

Bericht einer Indien-Reisenden

Im Herbst begleitete Marion Strencioch Indienhilfe-Mitarbeiterin Sabine Dlugosch auf einer (wie immer selbstfinanzierten) Projektreise nach Indien. Neben Besuchen in den Projekten Manab Jamin, Lake Gardens, Shikshamitra und Bikash stand ein Ausflug in die Sunderbans, das Ganges-Delta, auf dem Programm. Marion Strencioch hat ihre Eindrücke der zweiwöchigen Reise niedergeschrieben:

Impressions

Germany – Departure

Everything is at its place. There are rules. There is a reason why things happen. If you do something, you know what will happen. Things have a meaning.

It's simple, familiar, the world is in shape.

India – Arrival

The city

Airport. Impression. Gateway. Impression. Climate. Impression. Bus. Impression. Queuing. Impression. Immigration. Impression. Taxi. Impression. Street. Impression. Dog. Impression. Left turn. Impression. People. Impression. Clothes. Impression. Advertisement. Impression. Traffic. Impression: Honking. Rickshaws. Tuktuks. Cars.

Hurry on. No time to rest.

Houses. Impression. Shops. Impression. Dirt. Impression. Light. Impression. Sounds. Impression. Courtyard. Impression. Room. Impression: Bed. Shower. Fan. Door lock.

Wake up under the mosquito net. Take some pills to prevent stomach problems. Take a shower to sweat five minutes later. Cover yourself with anti-mosquito-spray.

Have your breakfast: Daal. Impression. Poori. Impression. Chai. Impression.

Jalo! Destination: Howrah Station.

Honk.

Honk.

Honk.

Honk.

Honk.

Honk.

The taxi finds its way.

Impressions left. Impressions right. Impressions ahead. Impressions behind. One brain can't take them all.

- "Is this a poor part of the city?"

- "No, it's middle class."

- "Then why are the houses so run down?"

Questions of a German. Uncomprehending looks from Indian friends.

A melody comes to mind: "Have you seen the old man in the closed down market, kicking up the papers with his worn out shoes..." Beggars here don't wear shoes.

Arrival Howrah Station: people, people, crowds. Train. Impression.

Only after some days, the impressions, that made your mind burst, slow down a little.

Diwali

The festival of light has come. Lights and candles everywhere, crackers explode, painting the sky in brightest colours. The air is full of sound and smoke.

Celebrating goddess Kali. In front of a temple, an old woman, white hair, no flesh between her skin and bones, barely dressed in a ragged sari is passed by a young lady in a gold-coloured sari, shiny hair, well-trained body and perfect make-up.

Nature

Mother Ganga flows – quickly but without haste – towards the sea, carries the boat, the bot-boti, along her shores, where the landscape, decorated with small villages, passes calmly by under a cloudy sky. The rhythm of the engine is the soundtrack to the journey, unknown still but comforting.

The first stop is Gosaba, entrance to the Sunderbans: take a walk in the town where no cars populate the streets, where people are busy nevertheless because everybody seems to run his own shop. Seemingly there is nothing you cannot get: Need some groceries? Want to buy a good book? Looking for Diwali candles? Take a rest in a street café to have some chai and roshogolla?

Time to get back onto the boat, no need for hurry though, the boat is rented for us, it does not matter if we arrive a couple of minutes later. Yes, we can spend some more time to walk around, look around – take photographs, take your time.

The boat rides on the waters of the Ganges again. As the sun appears, people, children leave the houses and when they catch sight of the boat and its passengers floating along, they raise their hands and wave to the white-skinned strangers.

The boat crew – how do you talk to people whose language you don't speak? Use your hands, some words you have picked up. The boy, 18 years, handsome, deaf-mute. He works on the boat with his father, uncle, cousin, integrated in the work like all others, talking with his hands only, telling stories – is what you understand what he wants to tell you?

An evening on the boat, watching the sunset. The sky takes on colours, red, yellow, gold, reflected in the river's waves. Wanting to describe this wonderful spectacle, the boy makes a gesture more beautiful than words could ever do.

A few days living with the river, living with the tide, the change of ebb and flood, feeling nature's fight and harmony, enjoying the sound of silence when the bot-boti stops its engine, calming your spirit down from the ubiquitous hectic of the city.

The village

The photographs of the letters asking for donations just before Christmas. Now they are in front of your very eyes, you see them for the first time: malnourished children, women in rags, hungry eyes. Mud huts, reed-covered roofs, one room, one bed, a pond outside instead of a bathroom.

A group of women gathering on a small terrace, a SHG, Self Help Group. What's there on their faces? A look of hope? Pride? Self-esteem? Have they learnt what these words mean? They have achieved something, they dare dreaming, modest dreams of a better future far away from the dreams the rich people have (about money, cars and trips to foreign countries) – but they are their dreams, their own dreams which they know now can come true. Aren't they so much more real, so much more genuine than what the high gloss magazines of our world have to offer? What do our dreams mean compared to theirs? Don't we have everything anyway? The things they do – aren't they so much more important than running to the office every day and piling up your money?

India – Departure

Longing to get back home, to have clear rules and order, to live in a familiar world.

What has this country left in me?

Germany – Arrival

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An old man sits on the sidewalk. Impression.