

Dr. LILIAN STANLEY

# THE DREAM

*that did not come by night!*



THE 10-YEAR HISTORY OF FEED ORISSA, A RELIEF PROJECT

**THE DREAM  
that did not come by night!**

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**Dedicated to all the partners  
of the Feed Orissa Project,  
who made this miracle  
possible!**

*“Blessed is he who has regard for the weak;  
the Lord delivers him in times of trouble.  
The Lord will protect him and preserve his life;  
He will bless him in the land  
and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.  
The Lord will sustain him on his sick-bed and  
restore him from his bed of illness” (Psa 41:1-3).*

## Thanks

Thank you Thalitha for your hours of typing and retyping and not losing your patience with me. Thank you Mr. Selwyn for your meticulous proof correction and untiring trips to the Computer Centre. God bless you for your cooperation.

Lilian

# **THE DREAM**

## **that did not come by night!**

*The History of Feed Orissa*

Odisha is our pet State. My husband and I spent three years in Berhampur. The last leg of our stay was in Ramagiri, one of our mission stations in the jungles of Odisha, for three months. Tigers, bears, pythons, wolves and coyotes surrounded the small clearing in the jungle which was this village. In 2001, I planned a short visit to the place. Hardly did I know God had longer plans for me.

We have a campus there and as if reserved for me, a quarters was vacant. It had all I needed—a room, a kitchen, a toilet and a small verandah. I settled down comfortably. This was the place God used me to start a clinic nine years ago, now known as the Jungle Clinic. I was excited to sit in the clinic

after a long time and started to see patients. Evening I would take a short walk on the jungle road and return before dark for fear of wild animals. No shopping, no ice-cream, nothing to entertain you. My only hobby was the Odiya newspaper which I read for want of anything better to do. It was at this time that news about the severe drought in the nine districts of Western Odisha was regularly published. I was shocked to see pictures of skin and bone people and read stories of child sale, starvation deaths, T.B and migration. Was this happening in India, in the State where I was? It was hard for me to believe.

I started praying for those people. Every time I prayed my inner being screamed, “Can’t you do anything more for these people?” I said a firm, “No, impossible.” But the inner turmoil could not be quashed. Then the voice of the Lord came gentle as a baby’s breath, “Go.” I was terrified. I trembled and said, “No Lord, not me.” He whispered as a soft breeze, “If you go, I’ll go with you.” It was not an audible voice and so you can imagine my confusion. Was my mind playing games on me? I tried to push the thought away but it always bounced back like one of those rubber dolls we use to box. Then I gave my ultimatum to God: “Lord, I am a woman. I cannot go. Send a man. It is nine districts, a vast place and I hear of dacoits. You are surely kidding. Please stop talking to me.” But the voice did not die down.



One day, three in the morning I was praying for these people. I saw picture cards stacked in the corner of my bed. I reached out and took the first card. It was the picture that I had seen as a third grader, hanging in my classroom—a picture of two children trying to catch a butterfly, leaning over a precarious edge and their guardian angel with spread out wings protecting them. I don't know if it was a dream or vision. But I knew it was my Lord waving the green flag. I wrote to the head office about my desire. I was allowed to go and see. We rented a car and I invited Mr. and Mrs. Biswanath Samal, our Odiya missionaries to join me in the trip.

As I was getting ready, two missionaries entered my room. "Why do you want to go there?" they asked. I replied that I wanted to see for myself what I read in the newspapers. "It's all false information. They write all lies in the newspaper. They wrote about us too." "Let me go and see if it is true or false." They were not ready to leave me. "What are you going to do there?" I persisted, "I want to help those poor unfortunate people in anyway I can." They were adamant. "You know what" they said. "even if someone dies of starvation we tell them to trust God. We don't even give a handful of rice." "Well, that's not how I look at it" I tried to calmly reply.

"Lord, am I doing the right thing? Please don't confuse me. What if I go and find it was all false

information?" I felt as if someone was pushing me, as if someone was carrying me and flying. It was a strange feeling that I cannot name.

We were out of Koraput District, then Kalahandi and then Bolangir. At Bolangir we requested a place to stay in the mission compound. Everything looked very normal. I was disappointed. Where was the drought I read about in the newspapers? Where are the matchstick-thin people? We went to see Mr. B.K. Nag of Indienhilfe, whom we thought might give us information. "I don't know" he said. "Now what Lord?" I asked, ready to pounce on God at the drop of a hat. "You brought me all the way here to make a laughing stock of me?" "Well..." dragged Mr. Nag. "May be you can go to my sister's house," he dawdled. "May be I can come with you." So off we went 70 k.m. to his relative's house. "I don't know" the relative, Mr. Senapathy said. I sighed. No use asking God. Somebody walked inside at that moment and he was introduced as Mr. Isaac Tandy, the evangelist. "Do you know anything about the drought?" I asked him, awaiting the, 'I don't know' reply. But boom came the answer that made our hearts jump. "Ofcourse I know. I am working in those places. C'mon let's go. I'll take you to those villages." Thus started the miracle that continues even after ten years.

He jumped into our car and we started off full of expectations. Suddenly Mr. Isaac shouted, "Stop

the car. There is the man standing in the bus-station, who bought the child.” We stopped and interviewed him. Yes, he was the man who the newspaper said had bought a girl child from a starvation stricken family. “Lord, can this be true?” Nine districts is such a vast area. To see a man about whom I had read in the newspapers, standing on our way was a million-to-one-shot. The man said that the collector and other officials came and videographed him saying he did not buy the child. “But I did buy her for Rs. 5000/- because the family was starving and I did not have a girlchild. Syamlal fell at my feet and begged me to buy his three year old daughter. He was sick and had no money for his treatment. His family had not eaten for three days.”

From there we went through rugged mud roads till we reached Syamlal’s village. My heart was beating fast. We walked into the narrow streets. Was I going to see a face that I saw in the newspapers, who had sold his daughter? There he was, sitting in front of his hut. We talked to him and bought him provisions. He begged for a little kerosene since he had not lighted a lamp in his house since many days, which request we complied with. We met another starving family looking for prospective buyers for their children.

Then we visited the village of Prekren Bhoi and Premsila Bhoi, both woodcutters whose death due to starvation kicked up dust in the Assembly and hit

the headlines of newspapers. Prekren gradually became weak, took to bed and died. Three months later Premsila followed suit leaving their three children aged 12,4 and 2 to their fate. The children were under the custody of his brother Domburu. We asked Domburu why he did not feed his own brother. He was feeding him for sometime. When he found he could not even feed his own wife and two sons, he stopped feeding him.

We found him angry and shaking his fist. Some men had come one evening in a vehicle and taken him and Premsila’s children to a place 6km away explaining that a team from Delhi had sent him gifts, reading about his plight in the newspaper. They took his photograph with the gifts and sent him away without the gifts to walk back to his village at 10 p.m. He screamed, “If no one is going to help me I am planning to sell the children.” His family of seven lives on 2kg rice per day which he gets by digging a pond under the Food for Work government program. Meeting people after such people sent us into an emotional tailspin. I decided to come back, stay in Prekren-Premsila’s house and start the work.

We returned home and reported to the headquarters the tales of gloom and doom. We were asked to take a trip for a detailed survey. This time Mrs. Shakuntala Israel, the then Women’s Ministry Coordinator and our missionary, Mr. Philip Bishoyi accompanied me. We roamed around for fifteen days in a jeep.



*The man who bought the child*



*Diptipur Mission Hospital*



*Syamlal*



*Consumed by Tuberculosis*

The TV was repeatedly flashing news about the heatwave and death-toll in Odisha. But we decided to take up the survey in the barbecuing heat of May so we can get to the people before some more died. Temperature soared to 48 degrees celcius and we had to wrap wet towels around us to prevent heat stroke. On the whole we covered 58 villages.

There were atleast one or two starving middle aged or old persons in many of the villages. Some got an old age pension of Rs. 100/- per month (US \$ 2) (Now Rs 200/-) which lasted hardly for a week after which they resorted to begging. The houses were generally mud huts measuring 6'x8' with some rags and vessels. We could not find even a handful of rice or dhal when we inspected their houses. Everyday was a struggle for survival for them. They got out around 11 am, wandered begging and came back and put the rice they collected in a pot full of water and a little salt and boil it. They kept drinking it till the next day. They were lucky if they got a chilly to bite with it. It was nothing but another Somalia!

We saw a malnourished lady, weak and sitting on a cot. We asked her what she had eaten. She replied in a shaky voice, "Nothing since morning." It was 8 p.m.! Widows whose husbands died of starvation or TB, struggled to feed their children.

We offered to take some to an Old Age Home. The desperate ones were willing. But some felt very

insecure to leave their huts and village to come to a strange place to strange people. It was quite understandable and we thought of ways to feed them in their own places. Daud, a fine Christian in his 70's, was praying, "Lord, give me something to eat or take me." He and his wife readily agreed to come to a Home.

Some owned one or two acres of land which they leased for Rs. 50 per year because of the drought. When they became old and helpless their lands were swindled. The rich had borewells and motors to irrigate their land. Some starving people were being fed by neighbours on the condition that their houses would belong to them on the occasion of their death.

We felt sorry to see some who had lost their minds because of the stress of the drought and death of loved ones. They kept crying and blabbering, narrating their sad story over and over again.

Many had the BPL card (Below Poverty Line) with which they could purchase 16kg rice per month for Rs.5/ kg, but did not have the money for the buy. Since the card was useless for them some sold it for Rs. 100/-. The rich bribed the officials and got BPL cards. In some villages BPL rice was sold once in two or three months only. Poachers stole truckloads of BPL rice and sold it back to the Food Corporation of India.



**“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.”  
(Js 1:27)**

**“Deliver those who are drawn to death. If you say, Surely we did not know this, Does not He who weighs the heart consider it?”  
(Prov 24:11,12)**

**“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously everyday. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table.”  
(Lk 16:19-21)**

**“Whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”  
(1 Jn 3:17,18)**

**Do not lay up treasures for yourselves on earth where supercyclones and earthquakes will take them.**

**It is wiser to save souls than to save money.**

**“She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.”  
(Prov 31:20)**

People cried, “Give us food, give us water, give us jobs.” In desperation people were building temples to appease their gods. Women carried pots of precious water to pour on the goddess of rain.

In a village plunged in darkness with no street lights, we found poles and electric wires. We discovered it was an electrified village but people (except one or two) were too poor to get connection. People rolled cigars and sold 1000 for a throw-away rate. Some made leafplates and cups and sold. Because they had no money to invest, those leaves were their easy investment.

There was mass migration to other States. In some villages nearly 50% had migrated. Their houses were locked or inhabited by their aged parents. The young and strong moved out to Hyderabad, Raipur, Assam and other places in search of jobs as labourers. Some of the houses collapsed in due course. Crushed and ground down by years of poverty, hardly daring to hope that a change would come to better their lots, they left their parched lands in search of green pastures. Think of them in alien lands, not knowing the language with no place to stay, begging for jobs! People felt there was nothing in their village, but to put out the lights, lock the door and leave. Many died, or were exploited or returned home disappointed. May be God was taking this people out of the State that they might have a fair chance to listen to the goodnews. The old and ailing

who were left behind faced the drought boldly. They had no complaints because they knew that the survival of their sons and daughters itself was a big question mark.

The government and certain non-governmental organisations were providing borewells for villages. Many were good, some were defunct and a few running dry. But in many villages people were not able to use the borewell for washing and bathing because of the queue. They used dirty pond water even to brush their teeth. It was a nauseating sight. We would wash our feet on getting home if we had set foot on the pond!

Children had no scope at all. Some had stopped going to school and taken to begging. Certainly for starving stomachs education was not a priority. Some went for the sake of midday meals. There were schools but visited by teachers occasionally. Health centres were a distant dream for villages. In bigger villages there were Primary Health Centres but no doctors. A nurse visited once a week.

Our next concern was Tuberculosis. There was an appalling number of TB patients. Since they had to pay for the “free” treatment, patients went to the centre whenever they had money. So much so they kept taking treatment for 3-5 years. There were private doctors who treated TB for 3 months instead of the full course of 6 months and sent them away

**“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and then come, follow Me.”  
(Mt 19:21)**

**“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.”  
(Dt 15:11)**

**“I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.”  
(Job 29:12)**

**“Have I not wept for those in trouble?  
Has not my soul grieved for the poor?”  
(Job 30:25)**

**“He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.”  
(Prov 28:27)**

**“Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”  
(Psa 82:3)**

**“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever, his horn will be lifted high in honour.”  
(Psa 112:9)**

**“He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done.”  
(Prov 19:17)**

**“A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.”  
(Prov 22:9)**

so that they'd come back to them. Such things made us helplessly angry.

Christian patients were charged that they received money from foreign countries and demanded money. We had read the names of Mahadev Ganith and Rajaram Rout in the newspapers that they were suffering from TB and starving. When we reached their villages they had already died and gone to be with the ...? (who knows with whom they are?). The newspaper said Madhadev was reading the Bagavat Gita in hope of getting to heaven. It was a common sight in villages.

We met Debendra, a 35 or 40 year old skin and bone man lying in a manger. It was obvious that TB was consuming him. He received seven and a half kg of rice per month from the government. Someone cooked it for him and fed him. We arranged for him to be admitted in a hospital. We later heard that he was promptly admitted but died after 15 days. We were happy he had a clean bed and good food at least at the end of his life. In a village when we asked a man why he was not taking treatment for his tuberculosis, he threw back his head, erupted in laughter and said, "We don't even have money for food babu. How can we spend for medicines?" As somebody rightly commented, "It is not the disease that kills the man. It is the bill for the treatment that kills him." These poor had to pay for the "free treatment" as we later found out.

Oh, how we wished our pockets were full of thousand rupee notes that kept coming like the five loaves and two fish so that we could wipe away poverty at the snap of the finger!

God sent many guardian angels to lead us in our way. Mr. and Mrs. Anoop fed us, packed our lunch and sent us with a prayer. Their home had become a second home to missionaries. Mr. Purnanando Pradhan, a government official, Mr. and Mrs. Nag of Indienhilfe, Miss Latika, Asst. Pastor in the CNI church, Pastor Hyal, Mr. Patnaik and many others helped us tremendously. Rev. C.K. Das, the then CNI Bishop of Sambalpur Diocese went out of the way to help us, giving us the jeep and driver and arranging boarding and lodging for us wherever we went.

I lack the vocabulary to translate my feelings into words. The melancholy tales evoked a resolve in us. What hurt us most was that these people were not introduced to the God to whom they could hold on to in times of crisis. They were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd. What we saw was just the tip of the iceberg. There were stretches and stretchs of villages like these samples we saw. We were able to buy some provision for the starving. Since we had gone just to survey, we could not help much.

These people were not BPL but BDL (Below Death Line). They were already condemned to die,

stumbling to the slaughter. When we read such news day in and day out our senses get dulled from repeated shocks and a feeling takes over that so much evil and misfortune mar the world that a little more or little less does not make much difference, as Nehruji puts it. Now we have lost our capacity for shock and starvation deaths are just news for us.

When we shared all the news with the leaders of BYM, the Executive Committee recommended that we took a crash program with one lakh rupees to supply grains to the starving. So I went with missionaries Biswanath Samal, Prabudass and driver Jena. We supplied rice, dhal, eggs, biscuits and oil to so many starving.

Our last leg was Gandarla village in Bolangir District which we reached by a boat, crossing a river. It was 6.30 pm when we were returning. We were stopped on the way by some muscular youths who said we could not proceed till the police came. They had informed the police. We sat there waiting for the police. Around 8.30 the police came and took us to the police station across the river. The boatman was inebriate. Water was bubbling inside the boat as the boatman's assistant kept emptying it with a tin can. I was testifying to the police inspector. We informed Mr. Maharana, a very helpful and influential Christian in Titlagarh. He came immediately. I was allowed to go around 10.30 and other brothers

around midnight. The next day the police went to Gandarla to meet the people and found that the youth had gone to the people and incited them to tell the police that we gave them grains and told them to convert to Christianity, promising more rice after conversion. However the people told the truth to the police. The police chided the youth and apologised to us.

Mr. Sagar, Head of the Western Utkal Agricultural Centre came as a guide to us to all the villages and worked hand in glove with us.

In Bolangir we met Bishop C.K. Das who suggested we visit Diptipur in Bargarh District where the Mission Hospital needed a doctor. After going round the villages of Bargarh District we went to Diptipur to see the Hospital. A cord struck in my heart. A hospital with a lab, xray unit, operation theatre, 60 beds, nurses, technicians but no patients and only one retired doctor who was planning to leave. So many were dying of Tuberculosis and malnutrition. Why not start work there? So with the blessings of Bishop C.K. Das we started the work.

Where would I stay? Mr. and Mrs. Samal were given a house. I was shown a special ward in the hospital (12'x8' room). It was like an oven (in the month of May) temperature soaring to 48 degree C! I opened the toilet door and found four or five big lizards on the wall and plants growing from cracks. My heart dropped to my feet. I told myself



**“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”  
(Prov 14:31)**

**“Is it not the kind of fasting I have chosen: ... Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe him?”  
(Isa 58:6,7)**

**“He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know Me? declares the Lord.”  
(Jer 22:16)**

**“Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord: Look Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor”  
(Lk 19:8a).**

**“Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.”  
(Ezek 16:49)**

**“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”  
(Lk 14:13,14)**

**“You foolish people!... Give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.”  
(Lk 11:41)**

**“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, who was always doing good and helping the poor”  
(Acts 9:36).**

that I could not live there. Night I tossed and turned in my bed. The Lord reminded me that I vowed to go to the wood cutters' village and live in their house and start work—no electricity, no toilet. But here He had led me to a village where there was electricity now and then and a room with a toilet and I wanted to say 'No'. I hung my head in shame. I said, "Lord, I accept it." Morning I walked towards the hospital with 'Yes' in my throat. But before I could speak they said, "We have decided to give you the guest room." I breathed a sigh of relief and mumbled, "Thank you Lord." May be the Lord was testing my mettle.

Thus started the work. My husband suggested the name Feed Orissa. Before leaving for Orissa I sat on the cot, hands on my head. "Why did I ever start it?" I said. "Give up before you make a total fool of yourself" a voice within me taunted. What my husband said was to sustain me in the difficult days ahead. "Why are you anxious?" he said. "Just go, feed fifty starving people and come. That itself is great." That gave me the courage. The project was presented to a small group of our volunteers in Sitteri Hills. Mrs. Usha Jebaratnam removed her heavy gold chain and placed it on my hands. That was the starter.

Still I wanted to throw the fleece. "Lord, please don't misunderstand me. I can't see You. That's why Lord. I ask you two things. If they come to pass then I'll know you are directing me to start the work.

First, somebody should give us one lakh rupees. Then, someone should donate a vehicle. O.K Lord?" No reply. Then came a letter from Dr & Mrs. Subhakumar Khambatty with a one lakh draft attached. "But where is the vehicle Lord?" I queried. No reply. Then we were to the US for a programme. I presented the Feed Orissa Project. At the closure a man came and asked me, "We have an old jeep in India would you accept it for your project?" I bowed my head and worshiped. I came to know him as Mr. Christopher Tiller. He and his wife Pam stand with us till date.

So I went. But what we experienced was far from reassuring. Night I'd sit in the guest room with windows without bars, being bitten by mosquitos (I am allergic to coils) in the dark (we hardly had electricity for 12hrs a day!), tears rolling down my cheeks. My depression would descend on me like a demon. What am I here for? Did God lead me or did I come here emotionally? I would put on all the switches and wait for the electricity to come. I'd fry one full chicken and chew the whole thing to ward off loneliness and to keep my sanity. Morning adrenaline would bubble in my blood. I started brushing up my long forgotten Oriya.

There was a telephone booth but often the telephone was dead. At times I couldn't call my husband for a week. We started our combing operation of Bargarh District to identify the starving and T.B. patients. Mr. and Mrs. Samal and I would

wander from village to village advertising the 'doctor' for poor. I sat in the hospital reading the CIMS (drug book) learning the names of drugs that had fallen off my gray matter.

Patients started to trickle in. Dr. Mallik, the old retired doctor there, taught me many things. I learned more and more about the people. Many had hardly a meal a day. Many could not afford to pay the registration fee of Rs 30/- the hospital imposed. More than one person suffering from tuberculosis in a family was common. People accepted disease, poverty and suffering as part of life. Nobody had the gumption to fight against them. Women with TB became pregnant, delivered and fed their babies. Most of our T.B patients were daily wage labourers. The day they came to collect their medicines they had to starve with their families. Most of them got their medicines and went to work in the fields with all their ill health. Many did not come for free treatment because they could not afford the travel. When more than one member suffered from T.B. (which was very common there) sometimes one got treated and the other sacrificed his life due to financial constraints. We started bringing them for treatment. Quite a number were resistant to treatment having consumed only Ethambutol and INAH from the Government Hospital. The idea still prevails among the people that T.B. is incurable. Often they become victims of eagle doctors. Children with T.B. and malaria were a pitiable sight. Doctors can

straightaway come to fields like this after M.B.B.S. The need is great.

Many TB patients who came to us had been irregularly treated due to financial problems. That made our job more difficult since many of them were resistant to the usual drugs. Many came too late. We felt sad that people neglected themselves and their dear ones because of poverty. By the time they heard about the free treatment it was too late for some. There are an estimated 5,00,000 TB patients in Orissa and every year 80,000 new cases. Less than 30% take complete treatment.

We started the Newsletter and it caught fire. We saw the power of money and it could be very dangerous. The poor literally fell down at our feet. We realized the awesome responsibility to be humble, gentle and kind to the poor and not authoritative because we had money.

Gradually the scene began to change. People were getting healed. They joyfully carried the grains we gave them. They were better clothed and better nourished. We could see them smiling. It was so satisfying to see the happy smile on the faces of patients when we told them, "You are completely cured of tuberculosis. Give glory to Jesus and go." They responded, "I am alive because of you." The 'you' means you, who prayed and gave. We are the extension of your hands. That's the power of partnering. Without your help we would not have been able to undertake such a mammoth task.

Someone told me that poverty is a curse in Orissa. But as I read Mt 25:41: “Depart from Me, you who are CURSED ... I was hungry, you gave Me nothing to eat,” I understood that the curse is on those who do not care for the poor. In other words poverty is an opportunity for us to be blessed.

Mrs. Bimla Samal started a weekly gospel meeting for 35 poor people. We sent them off with 2kg rice each. The number gradually swelled up and became 1100. People streamed from 45 villages around Diptipur, some walking 10km for the 2kg rice. We closed the gate at 10a.m. But some who came late pushed past the gatekeeper saying: “We don’t want rice. We want to listen to the stories.” When asked, “When did Jesus come to this earth?” a lady promptly replied, “Two months ago.” Though we laughed, truly Jesus came “to her” two months ago only. Another old lady used to dance, “Yes, God is good” and teach it to others in her village. Membership in village churches grew. Some testified that they experienced an unusual peace ever since they started listening to the Goodnews.

Things came crashing down when the police called us to the police station. We were charged with trying to convert people by giving rice. We were told to stop the distribution of rice and sternly warned not to preach the Goodnews. It hurt us terribly to see the poverty-stricken, blind and handicapped go back with empty bags lamenting, with the name of the Lord in their mouths. The next

week we went to see the collector to get permission to do relief work. She was surprised that we were treating more than 100 TB patients and wanted to see our work. So Srimathi Aparigita Sarangi, Magistrate and Dt. Collector, Bargarh, visited us on April 15, 2002 and we walked with her like V.I.Ps and the sub-inspector who shouted at us came behind us with folded hands like a lamb. Praise the Lord! His people shall never be ashamed.

We were embarrassed when the poor came in silk and satin to receive goats from the collector. Later we realized that they were wearing the old clothes we had given them. They testified, “We had no proper clothes and no reason to get dressed up. We just sat at home from morning till night with no hope or joy. Even our minds were becoming corrupt. Now we dress well, come to Asish Sebasadan (That’s our centre), work and earn. We are so happy.”

Many of the poor and starving were Christians. There were believers who begged, whose houses had crumbled down, and Christian students who were unable to pay school/college fees and even without bus fare. It was a sad sight to see church buildings broken, leaking and collapsing. The congregation didn’t even have mats to sit on during worship. We repaired the Ichapalli church and bought mats for them.

The hospital work was growing. Only TB patients were now receiving rice, dhal, oil and eggs. The poor

came with the hope of having TB so that they would become eligible for the same.

As I sat in the Hospital one day seeing TB patients a woman kept bothering me for rice. I was hardening my heart as advised, so as not to make them lazy and beggarly. When I got up to go for lunch I wanted to check my weight. I was 60 kg. Immediately the woman climbed on the weighing machine. She was 34 kg. She said, “Look, I have three children and nothing to eat.” I was so embarrassed. Some poor registered their names in the Hospital, paying for their card and squatted around me begging me to check them up. I didn’t think anything unusual about it. When the truth dawned on me I was stunned. Those had come with the hope of having TB so that they’d become eligible for rice, dhal, egg and oil. Do you get it? Some got shattered when I told them they didn’t have TB! I went into depression that day.

Looking at the enormity of the task our hearts failed. We kept singing, “Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing, nothing is too difficult for Thee!” Mother Theresa’s words — “What we do is a drop in the ocean. But if we do not do what we can do, the ocean will be less by one drop!” — kept coming to our minds often, lifting us up.

Alladini and Premi both Christian widows were so bad they could not even get up and receive what we offered, dying bit by bit of starvation. They were

mentally disoriented. We brought them to the Diptipur Hospital and fed them for a week. Both recovered and went back home. We sent them with rice, dhal and oil. The next time we saw them, they were drawing water from the borewell and doing household chores. O what joy it was for us!

Bhutta Bunia was a young widow with two girls aged 8 and 5, whose husband died of TB. The first time we saw her she was literally dying of starvation. She ran away and people had to catch her, bring her back and assure her that we had come to help. Her head was shaking. She refused to talk or receive the money we offered. The two girls stood in their panties. We provided her with all the necessities. We made a door for her house. Gradually she came back to life. Then we gave her two goats. Today she is a normal person caring for her girls.

By then I was given a house used by missionaries 50 years ago. I tie a cloth over the tap to keep the slime out. I soak a bedsheet in water, cover myself from head to foot and lie down under the fan on the floor unable to bear the heat. It feels like heaven. After five minutes the current goes off. I cry, “Lord, please send electricity. Am I asking too much?” I feel as if my brain is melting. The heat allergy is terrible and I scratch till I bleed. My skin is inflamed. Antiallergics and the heat have dulled me. My brain refuses to work. I take the risk of sleeping in the open. There is no other go. “Lord, I will not survive





*Alladini*



*Will someone help me?*



*They came looking for Ashish Sebasadan!*



*God, give us something to eat or take us!*

another summer.” I complain, “Next year I will be 58 and that is good excuse to retire.”

People go about with wet towels on their heads. All the eggs in all the shops float on water. Still people buy them. My mind revolts. Here you don't throw away rotten eggs. You give it to the poor who consume them even if there is a full-grown chick inside. Titlagarh temperature is 50 degree C. “100 have died of heatstroke in Orissa” announces the TV. I fantasize a fridge, ice water and an air-conditioned room. Then I think of the people who live in extreme heat or cold without proper housing, clothes or food. What a luxury it is to eat three meals a day. At the thought of missionaries from West who lived in this same house 50 years ago, under still more backward conditions, my self-pity receives a death blow. And to think of the Son of God, who sacrificed His all for us and lived without electricity in extreme climates!

Happy June dawns. The rain plays truant but the temperature drops down to atleast 44 degree C. My skin starts healing and my brain starts ticking. I apologize to God for the words spoken in my heat-stroke. “Lord, I'll be here as long as you need me here” I say.

By the end of one year we had built 12 huts for the homeless, saved 15 from dying of starvation, distributed 65 goats to the poor, helped renovate 2 churches and educated 18 illiterates.

By the end of two years 161 TB patients were treated, 240 were under treatment, 450 poor received rice and dal, 52 students received help for education, 78 goats had been distributed, 43 collapsed houses were reconstructed, 11 received loans to do business, 125 children received regular teaching through children's clubs in five villages. Old, new and warm clothings were distributed, 1250 patients were seen in Asish Sebasadan. Three Sevaks were being supported. Four Sevikas were dedicated and sent forth. Five helpers worked in the office. Two received driving training. Nine girls were sent to Balasore for training in various fields. Three churches were renovated. Two poor tailors were given sewing machines. Five weavers received help. We were called to the Police Station thrice. Thrice we were threatened to be defamed by the newspaper. A journalist from the local newspaper threatened us more than once that they would publish that we were giving rice and converting people. Though that gave us a furiously thumping heart, we decided to ignore him and he sank into oblivion. “You shall seek them and not find them, those who contend with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, a nonexistent thing” (Isa 42:12). The Governor's wife Madam Lady Sushila Rajendran gave us interview.

God kept us from accidents, snakes and deadly tiger scorpions which wandered around our houses. Many of you might not have seen these giant black

scorpions. The biggest are about 4 inches broad and 8 inches long. The sight is enough to make you jump out of your skin. We killed deadly snakes inside our houses. Once the moment I killed a viper in my bedroom. The electricity went off plunging, me in darkness.

After two years of my stay in Diptipur, coffee and ice-cream became available because every week I would ask the shopkeeper for the same. After three years a fruit shop was opened.

By this time some were ready to take baptism. Many believed but they were afraid because they would be denied certificates and jobs.

In the May of 2003 the CNI requested us to move out of the Hospital. They were not receiving income for the Hospital from the poor we treated. The Bishop allowed us to use the Bishop's quarters for a rent of Rs. 500/- month. It was the biggest house in Diptipur. So we shifted stock and barrel and named the centre Asish Sebasadan.

In the September of 2003 Mr. Samal was transferred to Koraput District to take up the post of Associate State Coordinator of Odisha. It was a moving scene as many hugged them and cried. They had stolen the hearts of people. They were a great support to me. Mr. Philip Bishoyi moved over to Diptipur. Philip knew the nuts and bolts of missionary work and made many welcome changes.

That year the rains turned out to be floods. Rivers around Diptipur were overflowing their banks and bridges, inundating fields and villages. The Anganath went into a furious s-pate. The sight was unimaginable, the river flowing like an angry drunken giant. It was a sad sight to see people worshipping it. Near Diptipur about 500 had to be evacuated to safety. We fed 200 while the rest were taken care of by others. We praised God for this opportunity. We were without electricity or water supply for 7 days. we distributed old clothes for the flood victims. Our visit to the villages was a shattering experience. The villages had been under 10 -12 feet water. People were turning over bricks and digging the debris where once their houses stood trying to salvage whatever was left. People fell at our feet and wept. Owners of two storey houses stood in the queue for old clothes. People sat under polythene sheets. The school was conducted in sheds. While returning, the rivers swelled and our jeep could not cross the bridge as the water was flowing furiously 2 feet over the bridge. Strong men held our hands and helped us cross the gushing river. Houses of some of our TB patients had collapsed in the rain.

We selected Tikrapada and Ainlabata villages and built 75 houses costing Rs. 10,000/- each for those who lost their houses.

Financial help was flowing in and we started enrolling more patients from the long queue with sunken eyes and showing ribs looking to us for help.



*Flood (2003)*



*Feed Orissa Family (2003)*



*75 houses for flood victims*



*Old clothes arriving*

Bony faces started filling up. Collapsed houses took shape. Some with surgical problems were sent to the Khariar Hospital 120 km. away and we had them operated there. Grateful hearts greeted us on the roads. Diptipur means 'Place of Light.' We prayed that our Lord would truly make the place so.

Dr. Berty Chandran, M.V.Sc., a retired veterinary surgeon was the first to offer his services to FEED ORISSA. He was a jack of all arts. He and his team fixed tube lights in the antic quarters that'd been given me thus brightening up my life. He drove the van, slogged up and down to Bargarh, 60 km away for major purchases and collecting parcels. He joined the team to teach about T.B., Malaria and various diseases in villages using picture cards. He carried poultry vaccine for 6000 birds and vaccinated them. That year none of the birds died of disease.

Dr. Berty Chandran writes: "I consider myself privileged to have been to Diptipur, Orissa, to help in the relief work there among the drought affected poor, along with a few others. Though we could not speak the language we helped in sorting out medicines and old clothes, collecting parcels from Bargarh, getting the TB patients from villages for treatment and other odd jobs. I was glad to drive the van for the team. Everything was new to me. We could buy vegetables only once a week. Being a mutton lover I had to bicycle to the next village to

buy mutton available there once a week. Lot of time was wasted due to frequent power-cuts. The roads to the villages were rugged and bumpy. Once our van got stuck in the middle of a flowing river and it was a priceless experience.

"As a veterinarian I found it amusing that the noses of bulls were not pierced for a rope. We lived nearly half a century behind. Veterinary Hospitals were few and their shelves were bare. So cattle and poultry died in batches. The absence of street lights made the sky utterly black and the stars sparkling. I was enthralled at the night sky.

"Having heard about the Saturday meetings we eagerly waited for the day to arrive. The van had to make two trips to Padampur, 20 km away, to bring the required rice and dhal. Saturday dawned bright and blue. By the time we finished our devotions people were streaming in from all directions. It was a stunning sight. They sat jampacked, 1100 in all, from 45 villages. They listened with utmost reverence, answered questions, clapped and waved hands as they sang. Missionary couple Mr. & Mrs. Samal ministered the Word.

"We arranged a meeting for people to come and learn about Self Help Groups. 40 turned up and left with much enthusiasm and hope. As a first step we hired a man to teach bamboo basket weaving.. A dozen girls came regularly to learn."





*From 45 villages!*



*Dr. Berty Vaccinating birds*



*Eye and Dental team (2004)*



*Teaching a trade*

Christians were a pitiable lot. Take for example Sushil. He was an eighth standard student who begged us to buy him books so he could study. We found him suffering from TB and started him on treatment. A month later we visited him and found to our utter shock that he was neither going to school nor taking treatment. At first we were angry. But on probing we found that he was not allowed in the school because he had no uniform. In the hospital he had old dues to the tune of Rs 150 and so was afraid to go for the treatment. We bought him uniform and cleared his hospital dues. Sushil started to look us in the eye and smile. That was our reward.

Another example is Jeyanthi who was struggling to complete her B.A. final year. When she was three all her four elder siblings died. Her father brought in another woman and her mother lost her mind. Jeyanthi was ill treated at home. She managed two years in college with two dresses. We helped her complete her studies and now she is married to a pastor. Such families abound. Many college students have no wrist watch, footwear, sweater for the winter or even bedsheets at home. We started collecting these and distributed to the needy.

Once we published about 7 year old Daniel, wandering the streets of Gandarla in the Newsletter. Mr & Mrs. Cyril Nayak of Sambalpur read it, took him in and a little later his sister too and educated

them. Today they are fine Christians stunning their village. The Cyrils are our ardent supporters.

Mr. & Mrs Samal visited the Ichapalli church and revived the congregation. When Dr. Alfred Devadason visited they all received the Holy Spirit. One day I noticed a boy sitting there dull and depressed. On enquiry I found he was Asish, a graduate without job. We told him to come and work with us for Rs 10 a day. He came enthusiastically. We sent him for driving training and he became our regular driver. Now he is our missionary.

Mrs. Bimla Samal started a ladies meeting in her house for five Christian ladies. The number gradually grew to 45. Many were saved, baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit. One day three of the ladies expressed their desire to serve the Lord. We prayed for them and made them sevikas. They started regularly visiting the villages. The response was very good. Women and children started gathering in villages to hear the goodnews. Now there are six sevikas. People said, "We know Jesus died on the cross. But nobody told us why He died. Now we are beginning to understand."

The men staff also started visiting villages. Mr. Sanjeep was a teacher who resigned his job to serve the Lord fulltime. When the drought set in, his ministry suffered. People stopped giving offerings. His family was starving. He joined us and started going to villages. More men joined. Today we have people



*God gave me hands to help!*



*Rukni before treatment*



*I was blind, now I see!*



*Rukni after one month*

gathering in 36 villages to hear the goodnews and worship the Lord.

During the mohulo season young and old can be seen picking the flowers in baskets. It is a cream coloured flower with a strong scent and thick sweet honey. Country liquor is made by brewing it. The dried flower is Rs 5/kg.

We were at a loss to rehabilitate the poor. We tried giving goats. It was a successful project. The goats started to yield and smile replaced the tears in the faces of the poor.

A few miracles are worth quoting. In Arda village an 18yr old boy, bedridden for 7 years was brought to us for prayer. The father was weeping bitterly. Mrs. Bimla Samal prayed for him and left. The following week when we visited the village the boy was walking and followed us everywhere.

A couple came to me for a recommendation letter to Khariar for surgery at a concessional rate. The lady was suffering from uterine bleeding for 2 yrs. I gave her medicines and asked them to come after 2 months for a referral letter. 2 months later they came beaming with delight. The bleeding had completely stopped.

Subasini Sagar came to us after 11 years of marriage having spent Rs. 45,000 in vain to conceive. She had two miscarriages. I could find nothing wrong with her except that she was too thin. All tests were

normal. We just started her on T.B. drugs. Within three months she conceived and gave birth to a healthy boy baby. Husband and wife believed on the Lord and were baptized. They have another child now.

Ladu Bariha was operated for a block between the stomach and the intestines. There was a growth blocking the passage of food. Since the growth was extensive a palliative surgery was done. Later I explained to him what the surgeons told me, that it was cancer and only God could heal him. He said, "Even in the middle of the night when I get up I pray." "To whom?" I asked. His reply saddened me. "I don't know the name." I then briefed him the gospel and urged him to call on the name of Jesus. Paul rightly said, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14,15). Listen to the rest of the story. The Biopsy report came as "Not cancer". Our hearts burst forth in praise to our God. He was back to good health.

Another well placed man came with his wife traveling 250 k.m. for treatment of her diabetes. I asked, "Why did you come all the way here for diabetes? Your company has a hospital and you get free treatment there." His reply shocked me. "My colleague came here for treatment of diabetes and now he has no diabetes."

Sulochana, a poor believer came for pain abdomen. There was a cricket ball size mass moving about freely in her abdomen. I put it down as ovarian cyst, advised surgery and asked her to come the next day to be shown to another doctor. When he examined her, to my embarrassment there was no tumour. I asked her what happened. "I was so terrified of surgery that I prayed real hard" she said.

Mayadhar Tandy developed severe skin reaction to T.B. drugs. He was admitted and treated with various drugs and discharged when he had no more money to pay. When he came to us, I didn't know what would help that tough allergy. I put in my hand into the bag of anti-allergy medicines people sent. Out came polaramine. In three days his skin became like baby's skin. We used to request prayer for our patients in the newsletter. People prayed fervently and we could see the effect.

Shanthan was demon possessed since many years. When Mrs. Bimla Samal prayed for him he was delivered. You can still find him in the Diptipur bus-station distributing tracts and selling New Testaments.

20 year old Chudamani was coming to us with diabetes. Urine sugar + + + +. I used to advise him to go to a specialist for insulin therapy and send him with some medicines and good news. He would not go because he did not have the money. After a month the lab report showed nil sugar. I went to the lab

upset, and demanded, "How can you put 'nil' for a juvenile diabetic?" The technician replied, "I know that madam. That's why I repeated the test thrice." I came back and asked him, "Did you pray?" he smiled and said, "Yes, I did." Give an applause to our great God.

We had a medical camp in 2002. Dr. Isaac Jebaraj, Orthopaedician from CMC (Vellore), headed the team. Dr. Gnanamani was the anaesthetist, from Nagercoil. Dr. Sampath Karl (Ladu Bariha's surgeon) was the paediatric and General surgeon from CMC (Vellore) and Dr. Mathew Samuel was the Orthopaedic surgeon from the Christian Fellowship Hospital, Oddanchatram.

I was smitten by the sight of old people, blind due to cataract. Such an easily treatable condition with no solution in view. The blind led the blind to go to the fields in the night to relieve themselves and got bitten by snakes. Eye camps are so many in Tamilnadu but in Orissa they are almost unheard of.

One day I received a phone call. "I am Pushparaj" the caller introduced himself. "Can we come and conduct Eye Camp in your place? Just give us accommodation and food and we'll take care of the rest." "I will answer before you call" says our God. So expert Eye Specialists came from Medivision and operated on 300 patients, with not a single failure! All glory to God! Since then Surgeons, Anaesthetists, Staff Nurses, Dentists, Physicians and other para medical staff have come from Medivision





*Feeding flood victims (2008)*



*Thank you for coming!*



*Mrs. Bimla Samal*



*Surgery Camp Team (2008)*

and helped relieve the sufferings of the poor. We have had many medical and Surgery Camps. Countless poor have been helped.

The work was growing and we needed workers. We started enrolling workers. Today we have in our pay roll 48 staff. Mrs. Haema Henry volunteered to do the computer related works and maintained the mailing list. Till today she is faithfully doing the job.

Livingstone and Sugirtha worked with us for 6 years and took the work to new heights. Slum tuition centres were their brainchild. Today many slum children are helped by way of tuition, nutrition and medical help. During their tenure the Happy Home was opened and more than 20 very needy children are nurtured there and educated. Their faithful service was deeply etched in the minds of staff and people. They were there during the Kandhamal riots and God protected them. They ministered to the victims in various ways. By then I had shifted to Vellore. Sugirtha wrote the Newsletter for 5 years.

The Gospel was making inroads in villages. People were hearing about a new God called Jesus Christ. His name was hard for them to pronounce but they were learning that if they prayed in His Name they were filled with inner peace. There were oppositions and threatenings. What kept us going was the definite call of God, the uplifting letters from people and more than anything, the pleading sunken eyes of the poor. We were buying cycles for the

workers who went from village to village proclaiming the gospel. Congregations were springing up in villages, worshiping in huts, under the trees or local clubs. People were hungrily buying the gospels and New Testaments.

There were many threatenings from the devil but two in particular stuck to my mind.

Once was when I became very sick. In the mission house that was given me I slept in the bedroom near the window. One day I started wheezing very badly. I was experiencing such an asthmatic attack after nearly 15 years. After a week I discovered very fine dust falling on me from the ceiling. Mr. & Mrs. Samal removed my cot to the hall and cleaned up the place. To our great surprise we found out that the dust was falling only over my cot, over the rectangular area and nowhere else! I improved and became alright in a few days and shifted back to the bed room. The dust never reappeared.

Another was a worm I saw inside the house while sweeping. It was curled up and was as fat as a thumb. At one end was the face — a full round with eyes and mouth. When I went near it, it opened its eyes wide and looking me in the eye bared its teeth in a threatening way that sent a chill down my spine. When I tried to remove it, it opened up like a spring and fell three feet away. I finally managed to throw it in the backyard.



*Before and after Surgery*



*Before and after Surgery*



*Why did God create ugly people?*

*... so that we can make them beautiful!*

*Why did God create the poor and the sick?*

*...so that we can feed them and heal them!*

**“Your prayer and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.”**  
(Acts 10:4)

**“Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him?”**  
(Js 2:5)

**“Remember the poor.”**  
(Gal 2:10)

If anyone had told me these “stories” I would not have believed!

When the project was launched we were asked to close it down in six months time. But after six years it was still marching ahead. This year we complete a decade! We are now working in three districts.

Here we are eating, drinking, trying out new recipes, stepping on the weighing machine daily, checking our cholesterol annually, belching and taking gels for indigestion. On top of it all a multivitamin, a calcium tab and a Vit E! There they are dying of starvation, digging for rats and eating them. People can die of diseases or accidents. That’s beyond us. But we cannot let them die of starvation. Unless Christendom turns to practical religion it is not going to make a dent in this world by its pulpit-pounding preaching. God will require the blood of these people at our hands. How blind we are to the awe-inspiring simplicity and purity of the teachings of Jesus!

God says, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14).

It is said that Gandhiji started wearing a towel around his waist only after seeing the poverty of the people in Odisha. We all cannot become Gandhijis. But atleast we can learn to live a simpler life. We may not be able to slay the dragon of drought, but we can certainly rescue people from its throat.

I had read that, “For every tonne of surplus grain there is one starving person in the world.” Poverty amidst prosperity! We are fortunate to be on the prosperity side. I cannot even forego a meal. I become dizzy and hypoglycaemic. I cannot imagine somebody dying of hunger pangs. I used to feel sorry for those who take *Kanji* three times a day in our mission fields. Now I feel they are rich, unbelievably rich! They have something to sustain themselves.

Many villages are still waiting for their share of the crumbs. We are fighting relentlessly to give these people a better life even though it seems to be a massive social problem that defies solutions.

I want to conclude with the marvellous story of a man who once stood before God, his heart breaking from the pain and injustice in the world. “Dear God” he cried out, “look at all the suffering, the injustice and distress in your world. Why don’t you send help?”

God responded, “I did send help. I sent you!”

Beloved, if you have a dream, go for it!

We thank each partner of the Feed Orissa Project for making this miracle possible. If you are interested to receive the bimonthly news about the work, please write to us for the free Newsletter. We can send it by post or email.

*My dream  
has become more  
than a dream!*



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