

## AN INDIA EXPERIENCE

by George W Shaw

I understand a little the concerns the participants of the October 2010 Commonwealth games in New Delhi, India are having. As I've traveled to countries around the world it's wonderful to know God is with me. Over the last twenty years I've ministered in many countries, and the first time in another culture can be quite surprising, challenging and even shocking. Being in a country where they do things differently than I'm familiar with can feel strange the first few days. I find great encouragement from what God told Moses. When he thought he was alone leading Israel in the wilderness he prayed: "...If I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight." "And He [God] said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'" [Exodus 33:13-15 nkj] As Moses totally depended on the presence of the Lord for the task at hand – so I must do the same.

On my first ministry trip to India in 1997 [Judy's fourth], I was quite nervous about the 'in country' travel. It seemed that almost daily the English newspaper carried reports of people either maimed or killed in motor vehicle accidents. It bothered me that some drivers took chances passing into oncoming traffic. It didn't seem to matter whether it was a lorry, car, motorized rickshaw, tractor, a horse or ox drawn cart loaded with produce, a motorcycle, or what weather—to me it was a dangerous thing to do. But it seemed to be no big deal to them; a common occurrence. Almost everybody did it. But for a Canadian like me it was scary!!

Shortly after arriving in the southern city of Madurai, in Tamil Nadu, Judy and I hired a car and driver for a couple of days then used buses to get us to outlying village churches to speak. I must confess I was concerned. Yes – and somewhat worried over the issue of road safety. Many of the roads were narrow and twisty, with potholes to swerve around or bounce through. It was also monsoon season and low area roads flooded quickly.

The morning prior to our first day trip into the country, the Lord gave me a promise of His presence and protection. I read it in the Psalms: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills— from whence comes my help? My help [protection] comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. The LORD is your keeper; The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." [Psalm 121:1-2, 5, 78 nkj] Wow! That was just what I needed! It made my day! My week! I would make it back to the hotel – back to Canada eventually! How do you suppose those days of country travel and ministry went? Perfect! The Lord certainly was with us at all times. And He gave us Pastor Luke as our faithful guide and comrade – everything went well.

During that week of travel and ministry on the plains and up into the mountains, no matter what the drivers did or didn't do, such as driving at night with the head lights turned off, much of the time [to save battery??], there was an overwhelming sense of God's presence, peace and protection.

There were no mishaps or even close calls [??], and that pleased the drivers as well as ourselves. If we were in any danger we didn't know it. God overshadowed our going out and coming in. Each evening we returned safely to our hotel room, tired, hungry, but happy and at peace. People were saved, healed and blessed by the Lord's presence in the meetings.

All my worry and fears of an accident on foreign soil never happened. Matter of fact from that morning I had no fear on that trip or on successive ones. I suddenly knew everything would be OK! That was it! This enabled me to relax and look beyond 'what could happen' to the One in whose hands we are safely kept, enabling me to concentrate on preaching the Word and ministering to people. It is really freeing to know God's presence is with you.