

In His Name

A RECORD of ASSEMBLY
MISSIONARY OUTREACH
from New Zealand

Edition 1

Les A. Marsh

1974

Edition 2

Leslie A. Marsh,
Henry D. Erlam

1987

Miss Sybil Taylor – 1924-1977 (Edition 2)

Miss Sybil R. Taylor was commended by assemblies in Auckland and Hunterville and went out to Mr and Mrs Rawson at Coimbatore India in July 1924. There she learned the Urdu language to enable her to reach the many Indians of the Moslem religion. She had a little scope for her nursing training in the following year and learned Tamil with girls in the day-school. While at Hyderabad in 1926 to sit her Urdu exams she worked for six weeks in the government hospital during which time she had 21 maternity cases on her own and helped at 130 others. She continued at Coimbatore in 1927 and then joined Dr Charlotte Pring in the hospital at Narsapur in 1928. She learned Telugu while helping in the dispensary and passed her final language exams in 1930. She was able to make use of both Urdu and Telugu while visiting in

Koyyalagudem and became intimately acquainted with the problems of travel on crowded trains, bullock “bandys”, Indian buses, flooded rivers and roads that had been ravaged by floods and used for every possible purpose.

At Amalapuram in 1931 Miss Taylor launched out on houseboat evangelism, an occupation that engaged her for the following 40 years. Together with a team of Indian Christian women, she visited every village within walking distance of the canal. They went from house to house speaking to the women, distributing literature and preaching to them in the streets. The boat provided them with a home and a point of contact with the people and they moved along the canal when any particular area had been covered. They were not always cordially welcomed and in 1934, while based at Tadepalligudem, because of a misunderstanding they were insulted with terrible language. Although they did not know what Telugu swear words were the local people said that ten thousand insults were heaped upon them. The rest of the people listened well the next day because they had not retaliated. Systematically all the canals were visited, the “crew” usually consisting of a boatman, a cook, two Indian sisters and Sybil.

In 1936 she attended the Centenary Conference at Narsapur commemorating the arrival of Messrs Bowden and Beer and their wives when they came out to Godavari with the returning Anthony Norris Groves. A hundred years earlier there had not been one Christian on the Delta, but at the conference, 5,000 believers attended the meetings. During 1938 she relieved at the Narsapur hospital and the following year returned to the houseboat. In 1944 she found many opportunities in the jungle areas, often camping out with a group of workers. For four years from 1945 she stayed in New Zealand to care for her parents, returning to the Godavari in 1949.

Throughout the 1950's Sybil experienced great times of interest. In some villages regular Bible study and prayer sessions were conducted in caste women's homes, some daily and some twice a week. In one home where a young man had been thrown out because he accepted Christ some years previously, a breaking of bread meeting was held. Visiting every canal on the West Godavari, they found it took four years to cover the area, so that villages, some of which had populations of 15,000 people, were not being frequently contacted.

From 1957 to 1960 she either relieved Pat Heads in the leprosy clinics or helped her in them and rejoiced to see the number of people who heard the gospel while waiting for their treatment. In 1961 she was back on the houseboat, finding continued interest. Even the local engineer helped when mechanical repairs had to be made to the boat in 1963, while Stewart Collings was there to repair the woodwork. However, the days were uncertain and in 1964 the boat was stoned four times, while a yelling crowd of students smashed its shutters.

At that time they were based at Koyyalagudem. They proved that despite the unrest the fact that the houseboat was accessible to the villages and to the people meant that they had better contacts with them. Miss Jessie Anderson was Sybil's co-worker in those years and in 1969 they stayed longer in each place, in order to be a greater help to groups of people in different villages. In November of that year they experienced a cyclone with winds up to 200 miles an hour, causing tremendous damage over the whole area. The houseboat broke its moorings and sank and the next day Christian friends gathered up bits of wreckage from a wide area. It was decided later that the houseboat could not be repaired satisfactorily so it was converted into a barge for the transport of produce and fuel to the leprosy hospital at Narsapur.

In 1970 Sybil shifted to Nidadavol and took up residence in the old Crawford Tilsley property. In 1971-72 she underwent surgery for cataract [sic]. For some four years she engaged in leprosy work together with Pat Heads. 1974 marked the 50th anniversary of her going to India – a truly significant milestone in the life of a gracious Christian.

In 1975 and 1976 Sybil often noticed the changing attitude of the Indian people to the Christian message and their treatment of believers as a result of her faithful ministry and concern. She still continued to distribute literature at Hindu festivals, and even those people unable to read would take a track home for their children to read out loud for them. However, in May 1977 she returned to New Zealand, and spent her last years in the Edenvale Home, Auckland, going to meet her Lord in 1981.

[Source entry includes the same uncaptioned photo of Miss Taylor used in the first edition, plus photo titled 'Typical transport in Madras city']