



India Tsunami Relief

Biography of Dr. B. V. Rao & His Progressive Faith Ministries; Dec. '04 Tsunami & Biblical Orientation; Aid Christian Victims through Grace Evangelical Ministries

Last year Moses Onwubiko conducted a number of Bible conferences in East India primarily in the State of Andhra Pradesh \än' drah prah-desh'. One of the several ministers who hosted Moses was Dr. B. V. Rao \r' \, founder of Progressive Faith Ministries in the State's fourth largest city of Vijayawada \vi' ja-ya-wä' da\.

The following biographical sketch of Dr. Rao is provided by the offices of Grace Evangelical Ministries in Nashville, the not-for-profit corporation that supports the ministries of Moses Onwubiko:

Moses and his Grace Evangelistic Ministries were introduced to Dr. Rao through Pastor Naboth Otukho of Kenya, who found us by wandering into Rick Hughes' website. We have had much communication with Dr. Rao prior to and since our visit with him. We were only with him for one day. We met him after our schedule had been arranged and had to sandwich him in. He gathered all the pastors of his area together and Moses taught them for three uninterrupted hours.

Dr. Rao is a sophisticated, well educated man from one of the higher castes. He writes of himself:

I am a medical doctor and a pharmaceutical formulation and marketing consultant. I am married, 57 years of age with 4 children and 4 grandchildren. I was from a Traditional Hindu family background and came into Christ's fold in 1988 through a miraculous healing manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life of my wife. [We spoke to him about this. They were in the stands and she accepted Christ and was healed. No hocus-pocus—there is much demon possession in this part of the world and consequently there are often headings when people accept Christ because obviously the demon loses his territory.]

On receiving the medical miracle in my wife Shobha, after some hesitation we embraced Jesus and started going to the church. We also took the baptism publicly and arranged a big feast on that occasion in front of our house in our locality. It became a *major issue in our community*. The elders of our society and community got wild. They threatened us with a social boycott. Both my younger children were sent out of schools in the middle of the semester. They warned us of dire consequences. We did not heed them and they planned to kill us.

They tried in several ways but all the time the Holy Spirit saved us by creating unexpected situations for the hired killers. I will just give you one example: one night in February 1989, they wanted to destroy our house with bombs while we all slept.

Before they enacted the actual execution of their plan, they went to a bar-cum-restaurant to have some alcoholic drinks. When they were in the bar someone I also know went there. Since he once was also part of the mafia, he casually enquired what they were planning. They informed him that my house was going to be bombed and we all would die in our sleep.

My acquaintance told them to abstain from the ghastly incident on my house. He warned that the attorney who deals with all their police cases—they have committed many crimes—is my school mate and a close friend. He warned them if the bombing took place, the attorney would not defend them in this case nor will he defend them in the many cases they have in the Indian courts. The attorney is a defense lawyer and is very famous for his capabilities and maneuvers in the civil and criminal courts where he obtains acquittals in 99% of the cases he defends.



Immediately they rang up my friend and their attorney. My friend warned them not to target me at all and also as a safety tactic asked them to protect me and my family from attacks by other mafia teams in that area. Suddenly the offenders became my defenders. My friend who met them in the hotel came and informed me about how God changed the situation in the last minute.

I came into the ministry part time some nine years back and into His full-time ministry in 1999. I am well connected in the society and well known in the Christian circles throughout the state. I am the president of the YMCA of our region and a member of the Bible Society of India. I am the secretary of the local pastors association.

India is a land of 1-billion, 50 million people (one sixth of the world's population lives here) and many religions, Hinduism (80%), Islam(10%), Buddhism, Jainism \jɪ' ni-zam\, Sikhism \sɛ' ki-zam (7%) along with Christianity (3%-out of which Catholics and Protestants are constituted equally). The greatest problem is the practice of the occult and belief in superstitions. The rate of illiteracy is almost 50%. The society is dominated by a caste system.

The cities of my ministries are Hyderabad \hɪ' da-ra-bad\", the capital city of the State of Andhra Pradesh and Vijayawada, my home town. The ministry's operations spread in an area of 650 miles among four districts.

Most of our 33 churches are rural and many are situated in difficult terrains. Nine of our churches are in terrorist-infected areas. Maoist communist Naxalites fight against government forces revolting against civil administrations. [Naxalite is an informal name given to revolutionary communist groups that were born out of the Sino-Soviet split in the Indian communist movement. The term comes from the Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal.] Bloody fights often take place between the government forces and Naxals resulting in thousands of casualties disrupting peaceful civic life.

My daughter and son-in-law work in this difficult terrain teaching the Word and peace of Jesus Christ to the unreached in the Coal Belt area where superstition, occult, idol worship, and religion rule over their lives in addition to the poverty, illiteracy, and the menace of civil disturbance. So far nearly a thousand people were brought into the salvation experience of the Lord there for His Glory.

We run an evening Bible college, a 24 hour Prayer cell, and free medical camps in addition to many ministerial programs to bring the Word of Jesus Christ to the unreached. On the 15th of October 2003, we celebrated for the 8th year in a row the convocation of the Vijayawada Evening Bible College and also inaugurated the 9th-year classes. We thank the Lord for having fulfilled our dream of imparting biblical education to the people who came into the light and power of Jesus Christ from the darkness of India's religious atmosphere.

When we were saved we thought of learning the basics of the Bible and the deep knowledge of it, but we could not. Being involved in a profession with a bigger family we did not have time to go to the regular Bible colleges. Of course the Holy Spirit has taught us and leads us into His deep Truths. We began praying for the Almighty to help us to open a Bible college, which imparts biblical education to people like ourselves who cannot afford time to go to regular Bible colleges.

Praise the Lord that He has shown grace to us in this regard. Hence the Evening Bible College came into existence in 1994. To date 150 people from various religious and professional backgrounds have graduated. This year 21 students of different age groups and denominations graduated and were awarded their diploma certificates.

Daily we teach Church history, the four Gospels, Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, and Evangelism among various groups. We also teach History of Israel, the Book of Revelation, Theology, Discipleship, Spiritual Authority, and more by renowned Bible teachers. This is the first part-time and evening Bible College in this part of our country, teaching and preparing many future Ministers of God. We wish to start the same in Hyderabad in the future. We are also conducting short term (30-day) Bible training to rural youth, quarterly in selected centers, by subsidizing stay, books, food, coaching, notes and following up their future ministerial activities at rural churches.



Dr. Rao has utilized the '89 Basic series of Grace Doctrine Church at his Bible College and in Faith Progressive Ministries' various programs. He has requested that the audio of these fifty tapes be transcribed so that he can then translate them into Telugu \te' la-gü\, the major language in the State of Andhra Pradesh. A team of volunteers scattered all over the country, coordinated by Trina Lawson, is presently transcribing these tapes. John Smith is editing them into a final manuscript. When completed these lessons will be sent to Dr. Rao for his use in India.

I have given you this biography and background on Dr. Rao for a reason that I will now address.

On Christmas night an earthquake jolted the floor of the Indian Ocean just off the shores of Indonesia. The resultant tsunamis—or “tidal waves”—struck land from East Africa to Malaysia leaving hundred of thousands of people either dead or missing.

This quake was an undersea tectonic shift that occurred at 7:59 A.M. local time on December 26, 2004. (This was 8:30 P.M., Central Time, on December 25.) The earthquake generated a tsunami that was among the deadliest disasters in modern history. At a magnitude of 9.0, it was the largest earthquake since the 9.2 magnitude Good Friday earthquake off Alaska in 1964.

The resulting tsunami devastated the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand, and other countries with waves of up to 50 feet high. It caused serious damage and deaths as far as the east coast of Africa, with the farthest recorded death due to the tsunami occurring at Port Elizabeth in South Africa, 5,000 miles away from the epicenter. Anywhere from 165,000 to 310,000 people are thought to have died as a result of the tsunami, and the count is not yet complete. The true final toll may never be known due to bodies having been swept out to sea, but current estimates use conservative methodologies. Relief agencies warn of the possibility of more deaths to come as a result of epidemics caused by poor sanitation, but the threat of starvation seems now to have been largely averted.

We have observed that the vast majority of the countries affected by this natural disaster are heavily influenced by Islam and some of the areas, such as Ache district of northwestern Sumatra in Indonesia, are hot beds of Islamic terrorists.

Several passages of Scripture are apropos here:

Psalms 89:9 - You do rule the swelling [pride] of the sea; when its waves rise, You do still them.

Psalms 93:3 - The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their pounding waves.

v. 4 - More than the sounds of many waters, than the mighty breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty.

Jeremiah 5:22 - “Do you not fear me?” declares the Lord. “Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, an eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot cross over it.”

v. 23 - “But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and departed.”

Jeremiah 5:29 - “Shall I not punish these people?” declares the Lord, “On a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself?”

Job 26:12 - He stirs up [רָגַע] *raga*: to do something instantaneously, in a moment; to stir up, e.g., God's agitating the sea as per Job 26:12; Isaiah 51:15; & Jeremiah 31:35] the sea with His power, and by His understanding He breaks up the storm.

Radmacher, Earl D. (Genesis ed.). *The Nelson Study Bible: NKJV*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 854, fnt: 26:12:



With His power God controls the sea, which was a symbol of evil and chaos. The highly figurative language may express the power of God over creation in a wide variety of ways. Here the sea and the storm are merely creatures under the control of the Creator.

Isaiah 51:15 - "For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up [רָגַעַ] **raga**] the sea and its waves roar (the Lord of the armies is His name).

Jeremiah 31:35 - Thus says the Lord, Who give the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up [רָגַעַ] **raga**] the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of the armies is His name:

v. 36 - "If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the Lord, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever."

With these passages in mind we can now more appreciate the following report which has come out of the Ache district of Indonesia demonstrating the magnificent grace of God and how His perfect plan protects His own:

NOTE: Subsequent to teaching this lesson I discovered that the following story is false and spread as part of an Internet scam. I attempted to verify its authenticity before using it and thought I had done so. This is an example of how it is so easy to buy the lie in a time when rapid communication of data is made available to those who would use it to spread a hoax. I was duped and passed along the fable. Be alert lest you, too, be deceived. The fraud is exposed on the following site:
<http://www.snopes.com/religion/tsunami.asp>

Eighty percent of the town of Meulaboh in Ache was destroyed by the tsunami waves and 80% of the people also died. This is one of the towns that was hit the hardest. But there is a fantastic testimony from Meulaboh. In that town are about 400 Christians. They wanted to celebrate Christmas on December 25th but were not allowed to do so by the Muslims of Meulaboh. They were told if they wanted to celebrate Christmas they needed to go outside the city of Meulaboh on a high hill and there celebrate Christmas. Because the Christians desired to celebrate Christmas the 400 believers left the city on December 25th and after they celebrated Christmas they stayed overnight on the hill.

On the morning of December 26 an earthquake followed by tsunami waves destroyed most of the city of Meulaboh and thousands were killed. The 400 believers were on the mountain and were all saved from destruction.

Now the Muslims of Meulaboh are saying that the God of the Christians punished them for forbidding the Christians from celebrating Christmas in the city. Others are questioning why so many Muslims died while not even one of the Christians died there. Had the Christians insisted on their rights to celebrate Christmas in the city, they would have all died. But because they humbled themselves and followed the advice of the Muslims they all were spared destruction and can now testify of God's marvelous protection.

This is a testimony of the grace of God and the fact that as believers we have no rights in this world. Our right is to come before God and commit our lives to Him. Our right is to kneel down before the Lord almighty and commit our ways to Him. He is our Father and is very capable to care for His children. Praise the Name of the Lord.

—Bill Hekman, Pastor, Calvary Life Fellowship in Indonesia.

When news of the tsunami arrived it became clear that eastern India was also a victim of these dangerous waves and inquiries went out to discover how the Christian churches, recently visited by Moses, had fared. The following is the synopsis provided to Grace Evangelistic Ministries by Dr. Rao, dated January 3, 2005:



The tsunami hit the coastal areas of the southern most states of India, Andhra Pradesh, where we live, and adjacent Tamil Nadu (ta' mal nä' dü). It left very deep scars on us. Nearly 50,000 people lost their lives and many more lost their houses and livelihood. [The death toll for India has been revised since early January to 8,000 dead and 5,700 missing.] Bodies washed out to sea have to wash back to the beaches before the final toll can be calculated.

By His grace and due to your prayers we are very much alive and safe in His grace. We are 30 to 50 miles from the seacoast but many of our associate churches and congregations suffered a lot. One lost 2 lives and 2 more children are missing. In another associate church the waters flooded the entire congregation during the worship service resulting in 28 killed. Many more are yet to be traced as many coastal-village churches are made with mud walls and hay or tin roofing. They almost vanished in the thick waters. They have to be rebuilt again.

Most of the affected people are from the fishermen community and most from this community are Christians. They lost 50,000 fishing vessels, boats, and their nets plus their equipment. They need to be provided with food, medicines, clothes, cooking utensils, stoves, and makeshift tents in the first stage and they have to be provided with houses, boats, nets, and financial assistance at a later stage.

It is nearly impossible for our government to reinstate these people. Many Hindu, religious and social organizations jumped into the calamity and started helping the people. In this great humanitarian effort we are already a part of relief activities by immediately providing the medical and food needs of the people who suffer and languish in relief camps.

We wish to be a part of the ongoing relief activities extending the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to the suffering. It is a great opportunity to extend not only the love of Christ to them but also His Gospel for the perishing communities in India to whom the Word has yet to reach.

We request your kind assistance and help in any way to fortify us to do His work in these areas and to extend His love to the people that are in the midst of suffering. We trust in Him that you will remember the suffering brethren in this part of the globe. More than financial contributions we value your prayers for the families that lost their kith and kin, their lifelong earned possessions, homes, boats, etc., so that they may be comforted in His grace and love.

Yours in His service.

Rev. Dr. B.V. Rao
Progressive Faith Ministries
Andhra Pradesh, India.

With this information in hand I began to consult with Moses' offices through Debby Hagar about what could be done to assist the Christians who were victimized by the tsunami. The objective was to determine if there was a need and, if so, how to best respond. Dr. Rao's e-mail of January 3rd clearly revealed the need. However, such assistance must be managed in an organized, meaningful, and legal manner. After consulting legal counsel in Nashville, the decision has been made to offer a means through which those so motivated can assist these people. Funds will be collected by Grace Evangelical Ministries, the non-profit that supports the ministries of Moses Onwubiko.

I mentioned to you, and simultaneously, the Internet congregation about this idea and that I would report to you our discoveries. Several have written asking how they might participate. With all the legal details worked out we are now able to pass along the following option.

All who are motivated to assist the Christians of Andhra Pradesh, India, should make their checks payable to:

Grace Evangelical Ministries
P. O. Box 17246
Nashville, TN 37217

Attention: Progressive Faith Ministries

IMPORTANT: On the "Memo" line write: **India Tsunami Relief**



In order to provide Dr. Rao and the other pastors of the affected area with the literature they would need for outreach during this recovery, the Board of Directors of Grace Evangelical Ministries will consider utilizing some of the proceeds to publish Moses' Gospel tract "Riding the Death Train" in Telugu \te' la-gü\, the language of the Telugu people who make up the largest group in Andhra Pradesh. Dr. Rao has finished the translation and the printing would be done in Andhra Pradesh at a much reduced cost than if done in the United States. This is to be determined as funds allow.

All donations to "India Tsunami Relief" will be transferred by Grace Evangelical Ministries to Progressive Faith Ministries in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India, and they will be administered there by Dr. B. V. Rao who will disburse funds as circumstances dictate in coordination with the several pastors of the region.

Since Grace Evangelical Ministries is a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit corporation, all contributions are tax deductible.

For more information on Grace Evangelical Ministries consult its web site:

<http://www.gracemissions.org>

For more information on Progressive Faith Ministries consult its web site:

http://members.aol.com/ht_a/psalm12607/ProgressiveFaithMinistries1.htm

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