

# The Bustling & Bouyant Bazaars of India

The hustle and bustle of the markets throughout India are an amazing source of subject matter for a photographer. When asked what to do while on a trip to India I always suggest, amongst the obvious tourist fascinations such as the Taj Mahal, to visit a market. I find that this is a perfect location to observe not only the different cultures and emotions of the wonderful people of India but also savour the local cuisine and enjoy the regional crafts and trades. The vivacious atmosphere experienced is unique. The bartering over goods creates excitement amongst people,

which is quite infectious.

Having visited many markets throughout India I was pleasantly surprised to notice the significant difference between these *bazaars* - the various smells linked with the local foods, the effervescent colours changing from region to region.

Visiting the markets in Bengaluru, armed with camera and a selection of lens, I positioned myself discreetly in the corner of the market. I observed a vendor taking a few brief moments from her busy day, her pensive look was deep that I could not help but wonder what she was contemplating.



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The moment was interrupted when a man strolled by carrying a tray of freshly prepared pineapple, the rugged expression of concentration and determination evident in each line of his face. As I strolled further round the market I watched the way the customers extracted their chosen goods with precision and bartered the price to an acceptable level for both parties. We are far too quick to pay the asking price in the UK with bartering not being a tradition sported. However, with the economic challenges currently being suffered by many I have observed people asking for lower pricing. I wonder if this is due to people travelling and experiencing the fun of negotiating!

The fascination of the street markets in Rajasthan was based around the jewelled colours that were evident not only in the dress but also in the fabrics and goods on display. There were groups of people throughout the street exchanging stories. Peals of laughter could be heard as friends enjoyed each other's company. Families out for a weekly trip, children playing, and vendors promoting their wares created an effervescent atmosphere. As an observer it was like being an audience at the theatre, an abundance of activity surrounding you. Yet how many things in life do we take for granted and do not actually see? Could I describe the markets in Europe the same way or do I just see them as a means to an end, somewhere to buy what I require? It's amazing how a 'lens' allows you to look at the world through different eyes. Although the crowds of people create challenges when taking candid portraits, they also provide a camouflage to hide behind when capturing that magical second of the intense emotion. The pensiveness, the sadness, the thoughtfulness, the love and the dreams - all displayed



▲ Flowery As this man carried his load through the busy market he still took the time to observe what was happening around him. The accuracy of manoeuvring amongst the crowds had obviously been perfected with practice.

through the eyes and body language of the individual.

Many of the visitors to the markets have gone to great lengths with their dress and walk proudly around the stalls. Often the vendors have taken a lot of time with their appearance. This was very obvious with the tribal women bedecked with their jewels and vibrant attire.

Upon leaving one of the tribal villages in Araku Valley I came across the local market where many of the tribal inhabitants from the nearby hamlets congregated. The atmosphere was electric, everyone laughing and enjoying the relaxed day. There were mixed groups enjoying the local refreshments, exchanging stories. Children chased each other; squeals of glee were heard as the pursuer captured his prey. Yet again this was a different experience; the market stretched throughout the fields, truly an outdoor experience, the only shelter from the blazing sun being the umbrellas. This was not only a market, but also a family event with many cooking food for lunch generating a mixed aroma of smells.

I watched the women having their hands and arms painted with henna, the skill and artistic flair evident as the street trader



▲ This man strolled by carrying a tray of freshly prepared pineapple, the rugged expression of concentration and determination evident in each line of his face.



◀ This woman held on to every word that was being spoken to her. Her expression portrayed the kindness that lay within this individual. How often do we get distracted and not always give the full attention that maybe we should.

worked with great precision. The group of females were busily chattering as they sat in a circle trying on sparkling bangles, creating a kaleidoscope of colours.

With the bright colours symbolic to Rajasthan, the large rings and ornate jewellery representative of the tribes of Andhra Pradesh and the oriental features specific to Nepal, it is easy to recognise what part of India you are in. However, when I walked the streets of the markets in Delhi I could have been in different parts of India. I was intrigued with the visitors at the Gurgaon market - the beautifully dressed young woman wearing a lilac sari, the young mum with the beaming smile that lit up her face the man taking a well earned break. The young women dressed in their attire from Rajasthan stood out amidst the crowds. Even the young couple from the Nepal region were evidently enjoying the experience of the marketplace. Again all different emotions were on display ranging from protection, contentment, tiredness, apprehension and love.

As I watched the vendors proudly stacking their barrows with fruits and vegetables, carving shapes into many of the fruits I couldn't help but wonder if they are just as articulate in everything they do. Again I thought of back home and could not think of any market or indeed shop in which I had seen such an artistic display of fruits and vegetables. Another unique habit displayed by the people of this amazing country.

You can read more about my perceptions and experiences and why I choose to capture the images that I do in my travels, in further editions of *Asian Photography*.

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— Lesley J Saunders