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MAKING SELF RELIANCE

'Dirty Day' was organized by the Projects Abroad| India at Dayavu Boys Home. Volunteers demonstrated the power of volunteering by involving themselves wholeheartedly - one group of volunteers planted 100 saplings, while another group built a goat shed from scratch in one day : a third group donned gloves and masks and painted the interiors of a new building on the campus, everything happened in one day like a miracle. By doing all these tasks, we have helped the home become self sustainable and self reliant.

The founder of the home gave a final speech after 'Dirty Day', which was heart touching. Projects Abroad | India turned the home to be financially self reliant. One of orphans said "I am happy that there is someone to help us". Hope we will change many lives with this volunteer power.

Thank you

G.Durgairajan

Information Manager
Projects Abroad | India





A glance at Thirumalai Nayak Palace

Story By Nora Roger
France



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Around 1km South East of the Meenakshi Temple in the city of Madurai stands one of the finest buildings in South India: the Thirumalai Nayak Palace. The original palace was commissioned by the king, Thirumalai Nayak, who ruled from 1623 to 1659. It was built in 1636 with the help of an Italian architect. The complex was then plundered and demolished by his grandson Chockanatha Nayak, who wanted to build his own palace. Lord Napier, back then Governor of Madras, partially restored the palace in 1866 for six years. Nowadays, you can access the Entrance Gate, The Main Hall and the Dancing Hall. The Thirumalai Palace is today under the protection of the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department.

A magnificent show

Upon crossing the wooden main door, allowing us to enter the palace, one is immediately impressed by the 3.700m² of this huge courtyard, magnificent! Numerous enormous pillars face us, supporting statues, ornaments and other splendid engravings painted in burgundy and green. There are three rows on each side of the courtyard, and six rows inside the courtyard. Fun fact: because these columns are so massive three people are needed to surround them. Thanks to open-air, this space captures the light so that elements are highlighted and colors are emphasized. Standing still, in the center of this immense construction, we are hypnotized by its Indo-Saracenic style; Dravidian and Islamic at the same

time and to spoil nothing, silence everywhere.

In the internal part of the courtyard, where the throne is or at least its replica, every plot of ceiling shelters sculptures or paintings, each one different every time. We can already guess the importance which art had for the king. That is without taking into account "Natakasala", the current museum. Entertainments took place here in the arena. Seeing these burgundy walls, these statues of elephants and dragons on the ceiling, illuminated by sunshine crossing the colored windows, we can easily imagine the dancers moving altogether with grace for their king. He would have been standing where the statue of Narashimha is now, dominating the assembly.

A hymn to art

“Natakasala” is now a museum sheltering the vestiges of what this place once was. You will find Mahal Daniel’s paintings, Neolithic’s utensils as well as various sorts of shells, but also numerous sculptures from Jyesta Devi to Buddha. From this place you can get into the epigraphy part of the museum, in an adjacent room which is more austere. Painted in yellow and white, this place emphasized the boards where some inscriptions reveal themselves on the stones. You can also observe palm leaf manuscripts, handwritten; impressive! Outside, while modern buildings re-immers and noises of horns can be heard again, several new statues are presented. Damaged by time it is sometimes necessary to guess the face or the details. But the essence of the characters is perceptible from Vishnu to Yoga Narasinuha. You can also see the enormous dome from here, as well as the head of dragon on top of a nearby roof.

During the high season, the Thirumalai Nayak Palace gets approximately 1000 visitors a day. They mainly consist of tourists and curious people from South India. Once again, standing, surrounded by all these immense columns, or even in the dancing hall (under seventy meters of ceiling), you feel quite small. It is difficult to imagine that in reality the current palace you’re in is four times smaller than the original Thirumalai Nayak Palace, before its destruction. Imagine; the ornaments, works of art, decoration, colors and lighting effects in such a place. A “Sound & Light Show” takes place every evening to try to dedicate the place as it was supposed to look like in its bright times, and to tell the story of this fabulous Indian Palace. ■■





Bollywood verses Madurai

Story By Nora Roger
France

Before I came to India, I watched a Bollywood movie a day. I knew it would not be a correct representation of the country, but at least it would give me an idea about it. They don't create these films out of nothing, do they? I have seen almost fifteen films of the actor Shah Rukh Khan; all of them show's an organized and smiling crowd, lots of beautiful bright colors, temples, incredible homes and landscapes. I was amazed by the beauty of women, dressed with classy colorful saris and their magnificent hairstyles, but also by their grace in every movement. However, I have read that an Indian girl should not show too much skin, but they do so in these movies. It is probably due to the Hollywood influence.

I finally landed in Madurai in January. The first impression, I might say, was not that great. I guess this is the so called "cultural shock", even if it is not completely unlike what I expected. But still, you cannot genuinely imagine the reality of this place, until you have been here. My habits and logic were upside down. It wasn't the cut of power, the bugs and the rats or being all dressed when it is thirty degrees outside, I never cared about that, but all the noise, the dust, the crowd, the crazy driving and the spicy food... it disturbed me.

I realized something though: Bollywood actually is a relevant reflection. No matter horns, mad traffic nor the insanitary condition. You'll get used to it. At the end, it's not the pictures you see that is important but the values carried by the movie through: family, respect, kindness, tradition and beliefs. This you can witness every day in Madurai.

Before leaving France everybody told me



"You have to be strong, you'll have kids running after you to sell you stuff!" Far from Danny Boyle's movie Slumdog Billionaire, the only children running after me are those who want to practice their English, who are curious about me. Moreover, when I went to visit the Meenakshi temple, the locals explained to me where to leave my shoes, because you have to remove them before entering the temple. Afterward, they assured me into the line that was only for women, letting me cut in front of the others. Another one gave me some of her food, while I was inside. When I took the bus to go back home, a man gave me his seat. Some few details of kindness, but strangers in my country won't help

you that easily. In some over-cleaned and well organized cities, you will have comfort but not so much humanity. If you are planning on visiting India, remember that you won't be dancing and singing a hindi song in a colorful street but you will enjoy yourself. As the proverb says "you can't judge a book by its cover".

First time in India

Story By Valentina Ebranati

Italy



First time in India, or better said, the first time that I set foot on Indian soil. I've been going north to Nepal and South to Sri Lanka, but is now faced with the journey of my life: the one to India.

India and its culture have in fact always accompanied me day by day during my life, both due to family composition and to important bonds of friendships.

Mostly every day, beside to the Italian culture in which I was born into, my aim was not to lose the Indian part in me. And

so I did, with clothing, cooking, readings and studying the ancient traditions as the most recent pop life with its music and film's heroes. I live near the town of Florence in Tuscany, one of the most beautiful regions of Italy and I work in the local University but I must admit that my everyday life is made of dressing kurtis, cooking super spicy biryanis and singing hindi pop songs.

Many times I have organized my travel but each time something happened for which I had to delay or put off the idea,

even because I didn't want to come here as a simple tourist, I wanted to be part of the daily life, so finally, after a long series of bad and good events in my life I had the chance to leave; my special moment had arrived!

I must admit that when the airplane was landing on Mumbai, first stop of the journey, with all its shining lights, I had my heart beating...so it was finally and really me, arriving in India!

Then, once in Madurai, from hour to hour, the dream turned into reality. I met my wonderful host family, walked to the center of the town, went to the holy Meenakshi Temple and the crowded small markets, ate a meal on a banana leaf, made an effort to talk and listen to everybody, including the street future teller with his cute green parrot that picks fortune cards, even if I do not understand a word of the Tamil language and, last but not least, wearing the best of my Indian clothes, that most of the year are sadly closed in the wardrobe!

Everything is exactly how it was expected to be, with one difference, now it is no longer a movie, it's my daily life and I don't want to miss one minute of this great experience. Step by step I discovered something new that I didn't know before and most of the things are amazing and exciting. Of course, there are shades and even things that I would never get use to like the noise of the continuous sound horn in the street, for example, but the thing that I regret more is being unable to talk to people, all kinds of people, from the woman who sells hair to the girls joining the procession of women carrying bowls of sprouts on their heads; one of the most impressive image that I will keep in my heart forever.





Dirty Day Pictures 22th January At Dayaru boys home



Volunteers in action at
Painting on the newly
build walls

Volunteers
from various projects
planting more than 100
plants



Volunteers building
new goat shed on the
boys home