

Showers of blessing in the face of a cyclone Evangelistic campaign in India reaps blessings

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
Missionary Journalist

Imagine holding a major outdoor evangelistic crusade under the threat of an imminent hurricane.

Rev. Dr. Peter Pereira, the President of Hope for Today (HFT), a ministry of the International Leadership Institute, faced that option in early November as a strong cyclone bore down on India's southeastern coast just as he was about to begin a three day "Good News Festival" in the city of Tuni just nine miles from the Bay of Bengal.

Thus, Peter and his colleagues began to pray earnestly for the crusade and the impending storm. "All the churches prayed for the meetings especially for good weather," Peter reported. "The women's prayer groups knelt down in the meeting ground and prayed for good weather. To our surprise, there was no trace of rain in Tuni though it was raining in surrounding places.... Everybody witnessed the dramatic change of weather from the first day of the meetings. On the first day God had already spoken to the people of Tuni by controlling the weather."

And, the Lord moved in a mighty way during the campaign. Over 4,000 people turned out the first night, and by the third evening, 10,000 people, around 20% of the city's population, came to hear the messages. All-told, over 1,400 people made first-time professions of faith in Jesus Christ during the stormy crusade.

One participant reported after a campfire on the final evening that the fire "signifies the fire set in our hearts by Rev Pereira and we should keep this fire in the days to come and has to be spread in our surroundings."

The evangelistic campaigns, which HFT sponsors throughout the year, involve a great deal of volunteer support. The meetings are conducted by a local committee with the help of local pastors, lay leaders, and churches.

"Every pastor of the town had a role in these Festivals," Dr. Pereira reported. "The choir was formed with youth from all churches. There was a team of hundred voices that sang in one accord which was a glorious moment."

"During the day we had special meetings for Pastors, youth and women," he said. "Then in the evening, the community-wide services were held."

Most Americans have never heard of the town of Tuni in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It's a small city of just over 50,000 souls--people important to our Lord. And many of those people are members of the Dalit social class.

To be a Dalit, or an untouchable, in India is about the worst imaginable fate that can befall anyone. Although abolished by India's 1950 constitution, the practice remains a degrading part of life in many rural villages. Dalits are often bullied and assigned menial jobs such as manual scavengers, removing human waste and dead animals, leather workers, street sweepers and cobblers.

No wonder, then, that 200,000 Dalits recently converted from Hinduism to Buddhism under the belief that by taking that step they would insure that in their next life, they will be born into a better part of society.

That is a challenge to Hope For Today, an Indian Christian organization that carries out a ministry of compassion, evangelism and social ministries in India's Andhra Pradesh state, home to large numbers of the country's 150 million Dalits.

There, Dr. Pereira and his team operate Alpha Homes, a ministry to boys and girls coming from families where poverty is so intense that their parents cannot support them. At the homes, loving Christians house, bathe, feed and educate these children with the goal of lifting them out of their poverty into a better life.

Reaching Dalits for Christ is an important part of this ministry. Dalits have been slow to respond to Christian evangelistic efforts. In addition to many conversions to Buddhism, Hindu groups have been successful in "reconverting" many Dalits from Christianity to Hinduism. The percentage of Christians in Andhra Pradesh state is only 1.9%.

The Pereiras are involved in church-planting, leadership training seminars, evangelistic campaigns, and preaching and teaching within the churches. In addition to working with women and children through the Alpha Schools and Homes, they also minister in a vocational training center, medical camps and a nutritional feeding program.

For more information on the work of HFT, contact International Leadership Institute at P.O. Box 1005, Carrollton, GA, 30112, or via email at info@iliteam.org. The International Leadership Institute trains and mobilizes Christian leaders to reach their nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The International Leadership Institute trains qualified Christian leaders who are equipped to accelerate the spread of the Gospel around the world. Graduates

apply the principle of multiplication by training 100 or more leaders within two years. Priority is given to leaders from nations where the Gospel is the least accessible. During 2006, over 4,000 leaders around the world received ILI advanced training. Alumni now lead in forty nations.

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