

Sweet and Sour

Description

We are still in a holding pattern regarding humanitarian work in India. It isn't exactly fun but we are finding ways to keep busy. We continue to meet new people and have unique experiences.

Monday while looking out from the balcony to the Kailasagiri Hill I noticed how bright and cheerful it looked. We got at least an inch of rain over the weekend and everything was rinsed and brighter. The air is clear and it just felt lighter (not heavy), more hopeful. Things are looking up.



Our balcony view looking out to the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean

Except that we got locked *in* our apartment! We could not get the lock to work. I was a little panicked. It is a long way to climb down from our 17th floor balcony. We used a spoon handle to unscrew the lock (we have no tools) from the door but that didn't quite work because a plate went perpendicular into the door frame. I yanked on the handle but all that did was pull the handle off of the door. We shimmed and bent the lock and got it open but then we couldn't get it back together again. A spoon handle was not adequate. We contacted the maintenance guy but he wasn't able to come until the evening so we had to stay home all the rest of the day.



Our bent, non-functioning lock

We had some meetings this week pertaining to the work here but we won't know anything until April. We are looking at some places that might be fun to visit while we await direction. We were invited to serve at church by Rick speaking in Sacrament Meeting and me teaching Relief Society. An especially interesting experience since we had people translating for us.



There is always something beautiful to see



Doorstep chalk design



Even the trucks are decorated

Happy Ugadi! Wednesday was the New Year here in the state of Andhra Pradesh (and other Telugu speaking states). Our badminton friends invited us to the 7AM celebration at the Health Arena by the Buddha. They said there would be food and that it was a special time. We were happy to go and I had thought about bringing some food item to share. After reading a little I decided that they had some traditional food and that I should just enjoy that. When we arrived and got to the top of the ramp at the entrance there were a lot of chairs set up and the man with the microphone said something like, “Welcome foreign visitors! Please come and join us.” It was rather hilarious. We continued up and since they weren’t quite ready to begin we walked for a bit and then returned. At that point only one of the badminton people was there. It was so not what we were expecting. Once again language is a barrier. We speak the same words but they mean something different.

The program was about an hour long and mainly consisted of an astrology guru sharing the predictions for the year and pronouncing the traditional blessings. It was all in Telugu so we only understood a few

words here and there. The man that “coaches” badminton came late and was decked out in his new clothes. New clothes are part of the tradition.



Astrology Guru sharing his wisdom



A new acquaintance, Rick, Mr. Naidu (coach), a badminton friend (we were his “honored guests” at the celebration

Following the program they served the pachadi which is a chutney with six tastes—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and spicy. These ingredients reflect the six aspects or emotions of life. They are a symbolic reminder that one must expect all flavors of experiences in the coming new year and make the most of them. It tasted pretty good but it all comes back to eating food prepared with unknown care...

I often forget how much we stand out. I honestly don’t feel that different but people continue to approach us just to say hello or say they see us walking and want to talk. Random people often want a chance to practice their English as well as get a photo.



The filing system at the Foreign Registration Office. Is it a surprise that the official didn't show up for our appointment? No!

We went to Tanneti park beach again this week and one of the men we met at the Ugadi celebration noticed us and was surprised that we knew about this beautiful place for walking. We would have just passed him by because *he* didn't stand out. We do try to greet people as we walk and sometimes a conversation ensues.

The government has allocated funds to spruce up Vizag because of the G20 summit being hosted in India. There are conferences all year long throughout the country. Some of the projects we have noticed include painting the median concrete work, planting flowering plants in those medians and the traffic circles. There are a significant number of murals in Vizag and they are creating new ones as well as sprucing up those that already exist. We were surprised to find some paintings on boulders at the beach that were not there a couple of weeks ago.



Stray dogs relaxing on the beach



A surprising new fish on the beach



We noticed these on the return walk



An interesting sight because it related to this week's *Come Follow Me Lesson*
—Matthew 13:47-52

Although we did not know what a mission to India would look like it is not going at all like we imagined. Life rarely does. I am thankful to feel at peace despite not knowing when we will be given the go ahead on projects or what that will look like. We have to take the sour along with the sweet and incorporate the spicy and the salty. It is all important to keep life balanced and to develop ourselves along the way.

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