

New and Different

Description

As you may have noted our blog site was down for a couple of weeks. Unfortunately all of our posts were lost and it has taken Rick many hours to recover the data. Because of this my post is a little long.

We have been taking a lot of time to get to know where things are here in Vizag, *the City of Destiny*, as it is called. We are getting more comfortable with the supermarkets, travel by auto rickshaw, the warmer weather and cooking with ingredients that are just a little different. My observations...The people here dress in more traditional clothes than they did in Delhi. Lots of saris for the women and dhoti for the men. Fewer people speak English. The weather is more tropical. The language is Telugu and that is what is mostly spoken at church making it challenging for us. Prayers are generally long, heartfelt, faith filled and personal even over the pulpit. We thought the people in Delhi looked at us with surprise and interest but here we really stand out. In Delhi we lived in a neighborhood that had several embassies and so we were not the only foreigners around. It was a relatively quiet area within walking distance of a small outdoor mall and a short ride to a very large mall. The mall here doesn't have a lot to offer us and is a 15 minute drive. We live on a busy four lane road. There is traffic and honking all hours of the day and night. The traffic is still crazy but there are a lot more scooters, motorcycles and rickshaws. Seeing women driving scooters is common as is riding side saddle on the back with their colorful saris flapping in the breeze. There are not as many stray dogs, but the ones we have seen are often very scrawny and mangy. They have more water buffalos and although we haven't seen as many cows wandering the street the ones we do see are so much healthier. We are no longer able to walk to church because it is too far away. That is a little disappointing.

Early in our exploring we found some small neighborhood parks that required many laps to achieve any distance. Fortunately we found another place that is called a health arena which has some nice paths along the base of a large hill. There is also a stairway up one end that has 500-600 steps. We have climbed the stairs twice now. This is a good option as long as we get an early start so that we beat the heat and walk when it is still below 80.



The white trail is the stairway to the top of the Kailasagiri hill



Rick ready to climb the stairway to heaven

Kailasagiri is a park and tourist area on top of the hill. Last Saturday after climbing the stairs we walked through that area and met a group of Indian tourists from Telangana. After taking my first photo of the 40 foot statues they noticed us and everyone seemed to think they needed a picture with us and to shake hands. It was a little crazy especially seeing as we were sweating profusely after our climb. The last photo was with a small woman that only came to my shoulder. After our picture she reached up and wiped the dripping sweat from my chin. They have a very different concept of personal space!



A few of the tourists from Telangana with the statues of Shiva and Parvati in the background



Play area at Kailasagiri

We walked to the beach one morning and there is a nice park there but it is a long walk through traffic and along broken or blocked sidewalks. We get a lot of curious looks from people as we walk by. The children are more likely to smile and are excited when we talk to them. One day they were actually chasing after us calling out asking our names.



Homemade boat



Hand crafted boat



Beached boat-Bangladesh merchant ship that was shipwrecked in 2020

You may be wondering when we are finding time to do our humanitarian work. Well the sad news is that we are on hold for a couple of weeks as we wait for the area leaders in Hong Kong and the church legal department to figure out what we can and can't do here in India. There are some restrictive laws and requirements and legal has concerns with some of the projects we have been doing meeting those requirements. So until we get the go ahead we will continue to explore and adapt.



Buddha Vanam along our walking path



Jack fruit growing by the way side

While walking at the health arena we came across a group of people that get together each morning to practice badminton. They are very friendly and have invited us to join them. We purchased some racquets and played a little on Saturday but because of our late start we didn't have much time. Rick didn't get as much practice as me because he was drawn into a conversation with a man who is making a movie about the Indian freedom fighters. He was asked to play the role of a British officer! It doesn't seem to fit with the reason we are here and may be politically problematic so he will probably need to decline but it was a fun thought for a minute.



Rick and film maker, R.V.V.

Unusual sights not captured in photos:

- Two guys on a scooter carrying an 8 foot ladder.

- An old man with long gray beard dressed in white robes zipping along on his scooter.
- Two camels being led along a busy road.
- A beggar/vendor trying to sell windshield sunscreens to Americans in an auto rickshaw.
- A man carrying a 5 gallon bucket on his head full of sheep (maybe goat) heads.
- My forehead sweating while eating some delicious biryani. (The manager came by and asked how the spice level was. Apparently the chef toned it down for us!)

Random things we saw while walking around the neighborhoods:



We frequently see overloaded vehicles-trucks, bicycles, rickshaws and scooters



They carry all kinds of things
on their heads-brooms today



A man taking his dog for a ride



Funny cow and motorcycle combination



Puppies on the doorstep



Cow on the doorstep!



Towering 108 foot statue of
Sri Abhaya Anjaneya Swamy

It seems that every day brings something new and different in our lives here in India. Just when we think we have things figured out, they change, or something new comes along. It requires our faith to take that one step into the unknown and continue moving forward never knowing what to expect next. Kind of like life.

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