

My Indian Summer

An overseas adoption was the gift of a friend for my thirtieth birthday and this journey to India, an idea since then.

With the help of Lara and Cinzia (who is also a sponsor and who travelled with me) I left behind me my doubts and uncertainties on so many aspects of a journey which, often, can not be planned and/or controlled. On August 2nd, Cinzia and I set off. Our adventure started in Warangal. Your first taste of the Indian micro world is special; you immediately notice that your presence and diversity awake a lot of attention and you see a slow and progressive spreading of smiles and curious glances when you pass by. India is curiosity. Travelling by car is like Russian roulette consisting in overtaking both on the left and on the right (in India people drive on the right); non stop horn-blowing in streets overflowing with motorbikes, scooters, Tuc Tuc (the most common Indian taxis), people on bicycles or walking. India is life. The first people I met in India and who welcomed us were Father Prakash, Kodi (the driver), Geea (the cook), Baskar and a swarm of splendid people who were always most helpful.

In the few days spent there we saw some villages and schools and met 3 children supported from overseas and we gave them their letters from Italy. Their expressions were still and apparently frightened, perhaps by the camera and the strange presence of two people so different from them. I had just returned from a trip to the city and in my rucksack I had the letters addressed to the School for Children children.

I was not expecting their arrival and without even the time to exchange a smile I was asked to take their photograph. It is difficult to describe but in that moment this gesture gave me a strange sense of melancholy and a little sadness; the time to take a photograph and the children had returned home. India is unpredictable.

One of the more important and touching experiences of these interminable early days was meeting Father Antonio.

He has been living in India for 35 years and runs a specialised care centre against skin disease. That morning we went with him on one of his daily visits to a village. In front of our eyes children, women and old people showed their bodily "flaws". After their visit each patient was given a prescription to collect his medicine (tablets, lotions etc.) from the temporary stall set up along the entrance pathway.

On the day before our departure we had the chance to visit a village where two drinking water wells sponsored by S.F.C. have been built and a water purifying plant in a second village.

Here in Warangal, among the villages, I met "Indian eyes" for the first time; and they were those of the children.

I tried to imagine the future for many of them and letting this journey's experience settle inside me I realised that the support that we give, even if only to one of them, can truly make the difference. After three days, long and intense, spend among marvellous people we moved on to Khammam. On arriving Sister Shirley was awaiting us. She is the most wonderful person. These days were spent visiting schools (many schools) and villages.

Our visit to Khammam was for both Cinzia and myself our opportunity to finally get to know our own children, in different situations and at different times.

I met Akhil one morning and that day was supposed to have been the last day of our stay in Khammam.

I remember we were sitting in a ground-floor room in the school. Cinzia, Sister Shirley and I.

The entrance was against the light and it was easy to recognise Akhil in the image which appeared in the doorway after a short time, barefoot and with his arms folded in his light blue school shirt/uniform. He came in noiselessly. At that moment I was happy. It came naturally to smile (straight from my heart) and to go towards him, embracing him and looking from the very first moment for ways and means to communicate with him.

As soon as he gained a little confidence Akhil also started to ask some shy questions as to how my parents were, their names and what jobs they had.

I have a lovely memory of those hours spent together. In the afternoon we went into the centre (Akhil wanted a new shirt) and the following day, again together with Sister and Cinzia, we strolled about, visited a playground and ate an ice-cream. If there will be another opportunity to return I believe I will try to be less “adult” and more “childlike”, because India (or perhaps anywhere) to be understood and lived to the full must be seen through simple and curious eyes.

Lorenzo