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## Linnea's Blog III: The Sweetness of Chai

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Hanging woollens

### Linnea's India Blog III: The Sweetness of Chai

“Canadians are not friendly?” our guitar-seller, Rajet, asks David later in the afternoon. David is attempting to explain how he loves the friendliness of the Indian people. “No - Canadians are friendly; they are great,” he answers. It’s just that we have walls and doors and distance. In Canada, everything is designed to give highly-prized personal space: our houses, our lines on the road, the doors on stores, line-ups single and by the rules. All designed to maximize our sense of safe individuality. In India, so much is out in the open, in the midst of everything. Shops are small and pour into the streets, with merchandise hanging and stacked around the front of each. The people crowd the streets; buying and selling begins in front of everyone, until you are invited inside to negotiate further, with perhaps a cup of chai.

We are sitting on a floor mattress in Rajet’s music store, sipping from tiny plastic cups. We have compared notes about the Goods and Services Tax

which India adopted about 6 months ago, and which has, in his opinion, plunged accounting into national confusion. Different classes of goods are sold at different tax rates; the rate started at 28%, was lowered, only to be raised again. A guitar is bought from abroad and is paid at 28%, and is sold with the same tax rate. Yet, a wooden harmonium (hand-pumped box organ) is free of tax.

Clearly, things are happening in India to attempt to clean up past abuse, favouritism and bribes. Currency was recalled last year to be replaced by new. Rajet shakes his head; “I got pulled over by the police officer who noticed my license was not clear, I was not wearing seat belts and such. I handed him 200 rupees but he said, ‘No backshish. You must go to the court and pay.’ So, I went to the court to pay. The judge looked at me and said, ‘Your license and your seat belt... you must pay 300 rupees.’ So, I go all the way to the court to pay 300 rupees instead of 200.”

This is not what troubles him the most, though. In the court, he actually walked into the wrong room. It was not the Traffic Court, but rather the Divorce Court. All was chaos, people shouting, parents speaking up for their adult children, disarray. A man who seemed to know things told him that 80% of love marriages end in divorce in India. This worries Rajet; his posture noticeably changes as we sip our chai in his shop. He has a “very special friend who is my girlfriend, who I am engaged to”. It is a love relationship; they are well suited and his parents just love her. He fears what might sour that, possibly, when she moves in with his family, as is the custom. There is something more trustworthy about an arranged marriage. The man at the court has increased his worry.

It is an unusually intimate conversation in which Rajet clearly sees David as his elder. Our hearts are warmed. David buys the guitar so he has something to play during our mission stops. The sweetness of this conversation over chai stays with us all day.

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To contribute to Linnea and David's Music Ministry: <http://www.linneagood.com/>

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Linnea Good

"Enlivening Faith through Story and Song"



Peanuts for sale



Street view



Pots



Window



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