



Initiatives of Change

# AfL Encounters

News from the Road of Action for Life 3  
Visit: [www.afl.iofc.org](http://www.afl.iofc.org) Email: [afl@iofc.org](mailto:afl@iofc.org)

Volume 3 Issue 15  
13 March 2006

Back to Asia Plateau after two months in crowded cities, dusty roads, we are more grateful than ever for the silence and beauty of Panchgani's nature! There has been a lot to share and learn... This is our last month in India before a whole new journey starts. Still, we want to give some last glimpses of our experiences on the second outreach.

## **DELHI TEAM: City and its citizens**

After breathing the cool Himalayan air and touching the sacred Ganges, we returned to Delhi refreshed and ready to reconnect with this city and its citizens.



Going out into the community with *Parivartan*

Our links with change-makers enlarged when we visited *Parivartan*, a movement dedicated to social equality. By giving the poorest people knowledge about their legal rights, they've empowered an entire neighbourhood to fight corruption. Later we met with Dr. Kiran Bedi, the first and most senior policewoman in India. Her energy and hope inspired us to pack 48 hours into each day!

Throughout our stay, our friends at the *Initiatives of Change Centre for Governance* (an organisation working to improve public administration system

in India) offered us a gracious example of hospitality. Being provided with lodging, meals and space for conversations, we were able to grow as a team and as individuals on our inner and outer journeys.

## **UTTAR PRADESH TEAM: Loving People More**

The last weeks of our outreach in Lucknow passed rapidly. Although the interaction and presentations were focused mostly on management institutions and colleges, we had an opportunity to meet people concerned with social issues: from a retired top police officer who works for the preservation of nature, to a university professor who believes in holistic spiritual education. This outreach showed us that India faces many challenges but there are also individuals working for the necessary changes to take place.

Our stay ended with a visit to the rural villages where the organisation *Asha (Hope)* is working for education and social awareness. As the community opened their homes and hearts to us, we learned that the material needs and lack of education are not an obstacle to love people more. With this acknowledgment in our hearts we said good-bye to our hosts and our visit to Uttar Pradesh state.



Children's attention is held by an AfL presentation

### **NORTH-EAST TEAM:**

Eight people from seven different nations travelled to the North-East of India – a troubled but beautiful land: full of hope for peace, yet still entangled by the past. The roads of Bodoland, our first stop in the NE, were bumpy, and so were our inner journeys. The team struggled to overcome cultural misunderstandings. We struggled with our faith and had to face our real selves. The struggle however gave us new energy, new confidence, and each one of us grew along the many roads that we travelled.

This incredible adventure however would not have been possible without the generous support of many people who gave their time, their houses and cars for our use. It would have all been for naught without the amazing souls that we were able to touch and be touched by. Eight out of our eight participants would do it again in a heartbeat – thank you North-East!

### **JAMSHEDPUR TEAM:**

The last two months together have taught us to compromise, understand and support each other. Community life challenged us in the process of giving and receiving feedback. “The way in which one expresses feedback is important. If you do it with love and care, the right expression comes out.” (Lena Kashkarova, Ukraine)



Workshop with students in Bhubaneswar

Although at times we doubted that our presence can make a difference, Dr. Amit Mukherjee, our host in Jamshedpur, shared with us that our visit meant a lot to the local team. Meeting the Sisters of ‘Missionaries of Charity’, who serve the poor, sick and dying, we begun to understand what real

faith means. “I realised how much I can grow in my spiritual journey. I saw the necessity to become humble and aware of others’ needs.” (Diana Damsa, Romania)

“This outreach was important for understanding my own religion in the wider perspective. It has strengthened my belief and has shown me the way for my future.” (Imtiyaz Ahmed, India)

### **SOUTH TEAM: Last heat of the South...**

... started for our team in Bangalore. We were seriously preparing ourselves for XIME (Xavier’s Institute for Management and Engineering) - institution with great vision and care for their students, giving one of the best education and facilities in India. Four days filled with workshops led by students and a presentation of AfL have given us new perspectives and challenges.



AfL members participating in team exercise at XIME

This time will be remembered with a sense of gratitude to Bangalore team for organising an amazing programme throughout the software hub of India, hosting us in their families, giving us two wonderful days in the world’s biggest Open Air Museum in Hampi and sharing with us their vision for India and Action for Life.

“A conversation on four moral standards I had with my host, made me question how much am I prepared to risk for them? This led to a deeper level of reflection on the application of standards in my life.” (Han Ting Pan, Taiwan).