

Women in Focus Evangelism

Prayer Points

Media ministries development and education in India.

Sneha's Father (one of our ministry workers). Her Father's healing of Kidney Failure. His name is Pradeep.

Terri Novini's hyperthyroidism. She is seeing a specialist Aug. 30.

India's 5 Regional Women's Leadership Conference in May/June 2007

Greg & Terri Novini Missionaries to India

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Greg and Terri (Brelsford) Novini, Missionary to India, Account #2280907

Issue 20

(previously Brelsford Brief Newsletter)

August 2006

The Measure of a Woman: The Story of India's Brides



Scene 1
In a remote village in Rajasthan in North India, nine-year old Rajnu is decked with jewels and dressed in a traditional attire. Two front teeth missing, and yet she smiles. It's the smile of a little girl. And yet what's happening around her is no child's play. The laughter around her is not the laughter of children enjoying their little childish games. It's the laughter of grown-ups, of her parents and relatives and villagers gathered around her as she's given away in marriage to a fourteen-year old boy. Unaware of the gravity of what's happening to her, Rajnu continues to smile.

Scene 2
In buzzing cosmopolitan Mumbai, twenty-two year old Priya sits stock-still before the mirror, stunned that she's about to be married off to a man she hardly knows. At first, her parents had tried convincing her of the economic viability of such an arrangement - the man is owner of a thriving business. Unconvinced, when Priya resisted the idea, her parents had resorted to tears and threats of disowning her. A dutiful daughter, Priya succumbs to the pressure and relinquishes her moderate dreams of wanting to know a guy before stepping into a marriage with him.

The extremities in the two situations are obvious - one a marriage that terminates a childhood, another that ends a dream. One that is illegal, unapproved and punishable by law, the other a marriage of convenience, under the respectable covering of legality. One deprives a child of her childhood; the other deprives a woman of her rights and treats her as less than an individual.

frowned upon, 'arranged' marriage is the order of the day. Indian national dailies publish classified sections in their weekend editions. Here alongside business offers and advertisements are elaborate segments describing the criteria of prospective grooms and their families for potential brides, specifying the preferred caste, sub-caste, and horoscope.

Other 'brides wanted' classifieds specify the age, height, weight, beauty and salary criteria that a woman must possess to become a bride. Slim is in. One potential groom demands a 'really beautiful, fair, slim, youngish girl'. Descriptions and demands go all the way from 'fair, slim, beautiful' to 'highly educated'. Although, it's often claimed that there's no pressure on women to look like models in an arranged marriage, most marriage classifieds reveal that the opposite is true. In a culture, that is still coming to terms with the invasion of beauty contests, marriage classifieds cater to the demands of the beauty conscious Indian male'.

In a marriage alliance, it is imperative that horoscopes match and a sizable dowry is discussed. Post-marriage disasters are usually blamed on the new bride, owing to either her bad luck or insufficient dowry.

A study on arranged marriages has concluded that such marriages are likely to thrive in societies that look down on women. Women in rural India have no option whatsoever apart from arranged, mostly forced, marriages. In urban India, educated women are liberated women and yet when it comes to marriage they have virtually no say. Girls are expected to meekly comply with their family's

In a society where love marriage is still

[Continued inside...]



The Measure of a Woman... (Contd.)

Please see the Brelsford Website for more featured stories and video clips at:

www.terribrelsford.org

Passwords to enter:

Userid: saveindia
Password: WIFE
(Note: Words are case-sensitive)



The June Newsletter story and article, 'The Diary of an Indian Mother' and 'Epilogue: Esther's Story' are available on the website. Also posted on the website is the profile of Ms. Merilyn Jemimah Mohan.

Please note that the article 'The Measure of a Woman' featured in this newsletter edition are excerpts. The complete article will be available on the website shortly.

wishes which sometime border on intimidation and emotional coercion. Unused to being defiant, most girls give in. When women do refuse to give in to such pressure, some communities resort to honor killings where such women are hunted down and killed by their own family members.

Post marriage, she is expected to fulfill her duty as wife and mother mostly within the confines of her own home. Strong family ties and traditional marriages expect the wife to live with her husband's family. And most often than not, the demands of her new family begin to break her down. Domestic violence in some cases is not uncommon. Nearly 73% of marriages end up with husbands being abusive. Newspapers carry disturbing stories and shocking images of dowry harassment and bride burnings. In Indian society, divorce brings shame and so women continue to remain in

abusive marriages. If divorced, their own families refuse to accept them.

There are some successful arranged marriages. The difference however is consent. As this practice continues, at stake are the lives of thousands of women in India. Constantly stripped of their rights at every stage of life, women feel bartered, second-rate citizens in their own country, slaves in their own families. The measure of a woman's worth lies only in the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Until the day the good news of Jesus' message of the worth he brings into every human life, male and female, is preached, women are bound to remain in the stranglehold of such devastating practices.

Article by Sneha Pradeep, Terri's ministry assistant, working with Women in Focus in India. Please pray for her father who is in critical condition with kidney failure.

Can you hear her? by Shanmuga Priya

From birth to death
From dust to dawn
It's struggle all day
And desolate all the way

Is it a curse? Or is it fate?
To be born as a girl
Whose life is all but hell

Like a flower she blooms
Blooms at the dawn of day
But nobody wants this flower
Except to be crushed and trampled

At birth she is gruesomely murdered
Worse if she escapes,
For she is denied
Denied of her rights,
education and power

She works hard in the fields
Till the sweat dries on her face
It is to feed her family
It is to send her brother to

She has to go to another family
She needs a huge dowry
So why spend on her education?

Her shoulders yoked with burdens
Her feet stumbling, her hands hard
Her throat dry, she's no more than a skeleton
Yet she toils on for money

She's sold at marriage
For a huge price of dowry
She doesn't even know her husband's face
Yet she covers her head hoping to see dawn

Only later does she know
The fire and the furnace
Beaten, harassed and tortured
For another load of dowry

Will the sun dawn on her?

school
Ask her parents the reason
and they say

Will she ever find solace?
Will anyone really care for her?
Or must she embrace death?

Do you hear her voice, her cry? Or
Are you numb to her pain?
Can you live in her world
Where darkness reigns

Can you raise a voice of revival?
Will you support her cause?
Can you show her the way?
Can you hear her?
She still cries.
The voice of the Indian woman.

Shanmuga Priya was Terri (Brelsford) Novini's assistant one year and now has received a 2 year scholarship to Southern Asia Bible College in Bangalore from the Novini (Brelsford) Account. This poem is honor of the memory of her mother who passed away in 2002

Novini Summer Highlights Update

JUNE WEDDING HIGHLIGHTS

On June 3, 2006 Greg and I had an appointment with God at the altars of Northland Cathedral in Kansas City, Missouri where Dr. Lowell Harrup pastors. Our dear friends and mentors Dr. Gary and Doris Denbow officiated the ceremony. My childhood pastors, Bob and Olla Morris participated in the wedding by giving the bride away and speaking from the Word of God at the altar. Missionaries David and Beth Grant challenged us with a missions commitment during the ceremony as we united as a couple. Pastor Lowell Harrup prayed the pastoral blessing over us.

Two hundred guests traveled from Canada, West Virginia, Indiana, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas, and all of Missouri to bless us on this day. We were so touched that dear missionary friends, including our AGWM Eurasia Directors, Jerry and Karen Parsley, traveled to be with us.

The most precious part of the ceremony to us was when Pastor Nathan Scott was singing the "Lord's Prayer" and all the ministers/missionaries attending came forward in twos to pray a blessing over us. We want to thank the following couples for sharing this time with us and blessing us through the laying on of hands:

Ron and Georgia Garner, District Superintendent
Ray and Kim Brewer, District Assistant Superintendent
Morris and Charlene Hunt, District Secretary/Treasurer
Laury Hunter, District Women's Ministries Director
Jerry and Karen Parsley, Eurasia Regional Directors
David and Beth Grant, Eurasia Area Directors
Dwight and Anita Dobson, Missionaries to Sri Lanka
Jim and Jeanne Lowell, Convoy of Hope Missionaries
Rena Pilsing, Missionary to India
Lloyd and Bunny Hartzler, Christian Education pastors
Shawna Hart, Pastor's wife from West Virginia
Barbara Bradley, Children's Pastor in New Mexico
Phil and Diana Huffman, Missions Pastors

The wedding and reception were made so beautiful through the creative hand of Pastor Bunny Hartzler and her husband Lloyd who climbed ladders among other things. We also want to thank Veronica Boudreaux and Heather Sachs for lending their artistry in decoration for the day.

Many people asked how I had time to decorate and prepare such a beautiful array of food for the rehearsal and reception especially since I had just returned from India. It was our dear friends who did all the work. We so appreciate Bunny Hartzler, Laury Hunter, Gloria Rose, Veronica Boudreaux, and Lynda Denton who each worked so

hard to make this a special occasion for us.

We also want to thank our dear Christian café friends, Cathy Detherage, Dorothy Catapano and Tricia Nielsen for traveling from Kansas, Iowa and Indiana to prepare a beautiful feast for our rehearsal dinner. The food was awesome and the decorations beautiful.

We feel so blessed by our family, dear friends, missionary family, pastor friends and church family. Thank you for blessing us in so many ways.

JULY HIGHLIGHTS

After our June wedding and honeymoon, Greg and I were busy locating housing in Springfield, Missouri for our MIR assignment at CBC. We found a newly built duplex only 2 miles from the school. So we had our first "boxing" match as a couple as we boxed up our things and moved to Springfield for our ministry assignment. Every missionary is a veteran "boxer." :)

Also in July, Greg and I attended the Re-entry Seminar for Missionaries returning from the field and also School of Missions both held in Springfield. These are times of preparing and sharpening the sword of missionaries for their call.

AUGUST HIGHLIGHTS: Meetings, meetings, meetings...

Plans are being drawn for a missions trip to India for May/June 2007. Terri has been meeting with Beth Grant, Barbara Cavanass and Deborah Gill about organizing 5 Regional Women's Leadership Conferences in India. Dr. Debbie Gill and Dr. Barbara Cavanass have written a widely received book entitled, "God's Women: Then and Now." We are assisting these ladies in releasing this book in India and translating their workbook currently being written by them into 5 Indian languages for study among our churches.

This month Greg and I have moved into our office at Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri to prepare for our Missionary In Residence (MIR) assignment with this flagship Bible college. We are assisting the Missions Department in developing a new River Crossers Mentorship program for their students. More details to come.





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