

PURE RELIGION

The Stairs That Lead Home

Aisyah Husain remembers hearing people scream. And then the terrible words, “Run! The sea is coming!”

And Aisyah ran.

Behind her, the ocean had pulled away from land leaving dry land in its place—but only for a few moments. As though gathering strength for a terrible blow, the great ocean recoiled and threw itself against the earth crushing villages and burying everything that stood in its path as far inland as four kilometers from shore.

Aisyah continued to run—watching as neighbors, friends, and loved ones lost their fight and succumbed to the flood.

She managed to reach high ground but not without cost. That evening, Aisyah’s husband felt a paralysis overcoming his limbs making it difficult for him to move. She took him to a hospital where they did what they could, but two months after the tsunami had buried her village, Aisyah was forced to buried her beloved husband.

When she finally was able to return to her village, all that was left of her home was five concrete steps—steps that once had led up to her front door. They now led up to empty air.

The government had erected temporary housing for those who had lost their homes, and Aisyah agreed to go there for a time. She was able to raise a few chickens and ducks, but what she

wanted more than anything else was to return to her own home—the place of her family; the place of her most precious memories.

In 2006, Humanitarian Services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to the people of her village with a proposal. They would help supply the materials for new homes if the people of the village would help in any way they could to assist.

For Aisyah and many hundreds of families like her, this new hope was something they had yearned for with all their hearts. They eagerly agreed to assist and the buildings began to appear.

Since the old, concrete steps were all that remained of her former home, Aisyah asked if she could keep them. She said that she wanted to have them “to remind me of my life before the tsunami. Maybe I can place a few plants on them.”

Of course her wish was granted.

On February 2, 2007, Aisyah held out her hand and accepted the keys to her new home.

Today, Aisyah sits on the old stairs that rest outside her new home, grateful for the kindness of unknown strangers who made this all possible. For even though the stairs are empty after the fifth step, they now lead to a place she can call home.

