

# Giffard Memorial Hospital

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NARLAPATI SUBHAKAR PRASAD

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Giffard Memorial Hospital (GMH), situated in the Nuzvid, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, India, is 250-bed general hospital operated by the Medical Educational Trust Association Surat for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Southern Asia Division.

Since it is in a rural setting, the majority of the patients are peasants and daily wage earners, and the hospital has been registered with the government as a charitable institution. The hospital operates the following departments: general medicine, orthopedics, gynecology, pediatrics, anesthesiology, general surgery, and ophthalmology. The hospital also has a good clinical laboratory, with X-ray, E.C.G., ultrasound scan, and gastroscopy. The institution has a neonatal intensive care unit and also provides chaplaincy services. About 80 churches have been established around Nuzvid as a result of the ministry of GMH.

## Background

The British bestowed titles such as “raja/maharaja” on wealthy *zamindars* (feudal landlords) who cooperated with them. The titles were hereditary, and their sons were *kumars* (princes). About 400 years ago, an Indian prince with his retainers had gone out hunting. According to the story, a large hare, instead of fleeing, charged the royal hunting dogs with such fury that they turned tail and ran away in fright. The prince’s advisors told him that this was proof that this land was extremely fertile, and they counseled him to move his palace and fort to this site. This prince built a town and named it Nu-ja-veedu (Nuzvid), recalling the incident in the *nuvulu* (sesame) field.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 20th century, a *zamindar* (the Rajah of Teleprole) emulated his father who had vowed to alleviate the sufferings of the poorer classes. At the palace gates, he dispensed medicines for common ailments, but lamented his inability to help in maternity cases. To further fulfill his father’s vow and to memorialize his father, he started building a hospital investing 30,000 dollars. Impressed, the local British government also decided to assist financially. In 1912, Colonel Giffard of the Government Maternity Hospital in Madras laid the foundation stone of the hospital. Because of the World War I and related difficulties, the government was unable to assist, and the buildings were left incomplete.

In 1922, an Adventist missionary named Theodore Flaiz set out for Vijaywada to do some ingathering. A suspended employee of the church who was trying to regain favor hitched a ride with him and persuaded Flaiz to visit his “friend,” the raja at Nuzvid, where the missionary would be assured of success. Flaiz complied. While the Raja disowned any knowledge of his companion (who had stayed back), upon hearing of the plans to help the poor in the community, he offered the missionary five acres of land and the unfinished buildings of the hospital plus Rs 10,000 to complete them. The only condition was that the hospital should be named in honor of his friend Colonel Giffard, who had laid the foundation stone ten years earlier.<sup>2</sup>

## Establishing the Hospital

The hospital was named Giffard Mission Hospital. An agreement was signed between Shree Rajah Sobhanadri Apparao, *zamindar* of Telaprole, and the India Financial Association of Seventh-day Adventists that detailed the transfer of assets and continuing obligations of both parties.<sup>3</sup> The cook house and servants’ quarters were practically complete, but the three wards were only completed up to the wall plates.<sup>4</sup>

In answer to a call for a physician, the Mission Board sent Dr. Arthur E. Coyne from Loma Linda University. After some post-graduate study in England on the way<sup>5</sup> and a year of language study, he opened Giffard Mission Hospital on September 15, 1925.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Coyne had not planned to begin so early as the buildings were not yet complete, but patients had started coming so the doctor began to treat them.<sup>7</sup> At the time of opening, the staff of twelve included a midwife, a compounder (pharmacist), two dressers, three attendants, two gardeners, a caretaker, a laundryman, and a sweeper. The bed capacity was 21.<sup>8</sup>

A few years later, the raja donated another Rs 10,000 to complete the nurses’ quarters and to construct a compound wall to keep out the cattle.<sup>9</sup> Whereas the perception of some was that Adventist sanitariums tended to cater to the wealthy in the big cities, this one served the poor in the villages.<sup>10</sup>

When Mrs. Coyne remarked that a church would be needed, the zamindar responded that he had already realized that two years earlier and had purchased a plot of land opposite the hospital. He had the church constructed there.<sup>11</sup>

## Early Developments

In the early years, zamindars helped to provide funds for new additions including a beautiful, up-to-date operating room, a reading room, guestroom, and private cottages. The Zamindar of Telaprole was active in promoting the growth of the hospital.

On March 3, 1936, a new ward was opened that was built of stone from the zamindar’s own quarries. The ward was roofed with Mangalore tile. A wide veranda ran nearly around the entire ward. On either side of the broad steps were ramps for stretchers and wheelchairs. The spacious ward contained eight modern hospital beds. The

galvanized-iron ceiling was painted a restful light green. The rows of immaculate white beds, done up with new linen, made an inviting scene. At one end of the main ward were two private rooms for patients, and at the other end was a nursery with six little cribs. Behind the ward, connected by porches, was a building with the bathrooms.<sup>12</sup>

The first x-ray machine was brought by Dr. Douglas W. Semmens when he returned from furlough. This was a gift to the Giffard Mission Hospital from medical friends in America. Dr. Elizabeth J. Hiscox, who was associated with Doctor Semmens was experienced in X-ray work and took charge of this new department.<sup>13</sup>

Five years after the donation, more than 300 villages were represented by the patients who came to the hospital during one month. The average number of those ministered to in one way or another by the institution was more than 2,000 patients a month.<sup>14</sup>

## World War II

From 1942 to 1944, all the overseas personnel left and, in their absence, the hospital operated as a dispensary managed by B. S. Solomon, Y. Daniel, S. Joseph, and A. Grace. The hospital was reopened for regular work in August 1944 by Dr. Elizabeth J. Hiscox, who had first come to Nuzvid in 1938 but had left in 1942 due to the World War.

T. R. Flaiz, who had negotiated the acquisition of the hospital property and building, had qualified himself as a physician at Loma Linda in 1937, and after working there as vice president for two years and in private practice for another four years, he accepted a call to return to Southern Asia, serving as medical superintendent of GMH and as medical secretary of the Southern Asia Division from 1945-1947.<sup>15</sup> During this time, more land was acquired, bed capacity was increased to 108, and the government recognized nurses training school was established.<sup>16</sup> He left to serve the General Conference as medical secretary.

During the war years, a group of Seventh-day Adventist medical personnel in the American army were stationed at Ramgarh, 46 km. from Ranchi, the present capital of Jharkhand. They came to Ranchi every Sabbath for church services. Among them was a tall young doctor by the name of John B. Oliver. He was told of the need for doctors in India, and Nuzvid in particular. At the end of the contract with the army, he returned to India with his wife to become the medical superintendent, replacing Dr. Flaiz six months before independence in 1947. He left in 1952, but returned again and again to serve the hospital. During his time, the large Nuzvid SDA auditorium was built.<sup>17</sup>

During the end portion of the war years, the completed building projects on the compound are as follows: (1) The Flaiz Ward —a new women's ward named after Dr. T. R. Flaiz, who very competently engineered its construction. It was formally opened on the 23rd of December, 1946; (2) The extension to the surgery — a much-needed building to fall in line with the ever-increasing patronage of the hospital; (3) Kasturi Bai Hall — the

library hall that was used by students and workers; (4) a choultry (a resting place) for Christians who were not allowed to stay in the Hindu choultry in town. It consisted of two rooms and a large hall. This was much used great by our church members and workers who came for medical attention and also by Christians of other denominations; and (5) four new workers' cottages in the Garden Compound. As a training school for nurses, the hospital received workers and students from all over the Division and it was to meet that need that those cottages were built.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Bazliel, a good orthopedic surgeon, was in charge of the women's clinic and ward, and Dr. Thomas was in charge of the men's clinic and ward. Both kept the hospital open in the very hot summer months for the first time. Dr. (Mrs.) Bazliel took care of the women's clinic for a short time. With all the workers and the European staff back at the close of the War, the hospital once again functioned at full speed. An outpatient clinic was opened on August 5, 1947, in Eluru at the office of Dr. T. John, a former hospital worker. Dr. Oliver, Mr. Eswar Rao, and Miss Janobi opened the clinic. The hospital was engaged in missionary work in conjunction with medical work. Workers took a lively interest in evangelistic endeavors, and branch Sabbath schools were conducted regularly.<sup>19</sup>

## Maternity Ward

On Sunday December 18, 1955, Shri Bezwada Gopala Reddy, chief minister of Andhra State, opened a new maternity building. Named the "Flaiz Ward" in honor of Dr. Flaiz, who was instrumental in the establishment of the hospital. The ward was donated by the Zamindar of Ellamarru, in memory of his wife. The zamindar's son was also present as well as about 700 guests. Dr. J. B. Oliver gave a brief history of the hospital and the maternity building, which was followed by the main address given by Shri Bezwada Gopala Reddy.

The new building had 12 beds, one semi-private room, and five private rooms. There was a delivery room, two labor rooms, and nurses' work rooms. The nursery had large windows on one side, which made it convenient for patients and relatives to see the babies as they were cared for. The donation by the zemindar of Ellamarru was largely responsible for the building while substantial amounts came from Dr. T. R. Flaiz and from the Medical Extension offering.<sup>20</sup>

## Community Service

At the beginning of 1979, Giffard Memorial Hospital launched a community eye project with Dr. Ronnie Gyi, who held a diploma in ophthalmology, leading the project. With financial backing from the Christophel Blinden Mission, the project was off to a good start. Eight months of groundwork acquainting the surrounding villages of the program paid off with more than 1,000 people screened in one month and 100 cataract surgeries performed. After that, 20 cataract operations were scheduled each week. The CBM continued sponsorship on a

large scale.<sup>21</sup>

## The Golden Jubilee

The people in Nuzvid and around Krishna District and the staff of Giffard Memorial Hospital celebrated the Golden Jubilee on November 11, 1975. Inaugurating the celebrations, M. R. Appa Rao, vice-chancellor of Andhra University, who incidentally was a native of Nuzvid and had taken a keen interest in the development of the hospital, delivered glowing tributes to the dedicated medical work rendered by the hospital through the previous five decades. He made a special mention of Dr. E. J. Hiscox, the female doctor who served the hospital for three decades, comparing her with Mother Theresa of Calcutta in her service for the sick. He recalled how Miss Hiscox pooled all her earnings for several years and donated that amount to build a 50-bed children's ward in the hospital. The ward was inaugurated at that celebration. Mr. Appa Rao further asserted that "service" was the motto of the staff and workers of the Giffard Hospital and it was "written all over the place." He expressed thanks to those rajahs, whose donations of lands and funds and the incessant care and service of the missionary personages of the SDA Church took to make the medical institution grow to that stature. Mr. Paladugu Venkat Rao, MLC, stated that it was heartening to note that while the medical profession had become a business proposition, such good work was being done at Nuzvid. Presenting a report, Dr. M. Jagannadha Rao, medical director of the hospital, traced the history of the hospital's development. He paid tributes to the late rajah of Telaprolu, Col. Giffard, the surgeon general of Madras, T. R. Flaiz, who was instrumental in building the hospital and who served for 40 years, and others who helped the hospital to grow. Elder F. W. Wernick, vice president of the General Conference, and Dr. Ost, lay field secretary of the General Conference were specially flown in to participate in the function. Dr. Ost presented awards to the active and retired staff of the hospital. A portrait of the Rajah of Telaprolu was installed at the hospital in the presence of his wife.<sup>22</sup>

## Pioneering Health Education

The first and only graduates of a two-year theological seminary course at Ibrahimpatnam, about 50 kms from Nuzvid, were also the first to receive health education to prepare them for practical health evangelism. The seminarians spent two months at Nuzvid taking courses in religion and health from a former hospital chaplain and his wife, pastor, and Mrs. Anandaraj and former chaplain and his wife. Medical Director Dr. Philip Viruthan held a graduation service for the trained health evangelists in August 1978. Three graduates were placed in separate villages and were successful in alleviating suffering in those villages. They were much appreciated by the village panchayat and the village residents. In January 1980, the Christian Medical Association of India negotiated funds from a Dutch agency to expand the project.<sup>23</sup>

## First Heart Surgery

On March 18, 1982, the hospital conducted its first open heart surgery. With that surgery, Giffard Memorial Hospital provided an effective answer to a narrowed mitral valve—the commonest heart disease seen in India at that time. Despite minor setbacks, the surgery was successful. This was the first Christian-operated heart surgery in the whole state and the first in a rural setting. In the afternoon, a 14-year-old boy with a patent ductus arteriosus, a congenital heart defect, was operated on. The boy had a stormy operative and postoperative period, demanding the best efforts of the chief surgeon, the chief anaesthetic, and chief ICCU nurse, the maintenance and servicing engineer, and a host of others. Both patients became living testimonies to what dedicated and committed service could do despite hardships and handicaps.<sup>24</sup>

## Management History

When it was established, the hospital was managed by a committee chaired by the superintendent/president of the South India Union. When the hospital reopened in 1945 and with the establishment of the government nurses training school in 1946, the institution was brought directly under the Division and was managed by a board chaired by the president of the Division.

In the month of February 1998, the Southern Asia Division made changes in the administrative structure of the hospital. Mr. Joshi Victor Rayavarapu was appointed hospital administrator.<sup>25</sup> The hospital was modernized and inaugurated by Pastor. D. R. Watts, Division president, on December 6, 1998.

In 2000, the hospital came under the umbrella of the Adventist Health India System, and the board was chaired by the secretary of the AHI.

The Medical Educational Trust Association Surat (METAS) of Seventh-day Adventists took over the operation of the hospital in 2007, with Dr. M.S. Jeremiah as the president & CEO. Since the hospital, school, and college came under one umbrella, executive vice presidents were appointed to assist the president & CEO in managing the administrative affairs.

## College of Nursing

From the time the hospital was first established, Mrs. Coyne, and later Dr. Emma Hughes, taught a few workers some practical nursing. In 1928, the hospital offered a three-year nursing course and a two-year compounder (pharmacy) course. The prerequisite for both was completion of the eighth standard (approximately junior high school). In 1934, the school of nursing was affiliated with the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI). In 1942, due to World War II, the hospital and the school closed. T. R. Flaiz arrived in India (1945) and revived the nursing program. The first government recognized higher-grade nursing certificate course began in 1946. Government recognition by the Madras Nurse and Midwives Council was granted in 1947 but made retroactive to 1946.<sup>26</sup>

Needing 200 cases per year in order to begin the midwifery school, Mary Mathews, with a few students, went to the villages constantly seeking expectant mothers. They visited with them, monitored their blood pressures, checked them for anaemia, followed up on their diets and, in some cases, cooked meals for them. They also taught them better dietary habits. The mothers were encouraged to listen to the babies' heartbeats, which they had never done before. Gradually a few came to the hospital because their nurse friends were there. Infant mortality decreased noticeably in the surrounding villages.<sup>27</sup>

A one-year matriculate-level course in lab technology and a midwifery course for nurses began in 1952. The lab course was upgraded in 1974 and became a two-year course in 1990. The nursing council integrated the six-month midwifery course into a three-year A-grade nursing course in 1988.<sup>28</sup> The lab school closed in 2009.

At the end of 2006, the Division took an action to transfer management of GMH to the Medical Educational Trust Association, Surat of Seventh-day Adventist METAS for the purpose of developing the nursing school into a college and improving the hospital facilities.<sup>29</sup> METAS assumed management of the entire campus, consisting of the high school, the hospital, and the nursing school. The whole area of five acres was cleared and two blocks built for the school of nursing and a college of nursing. The college is affiliated with the Dr. N.T.R. University of Health Sciences, Vijaywada, and offers a four-year B.Sc. Nursing degree.

## Recent Developments

Dr. Eliah Srikakolli, who succeeded Dr. M.S. Jeremiah in 2014, took interest in further developing GMH. In the last few years, a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit became an added asset with the outstanding services of Dr. Edwin Raj, chief medical officer and pediatrician. More comfortable quarters to accommodate doctors were built through the financial contributions of Mrs. Kollabathula Mary Samuel's children, Dr. Ferdinand Samuel, Mrs. Dorothy Pandit, Mrs. Cathy Samuel, Dr. Vincent Samuel, and their families. These were inaugurated during the COVID pandemic virtually by Elder Ezras Lakra, president of Southern Asia Division. This complex with two floors is named, "Oliver Home," in honor of Dr. J. B. Oliver. Concrete cement roads were laid in 2020. A state-of-the-art Intensive Care Unit and an additional Neonatal Intensive Care Unit have been constructed.<sup>30</sup>

## Medical Directors

A. E. Coyne (1925-1930); A. E. Clark (1930-1932); D. W. Semmens (1932-1937); H. G. Hebbard (1937-1938); D. W. Semmens (1938-1942); E. J. Hiscox (1944-1945); T. R. Flaiz (1945-1947); J. B. Oliver (1947-1952); D. W. Smith (1952-1953); J. B. Oliver (1953-1958); P. S. Nelson (1958-1962); J. B. Oliver (1962-1967); C. A. Ninan (1967-1972); N. S. Fernando (1972); E. J. Hiscox (1972-1974); K. P. George (1974-1975); M. Jagannadha Rao (1975-1976); E. J. Hiscox (1976-1977); Philip Viruthan (1978-1982); G. E. McWilliams (1982-1984); Ronnie Gyi (1984-1985); Mohan Chandrasekhar (1986-1989); Narendra Rao (1990); Pramod Hansdak (1991); Ronnie Gyi (1991-1998)

## Hospital Administrators

J. V. Rayavarapu (1998-2001); K. Daniel (2001-2005); Don Schatzneider (2005-2007); S. Elish (2007)

## President and CEO (METAS)

M. S. Jeremiah (2007-2014); S. Elish (2014 - )

## Executive Vice President (Nuzvid Campus)

Vara Prasad Jacob (2007-2009); Albert Miller (2009-2010); R. N. Prabhudas (2010-2016); P. Sam Moses (2016 - )

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30. Personal knowledge of the author, who is a native of Katrenipadu Village, which is 12 kms from the campus.

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