

Global Report

March / April 2011

Everyone in the world ... in the Word

God Shows Indians He's Lord of All – Including Lizards in India

Before bowing spiritually to the King of kings and going to seminary, Pastor Veeranna violently opposed Christianity in India. Now he joyously directs CBSI classes among his people, the Banjara, a gypsy tribe with Hindu-animist beliefs, and watches our wonder-working God change the lives of many.

Veeranna's father, a railroad locomotive engineer, was a chain-smoking alcoholic. His mother, he says, was a devil-possessed pagan who used wizardry to predict the future. From childhood he hated the worship of multiple gods, but when his parents enrolled him in a Christian school, believing it would provide a good

education, he felt uncomfortable there too. He was so zealously opposed to Christian beliefs and disgusted with the atmosphere—as well as distraught in failing the 10th grade—that he added pieces of poisonous lizards to a meal 200 students were being served. Nothing happened. He then tried to kill himself by eating the lizards. Again, nothing happened.

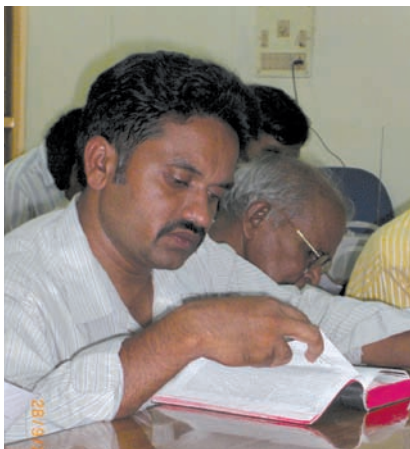
When a traveling evangelist came to his Banjara village in 1992, Veeranna received a Bible and a book titled *The End of the Age*. As he read these, he felt convicted of his sins and accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord, becoming the first Christian in his community.

Eventually he sensed a special

calling. "I realized that the Lord knew me before He formed me in my mother's womb, and I came to believe He was setting me apart and anointing me as His servant to Banjara people," Veeranna says. "But I said to Him, 'God, I am young and do not know as much about the Bible as I would need to for ministry. I do not know how to present Your message of love to our tribal people.'"

After much prayer, Veeranna enrolled in Bharath Bible College, and after graduating in 2000, he founded a church for Banjara. Before developing CBSI classes on his own among his people, he worked under Dr. Clement, who led broader-based CBSI groups in Andhra Pradesh at the time. Veeranna now partners with Devendra, a fellow

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Pastor Veeranna, left, once far from God, now loves the living Word.



Left: Banjara CBSI class members prepare to distribute lessons in the Telegu language.

Bottom Left: A study group composed of Banjara gypsies discusses a CBSI lesson.

Bottom Right: Pastor Veeranna leads a CBSI study group.



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pastor and the ministry's National Director for India, in shepherding 15 Banjara CBSI classes in the Telegu language.

"Some Banjara in CBSI have stopped lying, drinking, worshipping idols and beating their wives," Veeranna says. "The Word of God has this power, and CBSI's study and teaching methods are effective. Although I obtained a



four-year theology certificate, I did not understand Scripture as the Lord's living Word and did not know how to teach from it with good effect until I became involved in CBSI. Now I am equipped to minister for Christ in Banjara communities."

Historically, Banjara have been farm laborers or odd-job workers. Their unique dress, heritage and customs distinguish them from most of the population. They love storytelling, music, singing and dances in which men play drums as women twirl in circles while chanting.

Few Banjara have heard the gospel or come to faith in Christ. Most—bound by superstitions, fears and witchcraft—follow a

Pastor Veeranna leads a CBSI study group.

belief system involving goat sacrifices. Many are reluctant to receive Christ, viewing conversion as an intolerable break with tradition. Also, they fear that if they follow Jesus, their gods will bring calamity on their communities.

"I can give strong testimony about CBSI," Veeranna says. "We are seeing God use this ministry to transform lives through His Word. This is wonderful. I hope pastors and people all over India will hear of and embrace this ministry. If they will, they and their communities will be blessed. I just know it—praise the Lord!"

If you value Veeranna's ministry in India, the Lithuanian students who are learning the Word, or the lives being changed in Peru, will you contribute financially to CBSI?

Directors' Note,

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God for the youth's vindication, they refused to pay a bribe to free him. "We were stunned when instead he was sent to a horrible juvenile home, one that strikes terror in the hearts of Peruvian teens," Gladys says. "Every week we visited our son in a locked courtyard. There, surrounded by other teens, we shared the gospel with any young person who would listen.

"A 12-year-old boy, who had committed murder, said, 'I am the devil's son. There is no point in telling me about Jesus.' We prayed for him and kept sharing Christ with him, and within one month God delivered him from darkness. Miraculously, he became a child of God! Now, with the Lord's help and our mentoring, he has become a godly leader in the juvenile home, studying the Bible and sharing Christ with his peers."

This is one of many stories of lives

changed since 1980, when CBSI started its first international class in South America. Four of the 62 women in that initial study still serve CBSI in Peru—their lives and faithful service "spurring us on to love and good deeds."

We love Gladys' summation: "CBSI has been my spiritual university," she declares. "It has given me knowledge of God's truth and strengthened my faith to serve Him in good times and difficult times." We say, "Yes! Praise God!"

Serving Jesus with you!



These women helped establish CBSI's first class in Lima in 1980—CBSI's first in South America. Left to right: Peggy, Marty, Vera and Beta. They are all still serving in CBSI Peru.

Frank + Marian

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Bible Study Brings Foreign Students to Faith

By Caleb Marietta Smith

My greatest joy is in observing the Spirit's life-transforming power through CBSI. Three university women in Lithuania testify to God's presence in our midst.

Sacrificial Service

Ilona, a Belarusian-born Lithuanian, manages the student cafeteria at LCC International University in Klaipeda, often working long hours. She has attended Klaipeda's Multicultural CBSI class from the beginning and, to draw deep meaning from biblical texts, receives and studies each week's lesson in both Russian and English.

On Friday nights, Ilona comes to my kitchen from her work in the cafeteria, where she was on her feet all week. Graciously, she serves arriving class members drinks and refreshments, topped with conversation in their native tongues. She then joins in the lesson discussion, where God uses her fluent Russian to clarify His truth and disclose His love to students from several nations. After seeing the students safely on their way to dormitories, Ilona walks along dark streets to catch a bus home for a brief weekend reprieve.

When thanked for sacrificially shepherding students

on coveted Friday evenings, she responds with a smile and asks, "How could I not be here for these angels?"

Worshiping in Spirit and in Truth

Angelina is one of several Ukrainian students who joined Klaipeda's Student Multicultural Class in 2009, with no knowledge of Scripture. Her honest questions and reflective "weighing of the evidence" blended with beautiful singing through which the Holy Spirit ministered. In our Friday-night singing circle, worship seemed to flow from Angelina's inner being before she understood or fully knew the One to whom her adoration was directed. It appears that God has used CBSI and her love of music to awaken Angelina's spirit to the truth of His Word.

At home in Ukraine for summer break last year, Angelina thought through her lingering theological questions. In the fall she returned to Klaipeda with new radiance—she now leads worship at weekly chapel services and at CBSI. "My questions have been fully answered, and now

I know I believe everything I've been taught from Scripture," she says.

A Grandmother's Faith Leaves a Legacy

Iryna is from the same Ukrainian city as Angelina, and, like her, chose an English-speaking university in order to gain proficiency in her fourth language. Loosely connected to a traditional church, her family never attended worship, nor was the family Bible opened—except by a remarkable grandmother. "She would take it out of a drawer and read it to me," Iryna says. If a believer in Christ, this woman would have lived her entire life under the threat of deportation, labor camp confinement, atrocities or worse.

The notion that she might have been discreetly sharing a secret faith with a precious granddaughter intrigues Iryna, as does the chain of decisions that led her to Lithuania. Her face is aglow with the possibilities.

In God's kingdom there are no arbitrary or random events. How precious is the knowledge that all of us

are threads in the intricate tapestry of relationship with Him that God is weaving and one day will reveal in its fullness. Praise His holy name!

We covet your prayers for the leaders and participants in CBSI classes.



1 - With her lovely voice, Angelina worships the King on high.



2 - Ilona, standing, takes special care of university students in a CBSI class in Klaipeda.



3 - CBSI in Lithuania provides university students with refreshment in body and soul.



4 - Caleb Marietta Smith, center foreground, loves the university students God has given her to shepherd.



5 - Iryna, left, receives a warm embrace from Caleb Marietta, her spiritual mentor.

CBSI's "Spiritual University" Transforms Peruvians

At January's CBSI Leadership Conference in Lima, Peru, we heard the amazing story of Gladys, a bitter atheist who became a joyous believer in just over a year.

"When our baby girl died, I was furious," Gladys says. "I felt shredded in grief, and thought, 'If there is a God, why in the world would He let my precious girl die?' Seeing my agony, a co-worker invited me to her CBSI class. I agreed to go only to please her. I had no intention of attending a second time, ever, but the praise and worship music captivated me. I could not get the songs out of my mind. Later I told my husband that although the meeting was nice, I could not understand why the women there kept talking about God. He does not exist! That issue was settled for me."

Nonetheless, Gladys attended the class for a year. She understood little of what she read and heard and was embarrassed in her struggles to answer study questions while others seemed to take them in stride. The class members'



Joy in the Lord has replaced stony atheism in CBSI class leader Gladys.

songs of praise and touching prayers for her kept her coming. "Little by little, verse by verse, question by question, I began to understand the Bible," she says. "In time I became aware of God's personal love for me. I asked Him to forgive my anger against Him, and I asked Jesus to be my Savior. For the first time in my life, to my surprise, I had peace in my spirit."

Then storms struck. Though an unbeliever, Gladys' husband had always been kind and considerate. Now he turned on her, accusing her of using Bible study as cover for an extramarital affair. He even came to the church where the class meets and interrupted sessions to assure himself that there were no men in Gladys' discussion group.

Remarkably, when a friend invited Gladys and her husband to attend church, he agreed. "This was shocking enough," says Gladys, "but then, after the service, my husband asked me why I had told the pastor all about his private struggles. I pointed out to him that I did not even know the pastor and that what he was thinking and feeling must be the Lord speaking to him. That night God's truth came into his heart, and he asked Christ to be his Savior."

The two then faced another challenge. Their 13-year-old son was wrongly charged for a crime gang members had committed. Trusting in

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