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No. 123

MISSIONARY SETTLEMENT FOR UNIVERSITY WOMEN [BOMBAY]

MOTTO:

διὰ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

“For Christ, through the power of Christ”

STAFF 1936

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UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT
BOMBAY
April, 1936

DEAR HOME MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES

I am very happy to write my first letter to you from the Settlement.

One of the most urgently needed reforms in India concerns the conditions of shop labour; hence the introduction of the Shops Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council. This Bill was meant to prohibit the employment of children, to limit the hours of work of young persons in shops, and to provide for early closing.

I was employed by the Government Labour Office to investigate the conditions of labour in several shop areas in the city of Bombay, especially in the big firms and shops in the Fort area. Some students

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of the Social Training Centre accompanied me to watch the proceedings. The managers and shopkeepers gave me every assistance.

The conditions in restaurants were found to be most appalling. The education of the masses is essential. Illiteracy makes labour cheap and inadequate. If a man or boy is not good at anything else, he is considered fit for a job in a restaurant; and so he takes ignorance and filth with him wherever he goes.

I sent in my report to the Government Labour Office. The Bill was discussed in the Bombay Legislative Council and it was thrown out. I was very disappointed to hear the result, but I hope that someone will bring it up again in the near future. On the whole the Bill has a good purpose, but it needs to be made fuller, and more clauses should be inserted if it is to be effectual in bettering the conditions of all concerned with the shops.

During Miss Navalkar's absence I was appointed to the Committee of Bowker Hall, which is a hostel for poor students, nurses and teachers, either employed or unemployed and looking out for jobs. A small concert was arranged to raise funds in aid of the hostel and to meet the needs of some of the residents.

I conducted a Bible Study Group for Christian students in Bowker Hall once a week. We started our Group with "Studies in the Gospels", which was followed by "Great Teachers in the Bible". We had discussions on subjects like "God's Purpose for our Lives" and "God speaking to us".

Miss Navalkar and I attended a Breakfast Conference of the Indian Women's Club, which is run entirely by Indians. It sprang from the Blue Triangle Club of the Y.W.C.A. The Secretary gave a most interesting talk on the biographies of Indian Christian women saints of modern times, like Pandita Ramabai and Susie Sorabji. Another member laid before us the problems of Christians in modern India—educational, social, religious and economic. Dr. Hewat of Wilson College spoke on "The Relationship of Men and Women to the Church". She emphasised the work which women could do in connection with their churches and made some practical suggestions. She spoke about the Church in China, and to us it seemed that the Church in China was more advanced in its activities and in its spiritual life than the Church in India. She reminded her audience that thought and action ought to go together.

We had a big party at the Settlement for the pupils of the St. Columba High School who will be University students in June. They had kindly given me a farewell party when I left the school and had also invited me to their annual picnic. We played games on the roof, took a snapshot and showed them round the Settlement.

The Cama Hospital for Women and Children celebrated its Golden Jubilee in March. Many of our Settlement post-graduate students have been connected with this hospital, living on its premises for

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further studies and for more practical work. Dr. Jhirad is the Medical Officer in charge of the hospital. She is the first Indian woman who has held that position.

A committee of women was appointed, and their aim was to raise a sum sufficient for the most pressing needs of the hospital, which are: (1) The extension of the Out-Patients' Department; (2) A new operating theatre and pathological laboratory; (3) A hostel for post-graduate women students; (4) A children's ward.

A Flag Day was organised throughout the whole city of Bombay on the 26th of March. I was one of the organisers in the Byculla area and supervised forty-one volunteers from the American Mission High School. The flags were sold in streets, lanes and at stations, and volunteers even went from house to house with cards to collect money. Besides this, collecting cards for school children were distributed by many helpers in nearly all the schools in Bombay. Miss Navalkar and I are still working at this scheme. Children enjoy collecting annas to fill up the little squares.

We had three doctors staying with us during the Jubilee Week. The public meeting in the Cawasji Jahangir Hall was a great success, and so was the entertainment arranged by Mrs. Blackwell in the same hall on the 8th of April. We hope Dr. Jhirad will be successful in getting what she wants.

I was asked by the American Women's Club to give a talk on the work of the Missionary Settlement for University Women. Most of them had not seen the Settlement and were deeply interested to hear of our aim and activities. Questions were asked after the talk. Some of the members of the club came to our Friday At Home and were taken round the Settlement. I asked for a donation from the club for our roof repair fund, and we have great hopes of getting a good sum.

During Miss Navalkar's absence from India the work of the garden fell to my lot. I simply love gardening, and ever since I started it I have been learning names of new flowers and plants.

Yours sincerely,

RAJUS DONGRE

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT
BOMBAY

April, 1936

DEAR HOME MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES

Life in the Settlement is so full of variety that every Settler must give a different picture of its activities. My impressions will of necessity be more superficial than those of my colleagues who have had more experience of life in India.

I think you may like to hear a little more about Naigaum Social Service Centre. Miss Navalkar and Miss Kaae serve on the Com-

mittee, and the worker in charge was one of our Social Training students. She does everything with immense gusto, from washing babies to giving blunt matrimonial advice. She stencils the walls with designs of zebras, or puppies chasing leaves, or other cheerful subjects, all supplied by a friendly shopkeeper in the district. She is making flowers grow in one of the most squalid districts of Bombay. It is specially interesting to visit the Centre on a Saturday, for on that day members of a Criminal Tribe make their appearance. These unfortunate people, thieves by birth and religious tradition, had been compelled to live for a time in a Settlement supervised by Government; but now, their period of discipline and education being at an end, they have been released to find honest work. As this is just what they cannot find, they have had recourse to begging. When they visit the Centre, which is quite close to their so-called homes, the women of the Adult Education class apply what they have already learnt by submitting their less fortunate sisters to a vigorous scrubbing and combing. After this operation they share with them their daily allowance of porridge.

We have had many interesting visitors, among them some delegates to the meetings of the International Council of Women at Calcutta. Dame Elizabeth Cadbury came to dinner with us and also visited Naigaum. We have also had visits from Miss Cashmore, formerly of the Manchester University Settlement, and now doing village work in the Central Provinces; Miss Caton of the Indian Village Welfare Association; Miss Standley of the International Missionary Council, and Canon Stacy Waddy. Miss Beck, who was associated with the Indian Students' Hostel in Cromwell Road, stayed with us for a short time, and we were all grieved to hear of her sudden death at Allahabad a few weeks later.

Many of our students are now in the thick of examinations and extremely tired. Examinations are even more of a bogy here than they are in the West. With great difficulty we sometimes persuade a few of the girls to come for a short drive along the shore; but they always stipulate for a really short drive, as they grudge every moment taken from their studies. What makes it even harder is the fact that their ordeals are timed for this time of year when the weather is becoming hot. The medical students in particular find their "practicals" most fatiguing. A good many of our girls are taking their Finals now, so we shall soon have to part with old friends. When the University session re-opens in June we shall see several new faces.

Already we have a few new girls, but some of them will be with us only for a short period. Two very nice Goanese sisters came with the intention of staying here for good, but since then their parents have planned to come to Bombay and make a home for them. Another little schoolgirl came for a few weeks and will be leaving soon. She knows hardly any English and depends for real intercourse on the

Gujarati-speaking students. She has a sweet nature and shows appreciation of our vain attempts to speak to her. Of *my* attempts, perhaps I should say, for Miss Navalkar and Miss Dongre can, of course, make themselves clear to her. Another new student is a Parsee journalist. She was for some time in England and is much interested in public questions. She intends to take Miss King's Social Training course, as she is sure it will be of professional value to her.

Some of our students went during the Christmas holidays to the All-India Conference of Women at Trivandrum. They were so delighted with everything they had seen and heard that we persuaded them to talk to us about their experiences. One, an art student, brought sketches of South Indian types as well as several snapshots. Another seemed most impressed with the fact that in South India nearly everybody dresses in pure white. Another said she had given offence to the most patriotic ladies by wearing *saris* of Japanese georgette instead of Indian-woven material. They all agreed that the most heated discussions had been aroused by problems of marriage and home life.

We wish that we could institute more of these informal talks, but the pressure of examinations has made this impossible. One of our art students arranged an exhibition of her pictures in the library. They are exceptionally good, particularly those in the Indian style, which is full of delicate detail not unlike medieval illuminated work. This student shows genuine appreciation of European art, but says that Western design has too many straight lines to satisfy the Indian feeling for curves. One of her pictures, exhibited at the Art College, impressed the Governor very much, and in the end it was bought by Mr. M. R. Jayakar, who was one of the most notable delegates to the Round Table Conference in London.

I spent a few days in Poona last week and was most attracted by our new Settlement there. The house is quaint and homely, and the students take great pride in all their domestic arrangements. One day I went with Miss Underwood to the market, where she was in her element laying in provisions for her family. An Indian open-air market is very gay; the fruits and vegetables are so varied, and there is so much excitement in the form of goats and dogs and cows *and* motor-lorries wandering about.

I think you know that in our Poona hostel prayers are held on the roof. They are undecided what to do during the rains, when the roof, as it now stands, will not be practicable. Either they must set apart a room downstairs or they must build another strip on the present roof to protect them from the weather, and this they feel will spoil the present atmosphere which owes much to the sense of space and freedom. The nights I was there we all climbed up a narrow spiral staircase, took off our shoes and sat down on mats. We read by the light of two oil-lanterns, and we could see the tops of palm-

trees and the stars. It was bright moonlight, and the whole impression was beautiful and moving.

Between Miss Underwood, Miss Moore, and Miss Gordon of the Church of Scotland Mission, I saw nearly all the sights and notabilities of Poona. I was taken up a long flight of steps specially constructed for elephants to a temple on top of a rock. It was well worth the climb for the view of hills breaking the skyline and for the sense of open space. In former days European visitors were allowed into



M.S.U.W. Hostel in Poona

the temple, but since the "Untouchables" have been vainly demanding entry the high-caste authorities have refused entry to all except Brahmins.

I was also taken to the *Ashram* conducted by the Christa Prema Seva Sangh (or Community of Service for the Love of Christ). From the roadside one can see only a low unpretentious building; but from the moment one passes through the entrance loggia it is all beauty and simplicity. One looks through this wide porch across a garden with hollyhocks and sunflowers and cypresses to the hills beyond. It is like an Italian picture, and yet it does not seem incongruous with its Indian setting. The little chapel by the stream is built in the Indian style and has mural paintings by Indian artists. In another part of the building they have a delightful painting of St. Francis talking to a sprightly little parrot perched on a branch above his head.

The Fathers run a students' hostel and do much work throughout the city. There is something in the gracious simplicity of their

witness which makes a deep appeal to all with whom they come in contact. One moonlight night Miss Moore took me to a service in the Ashram garden. The whole setting was almost ethereal in its loveliness, but there was an astringent quality about the actual service—in the deep simplicity and realism of the devotions and intercessions.

This question of simplicity is one which must trouble the consciences of all missionaries to this country. The Indian mind is very sensitive in its appreciation of any life which shows detachment from the desire for luxury or ease or privilege. It is quick to discern how much of ourselves we are really giving and how much we are withholding.

When last December I visited Dr. Stanley Jones's Ashram at Lucknow I found the same question uppermost in the minds of an almost entirely lay community. What most interested me there was the type of Indian attracted to a life of simplicity. One man in particular had a most remarkable story. He had been a *sadhu*, or holy man, and had wandered from shrine to shrine vainly seeking peace. A copy of *The Imitation of Christ* fell into his hands and he read it with deep interest. But it seemed to increase his despair, so much so that he resolved to drown himself. He was very weak with mental and physical distress, and at the riverside he fell into a sort of trance where, as he expressed it, he had "a vision of the Cross". Even this vision did not bring him peace. All this time he had never read a gospel or seen a Christian missionary. The next book which came his way was *The Wide Wide World*, and, incredible as it may seem, this second-rate, sentimental book completed the process which had been set up by *The Imitation of Christ*. He was convinced that there must be something in the religion which supported little Ellen in all her troubles. The upshot was that he went to a mission station to receive Christian teaching. His family cast him off when he became a Christian, but he persisted in his course; and to-day he is a man of distinct spiritual quality, exercising a great influence throughout the district.

I am writing in Holy Week. Many of our Christian students are so pressed with examinations that they cannot take advantage of the special church services. Good Friday, however, will be a general holiday. All the Christians will go to the three-hour service and it is possible that some of them may want to hear the Passion music in the cathedral the same evening. We all feel how much we stand in need of Good Friday with its call to sacrifice and of Easter Sunday with its promise of renewal. It is a great support to know that we are being held in your remembrance.

Yours sincerely,

MARJORY A. BALD

MISS ELLA PAYNE

Miss Payne, an old friend of the Settlement, passed over on Monday, the 16th of March, after a long period of suffering patiently borne. She was a student in Wilson College when the first Settlers arrived in Bombay and she was one of the Christian students who attended Miss Dobson's Bible Study Class. She knew most of the Settlers both old and new, and of late years had paid long visits to the Settlement. She began her teaching life in Queen Mary High School and in 1901 joined Government Service. The thirty years of her work in Government were spent in the Training Colleges in Ahmedabad and Poona and as Inspectress of the Central Division. After her retirement she gave two years of voluntary service to the American Mission High School for Girls in Ahmednagar. Her delightful companionship will be missed by many friends.

DR. TEHMINA CAMA, M.B., B.Sc.

In a letter written on April 4th Miss Navalkar mentions the sudden death of an old student of the Settlement, Dr. Tehmina Cama. Dr. Cama came to us from St. Helena's, Poona, where she was at school under Miss Susie Sorabji, and was with us as a student from 1912 to 1913. Her frank lovable nature made her a favourite with all. She had grown up in the country and loved animals. She had an open, fearless and generous nature, and amongst her fellow students in the Grant Medical College she exercised a healthy influence and was popular in the right way with both men and women. She came from a much respected Parsee family and had inherited the best traditions of her community.

After graduation, Dr. Cama struck out in a line of her own, and carried on an investigation into women's work conditions in the mills of Bombay. This she did for Government in close association with Dr. Balfour. Her practical common sense, sympathy, and tactful reticence made her trusted by Government, mill-owners and managers, and she was instrumental in starting crèches in many of the mills of Bombay. All this was uphill work, but Dr. Cama was undaunted, and she obtained funds because she was trusted.

She was the first factory Inspectress in India, and was awarded the Kaiser-i-hind Medal for her services.

She will be very much missed in the mill area of Bombay, and also at the Remand Home attached to the Children's Court of Bombay, where she acted as Honorary Physician for many years.

E. C. G.