

Do or do not. There is no try.

Description

Another shall-we-just-say *interesting* week in Vizag has come and gone. In many ways, our daily routine is pretty settled: up at 5:30, scriptures, yoga, prayers, breakfast or a snack, then out for our morning walk.

Lots of walking and exploring some new parts of town:



Lutheran church



Hindu temple not far from
Lutheran church

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/everybodys-got-a-water-buffalo.mp4>

Everybody's got a water buffalo!



Well at least this man does



Cow all decked out

In addition to our daily prayers, we do lots of thinking — but see the admonition on the tour bus! — some reading and writing, some online and in-store shopping, eating in and out, just your typical missionary life!



A word to the wise!

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/lunch-arriving-at-platform-65.mp4>

Lunch arriving at Platform 65

We've started playing early morning badminton (just back-and-forth birdie hitting, no net, no games) with our friends in the walking park. I recorded a short video of their "coach" playing with one of them. (They call him "our booster".)



People who play badminton on the walking path

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/coach-putting-on-a-show.mp4>

Coach putting on a show!



Cool walking park flowers

Yesterday we went to lunch with the Bairds, then attended a first branch baptism (Satya, who got married our first day here, three and a half weeks ago) and then a third branch YSA (Young Single Adult) activity, which we came at the tail end of while they were just talking and cooking and eating.

The chicken kebabs smelled wonderful, and they offered, but we politely declined to partake. All four of us seniors were given the opportunity to share some thoughts with the YSAs and bear our testimonies. The Spirit was strong!



Cool flower design in a bowl of water on the floor of the hotel where we ate lunch



Satya (blue shirt) after his baptism, with his wife and the missionaries

Now, how's that humanitarian work going, you ask?!

Well, we had our momentous meeting on Friday that included all three humanitarian couples (us, the Jones, and the Gerlachs) and our immediate chain of command — our direct manager, his supervisor, and his supervisor (the Director of Temporal Affairs), plus two lawyers from our legal team in Hong Kong.

The meeting went for about 90 minutes during which the lead attorney told us very clearly that because the government is clamping down on how foreign contributions come into and are used in India — pretty much all the types of projects we have been doing we can no longer do. All the ideas we brought up in the meeting were shot down — no can do. We asked for a concrete example of a project that we

CAN do, and got nothing. We left the meeting very confused, frustrated, and disappointed. Why are we even here if we can't really do anything?

Basically we were left in the dark about what value we can add by being here in our current calling as humanitarians. We were asked to brainstorm, and pray for guidance to come up with ideas we could discuss in a follow-on meeting that will happen hopefully as soon as tomorrow.

Taunya and I thought, prayed, discussed our ideas just with each other, and pretty much wound up going in circles and getting nowhere. We went to bed pretty unsettled, but we each slept better than we thought we would. So yesterday morning we decided we had enough energy to tackle "the stairs" again. Which we did. Resting about 3 times during the 20 minutes or so it took, we climbed 816 (yes, I counted them!) stairs, which had several landings breaking them up (which I didn't count). During one of our rests, a man who we greeted briefly as we began to climb, and who had shortly thereafter started following us, caught up to and then passed us on his way to the top. As we exchanged greetings, he said we inspired him to make the climb — that wasn't his original plan! We greeted him again at the top, and then had the most amazing and enlightening conversation where we learned, first, that he was a retired engineer after a career working at the naval base.

His English is excellent, and we learned so much more from him as he freely shared his thoughts about his country, its history and current status, its people and their mindsets and struggles. He asked why we were here, and what we thought of his country. That triggered more learning about our mutual desire to do good, to act charitably toward our fellow beings. He shared with us what he saw as opportunities to do humanitarian work here. I won't go into details now, but will just say that his ideas felt promising! We've been pleading with Heavenly Father to guide us and lead us to people who can help us in our quest to lift and bless the poor and needy. We know that he was a direct answer to these pleas — and he was pleased when we told him that!

We were walking while having our conversation, and we ended up walking all the way to the other end of the Kailasagiri hill, then down the long road that ends at the beach road, and back along that road to where he had parked his car. He kindly drove us home, and we exchanged contact information with intentions to reconnect.

At the YSA activity last night we learned that the branch president is the principal of a private school with 800 students. Another brother in the branch who I talked with briefly has a PhD in chemistry! He works for the government on sanitation works. So, we can't help private schools, and we can't do sanitation projects with the government, but it still felt like another door opening a crack, letting in a little light, beckoning us on through the remaining darkness. There are people here who can help us learn and grow and figure things out!

Because as Taunya reminded us by putting 2 Timothy 1:7 on the fridge: *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."* We have not given up, nor will we succumb to wishy-washiness about the work. What work we do not know right now. But we will learn, and then we will not try, we will go and do!

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