

Helping People

One Drop At A Time



Field Report From India

November 21, 2007

Dear Friends,

It has been more than a week since we sent out our first update so as you might suspect we have been many places and done many things since then. There is never a lack of things to do here because everyone wants a piece of our time. Our presence at events brings it a lot of prestige. It's not because we are exceptional or important but any event that is attended by an American must be special or else why would anyone come all the way from America to attend? Needless to say we are invited to many occasions and painfully we must decline most of them. The most difficult situation is when we must decline invitations to the homes of personal friends and acquaintances.

One such situation cropped up after joining our friend Basha for dinner at his home. I met Basha in 1969 when at 16 years of age he was already an accomplished carpenter who could make precision furniture with his hands (and feet) and a few simple tools. I hired him to put screens on our home in Kolar, something rare in India even though mosquito born diseases like malaria, dengue fever and chickungunia are common afflictions. His talents were vast and his humor was infectious and we quickly hired him in our workshop as an apprentice mechanic and taught him how to drive. He went on to be a master heavy equipment mechanic and long distance truck driver. He now owns a very successful hardware store in Kolar.

His eldest daughter is getting married December 4th so we bought her a gift in Bangalore for the occasion and brought it to dinner. For three hours before, during and after dinner she begged us to delay our trip home so we could attend her wedding. We could not leave before we promised her that we would call the airlines to see if it were possible to change the flight. It will not be easy to tell her it is impossible for us to attend.

We also get requests to donate money or supplies to all sorts of worthy and unworthy causes, everything from library books for schools to medical clinics that prescribe magnetic therapy. We were approached at a local Rotary meeting to donate water filters to a school that was also receiving a donation of used computers through a Rotary initiative by the local Rotary club. We visited the school and agreed to donate eight filters to would provide clean water for their students.

We surveyed their water delivery system and were saddened by the results. They receive their water from a bore well in a nearby village and it is pumped through pipes to a storage tank on the schools grounds and then fed by gravity to two drinking water stations on either end of the

giving

U.S. dollars go a long way
in India....for example:

- Adopt A Family:** \$ 25
(Donation of one water filter to a needy family who is unable to purchase a filter)
- Adopt A School:** \$ 100
(Donation of two water filters to a school accompanied by a clean water education program)
- Adopt A Village Partnership:** \$ 2,500
(Donation of up to 60 filters to a needy village, subsidy of up to 30 filters purchased by villagers, soap & educational program for village children, community steward for one year)

Make Checks Payable to:

**South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc.
2832 Whitney Avenue,
Hamden CT 06518 USA**



school, each with about 8 taps. The system is elegant in design but the water that pours from the taps for the children is contaminated. The water from the bore well is potable but it gets contaminated by the leaky delivery system and the poorly maintained storage system. We see this over and over in schools and villages. Until the drinking water and waste water are separated and treated, contamination will be a problem. The Bio-Sand water filters is a temporary fix for this problem, but the complete sanitary solution is many decades away.

One of the highlights of our week was attending the dedication ceremonies for the latest two villages benefiting from the "Adopt-A-Village Partnership" program. The villages of Maniganahalli and Thummalahalli were adopted thanks to a Rotary matching grant between the Rotary Club of Kolar India and the Rotary Club of Old Saybrook CT USA. Both villages received their water filters in October but the dedication ceremony was held a month later so we could attend and also so we could hold some discussion with the villagers about the filters, their benefits, and any questions or concerns the residents may have. Both dedication events were well attended and some excellent discussions took place. The community stewards for both of the villages are conscientious and truly care about the well being of their neighbors. More filters have been requested for each village and we have no doubt they will have much success as a result of the program.

It's difficult to explain what it feels like to be in an Indian village. The feeling in a village is unique and wonderful. The rhythm of life slowly pulsates throughout everyone's movements. The movements are not marked by the clock as we know it but rather by a timeless process of planting, harvesting, cooking, cleaning and mending. Worship is a daily event punctuated with monthly festivals related to the Gods. Days blend into seasons and seasons blend into lifetimes. The lifetimes can be seen in the stone Temple steps smoothed and worn down by bare feet paying homage to the Gods. It is tempting to want to stay and soak up the spirit of the village, to become a part of the rhythm of the timeless repetition of life. But duty and common sense finally take over as we reluctantly leave and say good bye to our new village friends in the dark and peace of the night.

We hope everyone has a wonderful Thanksgiving Day. We will not be attending our usual turkey dinner feast at our friend Haroon's restaurant this year. We have a busy week planned with water related tasks. We don't mind at all; we love being here in Kolar and seeing progress being made! We are thankful for this rare opportunity to be making a difference in peoples' lives.

Best regards,

Cathy and Mike

