



Indian Christian Training School (1915-1916). Seated L-R: A. H. Williams (Treasurer of the India Union), Mrs. I. F. Blue, I. Frank Blue (principal of ICTS), J. S. James (acting India Union president), S. A. Wellman (chairman of India Financial Association--the legal body of the India Union).

Standing are the first students of the Indian Christian Training School.

Photo courtesy of Southern Asia Division Heritage Centre.

Indian Christian Training School

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The Indian Christian Training School (ICTS) opened on November 3, 1915 in a large rented bungalow within a large compound on 17 Abbott Road, Lucknow. I. F. Blue, a former professor of Union College, was the founding principal of the school.

Early Adventist Work in Lucknow

Adventism entered Lucknow as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. The missionary couple Luther and Georgia Burgess pioneered mission work in several locations in northern India. As a result of their efforts, the first Hindustani church was organized during the 1908 biennial conference in Lucknow.¹ Although Adventism began in Calcutta, the Foreign Mission Board leadership did not consider it as the ideal permanent location for the mission headquarters. The Board decided on Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh. In 1909, about thirteen years after the India Mission was established in Calcutta, its headquarters was relocated to 19 Banks Road, Lucknow.² The publishing house was also moved to this location. As a result, a sizable group of Adventists sprang up in the city.

The Need for a Union Training School

In nearly all branches of mission work, the denomination felt compelled to employ workers from other Christian missions and even non-Christian communities due to a lack of Adventist workers. This was especially the case in mission schools where nearly half of the teachers were non-Adventists.³ H. R. Salisbury, the president of the India Union Mission, in expressing the negative impact of allowing this condition to persist, lamented,

Time, money, and souls have been lost because we have employed in our schools, teachers who cared nothing for this truth. We shall never do our full duty to students we have gathered in our many schools until every teacher is a member of our own mission, trained for his work, and filled with a love for the souls of his pupils.⁴

It was thus, the need to produce qualified local Adventist workers for schools and other church units that church leaders had established the Karmatar Orphanage and Training School in 1904.⁵ However, the school operated more as an orphanage than a training school. Besides, a more central location with proximities to the railway station, telegraph office, and better climatic conditions was desired.

Founding of the School and Its Brief Operation

The Union Advisory Board passed a resolution on April 12, 1914 for the founding of a central union school for the entire India Union Mission. The board also resolved to request the General Conference to allocate one thirteenth Sabbath School offering in 1915 for the school building project with the expectation of receiving at least \$2,000. It was agreed that until the buildings were completed, the school was to operate in rented buildings.⁶

As planned, the Indian Christian Training School (ICTS) as it came to be known opened on November 3, 1915 in a large rented bungalow within a large compound on 17 Abbott Road, Lucknow where both the church headquarters and the publishing house were also located. The existing storerooms were cleaned up and sanitized and converted into hostels. The Foreign Mission Board sent I. F. Blue, a former professor of Union College to be the founding principal of the school. It was planned that ICTS would offer standard XI-XII. Students who passed tenth standard in regional training schools and wished to pursue higher studies were to attend ICTS.⁷ Blue reiterated the purpose of the school when he wrote,

The school in Lucknow has been established, especially, for the training of leaders in the evangelistic and teaching lines. Of primary importance to our work in India is the training of Indian evangelists.⁸

In the first year, there were fourteen students: one student from Tamil Nadu, two students each from Burma and West India, and three students each from Andhra Pradesh, North-west India, and North India.⁹ Instruction was given in English. Blue and his wife with the assistants of native Indians served as the main teachers with occasional help from other missionaries. Peter Shindi was one of the Indian assistants. The school managing board consisted of W. W. Fletcher, I. F. Blue, and S. A. Wellman.

In 1916, student enrollment increased to 22.¹⁰ Students came from Andhra Pradesh, Burma, Bengal area, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and several parts of northern India. All students received financial assistance during their study in the school. In 1918, the school was relocated to 61 Abbot Road within the city. No information about the new school buildings as planned is reported in the church paper.

During the short duration of its existence, earnest efforts were made to provide a holistic education at the school. Students were engaged in manual activities aside from studying the Bible and other subjects. They also actively participated in outreach ministry such as writing and receiving missionary letters, home visitations, mailing papers, selling tracts, lending or giving away books and tracts. The short lifespan of the school makes it difficult to measure its impact on the church and the community. Although its impact may not have been as great as other educational institutions in the Indian mission field, many students who graduated from the school entered denominational service. It was reported that by 1920, twenty-five graduates from the school had entered denominational work.¹¹

Decline and Closure

While South India Training School (now Spicer Adventist University) rapidly progressed, ICTS declined. Soon after its establishment, I. F. Blue temporarily withdrew from his position as the school principal due to a serious case of diphtheria. A. H. Williams temporarily oversaw the administration of the school. Although Blue returned in January 1916, his sickness forced him to return to America.

According to George Jenson, language was the main cause for the school's downfall.¹² It seemed that students who came from different regions did not fully understand English, the medium of instruction. To bring together students with diverse language and culture into one school and trained them with the same method was in its early experimental stage. Eric M. Meleen who was actively engaged in educational initiatives in India expressed a similar tone when he wrote, "the differences in the languages of the people in India make a central training school impracticable . . . it seems to me we will have to have several small training schools in different sections of the country."¹³

On the other hand, at South India Training School (now Spicer Adventist University), the medium of instruction for grade 1-4 students was in the vernacular. Grade 5-7 students were taught in both the vernacular and English. Finally, grade 8-10 students received instruction in English.¹⁴ It is likely that such a foresight aided the success and progress of the school. If ICTS had followed a similar trajectory, it is possible that its prospect would have been different. In the end, the church leadership in India felt that it would serve the cause of the church better if training was provided in smaller regional schools rather than bring all the students to one centralized institution. Blue shared this sentiment as well.¹⁵

Adventist church historian Floyd Greenleaf observed that the other mission schools, which were to act as feeder schools rather became competitors.¹⁶ After a string of disappointments and low enrollments, the school was closed down some time in 1919, which practically handed the rein to South India Training School as the leading educational institution in the division. Students transferred to schools in Lasalgaon and Hapur.¹⁷ Blue expressed the hope of reviving the school in the future. However, the desire remained unfulfilled. The North India Girls' School in Hapur was relocated to the same premises previously occupied by ICTS.¹⁸ In 1920, the Division Committee voted to transfer the General Conference financial appropriation for the defunct union school to the Northwest India Union Mission Training School (for boys) at Hapur.¹⁹ The experiment with ICTS to train mission workers for the whole union mission territory finally came to an end in less than four years after a promising start.

Indian Union Christian Training School Principals

I. F. Blue (1915); A. H. Williams, Acting (1915-1916); I. F. Blue (1916-1919)

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1. J. L. Shaw, "Mission Headquarters," *ARH*, June 19, 1913, 19.

2. Ibid.

3. I. F. Blue, "Educational & Y.P.M.V. Dept.," *Indian Union Tidings*, January 1917, 21.

4. H. R. Salisbury, "Superintendent's Biennial Report," *Eastern Tidings*, January 1915, 6.
5. J. L. Shaw, "Karmatar (India) Training School," *ARH*, April 14, 1904, 14.
6. India Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, "Minutes of the India Union Mission Advisory Board Meeting," (Lucknow, India: India Union Mission 108 April 12, 1914); W. E. Perrin, "Summer Council of Advisory Board," *Eastern Tidings*, April 1914, 1-3; Salisbury, "Superintendent's Biennial Report," 6.
7. G. G. Lowry, "Coimbatore," *India Union Tidings*, May 1, 1917, 5.
8. Blue, "Educational & Y. P. M. V. Dept.," 21.
9. I. F. Blue, "Opening of the Indian Christian Training School," *Eastern Tidings*, November 1915, 2-3. This article by Blue also contains a list of the fourteen students.
10. J. F. Blue, "Indian Christian Training School," *Eastern Tidings*, November 1916, 7; J. S. James, "The Retrospect," *India Union Tidings*, January 1917, 8.
11. I. F. Blue, "Report of the Educational and Young People's Missionary Volunteer Departments for the Years 1917-1919," *Eastern Tidings*, February 1 & 15, 1920, 12.
12. George R. Jenson, *Spicer Memorial College: A Dynamic Demonstration of an Ideal* (Poona, India: Oriental Watchman, 1965), 21, 33.
13. Eric M. Meleen, "The Training School—Its Object and Purpose," *Eastern Tidings*, May 15, 1920, 2.
14. J. S. James, "South India Mission," *India Union Tidings*, January 1917, 17.
15. Blue, "Report of the Educational and Young People's Missionary," 12.
16. Floyd Greenleaf, *In Passion for the World: A History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 196. The school at Kalyan was one of the feeder schools. See G. W. Pettit, "Field Gleanings," *Eastern Tidings*, August 1916, 7.
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