

July 2009

Dear Friends,

A letter enclosing a £50 donation contained comments which make a fitting start to this letter:

*The whole Serampore enterprise is a wonderful tribute to the vision and courage of its founders, and with modern India taking off as a country to be reckoned with, the Christian role and contribution certainly needs to be strong and attractive. And the campus needs to look well cared for.*

That says it in a nutshell, doesn't it?

The Principal, Rev Dr Lalchungnunga, has sent the following **recent news from Serampore**:

1. We had an international seminar on bio-diversity on 13-14 Feb, which was well received and attended. It was a good experience for me personally; I discovered in a more scientific way how many bacteria there are in the universe and how limited our knowledge still is about them. It was everybody's concern that we need to really take care of our world if we want to survive as human species.

2. The Danes show keen interest in reviving Danish legacies in Serampore. The Danish Court building is being renovated by the Govt. of West Bengal. St. Olaf Church building is so bad that we cannot worship in it now. If the Danes can help us do major repair, we may resume our worship there.

3. We will have some 140 theology students altogether in the new session, which begins with retreat programme on 13th June. We will have the Vice Principal and two teachers share messages in the theology department retreat this year, instead of inviting a person from outside as a speaker. Two new Teachers will join, thus further stabilizing our theology faculty. This year we had Summer School of Languages, where we prepare the fresh students of BD in Hebrew, Greek, English and Bengali. We feel this is a good practice.

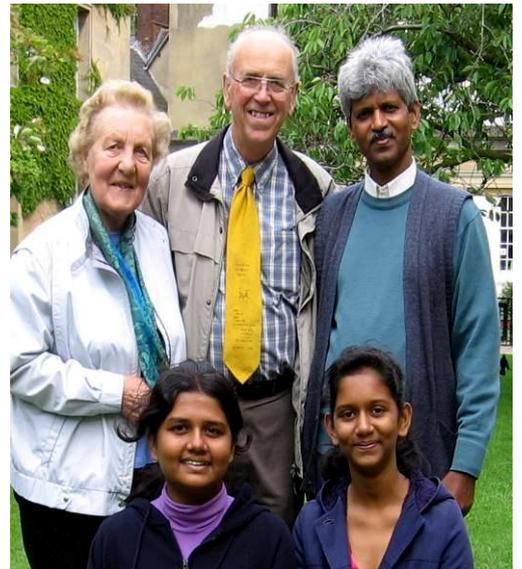
4. Another development which may be of interest to you is our attempt to have an extension Diploma Course started in Bible Translation. This will be done with the support of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Wycliffe Bible Translation, Word for the World, and Bible Society of India. By doing this we hope to revive from Serampore the vision and mission of William Carey and others that the Scripture be made available in all the languages.

5. Carey Day Celebration Committee have decided to have "Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges" as the theme for this year's Carey Day. We have invited the US Consul General to be our Chief Guest and one of the Joint Directors of Public Instructions, Govt. of West Bengal, to speak on the theme. The usual ways of celebration will be organized, including procession to Carey cemetery and having service there.

5. The Carey Cemetery is substantially improved with the services of INTAC and they are handing over to us after their renovation work is completed, possibly in the last part of this month.

7. Our plan to build Carey Communications Centre cannot materialize at the moment on account of the economic recession.

8. We had a consultation on June 9 between the members of the Council of Serampore College and Church leaders on the financial support situation of Theology Department. Their recommendations were endorsed the following day by the Working Committee of the College Council.



One of the new teachers is GH Mithra, returning after a break for doctoral studies at Bangalore. We visited him at Regent's Park College, Oxford - he was over for a few weeks of study, joined by two of his daughters for the last fortnight.

The consultation was cordial and encouraging. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church of Mizoram, the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India, the Utkal Christian Church Central Council (Orissa), the Mar Thoma Syrian Orthodox Church, and the Lutheran Church were represented. The Churches of North India and South India were not. The leaders who attended were very open and positive towards doing something for the sustenance of the theology department of the College. The more encouraging recommendations they made are:

- (a) Appeal be made to the Churches to observe Serampore College Sunday on the first Sunday of February every year and send the collections of offerings in one of that Sunday's services to the College.
- (b) Every Church which sends a sitting member on the Council of Serampore College should henceforth give not less than Rs.10,000 (about £125) annual membership fee.
- (c) Churches be requested to fully or partially sponsor teachers to the theology department.
- (d) Churches be appealed to make grants available to the college for special projects.
- (e) Churches should sponsor students fully.
- (f) Appeals be made to Churches to contribute toward enhancement of the Council's corpus fund to take it to the level of Rs.2-3 crores (about £250,000 - £375,000).
- (g) Theology Department shall organize Church visits every now and then to share the College's concerns and to make appeal for financial support.
- (h) All efforts be made to make the Churches know that they are the owners of the College.
- (i) Ways and means be sought to appoint full-time Promoter of College finances.

These are bold recommendations. Please ask members of Friends of Serampore to pray and do whatever is possible to make these dreams a reality.

We plan to have similar consultations with our overseas partners and friends at Serampore on 22 October 2009.

The exam results in the **Senate Report** for 2008 indicate the scale and importance of "**Serampore College (University)**" [with the figures for 2007 in brackets]:

Diploma in Clinical Pastoral Counselling	[33] 20	Bachelor of Divinity	[615] 662
Diploma in Christian Studies	[26] 64	Master of Theology	[87] 75
Bachelor of Christian Studies	[89] 80	Doctor of Ministry	[10] 10
Bachelor of Theology	[296] 319	Doctor of Theology	[7] 10

**Total: [1163] 1240**

The Senate takes very seriously its responsibility in conducting examinations and overseeing academic standards. The Annual Report speaks of "recalling a number of answer scripts of colleges where very high marks were awarded in 2007 and 2008 and re-evaluating them." Some of the colleges are largely autonomous in many respects (as in many of the secular universities in India) - Serampore is urgently having to consider afresh the criteria for this status.

**"A Steep Learning Curve"** Edward had occasion recently to write an article under this title, part of which we pass on here:

*Rosemary and I went to India in 1959 with the BMS. As an eager-beaver young missionary, my theme text was from Acts 26: "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." I taught at Serampore College in the Physics Department, whose head, Prof Ganguly, was a wonderful Bengali gentleman. In his Calcutta MSc he had come second to a future Nobel winner. He had also, studying in his spare time, taken first place in MA History! Not only his scholarship, but this Hindu's humanity and spirituality put mine into the shade, and eager-beaver missionary had to do some very rapid thinking!*

*One conviction, which has remained ever since, is that you do not magnify Christ by belittling others. From the story of science itself I realised*



Radharaman Ganguly

*that I have the privilege of seeing through telescope and microscope wonders that Isaac Newton never saw - and would have given anything to see - but yet he was a far greater scientist than I am. In the same way, we can still have the highest respect for those with whom we seek to share Christ.*

*As well as Hindus, we also counted Parsees and Sikhs among our good friends...*

Here is a summary of the inspected accounts for last year.

<u>INCOME FOR 2008</u>		
Balances b/f on 1 Jan 2008:		634.43
Donations and subscriptions:		3492.80
Gift Aid refunds received		490.34
Bank interest		<u>1.72</u>
		<u>4619.29</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE FOR 2008</u>		
Journal subscriptions		142.77
To Ser.Coll.: Support of staff member	2000.00	
For Theology Dept. appeal	1359.00	
Donation earmarked for Scholarship	<u>641.00</u>	4000.00
Expenses: Newsletters, postages and computer use, etc		109.10
Balances c/f on 31 Dec 2008:		<u>367.42</u>
		<u>4619.29</u>

If you wish to give financial support, please make cheques payable to *Friends of Serampore* (unless you have made a Gift Aid declaration for gifts of £40 or more, in which case please contact us first) and send to us at: 12 Penny Lane, Guarlford, Malvern, WR13 6PG.

Do hold the College in your prayers, especially in their financial need. With our warmest good wishes,

**Edward and Rosemary Williams**