

HEART-WRENCHING DAY AMONG THE DALITS

Don Iverson, Banner Elk, NC Church of Christ

Looking at a map of India, about 40 miles south of Nagapattinam, you will notice a horn-like peninsula off the east coast. At the tip of this land area is a village called Ve-dha-ran-yam. Jim Waldron and I traveled there on March 10. Having been exposed to many who were affected by the Tsunami we expected the villages known as, Anna and Tribal Colonies to be much the same, but it was an entirely different story.

Most people in India are part of a prejudiced corrupt caste system. The lowest of the castes are the Dalit people. These have been labeled "the untouchables." The 350 families of Dalits in these two villages depend on the so-called high-caste fishing community for their livelihood. The Dalits have basically been enslaved to these "higher castes" for generations. The Tsunami has momentarily destroyed the fishing industry, thus the helpless Dalits fell into despair without jobs or help from those who can be cruel and heartless.

Entering the first village of more than ninety grass huts with dirt floors we were approached by some of the poorest people I have ever seen. Their clothes were ragged, hanging and/or wrapped around their bodies. Since the Tsunami (over two months before), they have received rice one time from the Indian government. We choked back tears and Jim struggled to get words from his mouth as his eyes filled with water.

"Imagine," he said, "watching your whole family starve." We turned and walked away briefly. Approaching a house with our cameras in hand, a young lady retreated quickly into her bamboo and thatched shed. Brother San-tha-na-raj explained that she had been very recently raped by one of the "high-caste" men. She was ashamed and did not want to have her photo taken. In her eyes there was a lonely look of desperation and shock. I thought to myself, "I hope she will soon be my sister in Christ." "I hope she will be a part of this glorious kingdom in which there is no prejudice." "I hope she will come to know our loving Savior and the security and hope we have in him." Though these Dalits were suffering, they were compassionate and quickly agreed to show the way to the other village where the tribal people suffer as they do.

In this second village there were more than fifty families. Their situation was much the same as the other Dalits. It was heart-wrenching to stand and think of watching your own children or grand children starve before your eyes. How horrible it would be not only to sacrifice your own food for your children, but to watch your wife make the same sacrifice. Pray for brother Jim. He will be working with these people in the coming weeks to arrange relief for them by purchasing 55 pound sacks of rice and a large sack of groceries for each household.



NOTE FROM JIM: *As of 4/30/05, 965 families consisting of nearly 5,000 individuals have been helped in the manner described above just south of Nagapattinam. Each "order" contained a Tamil New Testament and six gospel tracts. Our Tamil brothers are preaching house to house and openly proclaiming Christ and His kingdom in street meetings in eight or ten villages around Ve-dha-ran-yam. God will give the increase. Already in the January (3-11) bicycle campaign 671 were baptized and more than 267 have obeyed the gospel in conjunction with other relief work which was begun by brother Don further south back in January and thousands more have been assisted with food and basic needs.*

BULLETIN BRIEFS

Vol. 8

May 2005

No. 5

THE TSUNAMI COMES BACK TO HAUNT THE EARTH MOVED – 8.7 ON THE RICHTER SCALE

"Panic, fear and confusion" were the words used by one writer in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to describe his emotions when at 11: 55 p.m. on Monday the 28th of March another powerful earthquake struck off the western coast of Indonesia's big island, Sumatra. It occurred near the location of the December 26, 2004 earthquake, which triggered the most deadly Tsunami in modern times. When the scientists at the US seismological center in Hawaii detected the most recent quake they immediately warned the countries on the perimeter of the India Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Thus just after mid-night these countries, including India, were warning their people by radio and TV of the possible reoccurrence of a Tsunami. Such did not occur, but that did not stop the panic of those huddled and camped along the sea shore.

For example at Na-ga-pat-ti-nam, on the east coast of Tamil Nadu, where thousands were drowned and the homes of many others destroyed by the December flood, great numbers of people fled in "panic, fear and confusion" from the seashore area. Not coincidentally we had thirteen Tamil gospel preachers staying in Nagapattinam in the SSM lodge.

The purpose for our brothers being there was due to the work we are doing to aid the victims of the previous catastrophe. The lodge sits a long way from the Bay of Bengal, and as it was the middle of the night, the people crowded into any place they could to find safety, including the lodge.

When reporting about the incident the next day, brother Sankar Dayalin, said it gave them a great opportunity to teach the fear-filled people the truth of the gospel. The masses in Tamil Nadu, who have no knowledge of eternal things and are without God and hope, are still overawed by the horror of the December tragedy. Thus we are planning another bicycle campaign for Christ May 8-19. We expect to have between 800 and 1000 gospel preachers going on bicycles to cities, towns and villages across this state of 65,000,000. The vast majority of these brothers are "tent-making" preachers and day-laborers at that. For most of them we have bought bicycles and for others we will provide by the 8th. For a daily wage they will receive Rs 100\ (\$2.36), that is each \$28.36 for the twelve days.

It seems a small amount, but it is a great boon for our brothers and their families as work is very scarce at this time of year because of the dry season. The campaign's thrust is, "*Winning Souls in the Wake of the Tsunami.*"



BEELZEBUB'S BARGAIN BASEMENT

Jim E. Waldron



SPECIAL SALE
(all items for just one price):



Item 1: Five pounds of extra dry and coarsely ground corn meal for those who wish to practice being **mealy-mouth** in the pulpit.



Item 2: Two quarts of **soft soap** for those preachers who wish to con the church into accepting drama instead of gospel preaching, the latest in religious games, gimmicks and gadgets to draw a crowd.

Item 3: One copy of **"The Pride of Having the Largest and Most Glamorous Edifice in the State,"** which includes details on how to get the elders to build the largest building, the tallest steeple, the biggest 'family life center' with gym, indoor track, large weight room with the latest in anaerobic equipment, fountains, beautifully landscaped gardens, etc.



Item 4: One copy of **"Ten Ways to Ignore the Great Commission,"** which includes practical tips on how to get the members to close their eyes to the poor and spiritually emaciated masses in third world nations. With this book you can easily persuade them that there is no real urgency about laying up treasures in heaven. It includes a number of ideas on how to procrastinate on such things. It teaches how to soothe ones conscience by giving a pittance to world evangelism while buying bigger and better things for themselves and their kids.



Item 5: One copy of **"How to Preach Mush and Call It Love"** for those preachers who just love the praise of men (and women).



Item 6: One copy of **"Directions on How to Dance the Two Step (Forward) and One Step (Back)"** for those who aspire to be change agents.

Item 7: One copy of **"The Fine Art of Euphemisms"** for those who wish to label killing babies as choice, adultery as an affair, homosexuality as an alternate life-style, drunkenness as sickness, fornication as simply sowing wild oats, dancing as learning deportment, raunchy hip hugging belly showing jeans, beach and public pool wear as simply fashion.

Item 8: One copy of **"How to Color Pornography"** and call it literature for those educators determined to broaden the minds of young people and get them away from family values upheld by their moss-back parents.



Item 9: One copy of **"How to Bulldoze Your way Up the Ladder of Success No Matter How Many Others You Step On"** for those who have a real propensity for greed in the business world.

Item 10: One copy on **"How to Ignore the Antiquated Rule, 'Thou Shalt Not Covet.'" This little volume does wonders to teach the membership the dynamics of channeling their greed and how to play the lottery with a good conscience, i.e., commit at least ten percent to their favorite preacher.**

Item 11: One copy of **"How to Ignore the Requirement to Be 'Temperate in All things'"** for those who are determined to be rebellious and cannot stand discipline in anything in anyway in any manner at any time.

Item 12: One copy of **"How to Agree to Disagree in Matters of Doctrine, Morals and Ethics,"** for those who have been looking for ways to accommodate the life style of their kids and other relatives.

Item 13: One copy of **"How to Practice Wearing Two Hats on the Same Head."** This is a very practical work designed for those who are double minded, have two faces or speak with a forked tongue.



Item 14: One volume on **"How to Pay Lip Service on Sunday to Jesus' Statement, 'You shall Worship the Lord Your God and Him Only Shall You Serve,'" while hiding in secret on Monday nights and calling some man 'worshipful master.'**

Item 15: One bottle of one thousand **caplets for decalcification of one's backbone** for elders with a conscience, but are to timid to confront uncertain sounds from the pulpit.



Item 16: One copy of **"How to Go Along Ta' Get Along"** for preachers, who are squeamish about rebuking sin and indifference in the pew.

Item 17: One copy of **"The Delicate Art of Supporting the Liquor Industry By Social Drinking Without Becoming a Wino, a Whiskeyhead, a Sot or Falling Down Staggering in One's own Vomit."**



Item 18: Beelzebub's Bargain Basement Sale Catalog, which describes in exciting words many things for preachers and song leaders who desire to be seen. It features such items as bright red sport coats and describes numerous ways to acquire mail order Theological Degrees, titles, etc. It includes an editorial on how to be lifted up with pride, but look humble while you are at it. It even carries an article on how to practice humility and be proud of it.

Yes sir, any one or all eighteen items for just one price - your own soul!
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TSUNAMI CAN'T WASH THIS AWAY: !!HATRED FOR DALITS!!

Janyala Sreenivas

Note: This article appeared just twelve days after the Tsunami hit the coast of Tamil Nadu, S. India on December 26, 2004. It is available on the internet (Tsunami, ©The Indian Express, Bombay). I am quoting a brief portion in order that you may read of the suffering of India's Dalit people at the hands of the so-called upper castes. The word Dalit is a Hindi word, meaning, "oppressed". They are simply poor landless working people, whom the "higher castes" have arbitrarily designated as "untouchables." This will help you realize why Don Iverson, elder Banner Elk, NC and I are making a concerted effort to help these down trodden souls.

"NA-GA-PAT-TI-NAM, JANUARY 6: There's something even an earthquake measuring 9 on the Richter scale and a tsunami that kills over 1 lakh (100,000) people can't crack: the walls between caste.

That's why at Ground Zero in Nagapattinam, Mu-ru-ge-shan and his family of four have been living on the streets in (an area called) Nam-bi-ar-nagar. That's why like 31 other families, they have been thrown out of relief camps. That's why they are hounded out of schools they have sneaked into, they are pushed to the rear of food and water lines, given leftovers, not allowed to use toilets or even drink water provided by a UN agency. That's why some NGOs are setting up separate facilities for them. They are all Dalits. *The Indian Express* toured the camps to find an old story of caste hatred being replayed in camp after camp:

In the GVR Marriage Hall Relief Camp, Dalits cannot drink water from (the plastic) tanks put up by UNICEF. The Mee-na-vars (a so-called high caste) say they "pollute" the water.

In the Nallukadai Street Relief Camp, a Meenavar leader, grabbed all cartons of glucose biscuits (cookies) delivered by a Coimbatore NGO. The Dalits were told: these are not for you. At Puttur Relief Camp, the Meenavars have hoarded family relief kits, rice packets, new clothes and other relief material. When the Dalits asked for some, they paid a heavy price—they had to spend the night on the road. At the Nee-la-ya-dat-chi Temple Camp, Dalits are not allowed inside the temple, especially when rice and cash doles are being handed out. Dalits from three villages taking shelter at Ga-na-pa-ti cinema hall in Tha-ram-ba-ga-di are thrown out every night because the Meenavar fisherwomen say they did not "feel safe" falling sleep with Dalits around.

So 32 ostracized Dalit families took shelter in the GRM girls' school in Tha-nja-vur. But four days ago, even the school asked them to vacate saying it was due to re-open. (They said) "In Nagapattinam, three relief camps we went to denied us shelter saying they had no space." At "the Na-ta-ra-ja Da-ma-yan-ti high school, the watchman refused to let us in," says Murugesan. In the neighbouring GVR camp, Dalit fishermen said they are being nudged out of relief and compensation queues (lines). "We are inside the camp but kept in the far corner. Whenever officials and trucks come to give food, we are left out because nobody allows us to get near the trucks. Some men form a ring around us and prevent us from moving ahead in the queue," says Sa-ra-va-nan, a Dalit survivor.