



In this Aug. 31, 2015 file photo, an Indian artist with his body painted with the likeness of a tiger dances before a tableau with a picture of tiger during the 'Pulikali' or Tiger Dance procession in Thrissur, Kerala state, India. This folk art festival is held every year in this town to entertain people during the harvest festival of Onam. AP Photo/Arun Sankar K., File

The rich feast of India

Country leaves an indelible impression of color and fragrance



An Indian couple spends time next to boats used by fishermen at the Shangumugham beach on the Arabian Sea coast in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala state, India, Nov. 8, 2017. AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi

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For the EO Media Group

A trip to India is many things. It comes at the visitor all at once. This vast and old nation is a rich feast of color, sound, fragrance, animals, food and religion. Traveling in India's external chaos calls for a measure of dexterity not typically required in other places.

My wife and I re-learned the India experience in November. Our three weeks there took us to the central state of Maharashtra, to the fabled Rajasthan and to the water-saturated state of Kerala

(the Venice of India).

Our connection with India is our daughter's in-laws. They are our embodiment of Henry David Thoreau's observation: "Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and longitudes."

India was not in our dreams until 2013. When Nizar Rana married our daughter in the McTavish Room in Astoria's Liberty Theatre, we gained a link to what is called the Subcontinent. Nizar left his hometown of Nagpur in 2003 to enter an engineering masters degree program at Clemson University.

After landing in Nagpur (population 3 million), we enjoyed the generous hospitality of Noorddin and Zariné Rana's home. With them, we traveled to Tadoba National Park for a tiger safari tour. We saw the two-year-old rice processing plant of Suhail Rana, Nizar's brother.

When we made a similar trip two years ago, there were ten of us travelers. Going there by ourselves allowed my wife and me to gain a more intimate view of the Rana family and its city. Noorddin showed us the Karimabad Housing Society that his grandfather helped start in 1975. It is a striking

compound that is home to 198 families, and it provides a worship space as well.

Suhail Rana showed us through his thriving rice processing plant. Like a processing plant in the U.S., his uses computers extensively. But there is also more manual labor. Suhail arrives at his bustling office with a large stack of rupees, which he uses to pay rice farmers.

After being with Suhail for a day, I realized the strong similarity between him and Dirk Rohne, the Brownsmead dairy farmer. In their look, their bearing and speech patterns, they seem to share a personality template.

Light in the soul

For the westerner, India is an array of stunning sights. In downtown Mumbai it is humbling to see an old man yoked to and pulling a cart that bears large propane containers. Nearby is a sign that proclaims: "No life is so hard you can't handle it."

Cows are commonly at the edge of city streets and in the midst of traffic. Scooters with mom, dad and their young child are in the midst of cars and trucks. At the edge of traffic, one sees camels shrouded with cargoes of hay and a boy

See INDIA/4C



These shrouded women were on a Jodhpur street.

Brenda Penner photo



Source: CIA, World Factbook
Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group