



Humbler Than Dust: A Retired Couple Visits The Real India By Tandem Bicycle

Mona Lee

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Dick and Mona's arrival by tandem bicycle in rural villages of India is like a circus come to town. Each time they stop, they are mobbed. Usually more than a hundred people close in around them. Or in this moving scene: ". . . Dick boldly usurps the left edge of the blacktop and lets two big trucks roar around us . . . Another truck waits behind honking indignantly in demand of room to pass between us and a loping camel cart whose driver gapes sideways at us in abject wonder. After all, in this corner of the world an old white couple on a bike is positively bizarre in contrast with the mundane appearance of a camel driver sitting on a mountain of burlap bags, his white turban bobbing up and down." They begin each day of their 1,000 kilometer journey not knowing what they will eat or where they will sleep that night. Lodging, if available at all, does not afford basic comforts taken for granted in many countries. Often there is no hotel, and they depend upon the kindness of strangers or camp out under the stars. On a visit to the Gandhi's home museum Mona is inspired by a poignant quote from his autobiography. "The seeker after truth must become humbler than dust. Only then and not 'til then will he ever find a glimpse of truth." The story takes the seeker along on a series of horrendous and at the same time humorous adventures wherein truth is found in intimate encounters with life, people and culture at its humblest. The truth they gradually discover is that the beauty of life can best be attained by biking headlong into adversity. Dick Burkhart and Mona Lee are a retired couple trying to circumnavigate the globe by tandem bicycle and popularize the concept of a global parliament directly elected by the peoples of the world. *Humbler Than Dust* is the true story of their two-month travel adventure in India as well as their organizing escapades at the 2005 World Social Forum in Bombay. Throughout the journey they meet a host of wonderful characters who help them in many ways. They even get some help from Ganesh, the popular elephant-faced god whose spirit permeates the atmosphere of India.

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