

The Surreal Love of a Mother and Child!

Leslie Saunders elaborates on her understanding of maternal love in the Indian subcontinent and how the bond between mother and child here greatly differs from that in her own country.



Leslie J Saunders

Travelling through different continents and countries throughout the world must be one of the most amazing and exciting opportunities that one can have. To view and experience the diversity and reality of the world through your own eyes, experiencing the warmth and sometimes the hostility that you come face to face with only enriches your own life. Many people find themselves less fortunate and unable to travel and therefore can only envisage what these different cultures and geographical wonders offer through reading books, magazines and watching television. However, when one travels alone through unfamiliar territories there are often occurrences that bring to the forefront of your mind a memory of what you have left behind. I found this statement so paramount during my remote travels when I regularly came across the parents busily amusing or nursing their children and my thoughts would drift back to my own family back home in the UK. Again I found myself comparing the parent and child relationship in India with the relationship back in the UK and the western countries. As children busily played around me, not a care in the world, the most important and immediate fixation being the game they were currently involved in, I thought about how we had become so overly protective to our children in Europe due to the many dangers that lurked in the background. Do we allow our young ones to have the same freedom I see in India to develop their own character, or are we so over protective that we constrict their natural development by unintentionally modelling them into our own vision?

Like many of my experiences travelling throughout India, I was taken aback as I watched many mothers engaged in their daily work and chores, often with a small child strapped to her body. I marvelled yet again at the strength that these women portrayed. One of the women I met whilst travelling through Araku Valley, breast fed her baby while at the same time continuing to carry her heavy laden basket. She spritely continued her journey to the local market with no evidence of tiredness or stress.

The tribal woman exuded love and affection as she hugged her child closely having stopped for a moment to rest from her chore of grinding the maize. As I discreetly observed the engagement between mother and child I couldn't help but think about my family 5,000 miles away, the love between a mother and child is so surreal at times. During all my trips so



▲ **Sunshine!** This vibrant young woman reminded me of the sun. Not only did she wear a most colourful sari but radiated a huge smile. Wouldn't life be more pleasant if we all made an effort to smile so infectiously?

Colour Co-ordinate It was obvious that this proud mum had taken great time in dressing her child in cute clothing. The trip to the market was obviously an important day in the life of this young woman. I couldn't help but wonder if she always wore such an intense look.

Multi-tasking I was amazed to observe this young mum carrying her load, at the same time feeding her baby. She strode with a purpose as she continued with her journey to the weekly market. What a wonderful example of multi-tasking!



far, the evidence of true maternal feelings between such a small person and their mother shone everywhere. The closeness and importance of family life in Incredible India was unmistakable.

As I continued my travel through Rajasthan, I continued to witness the maternal love displayed for all to see, these dignified young mums dressed their children with pride. The child's carefully thought out attire complimented the vivid yellow of the mother's sari. They certainly stood out amidst the crowded market, as always a photographer's opportunity not to be missed! I was already prepared with my camera sporting a 300mm zoom and happily clicked away at the wonderful sight of the baby wearing a striking green bonnet, a protection against the glaring hot midday sun.

As I continued on my journey I came across a village where the women were busily collecting their daily milk. The pleasant sound of the villagers chattering and laughing amongst themselves produced a soothing ambience. I quickly searched for a discreet vantage point where I could capture the moment through my lens. It wasn't long before I was surrounded by inquisitive children, now I had a challenge trying to photograph the emotions of my subjects without being seen or disturbing them. But it wasn't long before the women forgot I was there and I continued to capture the moments that allows me to share the strength of these amazing women, 'The Real Women of India'. Again I contemplated my own life and couldn't imagine how I would find the strength and resilience that these amazing females exhilarated as they carried their child and milk churns at the same time.

The relationship between the parent and child depicts true emotions and is certainly one of my favourite subjects to photograph. The passion is so deep and telling in their expressions, what better stories can I portray through pictures!

Happy Clicking!

— Lesley J Saunders