

The Spiritual Story of Kasini Padar:



To know India you must know her spiritually. India is not a secular country. All revolves around the more than 300 million Gods, their temples, their pujahs , their gurus, astrology, caste system and innumerable festivals that appease their gods. The Indians' names reflect their caste status plus the deity they worship. India is predominately influenced by Hinduism with about 12% Muslim. Christianity has been in India for 2000 years since the apostle Thomas came to India. But I want to focus on a small village in Odisha called Kasini Padar because that village has become very important to many of us. We have visited this place and the villagers have taken us into their hearts and we have fallen in love with them. This is their story.

For likely 5000 years the people of this district have been Hindu. The area is also home of tribals the Konds. They are animists. They would do human sacrifice spreading the blood on the fields to earn favour from the gods. Christianity also has its roots in this area. For over 100 years both Lutheran and Baptist Canadian missionaries ministered in these areas.

Our top leader in India, Karuna, comes from this village and he has told me his story. Growing up, Karuna and the whole village knew only about Hinduism. They actually boasted that they worshipped 500 million gods. In a particular spot there was a sacred stone. They would regularly sacrifice chickens to gain favour from their gods. The village had the abundance of the jungles yet poverty was very real. Karuna had no shoes till he was 14. He studied at a school where he

lived in a hostel. Because he could be trusted and was honest he was put in charge of the provision store house. Yet there was constant hunger. They only had one rice meal a day with lentils. As Karuna became an adult he fell in love with Runita who came from Baracama, a larger village. She was Christian and though she liked Karuna she refused to marry him until he became a believer. Karuna did make that decision. They were married and had 2 young children and moved to his village. Because he was openly Christian the villagers shunned him. They could not go to the jungle for fire wood or to get water at the well so life was very hard for the young family. His father was the village head and his family did not reject him outright. Karuna especially loved his mother but she was slowly dying. She was constantly bleeding. She was taken to the Hindu priest and doctors. They spent all their money on medicines but nothing worked. Secretly a pastor came to visit. He could not publicly say he was a believer. He was allowed to pray for Karuna's mother and she was instantly healed. This healing stunned the whole family and they all slowly came to Christ. A small congregation was started that Karuna pastored. Karuna was led to pursue training for the ministry and trained for 2 years in Jharsaguda where I met him and was one of his teachers. Karuna's older brother then became the village pastor; now many more in the village had also come to Christ. Karuna had wide training in this large ministry where he had been trained. He worked in accounting, the sponsorship program. He learned to speak English and eventually ran a children's home with over 200 children. Because of persecution he was thrown in jail. After this he returned to his village. In early 2008 we called Karuna and his young family to work with us in Visakhapatnam. Later in 2008 the most famous Hindu guru was killed by Naxalites. The RSS blamed the killing on Christians as this guru had been on a mission to eradicate Christianity from Odisha and forcibly convert them back to Hinduism. A senior MP from Gujarat warned all the villages in the Kandhamal district that every village would be attacked. Those who recanted their Christian faith and identified their homes as being of the Hindu faith would be spared. Most Christians refused this and within 2 weeks more than 4000 radical armed Hindus attacked every town and village in this district. Over 100,000 believers had their homes destroyed as well all churches and ministry centres. Many were murdered and beaten. Women were in great danger. Nuns were raped.

In Kasini Padar all the believers managed to escape into the jungles. Only one couple was caught, an uncle of Karuna's who actually was still Hindu, and he was murdered. His wife was severely beaten and went into coma. The village church and all the believers' homes were destroyed. Srinu's future wife, Blandina, was just a young teenager from another village. She and a sister and her family escaped into the jungles. Amazingly, before dawn, 4000 armed attackers had cut off all roads and communication for the village. Yet a dense fog had settled on the village and almost all escaped. Blandina and her family lived in the jungles for a full 2 months. Yet she says they felt perfectly safe and protected by God. Several years later we visited this village. One of Blandina's neighbours desperately wanted to speak with me. I listened to his story. He had seen his wife butchered before his eyes with machetes. God gave an encouraging word to this man so he could release the horror of his pain.

Karuna told me if he had not been called to Vizac his family would have been killed for his children, Tina and Abhishek, were very small and they would not have been able to have escaped and surely would have been killed. Over 50,000 Christians stayed in refugee camps. Srinu

married Blandina in the camp. They stayed there for 2 years. Graciously the government stepped in and all the homes were mostly rebuilt along with the churches.

But God loved the people of Kasin Padar very much! In early 2015 our incredible late friend Edwin plus Karuna and I visited this village. Well over 300 believers gathered. It was wonderful; they get so excited. Within the village a blind girl was healed, similar to the story in John 9. We prayed for many for others. The lady that had been beaten and was in a coma approached us. She excitedly gave her life to Christ. Later Basia, Karuna and Srinu's brother, informed us that the blind woman had been healed. However the church and Karuna's home were still broken. My great friend Steve asked Karuna and I to put together a Rotary project for a number of these villages. Kasini Padar's well would run out of water for 2 months during the hot season. We came with a large team and over the last few years we have made a dug well and a deep bore well with pumps. Now the village has continual water for irrigation and drinking water. The Elman family built Eve home in honour of their sister. This is built on land Karuna donated where his broken home stood! Plus we have just completed a large church and meeting centre where the whole village can meet during the heavy monsoons. This week, with the help of Rotary, we installed a fence around 2 acres. This will permanently put the village over the top economically. Our vision is to bless all 2400 villages in Kandhamal, bringing new life and prosperity. Many Hindu families, upon seeing many miracles, wish to worship this God who answers prayers. Just in the last few weeks and months many have been healed. A young crippled man was instantly healed. A woman discharged from hospital and bedridden was instantly healed when Karuna and the elders visited her for prayer. A young person with severe internal problems was healed. Edwin, Karuna and I met so many young wonderful people from these small jungle villages. They were so alive and full of hope. Our plan is to equip them to train them to bring blessing to all these simple beautiful little villages. Please pray with us for such a wonderful vision! Let it be so!

Kell