

Six month Trip to India

Our children wanted us to visit India with them and we said yes. But we came into bind when one wanted to go in July and other was set a wedding date in Dec. But instead we decided to use the extra time in India to see it thoroughly. We had five fold aims 1. Visit of historic places 2.Pilgrimage 3.Celebrate festivals with relatives 4. Meet friends and Relatives 5.Some social work. We are glad we not only did these five, but also accomplished sixth one by attending some 15 Marriages and engagements.

We made Meerut as our Headquarter, which is near Garghmukteswar U.P.

We made 14 small and big trips from here and visited about 120 places in all India. We had very pleasant experiences of all these trips. Main places we visited are as follows: Mumbai, Goa, Panjim, Jaipur, Agra, Meerut, Delhi, Dehradun, Massuorie, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Gangotri, Gomukh, Jamnotri, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Lucknow, Bareilly, Kanpur, Ayodhya, Mathura, Brindavan, Varanasi, Allahabad, Shimla, Rohtang Pass, Kulu, Manali, Jammu, Vaishno Devi, Chamunda, Jawlaji, Ajmer, Pushkar, Indore, Ujjain, Vrodara, Khujaraho, Jhansi, Gwalior, Ambala, Amritsar, Wagga Border, Mount Abu, Kota, Bundi, Surat, Ahmdabad, Chennai, Kanya Kumari, Rameshwaram, Madurai, Tirchanapalli, Trivendrum, Calicut, Ernakulam, Kalicutta, Vijaywada, Kamarpurkar, Virsing, Purulia, Daspur, Kharagpur, Patna, Ranchi, Nalanda, Pawapuri, Biryatan, Sarnath, Faizabad, Bangalore, Mysore, Hydra bad, Diaper, Jodhpur, Bharatpur, Fathehpur, Songragh, and Karimnagar to name a few.

All our trips were different when it comes to mode and way how we traveled. Some time we traveled with our Car some time with Taxi shared Taxi, Train AC ordinary unreserved second class or First class by booking our own onward journey ourselves. Now in India you can book your own travel and even pay in Dollars, there are special windows for foreign tourists. There is lot of fun and enjoyment to travel in India in non-reserved trains with common folks.

Most of the places we have friends and relatives. Almost ten places we stayed in good and ordinary hotels and paid from 50 to 750 RS. /night. UP tourist and Himachal Tourist lodges are superb choice and even the will make food to your order and fresh with nominal extra money. We used to carry with some roasted Chickpeas and peanuts. We used to consume lot fresh fruits. Because we don't drink tea /coffee and coke we not only saved money but lot of time too. During our travel we only consumed hot food freshly prepared, no matter it is prepared by roadside Dhabbas. Tandoori roti is best food in India, which is available in all the Major road of India. May be because of this or with the grace of God we were not seriously fell sick at any time.

Some of our Incidents were very much different to mention here is our journey from Gangotri to Gomukh on foot. Distance is not much about 20-Km but everybody will tell you that it is 19 km. In India every body will estimate less time for a journey then actually it will take be aware about this fact add almost 10%.

We started for Gomukh from Gangotri with intention of staying at chirwasa overnight at about 3:00 PM, which is only 9Km from Gangotri. Many advised us take a guide or Horse but as we are we did not agree. We thought we had torchlight with us, but it will later to be proved not true. We walked about 5km and rested and had our lunch/dinner and moved forward, but at about ¼ km before chirwasa we lost the way because of arrow marked on a stone for a bridge over tributary of Ganga. Arrow was conceived to be pointing towards south and we proceeded north. Hence we never got to the wooden Plank Bridge. All of a sudden it became pitch dark and we could not see any thing. We decide to take an overnight stop here and sleep over stones instead pass the stream and take a fall in cold water and get drenched. We became nervous, and many thoughts crossed our mind, like any wild animal can approach us, in that case we will pose as dead. Scorpio can bite us, or a stone can roll down. We became positive thinker and thought these stones are lying here with the grace of god for so long and we had to spend only one night god will help us. Lo and hold we slept for two hours from 6:30 to 8:30, and wake up again as it started drizzling, and we thought who else but of Shiva. We started chanting his name, and just about 108 times we did we saw two torches from this side of stream and one from other side of stream. We could not keep quite started

shouting we are here we are here, but they were not searching us there were Sierra club members going to Mount Bhagirathi. They were nice asked us what the hell we are doing at this place alone? We replied that we were going to chiawasa. Then they asked us our ages we said 50 and 55 years old, they immediately took out their altimeter and said some thing like this height is about 14500 feet, and as per our age we might needed Oxygen. And further they asked are you feeling short of breathing, to that we said we lost our way and were resting and trying to spend the night in dark on stones. Then they told us another frightening story that one Austrian couple is missing since one month they saw the posters at Gangotri or villagers could have killed us for want of money. To all these we said nothing like this happened. They asked 'will we like to proceed with them' to that we said sure. They were five in Number and we were two total became seven, one of them commented seven is good number, let us proceed. They were very careful and advised us if we feel tired or short of breath we should tell them, but we rested two hour our stamina was as good as theirs. We reached Bhojwasa instead of chirwasa more then planned, which was about 15 km from Gangotri. Bhole bawa thume pranam. We spend the night in tent at night in Bhojwasa. Next day early morning we got up and it was full moon night (Sharad Purnima/Harvest Moon). Scene was like this we will try to explain if we could and in distance Gomukh was shining like a Jade (green Chinese stone) icy. We were in middle of a valley and all around us were peaks may be ten of them like fingers of cupped hand and laden with freshly poured snow and shining like silver. It was spell bound scene we never witnessed like this before, nor hope to see this any time soon after this episode. May be once in a lifetime adventure followed by once in a lifetime scene we could survive both with the help of god. Next we tried to search the Sierra party but without any success. We saw their faces in dark.

Like this we witness many Miracles which happened to us during these six month if we can count its no. Shall be large one. Every day was full of surprises and our faith in god increased every day and learnt a new lesson daily. We reached our desired place daily, we stayed in military banglow, only for 50Rs for two fully furnished attached bathrooms, and in Vaisno Devi we had Darshan in Military lines means shorter time in line. And not only we walked 110 km on hilly track during our journey our nephew who is only 6 walked with us during whole Vaishno Devi plight of 20 Km.

In Jammu we saw sfatick (clear glass) Shivaling of 5 feet tall. Biggest Shiva ling was in Khujraho 18 feet tall and about 40 feet in Diameter Saw three-colored sand at Kanya kumari Black from Arab Sea, Red from Bay of Bengal and white from Indian Ocean. We witnessed Mother Terraca's Ashram in Calcutta, Nirmala Sishu Sadan (Shelter for abandon children). Every child was happy and wants to play with you and very well taken care. Even you can adopt these children at any stage. In Dehradun we saw Cheshire home of invalid children who cannot take care of themselves and even family members leave them after their parent expires, no relative wants to visit them or have anything to do with them, there are 26 such homes throughout India. Workers her is to commend for their dedication even people from outside the country come for service of these gods' children. In Varanasi we saw homes for Adivasi's girls, who were traditionally wont, be going to normal schools otherwise. Now these backward class women will have some one of their own who has education door open to them. We saw birthplace of Ramkrishna Paramhans in Kamarpurkar, working school of Ishwar Chander Vidya Sagar and his Museum in Virsing in West Bengal. In Daspur we saw Eye operation Camps where not only people were brought free and operated free, fed free and also provides free glasses or free Contact lenses and given some winter clothing's by Gujrati's to West Bengali's. This is My India. Witnessed Villages of so called of Adiwasi which were cleaner then Many so called forward towns, in my opinion we city fellows can learn few things from our Adiwasi fellows Indians when it comes to keep our city and houses cleaned. Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi Visvanath temples are under lot of military force, which prime Imp ortance to Hindus, as they are birthplaces of Rama, Krishna, and Shiva respectively. Maha kaleswar Temple in Ujjain was great, but all these great places have sign of neglect and dirtiness and full of dishonest pandas it is true for all historical places of Importance

In India we saw advised society which is going towards nudeness and poverty which is again going toward same nudeness one because of want other because of necessity, both are doing same thing but are they same? Saw ray of hope in form of advances in education, progress at the same time ignorance and tears of compulsion and many problems have no solutions because we gave up on them. And biggest one is cleanliness is on top of the chart every body has an answer population is too much but are we doing our part to solve the problem, otherwise are we not part of the problem. Population no body think as part of strength not a problem, if our thinking will remain like this we will never be able to solve this dilemma.

But we saw so called backward District of Andhra Pradesh has many pockets of cleanliness, but some pockets of Chinnai so dirty even if you breath you surely will be sick.

India's beauty lies in the Nature so much and you have to have time to see and admire it in its own, which will give you lot of pleasure. No matter how big man you are in your achievements, but when you see the mountain peaks in India you feel yourself tinny speck in front of them and of course these are eight peaks of mountain in the world. When you see India standing at Vivekanand rock and see India see beach washes with water of three seas you feel chill in your every pore. In Mount Abu we saw world famous Dilwara temples where unmatched marble stone worked better than even Taj Mahal. We saw Wind mill in Tamil Nadu producing Electricity. Punjab Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have farms, which can produce three crops in a year nowhere in the world it is possible this is the greatest boon to us from God. On our way to Kedarnath about 15000 feet high we saw so many Water falls at every corner you can witness one, then we understood what they mean in our Mythological stories that Ganga has come to earth from the Shiva's hairs. It has forced us to say at every such corner Om Namah Shivay. And we told Pujaries at Kedarnath you think that you have imprisoned Shiva in this Tinny Temple, you are Lying he is everywhere and as large as background and surrounding Hill and every fall into is Ganga. You have to see this your self to understand the meaning of this completely. In Haridwar one has to see Ganga's Arti at evening and taken a dip at Har ki Pauri, I could do this at VIP ghat because my Brother-in-law is MLA of the place.

One side we saw honest Social worker making laboratory in 384 RS. In Villages, and other side where dishonest Government Servants who are not letting reach the relief materials to needy in Orrissa when a tidal wave hit the area in October 1999 because of greed of middle man. In Orrissa you can make mud home in 6,000 RS and brick home in 12,000 RS. Government offered 6,000 RS to each Victim provided it reaches them. Let me give you another prospective of food cost variation one place two people can eat a nutritious food in 14 RS in Gaurikund (Kedarnath). Other place a family of four and two children cannot have a full breakfast in ordinary place in Kulu in 650 RS incidentally both are in hills.

In my opinion Railways are the biggest culprits in making India dirty. You will ask me how let me explain you why. Every Railway coach is an open-ended lavatory. Which can discharge the refuse any where along the line and in turn people see them dirt make them more so along the railway line. I can assure you the sight is never pretty when you open your eyes in the morning in a railway compartment and dare to look outside for beautiful nature outside the train. There can be a start of this cleaning act by just mere with the help of a paltry sum of RS. 500 cost of a fiberglass tank, which can be attached to all railway passenger compartments and can be cleaned at all major Junctions were there is a sewage system in existence.

Use of Indian road can cover another Article but let me mention few of them without which this article will not be complete and list won't be exhausted which I noted down time to time. Roads are biggest garbage can, spitting place, cow gauging yard, children's play ground, meeting place, hawkers shop, rice mills, drying grains, grass, cloth dryers, hen fights, car truck repair shops etc. etc. And if some place is left you can bring your vehicles at the top speed of 30 miles per hour and still you have to watch for pedestrian crossings at any and everywhere at all odd places like turns and during early and late blinding hour of the day. Roads have more speed breaker than cars ply on it because they provide lot of employment to the repair shops. Roads in our country reflects our thinking don't let people progress to their full potential rather stop them as much as you can with the help of rules and regulations as much you can. Moreover if you own a shop and bribe a police can bring you shop up to the half of width of road without any thinking of traffic jam or thought it will cause obstruction to the vehicular traffic. Further if any place road is untouched it can be blocked for dignitaries or for religious and marriage party.

We could see some of the most Modern factories one such place in Gulabpura synthetic silk mill and Songargh paper mill to mentioned few. These are most Modern with latest techniques used.

We were fortunate enough to meet some real social workers that not only working with honesty but never married in order to serve the motherland never care for any rewards. Two brother's one Dr. Subba Rao and other is his younger brother Krishnamurti. Subba Rao ji was responsible for few hundred Dacoits surrender and lives in one room where he not only prepare his meals but entertain his guests and let them use his

phone to others. He still organizes youth camps in various parts of the country where the need and importance of Shram Dan is taught. Krishnamurti is managing a school for less fortunate students in the name of Vivekanand at Bangalore and raises money by singing devotional songs. These both gentle young men are in their seventies. We saw the Vivekanand School and met students. We also went to IIT Kharagpur and Rashmi's childhood school, which was beyond recognition because of too many new buildings, was erected in the name of progress haphazardly planned.

If you want to see some good clean temples you can do that but you have to go Military established temples be it in Vadodara Faizabad or Meerut cantonments. All Famous temples are only shops where God is in my opinion imprisoned by Pandas and doors can be opened as much as you can spend the money. Cleanliness will not be there guaranteed. You can go once because your faith but may not go another time because of all other reasons mentioned before.

Another good place we visited was World famous Bharatpur bird sanctuary. This is very clean and special place where you can see at hundred types of birds and birds from far of places like Russia or Europe and Asia Minor. Again we were lucky to see a pair of white swan which comes in the middle of Nov but came few days before. We saw Fatehpur Sikari where Akber made lot of Mosques over the existing Jain temples you can clearly see them under the poorly kept buildings of Akber time. But see the tyranny of Nature he wanted to make a city where there was not enough water for inhabitants of the city, hence he failed to keep the city there for long time. In context of Water Agra is not a good place during rainy season or otherwise city is incapable of supply enough water for its population. We saw the worst drainage system in any city existed. With one or two inches of rain is enough to cripple the city and even Sum (Caravan) type car will be under water. And worst yet we saw people so uncared that a donkey lying dead in one of the very fashionable suburb and people were eating dosha only ten feet away, for three days nobody even care to call city officials about it.

We visited some ten to fifteen Dams and witness the beauty of Vijayawada. Surrounded by hills and streams and dams water everywhere. Witnessed the sunrise in Bay of Bengal and sun set in Arabian Sea and also at sun set point in Mount Abu. In hill stations Massuorie and Shimla they both have different. Biggest ropeway of India is in Timber Trail in Himachal Pradesh and was the hill where Hanumanji kept his foot which looks like a footprint type hill in Himachal also Kausauli to exact.

In Manali there is Place where Hidamba used to live, who was Bhim's wife. Himachal Pradesh is also known as Devsthanam.

In India if you want to sell to masses in large cities spread the word US and it will sell like hot cakes. Pizza and Maggi are most popular foods of Present day India's youth of Metropolitan cities. We witness some kids eating Chocolate cake in Breakfast, and parents are proud they are feeding and afford it. Pepsi cola and coke are costly then fresh fruit juices but they are available at every corner even in rural India, this is probable result of blind follow up of American culture in the name of progress. Another biggest explosion is computer programmer's school and training classes no body is bother where these people will be using or do India need them to solve its so many problems. These are a wastage of our national resources and hard earned money of parent as they are the only one paying the bills most of the time. I do agree top 5 to 10 % are going abroad or work in India for Multi Nationals what about rest 90% no body seems to worry about it. And believe me these are not cheap trainings. Another big trend in education even the graduate and post graduate level students take tuitions from Prof. in coaching type of classes conducted by same teachers who were supposed to teach and paid by colleges.

In the end some other places worth mentioning are as follows:

In Amritsar with in Swarn Mandir we saw some for hundred-year-old tree and water tank so clean that you can see the bottom and fishes inside by the way they are pretty and big also. In Goa we saw St. Xavier's remains in unvacuumed glass case with out any preservatives. Near Meerut we saw a church, which granted as Basilica of east. In Bhopal we saw the biggest Mosque of the world but it may be when people pray on Id then it overflow to many side by streets. A scooter driver showed us the beautiful Bhopal. Who was not only proud to show us the city but said Lake Bhopal is biggest in the world. But we showed him in Map of Michigan Lake and said even this is not biggest. But in India another biggest Fort is In Chittoregargh.

And Hindi saying goes like this

“Talo me Tal Bhopal baki sab tallian he and Gargh me garh chittoregargh baki sab garhia he.”

In Prayagraj we saw Patal temple, which is underground. There we met one honest rickshaw wale who stayed with us in search of our house where we wanted to reach in mere 10 RS, and said sahib I am not worrying about money as much as I wanted leave you at right Place. What honesty! In Rajasthan our Car became invalid and one Village lady helped us for our water and Petrol need were met. And even stopped other vehicle to help our car to get started nothing she will take in return but became fascinated with an orange which she might have not had for some time wanted to taste that with us. In Triventhampuram we wanted our picture to taken by our scooter driver but because our communication he thought we wants to take his picture started combing his own hairs, we of course took his picture and mailed it his address as well.

So this is my country where there is honesty and hard work is still exist and we should all be proud of it in spite of all the bad things we hear and which may be true also.

We spend our Deepwali firecrackers with Leprosy's victim in their colony near Meerut where my brother Rajeev goes there for last ten years this his tradition. We should know these people couldn't consume sweets because of their health. And we celebrated New Years Eve with sharing our used clothes with hard working but not having enough clothes to cover their body with proper winter clothes.

In the end we would say we saw Bharat so much but not enough to say and feel satisfied we may go back more often and do some more social work, once we had completed our prime duty to raise our kids, if God willing