

India's Poorest- Caught in the Lock-down



It was a sleepless night, about a month ago, after hearing of the suffering and anxiety of so many. I lay with tears in my eyes as I thought of Indian brothers and friends, just waking up on the other side of the world. Fathers would be laying on dirt floors in grass huts, dreading for their children to open their eyes, knowing there was not sufficient food. I had already been hearing the words of mothers, saying, *“As adults we know hunger and can go without food for a period, but how can we endure our children, saying with tear-filled eyes that they are hungry?”*



The vast majority of India's poor do not have vehicles nor refrigerators. Exposure to news is limited, and many who live in rural villages are illiterate. Suddenly, the entire country was thrown into a full shutdown.

Families had no food. All public transportation was closed. Anyone caught outside of their home without an emergency reason was penalized heavily. The police have been very strict.

Depressed and desperate, fathers were turning to loan sharks. Greedy men eagerly lend money at 100% interest. Their scheme is a trap from which one can never recover. I am sure that as a father, I would have done the same. If my grandchildren were hungry, I would have gone to any extreme to stop their cries, even knowing that I will never in my life recover. I would agree in a heartbeat.

My zealous Indian brothers were way ahead of me. They were already making great sacrifices with what little they had, sharing with widows and the most destitute, paying expenses from their own pockets. In an effort to make a plan, it was explained that for us to help in a way that would have significant impact, we would need to feed 5,000 families for ten days. At \$25 per family, that would require \$125,000. I am ashamed to say that I faithlessly first told my brothers this would not be possible. For a moment, I had forgotten the promise of Jesus, *“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”* (Matt. 19:26). After much prayer and the advice of my elders, the work was begun.

GOD'S BEAUTIFUL, COMPASSIONATE CHURCH

Through the infinite wisdom of the Almighty, God's flock, the jewels of His crown (Zech. 9:16) rose to the challenge. Hearing of the hunger and suffering, compassionate hearts were touched. For three days, I spoke constantly on the phone or was at my computer, explaining how funds could be received for this aid.

I wish all who are reading could experience the great joy we have had in seeing American brethren, many of whom were out of work, sacrificing and giving so liberally. One family sent \$163, explaining that their ten-year-old son had donated \$63 from his yard-mowing funds.



At the same time, we received so many *“thank you”* messages from our Indian brothers and sisters. Over and over we heard of widows who cried when they received funds, not knowing from where their next meal was coming. Helpless lepers and physically challenged souls have been so appreciative. Elumalai (photo) has watched leprosy consume his hands and feet for the past ten years. His wife, a farm laborer, has supported them, but now there is no work.

STRUGGLES OF OUR EVANGELISTS

In the middle of the strict quarantine, our evangelists are struggling. They are compelled, as their first duty is their service to God. Most have managed to access remote villages through back trails. Others rise before daylight, hoping to get back to their

homes before roadblocks are manned. Some have had their motorcycles confiscated. One man even had his cell phone confiscated. In the rural area of Horus, one of our Bible School students was trying to help an older physically challenged man when he was approached by radicals demanding aid. When he explained that we are helping the poorest and most destitute, they beat him severely and stole the money, his Bible and his motorcycle. Because of his injuries, he was hospitalized (photo) for three days, and there is no hope of regaining the stolen property.



Through all of this, our Indian brothers ask daily about the welfare of their American brothers. They are concerned and amazed at our care, even while our own country remains in a shut-down.

GOD IS GLORIFIED

For your liberal distribution (II Cor. 9:13)

The objective from the beginning was (1) to teach the love of Christ and cause God to be glorified, (2) prevent starvation, and (3) stop the loan sharks. In one of many stories, Santhanaraj explained how brother Ponnambalam was distributing relief



funds in his neighborhood where many people were hungry. He came across Shanthi, a leprous elderly woman who lived in a hut. Because of her disease, her children had put her out of their home. All help for her had stopped and she was left to starve. Our brother explained to her that he had come from the church of Christ to help her and then gave her \$15. In unbelief, she could not speak. With tears running down her cheeks she placed her hands

together (fingers eaten away) as her gesture of thanksgiving. This \$15 will feed her for a month. Ponnambalam taught her about the love of God and will be continuing his study with her.

Several have already been baptized as a result of this latest work, but perhaps the greatest benefit has been to the new Christians. In the latest campaign, 17,429 souls were taught, and 2,628 obeyed the gospel. Most of the new Christians have yet to be able to attend fellowship and worship services. This relief program has been a boost, as they have seen the love of God's church first-hand.

UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S HOMES

Some quarantine restrictions have been lifted, but at present, our children have not been allowed to return to their homes. We have been supplementing the incomes of distant relatives and others who have willingly taken the children during this time. We have maintained constant contact with the children, checking on them nearly every day. A few were unable to leave the campuses, as they had absolutely nobody with whom they could live.

At the DNI campus, some of the earliest relief was provided by a few of our children and staff. Because we have good farming land at this campus, they were able to grow vegetables. They also cooked and prepared food which the



staff delivered to nearby villages. The people were so grateful, amazed at the love shown through God's church. Please continue to pray. Our children are

begging to return. Many are living in very difficult circumstances, especially those in Hindu homes.

OUR RETURN TO INDIA

Cathy and I are very anxious to return to the work. Bible camp, graduations and the beginning of new schools have all been postponed. At this time, it is unclear when travel restrictions will be lifted. Please pray!

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
BANNER ELK, NC
PERMIT NO. 25

India Missions
Church of Christ
PO Box 1413
Banner Elk, NC 28604

TAMIL NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION
Covid 19 Relief



Jesus Feeds 5,000...Again!

At the moment, 4,905 families are being fed as \$109,133 has been given by 189 individuals, families or churches. God is great!

M A Y 2 0 2 0