



Lined up along Sudder Street — home to most of the volunteers — rickshaws wait for business. The world's oldest form of wheeled transportation, the Indian rickshaw remains the primary method of moving people from one place to another.

CHAPTER

7

Sudder Street

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A FEW DAYS AFTER MY FIRST VISIT to Mother Teresa's leper colony, I began to visit some of the hotels and dormitories where many of the volunteers stay while in Calcutta. Sudder Street is the main tourist artery of Calcutta, particularly for young people traveling around India. There are what appear to be an endless number of cheap hotels and inexpensive restaurants that serve Western food. Sudder Street was my home for a few weeks while I stayed at the Fairlawn Hotel.

Directly across the street from my pleasant accommodations was the Salvation Army hostel, home for many young men who were working as long-term volunteers. One evening shortly after my first encounter with George, I visited him in his dormitory for the purpose of videotaping an in-depth interview with him. When I stepped through the front door, I immediately smelled the stale air and noted that the dusty walls were badly in need of painting. A guard pointed me in the direction of George's room that was on the ground floor facing noisy Sudder Street. George was lying on a narrow cot talking with several Frenchmen who also worked as volunteers with Mother Teresa.

Lines of rope hung from the walls, clothes piled over them, some drying, but most of the blue jeans had no other place to be stored except in suitcases that were under the beds or next to the cots. An old fluorescent light dimly lit the room, and a few tables were littered with plastic water bottles, shaving supplies, and bottles of shampoo.

The men seemed perfectly content in their surroundings as they lounged on their beds sharing their experiences as volunteers among themselves and then with me. I sat at the end of George's bed, flipped on my video camera, and let the men talk for the next hour. Their testimonies were profound and filled with their burning desire to find greater meaning in their lives.

Lying on his bed, an arm supporting his head, George began by telling me about an experience he had that morning with a patient at Kalighat. "He [the

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