

# The Ecumenical Family

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*Editorial.....* 

## CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT



*Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad*

As we celebrate Independence Day this month, we give thanks to God for our country India. Indian Christians have not lived in the country as aliens or foreigners. Christian Missions and Churches have made, and continue to make, very significant contributions to India's development.

As one observation<sup>1</sup> puts it: "Since independence, the number of services rendered by Christians has multiplied in various forms, like schools, rehabilitation centers, leprosy homes, orphanages, hospitals, dispensaries, colleges, vocational training centers, printing and visual media, social uplift programmes, social development initiatives etc. Christianity in India, at present, is rooted from south Kanyakumari to north Jammu and Kashmir." Throughout the country, "thousands of educational and non educational institutions are functioning as an expression of its (the Church's) social commitment. Various developmental activities are taking place under the registered social service societies . . . Rural development activities and conscientization activities are initiated in recent times amidst strong opposition from fundamentalist and political parties who see the Christians as hurdles to gain their vested interest."

Another observation<sup>2</sup> states: "Christianity found a particularly receptive audience in India among dispossessed people such as the Dalits (untouchables), tribals and poor slum dwellers. Christian missionaries in India have been very active in helping lepers and other diseased people. They have opened schools and health clinics for rural and urban people. They are credited with setting up the first printing presses and first modern colleges in South Asia, boosting literacy and education for females. Indians have been attracted to Jesus because of His association with the poor and suffering. . . . As of the early 2000s, Christian missions ran 16,500 schools and 6,500 hospitals in India."

In other words, Christians have been contributing to the transformation of India. "Transformation is a process by which the whole church takes the whole gospel to the whole city (society) so that the power, the peace and the presence of God is experienced by every individual who is reconciled to God, to one another and to the environment that brings economic sufficiency, social peace, public justice and national righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

This is our prayer for India:

May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown,  
our daughters like corner pillars, cut for the building of a palace.  
May our barns be filled, with produce of every kind;  
may our sheep increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields,  
and may our cattle be heavy with young.  
May there be no breach in the walls, no exile,  
and no cry of distress in our streets.  
Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall;  
happy are the people whose God is the LORD (Ps. 144:12-15). ■

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Indian Christian's contribution to the field of Social Work," <https://sites.google.com/a/depaul.edu.in/de-paul-times/022009/020906>.

<sup>2</sup> [http://factsanddetails.com/india/Religion\\_Caste\\_Folk\\_Beliefs\\_Death/sub7\\_2f/entry-4161.html](http://factsanddetails.com/india/Religion_Caste_Folk_Beliefs_Death/sub7_2f/entry-4161.html).

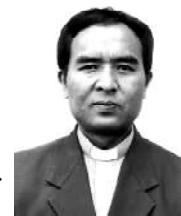
<sup>3</sup> Cf. J.N. Manokaran, Christianity's contribution to India, <http://www.christiantoday.co.in/article/christianitys.contribution.to.india/3645.htm>, 30 March 2009

*[Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad is presently the General Secretary of National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and is stationed at Nagpur along with his family. He was also the first Pastor of the English Congregation.]*

## A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON INDIAN CITIZENSHIP

India is a diverse country comprising of many cultures, races, and beliefs. Christianity is India's third most followed religion according to the census of 2011, with approximately 28 million followers, constituting 2.3 percent of India's population.

The term "citizenship" refers to the legal status that permits one to enjoy the benefits of membership in a particular country. When people "apply for citizenship," they are applying for the benefits associated with being a member of that country.



Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata  
Pastor, E.C.

### Christian Perspective of Citizenship.

Politics has been called the business of deciding who gets what, when, and where. The Bible expresses God's concerns for that very subject. In a democracy, citizens direct the government through political processes. Christians dare not abstain from involvement in such processes. The Christian faith promotes responsible citizenship, and the responsibility is heightened in a democracy, which by its nature needs citizen participation at every level — local, state, and national.

#### 1) God establishes government.

Government is a part of God's purpose for this world. God's people have lived under many forms of government. While no one form is divinely chosen, government itself is ordained by God (Romans 13:1-2). The Old Testament tells the history of God's dealings with Israel, the people to whom God had revealed His purposes and law. God made the Israelites a nation and blessed them, but God also expected the nation to express divine values because of its relationship with God.

#### 2) Government leaders are to be servants of God and are to be respected.

The Old Testament describes the desired character of a civil ruler—just, righteous, and caring for those in need (Psalm 72:1-2, 12-14). The New Testament identifies public officials as representatives of God, worthy of respect and honor (Romans 13:3-5).

#### 3) Secular government is temporary.

No human form of government will last through eternity. All will eventually end. Only the kingdom of God will endure forever (Daniel 2:44; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

#### 4) Christians are called to transform this world.

New Testament Christians and their fellow citizens had a choice—obedience or disobedience to the Roman government. We live, however, in an open system that allows for much more influential participation in the process of government, so political involvement can be one way to love our neighbors.

#### 5) Responsibilities of a Christian Citizen.

No single passage of Scripture lists all of the duties of a Christian citizen. Insights into what is expected of responsible citizens, however, are to be found throughout the Bible.

- a) *Give primary obedience to God.* God alone deserves to have unquestioning obedience. Christians exercise moral discernment in their support of or resistance to government.
- b) *Obey the law and work for good.* Ideally, laws exist to restrain evil, preserve social order, and promote general welfare. They are to be respected and generally obeyed in the context of Christian responsibility.
- c) *Pray for public officials.* Prayer to God on behalf of government leaders properly complements active political involvement. Christians should pray for government leaders without attempting to make prayer a substitute for active political involvement.
- d) *Work to establish justice, righteousness, and peace.* In a democracy, the moral quality of the government is what the citizens make it. The Bible establishes ideals for the Christian citizen's actions.
- e) *Support and protect freedom.* One function of government should be to guarantee personal and religious freedom. Christian citizens should be vigilant in the preservation of liberty. The Bible speaks of spiritual freedom through Christ, but political freedom allows people to express that freedom in a lawful manner. ■

## Christian Participation in India's Development: **DEMOCRATIZATION OF EDUCATION IN INDIA**



*Hepuni Kayina*

Today the privilege to education in India is a universal right that is taken for granted. No eyebrows are raised nor social uproars roused because someone wants an education. The only constraint would be economic reasons.

This was not the case many years ago before the advent of Christianity in India. In the words of the authors of *History of Education in India* (by Ram Nath Sharma and Rajendra Kumar Sharma), "In the post vedic age, no reference is found about the education of Vaishyas and Shudras. The aim of life of Vaishyas was laid down as agriculture, trade and commerce. They did not take any interest in intellectual education. The condition of Shudras was even worse. They had to serve the three higher castes. They used to work in the field as laborers and plow the fields, tame the animals and do some handicraft etc. Shudras were not free to get vedic knowledge anymore as they could in the vedic age." In other words education was the right of only the privileged upper castes.

This remained to be the scenario in India until the East India Company took political control of India. The same authors concede that the British were progressive and paid immediate attention to education. "They provided higher education and consequently set up the first colleges in India, one each in Calcutta, Madras and Benares (Varanasi)."

However, the real agents of democratization of education in India were Christian missions in terms of numbers and types of mission undertakings that effectively challenged and reformed many social evils that permitted education only to the elite upper classes while denying it to the majority masses. Many have written critically about Christian missions but cannot dispel the fact that India owes the initiatives in mass education to Christian missionaries who opened schools for common people in their vernacular language. Moni Bagchee for one acknowledges their contribution to education in West Bengal as in every other state in India. It was Christian missions that opened the first school for women. Besides foreign missionaries, there are instances where native Christians became significant actors in this endeavor. Pandita Ramabai from a Brahmin family in south Karnataka became a Christian and started the Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission that took care of widows. She also started a school for women in Bombay in 1889.

Besides schools and colleges, Christian missions also started technical institutes like Nave Institute in Shahjahanpur, Prakash Institute in Wadi and Ingraham Institute in Ghaziabad to train young people for employment in industries, and medical colleges like Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore started by Ida Scudder to train health personnel. Allahabad Agricultural Institute was started by missionaries to address new irrigation and crop raising methods.

It is to the credit of Ziegenbalg, a Danish protestant missionary for publishing the first book in India, the Bible in Tamil, and thenceforth the translation of the Bible into countless languages. Prominent among these literature pioneers was William Carey who translated the Bible into several languages. Missionaries also wrote grammar books and dictionaries of many languages.

There was no people that Christian missionaries would not take education and social service to, no reason that would discourage them, and no greater joy than emancipating the suppressed, the pariahs, the ignorant and the deprived wherever they went.

In democratizing education in India, Christian missions shaped and forged India into the biggest democracy in the world today! ■

*(Mr. Hepuni held the post of Joint Secretary in the E.C. Committee and has contributed greatly to the spiritual growth of E.C. He along with his wife and daughter are now with ELIC in China and are supported by the E.C. with prayer and finance.)*

## Christian Participation in India's Development: **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN LANGUAGES**



*Sam N. Jacob*

Right from the books of Moses, instruction is given to write down God's Word. This saved the text from getting distorted by oral transmission. So it has been the endeavour of the Jews to take the Scriptures with them wherever they went. When Christ gave the command to take His message to the whole world, this took an added meaning. Along with taking the written 'Word of God' in Hebrew or Greek language, translating it to the native languages also became an obligation of the disciples.

Though till the Reformation, Bible remained in only a few languages like Greek, Latin and Syriac, the situation changed after that. First it was translated into the European languages and as the missionary zeal spread, it began to be translated into the native languages wherever they went.

The Christian Faith came to India within two decades of the birth of the church. The written Scriptures also arrived here soon after. It is said that Pantaenus, a church historian and missionary, found a copy of Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew when he travelled to India in 180 A.D.<sup>1</sup> But, for many centuries Syriac language Scriptures and liturgy were used in the Indian churches and it was not made available in Indian languages. The Tamil Bible, 'Cardila', printed in 1554 was the first Indian language Bible.<sup>2</sup> This predates the arrival of the German missionary Bartholomew Ziegenbalg in early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Although the Christian missionaries worked on Bible translation, they did not stop with that. Ziegenbalg compiled the first Tamil dictionary of more than 40,000 words. The Protestant missionaries who came to India later also took keen interest in contributing to the local languages. William Carey, who wrote a grammar of Bengali and published an English-Bengali dictionary also wrote books on dialogues and stories. Constanzo Beschi reformed Tamil alphabetical characters, and also produced a fourfold Tamil dictionary, which was divided according to words, synonyms, classes, and rhymes. Vedanayagam Pillai and H. A. Krishna Pillai are two Christian writers who produced some of the first Tamil novels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Henry Martyn and Dr. Gilchrist, an American Presbyterian missionary and Rev. S. H. Kellogg contributed to the formation and popularization of Hindustani. Kellogg, in fact, drew more than a dozen dialects together to assist in creating present day Hindi. In 1893 he also produced *A Grammar of the Hindi Language*, which is still in circulation. Most of the modern Indian languages owe the production of their first dictionaries to Christian missionaries. The names of Ferdinand Kittel of Basel Mission and Hermann Gundert who published Kannada-English Dictionary and the first Malayalam-English Dictionary respectively are worth mentioning.

Coming to Northeast India, Assamese, Meitei and Chakma were the only languages that had their own scripts before the Christian missionaries came. Even then, Assamese was considered only a dialect of Bengali and it was the missionaries who fought for establishing its independent identity. All the other languages of the NE region which are written down today owe their alphabets and first dictionaries and other books to the missionaries. Due to the work of Christian missionaries, Bible portions and other books are available in more than 20 languages in Northeast India.

The tradition started by the western missionaries is being continued with more Indian missionaries taking up the challenges of learning the local languages and bringing out books in them. The work being done by Wycliffe Translators, IEM, FMPB, NLCI and other Indian missions in this respect is very commendable. But with more than 1500 languages and dialects spoken in India, the work has only begun. Whether the political leadership appreciates it or not, it is our solemn responsibility to give written languages to all our people groups as an expression of our love for our country. ■

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Old texts make case that Matthew wrote first gospel Published: June 05, 1999 NEIL ALTMAN, Lubbock Avalanche Journal

<sup>2</sup> Bible Translations into Tamil, Wikipedia

*(Mr. Sam Jacob is a former E.C. Committee member. After entering Christian ministry, he is serving the Lord in various capacities, and currently resides in Bengaluru along with his wife.)*

## Christian Participation in India's Development: **CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO DRUG ABUSE AND HIV**



*Felix M. John*

Many young people are dying today because of the effects of drug overdose. Sometimes drug addiction is also the cause for suicides. Many young people have problems with prescription drugs and illegal drugs. And only a few of them get any meaningful help. A very high percentage of adults struggle with at least with some substance addictions. Even the church is not free from this. There could be people sitting in our churches who are struggling with addiction.

So how do we address the problem as Christians and as a church? First of all we must understand what is addiction. There is a lot of widespread misunderstanding of addiction as a lack of intellectual or spiritual willpower. We have to recognize that there is an actual brain disease in drug addiction. And hence this has to be approached from different angles. To be considered addiction, it has to reach a certain diagnostic level. And then despite negative consequences and a desire to stop, the individual cannot. They can even build up tolerance to substances and require more to get high.

Ministry to drug-addicts must be a faith and scripture based ministry designed to help ease the process from recognition of addiction to seeking professional help. The first step to solving the problem is recognizing that there is one. If drug-addicts know that we are behind them, just as we would be supportive of somebody who had cancer, it will help a lot to remove the stigma associated with drug addiction. There are many who consider addicts as lost sinners without hope.

Drug addiction is actually a spiritual disease, and that's why the church needs to be involved with it. There are many churches which help these individuals reconnect through education, prevention, medical and family support. We have a Father who loves us and who always keeps us in His hands, and we have a reason to trust that everything will be alright. The church is the only organism who share their time and talent, offering hope, healing and reconciliation to those touched by addiction. Depending on the person, more intensive work may be necessary, including outpatient psychotherapy and group counselling, or even residential programs. But these help in complete recovery. The pastors help in regular counselling. There are hundreds of young people who testify today that the church has helped them to come out of such lost situations. They receive the forgiveness of God and reconcile with God through Christ.

### **HIV:**

For the last 25 years the world has been suffering due to the AIDS epidemic. It has caused untold suffering and it is destructive to the family and society. Although much progress has been made in the treatment of HIV, the progress in prevention has been much slower. Statistics say that there are 36.7 million people in the world who are HIV affected. Of this 2.1 million are in India.

Where does the church stand with regard to HIV and AIDS? The church and many institutions that are directly affiliated with the church and supported by the church, are the largest care providers of HIV and AIDS in the world. The mission hospitals are extraordinary and really exemplify faith in action. These institutions have stepped forward to respond to the AIDS crisis. Many relief services of the church are linked closely to many mission hospitals.

Apart from the direct care and support provided by hospitals, there is extraordinary work that is done to provide home support for people living with HIV and AIDS. The church and Christian institutions do much more than medical care. Throughout the world Christians offer tender loving care in the form of food and shelter to particularly the poor who suffer with HIV and AIDS. The care is also given in the form of a few encouraging words and compassion. It is the church and Christians, who started to reach out and hug individuals with AIDS, to show that they also need love and can be loved. It is through Christians that HIV and AIDS victims receive the unconditional love of Christ.

It is the church and the Christian community which has played a strong role in speaking out against HIV. They uphold and promote moral purity, making it clear that sexual responsibility, which means above all, abstinence and fidelity is a key part of promoting human dignity and the health and happiness of individuals. It is the Christian community which continues to respond with love and compassion to this terrible epidemic. ■

*[Mr. Felix John is a missionary with the Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM) at Nagpur, along with his wife, and is the first missionary the E.C. started supporting with prayer and finance.]*

## Christian Participation in India's Development: **MODEL CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS MEDICAL SERVICE AND HEALTH CARE**



Amenla Pongen

Medical health care remains a luxury which a vast majority of Indian citizens cannot avail until today. Amidst much talk of rapid overall human development and growth in the health care sector in India, health care services are very poor, and there are regions in the remote parts where it is neither accessible nor affordable. This is where organizations like Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA), a nonprofit Christian organization, emerges to fulfill and meet the needs of the people especially in the far-flung, underprivileged needy areas of the country, with a motto "*Fellowship for Transformation through Caring*".

Today, EHA has about 20 mission hospitals and 42 projects in North and North East India. This organization strives towards genuine care and love by evangelizing and transforming the community as Jesus Christ modeled. According to statistics, they treat about 8.5 lakh patients per year and help on an average 26,000 rural mothers with safe child deliveries and about 30,000 people receive surgical interventions. Apart from these, the organization has various projects and funds that help patients with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and provide relief measures in times of natural disasters and calamities etc. Many committed teams of doctors, nurses, paramedics and other staff have dedicated their entire lives serving at great personal cost as medical missionaries to provide health services, impart education, rehabilitation, training and personal evangelism, not only through teaching but also living out their lives as a testimony among them. These tireless services and hard work have impacted thousands of people although many people who have made those sacrifices often go unheard of and unsung.

One such hospital, which I know and have been a part of, is Makunda Christian Leprosy and General Hospital, Assam (Here on Makunda Hospital). It is situated in Karimganj District, a remote secluded, backward village of southern Assam, India. Makunda Hospital was started by the Baptist Mid-Mission USA in 1951 as a leprosy colony which was later taken up by EHA. However, with the departure of the founders and functionaries, Makunda Hospital was on the verge of a closedown. This is where a newly married couple, Dr. Vijay Anand (a pediatric surgeon) and his wife Dr. Ann Miriam (an anesthetist) landed up in the year 1993. They arrived all the way from Tamil Nadu with a heart to listen to God's call and a desire to serve the people. Despite no roads and connectivity, no electricity, water and conveyance to reach the place, these two committed souls had a vision to salvage and impact the entire community (which was earlier known to and for leprosy patients). Twenty four years hence, they serve the people, with a heart to give the highest quality care at affordable cost, recognizing the needs in health care, education and spiritual development. I can vividly remember the times they shared of how they had started the hospital without anything except for a ruined building and some few lepers in the colony. They performed their initial surgery under a lantern, walked down the deep forest at night to answer the call for emergency surgery! They sacrificed their whole life in bringing up the hospital. Worthy to their service, Dr. Vijay Anand Ismavel and his wife Dr. Ann were given the CMC's highest honor, the Paul Harrison Award for their Meritorious Service and Contributions in Rural Areas, in the year 2016.

I'm inspired every time I look at their lives, and if at all there can be a model for a Christian contribution towards health care, it is EHA and unmistakably this one family that has made its mark. Today, they have not only brought health care but a much better quality of life through employment and education. It was in the year 2004, looking at the needs in the community, that an English medium school was started to provide quality education. Today it serves the entire population with about 900 students till higher secondary (Science and Arts streams). As the hospital grew, the demand for dedicated nursing personnel was immense. So in the year 2006, a nursing school was started with the sole purpose to train Christian nurses, who would be willing to work in remote parts of the North Eastern (NE) states and other places. Thus far, it has trained about 225 committed nurses, and as envisioned they are working in all areas of North East mission hospitals and elsewhere in India. Today, the Hospital



sees about 100,000 outpatients, 12,000 inpatients; performs 2,400 major surgeries and 5,000 deliveries each year. We can see that Makunda Hospital not only caters to people of Assam but also to neighboring states like Tripura to an equally underprivileged population and needy area.

I have moved on from Makunda Hospital, but as I retrospect, I know this place has impacted my life. I never dared to complain about my work schedule then, when I saw Dr. Vijay and Dr. Ann working day and night trying to give the best treatment possible for the community. They have trained and motivated many committed staff as well as others who come in contact with them. I remember Dr. Vijay’s statement quoting from the Bible. *“No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”* And true to his conviction, their entire family (now two daughters – Hannah and Deborah) lives by it. Staff members recount emergency calls and Dr. Ann’s response - *“Okay, I will be there in 5 minutes.”* Many times it would be the second or third time they have to visit the hospital that very night. Never in my life had I seen them complaining about the heavy schedule, the uncountable night calls. Rather I could see the contentment in their lives, working literally for the Lord. Many a time, due to various restraints in medical facilities and equipments, they found themselves completely depending on God for healing to come for the patient and realized that God was indeed in control over their lives. As they would often testify *“...we saw so many miracles happening in the lives of the patients...”*. Though with ill health of Dr. Vijay Anand, who suffered and survived a heart attack, they continue to work, inspiring and transforming many lives. They never sought for worldly advantages, or the worldly urge for things in life, physical comforts, or material desires. They knew that the eye of the ploughman if he is to do his work well must look straight before him at the task he is assigned. They look back, just to see the marvelous work God has enabled them to do thus far.

For India as a developing nation in all spheres, EHA and Makunda Hospital’s contribution was unstated, their commitment was indescribable, and their selfless sacrifices were colossal. One single organization, one single family have impacted and touched so many lives in terms of health care services, medical missions, personal development and evangelism. Can this be a model for more Christians? Can we also imbibe this commitment and work towards a better nation and be an agent of change? ■

*[Ms. Amenla is Associate Professor and Nursing Superintendent at Christian Institute of Health Sciences and Research (CIHSR), Dimapur. She was a former active youth member of E.C.]*



Cottage Meeting  
at  
the residence of  
Mr. Ritu Raj  
(22/7/2017)



## Christian Participation in India's Development: MUKTI MISSION IN THE SERVICE OF DESTITUTE WOMEN AND GIRLS



*Debbie Zothanpari*

Mukti Mission has since 1889, educated women and children and provided a safe haven giving hope and restoration in the lives of destitute and disenfranchised women and children of India. Mukti mission at present has over 200 elderly women and over 200 young girls that live in the Garden homes. There were initially three schools—the Marathi Medium Sharada Sadan Primary School, Girls High School and the Junior College. There is also the Manorama English Medium Primary School and the Scott International High School. Then there is the Special School for the Blind and Special Needs.

The journey of the beginnings of Mukti Mission was a humble and admirable one of faith and perseverance. The main person behind the establishment of Mukti Mission was Pandita Ramabai Dongre Saraswati Medhavi, a brilliant Sanskrit scholar, great social activist, the first feminist thinker and champion of women's rights and education in India. She was one of the remarkable figures produced by the nineteenth century in the history of India and has been a legendary figure in her lifetime (1858–1922). Ramabai was born in a high cast Brahmin family in Karnataka. Her father, a renowned Sanskrit scholar, believed that women should be allowed to learn the ancient language of Sanskrit so that they could have free access to the Hindu religious scriptures. By the age of twelve, she learnt eighteen thousand verses of the Bhagvata Purana in Sanskrit. She astonished the Sanskrit scholars and was soon bestowed the title of Pandita (wise person).

Ramabai's father undertook a pilgrimage with his family. It was during these journeys to places in India that Ramabai witnessed the plight and degradation of child widows. She became the first woman to revive the women's status in India. In 1881 she established the Arya Mahila Samaj in Pune that promoted education for girls and advocacy against child marriage. Ramabai was also disillusioned by her religion and its views of women, that they could not get Moksha as men. Women get liberated from karma through the worship of their husband. The husband is said to be the woman's God. While in England for further education, she and her daughter Manorama embraced Christianity and were baptised.

In 1889, with help from the American Ramabai Association she opened a school in Bombay called the Sharada Sadan (Home of learning). The aim of the Sadan was to take care of child widows and educate them to be self-sufficient. The residential school was the first modelled in the kindergarten system of education in India. Ramabai also purchased a land at Kedgaon, south of Pune and named it Mukti Sadan (the House of Salvation) in 1898. By 1900 there were 2500 residents at Mukti Sadan. Mukti Sadan started with care of the child widows and today it takes in orphaned girls, destitute women and children and has since educated and nurtured thousands of girls as professional workers.

Ramabai was the first woman translator who translated the Bible from its original Hebrew to Marathi language. She devoted twelve years of her life to this. For her contribution for the women of India, Ramabai was awarded the Kaiser-e-Hind award in 1919 by the British Government during the British Raj – one of the highest awards an Indian could receive. The government of India recognised Pandita Ramabai's contribution by issuing a commemorative stamp on her in 1989.

As we see from Pandita Ramabai's life, education was in the forefront, that led the way to emancipation of women. She also believed in self-sufficiency for which she raised cattle and also had a poultry farm at the Mission. There is also a story about the wells, all twelve of them at the mission that supply all the water that is needed at the mission. There is one particular well that never dries up and is called the prayer well.

I have been fortunate to have served at Mukti Mission in Kedgaon from 1997 to 2001 among the children with mental and physical disabilities and set up rudiments of the Special Needs School. Ramabai's vision continues and many have found hope and a new beginning through its gates. ■

*(Ms. Debbie is Assistant Professor and Head Of Department, Counselling Psychology, at Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong. She is also a PhD Scholar, working on her PhD. She is a former member of E.C.)*



## A CHRISTIAN PATRIOTIC SONG

True Christians are also true patriots. This is because their love and concern for their country flows out of their love for the God who created their country and a conviction that He put them there to be loyal stewards, citizens and witnesses. Mark Twain defines patriotism as “supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it.”



Lalzawmliani Kayina

We find many patriotic songs composed by Christians. I am going to talk about one called “Great God of Nations”. This is how the hymn goes —



**Great God of nations, now to Thee  
Our hymn of gratitude we raise;  
With humble heart and bending knee  
We offer Thee our song of praise.**



**Thy Name we bless, Almighty God,  
For all the kindness Thou hast shown  
To this fair land the pilgrims trod,  
This land we fondly call our own.**

**Here freedom spreads her banner wide  
And casts her soft and hallowed ray;  
Here Thou our fathers’ steps didst guide  
In safety through their dangerous way.**



**We praise Thee that the Gospel’s light  
Through all our land its radiance sheds,  
Dispels the shades of error’s night,  
And heavenly blessings round us spreads.**

**Great God, preserve us in Thy fear;  
In danger still our Guardian be;  
O spread Thy truth’s bright precepts here;  
Let all the people worship Thee.**

This hymn was written by Alfred Alexander Woodhull of Freehold, New Jersey, USA, in 1828, when he was only 18 years old. It was originally titled as “God of the passing year, to Thee”. This hymn expresses a hope that all nations would praise God. He is the God of nations because

1. He is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes. (Dan 4:25)

2. Because of all His blessings, we should raise a hymn of gratitude or thanksgiving. (Psalm 95:1,2)

To bless (verse 2) means to praise. Psalm 145:21 says “My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise His holy name forever and ever.”

Some hymn books substitute “our fathers” for “the pilgrims” in verse 2. However the Bible says Christians are all pilgrims on earth. (1 Peter 2:11)

Verse 3 talks about freedom. We as Believers know that true “Freedom” is knowing the “Truth”, Jesus Christ (John 8:32). However, we can be thankful for the democratic nature of our government which gives us freedom to worship and practice our faith. At the same time we need to pray against any threat to this freedom.

Verse 4 talks about the Gospel’s light which shines upon our land. Yes, we thank God that this Light shines in several pockets; but we need to plead for the Gospel to pervade our whole land (Matthew 9:37,38). Only then will we as a nation experience the fullness of “heavenly blessings”.

The last verse is a fervent prayer we can all make to “let all (Indian) people worship Thee” - the true God. ■

*(Dr. Zawmi is a former member of E.C. and taught in the E.C. Sunday school for a while. She along with her husband and daughter are with ELIC in China and are supported by E.C. with prayer and finance.)*



**Sunday School Page****WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO BE WHEN I GROW UP**

I like to become a space scientist when I grow up. I like the sun, moon, stars and it is very interesting to explore heavenly things. When I was in Class III we were having science exhibition and I made a model of the solar system. Teachers and my friends were praising and encouraging me and I was so happy. This created more interest about space. After that I read some books and my parents purchased some more books for me to read and enjoy. I am so excited and I can't wait to grow up. I pray to God to make me a space scientist! ■

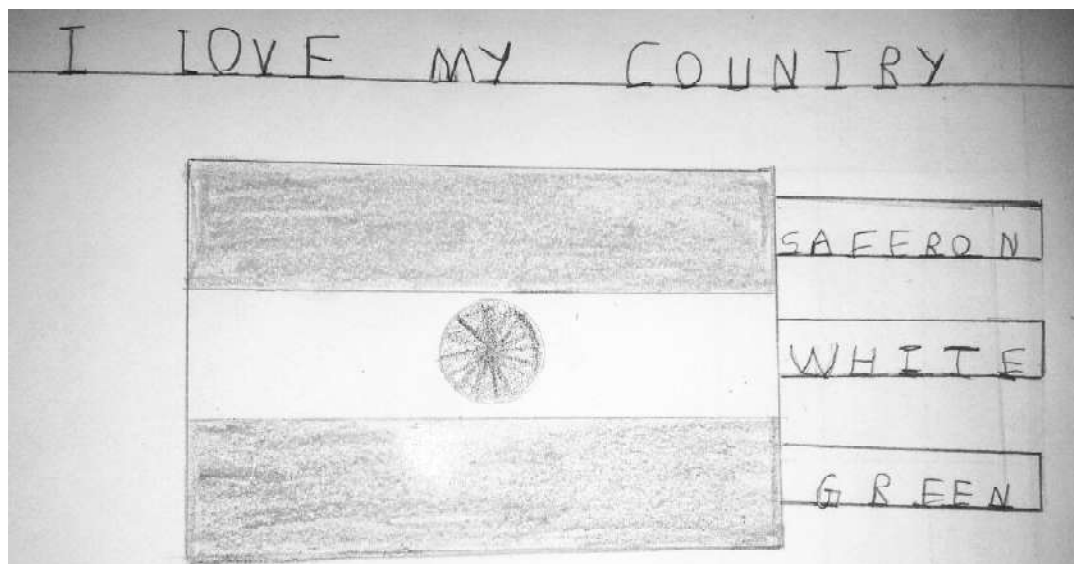


*Neha R.S.  
Primary Class, E.C. S.S.*

*(Neha is studying in Class IV, Mary Mount School, Aizawl.)*

**THE INDIAN FLAG**

*Bryan Enga*



*(Bryan is studying in KG Class, Capstone Community School, Bengaluru).*



## Christian Participation in India's Development: EXEMPLARY SPECIAL SERVICE TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Lavi Joseph

Dr. Mrs. Anna Mathew &amp; Dr. M.C. Mathew

The small front gate, leading into a small compound with tall Ashoka trees, and inside the building, all those friendly and jovial aunties, the room with so many colourful toys and games, the small chairs and tables, the mini slide and see-saw! And of course, the very kind Dr. M. C. Mathew (M.C. uncle to me) and the warm and loving Dr. Anna Mathew (Anna aunty, M.C. uncle's wife). Oh how I used to look forward to my visits to this dear place -- ASHIRVAD! After the warm welcome by 'Premila Aunty' (Ms. Premila John, the friendly and efficient Secretary), my parents and I would go to another room and be greeted by M.C. uncle. Never did it occur to me that I had come for my annual medical check-up. To me it was a fun place to be in, with a lot of fun things to do, with a lot of warm and friendly folks. I usually got to say hello to 'Anna Aunty' who had a lovely smiling face. 'Annie Aunty' (Ms. Annie Jacob), the young Psychologist assigned to me, was a huge favourite as she was very gentle and witty and made me laugh a lot, simultaneously and skillfully managing to get her work (with me) done as well. 'Sekar Annan' was friendly and kind and did a lot of jobs around the place.

Being brought up in a Christian home by godly parents, I was taught that JESUS was the ultimate Physician, who also used earthly doctors like Dr. M. C. Mathew. M. C. uncle and Anna aunty were committed Christians too. I always valued M. C. uncle's advice about any problem I had.

Then Ashirvad shifted to Christian Medical College and Hospital (CMC) Vellore, but most of the members of the team I had grown to love, moved there too, so I felt very comfortable. When I got my battery operated wheelchair and began using it to go for my appointments in the campus, Dr. M. C. showed great interest and made me demonstrate how fast I could go. A new Psychologist, Ms. Reeba Roshan joined the team. She was lively and humorous and became a good friend. As I grew older we did some serious talking too. The entire team had become like family to me and to this day the strong bonds of affection remain. They have stood with me through all the rough and tough times and shared the joyful times. M. C. Uncle and Anna Aunty, and Annie Aunty have moved on, and though I miss them, God has sent very caring people in their place. Ashirvad with its God-given team has indeed brought immense blessing to my life and I can't thank God enough. I just want other needy children to enjoy this great blessing. Do pray that many such children would get to experience Ashirvad and be blessed. – **Lavi Joseph**

**A Parent's Perspective:** It was purely by divine guidance that we came to be associated with Dr. M. C. Mathew and his wife Dr. Anna, **an extraordinary couple!** When Lavi was 1½ years old, I sensed there was a slight problem in one knee and since no one else seemed to think so, we decided to check it out when we next went to Chennai, by which time she was 2½ years. My brother-in-law, Dr. Sam David, a medical missionary, happened to be in Chennai at the same time as us, and introduced us to his Paediatric doctor friend, Dr. M. C. Mathew who was dealing with children with special needs, none of us suspecting that Lavi had any special needs at that time, as she was a very bright and active child. Well, soon after, at age three, she was diagnosed as having a rare, incurable and progressive disease, Mucopolysaccharidosis Type IV (Morquio Syndrome) by Dr. M. C. who referred us to a large teaching hospital for further tests which confirmed the diagnosis. How thankful we were for Dr. M. C. Mathew's approach in breaking the news to us – gentle and matter of fact, telling us only what we needed to know – not too much nor too little. For all his great intellect and experience he meets us at our level and takes time to feel our pain, really listen first and then address problems practically. One feels more rested and confident to face the situation after a time with him, for as Christians we know he places all his confidence in Christ.

On one occasion when Lavi had to be hospitalized in Chennai, although Dr. Mathew had referred us to the hospital, we felt very much alone and very anxious. At that time we were deeply touched by Dr. Mathew's concern and support. He visited her several times and rang up each day to find out how she was doing. This kind of commitment is truly rare. On yet another occasion when Lavi was seriously sick at Chennai, and Ashirvad had moved out of Chennai, and we wondered how to make it for our appointment with Dr. M. C., we were really amazed when he told us not to bring her and that he would come and see her, and he actually did, proving that Drs. M. C. and Anna are people who are humble and who will literally go many extra miles to help a needy child. Over the years we have seen them give so much of themselves in numerous ways – but I also observed that they are wise givers. They take care to see that when required they take the time to refresh themselves so that they can give even more effectively to the ones in need. A lot to learn from them!

**About ASHIRVAD (Briefly):** “Drs. M. C. and Anna had dedicated themselves to a special service for children with special needs and their families, and they developed a small team with different therapy skills, but in which parents were encouraged to play a central role.” “The Child Development and Research Centre was inaugurated on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1983 in a room in the central part of Chennai. In August 1985 they established a special trust called ‘ASHIRVAD’ or ‘Blessing’. In 1987 they shifted to a pleasant rented house in Annanagar, a western suburb of the city. After a year’s study at the Institute of Child Health in London, supported by Interserve, the Mathews returned to continue their involvement at the Ashirvad Child Development and Research Centre.” “They had embarked on a work that was pioneering, as at that time almost nothing was being done for young handicapped children in India. Their own daughter, their second child, had special needs and died at four months.” They turned their personal pain into gain for others. “The work was hard. Every family required support over long periods— no quick cure, no easy solutions. They stepped aside from conventional medical careers to embark on a work that had no prestige, no recognition. Every consultation at Ashirvad took time and much listening to enter into the very heart of the family.” “Ashirvad is not an institution but a philosophy of caring and sharing. Its motto is ‘taking sides’ and its logo depicts caring hands taking the side of children in need.” One striking feature of Ashirvad is the holistic approach to the entire situation. They don’t just tackle Lavi’s physical needs, but pay much attention to her all-round development as an individual. An equal amount of time is spent on counselling us parents, equipping us to deal with the problems, encouraging us to speak out and share our feelings, which has a healing effect on us and we are better able to care for Lavi. Dr. M. C. also takes time to pray with us, covering the spiritual aspect of our needs as well. The team at Ashirvad has truly been a tremendous blessing to us and to so many others as well. I can only say they have been hand-picked by God for this great and noble service. They work with a spirit of excellence and while their professionalism is clearly evident, they also interact with us very closely, so that we feel like one big family. The work of Ashirvad has received much recognition and praise from many eminent doctors who see the work as unique and a model of service to be followed.

Dr. M. C. was invited to set up the Developmental Paediatrics Unit (DPU) in CMC, Vellore and so Drs. M.C. and Anna moved to Vellore in February 1997 along with the majority of their team and set up the DPU. The Ashirvad Child Development and Research Center now functions as the DPU. “They undertook this move not only to provide help for needy children and their families but also to provide necessary training for doctors to take this new understanding elsewhere, thus fulfilling the Mathews’ vision to promote a holistic model to equip doctors in understanding and responding to early childhood disability and continue to pursue and promote scientific approach with a larger team of professionals from various disciplines and financial stability.”

After retiring from CMC, Vellore in 2010, Drs. M.C. and Anna worked briefly in Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Pondicherry, where they were Professors in Child Neurology and Pharmacology respectively. In 2012 they joined the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (MOSC) Medical College in Kolenchery, Kerala. Dr. M.C. is involved in the Developmental Paediatrics and Child Neurology Department and is also Chairman, CMC, Vellore Association since 2013. Dr. Anna is Research Co-ordinator, Professor and HOD, Department of Pharmacology.

I believe that the philosophy begun at ASHIRVAD will continue to gain momentum and go on to greater heights in its contribution to the alleviation of much pain and suffering present in our world. ■ - **Nimmi Joseph**

Sources: The book BEGINNINGS by Katharine Makower

*(Miss Lavi is always willing and available to use her talents to glorify God and be a blessing to others.*

*Mrs. Nimmi is a Homemaker and serves God in various ways.)*

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## E.C. HAPPENINGS

### I. SPECIAL SERVICES/DAYS CELEBRATED IN E.C. :

**1(a) 39<sup>th</sup> E.C. ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING SERVICE/PENTECOST SUNDAY (4/6/17):** The Congregation was privileged to have Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, the first Pastor of E.C. as the Guest Preacher. He delivered a very relevant, thought-provoking and challenging message. There were special numbers by the Sunday school and the service was very well attended.

**SPECIAL VISITING GUESTS:** The Congregation was doubly blessed, as Dr. Benny Prasad and his wife Zanbeni also ministered during the service. While Dr. Benny shared his powerful testimony, his wife sang some very meaningful and melodious songs. It was a spiritually uplifting and enriching service which was followed by a physically nourishing fellowship meal.

**(b) MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE (13/4/17):** It was held at 6.30 PM and Rev. V. L. Krosschhuanmawia was the Preacher.

**(c) GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE (14/4/17):** The Holy Communion service at 10 AM was led by E.C. Pastor, Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata.

**(d) EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE (16/4/17):** The Preacher was Pastor Vanlalruata and the service was followed by a fellowship meal.

**2 (a) MOTHER'S DAY (14/5/17):** The Mothers of the Congregation were honoured by the E.C. Youth during the worship service when a Bible passage was read out along with a few meaningful words. There was a solo and a special prayer for the mothers was said. Gifts were presented to them.

**(b) FATHER'S DAY (18/6/17):** E.C. Youth organized a brief programme to show their love and respect for the fathers by distributing gifts to each one. There was a solo and special words to honour the fathers was read out.

**II. BAPTISM:** On 7/5/17 **Mr. Ritu Raj** was baptized by E.C. Pastor, Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalruata.

**III. BOARD EXAM RESULTS:** The Congregation is grateful to our faithful prayer answering God for the wonderful results given to our children –

**Class X : Miss Bathsheba Badding – First Division**


**Class XII : 1. Master Daniel Bajaj – 3<sup>rd</sup> Rank in Mizoram**

**2. Miss Anisha Daniel – First Division**

**IV. THANKSGIVING:** Once again we thank God for the good results of our youth –

**1. Mr. Jaison Joshy – Passed M.Tech with 90%**

**2. Miss Hyebeen Kim – Passed B.A. Literature in First Division**

**V. WEDDING BELLS  : Mr. Abel Lalmuanpuia Gaikwad** (s/o Rev. Dr. Roger & Mrs. Zomuan Gaikwad) and **Ms. Lalchhanhimi** (Achhantei) tied the knot on **2/6/17** in the Mission Veng Presbyterian Church, Aizawl. Heartiest Congratulations to the newly weds and our prayers for a Christ-honouring and blessed marriage.





**VI. CATCHING UP** with our youth studying outside and former members: Their visits always bring great joy. In the past quarter we could meet up with our youth – Alan Sabu, Jaison Joshy, Hepshibah Badding, former member Ms. Denling Khartu and our missionaries Dr. Mrs. Zawmi and Mr. L. H. Kayina.

**VII. NEW MEMBERS :** On 9/7/17 the following persons were welcomed and admitted as members of E.C. : 1) Mr. Ritu Raj, 2) Mr. Forward Iswari, 3) Mr. Justin Jose and 4) Mr. Asosii Loli

**VIII. FAREWELL :** On 30/7/17 the Congregation bid farewell to:

1. Ms. Lalkhawngaihzuali (RIPANS)
2. Ms. Lalthazuali (RIPANS)

Bibles were presented to them as farewell gifts as per E.C. custom and Pastor Vanlalruata prayed for them. ■

## IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE



**TEJU BAHIRVANI**  
**(17.12.1949 – 27.6.2017)**

**Mr. Teju (67yrs)** went home to be with his Lord and Maker on **27<sup>th</sup> June 2017**, after a long and difficult struggle with several complications in his health, until finally lung cancer took over and claimed his life.

The funeral was held on 29/6/17 at Shillong, where he resided along with his wife.

He was a member of the English Congregation church, Mission Veng, Aizawl and attended the Sunday worship services regularly (whenever he was in Aizawl) and involved himself in the various ministries of the Congregation. Having a very good knowledge of the Bible, he loved discussing various topics of interest to him, from the Bible.

He was a very generous, kind, loving human-being who cared about others and always tried to maintain friendship. He endeared himself to the members of E.C. church and was a good friend/brother/uncle to the E.C. church members. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Ela Bahirvani, married daughter Judy and son Joshua. He will be greatly missed. ■

# Happenings in the E.C. Family



Baptism of Mr. Ritu Raj  
(7/5/2017)



Dedication of Baby  
Chishutmi  
(28/5/2017)



Mother's Day  
(14/5/2017)



Visit by former member



Ms Denling  
(30/4/2017)



Thanksgiving Prayer for E.C. students  
who successfully completed their  
Board Examinations

*Followed by feast*  
(14/5/2017)



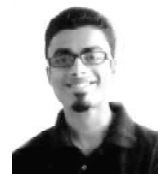
E.C. Anniversary  
(4/6/2017)



Special Number by Dr. Benny Prasad & Wife

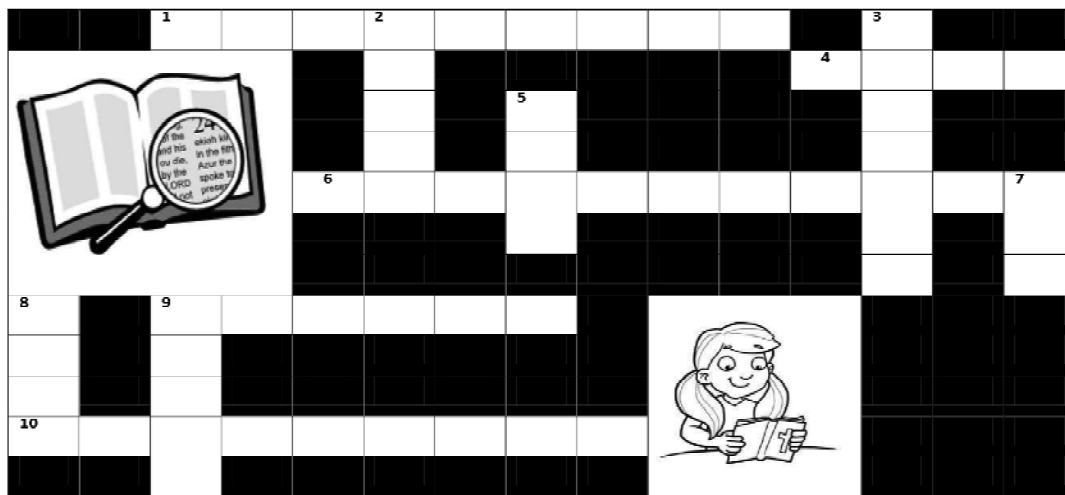
**BIBLE CROSSWORD**

(Version Used: NKJV)



Jaison Joshy

Find the answers by finding the missing words in each Bible Verse given below:



**ACROSS:**

- 1. Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in \_\_\_\_\_, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. [1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2]
- 4. If my people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their \_\_\_\_\_. [2 CHRONICLES 7:14]
- 6. Honor all people. Love the \_\_\_\_\_. Fear God. Honor the king. [1 PETER 2:17]
- 9. Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counsellors there is \_\_\_\_\_. [PROVERBS 11:14]
- 10. Let every soul be subject to the \_\_\_\_\_ authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. [ROMANS 13:1]

**DOWN:**

- 2. So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without \_\_\_\_\_ except in his own country and in his own house." [MATTHEW 13:57]
- 3. He makes \_\_\_\_\_ great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them. He takes away the understanding of the chiefs of the people of the earth, and makes them wander in a pathless wilderness. [JOB 12:23-24]
- 5. And seek the peace of the \_\_\_\_\_ where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace. [JEREMIAH 29:7]
- 7. Render therefore to all their \_\_\_\_\_: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. [ROMANS 13:7]
- 8. The \_\_\_\_\_'s heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. [PROVERBS 21:1]
- 9. Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling. [PSALMS 2:10-11]

(Mr. Jaison has been part of E.C. for a long time and has just completed his M.Tech in Computer Science in National Institute of Technology, Arunachal Pradesh.)

**ATTENTION!**  
 The English Congregation meets every Sunday for Worship at 10 a.m. in the English Congregation Church building, within the Synod Office compound, at Mission Veng.  
**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

Editorial Team : Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, Mrs. Nimmi Joseph, Ms. Lavi Joseph, Mr. Jaison Joshy  
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