



Tony Coffey@gmail.com
www.Bibleanswers.ie
Mobile 0868560724

INDIA 2018

You've heard of the movie, 'Trains, Planes and Automobiles,' well, that almost resembles the first leg of our journey to India. Due to long lay overs, a flight cancellation, a flight diversion, a bus journey which landed us in a village, I know not where, and eventually being collected by Vijay Kumar we were on the move for 35 hours from leaving Dublin to arriving at our destination. But it's extraordinary how a shower and the warmth of the sun cancel everything out.

What's happening around Kakinada (Andra Pradesh)

Seminars. We conducted a one day seminar and I taught on the theme, 'Meeting God in the Prophet Amos.' About 140 ministers and church leaders were present. Later a smaller seminar with 70 in attendance was conducted two hours away. In addition, we conducted meetings in homes and in general encouraged the believers.

The SWAN Project. The SWAN Project began over two years ago. The aim is to enable poor village girls and women to learn a skill which will enable them contribute to the family income. The women who are accepted into a training programme are carefully chosen and properly trained by local women. They commit to giving 10% of their earnings towards the support of the local preacher.

Over the past year women have been trained to do stitching. In India, each outfit is made to order. The sari is purchased and the blouse material is at the end of the sari. The blouse is stitched according to the woman's wishes. If material is purchased for a tunic and trousers outfit, they are tailor made. So stitching is still in demand. Those who finish their training to a high standard are offered a sewing machine. Each woman is required to pay

half of the cost of the machine. This shows their good faith and interest. They may have to take out a small loan to do this.

When funds become available other projects are envisaged. One is the training of girls who finish 10th form (10th grade) in school to use a computer. Most of the girls in these villages will finish school at this time and have no job skills. The training facility for these projects has been made available free of charge and the trainers are paid a small salary.



The women who are learning stitching proudly showing off items they have made.



Sitting at the machines

Sugar Cane. Last year we leased six acres in which to grow sugar cane; this required a large investment. Our thinking behind this project was to generate an annual profit which could be used to fund some of our other projects. With funding becoming more difficult to obtain and a strong possibility that the India government may put a heavy tax on foreign money coming into the country for Christian work, we needed to be looking at some alternatives.



Inspecting the sugar cane

Rice project. Over the past several years this project has shown itself to be very beneficial. The government is now giving a small monthly pension to the elderly (1,000 rupees a month, about €14 or \$15). This has allowed those we help to buy some of their own rice and we supplement this. Now we are able to feed 200 people each day.



Handing out saris



Distributing rice

News from Kochi (Kerala)

I made my first visit to Kochi thirty years ago. Today Kochi is a bustling city with an ever changing skyline and a smart new metro system. With growth comes congestion and pollution.

Our work with the church in Kochi included a one day seminar, along with a number of smaller meetings. The spiritual health of the church has been nurtured under the leadership of Saju George. Several months ago a Bible school was started with a small enrollment. The goal is to train future leaders for the church. Their annual three day lectureship continues to attract good attendance and has become a focal point for many of the churches in the state of Kerala. This is funded by the local churches.



Fellowship in the church in Kochi



Two of the first people I met in 1987

On my first visit to Kochi I met a family of a Lutheran pastor who was not being supported by the church because he refused to relocate, thereby making it possible for them to sell the facilities. Through donations from friends and churches we were able to provide education for the three girls. Today two girls have their MA and one has her Ph.D. Henni came to visit us; the other two girls live a long way from Kochi, but called us. Their expressions of gratitude were humbling to hear. Since returning home we heard the tragic news that Henni's husband collapsed and died. We are shattered.

A real highlight of our visit to Kochi was meeting the girls from The Morning Star Children's Home. A little background: About sixteen years ago a friend of mine in Kochi gave us the use of his ancestral residence to be used as a home for destitute girls. We housed about fifteen girls. They attended the local school and we always received excellent reports about them. Then five years ago a government inspection said that the facilities did not meet the necessary requirements and made us close the home.

The local church decided to let the girls return to their homes and we would continue to pay for their education and meet their basic needs, which we did. On the Sunday we were there eleven of the girls who were in the Home made the journey to join us, one coming from as far away as Delhi. Nine of the girls who were in the Home have continued their education into third level and one is doing her Masters. The other girls are in various jobs: banking, dental assistant, travel advisor and one is married. Looking back on the project can I see that this is an investment that has paid rich dividends.



The Morning Star Children's Home, Kochi
2006



Now they have grown up.

And finally, as far as I can tell, this may be my last visit to Kochi. The church is doing well and I am surplus to requirements, and that's the way it should be. Looking over the congregation on Sunday I saw families who had come to faith in Jesus in those early days. I saw their grown up children and enjoyed time with their grandchildren, the third generation walking with the Lord.