

THE
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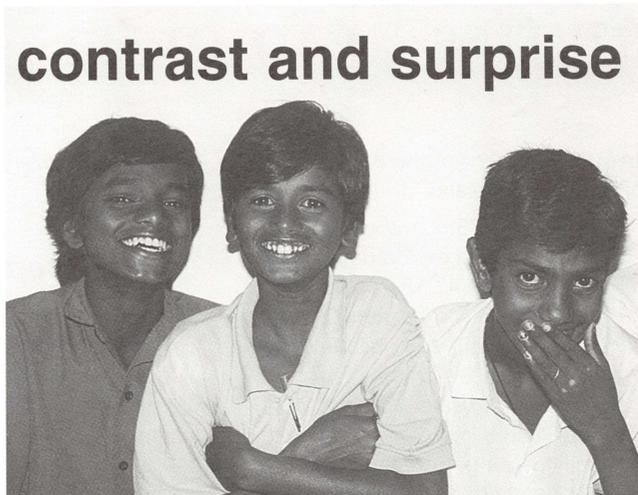


GAZETTE



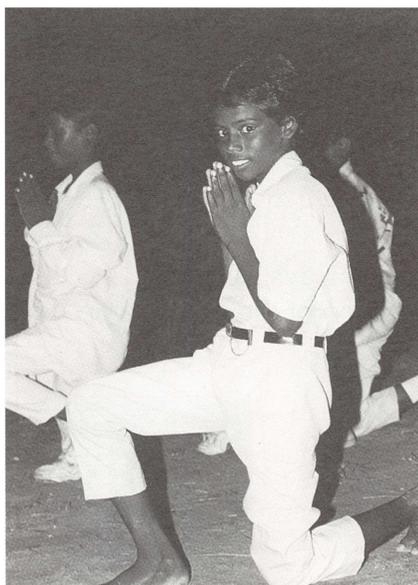
INDIA a land of contrast and surprise

In November 1994 we reported on the work of Junior Ministry, our partners in South India. Work was established in 1978 in the southern State of Tamil Nadu, learning from experiences in Malaysia. The basis for work is traced back to earlier work in India and to the origins of the Boys' Brigade here in UK.



At the hill tea plantation station, Valparai.

THE back street and alleys of Madras are, like cities throughout India, home to thousands of children and families who eke out an existence on the streets, finding basic shelter under tarpaulins and temporary awnings, hastily erected and carefully managed to keep out the worst ravages of storm and flood. In apparent disarray, life has a semblance of order as people go about daily chores of cooking, washing and cleaning as best they can. For all the squalor, life for these city dwellers is more secure than in many of the country villages where rustic dwellings hide a precarious existence and where employment is often seasonal and spasmodic. A worker in the hill tea plantations can expect to earn £20 a month, of which deductions are made for health care and other services. The cost of a packet of tea in our supermarkets is the price of a day's hard labour. But they are lucky, for employment is year round. By contrast those who live in the lowlands,



Taking part in a play, Ilayangudi.

finding jobs as casual field labourers, can only expect to find work for four or five months in the year. In the ceramic factories near Cuddalore, a worker may earn as little as £9 a month and somehow be expected to support a family of five. Food is cheaper than UK — but not that cheap. In nearby mines wages are higher at about \$45 a month, but often the bonded labourers receive only £30 from the sub-contractors.

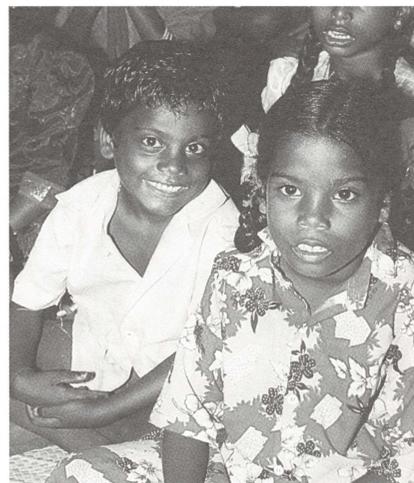
Exploitation is exacerbated by lack of education and opportunity. Physical and mental growth of children is stunted by malnutrition and parents are forced to regard their families as economic assets.

It need not be so and, given the chance, children are adept and eager to learn. Everywhere one is aware of alert and penetrating eyes of children. Feeding programmes, allied with basic education, can bring change and hope. That is the very situation in which the Junior Ministry in South India operates. Whilst others may stand back, units of Junior Ministry run programmes through church schools and homes in some of the very poorest areas, with plans to outreach to even more children.

There is no shortage. Millions of Indians live below what economists define as the poverty line and without adequate housing and sanitation. There are countries where economic progress is lower — but there is none which has so many poor. The World Development Report of 1990 showed that India had twice as many poor people as China and more than four times as many in the extremely poor category. As a precaution, the blood of every patient operated on in Madras city hospitals is tested. One in twenty samples register HIV positive. It is estimated that India will have the largest number of AIDS

victims of any country in the world by the year 2000.

The region south of Madras where work is presently concentrated is reckoned to be the poorest in the whole of India. Yet this is certainly not true of spiritual life and culture. Tamil is the language used in daily life. Although English is often portrayed as the common language of multilingual India, it is important to remember that less than 3% of the population have a basic understanding of it.



Young, eager faces.

Young people delight in expressing their skills through acting, song and dance as well as crafts and skills. India is a deeply religious country and to the vast majority of people religion is one of the most — if not the most — important factors in their lives. In a church in Tiruvannamalai, a town south-west of Madras, boys would regularly come after school, carrying their schoolbooks and bags. They enter the church singly or in groups of two or three, light a candle and then reverently kneel before the altar and say a prayer. Most may not claim to have a deep knowledge of Christ's teaching as yet

but this illustrates the religious platform on which the gospel is to be proclaimed.

Junior Ministry involves children giving them value and worth in a society where they can easily be forgotten. Young people are given practical opportunities of leadership and are often involved in the reporting and running of their programmes. These programmes are simple and direct and rely on the most basic of equipment. The key factor in all this is the support of the church and the dedication of leaders.

There are currently some 11,000 members in Junior Ministry between the Tamil Evangelical and Arcot Lutheran Churches. In India alone there are ten different Lutheran Churches, not to mention the larger congregations of the Churches of South and North India. Most recently, enquiries have been received from the Congregational Church in Mizoram province.

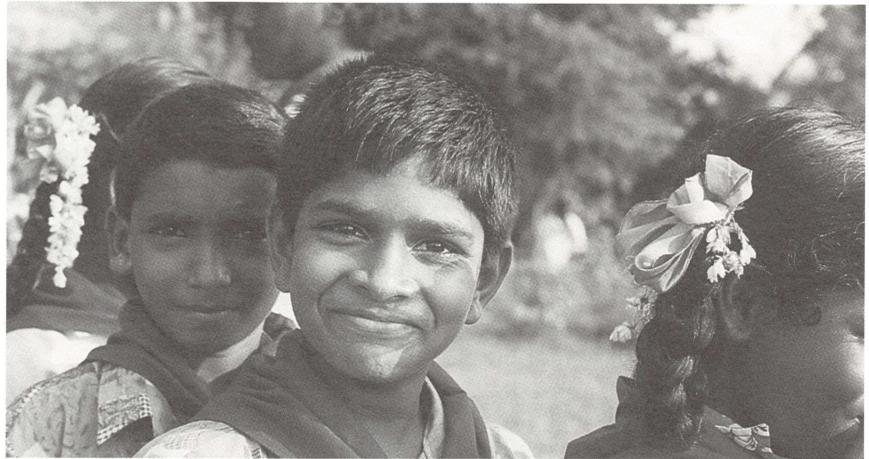
The potential is great and much work has still to be done. As one watches amazing programmes of dexterity at the home for blind children at Tirupattur those of us who can see are aware of the differences between the children.

Yet our very eyesight can blind us to all that unites and makes us one. So we should not, in any Christian context, seek to divide and categorise our work. Junior Ministry in India traces its origins back to the pioneering work of Alexander Smith and the BB. We should be proud that such work has blossomed and that Christ's Kingdom is being witnessed and advanced amongst those who are in greatest need.

**Eric Woodburn,
Executive Secretary,
The World Conference**

"Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?"

"When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."



Happy faces at a village team in Pakirapalayam.

BB INTERNATIONAL

AUCTION EVENTS

Building upon the success of Memorabilia Auctions two events will be held this year.

12th April at Northampton Battalion Headquarters and early autumn date at Belfast Battalion Headquarters.

Each event will feature auction of BB Memorabilia in support of BB International work.

Join us at Northampton or Belfast.

Help us by donating items for the Auctions.

Illustrated Auction Catalogues/Programmes available 1st March and 1st September 1997.

Further details:

**The Boys' Brigade, Felden Lodge,
Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 0BL**

The letters page in the January Gazette carried news of storms and floods that hit South India. Here is more news direct from Tamil Nadu and of the work being done by our young people to help bring relief.

'I hope that you have heard all about the lashing rains that devastated our region, subsequent to the storms that hit the neighbouring State of Andhra Pradesh. The recent torrential rains, to our horror, continued incessantly for a full fortnight. Nature's fury took a heavy toll on lives, not to mention causing millions of rupees worth of damage. The rural poor were worst hit, bearing the brunt of flood waters. Damage to their habitation, located near the banks of rivers and wild streams, left them starving and without shelter. Relief operations, both State and private, as well as Church related agencies, were undertaken on a war footing with great difficulty. In our area of Junior Ministry, our youngsters in many affected places engaged themselves in the effort, coming to the rescue of the suffering and even supplying them with food packets, financed by donations raised when making our "Carol Rounds". The disaster is reckoned to be unprecedented.'

**S. Vijayaruben, Junior Ministry
ALC, South India**