

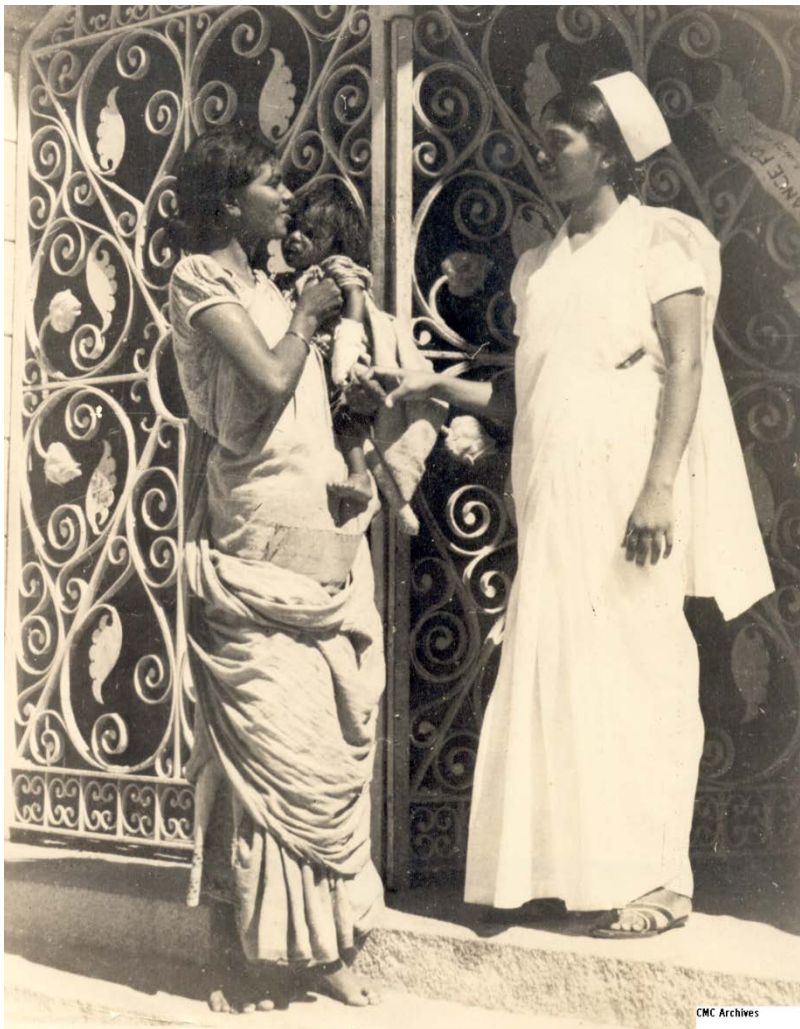


## Vellore hospital in the 1930s: A patient's view

By Mrs. G. Bevan

(Taken from *Links of Love: A Century of British Links with the Christian Medical College & Hospital Vellore, India*. Edited by Clare Howes)

I began my missionary service in Medak, Nizam's Dominions, now Andhra Pradesh, and lived in the ladies' bungalow in a large compound with six other missionaries. I was in charge of the Girls' Training School.



A scene from the hospital campus in earlier times

When I became ill, it was decided that I should go to Vellore, in South India, which was the place we turned to when special medical aid was necessary. A colleague was asked to accompany me and she also benefitted from the experience.

How can one describe our amazement when we came to a great white building set in the typical, unhygienic village street of those

days? I marvel as I see it all now, the vision of one dedicated person, Dr. Ida Scudder, who conceived and brought into being this vast centre of healing.



## Patient Stories

We were taken upstairs to a white ward, shining in its welcome. I lay in bed, grateful to be there, and then in came Dr. Ida herself with her colleague. She was short in stature in comparison to the other taller and younger doctor. Their decision was that I was too ill for them to give me the help I needed and that I should return home to England! Plans were made and this was the end of my contact with Vellore for some time.

During a year or so at home, I spent time in two London hospitals and was put down as a neurotic. At the second, a younger doctor came with the older one who was attending me and said quietly, "I think I could have helped you if I had been there". That encouragement meant a great deal.

A friend in India (I guessed who) sent money for me to have a holiday which was renewing and encouraging. After a while I said to my mother, "I think you can go back".

Again in Medak in charge of the Girls' Boarding School, living in the same bungalow, I found myself again needing help. Vellore! I asked to see a doctor I had heard did wonders for people suffering from all kinds of diseases. After diagnosing amoebic dysentery, she put me on a diet and would come in and say, "Have you drunk all that?" pointing to a *kooja* on a window sill – this was a delightfully shaped vessel which everyone used for water. This diet is still mine today in my 90s at the end of the century!

Some time later, I married and was expecting a little one when once again, we turned to Vellore. I was asked to make the three day journey in January 1939. Ann was expected in March but because of my medical history, they wished to keep a check on me and suggested I stay until she came. I sat for weeks on the flat roof of the hospital in the sunshine, sewing the little garments, enjoying the peace, care and assurance this gave me. I could look down on the beautiful roof of the Chapel which was the inspiration of all Vellore's ministry.



I knew Sister Vera Pitman on the staff and was told she had done away for the day just as Ann was telling us she was coming! Suddenly, Sister Vera came in wearing her outdoor clothes – she had asked about me on her return and came at once when she heard the news. This shows the concern the staff felt for their patients at Vellore. She went away and changed and there she was in the theatre holding my hand – I nearly crushed hers she told me afterwards!

All went well and the time was nearing our home-going when I noticed Ann had changed colour. In a few minutes, the specialist was with us but fortunately all was well. This was another instance of the wonderful care given to the patients at Vellore. Later on, we were staying in Medak in the vast bungalow with staff to supervise and guests to entertain on special occasions. I also had full care of Ann, who was about two years old, when, one day, I began to tremble from head to foot. A friend in another place kindly took Ann into her home with her little boy and her older sister – where we knew she would be cared for. I went to Vellore – where else? But they told me they could do nothing for me. I told them of a doctor further south in the Swedish Hospital who helped people in wonderful ways. “May I go there?” “Go and come back to tell us,” they said at Vellore. I went and was completely healed. The doctor who helped me became a good friend and later came to see us in Somerset whenever she came to our country. I went back to Vellore and told them what had happened – I trust someone else benefited from my experience.

These are pictures of Vellore in the past, but we know that many people are receiving the same kindness and healing today.