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Katmandu....

Nepal....land of the mountains, this boy is home!

We left Kolkata at 2 pm, with the flight being only an hour. It is a sight flying into this valley ringed by mountains. The backdrop is the wondrous Himalayas, always snowcapped and thrusting into the sky higher than anything else on the earth. There are many ways to sense being humbled and this is one of the most awe-inspiring ways.

I called my friend Sahadev in Bandipur and he will meet us here for breakfast around 8. It will be a five hour ride for him and a friend that he is bringing. We will; spend the day going around the city purchasing the supplies for the schools, first aid kits, a science lab, soccer balls and probably a few other things.

Yesterday afternoon Kara and I met Carmel for the metro ride to Mother Theresa's shelter for the homeless and dying at Kalighat, a poorer part of the city.. We had gotten our volunteer permission slip earlier that morning. The home is in a large building that has three main parts, two wards for each male and female separated in the middle by the kitchen. We each got on a work apron and were thrust into the wards to assist the men and women with their needs. It was initially a little overwhelming to figure out what to do because there is no orientation. I ended up helping individuals to the bathroom, getting them water, giving massages (a simple touch is such a wonderful thing), talking with them even though we couldn't understand each other, handing out the evening meal and then cleaning up in the communal kitchen. There were about 65 men, all lying on their cots with numbers above them. That is how you can know who need what if you are new and don't know anyone. The majority of the men have some kind of wound, many of them to the feet, some have dementia, and some are bed-bound. Most will circulate back to the street and then back to the shelter when their needs become critical again. To those of you who do long-term care, and hospice you have my deepest appreciation. It is a service unlike any other.

After our work we went back to the hotel and showered. Nafeeza had previously arranged to meet a friend for shopping so she was gone for the day. We ended up at a very nice Chinese restaurant with excellent food. We had friend rice noodles, spicy tofu and a wonderful vegetable mix settled in a delicious milky cream. Kara and Carmel had a Tom Collins and I enjoyed a Kingfisher beer. We had a great visit with Carmel and we have no idea when our paths will cross again. Remember she is headed to Australia for a job in Social Work. I have an extreme admiration for her and the dedication she has had to Mother Theresa's, this being her second time, the first being almost a year and a half in length.

So, we are in a new adventure, a different culture, and new feeling. Nepal does that to me, settles me internally.

Till next time, peace be with you.

chuck