

Khumb Mela, February 21st -24th 2019

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After all the personal research and excellent briefings from official sources; and already having an image heavily influenced by the occasional interaction through game of Cricket, Bollywood movies, and history framed and narrated by western writers...I finally got the wonderful opportunity to immerse myself into India through the Kumbh Mela festival which I attended from February 21st – 24th 2019

Those 4 days making new friends, experiencing the people, food, culture and awe inspiring landscape was a deeply transformative experience to me. Being aware of the global issues of former colonies like India, and the challenge of societies like ours in Grenada to re-connect and reconstruct our lineage which was often segregated through colonialism and slavery; my visit to India has started me on a quest to really begin to cherish and celebrate my India heritage as part of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean, and have a deeper understanding of my own uniquely creolized culture which has a strong Indian heritage. Many Grenadians today will say that my Grand parents or Ancestors came from “Bengal” or “Calcutta” and still have some cultural practices that can be traced to such roots but because we have not had the opportunity to go back and trace these ancestral connections many of us remain isolated from our Indian heritage.

While visiting India I saw faces which look like family, I saw activities and tasted food which had similar flavor to our Caribbean foods; additionally the warmth and hospitality of the people made me feel right at home, it’s a feeling I really did not expect to experience from a land which is geographically so far away from Grenada.

I have definitely felt a bond with India that I am sure will continue to strengthen and deepen over time. My Trip to India to experience Kumbh Mela was epic, and went far beyond my expectations. I have left India with a renewed sense in the wonderful nature of humanity and richness we can achieve when we share our culture, and openly show respect and honor to traditions, religions and customs which may be different from the ones we have been socialized to acknowledge as our own.

The Hindu philosophy of honoring nature and respecting the fact that all living things are created by divine hands and therefore is worthy of honor or prays, was also a major revelation to me. Being on the banks of the River Ganga, and visiting Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh really brought home that message in a powerful way to me. I saw people from every nation without separation based on wealth, class, color or nationality having a moment of bonding the human spirit together through this ceremonial immersion into the water. I laid my hands into those waters and I also felt this calm, a blessing which I know will continue to nourish my spirit for a long time to come.

Meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and some of his cabinet colleagues was also a most memorable event during my trip. The remarks my Minister of External affairs, Sushma Swaraj, and the PM was very inspirational, and I was really taken aback by the humility and wisdom of the words of both ministers. The both presented Indian political leadership as very much in touch with global issues, sober, intelligent and courageous leadership; these qualities are often not seen in the political leadership in many developing or Post Colonial states; I was truly impressed by the leadership.

I felt very privileged to have visited India through the efforts of the Indian High Commissioner in Trinidad, and all the team who assisted in providing all the relevant support to facilitate this experience. I left India feeling very inspired, the society is one which is diverse, culturally rich and in some ways a trendsetter. I saw a society trying to bridge the gap to tackle poverty, empowering of its women, protecting its children, educating its citizens, and still reaching out to the rest of the world to share its wealth, technology and experiences as a rapidly developing economy. This for me this is the story of India as I experienced it, a legacy in many ways, one which I will share with my children, community and all those who I can inspire to embrace India, a significant part of my Grenadian heritage.

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