
SOWING SEEDS IN INDIA



Pahar Ganj, the main bazaar near the New Delhi railway station.

Long-time reader Bhagavan Buritz records his experiences introducing the Urantia Book to people in Delhi

AM A GREGARIOUS, SEMI-RETIRED businessman from San Francisco and Hawaii who loves to talk to people about spirituality and the Urantia Book. A few years ago I turned 50 and asked myself, How will I spend the next half of my life? What is important to me? What have I learned? Spreading the teachings of the Urantia Book was at the top of the tier. I made a decision to get involved, to make myself useful in the Urantia movement and to be a friend to all. When I heard about the Delhi Book

Fair, which was to take place in India from August 12-24, 1999, I was intuitively drawn to attend. I volunteered, together with Mark Bloomfield and Paul Premsagar, to represent the Urantia Foundation. I had been to India three times before and the country had become a spiritual home to me. I had studied Yoga, Indian philosophy, Sufism, and Buddhism for many years. I had even adopted the name Bhagavan, which means “servant of the Lord.” It reminds me of whom I work for and initiates many conversations about God.

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11, 1999. Stepping off the plane I am immediately embraced by the familiar tropical heat and moisture. I am back in Mother India. After clearing customs and changing money—43 rupees to the dollar, good for tourists and exporters—I step outside the airport and am greeted by a clamoring throng. Everyone wants to help me. “Taxi, sir?” “Hotel, sahib?” So many people, so few jobs.

I decide to take the airport bus into town to Mark’s hotel. Mark has already been in India for a week placing Urantia Books in libraries in the Delhi area. We’ve spoken to each other on the phone but not in person. On board I pile my bag on top of other bags, burlap sacks, cardboard boxes and bundles of cloth. I find a seat, open a window and wait. After twenty minutes we are ready to leave. They close the windows, collect the 30-rupee fare, and turn on the air conditioning. The air-conditioning never works well in India, where the whole infrastructure is strained by a billion souls.

We ride for half an hour until we come to Connaught Place, the main tourist area. Everyone on the bus wants to help me get off. Because I am a foreigner they assume this is my destination, but I manage to stay on and ride to the New Delhi railway station. Somewhere around there I am to find the Kilash Guesthouse. Stepping off the bus, my senses are assaulted in every way. Rich, bright magenta turbans and multihued saris dazzle my eyes—did someone slip a psychedelic into my chai? Is that sitar music I hear in my head? Smells of incense, cooking oil, urine, curry powder, cow manure and diesel exhaust fill the air. Trucks, buses, three-wheelers, rickshaws, cars, handcarts and people all move about in a semi-organized chaos. There is a pulsing energy in this giant, swarming beehive of humanity. Porters try to grab my bag. I am inundated by horns, people jabbering, peddlers crying their wares. “Chaii, chaiii, chaiiiii!” “Taxi, sir?” “Rickshaw, sahib?” “Best hotel, swami?”

To get to the hotel I opt for a bicycle rickshaw—a tricycle with an open bench seat in the back, pedaled by one man. I climb aboard and make my first mistake by not bargaining on the fare. I put my bag in the sling behind me and wrap the strap through my arm—I don’t want to make a second mistake and lose my bag. Although I am bigger and stronger than he is, I relax and allow the man with pipe-stem legs to sweat and pedal me to my destination. It is my duty to ride and his duty to pedal. We go a long way, over an overpass, to the other side of the station, to Pahar Gang, the

main bazaar road, and stop in front of a shabby building with a sign in English reading “Kilash Guesthouse.” “Sixty rupees,” says the pedaler. I offer 40 and we settle on 50—too much, but because we did not set the price beforehand it is my duty to pay what is asked. Though little more than a dollar, it is a day’s wage for a laborer.

I walk up a steep, narrow staircase, at the top of which is a counter staffed by several Indian men in a central, open atrium going up several floors. The doors of the guest rooms are around the periphery, facing inward. I ask to see a room and am shown a tiny, cramped space with a bed and no windows, only a grate above the door for air. I don’t think I can stay here, but for 150 rupees I can store my luggage, change clothes and look for something more suitable. I inquire about Mark but he is not in his room. (Mark, I find out later, is paying 110 rupees for a similar room, which explains how he is able to distribute books to libraries all over India for a few dollars a day.) I give them my passport and wait while they do masses of paperwork. The Indians have learned bureaucracy from the British.

Back out on the street I find a three-wheeled, motorized rickshaw—a motorcycle/tricycle with a roof. I tell the rickshaw *walla* that I am looking for a hotel. Another man—a “tour guide”—jumps in with me. A hotel? No problem! The search begins.

We check out two, three, four, five, six hotels—none of them quite

right—and end up at a hotel on a side street, away from the noise. The owner is sitting at the front counter in the lobby doing his *puja*, his ritual worship. He is chanting and waving incense, and for a moment we are in the temple—in God’s house. This feels right to me. We wait for him to finish, then one of his boys takes me up and shows me several rooms, all spotlessly clean with marble floors, windows that open, a functioning air-conditioner and my own hot water heater for my bathroom. I have found my home for the next twelve days. I come back down and we begin negotiating the price. By now, from checking other hotels, I know the going rate. We settle on 425 rupees a day, including the taxes—less than \$10. I take a shower and change into my white *kutras*. These are what we call pajamas in America—the Hindi word “pajamas” came to the west via the British Raj.

I tell the driver of the motorized rickshaw that I want

“Today, in India, the great need is for the portrayal of the Jesusonian gospel—the Fatherhood of God and the sonship and consequent brotherhood of all men, which is personally realized in loving ministry and social service. In India the philosophical framework is existent, the cult structure is present; all that is needed is the vitalizing spark of the dynamic love portrayed in the original gospel of the Son of Man...” (1032)

to go to Pragati Maidan. “No problem,” he says. “Sixty rupees.” Meters are never used. We bargain the fare down to 40 rupees—probably too much, but I have no choice because I need to go. Later in the week I take this trip every day and find that the price is 30 rupees. The rickshaw *wallas* know that I know. I become “Indianized” and the bargaining is very quick.



DELHI BOOK FAIR, AUGUST 12-24, 1999

Under the British Raj a park-like area had been created in all major cities for lawn parties, polo, and outdoor social and athletic activities. Pragati Maidan, in the center of Delhi, is such a place—part theme park, part emporium for various Indian states, and part exhibition halls for book fairs and similar events. The Delhi Book Fair fills two halls, and as I enter I thank God that the air-conditioning is working. The Urantia Foundation is one of three foreign guests out of 200 book trade participants. Almost immediately, I spot the three concentric circles and a sign reading “Urantia Foundation, Chicago, USA,” and below that another sign with “The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man” in both English and Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the language of *pandits* and scholars, mantras and *slokas*. Sanskrit is not a living language, but many Hindi words are identical. Our banner is readable for most Indians in the New Delhi area. Here I meet up with my co-workers, Mark Bloomfield and Paul Premsagar, with whom I will be staffing the booth for the next twelve days.



Transportation in India. TOP LEFT: delivering eggs by bicycle. TOP RIGHT: a delivery truck. BOTTOM LEFT: an “ultimate” rickshaw. BOTTOM RIGHT: two wealthy women go shopping in Calcutta.



Mark is an Englishman in his late 30s, tall, thin, energetic, enthusiastic, passionate, and devoted to spreading the Urantia Book. Mark is a “roving” representative of the Urantia Foundation, focused on delivering books to people of India, Southeast Asia, China and Russia via in-person library placement. Mark worked with Mother Teresa and held babies in his arms that died “for want of 10 cents’ worth of milk.” This profoundly affected him. Half the year Mark teaches hang-gliding and ultra-light flying in England. He has also worked in an open-pit gold mine in Australia, where he poured liquid explosives with a cement truck. Mark does not want to waste a moment of time, or a rupee. He is convinced that the Urantia Book is the tool that will transform and awaken India. Mark came early to India and dealt with customs to import the books and related materials—no small task given India’s bureaucracy. Mark did all the work of getting the booth ready for the show and even paid some of the expenses from his own pocket.

Paul is a retired physician and a native of the Hyderabad area in south central India, and has lived in the United States for close to 35 years. We knew each other already, having become acquainted at various Urantia conferences. Paul has a warm smile that lights up his face, and he radiates a feeling of peacefulness.

The Book Fair was typical of trade shows all over the world. There were booths in rows, aisles, and different rooms, hosting more than a hundred booksellers, publishers, government organizations and related companies. Minimum booth size was about 10 x 10 feet, but some of the bigger organizations had booths that were two, three or even eight times larger than a standard booth. The three foreign organizations had paid twice as much as the local Indian companies, and as a result the booth that exhibited the Urantia Book was in an excellent location.

The three of us worked as a team so that we could alternate taking breaks to eat or walk through the book fair, go shopping or explore Pragati Maidan. We soon fell into individual roles. Paul, the oldest of our team, was a moderating and calming influence compared to Mark’s and my extroversion. Some of Paul’s countrymen felt more comfortable talking to him. Mark, the youngest, was the workhorse, as well as an enthusiastic greeter and a passionate

advocate of the Urantia message. He came the earliest, stayed the latest and handled all of the administrative details.

Most of the books at the fair were in English. English is the *lingua franca* of India, brought over by the British when India was part of the British Empire. It is the language of the educated classes who make up about 10% of the population—one hundred million people. A few stalls were selling books in Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi and other Indian languages. The subjects ranged from the Vedas and ancient philosophies to computer sciences, modern novels and children’s books. In India most books sell in the 100-300-rupee range. A middle-class person earning an average of 15,000 rupees (\$375) per month would have to work three days and an average worker more than a month to pay the 980-rupee cost of the new hardcover Urantia Book. The price was extremely high by Indian standards—it could very well have been the most expensive book at the book fair. Some of our books had been water-damaged during shipping and those we sold at a greatly reduced price. All undamaged books were discounted for interested individuals, and we gave away many books to those who’d expressed extreme interest and curiosity but could not afford to buy one. We followed our hearts and our intuition.

People were surprised that we only had one book. We explained that we were a not-for-profit organization whose only purpose is to make the book available. We made it clear

that we had no political or religious agenda. When we told them the complete text was available on the World Wide Web, a light went on and they knew that we truly represented a service organization.

Sitting in the booth, I witnessed the full variety of Urantian humanity pass before my eyes—every age and every race, from white to black and every color in between. An event such as this attracts the upper and emerging Indian middle classes. Women wear everything from Western-style jeans and dresses to saris to Punjabi-type pantsuits to full Muslim chador—a black tent covering every inch of skin from head to toe. The men dress mostly in Western attire—slacks, dress shirts and shoes—with the occasional traditional white *jama* pants, *koortah* tops, or odd combinations of Indian and Western, such as a *longy* with a sports jacket. A father and his 12-year-old son walk by holding hands; pairs of



People in all manner of dress passed by the booth.

chums, friends of the same sex, walk by hand in hand—not gay couples, just friends. An occasional Westerner drifts by, a piece of lint in a river of chocolate. Groups of children pass by in the British school uniform tradition—gray flannels and green or blue blazers with a school pocket patch. My dress was an ironic contrast—a Westerner in traditional Indian garb among Indian men in Western dress. Much of my prior time in India had been spent in the south. When visiting temples there, bare feet and bare chests are *required* or entry is denied—in other words, “Shirt and shoes, no service!” There life is more traditional, and my white *kurtras*, *mala* and sandals are considered normal.

As foreigners and as a foreign organization we attracted a lot of attention. Most people walked by with just a glance toward the booth; some paused to read the large quotes. Many showed a keen interest and active curiosity in the Urantia Book by inquiring about it and the organization that publishes it. For the most part we spoke with men, per Indian social customs, and mostly Hindus and Sikhs, reflecting the religious demographics of Delhi.

There were the usual questions: “What does Urantia mean?” “Who wrote the book?” “Who are these authors?” “Where did the book come from?” “Did *you* write the book?” “What is the basic message of the book?” To the latter question, when I answered “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man,” most Indians would respond, “We know that already. That is what the Vedas say. We agree with this teaching.”

Mostly when questions arose we would open the book to a relevant passage and let them read the answer for themselves.

“Is this Christianity?” was another common question. “No,” we said, “the original teaching of Jesus is to know God by faith; then one is a member of the family of believers—the *Satsanga*, the truth seekers. The followers of Jesus created Christianity, a religion *about* Jesus.” An amazing number of Indian people knew the difference between the religion *of* Jesus and the religion *about* Jesus. They knew Jesus without being Christians—the Portuguese explorers who came to India at the end of the fifteenth century were disturbed to find “Christians” who did not know the Pope.

The open hearts and deep spiritual knowledge of some individuals was a revelation. It seemed as if they had already read the Urantia Book. It is interesting to speculate on how much knowledge from the Garden came to India. Their true religions embrace *all* teachers and Deities. They have no problem adding another teacher, prophet, God, or Deity. It is the unique, all-embracing nature of Hinduism and also the Sikh religion that makes India such fertile soil for the fifth epochal revelation.

A few people came by repeatedly and some conversations

stretched to several hours. For these long, philosophical discussions and sharing of our lives and spiritual experiences we moved to the back of the booth. Some conversations evolved into mini discussion groups involving numerous people who had gathered around.

One extended talk was with two somewhat “nerdy” law students in their early twenties. They presented themselves as atheists, and wanted to argue and debate. I said, “You are obviously very intelligent young men and as law students must have a highly developed sense of logic. Lawyers have to prove things based on evidence. How do you prove the nonexistence of something? What do you use for evidence? I am a witness to the existence of God, but I cannot offer proof, because God is Spirit.” After ten minutes in this vein they agreed that maybe they were agnostics. Then the hard work began. We talked for three hours. The discussion ranged from the nature of evil and its cause to the experience of reality within the mind of man. The Urantia Book answered many of their questions. Near the end they admitted that they saw humans as vultures. I sensed that the poverty around them moved them greatly. Finally they asked, “How can we talk to God like you do?”

The high price of the book was a barrier. Many requested that the book be printed in India, which could be done at an economical price. They also suggested printing it in sections so that they could buy the book piece by piece as they had the rupees to do so. We handed out many pamphlets containing excerpts and descriptions of the contents, all of which were enthusiastically received. We

passed out hundreds of sheets with the Internet address—a surprising number of people had access to the World Wide Web and they were eager to look for the book there. One woman told Paul Premsagar, “I have been reading this book on the Web and am fascinated by it, but I cannot download the whole book.” She bought a hard copy. Internet access is charged by the minute and is relatively expensive by Indian standards, although many have free access at work.

Some of these individuals seemed sincerely interested in helping us spread the fifth epochal revelation and volunteered to assist us in the future. They wanted to know where our office was located and how they could contact us. They filled out cards for the Urantia Foundation giving their names and addresses. Some asked how they could get together for a study group.

On the last day, Paul left early to visit his relatives, and Mark and I carried on together. I had foolishly left my shoulder bag at the booth while having lunch and it was

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stolen. Among my lost items the most disappointing was the camera I had used to take pictures of the booth and some of the people who had visited it. The Muslims teach “Trust in Allah and tie your camel”; the Sufis teach “Heart in the heavens and feet on the ground.” My feet as well as my heart must have been in the heavens after twelve days of talking to people about our heavenly Father.

This incident was put in perspective for me by a young Sikh man I became friends with over the course of the book fair. He had been reading the book we had given him and calculated that if he read fifteen pages a day, he could read the whole book in less than half a year. He told me about the strife in India between the different castes and religious groups. About seven years earlier, during the turmoil when Indira Gandhi’s Sikh bodyguards had assassinated her, many Sikh men, women and children had lost their lives. My friend’s garment business was burned to the ground. Since then he had been somewhat adrift, but was now putting his life back on track. The loss of my little bag seemed puny by comparison.

I was sad to leave. After this initial experience I wanted to return as soon as possible, to continue in whatever way I could to bring the Urantia Book to India. I soon discovered that a much bigger event, the World Book Fair, was planned for the same location the following August, and that the Foundation would again be sponsoring a booth. I immediately volunteered.

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IT IS JANUARY 2000 and once again I am on a plane to India, going from my home in Kona, Hawaii, to Calcutta via Thailand and Myanmar (formerly Burma). Myanmar is a center of the fundamentalist teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, who taught “*the best godless philosophy ever invented by mortal man: it was the ideal humanism...*” (1037). “*Buddhism is a living, growing religion today because it succeeds in conserving many of the highest moral values of its adherents. It promotes calmness and self-control, augments serenity and happiness, and does much to prevent sorrow and mourning*” (1038).

Buddhism permeates Myanmar—effulgent like the jasmine flowers at dusk. A huge golden mass, the Shwedagon Paya (or *pagoda*), dominates the capital, Yangon (Rangoon) from its hilltop site. Eight thousand gold plates and thousands of diamonds and precious gems cover the 100-meter-high statue. There have been *payas* and giant statues of the Buddha here and everywhere throughout Myanmar for over 2,500 years.

A major Buddhist teaching is salvation via good deeds such as the giving of alms to the monks and monasteries—a clever fund-raising plan. In the morning, ochre-robed monks walk barefoot in single file seeking rice and other offerings. The common people spend more than half their income on food, but still they manage to find something extra to give to the

monks. All male Myanmar Buddhists stay in a monastery for a week when they are seven years old and again at twenty, an experience that shapes the men and influences the whole society.

Life in Myanmar is an economic struggle. The environment is similar to Southern India—a basic, rural farming lifestyle centered on rice-paddy cultivation. Unlike India, Burma has not exceeded the critical land/population ratio; the people live a simple life in Third World poverty, embodying the teachings of Buddhism. They live their religion of loving kindness and peaceful non-aggressiveness, acting in all situations with a calm dignity. Never did I see anyone act in anger, shout at another person, or create a commotion. The Burmese offer their services in a kind, honest and quiet manner. A “no” is accepted with faith and confidence in the future, unlike the frantic and belligerent hawking in India.

From there I fly to Calcutta. The purpose of my stop-over in Calcutta is to meet Paul Premsager so we can scout out a book fair held in the Maidan, to check out the possibilities for displaying the Urantia Book there in the future.

The contrast with peaceful Myanmar is mind-shattering. Calcutta is a word that strikes fear in the hearts of travelers. It is one of the most densely populated places on earth. The poverty is overwhelming. The polluted air smells of desperation—the struggle for food, shelter, and survival. India is crowded to the breaking point and Calcutta is broken. The aggressiveness of the touts and vendors is intrusive, rude, irritating, and brazen. Picture yourself surrounded by twenty taxi drivers, all of whom are begging to drive you from the airport to your hotel for at least three times the local fare. If you bargain hard, cleverly, and patiently, you will pay just one and a half times the local rate. And once you choose a driver, you can be prepared for loud, verbal battles between him and the drivers you rejected.

In Calcutta one can see the reality of the seven developmental epochs of civilization—from the nutrition epoch to the era of Light and Life—but mainly number one, the nutrition epoch where lives are devoted to securing food. A laborer makes about 40 rupees per day (a dollar equals 42.5 rupees), enough to feed a small family with nothing extra. In the West mainly single people live on the streets, but in India it is mostly family units. As I walk down a street a thin woman in a ragged sari holding a sickly-looking babe grabs my arm, “Food, baba! Rupee, baba!” She brings a cupped hand to her mouth and then to the mouth of her child. In the background is her home—a large burlap rag tied to a wall to form a lean-to shelter, a few pieces of cardboard for a floor, an open gutter serving as a garbage disposal, a viola as a toilet. A second woman stirs a battered aluminum pot resting on three stones; dried cow dung and a few twigs fuel the fire. A man squats beside her and watches a toddler, naked except for a string tied around his waist, use the “toilet.” A malnourished

girl of twelve who looks seven holds another baby on her hip. Nearby a different family group crouches around a similar pot. They reach in with their hands for a simple meal of rice and vegetables. If they can somehow move off of the street they have evolved to epoch number two, the security age.

I walk a few blocks and I am in yuppieville—the Maidan, where the Calcutta Book Fair is being held. We are now in epoch number three, the material comfort era, with cell phones, fancy restaurants, ice cream parlors and upscale shops. Drivers lounge against their cars smoking, gossiping, waiting for *memshab's* return. I talk with these middle- and upper-class people and find hints of the advanced epochs—the kindness, helpfulness, and saintliness of some Indian people foreshadows the final flowering of human civilization.

On the Maidan each publisher or bookseller has built a semi-permanent structure for the fair. I wander around and, half by plan, half by luck, I meet up with Paul Premsagar; together we stroll around and carefully survey the possibilities. Most of the books are in Bengali, the language of the state where Calcutta is located. Bengal is a noted intellectual center, and the people are proud of their language and their cultural traditions. We conclude that it would be best to skip Calcutta for now and focus on Delhi and distribution of the English version of the Urantia Book. Better to prepare the soil in Delhi and plant the Urantia tree deeply, and water and fertilize it via frequent visits.

WORLD BOOK FAIR, FEBRUARY 5-13, 2000.

Delhi feels peaceful, familiar and well-organized after Calcutta. Heading toward my hotel in the back of a bicycle rickshaw, I filter out the pollution with a cloth held over my nose and mouth, but all my senses are wide open. I sit slightly above the traffic as if on the crest of a wave—calm, alert, blissful, serene.

The World Book Fair takes place every other year and is the largest book event in Asia and Africa, with over 1200 book trade participants occupying nine halls, one dedicated to Hindi and Indian languages, the other seven for English books. One hall, the Agricultural Pavilion, was set aside for the 38 foreign participants who paid two or three times the “local” price. Our hall was on the border of the other halls and our traffic was about equal to the smaller Delhi Book Fair we had attended the previous August. The event lasted nine days and was open from 11 am to 8 pm daily. Our booth was staffed by four representatives from around the world: Mark Bloomfield (who had been at the previous fair in August), Kathleen Swadling and Robert Coenraads from Australia, and me.

Kathleen had recently returned to Australia after working for three years at the Foundation offices in Chicago. She and her husband Trevor, both long-time readers, had established the Australia office. This was Kathleen's first visit to India. She was shocked and disturbed by the poverty and squalor.

Kathleen has grown children, and she brought a concerned and compassionate motherly presence to the booth.

Robert has a Ph.D. in geology, lives in Australia and works around the world as a consultant. He is creating a database for library placement and works with the Australian Urantia Book office. He spent little time in the booth. He dressed in formal business attire and left no stone unturned in his search for publishers, distributors and a printer. Thanks to him, three distributors—including India's largest—signed formal agreements. One of the others specializes in spiritual and religious books and distributes throughout Nepal and India, with bookstores in Katmandu and Varanasi that focus on religion and philosophy (particularly Eastern) and cater to travelers searching for spiritual enlightenment. Robert also found several printers who could produce the book at an acceptable level of quality and at a reasonable price. A local edition will be inexpensive, eliminate logistic and importing difficulties and appeal to local pride.

Another Urantian who stopped by to visit was Charles Olivea, a retired teacher and Urantia Book Fellowship General Councilor, who had been sent to Delhi by the Fellowship. This was his first trip to India, and he was accompanied on his mission by Paul Premsagar who this time around was helping to man the Fellowship booth.

Based on our experience in August, we decided to sell the softcover edition for 100 rupees instead of the American price equivalent of 840 rupees. After three days we regretted having only brought along a hundred books, and we raised the price to 200 rupees. We gave books away or reduced the price for those who expressed a special interest or as the spirit moved us. We sold the last few books in the last hour of the nine-day event.

At the previous book fair I had been hesitant to answer honestly and directly the question, “Who wrote the book?” I would gather my faith and say, “Celestial beings. God has many helpers.” This answer seemed somewhat unreal to me—it did not ring true. Part of me knows and believes that the Urantia Book is the fifth epochal revelation and that the authors are who they say they are, yet there is another part—the Yankee from Topsfield, Massachusetts—that says, “*Whaaaa!* Is this some idea from California?” But this time I had more courage, confidence and experience. I would add, “God does not exist in the universe by himself; there is not just God and then human beings. God has created a whole host of helpers. Some of these helpers wrote this book to help us. They are celestial beings.”

Every Indian I talked to could relate to this truth. To Indians, with their pantheon of gods, goddesses and spirits, the concept of celestial authors makes sense. No one challenged me. There was a kind of nodding of the head from side to side, as Indians do, an acknowledgment that, of course, that is how God does it. It makes sense. Who was teaching whom? In Indian parlance, “Celestial beings? No problem.”



ABOVE: *The first study group in New Delhi.* MIDDLE: *Author Bhagavan Buritz (right) with a new friend.* BOTTOM: *Two new Chinese-Indian friends.*

One of my most memorable conversations was with two Chinese youths. When I say Chinese I am referring to their Han racial origin because they were born in India. The custom of the Chinese language is to refer to people according to the perceived relationship, and they addressed me as “brother.” This might have also been part of their religious background. They had been raised Catholic, and from their names, I could tell that they were Christians. It is common in India for Christian people to have names like John or Paul or Mary. It is true of most Indians that religious affiliation as well as caste are identifiable by the person’s name. Because of how they greeted me, I called these two young men the “Chinese brothers.” Earlier Mark had talked extensively with them and they had purchased a Urantia Book—a significant expenditure for these young students.

In their persistent and truly interested way, they asked me, “Brother, what about where it says in the Bible, ‘No man cometh to the Father except through me?’” Fundamentalist Christians use John 14:6 as proof that one can only know God through Jesus, that Jesus is the only way to heaven, and therefore one must be a Christian to be saved. I had never really been able to answer this argument to my own satisfaction, although in my heart I knew this was not the way of the Father. I said, “Brothers, you are Christians. You know God is our loving Father, correct?”

“Correct.”

“And in the Christian teaching, God is a Trinity. There is

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. They are one. And yet, at the same time, in some mysterious way, they are separate persons. It is beyond our understanding, but in faith we know it is true.”

They agreed.

“If I am a faithful Muslim, and worship Allah, is not Allah the same as the Father, as God?”

“He is.”

“If I know the Father, then I know all the Trinity, even if I do not know that there is a Trinity. If I know the Father, then I know the Son and the Holy Spirit, even if I do not know that I know this truth. It is part of the mystery of God.”

As I talked to them I could see the lights go on in their eyes. I could feel my own heart open and my soul grow as I added this memory to the picture gallery in my soul. We acknowledged the privilege of having Jesus in our hearts and recognized our responsibility not to condemn those who know only the Father, because if they know the Father, they know Jesus without even knowing that they know him.

We talked about many other subjects. I saw potential in these young men and bright lives ahead for them. At the end of our conversation they said, “Brother, pray for us.” We stood in the booth, bowed our heads and prayed together. They gave me their addresses and asked me to write to them. Before they left we took a picture and, with smiles on our faces, said good-bye. I look forward to seeing these brothers again at the Delhi Book Fair in August 2000.

On another day, a man in his late thirties stopped by with his family. He and his kids—a six-year-old boy and a twelve-year-old girl—were dressed in casual Western clothes; his wife wore traditional Indian attire. He looked at the book and quickly decided to purchase one. While we were talking, his cell phone rang. It was the typical American cell phone conversation, “Uh, huh. Yes, yes. Okay, we’ll meet you in twenty minutes. We’ll pick you up.” In our conversation I learned that he had been a consultant for the Red Wing Shoe Company in Minnesota. He was an expert on the operation of an Italian machine that extruded polyurethane soles—an Indian teaching American workers how to operate an Italian machine! Add the cell phone and the Western clothes, and the squalor of Calcutta seemed far away.

At the previous book fair in August we had talked about starting a study group. Our hope was that this experience would prepare the soil for indigenous study groups. After a few days at the book fair, Robert arranged for a meeting room and we scheduled a study group for 5 pm on the last day of the event. At the appointed hour we met, five Westerners and three Indians; six more Indians joined us within the first half-hour. Following a brief silent meditation we plunged into Paper 100, “Religion in Human Experience.” As in many study groups, the discussion jumped around. It was difficult to bring the conversation back to the subject at hand without

being rude. I was impressed with the gems these new readers had found in the book in just a few days. The Urantia Book seems to appeal to the Indian mind—we may return next August to find some Indian Urantia Book experts!

In the last hour of the fair I had an extended conversation with a young university student whose parents had emigrated from Tibet. In his search for truth he had studied Tibetan Buddhism as well as all of the major Indian religions. I had followed a similar path in my mid-twenties, except that I started with Yoga, and then studied Tibetan Buddhism. We shared a passion for truth. There was joy and excitement in our exchange—a fellow truth seeker met on the road. Earlier he had purchased a book from Mark. He soon persuaded a friend to buy a book also. The Tibetan student had now returned with another friend who bought a book. We were out of books, but he wanted to buy one more as a gift for another friend. (For the sake of comparison, a Urantia Book would have to cost an American a hundred dollars to be equal to what these students spent.) I was so impressed by this sincere truth seeker that I gave him one of the new hardcover sample books and suggested that he give his softcover book to his friend—one gift leading to another.

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After the book fair all of us who had volunteered had dinner together and discussed the future for the Urantia Book in India. We agreed that we must attend book fairs in Delhi regularly to maintain contact with the readers and distributors in India, and to price the books at 100 rupees each. We should strive to have a study group every night at the next fair, and maintain relationships already begun with readers, which will lead to local representation, which could grow into an Indian Urantia Book office. And most of all we should prepare to print a high-quality, inexpensive, Indian edition of the Urantia Book.

Spending days talking to people about the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is a transforming, awakening and enlightening experience. The seeds that have been sown at both of these book fairs in Delhi will require watering and nurturing to bear fruit. I am not keen on returning to the heat, filth and pollution of New Delhi in August of 2000, but I do look forward to seeing the flowering of the Indian Urantia garden. How will the seeds have grown? ■

All the money collected from the sale of books was donated by the Urantia Foundation for an “eye camp” that Mark organized. An eye camp uses a temporary location and volunteers to repair corneas. The only cost is the lens and medical supply at about 300 rupees (US\$7.00) per eye—a bargain to end blindness. The banner says, “The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.” No organization is mentioned on the banner—the Divine Healer gets the credit. If you would like to support Mark’s placement of books in Indian and other Asian libraries and/or eye camps, please contact the Urantia Foundation.