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Linnea's Blog IV: Way Opening

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Way opening



Linnea's Blog IV: Way Opening

My friend, Ad Purkh (Laura Stobie), gives us advice before we leave on each journey to India. We have shared with her our extreme anxiety about bringing 30 ukuleles in through Customs. Only a week before our departure, we had received word that bringing a large number of anything through the gate is viewed as being connected to working - without a work visa. Tourist school children have been sent home for bringing school supplies to Indian charities.

All this adds to the warnings and requests we have already received from hosts about keeping their work under the official radar. The ruling BJ Party is riding a nationalist wave that is actively trying to make the country fully Hindu. One of our three hosts has asked us to never use their institutional name in any publicity - indeed, they will not be publicly advertising our biblical storytelling event at all, but will promote by word of mouth only. They go by a Hindi name with no reference to Christianity at all, but lately they have been “visited” by government ministry officials for “conversations”. Our Punjabi Christian orphanage has been monitored, passports held a long time at Immigration, obstacles to bringing in equipment. There is distrust of foreigners, distrust of the Christian agenda. Hostilities are fanned by those in leadership.

I ask Ad Purkh what we should say as we bring in, say, 24 ukuleles in our 2 perfect Uhaul airline boxes. Should I say it is for “casual business”, which seems to be allowed on tourist visa, meaning, - we suppose but cannot find actually spelled out anywhere on government web sites - that we can give away samples to encourage a business relationship? Should we say it is for an orphanage but portray it as a Hindu school? Should we be honest?

Ad Purkh tells me: This is India; Customs is a conversation, not the western search for single syllables. “You tell him you are bringing little musical instruments to give as gifts to the families that are hosting you on your visit to India. It is your third time to the country and you were so moved by the hospitality that you received in these past trips that you wanted to bring the one thing that you know will bring joy: Music. Then he will say to you, ‘No, Mam, you cannot bring this in.’ So, you nod a bit and you look off in space a bit and you say, “Ok. Ok..... We just would like to bring these gifts to our friends, to show our respect to them and to honour this friendship.’ Then he will say to you, ‘No, Mam, you cannot bring this in.’ So you nod a bit and you think a bit and you say, ‘Ok. Ok..... We just want to show our respect and love for our families by bringing them these gifts of music...’ And then perhaps he will say to you, ‘You want to bring them in?’ and you will say, ‘Yes.’ And maybe you will bring them in.”

This advice eases my cares on the long flight to the country, casting an illuminating light on my usual forthright approach to obstacles. Perhaps India will teach me to soften (a miracle that would be). I pray in the plane.

Still, as we come down the escalator into the Immigration line-up hall in Indira

Gandhi Airport, I feel light-headed with worry about what I will be required to say. The man who takes our passports beams at us: "So, what will you do?" he invites. "Everything," we say. " We can't wait to see the Taj Mahal." Stamp! Stamp! And as we roll our carts of backpacks, rollies, suitcase and two perfect Uhaul boxes into the Customs area...

... there is no-one there.

We sail out of the airport into Arrivals, and the orange-pink fog of a Delhi evening.

Linnea Good

"Enlivening Faith through Story and Song"

You are receiving this blog because you contributed to Linnea and David's mission to India in one way or another. Easily unsubscribe by hitting reply with "No thanks" in the subject header (Lg and Dj will not see it).

Please be cautious about who you show this blog to. Our status in the country is not entirely stable, so we are not publicly posting our doings on social media. Feel free to privately pass this along to kindred, trustworthy spirits.

To contribute to Linnea and David's Music Ministry: <http://www.linneagood.com/>



Receiving the ukuleles from Wentworth Music in Penticton
(Thanks for the break in the cost!)



Airport breakfast for David



Airport breakfast for Linnea



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