

Christian Endeavor in Asia

(Dr. B. K. Pramanik, India)

Asia is unique from many points of view. It is the birthplace of many religions, cultures and civilizations. More than half of the world's population lives in Asia. The continent of Asia is so vast that it is very difficult to collate the history developments and present situation of any Christian organization.

As we all know, the Christian Endeavour movement was founded on 2 February 1881 in Portland, Maine, USA. C E being one of the most effective forces, of Christian Youth ministry that the Church had ever known, spread to other lands and many national Christian Endeavour Unions were formed.

The first Christian Endeavour Society on the India subcontinent was organized in 1884, i.e., within three years of the founding of the C E movement in the U S. Records show that C E Societies were first organized in Bombay, Madanapalli and Madurai in India. In 1897 the CE union of India, Burma and Ceylon was organised. By 1905 there were 567 CE societies with 28,200 members in India and 13 societies in Burma.

With amazing rapidity it spread from Church to Church, from denomination to denomination, and from nation to nation in Asia. CE societies were founded: 1884 in Ceylon, 1885 in China, 1886 in India, 1889 in Turkey and Japan, 1895 in Laos, 1898 in the Philippines. During those years CE was also established in Persia (Iran) and Siam (Thailand). Rev. Francis Clark visited Asia in 1886 and 1900.

With the success, the CE Movement experienced, the World CE Union was organized in 1885 and Asia was ready to host the Fourth World's CE Convention in Agra, India in 1909. Thereafter World's

conventions were held in Asia, New Delhi in 1978, Seoul, Korea in 1986, Singapore in 2002. Asian representation in World's Conventions was not very encouraging due to financial condition of the Endeavourers and government restrictions. However, in New Delhi convention more than 1200 delegates participated. For the first time Asia had a large delegation at the Centenary Convention in 1981 in Portland, Maine, USA and in 1982 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

CE is interdenominational interracial and international movement. In the second half of the 20th century most of the denominational churches have started their own youth fellowship with their own doctrinal focus. In some places CE is seen as an ecumenical liberal organization. Hence the Evangelical Student Union is taking over in Churches. Charismatic churches are not interested in CE movement.

Presently we know of C E Unions in India, Korea, Japan, Nepal and Myanmar. There is also CE in Syria and Lebanon, which falls under the region of Africa and the Middle East.

CE in **India** has been divided into four regions for better coordination and fellowship:

CE in North India, CE in South India, CE in East India and CE in North East India.

At present more than 120,000 CE members participate in 1500 Societies. Conventions are held every year at District level, once in two years at State/Regional level and once in three years at the National level. Apart from Conventions in which Christian Endeavourers come together to share and renew friendship and fellowship, there are regular CE retreats, Bible Study events and quizzes to challenge the young people. Presently persecution in some States has devastated our Christian Endeavourers. India needs special prayer.

In **Myanmar** (Burma), CE works within the Karen Baptist Church. The Karen Baptist Christian Endeavour Union (KBCEU) has more

than 1,200 local societies with almost 110,000 members. They publish a year book and are involved in evangelism, training and social work.

When the Protestant churches in **Japan** were united after World War II to form the Kyodan church, all CE societies also became a part of this church. The Japanese CE is made up mainly of seniors and is concerned about social projects.

Korea has three CE Unions linked to different Presbyterian churches. Church members between 20 and 50 years of age are considered members of CE. Thus CE has a large number of members (about 1 million). As the local churches are very strong the CE has not developed its own structures and activities very much. The Korean CE is supporting social projects and missionary work abroad.



CE Convention in Korea

The present situation of CE in many countries is not very encouraging rather disappointing. However, there are many strong Unions in Asia and God is doing wonderful work through these strong Unions. We need prayers that the Lord will intervene and bring revival in CE movement in Asia.