

3. A new joint committee of two nationals and two missionaries appointed by the Church and the Mission for the purpose of promoting evangelism and establishing new churches.

4. Lay leadership in the village churches . . . that an effective program for training lay workers might be developed.

5. All the churches in Gujarat, who are for the first time using ‘adapted for India’ Gospel Light Sunday School lessons . . . that spiritual growth in life and conduct may result.

6. A Pastors’ Conference for all ministers in Gujarat to be sponsored by World Vision in Ahmedabad this year . . . that it be a time of great refreshing.

7. A vehicle for Rev. and Mrs K. H. Kose, who expect to return in June to begin a new work among college students in the city of Ahmedabad.

Look for . . .

. . . the answers to these requests in the FALL issue of ‘Song of India’.

‘Ye also helping together by prayer . . . that thanks may be given by many . . .’ (2 Cor. 1:11).

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