

## **A FALLEN CORN OF WHEAT – THE LIFE OF RAC PAUL**

By Ms. Jessica Selvin

Dr. RAC Paul was born into a traditional middle class Christian family on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1941, in Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu. He finished his schooling and went on to study a Bachelor's degree in Veterinary science in Chennai. Although he kept to the tradition of a regular churchgoer, he had not yet made a personal decision to follow Christ.

One day when he got himself tested, he was diagnosed with a serious kidney problem. He felt utterly dejected and disillusioned and called out to God for comfort and hope. He attended a Gospel meeting where he heard the good news of Jesus which was very familiar to him, but this time he was convicted of his sins and he made a decision to follow Christ. His life took a turn for the better. He began attending a lively church with challenging sermons and involved in youth activities and prayer cells.

Although Paul never gained a complete recovery physically, he felt a strong calling for missions and decided to obey knowing that God could use anybody to accomplish His work. He quit his secure government job and joined the IMS through which he was sent to Malkangiri, Orissa. He lived in a thatched hut and led a similar lifestyle to that of the people there. He studied hard to understand their language and culture. There were a few believers there but there was no Christian leader or church and so he started a fellowship group. Seeing the different way of living of the few Christians there, others were also attracted and more people were added to their fellowship.

Dr. Paul also realized that the people were ignorant in so many ways and involved in various ways to improve their standard of living. He introduced them to new farming techniques, basic health and hygiene,

animal health and husbandry, etc. He also had a burden for the surrounding tribal people who were still unreached especially the Bondos who were well known for their violence and murderous lifestyle.

In time, RAC Paul began to pray for a suitable marriage partner who would be deeply committed to the cause of Jesus Christ and share a similar burden for the poor downtrodden people among whom he worked. God in His time brought Dr. Iris, a medical doctor committed to be a missionary, into his life and they were married in 1972. Once they were settled, Iris immediately opened a small clinic in their house and Paul continued to preach. They both shared a common burden for the Bondo tribe and decided to visit them. Iris began to interact with them by treating the sick and slowly won over their trust. They established a weekend clinic in their place and the Bondos began to accept their help and friendship and open up to the Gospel.

God blessed RAC Paul and Iris with two boys, and life was very happy and fulfilling for them. Paul was in his mid thirties when his health began to deteriorate. They had to rush to CMC Vellore for treatment where they learnt that a kidney transplant was the only solution to his problem. After much prayer and waiting, he could be treated but he was very weak and had to take a break to regain his strength. His heart was with the people in Malkangiri and he and Iris decided to go back. Still weak, he attended a language class which helped them to start working on a script for the Bondos. A poor woman died giving birth and the orphaned baby daughter was brought to them by the father stating he could not care for her. Paul had always longed for a daughter and he and Iris decided to adopt the precious little child.

Iris continued her medical work and took care of Paul. Although Paul had to be on bed rest, he welcomed visitors and counseled them. There were times, however, when his prolonged sickness affected him and he

slipped into depression. Iris wept and prayed with him and together they crossed the valley of sickness upheld by God's love and their love for each other. The heavy treatment had taken a toll on his heart and Paul suffered two heart attacks. Knowing he needed urgent medical attention, they decided to go to CMC again.

They were advised that surgery was the only option to try and save him from another heart attack. Iris was deeply troubled but Paul comforted and encouraged her and they went for the surgery entrusting everything to God. On the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1986, RAC Paul was wheeled into the operating room. Paul died during the surgery; he never regained consciousness. A corn of wheat had fallen to the ground – in God's own time and plan – to bear fruit for His Glory.

Dr. Iris Paul continued the work alone in Malkangiri and today, 30 years after RAC Paul's death, she and their oldest son still labour for God's kingdom in Orissa.