

## Pastor Elisha creates change through love and faith.

**On World Day of Social Justice, February 20, support Pastor Elisha through your compassionate prayers.**

**"You are a leprosy patient, go away!"**

Words like these are not unusual for people with leprosy to hear. Some may want to fight, others may leave and hide with fear or shame. But Pastor Elisha says that "Jesus gave me patience."

At age 61, Pastor Elisha has been a Christian for about 35 years. He is the leader of a leprosy community where he lives with his wife, children, and grandchildren. Both he and his wife are affected by leprosy.

Through a past project, CREATE, with The Leprosy Mission England and Wales, Pastor Elisha received training to become a Leprosy Champion. Champions stand up for the rights of others affected by leprosy and disability.

This training, along with his faith, helped him confront the local government officer who told him "go away!" With the help of an Indian Christian organisation called Brighter Futures, Pastor Elisha filed an official complaint. The officer was censured and called to apologise. Pastor Elisha forgave him and then withdrew the complaint.

Thirty years ago Pastor Elisha begged for a living. Even though he has not done so for decades he was known as the Begging Pastor by other pastors in the district.

Hurt by this demeaning nickname, he felt prompted through his prayers to invite these pastors to visit his community. Many of them accepted and were challenged and changed when they saw all that he had achieved in his community. Through The Leprosy Mission Pastor Elisha has been able to travel as a Leprosy Champion to talk at conferences in Nepal and Japan, advocating for his community. He prays and dreams about a time when leprosy affected families will be fully integrated into non-leprosy affected communities.

**Pray for Pastor Elisha and his community to flourish, experiencing full inclusion into the wider community.**

### World Day of Social Justice

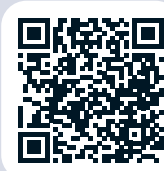
February 20, 2023



**On World Day of Social Justice (February 20) pray that more Leprosy Champions will be trained to advocate on behalf of themselves, their families, and all those affected by leprosy, discrimination, and disability.**

**You can provide regular support for people who struggle with the effects of leprosy, discrimination and disability. Scan the QR code or visit**

<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/tlc-india>



202301



The Leprosy Mission  
Australia

## Shreya can now dream of better days.

### Keeping in Touch • Issue 2, 2023

**Your kind hearted prayers help transform lives and build better communities.**

Shreya's parents died when she was just ten years old. Now sixteen, she lives with one of her sisters at their uncle's place in a remote village in the far west of Nepal.

**They have very little land and often struggle for food.**

For the past four months Shreya has been staying at Anandaban Hospital. A screening campaign run by partner organisation NLR detected her leprosy. They recommended going to Anandaban for treatment.

### "Shreya dreams of going to a different school where she would be made welcome."

Compassionate people from Shreya's village collected money so that she could travel to Anandaban. There she had operations on each of her hands. While Shreya may need to spend another two months at Anandaban for complete recovery she says that she is happy with the success of the operations.

Shreya's village has been a safe place for her. The tribe, neighbours and her people look after and protect her.

**Unfortunately, some stigma remains in her school.** Shreya stopped school in Grade 5. Because of her leprosy she was not welcome in her classes. Peers would tell her that she had ugly hands.

Shreya dreams of going to a different school where she would be made welcome. This seems like an impossible dream as she does not know who would pay the school fees to do this.

**Pray for Shreya to fully recover from surgery and to have freedom in her hands. Give thanks for the support of people in her village. Pray for Shreya to return to her education and not experience stigma there.**

Pray for the Anandaban Hospital, and particularly for our project with the Self-Care Unit. Thank God that patients receive the treatment they need and learn the skills necessary to care for their wounds.

**You can support and read more about the Self Care Unit by scanning the QR code or visiting**  
<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/Nepal-Self-Care-Unit>





A young man, Ashok, is sitting in the driver's seat of a yellow truck. He is wearing a white shirt and is smiling at the camera. The truck's interior and a yellow container are visible through the window.

**Your prayers change lives!**

**Through your support, young people like Ashok have a second chance in life.**

Ashok, 30, was diagnosed with leprosy as a thirteen-year-old. Following two years of treatment he was offered a place to study at the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) at Vadathorasalur in India.

"I joined because I was provided an opportunity and it was the best decision I had ever made. The VTC changed my life."

Self-stigma can be a huge barrier, but the right care at the right time can make all the difference.

"The teachers at the VTC first helped me to have a positive mindset and attitude. Then they provided me with proper training and education. This combination has helped me."

Learning life skills alongside his training has given Ashok the confidence to complete his education as a mechanic and get a good job driving lorries. This is important as he works hard to support his parents and two siblings.

"I have very fond memories of that place and I am truly grateful... It's because of TLMTI that my life is so different, and I am very happy."

About his leprosy Ashok says "I'm now cured but there is a recurrent wound on my foot. If it becomes untreatable at home, I can get treatment at the hospital." But he says his foot doesn't affect his work or his personal life.

**"Don't feel bad about yourself...  
...Be happy, don't worry about  
other people and what they think  
of you."**

**—Ashok**

He added, "Don't feel bad about yourself. If anyone mocks you because of your disease, don't care about them. Go on, take your treatment. It is curable, this disease. Be happy, don't worry about other people and what they think of you."

He says his goal is to spread the word about the VTC to others who are affected with leprosy so that they can get a second chance in life, as he did.

**Pray for Ashok and his family that they would continue to thrive and experience the benefits of quality education and personal support through The Leprosy Mission Trust India (TLMTI).**

**Pray that the Vadathorasalur VTC will continue to have the resources to provide people like Ashok with an education and a second chance in life.**

**Follow the link or scan the QR  
code to support another young  
person just like Ashok!**

[https://www.leprosymission.org.au/  
projects/vocational-training-centre-project](https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/vocational-training-centre-project)

An elderly woman, Bharati, is sitting on a white plastic chair outdoors. She is wearing a yellow and orange patterned sari and has her hands clasped together in a prayer or clapping gesture. In the background, another person is partially visible sitting on a blue bench.

**Jesus is my strength...  
why should I fear?**

**"My leg has been amputated, but still,  
I am happy because of my faith in  
Jesus Christ."**

Bharati's joy in the face of her struggles is an inspiration. She was diagnosed with leprosy before Multi-Drug Therapy was developed in the early 1980's. Bharati developed ulcers on her feet, and when she stood on a nail in 1975 was referred to a The Leprosy Mission hospital for ulcer care. More recently an infected ulcer led to her leg being amputated, and she now uses a wheelchair to get around.

Bharati and her husband have three children and five grandchildren and live in a leprosy community. Through the help of a now finished project with The Leprosy Mission England and Wales, Bharati became a Leprosy Champion. She was able to advocate to the Human Rights Commission over threats to their community's land, where 100 families live and support one another.

**"In front of me Jesus, why should  
I fear these official men? Jesus is  
my strength".**

**—Bharati**

Having grown up as a Hindu, Bharati became a Christian during the 1980's when a Pastor visited their community.

She then added a Christian name, Ruth, and became a singing evangelist. Now she visits other communities, singing songs of praise and teaching others what she has learned as a Leprosy Champion.

She encourages other women to become Leprosy Champions, many of whom are uncertain about speaking to officials. Bharati doesn't worry about that saying,

"In front of me Jesus, why should I fear these official men? Jesus is my strength".

**Pray for Bharati and others affected by leprosy to continue to have their voices heard as they advocate for their rights.**

**Pray for communities of people affected by leprosy as they support one another to live full and joyful lives. Pray that the love of Jesus will be experienced.**

**Your monthly gift of Total Loving  
Cure (TLC) will make a real  
difference. Together, we can stop  
leprosy transmission in India.**  
[https://www.leprosymission.org.au/  
projects/tlc-india](https://www.leprosymission.org.au/projects/tlc-india)

