

March 31, 2007

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It has been hard to find either the time or internet connections to write on this trip. I must apologize for my last letter which had a number of typos and errors. My editor-in-chief, Eddie Chu kindly caught them for me but not before I had pressed ENTER, and sent the letter on its way.

Jack and I took the train from Calcutta (I will use the old name) north towards Darjeeling, like the British Raj of old. What a great idea, this traveling horizontally. The sleeper cars were great, although I did bean a few people with my feet sticking through the curtains. The amazing part is my Rogers cell phone works just fine over here. I did not have a dead spot anywhere in West Bengal.

Can you hear me now?



The trip lasted the whole night and we disembarked at a town called Samsi. Partners leader, P.J. Thomas started us running the moment we arrived at 6:00 a.m. Jack Ninaber has left his mark in Bengal. The churches will never be the same again. He had kids diving off the altar in the churches and throwing them in the air. They loved it and will remember his stories for a long time to come.

P. J. has developed a massive, 1st rate campus with 900 children (take that Oprah and your 40 students !) His ministry helps hundreds of underprivileged families and the kids as well. These villages are among the most basic you can imagine. Mud huts, straw roofs and subsistence living. It was amazing to meet some widows whose lives were transformed by the simple gift of a pair of goats. We spoke to the workers, Bible college students and met many pastors in just one day. We were mercifully put back on the train at 10:00 pm for another night of traveling north to Alipudwar.



We met a young man, the village barber. He became a Christian, was persecuted. His little children were harassed. He became ill with a kidney disease and the villagers were waiting for him to die. There is no medical care in many of these areas. He stood firm and the church helped him get medical care. His health has improved. The villagers are now accepting them and these simple folk now have a beautiful influence on their neighbours.

Nicholas Narjinary and his 86 kids welcomed us in Satali, North Bengal. His amazing wife Pushpa looks after these kids from early morning to late at night. They are some of the sweetest kids I have ever known and I love visiting them. Jack was tremendous, teaching them Ultimate Frisbie. I am not a big hockey fan but hearing Jack teach Boro tribal children chant 'Go Leafs Go' on video inspired me. These kids are some of the happiest, most contented little ones you will ever meet. It is very unusual to see happy kids anywhere in India as many have to grow up fast.



The adoption of the kids is not the primary work of Nicholas. He is focused on seeing 500 churches established among the tribal people of North Bengal. The compassion for these orphans and abandoned kids simply flows from lives transformed by the good news of Jesus. I will share a story in my next letter of how his example multiplies.

We are off to Kalimpong shortly, a beautiful city built on top of a mountain. You can see Tibet, Assam, Sikkim, Indo-China border and Bhutan from the place we will stay. The 3 tallest peaks in the world are also visible on a clear day.

Thanks for sharing in our visit.

Phil Dempster and Jack Ninaber

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