

November 2023



India Rural Evangelical Fellowship

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Another Year to Shine

Just like that, our annual Shine Banquets have come to a close. What an incredible year of gathering with new and familiar partners alike. Last month, our friends from Illinois joined us for an evening of inspiring stories from Dee and John Rebba, Jake Vermillion, and so many more. It felt like a giant family reunion as we gathered around tables, broke bread, and celebrated all that God has done through IREF's ministry.

The Shine Banquets are always a major highlight of our year at IREF, and we're grateful to have shared it with so many of you. It's no secret that these banquets are also one of our biggest fundraisers for the year. During the banquet, we raised \$42,000 of our \$50,000 goal, and within 48 hours of Shine Illinois, the remaining \$8,000 poured in! God is so faithful.

More than that, though, we were able to build relationships and strengthen partnership with people across the country. Your prayers, encouragement, and support are what keep the ministry going at IREF.



Thank you to everyone in Florida and Illinois who helped make this year's Shine Banquet so special. A special thank you to Dee and John Rebba who joined us in person at both banquets. It's safe to say that no one will forget Dee Rebba's stories! Most of all, thank you to everyone who partnered with us. Whether this is a new partnership or one that has been part of your life for years, we are so grateful for you.

IREF wouldn't be IREF without you.



Student Story



Hem Sagar arrived at IREF in 2021 as a troublemaker. His parents tried to enroll him in different schools, but Hem Sagar skipped classes and roamed around the town. The family heard about IREF's emphasis on discipline from a friend whose daughter had similar

issues. The daughter went to IREF and came back a disciplined, respectful child.

Hem Sagar has done well at IREF. The teachers have helped him gain a vision and plan for his life. When the team sat down with Hem Sagar, he said, "I have discovered that I would like to be an engineer. Now I have something to study toward. My career aspirations have provided a purpose for my education."

Most people from Hem Sagar's home village of Devarapalli work at a pickle-making factory, earning \$2-\$3 per day. His father does heavy manual labor work, transporting sand from rivers to construction sights. Hem Sagar now understands that his father does not have many options due to a lack of education.

While most schools focus only on the education, IREF focuses on the whole child. The desire is for children to learn proper hygiene, self-discipline, and effective study habits. Through encouraging teachers and a good learning environment, Hem Sagar is excited for what the future holds.



You Can Give a Christmas Gift

We're not sure what Christmas is like for you, but at IREF, Christmas is a big deal—bigger than you probably imagine. Think thousands of Christmas lights strung high in the rafters of the sanctuary, drapping down the outside walls of the church, a giant tree decorated by the students, fireworks, and more!

The season is full of skits, dances, and programs that feel like amateur Bollywood performances, and most years, the students venture into Repalle to sing Christmas carols to our neighbors. Although many kids are not Christian, all of them look forward to and participate in the Christmas festivities. Who could resist?

As Christmas approaches, everyone gathers for a special service and celebration, and at the end, each child receives a Christmas present. These gifts don't come from their parents. They come from people just like you—IREF partners who want to make Christmas special for each student.

As we prepare for the Christmas festivities to begin at



IREF, you can be part of it too. You can give a gift to one or more students and make sure none go without a gift!

This year, we have 1,000 students. Each gift costs \$25, so we're raising a total of \$25,000. What's in the gift? Each student receives a new outfit! We wish we could show you the joy on their faces when they receive their very own gift. It's probably not unlike the joy you felt when you were a kid.

So, would you consider giving one or more gifts this year? It may seem like a small act of love, but nothing is small or insignificant in the Kingdom of God.

You can give on our website: irefusa.org/christmas.



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Continued

India Rural
Evangelical
Fellowship

What's the Caste System in India?

What do you know about the caste system in India? As people outside it, it can feel difficult to wrap our minds around such a structured and often discriminatory social hierarchy. Although attitudes toward the caste system are changing in cities, a person's caste still plays a huge role in their life, job, family, and more. India's caste system has thousands of levels that are nearly impossible to move up in and has existed for at least 3,000 years. A person's caste describes the work they should do, and those from the lower castes, especially the untouchables, experience great discrimination and prejudice.

At IREF, we deal with the caste system every day whether at the school or in the churches. We tell our students, pastors, and congregations that there is no caste system at IREF. We are all part of one Body—the Body of Christ. The Lord shows no favoritism and has drawn all people to Himself. With a system that is 3,000 years old, it takes hard work and intentionality, but we pray for a change in the hearts of students, pastors, and Christians.



Every day, we see how God is changing the caste system that divides India when we see groups like this—students from a wide variety of castes building friendship, trust, and respect.

Stay Connected

Do you struggle to find us on social media? Due to persecution in India, our Facebook and Instagram pages are private. Join our group or follow us for updates and ways you can pray for the ministry and events occurring in India. Scan the QR code to the right to stay connected.

