

Young Girl Stands Up to Abusive Father, Family Gets Saved

✘ Twelve-year-old Atmaja, along with her parents and two younger siblings, lived a pitiful life. Their home was a roadside hut, and because they don't have any land to farm, they never had enough food or adequate clothing. But hope has replaced the strife they once experienced.

Atmaja's father, Bratindra, had inherited land, but he squandered his money by buying luxuries and lost the property.

Bratindra and his wife Karishma didn't earn enough money to provide for all the needs of their three growing children. So Bratindra forced all of his children to go to work. If they didn't earn enough money, he beat them.

Bratindra and Karishma didn't want to send their children to school, but Atmaja wanted to continue her studies. Depressed about the difficult circumstances in her life, she lacked peace. Even though Atmaja wasn't a Christian, she had heard of Jesus Christ. She had no one with whom she could share her feelings, so she prayed silently to God.

She wanted to learn more about Him by going to Sunday school, but she knew her father would become angry if she went. Sometimes Atmaja secretly joined her friends in attending Sunday school, where she learned songs and heard the Word of God. Through her Christian friends, she received encouragement in the midst of her struggles.

But one day, Bratindra found out Atmaja had been going to Sunday school and spending time with Christian friends, and he mercilessly beat her.

Atmaja ran away from home and stayed at her uncle's house for a short period of time. When her mother went to bring Atmaja home, the preadolescent girl still refused to return to the lair of her abusive father, but Karishma's pleas finally persuaded her.

Atmaja told her mother about what she had been learning at the Sunday school and said she wanted to follow Jesus. Karishma supported this decision, but her husband did not approve. Without his knowledge, Atmaja got permission from her mother to go to Sunday school.

Bratindra continued demanding money from his daughter. And if Atmaja could not give him the desired amount of money, he would chase her from the house, and she would stay at a friend's home. Karishma could not control her husband's explosive, violent tendencies and ill-usage of his children to earn money.

Bratindra still discouraged Atmaja from going to school and told her she should earn money to pay for her younger siblings' studies because she was the oldest. Heartbroken, she stopped going to school for some time.

"If your father discourages you by being unable to support your education, your mother will support your education," Karishma told Atmaja.

Karishma approached the principal of Atmaja's school and requested that the school officials allow her daughter to resume school.

Atmaja went back to school, but soon her father found out. Furious, he beat Karishma. The stress of the situation overwhelmed Atmaja's young mind and nearly pushed her to the brink of suicide.

During this period of darkness when Atmaja almost considered killing herself, a pastor visited her home. He shared the Good

News with her parents, much to Atmaja's excitement. Karishma opened up to the pastor about her husband's evil behavior, and the pastor continued to visit the home to speak with Bratindra.

Bratindra's behavior gradually improved, although his lust for money still made him reluctant to send Atmaja to school. But when Karishma learned about the Bridge of Hope program and enrolled her daughter, Atmaja's future brightened. The program provided for her school fees.

Through Bridge of Hope, God transformed Atmaja's life. She learned many new things and grew in all aspects of her life—physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Atmaja grasps the material quickly. Although she was once shy and wouldn't talk to people, she has blossomed socially. Complementing the holistic education she is gaining, she also receives personal hygiene supplies, clothes and other gifts.

Now Atmaja attends both Sunday school and the Bridge of Hope center regularly. The transformation in her life made a huge impact on her parents and her community.

When Bratindra witnessed his daughter's changed behavior, he repented of his immoral lifestyle and stopped spending money on worldly pleasures. Their family life finally became more peaceful.

The Bridge of Hope staff are rejoicing at Atmaja's progress, and even people in the village have witnessed the changes in this girl's life.

Atmaja, whose future once appeared completely bleak, is thriving. Because of God's blessing through Sunday school and Bridge of Hope, she now has access to a foundational education and goes home to a peaceful atmosphere. Truly, God "raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the ash heap" (Ps. 113:7 NKJV).