



Easter 2007

Dear friends,

Happy, healthy, and content, I came back from India in March. Beate Steffens and her friend Nicole stayed on for three more weeks; they traveled and saw many interesting things, some nice and some not so nice. Perhaps I should widen my experience sometime and see some of India outside Andhra Pradesh. I haven't yet, but could one of these days!

On 1 April we opened two new sewing centers: one in Narasaraopet, the other in Yellamandha. The Indian fiscal year ends in March; therefore we waited until April to save some money.



Santhamma and her husband are happy because she can run now her sewing center officially. They live outside the town of Narasaraopet, in a mainly rural area. For many years Santhamma has been giving free sewing lessons to women in her neighborhood. Her retired husband has taken great pleasure in giving her all the help she needs. He is a former employee of the Indian Telekom and receives a small pension.



Naga Vardhini, with Beate behind her, and the women of the village Yellamandha are excited that finally they too got a Sewing-Center. For almost three years they have waited for it. Even Naga Vardhini's husband was fighting to get an education for these women. Yellamandha is actually a rice farmers' village, but because of too little rain recently, the farmers had to switch to growing chillies and cotton instead. Unfortunately the result was not much better either, because they can have only one harvest a year. Besides chillies and cotton, they plant Subabul trees, which are used for making paper, but they need around 2 years of growing. (Picture in the middle - background).

This time my main effort was checking former students to see what they do with their new ability. What kind of improvement do they get from learning to sew? As usual, I also checked out possibilities for new projects.



Hassina of Sri Vani's 1st Sewing class.



Bindu, Sri Vani, and Hassina.



Bindu and a former student.

Sri Vani's first students all lived in the huts just below her house. Most of them told me about their drunken husbands who seldom bring home badly needed money. At least with sewing they can buy food for their children and send them to school. So they are very happy.



Shiva Kumari, from the village of Appapuram, is proud of her former students who are in much better condition than before.

Shiva Kumari belongs to a high caste, but she overcame the old religious rules and regulations insofar that she does not make any distinction between castes or other religions. In Appapuram lately many high caste Hindus have changed to Christianity. So we had quite a few interesting and intensive discussions; for instance, what is a reason to become a Christian, and what disadvantages does it bring. For Hindus, especially if they belong to a high caste, it is a big decision, which can still possibly bring some disadvantages with it.

What would I
do,
if I could?



What could I
do,
if I would?

As a next step I would like very much to start a sewing center in Epurupalem, where we started a Medical Center last autumn. So many poor and needy people live there, that I feel really bad about it. If they could learn to sew, their situation would be so much better.



Nirmala (right in the middle) has started a small sewing class all on her own. In order to continue, she needs our help badly.

"There are people in this world, who are so hungry, that God can only appear in the form of bread to them."
(Mahatma Gandhi)

With hearty thanks for all your help and protection, I wish all of you happy Easter Holidays.

"The Lord is risen, He is truly risen!"

Yours truly,

Marta B. Järvi

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