



## *Museum Musings*

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### **The Bhil Banner, A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Artefact and An Acts 16 Event**



**Created by Christians in the Vindhya-Satpura area (a.k.a. the Bhil field) of India who were imprisoned because of their faith in Jesus Christ**

**In Hindi script, the banner proclaims: "In the love of God, through the leadership of Christ, we are learning the patience of the Cross in prison. From the jail-birds in Alirajpur."**

None of the men who embroidered and sewed the banner above would ever have planned to make it. But, it was political events in their communities that led to the religious persecution which led to their imprisonment. During the time that they were jailed, they handcrafted this banner.

The plight of the Christian leaders in the Bhil area was communicated the first time to supporters of the Atlantic Mission Society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through the March, 2004 issue of *The Presbyterian Message*. In the article, "An Update on the Bhil Field Situation in India", the letter of Dr. Pauline Brown, long-time Presbyterian Church in Canada worker in the Bhil area, was reprinted. In a letter dated Jan. 20, 2004, she submitted an urgent request for prayer. She reported on a change in political party which resulted in a hostile environment for indigenous Christians. The editor supplied this background: "The state elections there were recently won by the BJP, [Bharatiya Janata Party], a nationalist Hindu party. This has emboldened Hindu extremists in the area who advocate a

policy they call Hindutva, the belief that India is for Hindus only and that Muslims, and especially Christians, are not true Indians and should not be allowed to live in India.” (*Message*, Mar. 2004, pg. 25)

Pauline then relates the attacks that were perpetrated against the churches, homes and property owned by Christians in the communities of Alirajpur and Amkhut. “In fear the Christians fled the area, locking their homes, but the doors were broken and their homes looted and burned. Those Christians whose homes were burnt had no material possessions left.” (*Message*, Mar. 2004, pg. 26) The wife of a Christian business owner was badly beaten. At the Amkhut Mission School, the Hindu extremists warned the children that they should not attend a Christian school or read the Bible, etc. The children were psychologically terrified by a man who fired a gun in the air.

The authorities in Amkhut restored a relative sense of calm by falsely “charging” the local minister with instigating the riots. He along with 13 other Christians were unjustifiably imprisoned on Jan. 16, 2004. They were not released until nearly 2 ½ years later on May 31, 2006.

In the October, 2004 issue of *The Presbyterian Message*, Pauline updated her account. But, it was not to describe how the churches and homes had been restored, or that there had been reparations made by government officials for the property that had been destroyed. She told of her visit, in the company of twelve members of the Jobat church, to the jail on the afternoon of Easter Sunday. They went to visit the Christian prisoners (by this time 12 in number) to provide them with encouragement.

Instead, those who visited were blessed by a series of contemporary miracles. They witnessed the joy of the Christian prisoners. Instead of visiting with the Christian prisoners, the entire prison population (178) was in attendance through permission of the jailer. The prisoners and visitors listened as the Christian prisoners sang the Bhili-composed hymns to accompany the three Christian messages brought by two pastors and a church member. As the afternoon was concluding the jailer told them, “that if we wanted to come again, any time we wanted, we were welcome”. As they were leaving, they were invited by the head-jailer and the sub-jailer to visit their homes.

Surely, this banner is a visual reminder and assertion that the sovereign Lord of creation and the universes can and does perform Acts 16 miracles in any circumstance and in any era that He chooses.



**Pauline Brown, long-time Presbyterian Church in Canada worker in the Bhil area, presenting the Bhil Christian prisoners’ banner to Rev. Ian Morrison, General Secretary, Life and Mission Agency**

Credit: *The Presbyterian Message*, Vol. 114 No. 8 (Oct. 2004)

**Acknowledgement:** The above account of the Bhil Christians who were imprisoned in 2004 was extracted from the following articles published in *The Presbyterian Message*: “An Update on the Bhil Field Situation in India” Vol. 114 No. 3 (Mar. 2004), pgs.25-26; and, “Ross, Marjorie. “Pauline Brown’s Visit to Prison”, (Vol. 114 No. 8 (Oct. 2004), pgs. 6-8. Atlantic Mission Society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. <sup>1</sup>

### **Letter from Pauline Brown, dated Jan. 20, 2004:**

The church in Alirajpur has not been burned, as some previous reports had said, but pews and furnishings have been removed and damaged. Some homes of Christian families in Alirajpur were burned. In fear the Christians fled the area, locking their homes, but the doors were broken and their homes looted and burned. Those Christians whose homes were burnt have no material possessions left.

The mission bungalow built by the PCC mission and occupied by a Christian businessman and his family has not been destroyed, but his wife was badly beaten and her car torched.

At Amkhut, the perpetrators went to the Mission School and frightened the children, telling them that they should not go to the Christian School, should not read the Bible, etc. In Amkhut, one man had a gun and fired it in the air which really scared the children.

In Amkhut one man (a Hindu) was killed and the minister of the church, Rev. J. S., was charged with "instigating" the riots, an attempt by local authorities to pin the blame on Christians. The church in Amkhut was not burned, but damaged with Bibles ripped apart and furniture destroyed.

The Hindus that live in Amkhut have left and the Christians have remained. The Christians in Jobat were terrified having heard that Jobat is next! The Indian government has 70 security officers on the compound, including the Village Development buildings, Jobat Christian School, and other buildings. Dr. Deborah Tezlo, the Superintendent, reported that they have 12 security officers guarding the hospital alone. She said that in her bungalow she has an extra 70 or 80 young people staying with her as they are so frightened.

Source: "An Update on the Bhil Field Situation in India" in *The Presbyterian Message*. Vol. 114 No. 3 (Mar. 2004), pg.26.

**Dr. Pauline Brown** During World War II, Pauline served in the Royal Canadian Navy and was stationed in Canada from 1943 to 1946. Following the war, she trained and graduated as a nurse. She received her R. N. from Ottawa Civic Hospital. She earned her Diploma in Public Health and her B. Sc. in Nursing from the University of Ottawa. Later, she obtained her Master of Health Sciences H.C.P. (Health Care Practice) from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont.

Pauline arrived in India in Nov. 1951 and served as a missionary nurse until she retired in 2006. She served as the Director of Jobat Christian Hospital, Jobat Madhya Pradesh, District Jhabua and as a teacher at the Graduate School of Nursing In Indore. Along with Isobel McConnel and Bessie McMurchy, she helped to set up Mobile Medical Units in the Bhil field.

Pauline was made a member of the Order of Canada in 2000. She holds honorary doctorates and awards from the Canadian and Indian governments for her work in the Vindhya-Satpura region (a.k.a. the Bhil field) where she established a community health network to support the well-being of the Bhil people. She was awarded an honorary Doctorate in Divinity from Knox College, Toronto in 1998. ("Pauline Brown", pgs. 7-10) During the National Women's Gathering held in May, 2014, she was one of six who was presented with the inaugural award of the "Presbyterian Women of Faith". The award was established by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Women's Missionary Society and the Order of Diaconal Ministries to recognize the courageous and faithful work of women within the denomination who were instrumental in spearheading pioneer or ground-breaking ministries. ("Woman of Faith")

## INDIA

### Pauline Brown's Visit to Prison by Marjorie Ross

In June, Pauline Brown, on leave from India, visited the church office and brought the message to the regular staff worship service. Following the service, she agreed to retell this story on tape so that it could be shared with a wider audience.

I have summarized her update of the situation in the Bhil area, but the story of the visit to the prison is in her own words. Even so, the words may not convey to the reader the impact that they had when we heard them in person. Pauline relives the wonderful spiritual experience each time she tells the story. Her voice and her face show how much she and the others were moved that day, and how strongly they felt God's presence.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, a group of us from the Jobat congregation – six or eight of the men (including the pastors) and four of us women – got permission to go to visit the men who remain in prison in Alirajpur. And so we went, and we took with us fruit, because although you can't feed the prisoners, they can accept fruit. We were to be there from 3:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon – we had one hour. So the jailer met us at the door and we were frisked and all that stuff, and he took us into a room. We thought we were going to be meeting with the 12 Christian prisoners, but instead the whole jail, 178 prisoners, were there. The jailer had called them all, which was a bit of a surprise.

Anyway, the Christian 'jailees' were there, and they had drums, flutes and a couple of other musical instruments. They were playing and singing their Bhili hymns, written by the Bhils themselves. And they were happy; they were really drumming and singing to their heart's content, they were so happy. And then the messages were given by two of the pastors and one of the women, and after that the jailer spoke and told us that if we wanted to come again, any time we wanted, we were welcome. That was terrific!

Well then, they were going to hand out the fruit, and I thought, oh my goodness! How are we going to spread fruit for 12 to 178? But the loaves and fishes were repeated, and there were even enough plates, big plates like dinner plates, and everybody got a plate and everybody got a plate full of fruit! Now can you figure out how that was done? I really mean it! I don't know how they did it. But anyway, they all got enough, and it was a miracle!

And then, when we were leaving – you should know that now I am one of the oldest ladies in the community, and so I have certain rights, just because of my age – and so I blessed our Christian young men, and put a cross on their foreheads. Some of the other prisoners came with folded hands and said, "Please give us also a blessing", which was very touching. Some of the police came with folded hands and they had tears in their eyes, and said, "Will you please give us the blessing?" I was very touched, but I had never been in this situation before, and I didn't know how to handle it. Anyway, I said the Lord was blessing them, because we had all had a blessed time. So they too received the blessing.

Then, when we went out, the jailer said, "Please come to my house". So we all trekked over to his house, where we met his wife and their two sons. The oldest son, about 22 years old, was lying on the floor on a mattress, obviously very ill. The jailer said that they had taken him (to doctors) all over, and they were told it was some problem with his brain – not a tumor – which has left him in a semi-comatose condition for over a year. The jailer said, "Please pray for my son", and so we did, and we had a nice time with the family. When we left the head-jailer's house, the sub-jailer said, "Now you come to my house". So we had to go to his house where he gave us some snacks and mango juice, etc. and we had a good visit with him.



It was all such a blessed time. We said to them that we had thought we would come to give our men support, but actually they gave us so much. And our Christian men – yes, they're still in jail, and yes, some were crying – but they're all right. They are very, very strong. And, really, our church in Canada can thank God for them. . .

The day before I was leaving to come on furlough, one of my colleagues came with a banner about 3 feet long, made by the men in prison, and it is gorgeous. The banner is made with all kinds of colour; it's so colourful, with all different pompoms. They have written in Hindi script – in embroidery – “From the jail-birds in Alirajpur”. They are saying, “In the love of God, through the leadership of Christ, we are learning the patience of the Cross in prison”. My colleagues told me, “The men have sent this, and they say that you are to take it to the church in Canada to thank them and to show them how grateful they are for your love and prayers and support”.

When people see it, they comment on what a joyous piece of work it is, with all the colours, and the butterflies and flowers. It's worked so nicely, and is a tremendous amount of work – it must have taken them weeks of work! And it's not the kind of work that men usually do, which is another miracle! This beautiful banner is a demonstration of God's Grace to His people, isn't it? Through His Holy Spirit. It couldn't be any other way; it's by His Grace! We are richly blessed, aren't we?

When Pauline finished, I said that when she described the Christian men singing in the prison, and then the visit to the jailer's house, I was reminded of the story of Paul and Silas in Acts. (Acts 16)  
Pauline reached over and took my arm. “But that's exactly it,” she said. “At the time when it was happening, we were looking at each other and saying, ‘It feels as if we were in the middle of Acts!’ ” Clearly, they all received a special Easter blessing through that visit to the prison.

Source: Ross, Marjorie. “Pauline Brown's Visit to Prison” in *The Presbyterian Message*. Vol. 114 No. 8 (Oct. 2004), pgs. 6-8.

### **The Christian prisoners were eventually released – 2 ½ years later.**

Pauline recounts the celebrations that accompanied the release of the prisoners:

The release of the falsely accused prisoners on May 31<sup>st</sup> [2006] was a time of thanksgiving and rejoicing! In June, the men held a day-long thanksgiving service in their village, Puniyawat. In late September, the Vindhya Satpura's eleven congregations, institutions and individuals held a special service of praise and thanksgiving in Amkhut. About 3,000 people, including the Canadian representatives, National Church leaders and local political dignitaries took an active part in the celebrations which were planned and funded by our local groups. (“Brown, “News From Pauline Brown”, pg. 22)

**The testimonies of the Christian prisoners <sup>2</sup> are preserved in:**

## ***Witness***

compiled by Pauline Brown, Presbyterian Church in Canada worker in the Bhil area, India

My people, you are my witnesses and my  
chosen servant.  
I want you to know Me,  
To trust Me, and understand  
That I alone am God.  
I have always been God;  
there can be no others.  
Isaiah 43: 10

Several months ago, I was requested to do a write-up regarding the experiences of our sisters and brothers during the time of their arrest and incarceration in jail, during and after January 2004. It seemed to me that it would be much more meaningful if the men and women would record their own account of what happened and their individual responses.

Except for a few, most of the participants in that journey of fear, uncertainty – and finally – faith and certainty, have put down in their own words, their experiences. Some of the records are brief while others are more descriptive. But each one is a testimony and witness to how the Lord dealt with them and blessed them, both during as well as following their jail terms. Some of them also witness to the difficulties some of their families had to undergo during the two and a half years of forced separation. Through all of the accounts one is struck with the thankfulness expressed to God, for His faithfulness and also for the faithfulness of His people close to home and across far continents. This indeed is a witness to the strength of the “Golden Chain” which binds God’s people together as one.

### **Appreciation:**

It is impossible to mention every individual, institution and church who has contributed to this venture, in India as well as Canada and other countries. So many people were upholding the prisoners and their families in prayer, as well as contributing food, clothes and finances.

One must express gratitude to the members of the Incidence Committee, who never flagged in their concern and efforts for the release of the prisoners and the well-being of their families.

It is the prayer and the heartfelt desire of all those concerned that this booklet, published in Hindi and English, should be a joyful witness to God’s faithfulness, power and love.

Pauline P. Brown, C.M.

## **Glossary:**

Bajrang Dal – militant youth wing of the Vishva Hindu Parişad, right-wing organization based on the ideology of Hindutva

BJP - Bharatiya Janata Party

CHC – Community Health Centre

CNI – Church of North India

EFI - Evangelical Fellowship of India

RSS – Rashtirya Swayamsevak Sangh, a right-wing, paramilitary, volunteer Hindu nationalist group, modelled after Hitler youth

Sarpanch – an elected head of a village level statutory institution of local self-government called the panchayat  
- “Sar” meaning “head” and “panch” meaning “decision maker” provides the meaning “head of the decision makers” of the village (“Sarpanch”)

SBHS – Synodical Board of Health Services, Church of North India

SDM – Sub-Divisional Magistrate

SDOP – Sub-Divisional Officer of Police

Shiv Sena – a Hindu nationalist political organization variously described as extremist, chauvinistic and fascist and which sometimes functions as a terrorist group

SP – Superintendent of Police

Tehsildar – a revenue administrative officer

VSA – Vindhya and Satpura Area, also known as the Bhil field

## **Forward**

### **Vindhya and Satpura Area (V.S.A.) Incidence Committee of Bhopal Diocese**

The VSA Incidence Committee members and our advocates thought that it is impossible to get freedom of all the men from the jail, but God, in His mercy, made the impossible, possible. So all praise and thanks and glory to Him, because He gave freedom to all 16 prisoners in one day.

2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 20: 15, “And He said. . . the battle is not yours but God’s”. God fought for our prisoner brothers.

When the violent incident took place in VSA, or the Bhil field, the Rt. Rev. Maida, Bishop of Bhopal Diocese and his Executive Committee met urgently and formed the above-mentioned Committee to deal with the day to day matters of the victims, and the 19 our people in Jail (3 got bail after 3 days), and their families.

**Committee members:**

1. Dr. Wilson Dawar - Treasurer, Deanery Committee of VSA and Government Veterinary Surgeon
2. Dr. Deborah Tezlo - Convener, VSA Incidence Committee and Medical Superintendent Jobat Christian Hospital
3. Mr. Sanjiv Shalatiel - Co-ordinator, Village Development Prog., Bhopal Diocese
4. Mr. Sudhir Onkar - Gas Agency in Alirajpur and one of the victims of mob violence
5. Mr. Jairaj Reuben - Government teacher, Amkhut

**After 3 months, the following two members were added (they had spent a short time in jail also):**

6. Rev. E. Ariel - Presbyter in Charge, Zion Church, Jobat and Dean, VSA
7. Mr. T. Stephen - Headmaster, Christian School, Amkhut

**Co-opted Members:**

8. Dr. Pauline Brown - Co-ordinator, CHC of Mendha and Jobat and Co-ordinator for Village Development Programs, Menda
9. Dr. S. Daniel - Doctor in private practice in Jobat
10. Mr. Sundar Renwal - Retired District Superintendent Police, Alirajpur

At times the Committee was extended to include the Deanery Committee members as well as the Bishop of Bhopal Diocese, in order to deal with some difficult matter.

**Actions performed by the Incidence Committee included:**

1. Three members of the Committee visited the homes of the victims in Alirajpur, Munroe Church, Alirajpur, Kathiwara Church and Amkhut Mission School, and prepared a report re: the amount of damage which had been done. This report was sent to Bhopal Diocese and Church of North India, New Delhi.
2. a. Visited the men in jail many times. We encouraged them and they encouraged us saying, "Don't worry for us: we have hymn singing, Bible reading and prayers with other inmates of about 250". So it was a time of witness for Jesus Christ.  
b. Accompanied Dr. Samuel Kishan, Secretary SBHS New Delhi twice to visit the men. Dr. Kishan brought a gift of money from the staff of CNI Bhavan at Christmas time. The Committee members also took Mrs. Blessie from SBHS, New Delhi, to visit the men.



- c. A group of 5 people came to visit the victims and men in jail, 2 advocates from Orissa, EFI Co-ordinator and Chairperson, woman member of M.P. State Minority Commission and one pastor also came, and were accompanied by our committee members.
- d. Many other groups, including friends from Canada, visited the victims and “jailees”, with the help of our committee.
3. Visited the families of the men in jail and whatever assistance was given in money, clothing, food, supplies by individuals, institutions and churches in India and Canada, was distributed by the Committee members.
  4. Arranged for competent advocates. One advocate used to come from Barwani and after attending the court in Alirajpur, he would come to Jobat to meet with a few members of the Committee to update us on what was happening in the court. He was paid for every visit.
  5. Regular information was given to the Bishop and some money was forwarded from the Bhopal Diocese for day to day work and payment of the advocate.
  6. Bishop Maida, a few members of the Incidence Committee, the secretaries and treasurers of some of the churches of the V.S. Area went with the victims whose houses had been burned and looted and one lady who had been raped, went to New Delhi by bus from Jobat. They met Mr. Kantilal Bhuria, our M.P. and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the Congress President, who offered much encouragement. A few days later the same party went to Bhopal to meet the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, but could not meet him. So we contacted many political leaders for help, but little happened. On 31.5.06, the case came before a female Muslim Magistrate and she declared that all 16 men who were in jail were not guilty. To hear this news was a great joy throughout the V.S. area, India and abroad. All praise, thanks and glory to God for great things He has done.
  7. V.S.A. Committee members helped in distributing compensation money given to:
    - a) the people who were in jail for 4 days, those who were in for one and a half months and those who were in for two and a half years (b) those whose homes were burned and goods looted, according to category and (c) the 3 men who were injured.

Churches: Alirajpur Church has been repaired and Kathiwara Church is to be repaired using funds sent by a Women’s Missionary Society (The Presbyterian Church in Canada) and Church group in Canada.

**Institutions:** Amkhut School was damaged, for which some compensation was given. All the people who received the compensation were very happy and thanked the kind-hearted donors.

At present time, there are 17 men most of whom are government employees, such as teachers, rangers and other officers who were present at the place where the violence took place in January, 2004. They were all put in jail for one day and they are still having to attend the court regularly. We trust that God will help them to be free from attending the court soon. They need our prayer support.

On Sept. 23, 2006, there was a huge gathering of Vindhya Satpura Christians, Diocesan officials and Canadian High Church dignitaries. Also present to celebrate were a number of local political leaders and advocates. The whole day was spent in praising and thanking God for the deliverance of His people and for the return of a peaceful environment in the area. All the costs of this event were supplied by the rejoicing local Christians of Vindhya Satpura area.

We, as the Incidence Committee members thank all the partner Churches of North India and Canada, and all the institutions and individuals who have prayed constantly for our people, encouraged with letters and cards and helped us financially. Because you all supported in various ways, we got strength and did not feel alone. We say with the prophet Samuel, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." (I Samuel 7: 12) We give all thanksgiving to Him.

Dr. Deborah Tezlo, Chairperson, V.S. Area Incidence Committee

### **Pastor Number 1**

**(the names of the pastors and the Christian lay people have been withheld in order to protect their safety)**

I thank God that He has given me the opportunity to share my experience of Jan. 16, 2004, and to highlight some of the communal forces which took place on the Amkhut Mission Compound.

Since 1897, when Dr. John Buchanan<sup>3</sup> established the mission in this area, in my experiences, this is the first time such a happening has taken place in a mainline church.

1. On Jan. 16, 2004, about 11 a.m., a Hindu organization took out a procession in the Amkhut compound, and attacked the mission school and church. Those people didn't only shout against the Christians, but they also tore up the answer sheets of the children who were writing exams. They also tore up a picture of Jesus. They also tore up the Bible. They broke the glass in the church doors.
2. When these people entered the mission compound and began to do these things, the Christians tried to reason with them, but they became even more violent, and both sides began to fight and throw stones at each other. During this time, a large number of Christians came to the compound. Seeing such numbers, the Hindu activists got into their jeeps and ran away. Going to Kathiwara village, they lied saying that the Christians have kidnapped some Hindus. In this way, the Hindus misbehaved. Hearing this, the Hindus around Kathiwara gathered in Amkhut and began to attack the Christians with guns, bows and arrows and swords which they had brought with them. From the town of Bhabra, 3 more jeep loads of people armed with weapons were on the way, but were met on the road between Amkhut and Puniyawat by a large group of Christians from these two villages. The Hindus were firing guns from the top of their jeep, and during this time one of their group was shot.
3. On Jan. 16, 2004 at 6 p.m., Amkhut village became peaceful, but that very night all the police officers from Amkhut area arrived and ordered that everyone in Puniyawat village having guns should hand them over to the police. That very night people deposited their guns with the police. Those people were arrested and locked up in a nearby police station.
4. On Jan. 17 about 6 a.m., the Superintendent of police called me. With him, we visited the church and school buildings. Then he told me to write a report, and he took me to the police station in Amkhut. From there he took me to the Alirajpur police station and locked me up. He told me he was doing this for my own protection.
5. On Jan. 18 about 2 p.m., they took our whole group to the Alirajpur Court and about 8 p.m. we were all put in jail. From Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> to Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, I was in jail. Then I got bail from the High Court, but the others had to suffer in jail for 2 ½ years.

## **Worship in Jail:**

Every evening, we were singing and praising God, reading the Bible and telling other prisoners Bible stories. The jail police were also listening to the singing, Bible reading and prayer. People could hear us in the surrounding houses. We requested permission from the head jailer for holding Sunday worship and he willingly gave us permission. A number of prisoners came to the Lord. They were coming to us with their difficulties and we would pray for them. A number of them got released from jail. Besides them, others also began to have faith in prayer. In jail, those who were against us also began to pray.

## **My experience in Jail:**

I give thanks to God that He gave me more training through the jail experience. It was a beautiful experience for all of us. I thank everyone who prayed for us, helped us and especially helped us to get released from jail. I thank Dr. Pauline Brown that through her writing experience she could motivate us to write our experiences.

Thanks.

## **Witness Number 1**

I am \_\_\_\_\_ of village Puniyawat. On 16.1.04 morning, I rose and in a jeep went to Bhabra and from there 8 or 10 kms, I went to Kadwal village. There I had some conversation and ate food, at noon. From there my oldest son, his wife and 3 children came with me to Bhabra about 1 p.m. There, at about 1:30 p.m., we heard that RSS men had arrived at Amkhut to damage the church, and there is a big crowd and much fighting. A Muslim man told me, "In Amkhut there has been fighting, so go there as quickly as possible and save your church. Don't hesitate." I sent my oldest son by motorcycle back to Puniyawat from Bhabra and I started to look for a jeep to take us from Bhabra. Then I saw the jeep of \_\_\_\_\_, a man from Puniyawat, standing there so I told him that they were trying to break down Amkhut Church, so starting the jeep right away we took off for Amkhut. The Amkhut Bhabra road is about 17-18 kms and is in bad condition, so it took us about 1 hour to reach Amkhut. So we reached our village Puniyawat. As we got there my eldest son, with a gun in his hand, was standing by the road waiting for us. There were also some more people standing a little way off. All of us together went to Amkhut, arriving there about 3 p.m. and found all peaceful. There we found Alirajpur RSS and BJP people hidden in the police station.

Then in front of us, the SDOP, SDM, Tehsildar and other police people, in front of us, sent those (Alirajpur) people back to Alirajpur. After this, all of us brothers went together to the mission compound to see how much damage had been done to the church. Now all the Christian people considered what was to be done, and it was decided that everyone should keep their weapons in readiness, and should there be need both the old and the new bells of Amkhut Church would be rung and everyone would come running from every direction to stop the enemy. Thinking and deciding this, we began to return to our homes. Then I, \_\_\_\_\_, Brother \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ sat for a time at the police station. At that time, 2 RSS jeeps came from Kathiwara and we told them what had happened. Almost immediately after this, they left and a jeep of Bhabra people, by way of Puniyawat, arrived and in the jeep was the corpse of Arjunpa, who had been shot. And there were several other people who had been injured. We saw all this as we sat in the police station. The questions asked were: "Who did this?", "How did it happen?", "Where did it happen?". At that time, nobody knew anything and we left the police station knowing there would be more trouble and on the watch we scattered and returned to our own homes, arriving there as darkness fell. Then I was sitting on my verandah, gun in hand, and 10-12 men were sitting with me. Police, telling a lie, sent three men, Bibloo, Alfred and Arjun, to ask who fired a gun and that a man was killed, and SDOP would listen. All brought their guns to Amkhut police station, so the SDOP would listen to the sound of the guns and tell who fired the fatal shot. And there at the police station, the guns were put under police care and all names were written. That very night, we were all sent to the SP Sahib who was at Bhabra. We met him, then we were falsely put into a police jeep and taken to Ambua jail.

Six men were kept in jail for a night and a day, then again telling us lies, they took us to Alirajpur jail, because in that place was Motala Baba, a head constable whom we met and had conversation with, and our replies to his questions were written down.

Then we were kept in the jail for one night and one day and they took our statements. After that we were taken before the doctor and spent about 6-7 hours there being examined, then after that they shut us in the district jail. Whatever troubles, difficulties and sadness came, we bore them with love in the name of the Lord Jesus. Always we remained happy, and all people helped us and prayed to God for us. And we also worshipped our Father God in the jail regularly, and the jailer sahib was always ready to help us in every matter and we were always ready to obey his orders and he gave us opportunity to conduct worship and said to us, "keep praying to your God and you will be freed sooner, and I am praying for you, that you will gain freedom soon and after that I also will be transferred from here". Your prayers are being heard in every country, and by God's grace they are over you like a shield". And the whole jail was blessed. Everybody said to us that those who had put us there would be punished and they should be punished. Then I prayed, "Lord, will you do unjustly and will we be punished? We are here innocent." And others were saying to me that the rest of the men would be feed, but that I, \_\_\_\_\_, must be punished. And lawyers were saying likewise. So while hearing this, I spent time alone in prayer, while sitting or walking. But, Jesus said to me, "Don't be afraid, I am here with you, and I will be fair with everyone." When I received that answer, I was happy and after that the people in the jail used to come to me with their troubles to pray for them and also for their small illnesses. They would come for prayer, and we regularly prayed twice a day together as well as praying very often by ourselves. Then the jail people seeing us were saying, "you people are praying so much that you will surely be freed". All the brother prisoners were saying that these people are good people and their God will surely free them.

And you people were always remembering us in prayer and with the hope we also continued in prayer. So because of God's love and grace, we were released. For the future, we ask you people to continue to pray for us, and that we shall not fall into such a situation again, but that we shall go forward in the Lord's work.

Members of my household: \_\_\_\_\_; etc.

## **Witness Number 2**

Greetings to all my dear brothers in the Lord. I am \_\_\_\_\_, 26 years old, son of \_\_\_\_\_, of village Puniyawat. On Jan. 16 2004, I was in Puniyawat village near Amkhut. In the evening, I heard from my younger brother that this incident had taken place in Amkhut. Then after this, I went to sleep in my house. About 7 p.m, two people came to take my uncle's gun. With them, I went to the Amkhut police station. There the police, lying, told us that the Superintendent of Police had said to bring the gun to Ambua to check it. We took the gun there, and the police put us in the Ambua jail. And that night we slept with all the brothers. The next day at 5 p.m., we were taken to Alirajpur and put in the jail. That night all the brothers slept together. The next day they separated us and put us in separate rooms. There some people tried to beat and scare some of the brothers, but all of us brothers came together as one and prayed together. Then after that, slowly we mingled with other prisoner brothers and accepted that we were all brothers. After that, we prayed together every Sunday and faced many difficulties together. But whenever any of us felt sad, then we would help each other to give each other strength and courage that our faith would be ready to face difficulties. When they took us from the jail to court and nothing happened, then we were very disappointed. But, in the evening when we went back to jail, we prayed and became happy, with the thought that one day we would be freed. We lived well with the jailer and sentries and they gave us some help.

When our people came to visit us, we were very happy and whatever things they brought to us we sat and shared and ate together. In the jail when we received word from outside we were all sad, and the others in the jail came to ask us what was the matter, and explained to us that it would be alright, and that people could also get out of jail. When we applied for bail and it was refused, we thought that we would never get out of jail, and we were very much disturbed. At night, we would get up and, sitting on our beds, we would pray. We had so many experiences there that I had never experienced in my life, and things we learned that only we know and cannot tell. When we get released, we will forget all the sad things and we will celebrate with our brothers who were in jail. But

we had the experience in jail that what had occurred was God's will in order to bring the congregation together to become one, and that all the families of our brothers would receive God's blessings. When we were released and came home that night, we thanked God and celebrated with our families. I close with thanksgiving.

### **Witness Number 3**

I am \_\_\_\_\_, son of \_\_\_\_\_, 45 years old, and of the village of Puniyawat. What happened was that \_\_\_\_\_ brought word that the church in Amkhut was being damaged. Later we received word of the trouble there, and a group of us went to Amkhut. Some people came from Bhabra (a village 10 miles to the north) and we met them. They told us that non-Christians were coming, and this group were shouting anti-Christian slogans and had weapons. We also had weapons but we never used them. There was a large crowd in Amkhut by this time. On 17.1.04, we were called to the police station.

Then we left for our homes. On 17.1.04, we were called to the police station in Amkhut to bring our guns and licences. So I came, then the police, without taking any statement, put me in their vehicle and took me to Udaigarh. Then three days later, after making a case (charge), they took us to Alirajpur jail. Thanks to God, we had no trouble. We were 14 men there. In jail, we were not prevented from holding meetings. When someone fell ill, we prayed for them and people outside the jail prayed for them also. We had to go regularly to court every 15 or 20 days every month, but the magistrate never came to hear the case. Then a new date would be given. Sometimes the magistrate sat and hostile witnesses would give their witness against us. But we prayed that their evidence would be lies. And the Lord heard our prayers.

The witnesses kept giving their testimony, and it took quite a lot of time, then slowly slowly the dates came closer together, and finally the testimonies were finished. Then the date for the decision arrived. We were worried, but we prayed and the Lord had saved us when we were put in jail and while we were there. We were in jail for 2 ½ years. On the last day for the decision, we all stood in a line before the magistrate. The magistrate asked the name of each man in turn: "where do you live and what is your name?". In turn, we told her our names and the names of our villages. "I now release everyone of you," she said. Then we were all very happy and thanked the Lord for His grace. That very day, in the evening we left the jail. People who had come to meet us now took us away.

Finally, I give thanks to the Lord.

My wife's name is \_\_\_\_\_. My children's names are: \_\_\_\_\_; etc.

### **Witness Number 4**

\_\_\_\_\_, son of \_\_\_\_\_ of village Puniyawat. Age 50 years.

On 16.1.04, I went to herd my goats. In the evening, I came to my house, and about 5 p.m. I was called to bring my gun and come to the police station in Amkhut (about 4 miles distance). I thought it was to check the guns. The next day at 3 p.m. they arrested me. Then (having been taken to Alirajpur), I was taken from Alirajpur to Ambua jail, and about 11 p.m. was put in Udaigarh jail. I was there for three nights and three days. On the fourth day, they left us in Alirajpur jail. All together we were 13 men. On Sunday, we prayed and read the Bible – worshipping together. Other people – not Christians – worshipped with us and learned fellowship, being together. We fasted and prayed and gave witness with Bibles. We were given five breads (chapattis) at noon and our stomachs were never filled. Sometimes we were given palm tree juice, which some people drink. In two and a half years, our lives were greatly changed, thanks to the work of God. The word which was given will have one hundred percent harvest.

Thank you!

### **Witness Number 5**

On January 16, I was in Binit village irrigating wheat. Then my daughter \_\_\_\_\_ told me that our church was being attacked. Then I went from there about 4 or 4:30 p.m. By that time, all was quiet. Then all our brothers met

and were talking this over at \_\_\_\_\_'s house. Then about 8 p.m., the police came to \_\_\_\_\_'s house to take him for questioning. They said, "we are taking you too" to me, and so we all went. Then my companions were grabbed. They asked our names, then I ran away from there. Then eight months later they arrested me and put me in jail. Then I came to know that there were two charges against me – Nos. \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ – so it seems to me that they are still against me at the Amkhut station. Since then, I have been praying with fasting to the Lord. God heard my prayers. You people also prayed for us. God heard your prayers too. In jail all our brothers prayed morning and evening that we would be released from this jail. It was difficult for us to sleep. We had to observe the rules of the jail. We suffered much difficulty in jail, such that we can't tell you people. If you had to listen to all of it, you would not be able to hear it. We knew that you were praying for us. Thank you for this. We were released from jail and we were happy that we would be with our families, and with the people of our Church too. When I was running away the order had been given to shoot me, so I was afraid. God gave me such courage that morning and evening. I daily prayed that God would cause my release. Since I came from jail, I regularly pray morning and evening too, and I will continue. Now, for my family and me, please continue to pray. I have three children named \_\_\_\_\_ etc.

I close \_\_\_\_\_; age 29 years. Village, Puniyawat. My father is \_\_\_\_\_.

It seems it was God's plan to save us so we could witness for Him. This is my witness.

### **Witness Number 6**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my father's name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am 22 years old. I live in Puniyawat village.

On January 16, 2004, I went to the jungle to herd the animals. In the evening, I heard of the troubles in Amkhut, and the next day was called by the police. I was called to the Amkhut police station, then taken to Udaigarh. There the case against me was made. Then we were sent to jail, without any reason. This gave us much suffering. However, afterwards, thanks to God, being in jail we had meetings for worship. In jail, despite everything, eating, sleeping, rising, sitting, eating – every kind of difficulty, we spent two and a half years, and because of all this the people of the Church who had been separated, became one. It may well be that the Lord's will was shown to us. For the future God knows, and we thank Him that our families supported us through this. So I thank you all and give much much thanks to the Lord. On the day they told us that we were not guilty, we were so happy that our hearts were filled with joy that we had never known. For the rest of our lives, we will never forget Him and we will remember what He has done for us.

Thank you.

### **Witness Number 7**

I am \_\_\_\_\_, son of \_\_\_\_\_ of Puniyawat village, about 38 years of age. I was at home when police sent word that all gun owners must bring guns to Amkhut police station for checking. So I went, and without asking me anything they arrested me and put me into jail. I remained in jail for two years and four months.

My children, my wife, mother, father and brothers were very upset and sad. I also was sad and very anxious but God took all my sadness and worries away, and helped me not to hold bad feelings against those who put me in jail. In jail, I was trusting only in God that He would do something for us. Many times I felt troubled, but God sent many people who gave me peace. In jail, I learned much about God's Word and what the Lord wants from us. I thank all of you who prayed for us and helped us financially. May God bless all of you.

Perhaps this was God's plan that all of us Christians be united and increase in our faith. The Lord performed a great miracle for us, and I thank Him so much.

\_\_\_\_\_, of village Puniyawat, have four children named \_\_\_\_\_, etc.



### **Witness Number 8 “A Witness to the Amkhut Unfortunate Incident”**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. My father’s name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a resident of Puniyawat. My age is 22 years. The events of being in jail I can tell, so I want to describe them to you.

This event happened in 16.01.04. On that day, I was at my home. When we received the news that Amkhut Church was being damaged, then we left the house and went in a jeep to Amkhut. There we found everything alright, but when the MLA came from Alirajpur and fired a gun, then difficulties expanded. We left Amkhut and returned to Puniyawat. Again we heard from our houses that a Bhabra man had been killed. About midnight when we were in our homes, two men came to our houses to take us. They said that all gun owners were called by SP to come to the officer’s house. We went there. I took my father’s gun and came, then they locked me up. Then the next day, those people also caught my father and locked him up. My father told them that if you put me in jail, then release my son. They told him that the cause is made against your son, so we can’t release him, but we can release you. So they let my father go. The police from the station said that the SP had gone to Amkhut. Then they took us to Amkhut. In Amkhut, we were told that the SP had gone to Bhabra and asking our names, wrote them all. We were told to stay in Amkhut until the police returned from Bhabra. Then they took us to Ambua and shut us in the jail. We were there for a night and a day. At 9 p.m., we were taken to Alirajpur. There we were shut up for a day and a night. From the court, we were taken to the jail and left there. We felt sad and discouraged; now what will happen to us? In jail there was a mat, a blanket, a plate, a glass and a bowl given to us and we were tied up like animals. Whenever we were taken from jail to the court, we were tied up, then taken in a police van. In the court, we were placed in a small room for the day, and returned to jail at night. For two years, four months and fourteen days, this was our life. Whenever there was application in court for our release, then there was objection and difficulties. Then we were immediately saddened. But we increased prayer to God that only our heavenly Father would save us. God answered all the prayers His people prayed for us. The day our decision was made, we were overcome. What would happen? Freedom or further jail? We continued together in prayer and tears of thanksgiving. At 5:30 p.m., in front of the judge our case was presented and our hearts beat harder. The judge called each of us by name and at the end said, “each of you is guiltless”. Then we were overjoyed and hugged each other. This happened because of your and our prayers. We gave thanks to God.

This is my true witness.

### **Witness Number 9**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, 37 years old. My father’s name is \_\_\_\_\_. I live in Puniyawat village.

On January 16, 2004, this event took place. On that day, I was at the jungle river to catch fish. At about 5 p.m., when I reached my house, I learned that in the village that my uncle, \_\_\_\_\_, had brought word of the happening at Amkhut. Then at 2 a.m., police – lying to us – called us to the police station. I went to learn of what had happened. Seven men went, though I was not one who owned a gun. Seven men who owned guns were there, and that night we were all taken to Ambua. After that very night, the seven of us were taken to jail in Alirajpur and a case was made against us. I felt much sorrow because I was in jail for no reason. In jail, God saved me from much suffering and illness. Therefore, I give the Lord many many thanks. When we were taken from jail to court by the police, we felt much suffering of the mind because we knew we were not guilty. God, too, knew our suffering. In the jail, we had worship regularly. Every Sunday, we had a meeting and God put a feeling of love in the jailer’s heart to permit our meetings. There, in sleeping, rising, sitting, we suffered greatly. The arrangement (space) for sleeping was about as hand length to elbow. But in spite of suffering, days went by. And we kept our hope in God that surely, one day, He would release us. In all our troubles, we read the Bible, and thanks to God, all the group prayed. Our families at home also suffered, and sympathised with us. From my heart, I give thanks for people who prayed for us. And the day that the decision was made for us, just as we heard of the decision that, “you are guiltless”, our hearts were filled with joy, so that there was no limit to it. Life is new now. Before this time, we had forgotten God. And before this happened, the people in the congregation were not united, but afterwards the congregation became one,

so this was probably part of the Lord's plan. But the devil's hand was also in this. God alone knows about all this. Now we began to remember Him, and now, to the end of life, we shall keep giving thanks to God. And may we never throughout our life make that kind of mistake.

This is my witness.

#### **Witness Number 10**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, son of \_\_\_\_\_, am a government schoolteacher. I have three children -- \_\_\_\_\_, etc.

On 16.01.04, the day of the events, I was in Amkhut. I was at my work from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The event at Amkhut was 3 kilometres distance. I had no knowledge of the event, but because of being a Christian, I am writing a report of the events. Since 16.01.04 to 28.07.05, I have been in many places. Nevertheless to me on 29.07.05, at the time of duty, suddenly three police came, and ran at me and caught me, and tying me up like an animal took me to Amkhut police station. They kept me tied up there till 2 a.m. At 3 p.m., the police suddenly came, took me out and tied me up again, and took me to Kathiwara. The next day, they took me from there to Alirajpur. Before being bound, I was never afraid in the jungle or in any valleys. Being in jail was like this; for six months I did not have a bed. I slept on the beds of others. For food – daal was like water and bread was burnt. In jail, every kind of difficulty was suffered. The whole group was shut up in jail. And we were closed in on four sides. We had no opportunity to meet with family or friends.

Despite these difficulties, I did not lose my faith in Jesus and in prayer our whole group shared. We prayed that sick people would be healed, and they were. All prisoners, the jailer and sentries were astounded. From being in jail, my personal life has been strengthened and I have become a stronger, faithful person, because as the Bible says, difficulties strengthen us. Therefore, for your prayers, for the prayers of the Church for us while we were in jail, I remain happy. By the prayers of faithful people, we have been released from jail. The Lord is powerful who has caused our release from jail. Because of what we have suffered, the society has become stronger. Today we are one in Christ the Lord. The Lord can prevent differences, but the Lord permitted our difficulty so there is a witness for Him and that His Word may spread more and more and that His people may be strengthened in more prayer. Therefore the Lord permitted this event. This is my witness from my experience in jail.

#### **Witness Number 11**

I am \_\_\_\_\_, and I live in Puniyawat. In this instance, by telling lies they caught us and we were put into jail. On 16.01.04, I was herding my cattle in the hills all day long. At this time, I knew nothing about what was happening, because my house is very near the jungle and I had taken my cattle very far into the jungle. When I arrived home in the evening, I heard all the news, that people from the RSS, had come to break the Amkhut Church, and there was fighting. I have one son and he had gone with all the villagers to build the church. The Amkhut Church is 4 kms from our house. Even so, all the people from Puniyawat went to save the Amkhut Church. In the evening, after tying up my animals, I heard all the news, and taking my double barrelled gun, went to the church in Puniyawat, where along with the other villagers, I spent the night. In the morning, I went back to my home. Then word came from the police that all those owning licensed guns should bring them to the police station, to have their licences checked by the Superintendent of Police. And in this way, telling lies, they got us to the police station. There they took our guns and licences, and put all of us in jail. Then again lying to us, they took us to a high official in Ambua station, where they told us they would free us, but telling us more lies, instead they took us to Alirajpur police station. After about 5 or 10 minutes, again lying to us that they were taking us to Ambua, instead, they took us to Udaigarh police station and locked us up. They took all seven of us, and along with the SDOP and several station officers and constables, they took us from place to place. For 3 days and 3 nights, they kept us locked up at Udaigarh police station, after which, making out an FIR (first information report), they took us for a physical check-up in Alirajpur. Then they took us before the Magistrate in the court. After this, they put us in the Alirajpur jail. There, even though we were innocent, we were kept locked up for 2 ½ years.

There, we accepted Christ as Saviour and remained in prayer to Him. While we were in jail, all the congregations here as well as abroad, kept praying for us. Because of these prayers, we were released from jail.

All the congregations helped us a lot, and foreign congregations also helped us very much. Therefore through our Lord Jesus, we thank all our congregations and overseas friends for all their help. All of them together freed us.

\_\_\_\_\_, aged 55. My family \_\_\_\_\_, etc.

### **Witness Number 12**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, my age is 22 years. I have studied to seventh class. Because of my family's poor circumstances, I had to leave studies and go to work.

The incident about which you asked was like this: on 16.01.2004, I was at home, and when the incident happened in Amkhut I did not go. In the evening when I heard about the incident, then to hear more, I went with other people to my neighbour, uncle \_\_\_\_\_'s house. Then in a little while, two more people of the village came, and said that police have come to \_\_\_\_\_' house for enquiry and are calling everyone with their guns for inspection. "So, you people come." So everybody, with their guns and licences, went to \_\_\_\_\_'s house. Then the police told us to go to Amkhut with their guns. They said that after checking the guns we could go home. So, with the other Puniyawat people, I sat in the jeep and went to Amkhut. There they did not release anyone, but after taking everybody's name and my name also, they locked us up in a room, and then took us to Alirajpur jail and making a false case, they locked us up in the jail.

When they left us in the jail, at first we had to suffer a lot of trouble. The police told our families that we would get bail soon. Everybody tried very hard, but for 2 ½ years we didn't get bail under Article 307. The big leaders of the opposition got together and made separate cases against all of us, so we stayed in jail. There were a lot of different problems in jail. We didn't get food, sleeping arrangements were difficult, because everyone was against us. The followers of the opposition party fought with us a lot, and therefore we were transferred to another jail. Then the court ordered us to be put back into Alirajpur jail. Our families would come to meet us in jail, but on the road their lives were in danger. When they came to the gate of the jail to meet us, then the police didn't act well with them. Seeing all this I was losing hope, and so I was praying. But people all over were praying for us. You people prayed and helped us very much. After 2 ½ years, we are now outside and free, and I was very happy and am very happy to be at home.

Because of your prayers, I was released from jail. You asked about my family and they are: \_\_\_\_\_, etc.

### **Witness Number 13**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my father's name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am 59 years old. I am a resident of Puniyawat village. I want to tell you about the Amkhut incident that happened on 16.1.2004. When it happened, I was at work. When I got home in the evening, I heard about all that had happened. Then we were told that we had to go to Amkhut police station. They arrested us. Then they took us from Amkhut to Alirajpur police station, and from there they took us to Udaigarh police station. They kept us there for three days. Afterwards they put us in Alirajpur jail. In jail, we kept praying to God. I am blind in one eye and have poor vision in the other. They locked us up on false charges. Even so, we grew through God's love.

On the day we were released, we were very worried about what might happen. And when they told us the good verdict, then the judge said to us, "I find all of you not guilty".

Thanks be to God, that this is my true witness.

#### **Witness Number 14**

I am \_\_\_\_\_, son of \_\_\_\_\_, age 35 years old and on 16.1.04, I was at home. Twenty days after the incident happened, the police came to my house and chasing me, caught me. They took me to Ambua police station and locked me up. It was winter time and I had no covers. At that time, I had no weapons, but the police registered a case against me with the charge of having arrows and locked me up. We tried very hard for bail, but we could not obtain it. When the police caught me they tied my hands behind my back so I couldn't run away, and although I was alone, there were 8 police against me. In jail there were quite a lot of difficulties, for the first year, but we kept hoping that one day God would free us. We always kept praying to God three times a day. A lot of people were against us, but we didn't worry about them. We were remembering our true God. Because of all your prayers, our jail time went alright. The police surrounded us when they took us to court (for hearing). When the opposition witnesses came, they spoke in our favour and we got peace from this as well as the peace which God gave us.

Our people were also very worried and fearful about what would happen to our men – would they get free or have to stay in jail? – but we stayed strong that our God would one day free us. After 2 ½ years, when we obtained our freedom, then all the sadness turned to joy. For 2 years, we fasted and prayed that our families would not be too worried and our Father heard our prayers. Having to live by ourselves, away from our families and children was difficult. While we were in jail, many requests for prayers for others came to us, such as healing from sickness, and God gave them healing.

We were going to different places in Amkhot telling God's Word, but the devil was against us and raised up opposition. Satan did not want God's work to prosper. When we were in jail, we used to hold prayer meetings from which our families received blessing. Before this incident, the church was getting separated, but after this happened, the Church has become one. Why were we persecuted? We were persecuted and jailed because of being Christians. But thanks to God that He blessed and helped us.

Thank you.

My family: \_\_\_\_\_, etc.

#### **Witness Number 15**

On 16.04.04, about 12 o'clock noon. At that time, 8<sup>th</sup> Class was giving an examination. The intruders went into that class and began tearing up test papers. Making one girl stand, the intruders said, "in Jhabua, the father harmed an 11-year old girl (this was referring to a priest in the Roman Catholic School). When they can do that in Jhabua, why do you study here? Go outside in a file."

One teacher asked, "Why are you preventing the students giving their test?"

Then I asked, "Whatever you have to say, say it, or leave this room". Then they began to throw out the children's pens, papers and to beat the children.

Then I told the children to go outside, so the children ran out the back, left the school and ran to their homes. Some of the men and women tore the pictures of Jesus from the school room walls and stamped on them. From the teachers, not a word was spoken; we just stood apart from the intruders.

Then they went into the office, and taking the register, notebooks and Bible, began to tear them up. Any glass items were torn up (e.g. photos), then they went toward the cupboard.

At that moment, \_\_\_\_\_ came into the office and fastened the padlock of the cupboard in which the school records and the key were kept. The intruders tried to find the key but \_\_\_\_\_ wouldn't give it to them. On the office wall was a large picture of Jesus. It was taken down and torn up.

The children had gone weeping to their homes and their mothers now came to see what had happened in the school. From the children, the news spread through the whole village. People began to gather from every direction. In one hand would be a stone, in another a wooden stick. They began to drive away the intruders with stones and sticks and the intruders left the compound. \_\_\_\_\_, a Christian teacher in a government school, said not to beat them. Then people began to feel peaceful.

After this incident, the people began to feel they should give a report of this occurrence to the police. Two teachers, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, went to the police station there in Amkhut about 2 p.m. The headmaster was not present during this incident because he had taken a patient to Alirajpur (government) hospital. When the incident was reported in Amkhut, the police said the report should go to the SDOP Jobat. Before we could go, the sound of gunshot was heard. Everyone came running and we could not leave. At that moment, the Alirajpur police chief and one of the political leaders came, and a crowd began to gather at the Amkhut police station. Then it began to disperse as evening time came.

January 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 a.m., a police constable came to call us, "the police are calling all who know of yesterday's incident". To give our description of events, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ and with Headmaster, we all went to the police station. Then Padre \_\_\_\_\_ also was there. Our descriptions were to be written down after our arrival in Alirajpur, but the SDOP had been called away, so our witness was not written. In Alirajpur, for a whole day, we had nothing to eat or water to drink. About 12 midnight, the SDOP officer came and (without any description of events) demanded we give our signatures. I replied that I can't read when I haven't slept all night. It was now Sunday so we sat and prayed. The SDOP Jobat had told us that after giving our description of events, we would be freed. I told him I could not write, but he had not told us the truth. And we were still in jail.

On Sunday 18.1.04, Bishop Maida came and we met him. A police van came to take us to the court. At that time, we were 17 people from Amkhut. A lawyer, and our M.P. representative in Delhi was on tour, but we had to sit in court all day till 7 p.m. while he was on tour.

After that, we were taken to a doctor for examination. At 7:30 that evening, we were put in Alirajpur jail. We were from 18.1.04 at 7:30 p.m. to 22.1.04 in jail. From Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>, we had no opportunity to wash our hands and faces, or even to comb our hair. On Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, a prisoner-jailer (one who was formerly in jail), \_\_\_\_\_, helped us brothers and sisters, and came to meet us. He gave us towels, combs, toothbrushes. Then we could comb our hair! For six days, we could not bathe, brush our teeth, nor change clothing because we had nothing.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> day, there was a decision and we were taken to Jobat and the next morning to Amkhut because two men, Digvijay Singh and Kantilal Bhuria (former chief minister of M.P. and present Congress M.P.) were coming to see what was happening.

Four teachers, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ got bail. Then the Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General came for school inspection. The Headmaster was in jail so the two men ordered that the school be closed and the keys given to them. Then I asked them that since all the teachers were here and there is only a month and a half of the school year left and the examinations will be due; and there are hostel [residence] children from various villages – what will the future mean? A whole year's work will be in vain. The school has more than 300 students – think about them. Then they gave us the keys. The men wished the school to be closed, but that was not God's will.

26.1.04 is Republic Day, so in the absence of the Headmaster, \_\_\_\_\_ acted as chairman and arranged for a big celebration in the school campus where many Christians could come to celebrate the Republic Day. After the flag hoisting, sweets were distributed to everyone. None of the Christians went for the flag raising in front of the police station or the Panchayat building. In those places, very few people took part, because even the Government Christian teachers had come to the Christian compound for the ceremony. Afterwards the Panchayat (local government body) requested that the school children should be brought to the government campus. Two officials took the responsibility for their safety. After that, the children were taken to the government campus. We were refusing to go, however, the Government representative told us that you people who have been released from jail should take part, to show that, even following such an unhappy event, now things have become quiet.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of Jan., we people, under the leadership of Kantilal Bhuria, went to Delhi by bus. There we submitted a written report and met with Sonia Gandhi for talks. We also took part in a press conference where we spoke our minds. But no one seemed to pay attention. Our case was registered for disturbing the peace by the SDM. After that, we had to attend court (in Alirajpur) for two years and three months.

My experience from this incident is that the Christians became close, and spent more active time in prayer. I had thought that God had forsaken us, but believed that through prayer the doors of Heaven open, and that the gate of salvation would open for us. When God's people forget Him, and begin to do those things He does not want, then

He permits them to be under the authority of unbelievers. So I believe that because our society --that is, the Lord's sons and daughters -- was acting against His laws, we were receiving a warning and this suffering was permitted to come, so that the Christian community would take care. And it was just for this that God sent Jesus Christ to bring salvation for those who repent.

When we teachers were released from jail, many people in Jobat came to meet us. When we reached Amkhut next day, many people were already gathered on the school campus to meet us. The scene made us so happy and armed our hearts for it showed the love that is among His people.

### **Witness Number 16**

On Jan. 16, 2004, having completed my duties at Amkhut Middle School from 8 to 11 a.m., I set out from Amkhut for Alirajpur at 11 a.m. with a patient to have his plaster cast removed. In front of Mr. Salim Qureshi's shop, I met three women strangers who were distributing pamphlets, and who gave the impression of going to the Amkhut Hindu temple for worship (puja). They also gave me pamphlets, and I told them that I am a Christian. To their question as to how long I have been a Christian, I answered that my paternal grandfather had been a Christian, so it seems to me that it is about 100 years that we have been Christian. At this the ladies were very surprised and began saying that a bad thing had occurred in Jhabua town. [reference to the priest who had harmed an 11-year old girl in the Roman Catholic School] I replied that we are also sorry. I asked them where they came from and they replied, "we have come from Gujarat". After this, I proceeded on to Alirajpur.

About 2 p.m., after getting the patient's plaster removed, we did some buying of vegetables in the market and I got my hair cut. We reached the diesel pump station about 3 or 3:15 p.m. The SDM's vehicle was also being filled with diesel and the police superintendent Mr. Dawar was sitting in the back seat. After getting diesel, I was standing there and the pump attendant told me that the SDM sahib is going to Amkhut, where some trouble had taken place, about which we knew nothing at all.

When I reached the Government Hospital, my sister's son told me that some "rally people" are damaging our school in Amkhut. So I returned to Amkhut. At village Kuan, I met a mini-bus which left Amkhut at 4 p.m. for Alirajpur. The driver told me, "Don't go there. Amkhut police station is in an uproar, with stones, arrows and guns being fired." Anyway, I went on. And I arrived in front of Salim Qureshi's shop. He told me, "leave your patient in my house, and leave your jeep here, because there is a bad situation in the police station". I locked the jeep, and from there went to a house where I could see the police station. I saw that stones and arrows were being fired. I also saw a jeep and a Maruti van which had come from the direction of Alirajpur and were parked near the Amkhut bridge and someone was firing a gun from the jeep. Then the two vehicles turned around and headed in the direction of Alirajpur. This all happened around 4:30 p.m. Along with one teacher, \_\_\_\_\_, I sneaked into the school compound by another route. Then I went near the Amkhut bridge from where I could hear shouting and saw people throwing stones. Then in a short while, the police along with the SDM in his jeep and some other political leaders in two other vehicles (a total of 3 vehicles) left for Alirajpur.

Then I asked \_\_\_\_\_, a teacher, what was happening in the school. He told me that on 16.1.04 about 11:30 a.m. a government teacher, Mr. Rajesh, and \_\_\_\_\_ came into the mission compound in the area of the school and church with three women. \_\_\_\_\_ had seen them himself. When they came to the primary school, the women said to the children, "Say Ram and Om". The children said nothing. So the women left. The teachers said they thought that, just like other times, these people had come to visit the school, so they didn't do anything.

The intruders went to the temple situated near the police station, where they preached that the pastor "father" rapes women. "Chase away the pastor, beat him and kill him, and make all the Christians Hindu. If they don't obey, then burn their houses and kill them. Kidnap the women and kill them." In this manner, they were preaching. As in a rally, they again entered the compound about 12 or 12.12 p.m. Class VIII examinations were in progress. They numbered around 50 to 60 people. Then another vehicle with about 10 to 12 people arrived. They got out of the vehicle, and there were also 4 women in the group, and they went straight towards the classrooms and



began to ask, “where is the Headmaster?” and also “where is the “father” (pastor)?”. The teachers told them that these people were away and were not here. Then they told the teachers to send the children outside. Even though the teachers forbade them, they took the children’s answer books and tore them up. And going into each classroom and the office, they began to beat the children and teachers and drive them outside. They said to the children, “Don’t come here to school. Say ‘Ram’, and if you are a Christian, then become a Hindu”. When the children refused to do this, then the crowd began to beat them even more. The intruders who were outside the school began to throw rocks. Along with all the violence, the women intruders went into all the classrooms and began to break everything they could. One woman went to the Church and broke the door’s window with a stone. Then she came back to the school. Because many of the village people were gathering, the women sat in their vehicle and fled back to the police station. Then we also went to the police station. Then three vehicles, full of intruders, went off towards Kathiwara. Because most of the intruders had come from Gujarat, I did not recognize them, or know their names, except for one woman called Krishna Sister.

After all this happened, I went to the police check area quietly about 4:30 p.m. and saw the SDOP, SDM, Tehsildar and other officials. At that time, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were also there, and helped the police to quieten the crowd, and sent them home within five minutes. After that the Tehsildar introduced me to the SDOP and SDM. The SDOP told me to stay there so that the crowd would not come back. I stayed there with the officers. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were also kept with me, so that we could not collect another crowd. In a little while, two jeep loads of people came from Kathiwara and began to tell that two women had not appeared. They said that they had come to get those women. The SDM said that he had sent the women to Alirajpur for protection. He had sent them in Mr. Nagar’s vehicle to Alirajpur. Then those two jeeps again went back to Kathiwara. Those two women had been going from house to house in village Kuhan to give out pamphlets against the Christians, and they were not in Amkhut at that time and nobody had kidnapped them. [The Hindu extremists had circulated the lie that the women had been captured by the Christians in Amkhut.]

During this time, the SDOP Jobat told me, “Write up a report of the damage done by the intruders”. So while I was writing the report, two jeeps came from Bhabra with weapons, guns, sickles, iron rods, sticks, etc. There were more than 15 people who arrived at the police station and were shouting anti-Christian slogans. One injured person sitting on the roof of a vehicle was thrown off. They said to the police that one more jeep had been stopped on the road. Nobody knew why it had not come. They said that if anything happened to that vehicle, they would kill the Christians and burn their houses. Upon hearing this, the police said to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, “go to the rear of the police station, so these people won’t attack you”. So they went to the back of the station. After this the SDOP and SDM went towards Puniyawat so see about the jeep and its passengers. When they returned, they said that the jeep was overturned and on fire and that they had not seen any living or dead people. At this time, a passenger bus came from Alirajpur. In the bus, they sent the wounded and other jeep passengers to Kathiwara with police escort. After that I gave a one-page report to the police, and quickly went to the Christian compound where some people were gathered. I advised them to be careful and not let any vehicles into the compound, and that night after eating, take turns in guarding the compound. And I stayed with them from 6 to 10 p.m.

At 10 p.m. a jeep came to the compound. Everybody was watching. But the jeep went to my sister’s house. I went there and one of the people who had come told me that my family was worried because I had not reached home so they had come for me. While we were talking, the police called me again. I went to the station where the SDOP told me that wireless had come informing that \_\_\_\_\_ had been killed and his body was lying near Pangora village. So what should be done? I told the police that my family was looking for me, so I will go home and take 20-25 people with me to look for \_\_\_\_\_’s body. When we neared my house, close to the panchayat meeting house, a boy stopped our car. When the police asked who he was, he said, “My name is \_\_\_\_\_” [the name of the boy who it had been claimed had been killed]. Hearing this, the police ordered him into the jeep so that he would be taken to Amkhut. After this, we arrived at my home with the police. There were five persons: SDOP; TI; inspector; etc. They stayed at my house till 11 p.m., then taking \_\_\_\_\_ [the boy mentioned above] along with one other official, the police returned to Amkhut.

That night the police told me to call all those with gun licences so I sent word around. Then the people with gun licences gathered at my house. The police said for them all to go to Amkhut to give their statements, then they could go home. Some people had accompanied those with licences, so the police told them also to go to Amkhut. This happened about 3:30 a.m. and the police said to go so they could all return home after giving their statements. So the police took them all in a jeep to Amkhut. Arriving there, they said the SP sahib is calling everybody to Ambua police station.

So I said to the Jobat SDOP, "You first of all called everybody to my house, then you said to come to Amkhut station and now you say to take them to Ambua. So how can we trust you?"

The SDOP and sub-inspector said, "you wait till 6 a.m. We will bring you all back to Amkhut within 2 hours, and send you home".

I stayed on in Amkhut. On 17.1.04 at 6 a.m., the police came to my sister's house to call me. They told me that the SP sahib has come and he is calling the "father" and the teachers to the police station. He will take all your accounts of what happened yesterday. Then we arrived at the station about 7 a.m. I, Pastor, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Miss \_\_\_\_\_ and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. At the station, the SP only wrote our names, and while this was going on a sub-inspector told the SP that someone wanted him on the phone. So he left. When he returned, he told us that we would all have to go to Ambua police station, because seeing morning had come, the Amkhut people seeing our group, might collect and become violent. They said they were taking us to Ambua, but instead took us to Alirajpur police. There, all day, no one took our statements. At 11 p.m. they came and we said that, as they had not taken our statements all day, we wanted to be sent back to Amkhut and we could come back tomorrow. But the Jobat SDOP said, "We can't send you".

I said, "You people brought us here to give our statements. How could you not send us back?"

Then the SDOP said, "Our authorities and leaders have said to make a case against both parties and then refer the whole matter to the SDM. Then you can take bail and you will be freed by tomorrow at 10 a.m.".

Then an official, along with the SDOP Jobat, wrote our statements all morning. On 18.1.04 morning, we read in the paper at the station that, along with the pastor, 12 people had been arrested. Only then did we know that only one party – ourselves – had been arrested.

On that same day about 1 p.m., they took four teachers before the SDM, and returning at 2:30 p.m. said that they had got bail. And, that they will take you two (pastor and \_\_\_\_\_ ) before the SDM in order to get bail. Then they will take you to Amkhut and let you go free.

At 2 p.m., Mr. Chowdryji came to me and said, that as far as they were concerned, they could not write one word by themselves, but they had to do what they were told by the party in power. He said, "We can't do anything, we are helpless". Then we understood that the whole episode had been preplanned by the political party in power. So we could not do anything. And nobody knew what would happen. Nobody asked us any questions nor took our statements. About 3 p.m., our Bishop and Diocesan treasurer came to the police station and, with great difficulty, we met them for a short time. Then the police quickly took the prisoners away in a truck and said they had to go to the court to get bail. So we were taken to the court. We all sat in the court for an hour, then they took the nine men to the hospital for an examination. Then at 7:30 p.m., they took us from the hospital and put us in jail.

In this manner, telling us lies -- that the SP wanted our statements -- they took us all over the district. Then we ended up in jail. In this way, from 16.1.04 at 4:30 p.m., I was in the company of the police only until they made a case against me and put me in jail on 18.1.04.

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### **In Jail:**

On 18.1.04 at about 7:45 p.m., on reaching the gate of the jail, someone from inside the jail called to me, "Honorable uncle, we have been waiting for you, please come". When I entered the jail, the police listed all my belongings in their record, and then sent us to jail. They put all of us in room no. 1. The man who had called to me arranged for our blankets and food. After eating, we all went to sleep.

According to the jail laws, from Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> at 6 a.m., they took our daily attendance. Then we got tea at 7 a.m. After that we met with each other and because I had been village sarpanch of 127 villages, I knew a lot of people. After that we got breakfast at 8 a.m., followed by tea at 10 a.m., lunch at 12 noon, then rest period until 2 p.m., tea at 3 p.m., then for some time opportunity to wash clothes and bathe, then dinner at 6 p.m. After this was the prisoner count, and were locked up in our cells. This was our daily procedure.

On Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>, the jailer called us and told us what we would be expected to do for the Republic Day programme (on Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>). I told him that we knew some Christian songs so he said for us to sing those. So then we were practising the songs. When we told him that we should read from the Bible, he supplied a Bible. From that day, we read the Bible and witnessed to the other prisoners. In the evening, we began to sing and pray and some of the other prisoners took part with us. In this way, the Lord gave us the opportunity to witness from His Word. I was reading the Holy Scriptures regularly, and by the time we were released I had read through the entire Bible. And God gave me a new life from that time. And so, living in His presence even during times of sadness, He gave me a joyful spirit. I gave all my troubles to God.

During the 42 days I was in jail, I never stopped thanking the Lord for keeping me safe and for looking after my family. I believe that for those who love God, everything that happens is for their good. And so in this way, time passed until I got bail. I gave thanks in my school and the church that, by His grace alone, I remained faithful to Him.

On 29.1.04, the trial began and it went on until 29.5.06, and on 31.5.06 was the final hearing. And it was on the very day that 13 years previously God had given me a son (after six daughters), and therefore I had full faith that God would deal fairly with us, and would free us.

On 31.5.06 at 6 p.m., we were called to the court and the Honourable judge, given God's wisdom and judgment, declared, "I find all of you not guilty of the charge, and declare you free". With eyes full of tears, I gave thanks to God who hearing the prayers of all of us, showed His justice to the world, through His love. From this, God's love would also be shown to unbelievers and the seeds of truth would be sown in the hearts of unbelievers. Thanks be to God.

### **Personal Witness:**

I was very sad that I had been sent to jail without reason, but since then with the Bible, I began to worship every Sunday in church. So it seems that in jail, God still had some work to do. Therefore God permitted unbelievers to send me to jail, so that, even there, His presence and work would be shown. Every Sunday from 9 to 10 a.m., we worshipped with all the prisoners.

Before going to court, the prisoners would ask us to pray for them. So in this way, the Lord increased His presence with us and gave us opportunity to preach His Word in jail. I was always praying, "Lord, give us the strength to do your work, and take my problems that, even though in jail, I may be happy". From 23.1.04 to 27.2.04, I read through the entire Bible and for me this was God's gift.

The unbelievers, knowing that we had not committed any crime, had more faith in us, that because of our faith in God, He released us from prison. One of my daughters who had graduated from theological college, came home on leave, and with her mother spent more time together in prayer. Every day they were giving thanks that in every circumstance, God takes care of us. Some of my other daughters who were studying in Indore were praying without ceasing. And, God heard the prayers of everybody.

"Your way is through the sea and your road is through deep water, and none knows the marks of Your feet."  
(Psalm 77: 19)

### **Witness Number 17**

On January 16, 2004 at 7:30 a.m., I went to school. At that time, board examinations were taking place. Sixth and Seventh Classes were not giving theirs, so I took the two classes into the computer room and began to teach them computer work. About 12 o'clock, we heard sounds of people coming from the road towards the school. As the people came, they made much noise, and I could clearly hear them. They were calling, "close the mission school"

and “close the Christian religion”. There was a crowd of 80 or 90 people. Some of them were tribal Hindus, there were some Government school students, some people from Gujarat and some women who were Hindu followers and some men from a Hindu study centre. The crowd came towards the school. As they came, the school staff members watched them, and we returned to our classroom. But the crowd kept coming. In a short time, the Gujarat people came into my classroom and said, “Send the children outside”.

I said to them, “The Board examinations are underway and it is only a short time before they will be completed. You please wait.”

But those people paid no attention to me, and went into the classroom. Taking the children’s hands, they began to lift them up. But the children did not stand up. I had not told the children to do this, so the intruders began to beat me. When the children said they would not go out, the intruders began breaking up tables and chairs. To the children, they said, “leave here, we are going to make you Hindus”. After that they went into the 8<sup>th</sup> Class and disturbed them and broke up furniture – chairs and tables. They tore up our picture of Jesus Christ and our Bible too, then broke the glass on a table. The school records too, they tore up, as well as important necessary papers. Then after doing much damage, they all went outside, stood on the school grounds, and repeated their chanting. Some of the crowd threw stones on the teachers, some of which damaged the roof when they fell there. For an hour, the crowd stayed, damaging the school and making false statements. Seeing and hearing all this, the village people gathered. The intruders quarrelled with them with words and fists and then left. Some of the staff, some of the village people and I went to the police to report this event. It had taken about an hour. When we arrived at the police station, it was about 3 o’clock. Then police and the MLA who came in a motor brought people and weapons with them. Police and other people began to beat those of us who had come to make the report, and guns were fired. Arrows fired by the Alirajpur crowd hit two people of the village. After a time, some people came in a motor, carrying weapons with them from Bhabra and began to fire. At seeing this, the village people were afraid and leaving their houses, ran away.

On 17.1.04, the next day at 7 a.m., we were called to report to the SDOP and we, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, Pastor \_\_\_\_\_, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were called to report to the police station. They did not take our description in Amkhut saying that this would not be proper there. So they took us to the Alirajpur police station. From 17.1.04 till 18.1.04, they did not hear our description of events and for two days, hungry and thirsty, we sat in the police station. And on the third day, they sent us to the jail. There, it seems to me, that the Lord was testing us and He was testing me – how much difficulty and testing for my faith I could undertake. Staying in jail, it seemed God was using me for His own work. I was happy that I am a Christian; therefore, I can give thanks to God for all He desires to use me.

We were in jail for three days. After that, came our bail. We made a trip to Delhi. There we met Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, lawyers and the press. We told them of the experiences in Amkhut School, and of the final experiences which went on till April 2006 in the courts, after which we were freed. Therefore I give God thanks.

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Christian School, Amkhut

### **Witness Number 18**

At 7:30 a.m. on the morning of 16.1.04, I came to school (in Amkhut). Three of us teachers teach in classrooms behind the church. About 11:30 a.m., three girls (young women) appeared. They stopped our teaching. They began teaching the children things pertaining to the Hindu religion and against the Christian religion. Then they told the children that they should worship the sun as God. We didn’t do anything against them because we thought someone must have given permission for them to come. They stayed with us for about half an hour, then they left without going to the higher classes.

About 12 o’clock, in a kind of rally, Krishna sister, her associates and a few people of the village entered the premises shouting slogans, saying, “chase the foreigners away from here, kill the pastor”. After this, they forced

entry into the office and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Classes and began tearing up and destroying. The terrified children fled. They told their parents what was happening, then their families ran to the school where a big crowd gathered. We teachers were also afraid and stood off to one side. Seeing the crowd, some of the intruders fled by car and others on foot.

After all this, we teachers felt we should make a report to the police, but when two of us went to the police station, they did not write it. As we were returning to our homes, we suddenly heard a lot of commotion along with gun firing, so we ran and hid in our own houses.

On 17.1.04 morning, our school headmaster called me to the police station. They didn't take our report, but putting us into a "Gypsy" car, they transported us to Alirajpur police station. In that place also they did not take our deposition and the SDOP (sub-divisional police officer) went out.

Without food or water, we sat there all day. About midnight, they came with a blank paper for us to sign, but we refused to sign. It was the cold season, but without blanket or warm clothes, we sat there the whole night. The next day was Sunday so we prayed together, and kept on sitting. The Jobat SDOP was lying to us when he said, "After taking your deposition, I will personally take you home". Believing him, we continued to sit there.

On Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> at noon, they took us in a police van to Alirajpur jail. At this time, there were about 17 of us. They left us sitting in the van all day. About 7 p.m., they put us into the jail.

Throughout Jan. 17 and 18<sup>th</sup>, we had been in custody, without opportunity for washing even our faces or hands, or of having any food. On Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, one of the prisoners helped us and gave us soap, towel and toothbrush.

For six days, we had to remain in jail. We can never forget those days. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day, we were granted bail. Because of the late hour, we were taken to Jobat for the night (the Amkhut road is not safe at night). The next day our relatives took us to Amkhut, where our people welcomed us. We give thanks to God our Father.

From the experience of this occurrence, it seems to me that perhaps we have been growing away from God just as in the old days, God's chosen people Israel deserted Him and began to worship other gods and goddesses. Then through unbelievers, God gave them punishment and the Israelites returned to Him. It could be that this has happened to us for the same reason.

Because of what has happened, all the Christians have come together as one in prayer to God. My faith in God has also become firmer. When we were in jail, we were singing and praying to God. Perhaps before this, there had not been much witness to God in jail, but through us a witness was being made. So perhaps it was God's plan that His Word should be preached in this way.

Finally, I thank all the sisters and brothers through whose prayers and financial assistance we got strength through such difficult times.

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Amkhut School teacher

## **Pastor Number 2**

Some Hindus have a big plan to finish off all Christians, and send them off to England and America with all the foreigners and then they would get all the animals, houses, land and belongings. Then cutting off the hands and feet of the pastors, give them begging bowls and blankets, and send them off.

This will be done to silence the name of Jesus Christ, and make everyone a Hindu. And in this planning, the RSS, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, etc. all took part. They entice young people by giving them money. Young Hindus all enthused go into the bazaars every month, every week, and every day and, showing weapons, they scare the people. They make plans against the Christians to break down and burn the churches, and beat up the faithful, etc.

On 16.1.04, it seems that the leaders of the above-mentioned parties were ready to fight and the first place to attack was Amkhut. The population of Amkhut is about 1,700 and houses number about 160. After this, Puniyawat was on the list with at least 1,600 population and 150 houses. On 16.1.04, two hostile vehicles came from Ahmedabad to Amkhut mission school and the CNI church. The children were studying in the school. Entering the

school, they beat the children and teachers. They broke windows and doors. They chased away the children. They ripped up a picture of Jesus and said to the children, "Become Hindu and if you don't, then go with the English. You don't belong here." In this way, they went to some houses and damaged them. Then some of the Christian young men and women faced them and chased them away. Then in a little while, a leader came from Alirajpur to Amkhut with a large armed group. And then firing began. These people belonged to the BJP. In the fighting, some Christians were injured. In the meantime from Kathiwara and Bhabra, several vehicles full of people arrived to beat up Christians. Then the Christians from Amkhut, Puniyawat and nearby villages gathered together. Children were also with them. They faced the intruders and chased them away, having injured some of them. A jeep and motorcycle were burned. Because of this, Christian pastors, men and women were put in jail. The people who came from so far away to attack were not blamed for anything. Even the police officers didn't say anything.

The police did not charge them with any wrongdoing, but blamed the Christians for everything. They caught small and big workers, pastors and faithful brothers and took their guns and cancelled their licences. Up to now, they have not been returned. Charging the people with various laws, they put them in jail. Some people obtained bail in 15 days and some after 50 days. The fourteen men who were charged under Article 302 were kept in jail for 2 ½ years. Churches, vehicles and houses of Kathiwara, Alirajpur and Amkhut were damaged and burned. This went on for several days. Some Christians ran away and hid in the jungles and hills for several months. The fourteen men were in jail for 2 years and 5 months, but their faith never left them. God helped them financially also.

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, sarpanch, were at large for 2 years and 8 months and we ran from place to place. Finally, the fourteen men were released from jail, but we were still at large. In the end, the police came at night and caught \_\_\_\_\_, sarpanch. After that, they caught me. On 11.8.06, they put us in Alirajpur jail. Like Noah, we ran from place to place, but finally it was God's will that we go to jail. Going to jail, we started to pray, and the Lord worked in the jail. A change came into the lives of the prisoners, guards and jailer. In Genesis 39: 21, it is written that the jailer had a vision of grace about Joseph. In that way, it was also with us. The jailer openly told us to pray and change our fellow prisoners. If someone was ill, they asked the Pastor to pray so he would be healed. Three or four police who were looking after us were also present during the prayers. Several of the prisoners whose cases were not yet finished, asked for prayer. Then their cases were completed, and they were able to go home to their own villages. Some had not received bail, but after prayer they also obtained bail. Some of the prisoners were not getting along together, but after prayer they got together and made peace. Some were not having any visitors, but after prayer, their people started to come to meet them.

There were many changes effected in the jail. There was a plastic board hanging on the wall and using that I was teaching the men. Everyone listened carefully and quietly with attention to the board. All the brother prisoners were happy. All the people in jail gave us respect and none said anything bad about us. They even washed and ironed our clothes and gave us warm water for bathing. They brought our food to us and washed our dishes. They made our beds and kept our room clean. I did not pray to God asking Him why He had brought me here, or asked Him to take me home soon. The Lord arranged our bail after 3 months and twenty days. The case is still going on. Every 10 or 15 days, I have to appear in court and witnesses are also called. We pray that the case will be finished soon. We need money and believe that the Lord will provide what is needed, and with a minimum of cost. There was a lot of expense for the first group and our opponents want to get that much also and are asking us for money. Some people accepted the Lord.



## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> <http://ams.pccatlantic.ca/> Website of the Atlantic Mission Society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Names of the individuals are not printed in order to protect their safety.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Dr. John Buchanan (1859-1942) and Dr. Mary MacKay were pioneer Presbyterian Church in Canada missionaries to Ujjain and the Bhil area of India. He a native of Glenmorris, Ontario and she a native of Pictou, Nova Scotia, met as they travelled as medical doctors to serve the Board of Foreign Missions of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in Ujjain, India. Within one month of disembarking from the ship, they were married in Indore. They began their preaching and healing ministry in Ujjain in 1888. In the heart of the city, they built a school and a two-storied dispensary. In 1896, Drs. Buchanan were commissioned by the Presbyterian Church "to open up work among the Bhil tribes in the mountains". ("John Buchanan", pg. 215) He supervised the construction of a hospital at Jobat in 1897.

During the time of the great famine in India at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he directed the building of a mission compound at Amkhut. Along with the mission buildings, Buchanan developed four farms on the Bhil mission at: Amkhut; Sardj; Chicheniya; and Toran Mall. "All training was designed to produce better cattle, horses, goats, bees, fodder, seed, gardens and fruit trees. There was also provision for industrial know-how, such as carpentry, brick-laying and the quarrying of lime." ("John Buchanan", pg. 223)

At Toran Mall Lake, located 3,800 feet above sea level in the Satpura Mountains, he established a Summer School.

John Buchanan expressed the philosophy of his spiritual pedagogy in this way: "We are trying to join together what our Lord never intended should be divorced: religion [i.e. Christian faith]; intelligence; and honest labor". ("John Buchanan", pg. 225)

Always vigilant in considering projects that would benefit the community, he also envisioned and superintended workers who constructed an 11 mile stretch of road through the hilly countryside between Dohad and Alirajpur.

Dr. Buchanan's remarkable achievements were recognized with distinction. In 1913, he received from the British government the gold Kaiser-i-Hind ("Emperor of India") Medal for Public Service in India. In 1917, his alma mater of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1928, the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada honoured him by electing him Moderator. ("John Buchanan", pg. 225)

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