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## Dee's Journal – *Death by an Hour – by Dee Bird*

Oh my, India was an experience. Chennai has to be one of the dirtiest places on earth. The particulate mass in the air is apparently 10 times more than acceptable levels, and it isn't now and then – constantly the air is thick with filth. Our ship is just coated in a black layer of oily soot. The poor men who clean it will be busy until Thailand trying to get the grime out of the carpets and off the railings. Funnily enough, it's been raining all day today. I think it is nature's version of the car wash! Naturally, I didn't run in India. Firstly, we were too busy – what with overnight journeys on trains that had us arriving at our hosts at breakfast time, and leaving on trips at dawn – but also, it would have been a net health loss to run in that air – if one could survive the traffic of everything from cows, goats, tuk-tuk rickshaws, mopeds, bicycles, buses and Mercedes. It seems very much busier, more crowded and polluted than it was ten years ago, but the begging and overt thrusting of mutilated children into our faces is down. Despite feeling as if one has never seen such grinding poverty before, it seems less than it used to be. I was supposed to go on a trip to the poorest area of Chennai yesterday afternoon, but was suffering from an adverse reaction to my anti-malarial medications. (I have stopped taking them and feel much better.)

If I didn't get sick whilst in India, it was a miracle. We did everything that the medical team had warned us not to do... eating street food off banana leaves, eating with our hands with no washing facilities available, eating every conceivable fruit, unpeeled and unwashed... but enjoying it all, and surviving it all. The food was phenomenal. Indian restaurants in the west have modified their menus dramatically – one wonders why, since it is so very good just the way it's done in the homeland. Sleep was hard to find, especially on our night train – long unisex carriages with “beds” in tiny little boxes about a foot wide and five feet

long, with metal ribs down the middle... better living through drugs... CVS sleepaid pills worked their magic.

We don't teach today, which is a huge relief. Everyone comes back from India completely wiped out. It is an exhausting country. We have four days of classes before Thailand, when I will be off to the River Kwai – my Dad was a Japanese POW, so I thought I would go on a sort of pilgrimage...

Funny to think of your time change... When we were crossing the Atlantic, we had a Spanish interport lecturer, David, who spoke of “death by an hour a night”. More or less, every other day we are at sea, we lose an hour. 23 hour days are not what the great goddess intended!! India was only a half-hour which we lost on our arrival to India, and then last night we did the next half-hour. There will be another hour tonight, and another, and another... all the way around the world. We gain a full day when we cross the International Date Line, but that is of no value at all – it's just another day we have to teach. Funnily enough, that day is Easter Sunday – we have two Easter Sundays and teach on both of them!

.....I appreciate that anyone cares about Where in the World is Dee!!