

AECM INDIA MISSION 2000 REPORT

Nov. 14 – Dec. 18

Overview

India has the second largest population in the world with over 1 billion people. There are over 600,000 villages and our AECM leaders in India say that only 50,000 have been reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. India is located in the heart of the 10/40 window and is one of the strategic nations for world evangelization. It is also the most idolatrous nation on the face of the earth boasting 99 million gods with temples, figures, and relics without number. There are factories devoted to making such gods and each village is saturated with the active worship of idols. India is also the birthplace of two major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Holy Spirit first sent the Apostle, Thomas, to India. He planted seven churches in the Madras (Chennai) region prior to being martyred in 52 A.D. It is interesting to note that there were over a million Christians in India before the first white man appeared. Believers who have a direct lineage to these first Christians in India are called *Syrian* Christians. Some say these Syrian Christians have themselves become a caste noting that they are financially prosperous and it costs thousands of dollars to marry someone out of the group. Although Hindu governments have made several attempts in history to drive Christianity out of the nation, they have failed when reaching the region where Thomas ministered. Today, a major Hindu aim is to keep missionaries out of tribal areas. They have specifically targeted the villages for *Hinduisation* through a process called *sanskritization* where the *Hindu Rash'na* (order & rule) is gradually forced upon the tribal villages. The Hindu slogan for Christians is *quit India*. This means the AECM partnership in India is of the utmost importance for the future evangelization of the unreached villages.

This journey developed into a multifaceted mission involving more than one phase of the AECM's *dragnet* strategy for world evangelism. It began with a ten-day exploration of two major ministry networks in Northeast India and concluded with multiplication level ministry in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Northeast India is made up of seven states: Arunachal, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, & Meghalaya. These states are almost enclosed by Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal, & Myanmar. I was surprised to find that four of the states have a large Christian presence (Manipur – 34.11%, Nagaland-87.48%, Mizoram-85.73%, Meghalaya-64.58%). Some of the states are classified as restricted areas requiring a special permit to enter (i.e. Nagaland, Manipur). I spent five days in the city of Shillong, Meghalaya, and five days in Churachandpur, Manipur. Shillong was a four-hour bus ride from the Guwahati Airport in Assam. Elevation is over 1,900 meters so it gets cool at night. I was also informed that it was a miracle to receive a permit into Manipur. The Gospel first came to Manipur in 1914. People in the region are quite different from those in the rest of India. Their appearance resembles those from a Mongol, Thai, or Chinese background. The growth of Christianity in Northeast India has slowed down and many churches appear spiritually dry, but there is a growing hunger for the Holy Spirit that is bringing a fresh fire to believers for further evangelism.

Highlights

1. Shillong, Meghalaya – Rev. J. Huoplien Neitham, EFCI Secretary of Education, hosted my stay in Shillong. EFCI is a network of 233 churches in 16 districts throughout Northeast India. I learned much during two days of observing including the *chibai*, a high handshake that is similar to the Jewish concept of *shalom*. This was followed by three days of ministry. There were 12 salvations at Union Christian College, 3 at EFCI Headquarters church. Several believers also reported they received healing in the services and home visits. Although many shared experiences of being touched by the Holy Spirit, there was a barrier in the release of tongues.
2. Churachandpur, Manipur – God used Rev. Chungthang Thiek, EFI Secretary for Northeast India (EFI is a Para church or “umbrella” ministry providing leadership training, etc. for church networks in the Northeast), to establish Nehemiah Prayer Mountain in 1986. Today, some 3,500 believers (over 100 daily) come to the mountain to pray and fast. More than 24 prayer cabins

surround the mountain and overlook the valley. I was the first foreigner to stay on Nehemiah Prayer Mountain with the people. Over 70 leaders participated in the Deeper Spiritual Life Conference, Nov. 24-26. Chungthang shared it was the first time they have talked openly in public regarding the Holy Spirit. Rev. Labrosiem Songate, a Bible College professor, interpreted for me during the conference. The people were so hungry for the Holy Spirit and they declared I was the first to teach them in detail about the Spirit. A number of participants were filled with the Holy Spirit during the mass prayer sessions. There were also healings reported as many opened to the flow of the Holy Spirit. A request to have me preach at the ICI Headquarters Church (ICI is a network of over 300 churches) was received on the final day. Six backsliders returned to the Lord. Two of them were weeping with great tears. They were chief leaders in the church. Chungthang Thiek and the Nehemiah Prayer Team network are applying for AECM membership and they desire to hold a Holy Spirit Conference in 2001 for the entire valley. This is one of those partnerships established by the Holy Spirit.

3. Sindhibhata Village, Orissa – Rev. John Joseph of HMCI, a long term AECM member network, and I teamed to provide training for 40 young leaders who could be heard praying and singing praises early each morning. At the conclusion of the conference, the Holy Spirit sent these leaders in great power to remote villages where they face many dangers and persecutions for the name of Christ. In addition, 25 villagers gave their lives to Christ at the Sunday morning service. I also visited the remote village of Qualli where a new church has begun. Ten new believers were water baptized there. This phase of the mission also included ministry in Bhilai, Jacaporo, and Dhanpunji to encourage and strengthen the churches.
4. Rajhmundry, Andhra Pradesh – The AECM India Mission 2000 Ministers Leadership Seminar was conducted Dec. 6-8 in conjunction with Bishop D. Santhosh Babu of UCM, another long term AECM member network. Although we tried to limit participants to 120, leaders kept arriving until there were 200. Not only did this event involve the pioneering development and deployment of an AECM international ministry team from three continents, but also the Holy Spirit fell upon the conference to such a degree that participants frequently would break forth into spontaneous dance. I had not seen such freedom in the Spirit in India prior to this. The UCM leaders did a great job in organizing the Conference and the response was overwhelming. The UCM team worked until 3:00 A.M on the final day to process at least 50 new applications as God multiplied their church network overnight. In addition, we laid hands upon and prayed over seven evangelists whom God had prepared to reach at least 70 villages for Christ. This was the greatest conference I have ever been a part of.
5. Village Strategy – Although one village targeted was too remote for us to get to, the AECM Int'l Ministry Team was able to participate with UCM leaders and Bible College students in implementing the strategy to take villages for Christ. A prayer and praise march including house-to-house tract distribution through each village was conducted at dusk when the people returned from the fields. I blew the *shofar* over each village. This culminated with an evangelistic crusade in the evening. The goal was to help plant a church of at least 30 believers in each village and to trigger multiplication in the region. The strategy worked miraculously in the first three villages with at least 164 salvations (Chilakampadu – 44, Kothapalli – 55, Pippara – 65). The final three villages were a different story due to several factors, one being that our army was reduced in size by as much as 60-70% due to the distance of these last villages and another being the team was showing some signs of weariness. This led to two days of struggle with some conflict and confusion. It began in Goparam with confusion and indecisiveness in the harvesting of souls. Although the spiritual warfare was heavy, 32 responded at two different times to the call of repentance. This was reduced to 15 as a result of the confusion. At Thutuguntla over 60 responded, but confusion entered again and we counted only 3 so as not to misrepresent the situation. There were 14 salvations at Nereda village. This was the site of the final crusade and there was evidence that the attack upon the team was beginning to lift. The village strategy resulted in at least 200 and perhaps more than 300 Hindus who openly converted to Christ. Many know that they will be beaten and persecuted for the faith. The AECM Int'l Team had traveled 1,600 kilometers (1,200 miles) in six days to minister in the villages. We returned to Rajhmundry

to dedicate three new motorcycles to enable the evangelists to reach at least 70 more villages for Christ.

6. Financial Seed Planting – The AECM with help from Army of God International and its contributors was able to sow finances for leadership training and church planting in India. The Int'l Team also participated in giving. In addition, churches and ministries in India planted seed for the mission and in return planted seed into the AECM with offerings and honorariums. This indicates the Holy Spirit has established a true partnership in the gospel when all participate in His plan of giving and receiving. These funds were forwarded to the AECM and designated for international ministry.

Lessons Learned:

1. The AECM Int'l Team model was very effective. Although the team was spiritually prepared and fulfilled God's purpose, I recognized the need for better preparation regarding cultural differences, particularly those involving gender, race, customs, and religion. Proper orientation of Int'l team members in these matters will curtail potential misunderstandings and conflict when God brings three or more cultures together for a strategic mission. The human tendency is to over identify with the merits of one's own culture. Even the slightest hint of national or cultural pride can place an Int'l Team at risk of diminishing its mission of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. The AECM Prayer Network is indispensable to the accomplishment of the international ministry. The fact that over 10,000 intercessors around the world had received detailed prayer guidelines and itineraries served as a source of great comfort and strength for those laboring in the field.
3. Execution of God-given strategies to take villages for Christ must be consistent, intense, and aggressive. This is the mission field and leaders from all nations must be willing to endure hardships as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. I learned that any let down could have a direct bearing on the harvest of souls.
4. Mission's teams will gradually weaken without adequate rest. Although team members are commissioned by the Lord to labor hard, it is also biblical to have a day of rest even while on the most intense ministry assignment. I suggest for every six days of consecutive and intense ministry that there be the provision for a day of rest. This may be difficult to follow given the distances between villages and the demands for ministry, but a 6-1-6 pattern could make the team even more effective.
5. All nations have their peculiar strongholds of evil. India is a nation of idolatry being the birthplace of two major nonabrahamic religions of the world. Although other nations have their idols, idols openly abound and are actively worshipped by millions of people in practically every village of India. I learned that spiritual leaders from India and other nations need to unite to confront and do battle against the spirit of idolatry, but they must do so with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Isaiah 11:2). The Holy Spirit reminded us in the midst of the most intense spiritual battles that we are all ambassadors for Christ compelled by the love of Christ to reach the lost.
6. The value of planting financial seed cannot be overestimated. I learned that churches and ministries are making the transition from the "sponsorship" model to a true partnership. The concept of sponsorship tends to be one sided and conditions the recipient to seek receiving only, particularly from the West. This robs them of both the joy and blessing of giving. Partnership calls all to participate together in both giving and receiving. Several AECM churches and networks are beginning to receive unexpected blessings as a direct result of planting financial seed. For example, Harvest Pentecostal Church in Sindhivhata village received 25,000 rubies (\$555) from the local Hindu government for a new church roof. Also, UCM Church in Visakhapatnam more than doubled in one year. It is important to note that these were the first two international churches to plant financial seed into the AECM. They did this in 1999.

Conclusion:

AECM India Mission 2000 was a great test for the overall international harvest vision. The dragnet strategy for global evangelism accompanied by the mobilization of over 10,000 intercessors and the new concept of an AECM International Ministry Team (Global Strike Force) proved very effective in an extremely intense and challenging mission field. A visible level of multiplication was produced in the region. I recommend with enthusiasm that the AECM deploy the same strategies in other parts of the world.

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