

Passage to India

by Josh Stadtler

The several days of our pilgrimage to India gave me insight into the real meaning of mindfulness practice, specifically, the capacity of humanity, in its multitude of forms, to coexist. In India, without mindfulness, there are far too many people and far too broad a range of spirituality for this teeming nation to otherwise function.



Bombay, city of some 20 million inhabitants, perfectly captures this thought. The streets are filled with dizzying motion: people on foot, bikes, motorcycles; rickshaws, cars, buses, trucks; animals. Everyone and everything angling for that desirous bit of free space. Somehow, it works. I saw no accidents. Perhaps it is just the luck of the draw. I prefer to think that the entire city is engaged in a massive web of unified energy with every participant steeped in the awareness of a fluid flow of energy. To participate in this flow, for even a matter of days, is to experience its organic feel, as if the coexistence of all actors is something born out of necessity, but also out of a concerted practice of awareness and the honoring of others.

All over India, I felt acknowledged by those whose paths I crossed. Passersby on the street met my eye and gave a little shake of the head, a brief pressing of the heart with a hand or a “namaste” gesture. An enveloping warmth and a unique sweetness, a seemingly thankful sharing of the space and time together, defined my encounters, whether they be with handicapped fisher folk, patients at a leprosy hospital, tribal children at a Jesuit boarding school or indigenous novitiates preparing to

become nuns. That recognition and appreciation of the other, I surmise, is borne out of mindfulness and a belief that we are all one, an integrated whole, the same.

I am hopeful.

