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DINDIGUL TO LUCKNOW

Last month I related the events from the 12th to the 21st of July concerning my most recent trip to India. Those events included the visit to Pudukottai to finalize the arrangements for the new roof on the school for the blind and the story of the young teacher at the women's school being forbidden to marry a Christian. Her name is Mercy and although her parents are allowing her to worship on the Lord's day they are still pushing her to marry a Hindu.

On the 22nd I preached for the church at Angie Greene where the Coimbatore Bible Institute for women meets. At 2:35 p. m. I took a flight from Coimbatore to Mumbai and from there flew to Delhi. I spent the night with Sunny David, a long time worker for our Lord in that city. The following morning he and I took a train 305 miles to Lucknow, a city due east of Delhi. Both Sunny and I had contacts in the city that we wanted to meet. Going there also gave me the opportunity to seek a way to begin work among the Hindi-speaking people of India. Over 60 percent of the country's one billion speak that language.

After arriving we got a room at a local hotel, then went to search for a young Moslem man who has been studying the Bible by correspondence with a brother from Arkansas. We found the address he had been using to receive the Bible lessons, but we were told that he did not live at that location. Those who did live there told us he was a student in an Islamic College and that he lived in the student hostel (dormitory) or at least he had been. When we inquired at the college we were told he had left in May or June after graduation and gone back to his native place, Kashmir, which is more than 1000 miles from Lucknow. Kashmir is an area where foreigners cannot travel due to the violence by terrorists who are agitating for separation from India.

In the evening we made contact with a Mr. Ajay, whom Sunny wanted to meet. This man originally belonged to the Hindu religion, but is now a member of a Pentecostal church. He is a high school math teacher. We had a good visit with him, his mother, sister and brother. We were able to set up a time for a home Bible study the next evening. That study took place on the evening of July 23rd and it lasted for three hours. Afterwards the family served us supper. We left some tracts and promised to come again. On the following day Sunny and I took the train back to Delhi.

One unfortunate thing we ran into in Lucknow was a local preacher for the church of Christ who has been on American support for 15 years yet has little to show for it. When I asked about attendance where he preached he replied that two or three families were attending. He and his wife have good jobs besides the American support. They own a car and are building a large brick home in an upscale neighborhood. He took us in his car to show us the house. In route I observed that he had a five-inch cross on his dash that had an image on it, a crucifix. When I asked him in his own language why he was using this idol he denied it was an idol. As I was trying to make a picture of it from the back seat of the car he opened his glove box and put it inside. The rare individual in India, whether Hindu or Catholic, who can afford a car will put an image on the dash for "good luck." Later in a talk with him and his wife we learned that he had been a Christian for 15 years. The same length of time he had been on support. They also talked much about needing someone to build a building for them.

When I go to a restaurant and get bad service I maintain the bad service is because of bad management. When I see or hear of preachers in India who are getting American support and are teaching or practicing error and/or doing nothing to deserve the support I blame gullible preachers and elders from American who put them on support without requiring an accounting or checking on them. For a fact I know of cases where American sponsors have been informed of native preachers being false teachers or out and out thieves and the American sponsor blaming the American brother who gave evidence of such. The crooked native preacher is looked upon as the "underdog" who is being picked on by an unfeeling missionary.

The unemployment problem in India is so acute that Americans can hardly imagine it. This results in many in that country being baptized just to get on support. When an American worker lets it be known that denominational preachers will be put on support if they convert, he will have them flocking to him. Word gets around. If the Baptists or Lutherans quit supporting a man and he learns the church of Christ is "hiring" he will come running to the trough. Some have thought our policy of requiring a man to be a Christian for at least two years even before we let them attend the Bible Training School, coupled with a stiff Bible entrance exam was too tough. I recently got an e-mail letter from a man who said my work was an utter failure because we don't put men on support after they finish the school. When I did not reply to him he called me a "fool" in his next letter.

We know that the Holy Spirit requires that we train "faithful men" (II Timothy 2:2). We are bound and determined to not make the church in south India a welfare program for the church in America. If we entice people with money or other material things the Moslem and Hindu leaders in India will charge us with making rice Christians. We support men while they study in a pump-priming program and we put a few on support for critical jobs as school of preaching instructors or office workers. Yet, the vast majority of these must have a local church that supplements their support.

DELHI TO NAYARANGARH

On July 26 I took an Indian Airlines flight from Delhi, India's national capital, to Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, where I got a room in the Maharajah Hotel for Indian Rs. 1,000/ (\$21). The following day I took a flight on a small plane the 95 miles to Nayarangarh, where the Himalaya Bible Institute (HBI) meets. Brother Rudra Giri met me at the airport and from then until the 20th of August I was busy teaching the students in the school of preaching Joshua - II Chronicles. On the 21st I flew back to Delhi and that night went again by train to Lucknow to teach Ajay, accompanied this time by Sunny David's brother, Francis. Our visit with Ajay was for one evening only and short at that as he said he was very busy. Yet, he received the message quite well. I promised, God willing, to return in November.

Besides this contact, on this second visit we were able to meet another preacher. In contrast to the work of the preacher met on the first visit I was impressed with this brother's work and of his understanding of the truth. He has thirty-five or forty who meet on the Lord's day. We were invited to the home of a Christian who is a very successful farmer. He provides a large room in his home for the church to meet. I told them I would be a happy to come again and hold a gospel meeting for them. They indicated their great delight at the prospect. It is my prayer that this may be an open door for us to have a school of preaching among the Hindi-speaking people. Please pray to that end, as there are more than 600,000,000 of them.

Francis and I returned to Delhi on the 23rd by night train and the next day I flew to Chennai, which is the capital of Tamil Nadu. From there I traveled to Dindigul on the 25th. On Sunday I preached for the Central congregation. Monday through Wednesday I went each day to Siluvathur where the Dindigul Bible Institute (DBI) meets and worked with J. W. Samson doing interviews, discussing classes and reviewing work on the school property. One of our interviews was to help a young husband and wife to be reconciled. Four others were for the purpose of finding some experienced gospel preachers whom we could appoint as teachers at DBI. We found two brothers who are graduates of the school and are working as regular preachers for churches which they began themselves.

FROM DINDIGUL TO THE HILL COUNTRY OF NORTHEAST INDIA

Going back a bit, on the 25th of August I had received e-mail from Zimik after almost seven weeks. Since he and I want to get a school of preaching started in the northeastern part of India he asked if I could meet him in Calcutta. You will recall that I was turned back from a visit to the northeastern section of the country in March. A trip to Calcutta would have been a four-day trip for him; thus I sent word back that if there was another place nearer to him in the whole northeast region that would allow me to land I would meet him there. He sent word back that I could get into a city called Guwahati, which was a one-day bus trip for him. Since I was scheduled to preach a sermon for a wedding in Dindigul on Thursday the 30th at 7:00 a.m. I could not leave before that time, but after preaching that lesson I took a car to Madurai, bought my ticket to Chennai and by 2:30 was in that city. Once there I bought my tickets to Calcutta and to Guwahati and return. I spent the night in Calcutta and the next morning flew to Guwahati, which is in the state of Assam up near the area of China which joins India. Zimik met me and after staying overnight there we took a car the 65 miles to a city called Shillong. It was here that David Hallett, a Canadian brother, conducted a Bible Training School from 1973-1993. He was largely responsible for the development of the churches of Christ in this region. Zimik had attended that school of preaching. While there we investigated the possibilities of again having such a preacher training school in that region. The prospects look very, very good. God willing I shall return in November. This region has the potential of dozens of brothers attending such a school. Please pray for this opportunity. Ask your congregation to put us in their budget for 2002 or to increase their support. I preached in Shillong for two congregations on the Lord's day (September 3) and on Monday I returned to south India to investigate another possible site for a school of preaching near Bangalore. After that I went by train with J. W. Samson to Coimbatore where the two schools for the young people meet. While there we interviewed two more brothers as prospective teachers at Dindigul and selected one of them. By God's grace I flew into Nashville on the 7th and my mother, brother and Laura were there to meet me.

In Christian love,

Jim E. Waldron

**WALDRON MISSION FUND jimewaldron@hotmail.com
DUNLAP CHURCH OF CHRIST, P.O. BOX 123, DUNLAP, TN 37327-0123**