



Travel report India 3 – 19 January 2011.

Facts about India, read in newspapers while being there . . .

◆ December 2010 sales in the domestic car market rose by 25% vs. December 2009. ◆ The largest steel producers will increase their production capacity dramatically. ISW steel up 32%, Essar + 100% and Rashtriya + 120% ◆ Reuters-CRB index of 19 raw materials rose 17% in 2010. Coffee was up 77%, Copper +33% and silver + 84%. ◆ Food prices in India rose 18.3% in the final week of 2010. Onions (staple food) rose 80%, vegetables 60%. Fruits, eggs, fish and meat were all up by 20%. ◆ In the last decade 240.000 poor farmers and day labourers escaped their - and their families' misery by committing suicide. ◆ Exports jumped 36% in December; the annual growth rate will be over 20%. ◆ India will invest \$ 100bn in the next ten years to expand and modernize its sea ports. ◆ IndiGo, a low cost airliner, ordered 180 Airbus A320 planes at \$15.8bn.

. . . and what we have not read in Indian newspapers:

◆ 47% of all children below the age of five years is undernourished ◆ 61% of the population can read and write. People who only can read or write their name are included in this number ◆ Merely 10% of the population has a formal job; half of them are working in the private sector ◆ 40 million children who should be at school are roaming the streets, or are at work ◆ 200 million Indians are chronically hungry ◆ Half of all hungry people in the world live in India ◆ Around 300 million Indians have to make their living from less than \$ 1 per day ◆ According to the UN Human Development report India is in prosperity behind Equatorial Guinea and Tajikistan ◆ Sources: *Fortune, UNDP, Unicef, World Food Program.*

Introduction

It is eleven years ago we travelled to India for the first time to visit a pastor living in the exterior of Andhra Pradesh. This visit resulted in some humanitarian relief projects, but also in support for pastors in the most remote areas of the Indian subcontinent. Both activities are strictly separated, and donations are exclusively used for the aim it is given for.

Please read this travel report, and be surprised about the enormous impact a little help can make in a country where so many people suffer of utmost poverty

Remote Area Andhra Pradesh (RAAP)

1) general information.

We help poor pastors in this part of India in spreading the Gospel, and to survive in their daily livelihood. We pay them (37 pastors) a minimum salary (around \$ 35 per month), have built churches for almost everyone of them, and gave them a bicycle to be more effective in moving around. In RAAP it is not the government which dominates society, but Naxalite warriors (or Naxals) and RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) extremists. Their dominance is not restricted to this region, but spills over into the remote areas of Orissa and Chhattis-

garh, encompassing an area as large as France, with a total population of 132 million people. In RAAP both groups are very much opposed to changes in society and - especially - Christianity. The Naxalites are extreme communists who claim to act to the benefit of the population, but in the mean time they suppress the people, and rob food and money from them.

They are very murderous, and in 2010 more than 2000 people (estimation) were killed in assaults, almost double the number of 2009.

Via middlemen they demanded money and food from Samuel N., our managing pastor, otherwise he would be killed. Samuel convinced the middlemen that no money or food is available, and that the ministry was confined to helping the poorest of poor in the RAAP. The middlemen went around seeing if people could confirm this statement, and they got enough confirmation to remove Samuel N. from the death list - for the time being, at least.

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A bigger threat however comes from the RSS rebels, an extreme nationalistic offspring of the BJP party, a firmly Hindu-oriented party in India, actually the second largest after the leading Congress Party. In 2010 they killed one of our pastors by cutting his throat, left his wife almost dead in the bush, executed an almost deadly assault on another pastor, and burnt down the hut of a pastor's couple, telling them next time it would be their turn to be set ablaze.

A decision to become a Christian is not easy, and you might dearly pay for it. Dalits have a fixed number of 52% of all (semi) governmental jobs, but Christians have a mere 2%. As soon as someone becomes a Christian, he will most certainly lose his job. In non-governmental jobs you run a very big risk as well, so many people are hidden Christians. In all official statistics can already for forty years been read that around 2% of the Indian populations are Christians. This number is definitely overtaken, and according to authoritative sources is should rather be 7 - 8%

2) Pastor's school & two-day's seminar Narsipatnam.

In this region we started a Bible School for our pastors and "guest students" (pastors who do not belong to our group of pastors, **Registration for the pastor's seminar**

but are given free access to our educational facility). The three days a week / three years course is concluded by now, and all students were given certificates. The biggest prayer of the pastors in 2010 was to maintain the Bible school for another three years for there is a large demand for Bible training, and there is no other comparable educational facility whatsoever in RAAP. The prayers were answered, for a foundation based on Evangelization in The Netherlands was willing to pay for the prolongation of the course (\$ 40.000 for the three years' course). In January 2011 this new school period will start.



We were in Narsipatnam, a very poor town (30.000 people) on the edge of the RAAP. We invited all pastors for a meeting to present ourselves, for Samuel N. is the honorary chairman of the Narsipatnam Pastors Fellowship, and we have hardly ever met any other pastor in that town. After the speeches we invited them for a lunch. We think this has been a good initiative. We organized a two days Pastor's Seminar, and between 250 - 300 pastors attended. They came from everywhere in the RAAP, from distances up to over 100km away. They had to pay a contribution of \$ 0,25 - which does not reflect the real expenses, of course. We paid for everything: transportation, food, lodging, sound, electricity; well you name it. We believe the gathering was very fruitful, and was worth the investment of \$ 3500. In the evening hours we held an open air campaign for the citizens of Narsipatnam, and around 5-600 people showed up on both evenings. Johan E., a pastor from The Netherlands preached / lectured in both meetings. We met Chittima Paparao, the widow of the assassinated pastor from Korrukonda, and her daughter Ribkha (18). Click for a video report (4 minutes) on the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISO6VHAsURQ>

3) Remote Area Andhra Pradesh (RAAP) – Fieldtrip.

We made a field trip for one day, and visited churches in Rolangi and Kollapari in the jungle area of RAAP. We visited Rolangi twice before. The village counts about 250 inhabitants, and till five years ago no single Christian could be found. Now we have installed a pastor, and



his church has 90 believers and almost all of them have been baptized. In six surrounding villages there are some 30 Christians. We have built churches for all our pastors (22) in RAAP, and this church was built with the financial support of "Menorah" church in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. During some previous occasions we were not allowed access to the village, for Rolangi is situated within an area of solid Naxall dominance.

We visited Kollapari once before, and attended at that time a baptism ceremony somewhere out in the fields.

At that time there was no church, but this time we met the congregation in the new church building. We had a conversation with the pastor, which is not so easy as it seems to be. Among all the pastors and Bible school graduates (around 100 people) there is none who speaks English! The pastor told he started the congregation ten years ago, being the only Christian in the village of 400 people. Now his church has 110 members and some more members in the surrounding villages. We were welcomed with great joy and enthusiasm.

Click for a video report (4 minutes) on the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf5hZWMTHQE>

Remote Area Orissa (RAO)

1) General & Orphans information.

It took us 7 1/2 hours driving time from Visakhapatnam (AP) through the mountainous area to Nabarangpur (Orissa), a distance of 145 miles. Though the Indians are continuously reconstructing the road, it has not been very helpful thus far. Machines are hardly used, and making use of women labour (10 cents per hour) by dashing rocks into cobbles does not help much to make a jump into the future. In fact, every year the trip takes more time. **We**

visited the home of Saroj and Sobhamony T., and their - now - twelve children: five of their own, varying in age from 0 - 20 years, and the seven adopted children (7 - 9 years) which were taken from the garbage belt last year. It is really smarting that no one took any interest in the fate of these children. Saroj just picked them from the dump and took them home. No registration whatsoever, nothing. Do you have any idea how many thousands of



children disappear in slave labour factories all over the country? "Our" children adapted very well to the new situation, and all the children mingle excellently. It is a miracle to see these children sitting in their school class, following an English Medium education, and having computer lessons. Quite a change compared to the situation last year. We spoke to some teachers and the director of the school, and they are happy with "our" students. All of the children are doing well at

school, and to support their skills in English we hired a private teacher in English, who comes by two hours a day for five times a week. However, we are not much impressed by the results thus far. We had a conversation with the teacher and found out he speaks English well. We instructed him to teach English in a more active way, by speaking English only, and being more interactive. He seems to understand, and we are hoping for the best. For a short video (4 minutes) click on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWus51MreKg>

To alleviate the burden at home Sobhamony hired a lady home servant to assist, for Saroj has quite a lot of work to do. She earns \$ 40 - no, not per hour, but per month. Saroj is leading a group of junior pastors in the Koraput-region (1 1/2 hours driving distance), and has to be there for three days a week. He goes to and fro every day, which does not only take a lot of time, but is quite dangerous. Recently he was attacked by a bear, and twice he fell due to the bad road conditions. We faced the same situation in RAAP in the past and solved the problem by buying a car. This time money fails to buy a suitable car again (\$ 16,000).

In Orissa the work of our ministry is split into different parts. One of it is helping the lepers to survive. In order to be most effective, we put all lepers in the town of Koraput together and are surely a great help to them. We try to be of the same help to the 150 or so children in the adjoining beggar's camp, but thus far our efforts failed, for we do not have sufficient support to execute our plans and visions. A third and important part of the ministry is supporting the 26 junior pastors in the RAO. Unfortunately the first two activities are located in a different location than the pastor's activities in the Koraput area, which causes a lot of hassle in travelling around.

2) Visit to Leper's Camp Indravati Colony, Nabarangpur.

It was in 2005 that we visited the camp for the first time. At that time 28 lepers were living there in the most desolated situation you can imagine, and were starving. Since then, all lepers from Nabarangpur are invited to live in the camp, and get meals three times a day, water, medical treatment, clothes once a year and daily items like soap, kerosene and detergents. Now all the lepers of Nabarangpur - a total of 70 people, inclusive family members - live in the camp, and the camp has absolutely a friendly appearance, unlike almost every square or street corner in town. Our managing pastor Saroj T. has turned to the government to ask for paving the gangways in the settlement, for it is not good for the lepers to hurt

their feet, for they are impassive. Surprisingly, for the first time since Saroj started to help in 1995, the local authorities were willing to help, and constructed concrete gangways. The plants that were planted a few years ago are growing nicely, and make the settlement look much friendlier. Unlike every street in India, the camp is clean, and the houses are in good shape. The people requested some personal or collective items, such as an electric bore well. The well we dug five years ago is rather deep - around 35 feet - and pulling the water out is too



heavy a job for most people. We think we found a link to the government in helping in this special request. Making a bore well will cost around \$ 2000.

A man who is not able to walk asked for a tricycle which can be moved by hand. We think about it; expected cost: \$ 200. We are very happy with the success of this project, and consider the \$ 22000 annual expenses a very good investment. For a short video click on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcPFR79VDDE>

3) Visit to Beggar's Camp Indravati Colony, Nabarangpur.

The camp is situated next to the Leper's colony, and has approximately 300 inhabitants. The beggars in Indravati Colony cannot be compared with the beggars in the big cities, like Mumbai or Delhi. They especially concentrate on foreigners, and are exploited by beggar's



gangs who take the lion's share of their earnings. Sometimes they are even instructed at beggar's schools. The beggars in Indravati Colony are no hard core beggars who mutilate their children in order to make them better beggars. Beggars are deemed by birth to beg, like in the same way others are entangled in their professions. There is hardly any possibility to escape this vicious circle. The cast system has been buried officially in 1947 after a history of 3500 years, but the Indian culture still has not get rid of

it; it is in the genes of the Indians, so to say. The beggars we are talking about are lower

than the lowest cast; they are called outcasts, dalits or scheduled casts. They have no rights, do not get a job, and cannot appeal to law protection, and are mostly shun like having a severe illness. Nobody will shake their hands, and in buying a drink at the road side there is a separate cup for them, and even the shadow of a dalit is not supposed to touch you. No wonder many generations of beggars are followed by even more generations of beggars . . . unless the vicious circle will be broken.

We visited this camp almost annually since 2002, and are touched by the extremely poor living circumstances. People are unable to escape their situation for they are born as a beggar, and sentenced to be a beggar forever. For a short video (<3 minutes) click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkFonEP9lgg>

We did our utmost to find a way to help the children of the camp to feed them and send them to school, but the running expenses are too much a burden to us. We prepared an extensive Project Plan in 2010. For those who are interested to read it, please send us an email. Here too special requests were asked for. There is no electricity, and people ask for solar electricity. Others requested a new roof, but we offered them a job in constructing churches for our pastors in the RAO, and pay them a salary (\$ 5 / day) plus free meals, so that they will be able to reconstruct the roofs by themselves. We will work out this building plan, and hope that the cooperation will be to mutual benefits.

4) Pastor's school & two-day's seminar Nabarangpur.

In the tribal city of Koraput we have run a Bible school for three years, which has been completed by now. We have given Bible training to our 26 pastors, plus six "guest students". Like in the RAAP they do not belong to our group of pastors, but were allowed free admission to our school.



Unlike in the RAAP, we will not continue this Bible training. During our visit in Nabarangpur we invited all pastors from the town for a gathering, and a free meal. We thought it important to make us known to the NIPA (Nabarangpur Independent Pastors Association), for we are active in this region already for a long time, and we have not presented us before. Over 30 pastors showed up. During two days we organized a pastor's seminar, and the main speaker was - again - Johan E. from The Netherlands. We estimate that 70 - 90 pastors joined the meeting, and we are sure it was a blessing to all of them. We provided free meals, lodging and all other necessities. **On**

the final day we handed out certificates to all "graduating" pastors. Five of them became ordained pastors and four of them live in the Koraput area. They will manage preaching and evangelization in far away places, where even managing pastor Saroj T. is unable to go. The cost of this 2 1/2 days event was \$ 2300. For a short video click on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaE1uyT3GkI>

On the second day of the seminar a bus full of tribals from the Karaput area arrived; they wanted to be baptised. The baptism ceremony took place in the baptistery next to the church building in the beggar's camp. **At that afternoon, 59 people were baptised.** For a very short video look at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mxIW6L_2GQ

5) Fieldtrip RAO -Village Pachode.

We visited the village of Pachode which has - including surrounding villages in a radiation of six miles - some 600 inhabitants. Three years ago Pastor Solomon Majhi came to the village to start a church. Two other Christians lived there at that time. Now there is a blossoming church with prayer meetings every night (50 people), and once a month a prayer night which attracts 300 people. A number of 136 people have been baptised, **and while we visited the church another 4 believers underwent this ceremony in a mud pool outside the village.** We inaugurated the church building which was completed a few months ago and seats some 120 believers. Those who do not fit in the church have a seat outside the building on the mud floor. The area really is remote. Orissa - the poorest of the 29 states in India - is divided in 30 regions, and in only 3 of them (inclusive this Koraput region) the



Gospel is actively spread. 22 out of our 26 pastors work in this region, but - although Pachode is not far from Koraput - to reach the inland is almost impossible. The bus from Koraput ends in Pachode, for there is no road or path which leads any further. Our pastors go from there up to 13 hours by foot to reach the remote villages in the mountains. After this, the jungle continues almost endlessly, for hundreds of miles. Numerous dialects and languages are spoken, and only our local pastors are able to communicate with the villagers in their mother

tongue. Children are taught Orya, but the ability to express them in that language is very limited. People are extremely poor, and quite a number died in the last couple of months of starvation. No, no wars or large natural disasters, but simply too much rain for a good harvest. To survive, the villagers go with a carrying pole and two baskets to the market in Koraput - indeed, 13 hours walk - to sell their cauliflowers and other horticultural products. We have seen these tribal women sitting at the road side in the market streets of Koraput, with hardly any merchandise. It is our desire to support more pastors in this region, and to extend our area. Click for a video report on:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRnbZRSuUW8>

Conclusion.

We visited India for the 12th time in as many years, and we were happy with what we have experienced. The work in RAAP and RAO region is developing nicely, and especially RAO seems to be very responsive to the gospel. Though the area is dominated by Naxals, we do not experience much resistance from them. We will continue to perform our building project in RAO, and we still have some ten churches to build before the program has been finished. In the past we have held pastors seminars in both areas to encourage and lift up the pastors, but given our very limited budget we consider to skip these events next year, and spend the \$ 6000 to needier investments. We have no solution yet for the children of the beggar's camp Indravati Colony, but are confident that somehow a solution will be reached. May be the most visible improvement was registered in the leprosy camp Indravaty Colony. Our supervising pastor Ruben does a good job in keeping the area clean, and it is encouraging that the local government for the first time seems to take responsibility for the most despised of their citizens.

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Hoenderloo, 31 January 2011.

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