

Small Town, Big World: This Little Light of Mine

By Britt Bensen Steele

When we were in India, there was something both unique and amazing about the people. I think because their lives and characteristics were so different from mine, I noticed so many details.

I noticed their dark hair and smooth skin, their white teeth and brightly colored clothing, and how it took such a trained eye to see the difference between the rich and the poor because everyone dressed about the same and rode the bus.

One thing that really made them stand out to me was this constant and sincere desire to connect. They would come up to me and just start talking. We just don't do that here. Not with strangers. Not here: just walk up and

say, without any agenda, "where you from?" out of pure curiosity?

But in India, they did this, often. Most of the time there was nothing to be gained, no sale to be made. Nothing. They simply wanted to connect. I learned from some of the locals, that this was just the way they did things. It wasn't because I was white or western, because they would do that with an unknown Indian as well.

Their questioning was pretty much the same. It went like this: "Where you from?" "You married?" "Where your husband?" You



know where I went to school or where I worked. They wanted to know who I loved.

Even as we traveled by van three times a week to the "farm" where we offered clinic to the locals, the same thing would happen—without words—with the people on the buses—especially with the women. They would smile and just look at us for as long as vehicles were side by side. They would wave, offer their hands in prayer position, laugh with one another and do it all over again. They were quite

beautiful, and most of them worked 12+ hours per day... 6 days per week. They were tired. They were hard working. They were living in homes with dirt floors and leaky roofs. And they were filled with light.

I wonder sometimes about how we "do it," how we move so darn fast and how so few of us seldom lock eyes to ask "about the family" (in a sincere way, not a "time to make the donuts" sort of way)... I wonder about priorities and making a difference. I know what makes a difference: It's presence. It is your presence that is your greatest contribution to your community, your people, your home. It's the light in your eyes connecting to the light in my eyes that reminds us that we are all the same beneath our superficial differences.

I know the light that shines forth from my eyes. This little light of mine? It's yours too.

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