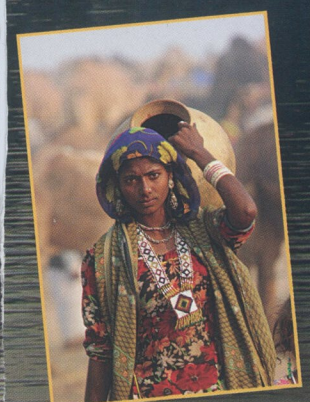


Khuri was the next town we visited, close to the dunes and our planned camel excursion. The town's desert huts were made of mud and straw, outwardly resembled Persian carpets, with brightly and abstractly painted decorative exteriors. The mayor made arrangements for our camel caravan that arrived right before sunset, across the rim of the dunes. The photographs we took that evening were magical and the experience of being there among the camel drivers is an unforgettable one. We couldn't speak their language, nor they ours, yet we communicated with hand motions and smiles. We later discovered that the fifty dollars we paid them for this excursion would feed five families and their camels quite well. That night we drank whiskey under the stars, watched traditional Indian dancing, and slept in mud huts like gypsies in the desert. The next morning we purchased some beautiful hand sewn bed covers, which we hoped would help sustain the village then set off toward Delhi, the final stretch of our journey before taking our flight to carry us south.



The beds were getting harder and we were growing weary of rice and vegetables. As we got closer to Delhi, the fun began. The traffic merged into six overlapping lanes containing cars, motorbikes, bicycles, trucks, occasional cows, and pedestrians - all converging and melding together, in a mass of horns and smog. This typical scene is really indescribable and I prayed more than once, as one false move from any of the drivers would have resulted in mass death. Surprisingly, during our time in India we never witnessed any accidents. After saying a final goodbye to Om Ji, we headed south to Kerela.

If northern India seemed too frenetic, the southern state of Kerela, by contrast is slow and idyllic. Kerela felt like a different country altogether. The influence of the Dutch, English, and Portuguese, is evident. Historically, all fought to dominate the area known for its spice trade. We spent three days there, resting, taking slow walks along the coastline, and watching the fisherman bring in their catch of the day with their large fishing nets. We also watched an authentic Kathakalia dance. The performers, all with painted faces, dramatized stories from Hindu mythology.