

I am home now. I have a sense of what the astronauts must have felt like after spending time on the moon and then re-entering our atmosphere through and with a fiery blast. It was hard coming back. I missed my husband and children terribly, but I am heart-broken over leaving my precious Indian family, orphans, the 1,200+ children we ministered to, and my traveling companion and co-missionary, Elizabeth Anne. Our trip home was uneventful, although I did not sleep well on the flights. I was blessed to be sitting between a woman from Russia who lived in Wyoming (the state), who was bringing her father back with her to see his grandchildren for the first time, and a young man from Tunisia, who was an interpreter. He was flying to Wisconsin to teach Arabic, and was fascinating to talk with. His English was flawless -- even had some of our slang down. He had never been in the U. S. before. Between the two of them, my sad and sleepy spirit was lifted by lively conversations ranging from raising children, Russia, contrasting Christianity and Islam, and What to Do When You are In Wisconsin (Go see A Prairie Home Companion and a Chicago Bulls game. He will be close to both St. Paul, MN, and Chicago). I joked with him and asked him if he liked cheese and beer, and was he ready for the cold?

It will take time to process all that happened on this trip. I will try to do some of it here, but I'm sure I will be processing it for a while. I have to share the following about something I found remarkable about my preparations for the trip. Rajan's grandmother was raised by the great missionary Amy Carmichael, who was an Irish Presbyterian missionary in India from the late 1880's until her death in India in the 1950's. She started a home for young girls, whose other only option at the time was to be put out on the streets if they were unmarriageable, if they did not follow the customs of the Hindu beliefs, or if they were about to be sold to the Hindu priests to be as used as sexual sacrifices (if I understand it correctly.) She made an impact on thousands and thousands of lives during her lifetime.

What was so remarkable is that there were some parallels between her life and mine, which is another affirmation that this trip is a God-lead trip! Of course we shared a love for India, but here are some other things I found interesting:

- 1) Miss Carmichael was Irish, and was raised Presbyterian -- I'm more than just a dollop of Irish -- a combination of the Scotch-Irish, and I was raised in the Presbyterian Church.
- 2) Miss Carmichael called all of her charges -- "Darling," not necessarily by their first names; I call my own children, the children at school, and my Jr. Cotillion children "darling," hardly ever calling them by their names, unless I need to get their attention!
- 3) Miss Carmichael prayed that the Lord would change her brown eyes blue -- I did the same, growing up, because my three siblings had our mother's beautiful blue eyes, and I was the only one who received my father's brown eyes.

- 4) Miss Carmichael's "adopted" father was a Mr. Wilson, who was a Quaker, and she was influenced by the solitude of Quaker meeting. I too love attending Quaker Meeting, and I find it is a luxury, schedule-wise, if I can "double-dip" on Sundays. (One service Methodist, the other one Quaker.)
- 5) Miss Carmichael owned a Scottish Terrier in her later years, who was highly protective of her, when she was bed-ridden. My four-legged child at home, Mac, is a Cairn terrier, a breed, which was considered the original Scottish Terrier. He is ferociously protective of me.

I guess one way to process my journey is to share the joys, the discomforts, and the things that brought me sadness. The joys are probably too numerous to list, but I'll try.

THE JOYS

- The Chinnadurai Family -- Pastor Rajan, his amazing wife Beckye, and their six beautiful children. Rajan has such a love for his native country and the people, a tremendous sense of humor (he told the most wonderful stories about working with crusades, the challenges Americans found in India), and he is an incredible preacher. From Beckye, I think I understand a little better how to walk within the rhythm of God's grace. She is the epitome of grace and graciousness, joy and patience.
- The Hope Home children
- The 1,200-plus children with whom we worked
- The Indian pastors and their families
- Traveling and working with Elizabeth Anne, whom we lovingly called "The tallest white woman in India" with her standing 5'11" in flat shoes. She is beautiful inside and out.
- Our interpreter, Augustine, who truly had a gift for translation
- The smells we encountered in the villages -- all I can describe is dirt (dry mud), jasmine, and heat, with a hint of spice. That scent is heavenly.
- How God orchestrated our presentations -- we had enough to hand out at every event, and how well they were received. We were told we were truly an encouragement to the pastors and to the children
- The food
- God's provision every step of the way, whether it was rest, food, scheduling, or a word of encouragement
- Being able to impart some of the lessons from Jr. Cotillion in each program we did, and then providing a more extensive program to the Chinnadurai children and Hope Home Children
- Eating a last meal with the family -- I sat with the HH children and helped them with their meals -- teaching them how to hold utensils properly (they did a beautiful job.)

THE DISCOMFORTS

- The heat -- during some presentations, sweat was pouring down my back. I now know why women wear their hair up. The temperature in the rooms where we gave our last program, was probably at least 110 degrees F. We were blessed to ride in a air-conditioned van from point to point which was truly a blessing!
- Sometimes the children would crowd around us so much and reach out to shake our hands, that I would have about 20 children trying to shake my hand at once. I wanted to spend time with each child, shaking their hands and speaking to them, but was unable to because of the numbers.
- Leg cramps
- The dreaded Indian toilet, which is a porcelain hole in the ground. I will take going behind a bush or tree any day over that. Problem was, there was no privacy with using Nature as one's potty, so we had to use the hole. It was awful. I have a hilarious story to share, but I won't share it here.
- Not being mindful of some of the cultural differences. A woman does not hug an Indian man, even if one has grown to be friends with him.
- Seeing an entire Indian family riding on a motorcycle. The husband would hold the two larger children in front of him, and the wife would ride side-saddle (because of her saris), holding an infant. How they did it was truly amazing, but it struck fear in me to watch them.

THE SADNESS

- Leaving my beloved India
- Missing my family and my colleagues at school
- The restrictive caste system
- Seeing the poverty and wanting to do something about it, but not sure what.
- Frustration over not being able to speak Tamil, and frustrated that the villagers' command of the English language was minimal, even though it is the official language of India. (My wise and thoughtful husband reminded me that they were speaking Tamil or another dialect way before the English came in the 1600's. But they need good English teachers now to help them with the official language).
- Not having more time over there, and wondering when I might return.

Thanks for reading,

Lisa

P. S. For the entire trip, go to <http://www.wyomingumc.com/MissionLisaChase2008.htm>. The letters will be posted for at least a few days.