

Grain, Sugar Cane and Marigolds, Oh My!

Description

This week began with another new experience and not because it was Rick's birthday. Several missionary couples went together to the Surajkund International Crafts Mela in Faridabad which is about an hour south of Delhi. It is kind of like a ginormous farmers' market without the selling of fresh produce. There were over 1000 booths that sold textiles, clothing, trinkets, pottery, furniture, dried food products, and so on. There was also a food court area with many yummy offerings. As always we were hesitant about eating food but found a hotel culinary school tent that looked more professional. (Each morning we pray with gratitude for our food and for it to provide the nourishment we need but now we add a prayer that it will not do us any harm!)

The fair was fascinating in and of itself, but we were amazed when we kept getting requests for photos with people. I think we were the only white people at the fair. I think Jawan and I had at least 20 people ask us for pictures.



<http://firstthreeodds.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/guy-on-stilts-at-fair.mp4>



The parents wanted me to hold their baby but he would have none of that.



Jawan and group of school kids



Taunya and Mary (mission president's mother) talking about bartering

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/fun-with-music-at-the-fair.mp4>



The stalls

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/drumming-at-the-fair.mp4>

Wednesday we had a meeting with a representative of the National Council of Churches in India. We expected it to take 2-3 hours but it lasted more like five. The Indians we have met like to share stories and just have a more leisurely pace. We did take him to lunch and that took some time. The culture here requires hospitality that includes food. We are always offered a beverage and frequently a snack as well. If our meetings are anywhere near lunch time they want to provide a meal. It is challenging to convince them that it is our turn to pay.

We spend time regularly developing relationships and connections. This particular gentleman has

some great contacts with people and groups that can help us with distribution and maintenance for the wheelchair project the Joneses are working on here in Delhi.

Friday and Saturday we ventured even farther than Faridabad. It took 2 to 2 1/2 hours of travel each way. Friday we visited five rural schools near Jewar where we evaluated the need for RO systems. As we were driving along the roads between fields of grain, sugar cane and marigolds I could feel the tension leaving me. I didn't even know I was feeling uptight. It was lovely to leave the chaos of the city behind for a few hours.

The children in these rural schools were absolutely adorable. They are very polite and well behaved. Some had uniforms, some did not. Some had shoes, some did not. They all had big brown eyes full of curiosity as we walked around their schools. It was a long 8-hour day but very rewarding.



Looking over the school wall across the field to a Hindu temple and other buildings



Fields of marigolds where they pluck flowers for garlands



Children at the well pump. It was apparent that they were taught the need to wash after using the toilet.



Some seemed to just like to work the pump and play.



A class of younger children



Another class of youngsters at a different school



School bags waiting for owners to claim them at lunchtime. Note the ones made of grain/legume sacks.

While traveling along the backroads we encountered young men who were carrying decorated bow-like contraptions with containers of water attached. They were traveling with sacred water from the Ganges river and taking it to a Hindu temple. It was about a 250 km trek and the processions were accompanied by other people, support vehicles and there were resting spots along the way. It was all part of the Mahashivratri celebration.



One of the water bearers ready to continue his journey

and other water containers waiting to be picked up.



Rick and Taunya sitting under a huge Banyan Tree, the national tree of India, located at the second to last school we visited.

Saturday's trip took us north to Baghpat where we visited a hospital to learn more about the community and their need for the diagnostic equipment we are hoping to supply. They were very accommodating and of course gave us beverages and snacks. I tasted but didn't care for the Pudina flavored potato chips. It had kind of a minty, garlic, cinnamon taste. (We were able to excuse ourselves from the lunch invite.) We learned all that we needed to and saw lots of interesting things during the drive. Here are some photos.



Woman in a bright sari talking on her cell phone as she rode in the cart pulled by a bovine.



Water buffalo outside a business



A couple of water buffalo in front of a residence. There were a lot but it was hard to get a picture from the car.



Dung cake houses along the side of the road. They take good care of their water buffalo and their dung cakes.



What a variety of sights at the intersection.



What? A camel pulling a bulging bag of fodder!

I have no great insights from this week, just the realization that no amount of words or photos can relay

the sights, intensity of colors and sounds and the feeling this all invokes. Maybe there is a life lesson in there somewhere. How about this? You can only rely on the testimony of someone else for so long and then you have to develop your own. Some things just need to be gained through personal experience.

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