

India... they say you either love it or you hate it, there's no middle ground. Maybe it's because in India everything about life is so intense, so rich, so colourful, so strongly flavoured, and so loud. India gets under your skin!

India has had a profound impact on my own life since, as a young seeker from a disillusioned western background, I first encountered her. I was one of a generation of dropouts, searching for meaning and a different way through life. As I drifted through the subcontinent and took in the incredible intensity, experimented with drugs, poked my nose into temples and mosques and churches, and befriended holy men and ordinary folk alike, something in me changed, and I have never been the same since.

What most deeply changed me, in the midst of this amazingly potent and often toxic mix of culture, religion, and existential struggle, was when Jesus walked into my life with such clarity and authority that I became a sold-out Christ follower. It was a power encounter – a spiritual conquest – and sharing Jesus through mission became my prime pursuit and passion.

India does that to people – it inspires passion. One of the things I love about Indian Christians is that they love Jesus with an abandon and fervour that we in the West find hard to follow. They have an understanding of the powerful nature

of God, and can engage in theological or philosophical thought whilst also caring for the needy. Yes, there are other aspects where they – like all of us – fall short and fail. But when walking and living with Indian Christians in close quarters as we did, in intentional community – wow, you need to be madly in love with Jesus or you pack your bags and get out.

This is the country where Interserve was born, and India's vibrancy and passion still pulses in the veins of our fellowship. Interserve grew of age in India before reaching out beyond her borders, and as a mission fellowship we have now come full circle, sending India's sons and daughters to share the good news of Christ abroad. And while still financially needy and stretched, India has other resources – like her people, her multicultural context, and passion – that she is rich in, and wants to contribute towards mission.

One of the hallmarks of our Indian inheritance is Interserve's concern for gender equality. Created to serve the women of the zenanas, Interserve has, from its inception, been a mission that stands against the tide, and stands for equality, justice, and an integrated gospel that brings freedom from any yoke of slavery. Intrepid women from across the world responded to the call of Christ to help bring freedom to India's girls and women through education, and the opening of schools, colleges and universities. Then at a time when it was still considered

indecent for women to train for a medical career, Interserve pioneered women's medical missions. This in turn led to Queen Victoria sanctioning the training of women doctors, both in the UK and India, and the provision of medical care and hospitals for Indian girls and women. What an amazing story of God walking with His people (see page 6).

As you read this GO, and the range of articles contributed by Partners from across the Interserve world, may some of that same Indian passion, that vibrancy and life, encourage you in your walk with Jesus.

Finally, we had a great Interserve Day last month, and recently our IS NZ Council met to brainstorm on God's leading regarding the future of missions. We are interested in hearing what you sense God is saying to the wider body of Christ, and to us as Interserve - please do drop me a line, I would love to hear from you!

Jonas

