

Volunteer's Report

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India

Bangalore, India is a long way from home, half a world away. The time is the opposite of America; sleeping and eating schedules are completely reversed. The plane trip, itself, was about 20 hours long with two stops in Germany.

Our first day and several to follow in India, were a study in culture, food, language, and traffic. Our first stop was for breakfast and I did recognize the western food on the buffet, but the Indian food was identified but it was still a mystery. I tried a little of this and a little of that and found a couple things I enjoyed, one being Malasa dosa. I describe Malasa dosa as potatoes in the middle of two levels of a pancake; it's very good and a very popular morning meal.

We were picked up for our first adventure, and getting to the location was very interesting. The traffic was overwhelming; people, animals, bicycles, cars, cabs, lorries, scooters, they were everywhere. Where there should have been two lanes of traffic there were about five lanes, every space was full of vehicles. And they drive on the "wrong" side of the road. Wow! We were extremely blessed to have a driver that was skilled and competent.

The Street Girl's Home in Bangalore touched my heart deeply. This home had only been open about a month; the house mother was a new graduate and learning the language of the children from different regions, as well as learning her responsibilities. My heart went out to her completely (every time I think of her I still pray for her). The girls sang and danced for us and they were beautiful. Twelve of the eighteen girls were bald and I hesitated but I finally asked about that and found they had experienced lice in the house and the only way they

could beat it was to shave the girl's hair. Having had foster children in the past, our family had experienced a lice infestation and I understood the extreme treatment. We toured the house and I didn't see many personal items, but each child had a bed and a foot locker and everything was clean. The pantry was not as full as my pantry at home, but in the following weeks, I found that most food is bought fresh at the time of consumption. We were offered refreshment and I enjoyed my first cup of Indian tea, wonderful!

My Dad, Eddie Lofton, was given the opportunity to preach at a church on Saturday night. Eddie preached, the interpreter translated the sermon, but some people were not understanding so another interpreter was added to the mix, which I found funny and I thought to myself that if there were deaf there and someone was interpreting, that would be preaching in four languages.

We visited a total of ten houses during our tour, and each was special. But there were several that really touched my heart. One of the homes was for children with family members suffering with Aids. The children themselves are healthy. These children had experienced the death of a family member from Aids or that family member is still suffering with the disease. Children are so resilient, they are in the midst of sickness and disease but they sang, danced and played. We had so much fun spending time with them. The girls painted the hands and feet with lipstick, like American girls play dress-up.

The home for deaf was awesome. I wanted to stay there and talk with them. They were so hungry for communication. I sign in my church, with and for, the deaf and when I met the Indian deaf children, we discovered that our languages were different but we were still able to communicate. I learned their alphabet and I showed them my ABC's. We also exchanged numbers and words like tree, teacher, mother and father. These children are so smart; they are learning the written language for their region and English and as well as being taught the oral language skills to lip read and speak, and they know sign language. They are

also being trained in classes for tailoring, sewing and carpentry so they will have a skill to support themselves and their families in the future. As we left Nazareth Home for the Deaf, I hung out the window touching each child, nearly crying and waving until I could not see them anymore. What a wonderful day!

Other things I observed include:

- Some of the homes are being very innovative with their resources, planting gardens, tapping into the rubber tree, and/or using scraps to make methane gas used for the cooking stove.
- Every house was courteous, showing their servant's heart towards us and the children under their care.
- The food was strange and wonderful. The fruit and vegetables were the same that we use in America. All the meals I ate at the houses were great, but I can't order if I go to a restaurant, I don't know the name of the food I like.

"If anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." - Matthew 10:42

"Sister, what's my name?" she ask. I respond with confidence, "Bonita". There are thirty girls clamoring around me and they all want me to remember their names and sorry to say I've only remembered one, but I'm so proud of myself and Bonita, she glows with her approval. I shared many hugs and kisses with the children I met and I believe they touched my heart more than I touched theirs.

Would I go again? That is a question God and I will need to discuss. I now have an extensive love for the people of Southern India and I will pray for them much.