

INDIA, AN IMPRESSION



With its atmosphere, India is not a country, but an experience. All the senses are under siege: the smell of incense mixes with cow dung, diesel fumes and open sewer with the intoxicating smell of roses, shops invite you with a delicate mix of fine spices, irresistible to your nose.

The eyes feast on the colorful clothes, the brass statues and glittering cushions and what not of the bazaars, pictures of the gods and goddesses that seem to be everywhere, the marble of the temples, the sheer ant heap mass of people that finds its way in the narrow streets. Trucks are temples on wheels, as are many rickshaws. You can sit for hours just watching without one minute of boredom.

Ears are bombarded with the constant blowing of horns, the salesmen's cries, the shrieking of crows or monkeys, the prayer chants of temple and ashram (amplified beyond the power of the poor loudspeakers) and the banging on wedding drums, in some cities mixed with the call of the mosque. Add to this the Gayatri mantra, coming from the shops, competing with other Indian music and you know India may be the mother of meditation, but silence is a rare commodity. Yet one massage at the barbershop can bring you ease, silence and comfort.



India may be prudish, but how to avoid physical contact in a rickshaw that is meant for six, but easily holds twelve? The ever present motorbikes weave their way in between the pedestrians, holding their balance like accomplished tightrope walkers, people bump into each other, Delhi smog gets into your skin, hair and nails within minutes. Baba's abound (either real or touristy) and traditional loincloth mixes with modern jeans. But all cloths have one thing in common: everything's dirty.

One thing is not physical: the traffic. Rickshaws, cars, motorbikes and pedestrians somehow seem to manage to keep a distance of at least one inch and traffic is chaotic, but always seems to merge and get into a flow. As such, modern Indian traffic symbolizes the symbiotic nature of India's religious culture, always respectfully tolerant and ready to embrace yet another stream of consciousness.

All senses come together when eating, which is traditionally done with the right hand. Smacking and slurping is promoted, as the air getting in actually enhances the quality of the taste. For





the connoisseur, once you get used to it and have overcome your western inhibitions!

If the above may sound negative, please know that from the very first moment we set foot on Indian ground, we felt we would come back. As you obviously cannot change things and as everything is so irrationally over the top, all you can do is surrender, let go and go with the flow. India can show you all your inhibitions and lets you feel instantly how relative your values and customs are.

India is an experience in contrasts as much as in patience.

What better way to be confronted with Western efficiency and time management than visiting India?

What better way to relax than to dive into the flow of the Indian streets, needing nothing, wanting nothing and just merge?