Review and Reflections on India Study Trip January 2011

We would like all participants in the India Study Trip to reflect on the visit and provide some feedback on all aspects of the visit. This will help us in reporting on the success of the study visit, and in considering and planning for the next study visit in 2012.

What were the most important outcomes for you, having returned home from India?

Would you recommend the trip to other students, and why?

Can you provide any examples of activities that you found especially meaningful, important or transformative?

Please write a sentence or two about each of the activities listed below - comment on how effective and useful they were to you in understanding Indian culture and religion:

Village walk, orientation and visit to folk shrines:
The body in Indian art and religion:
Catholic Mass, participant-observation:
Yoga practical:
Temple architecture power point:
Visits to Temples - Jain and Hindu:
Indian folk dance:
Student presentations:
Mehndi:
Making a mandala/patterns on a person:
Visit to Sita school:
Shopping trips to Bangalore:
India, ecology and climate change (with Siddartha):
Evaluation discussion:

How did you find the facilities of Sangam? (Meeting, sleeping, and eating arrangements; also toilet and washing facilities, access to electricity.)

Please provide some comments on the lecturers, organisers and advisors for the study trip (Jyoti, Kiran, Imogen, Chris, Tom and Dominic).

What are your reflections on the preparation and organisation of the trip? (Consider preparatory meetings, making payments, visas, meeting points, sharing of information.)

What are your reflections on the cost and value-for-money of the trip?

If you were to enhance this trip for students next year what would you suggest could be added or amended?

What do you consider has been of most value to you in undertaking this study trip to India?
Could do better …

More trips out and lectures out and about in the area. I don’t want to put too many negative thoughts upon the trip because I really appreciated all the effort of Dom and Tom, the beautiful place we stayed, the group and learning about India and I know this was the tester run, being that it was the first trip so the organizers had no idea how it was going to pan out or how the timings of the day would work. … I was itching to explore more of the area.

Kieran made a valid point that perhaps we should come with a core understanding of India, its culture and what we would be interested in studying further.

I’m not sure if anything needs to be added, though I think certain aspects of the trip can be enhanced. For example, having a lecture about temple architecture would have been enhanced whilst sitting outside of a temple. I also think that we could have fit in a couple more lectures on Hinduism – Jyoti would call himself a Christian so we were getting most of our information through his perspective. Having a Vaishnavite, for example, come and talk to us about his or her faith would have been fascinating. Ideally, though I’m sure this is not possible, the India Study Trip would be best if it was part of a formal module, ie ‘Religions of India,’ and the assessment drew on from our projects.

I am planning to do a self directed module on the trip, but that might not be the case for everyone who might have viewed it more as a holiday than a study trip.

A trip into Bangalore at the beginning of the trip. …

I think my biggest observation here was that more preparation could have been made for the notion of communal living and what this entails. One of the things which did irritate me slightly was how thoughtless people were sometimes (for example using the last of the loo roll but not bothering to make sure that it was replaced). I think it would be worth making part of the orientation session a focus on these aspects of the trip since, although they are often just little things but they do make a difference to how well people get along together. And it’s a good life-skills lesson too!
Student Destinations and Transformations

I found our day visiting the temples, watching the activities at the lake and the boat ride at the bird sanctuary unforgettable. This day really opened my eyes to India. I loved seeing the diverse country side and the old buildings.

We got to see rural India but also the modern developing India which was useful in learning about the culture and the societal make up.

It’s a life experience I will never forget and has sparked an interest in the sociological and political make of religion in India which I intend to follow up.

I think the most important outcome has been to reaffirm my interest in how religions affect people. Religions in Britain have been marginalized to some extent, and to see religions as integral to everyday life has really piqued my interest.

Seeing the temples in person as opposed to reading about them in books was the most meaningful activity for me. You can really make personal reflections on the power of religion when you are walking around a temple. I also enjoyed visiting the church service, you could really see how different cultures put their own twist on things.

Learning about the Indian culture and their way of life. How important religion is to so many people. I felt that it was important to spend time working on our projects, looking at one important aspect and expending on it; it allowed us to consider things in more depth. The most important thing for me was visiting somewhere so completely different to what I am used to and it being such a great experience.

It was just a great experience overall, and I am very grateful for being able to go. I learnt so much whilst I was there and so have brought so much back with me. I feel that I have been able to think about things in different ways and that is important to me.

That’s a big question! The walk round the village – particularly the time we spent at the brickworks. One knows that this sort of situation exists but it is something quite different to see it laid out so very graphically in front of you.

Going to the Jain temple was huge too – but in a very different sort of way. Some interesting thoughts on the notion and purpose of pilgrimage, from a somewhat different perspective to my usual western Christian one, was one offshoot of this.

The trip has piqued my interest. The trip has added to my overall university experience and education in religious studies.
Study visits and Transformation (or Tourism)

1 The cognitive dimension involves learning new facts, ideas and concepts.

2 The affective dimension occurs as learning shifts away from the intellectual towards personal and connected knowing, often as part of a shared experience.

3 The existential dimension consists of deep soul-searching in which students question their values, life purpose and sense of meaning.

4 The empowerment dimension comes about as the student begins to resolve issues and realises that they can make a difference.

5 The action dimension is the final stage in which students realign their lives, either personally or professionally, as a result of their learning.

Rogers and Tough (1996).