EDPD 6304 - Multiculturalism in Education - Travel Journal

Summer 2007 -- June 3 - June 14, 2007

Welcome to the
EDPD 6304 - India Travel Journal

Dear Friends and Family,

The College of Education and Social Sciences (COESS) at West Texas A&M University is committed to the continuous development and improvement of all academic programs through the integration of cross-cultural understandings; and, in pursuing this commitment, has developed a series of international, faculty-led cultural explorations that are embedded in selected academic courses. (More information on these courses can be found here.) We are personally and professionally proud of our Go-Global Initiatives in the COESS. And, as you can see, we are expanding our classrooms into the cultures of the world.

What a privilege to share with you our daily travel experiences in India. Each day, during our COESS student travel excursions, 2-3 travelers will be recording the day’s adventures. This will provide us an excellent opportunity to reflect on our experiences and, simultaneously, for you to share these experiences with us. We will even attempt to upload digital photos (technology permitting). We will be posting, daily, beginning on June 4th and ending on June 13th. However, please do not be alarmed if daily posts do not show up immediately; delays should not be interpreted as anything other than technological issues.

We hope the journal will provide a measure of comfort, education, and excitement as you explore the world of India through our written words.

Namaste,

Dr. Eddie Henderson, Dean, COESS
Dr. Angela Spaulding, Associate Dean, COESS

June 3
Location: Amarillo, Dallas, and Chicago
No Journal Entry

Today the group is traveling from Amarillo to Chicago where they will board an International flight that takes them directly to New Delhi, India. There will not be a post today since the group is in transit. The group's arrival to New Delhi will be on June 4, and once the group has arrived to the hotel, faculty leaders will post a safe arrival message for the June 4th posting.

June 4
Location: New Delhi, India
Journal Entry: Dr. Spaulding & Dr. Henderson

Namaste and Greetings from New Delhi, India!
The first group of 7 WTAMU students arrived on time at the Indira Ghandi International Airport and were met by Dr. and Mrs. Eddie Henderson after clearing customs and immigration. They arrived safely at the beautiful Hotel Ashok located in the center of the diplomatic community and are already learning the intricate "art" of tipping in "Incredible India."

We regret that weather in the U.S.A. resulted in flight delays and cancellations. However, Dr. Angela Spaulding has been a good shepherd and the remainder of our students and faculty will arrive in Delhi during the evening of June 5. We will post an update shortly after their arrival.

Civil unrest has been occurring near Jaipur, India during the last week. Although the unrest has lessened, it remains present to some degree. Due to the possibility of an unpleasant experience in that area and as a result of our flight delays, we have chosen to eliminate Jaipur from our itinerary. We will depart Delhi on June 6 for the city of Agra - the location of the Taj Mahal.

Tune in tomorrow for the first journal entry posted by our students.

Namaste! And Safe Travels!

June 5
Location: New Delhi, India
Journal Entry: Chris Trice and Virginia Williams

Hello Friends and Family!

It’s 11:00 p.m., June 5, in New Delhi and twelve more members of the EDPD 6304 – India Experience just arrived to the Hotel Ashok! The remaining five of our group are still in transit, but are expected to land in New Delhi within the next few hours. Everyone is doing fine despite the travel adventure we had getting to India.

Today, seven students, Dr. Henderson, and Mrs. Henderson explored New Delhi. We started the day with a breakfast buffet at the Hotel Ashok. The food was amazing! They served traditional vegetarian Indian breakfast items (all savory and spicy) and offered a full western style breakfast for those who weren’t ready for full submersion into the Indian cuisine. After breakfast, the group loaded onto a tour bus and briefly visited the assassination site of Mahatma Ghandi. The President of Brazil was expected to visit the same time we arrived so, we had to move on fairly quickly.

Our next stop was the Lodhi Garden and Tombs. Lodhi was an Afghan dynasty, which lasted approximately a century before the Mongolians ousted them. The Lodhi gardens and first of four tombs were constructed in 1415. Today, the garden is a representation of the concept of reincarnation and despite not having any precipitation since September, the trees and flowers were lush and flowering. The garden is also a jogging trail so we saw many Indian men (no women) running around the grounds. The Afghans were Muslim and we learned a lot about their burial practices from our excellent tour guide. Most of the Indian population is Hindu and when their bodies expire, they cremate the remains and then put the ashes into the Ganges. Muslims; however, are buried in the ground much like Christians, except they pay close attention to how the body is oriented with respect to the location of Mecca.

From the Lodhi gardens and Tombs, we moved to the incredible Lotus Temple of the Bahai faith. The awe-inspiring piece of architecture was based on the number nine, which is the highest single digit. There are over two million people of Bahai faith in Delhi, and the temple was crawling with people waiting for the chance to meditate within the Lotus Temple.

Next we visited the SAGA department store where we received a lesson in the art of carpet making. Our rug maker demonstrated how the hand-knotted Kashmir carpets are made. They average about 720 knots per square inch. The carpets were all based on ancient Kashmir designs, all of them intricate and beautiful. We departed the store and ate lunch at a restaurant which served both Chinese and traditional Indian food.

Our final stop was the Birla Temple of the Hindu faith, which required that we remove our shoes before we entered. The architectural structure was vast and intricate with swastikas (an ancient Hindu symbol usurped by the Nazis) and elephants. Everyone visited the shrines of the individual Hindu gods, including Lord Vishnu, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva, Lord Hanuman, Goddess Durga, Lord Ganesh, and Lord Buddah. Both Krishna and Buddah are incarnations
Vishnu has had nine incarnations and the tenth is due sometime in the next few hundred thousand years or so. Today is Tuesday so; it was Lord Hanuman’s special day. He is the god of the bachelor and we saw many young men seeking his blessing.

All in all, it was an interesting journey through everyday Indian life. I already have a much greater understanding of the Indian people and I am anxiously awaiting tomorrow’s sunrise so we can begin another enlightening day.

Chris’ Journal Entry:

My Indian experience is more limited at this point than Virginia’s, since I only just arrived here a few hours ago. I have experienced the Delhi airport, the rather bazaar and potentially frightening bus ride, and of course the Hotel Ashok. We were offered both Western and Indian meal options on the plane, so in the spirit of adventure I ate only Indian foods, hoping to prepare my taste buds for the coming days. You may be wondering why I used the words “potentially frightening” for the bus ride. Suffice it to say, traffic and pedestrian control is much different here, almost absent. The closest comparison I have would be to imagine heavy interstate highway construction and heavy traffic with cars parked randomly in the lanes and pedestrian walking on the sides of the roads in the dark.

The unexpected adventure getting to India had distracted me from my previous concerns, so when we finally arrived I exited the plane with no expectations or reservations. I was pleased to find that my previous hesitations were unfounded. The airport was much like any airport and I saw no animosity in the faces of the people, just curiosity. There was one aggressive attempt to earn a tip from me, but fortunately I was prepared for that thanks to Dr. Henderson’s wise advice. I am sitting here in the hotel typing this and I can hardly believe it is real. I never dreamed I would have this experience and I can’t wait to continue the exploration tomorrow. Although I am tired and should be sleeping, I feel like I shouldn’t close my eyes for even a second, as I might miss something.

June 6
Location: New Delhi, Old Delhi, and Agra, India
Journal Entry: Roxie Igo and Michelle Sanders

The theme for today is “together again”. Last night the “Magnificent Seven” picked up the “Chicago Twelve” who were glad to join them. The “Fabulous Five” arrived about 3:45 this morning and have now traveled to three continents in the past 36 hours. Everyone is together and doing well although some of the luggage is missing in action. We have an extraordinary group that has pitched in and risen to the occasion and helped wherever needed.

The temperature is warm…today, it was 116 degrees and tonight it is a balmy 91 degrees. Highlights for the day included:

- A visit to Raj Ghat which is a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi that marks the spot of his cremation and where an eternal flame burns in his memory.
- We drove by and took photos of the Red Fort which was the palace for Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan’s new capital, Shahjahanabad, which he had moved from Agra.
- We toured Old Delhi enroute to Masjid-i-Jahan Numa, commonly known as Jama Masjid. It is one of the largest and best known mosques in India.
- The architecture at Qutub Minar was absolutely incredible! The tallest brick minaret in the world is located here in South Delhi. The minaret is made of fluted red sandstone covered with intricate carvings and verses from the Qur’an. At this location, 27 previous Hindu and Jain temples were destroyed and their materials were re-used in the construction of the minar.
- The “Magnificent Seven” (who visited this temple yesterday) guided the rest of the party through the Lakshmi Narayan Temple which is the shrine for the Lord Vishnu. We all received a tilak, which is a Hindu blessing of a red dot of sandalwood placed on the forehead. In order to receive the Hindu blessing, all presented an offering of fresh flowers to the various gods.

We ended our day after a 5 hour bus ride to the city of Agra, location of the Taj Mahal. While riding the bus to our destination of Agra, we had the opportunity to see animals walking freely among the townspeople and along the highway. These animals included cows, water buffalo, monkeys, camels, goats, and even an elephant! Upon our
arrival at the Taj View, our hotel in Agra, we were greeted with fresh floral leis and cool lemonade. We received a red dot on the forehead to bless our visit. We look forward to more India adventures tomorrow!!

**June 7**  
**Location:** Agra, India  
**Journal Entry:** Tammy Flores, Erin Prickett, and Lindsay Webb

We all woke up this morning to an amazing view. From our hotel rooms we can see the Taj Mahal. After an Indian breakfast or a western breakfast depending on your taste..... we set off for a bus ride to the Fatehpur Sikri! This is a city that was occupied from 1871-1885, and then abandoned due to the lack of water. It is located in the state of Uttar Pradesh! This was such an amazing and grand city.

We also visited a Muslim Mosque! There were many people here to worship! We all have to cover our heads men and women! While at the Mosque we each received a red piece of string that we could tie to the marble lattice screen. Once tied on, you can make a wish and when the wish comes true you must come and untie the string. Ashla, our tour guide, said we can email her and she will come and untie the string for us....when the wish comes true.

Our bus ride led us through the countryside of India coming to and from the Fatehpur Sikri. We saw remote villages and the village life is very unique. The men sit around all day and smoke cigarettes, play cards, play with children, and enjoy the company of each other. The women are not having fun at all; they are collecting water and firewood. The women must also tend to the children and animals. The women are constantly working! Note to husbands and boyfriends: DON’T GET ANY IDEAS!!!! J

We then journeyed to the Agra Fort also called the Red Fort of Agra. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site. This is the most important Fort in India! The country of India was governed from this place during the Mughal Empire. The famous builder of the Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan, once lived here, and was later imprisoned there by his son after building the Taj Mahal. There was an elephant ramp that was huge! This fort was looked like one from a fairy tale. It had a mote and drawbridge! This city sits on 126 acres of land with a beautiful view of the Taj Mahal.

Our adventure did not end here. We then journeyed to the Taj Mahal. We were escorted in by horse drawn carriages to the entrance of the Taj Mahal! The Taj Mahal is very hard to explain! Its beauty and presence is surreal and indescribable. Most people think the Taj Mahal is a palace; however, it is tomb built in its magnificence by Shah Jahan out of love for his favorite wife! She died while giving birth to their 14th son. The marble is so intricate that appears to look like lace! Adding to its beauty, the marble has ebony and precious gem stones in the marble. We were able to sit and watch the sunset behind the Taj Mahal. On a funny note: The Indians also viewing the Taj Mahal were more interested in the Americans. It is a tradition in the Hindu religion that if an American holds your baby then your baby will have good luck. We totally know what it is like to be celebrities. Everyone wanted to be in a picture with us and shake our hands. They were all very sweet people.

**June 8**  
**Location:** Agra and Varanasi, India  
**Journal Entry:** Pam Walker and Deborah Johnson

Howdy from India. We were a little disappointed at first to realize that we were assigned to write about a day of traveling on a train. We thought our journal would sound something like: we boarded the train, we rode on the train, we rode on the train some more, and then we got off the train and went to the hotel for the night. However, as you will read below, we had plenty of new experiences to share. Prior to leaving the Taj Mahal View Hotel in Agra, we purchased discount pictures from the carriage ride from the night before (only 50 rupees!) and about 30 cheesy Taj Mahal snow globes for gifts and souvenirs. We then left for the Tundla Train Station which was about an hour away. Upon arriving at the station, porters carried all of our luggage on top of their heads...actually about 4 pieces at a time. It was quite a site. When the luggage was gone, we exited the bus and moved quickly to the station to await the train to Varanasi...up the stairs, across the bridge, down the stairs. We were definitely the center of attention on the platform with our strange appearance and baggage piled a mile high. Following the detailed instructions given to us by our guide and professors, we made a mad dash for the train which only stops for new passengers for 5 minutes. Our luggage was loaded assembly line style, and then it took about an hour to sort it out and deliver it to its owners once we were underway. We had seats in the air-conditioned sleeper cars which resemble benches; as we learned more about
the organization of the train cars, some of us frightfully found out that we were supposed to climb up into the upper berths. Needless to say, we filled most of the upper berths with luggage and shared the lower seats. Many INTERESTING things happened along the way to Varanasi. Some of us met and talked with an Indian couple, with the last name of Baskar, whose son is an engineer in Houston. Mr. Baskar was gracious enough to write many of our names in Hindi for us, and the couple shared information about the Indian culture. Then we had a little excitement when about 15 college students who were fascinated by the Americans snuck from their car to ours and moved on only when directed to by a policeman. Our next incident occurred when our train stopped in the middle of nowhere because the engine overheated and had to be replaced. This took about 1 ½ hours at which time the air conditioning stopped working in one of the cars. (We had extra friends join us at this point in our air-conditioned car.) Periodically throughout the ride, train attendants carrying hot pots walked from car to car shouting “chai” and “coffee.” Meals were also for sale, but we had box lunches prepared by the hotel in Agra. (Our guide said he wouldn’t even eat the food on the train.) Some of the WT students met a boy, Vishal, who lives in Calcutta and attends a Catholic school. He and his family are Jains, a religion practiced by a small percentage of Indians. Vishal is learning Hindi as a second language, and he wants to be a pilot when he grows up. Mr. Fox met some university students and walked them from car to car introducing them to us. These students travel by train every day to and from the university. But there’s no other experience like visiting the western toilet on the train...don’t forget your toilet paper. First of all, remember the train is lurching, and you DON’T want to actually sit. The potty looks quite normal until...you look down into the bowl to see the ground passing below. This is India’s very efficient flushing system. The rest we’ll leave to your imagination. We finally arrived in Calcutta at about midnight instead of 8:00 as originally scheduled. Getting off the train was just as exciting as getting on. As soon as the train stopped, new passengers started boarding. We pushed our way toward the exit as porters came to take our big pieces of luggage. We then headed to the bus as break-neck speed, up the ramp, across the bridge, and down the stairs. Since the bridge is out that leads to our hotel, we must go an alternate route which will take an extra hour. Because of our late arrival, we will adjust the itinerary in Varanasi and move the sunrise boat ride on the Ganges to Sunday. It has been a full and tiring day of traveling on the train, but the sights, sounds, and people of India will stay etched in our minds forever.

June 9
Location: Varanasi, India
Journal Entry: Dolores Arambula and Christy Trevino

After our train ride adventure we arrived to the holy city, Varanasi also known as Benares famous city situated on the banks of the river, Ganges. We awoke to a delicious breakfast and headed out to the streets of Varanasi where we visited numerous sites:

- Sarnath, which is also referred to the “deer park” where Gautama Buddha first taught the Dahrma and where the Buddhist Sangha came to existence through the enlightenment of Kakondanna. Our guide, Agith guided us through the Buddha temple, Mulagandhakuti Vihara that had marvelous murals that depicted a story of Gautama’s life. We also received a holy blessing from the Monk that oversees the temple on a daily basis.
- Next, we visited Deer Park where Gautama gave his first sermon to the deer and the five disciples. Upon entering Deer Park we were enlightened by entrance view of the holy tree, Bodhi planted by Anagarika Dahramapala. Archaeologists have assisted to discover the ruins of the Buddha temple remains of the 2nd century B.C. destroyed by militant Muslims. The Ashoka Pillars are also located at the Deer Park; these pillars are the structure that held the four-figure face lion statue, which is known today as India’s national symbol.
- Following the Deer Park we were escorted to India’s Premiere Artifact Museum where we went through tight security, not allowing us to use cameras or video camera devices. The pride and joy of Hindus faith is the disfigured Buddha which the Muslims defaced causing it to lose its spiritual value. Numerous artifacts are located at this museum several dating back to 100 B.C.
- After an exhausted hot day, several of us relaxed with the hotel’s activities which included; spas, swimming pool, and shopping.
- Once again, we were off on our adventure visiting the Bharat Mata Temple dedicated to Mother India. The Bharat Mata Temple that was built by Babu Shiv Prasad Gupt whom built a marble model of undivided India, which serves as a relief map of India.
- Later that afternoon we headed to the Ganges River. The Ganges is the major river in the Indian subcontinent. Our means of transportation to the Ganges River was by rickshaws (carriages powered by local bicyclist.) The rickshaws went as far as they could take us, we then walked the rest of the way, and the sights and sounds of the streets encountered us, the many different horns, whistles and bells of the vehicles all
ringing simultaneously. The variety of odors from the Indian culture's foods. On the way down to the river, there were many beggars lining the sides of the steps. We then got on the boat and one of the oarsmen, who was deaf, road the boat down the river. Aligning the river, were many cremation sites and structures built by kings dated back from 16 century. Many of us saw a corpse floating along the river. At the cremation site, the bodies were wrapped in very colorful saris. Returning to the river, we saw Hindus performing ritual ceremonies. Once we docked and got off the boat, we were surprised to run into a parade. The parade was being lead by an elephant and in memory of the wedding anniversary of Shiva. Everyone called it a night for we were anticipating our 4:30 a.m. Ganga River boat excursion.

June 10
Location: Varanasi and Kolkata, India
Journal Entry: John Civis and Caleb Rejino

We are leaving the hotel at 4:30 am (Amarillo time = 6pm). The Hindu religion is the holiest when the sun is rising and when it is setting. We are traveling today back to the Ganges river and our guide assures us that Mother Ganga is prepared for us. She is the god of the river-the river itself. According to Hindus it is sacred and personified as a goddess. Hindus believe that cleansing oneself in the river washes away sin and purifies. We are ready to see the sunrise on the Ganges. Our walk to the river bank and we were amazed by the traffic on the way to the bank of the river. The mass of people never diluted but became concentrated more and more until we embarked the boat. Even early in the morning the streets were covered with people—making the streets their home. Where else can a several million people live? We are met again by the persistent hawkers who will not take no for an answer. The peddlers are of all ages and their products are just as varied. “You are my friend,” some would say and then follow by saying their names were Rick, Bobby, or John to English speaking travelers. Odors of sewage and concentrated urine filled the curry infused air as we passed by vendors who sold gifts of offerings. Once we got to the docks and boarded the boats, we traveled downstream and had the opportunity to observe many rituals performed by the Hindus. Some sang and chanted in unison in a meditative spirit and others filled the air with laughter as they neared their pilgrimage. Pilgrims staggered the banks as they were about to begin the ritual bathing. To begin the cleansing process they were to visit with the priest and then descend onto the banks to take their clothing off leaving their undergarments on. The rituals began in a symphony of rhythms since people were starting as others were ending. The continual offering was an impressive and awesome site to see. Hindus do not come to the Ganga to die but to have an encounter with the goddess herself. As we approached the boat we coated past a group of who brushed their teeth in the murky waters and bathing as normal near the steps. One another section of the banks, a master teacher was conducting swimming lessons and parents became studious onlookers. Immediately following this scene was the open air crematory allowing the smoke arose and fires to be seen from miles away. Here is where bodies of the dead were first immersed into the river and then the deceased had their mouths filled with the river water by all male relatives since females were not at this ceremony. Once this process was complete, the holy fire was received from the temple to initiate the pile of wood on which the body would lay. The oldest son was a very important part at this time since his duty was to send the ashes into the Ganges—sending the soul to heaven and ending the cycle of reincarnation. Our boat rides lead us back to the banks to our next stop.

Then we proceeded to Banares Hindu University for a tour of the campus—a site of three public institutes. The medical sciences, and technology are among the top three residential universities in the world having more than 128 teaching departments built on land donated by the King Mahaja Raja Kashi. As a part of the university a Hindu temple is found. Our next stop found us touring this temple barefoot through a series of large open air halls with various sized bells hanging from the twelve foot ceiling. These bells were struck by those entering to “awaken” the goddess Shiva and announcing your entry. After about the sixth bell and passing by the carvings of marble along the walls depicting holy symbols, we begin to enter the room where Shiva’s presence is. The presence is evident by a nurb shaped stone that is covered with stringed marigolds. Milk is then poured on top of the stone and the milky substance covers the stone, showers the flowers, drips on the shiny metal basin where it sits. The aluminum basin forms a mote where the milk is collected and then guided to a spigot where it is caught by a bowl. This bowl holds the contents by which the priest, who sits next to the stone to officiate, then dips his finger to mark the forehead with this special liquid and a powdered touch of red or light brown. After this we exited and left the shrine for a nice air-conditioned bus from a weather that was comparable to that of a midsummer’s day in southern Mississippi.

After returning to the hotel for lunch we soon left for another shopping opportunity at a Varanasi silk company. There was a guide to informed us of the process of such a lucrative industry of which the town is famous for. The silk,
coming from various parts of India where it is treated and dyed, is then loomed by hand by various artists who manufacture 25 centimeters of fabric in one day. Needless to say the process is quite time consuming and very tedious depending on the pattern memorized by the artisan. After the great demonstration we were lead to the upper room where four different grades of silk products were shelved. Table clothes, runners, saris, pillow cases, wall hangings, bed spreads, and yards upon yards of fabric were just some of the samples we were fortunate to see. With our hands full of “steals of a deal”, our group then rested the evening away until it would be time to board the train where we would spend our night. Sleeping on a train was a new experience for many of our team members but an experience they would never forget. The twelve hours on the train would prove to test many of us as our journey through India starts to wind down.

June 11
Location: Kolkata, India
Journal Entry: Jessica Weishaar and Emily Cook

We are on the last leg of the trip. After, traveling by train all night we arrived this morning in India’s biggest city, Calcutta. Our overnight train adventure began three hours late and with the beginning of the Monsoon season and Varanasi’s first rain since September. We all woke up refreshed after a surprisingly good night’s sleep in the cramped quarters of our train car. We shuffled our way through the chaos of the world’s largest train station and dodged the million yellow taxi cabs in the street to get to our bus.

The drive to the hotel allowed us to see that Calcutta resembles some cities in the United States with its large buildings, many taxi cabs, and fast pace. Even with all these things that seem familiar to us it is still obvious that we are far from home. Our luxurious hotel was a complete turnaround from our train accommodations. Everyone was ready for a shower and a good meal. After, a shower we all meet at the hotel’s coffee shop (24 hour restaurant), to indulge ourselves in a spectacular buffet featuring tradition Indian food as well as western cuisine. After, being out in temperatures well in the 100’s and visiting all the spectacular cites that India has had to offer, we were all ready for a leisurely afternoon.

Half of the group wanted some well deserved rest at the hotel, while the other half wanted to explore what Calcutta had to offer as far as shopping. Our new guide Sachi took half the group to one of Calcutta’s multi storied malls as well as some local shops. Although, the shops our not quite what we are used to we still managed to find some great souvenirs.

Many the women on the trip opted to visited the hotels spa and receive a variety of services including massages and Henna art work on our hands and feet. The day ended with a great group discussion about things that we have experienced, learned and what we will do with our new found knowledge that we have gained from our trip to India. Everyone seems to be well rested and ready to visit Mother Theresa’s hospital first thing tomorrow morning. We are on the last leg of the trip. After, traveling by train all night we arrived this morning in India’s biggest city, Calcutta. Our overnight train adventure began three hours late and with the beginning of the Monsoon season and Varanasi’s first rain since September. We all woke up refreshed after a surprisingly good night’s sleep in the cramped quarters of our train car. We shuffled our way through the chaos of the world’s largest train station and dodged the million yellow taxi cabs in the street to get to our bus.

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June 12
Location: Kolkata, India
Journal Entry: Jeffrey De La Garza and Matthew Blanscet

Highlights today for your enjoyment:
- Howrah Bridge
- Flower Market
- Mother Teresa House
- University of Calcutta
- Mother’s Children Home
- Mother Teresa’s Hospital

After spending the night at the beautiful Taj Benjal Hotel, a five star hotel, we lead out to explore the wonderful city of Kolkata, India. Our first visit was Mother Teresa’s House. This is where Mother Teresa spent her life helping people from all parts of the globe. The site offered a museum of a number of items Mother Teresa used during her life. We visited the room in where she lived and died. Mother Teresa currently rests in peace in a beautiful tomb in the middle of this place. We were only able to feel a small piece of her wonderful work. The nuns were excited to receive our offering of bedding.

After a short walk, we then had the wonderful opportunity of visiting Mother’s Children Home. This home provides care to sick children and also contains an orphanage. The home is well kept. Our hearts cannot help but have compassion for these needy children. The children were happy and excited for our visit and welcomed us to their home. Many of these children are adopted from families from other countries. There are full time nuns who work with the kids on a daily basis and we met a group of missionary students who were from California. They are in India for the sole purpose of giving these children much needed love. Their tireless work is very much appreciated. As we visited the home, the missionaries feed, played, and carried the children. The children were much appreciated of this kind and loving gesture. We gave a monetary donation as a group. The nuns were very happy to accept such a kind gesture. For we did a small part, we know that whatever they receive will benefit the home.

We wrapped up our education on Mother Teresa by visiting her hospital for the desolate. The feelings we had in there are unexplainable. We gave them some more sheets and blankets to this part of the group.

On our way to lunch we spent a few minutes taking pictures of the Howrah Bridge. This bridge spans over the Hooghly River in West Bengal, India. This bridge is used in many Hollywood pictures. We had the opportunity to take a picture with some local children. They were so excited and eager to be in our photos. We laughed at their sense of humor and know they made a difference in our lives.

The afternoon consisted of a visit to the University of Kolkata. To our surprise, the University of Kolkata ranks among the top 80 universities in the world. Graduates of this university consist of Noble Prize winners and numerous political leaders throughout India. A visit to the college bookstores was a surprise as the books are sold in rundown shacks alongside the streets.

The Flower Market was an adventure to remember on this trip. The area was following a trail that leads to an area where many trucks were trying to work. We had a difficult time in the maze of the flower market. The flowers are arranged for local merchants in town such as the hotel we are staying in tonight. The flowers in the hotel are beautifully arranged and provide the hotel with a wonderful site to enjoy by the guest. If you do not like tight and small spaces, this area should not be visited by you. Many people working and delivering items to one place to another. As we walked, we sort of stopped the people from working, but the people were as friendly and happy to see us.

This evening many have the opportunity to shop for some last items and other were eager to get to the hotel to shower. The heat has made many swear. This was an opportunity to get ready for dinner and ready for the trip to Delhi tomorrow.
Many of us have enjoyed the trip to a certain level and have learned some much about India. To say that we are uncomfortable and homesick is an understatement but we have learned that no matter where you are life continues. We are fortunate to live in America, a land of opportunity, but for the Indian people, this is their land of opportunity. What we take from this trip and experiences will be a reward that will last a lifetime. We will all take a piece of India that will ever change our lives. Positive or negative experiences are what makes and shapes us for the future. So what do we do now? Make the best of everyday and remember the simple things your parents taught you. Love, Accept, Share, Laugh, Cry, Smile, Work, Care. What else is there in life, but for one another.

June 13

Location: Kolkata and New Delhi, India

Journal Entry: J.D. Parker and Nathan Russell - Final Thoughts

It is Wednesday, June 13, 2007, and our Indian journey is coming to an end. Last night we inaugurated the monsoon season, which brought 4.5 hours of heavy rainfall, lightning and majestic thunder. The streets of Kolkata were flooded this morning, and our tour guide admitted to wading in waist-deep waters when walking to the hotel.

This morning we learned, too, that the Indian airline, the government-owned airline, went on strike. Though this was not our airline, it was unwelcome news. Thankfully, the strike did not cause any delays for us. We departed the hotel just after noon, and our intense journey to the airport began. Streets were flooded with deep waters, traffic was congested, horns blared, and a bus in front of us was caught by the water and tipped to the right 30o or so when making a sharp turn. The bus was stuck at the tilt, and the occupants were evacuated into the flooded streets. We finally made it to the airport around 2:10pm to make our scheduled 2:40pm departure to Delhi.

Confusion abounded as we tried to check our luggage and understand the carry-on policy. Batteries, water, hand gels, and make-up were not allowed as part of our carry-on luggage, and only ONE carry-on bag was allowed. We desperately tried to reduce our carry-on baggage, so Pam graciously took the girls’ makeup and 30+ bottles of hand sanitizer and packed them in her checked luggage. Our flight was delayed, which gave us some grace in having so much confusion at the ticket counter. All twenty-five of us made it safely on board, and our short trip to Delhi took flight.

Following our arrival at the Delhi domestic airport, we returned to the Hotel Ashok for a quick dinner. We left the Hotel Ashok for the Delhi International Airport at 8:15pm so we would have three and a half hours to make it through the grueling check-in/immigration process. We arrived at our gate with little more than an hour to spare before departure. We expect a great flight.

JD Parker, the coauthor of this journal, is continuing his unique journey in Japan. We left JD at the Taj Bengal Hotel (Kolkata) this morning, and he will travel on to Japan later tonight. We discussed our journal topics over the past days, and our collaborative effort is below. The sentences are pieced together to form a final mosaic of reflective writing about this most amazing experience.

We touched the River Ganges, we felt the heat from the crematories on the back of our necks, we have been blessed by monks and holy men, we walked where Mother Teresa’s feet trod, and JD was even kept up all night by a thirteen-year-old who wanted to discuss Jurassic Park I, II and, yes, even III during the train ride to Kolkata.

While walking through the gates of a very special shrine to Shiva, Nathan and I noticed something out of the corner of our eyes. We both knew instantly that what was written on a worn out poster, pasted to a small vendor cart, summed up our trip exactly. That poster read, “Travel Promotes Tolerance.” What we have learned over the past eleven days has undoubtedly changed everyone involved with this adventure. We have gone global, as this program states. This is evident with our late night discussions about how we feel we are doing as educators and what we need to do to become better leaders. These discussions prompted us to take an introspective approach and ask, “What am I going to do in light of what I have seen and experienced?”

This journey has promoted tolerance for many of us. What a special gift it will be when we can, in turn, help promote tolerance and the acceptance of diversity in our own schools, homes, and communities in light of what we have experienced in India. Perhaps this is one answer to the question. We have learned, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi
that, “[We] must be the change [we] want to see in the world.” This is another answer. We have made extraordinary friends within our group and in India that will last a lifetime.

In closing, I want to issue you, the reader of this online journal, a challenge. Though you have not had the opportunity to “Go Global” with us, you have been able to vicariously share our experience through this online journal. The question we have asked one another and ourselves is also for you, “What are you going to do in light of what you have read?” This is an important question. You may decide to research other cultures and religious faiths. You may decide to support the “Go Global” initiative at West Texas A&M University. Perhaps you will “Go Global” yourself; however, even if studying abroad is not an option for you, I encourage you to “THINK Global.” By doing this you will question the various and difficult aspects of life as a citizen of the world, and you will be a better citizen having done so.

Thank you for journeying with us the past ten days. We look forward to having global discussions with you.