



SONG OF INDIA:

Tales of Travel and Transformation
MASTI RATING: EXCELLENT

Travelers' tales centered on India often talk of transformation, particularly of the spiritual kind. But what makes Mariellen Ward's narration so fascinating and admirable is her ability to don the Indian frame of mind.

She slows down and lets the cultural cauldron that is India churn her around till she begins to align herself with the poor Indian masses who manage to maintain unwavering faith in the face of pressing hardships.

Mariellen's new book "Song of India: Tales of Travel and Transformation" is a compilation of articles which have appeared in different publications. Two of them, "The Crossing" and "Morning is Golden: Life in an Ashram" were published in the leading Canadian newspaper the Toronto Star.

In the course of the book, Mariellen finds the Orient of her childhood fantasies in the architecturally rich desert town of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. She also

comes face to face with death as a part of the life-death-rebirth cycle in Benares, the holiest Hindu pilgrimage site.

The writer also experiences the vitality of river Ganga, the lifeline of North India, the therapeutic nature of simple *ashram* life, the love and warmth of Tibetans and the butterfly season in Dharmasala, the seat of the Dalai Lama, the dynamism of new Bengaluru's (Bangalore's) Electronic City and the relaxing charm of old Bengaluru's gardens, café's, markets and godmen.

But some of the Mariellen's most compelling writings are those inspired by India's amazing people. For example, when she takes a public bus in Rajasthan, a mode of transport she had avoided in the past, she sees crushing poverty and the generosity and friendliness that survive it.

Towards the end of her piece about the bus journey, she writes – "I turned away to look out of the window at the

dry desert landscape, baking under the scorching sun, and dotted with mud huts and women walking with huge bundles of twigs and branches on their heads, or almost as equally large jugs of water. My eyes filled with tears as I realized the real reason I had avoided taking the bus."

Of course there are other dimensions to travel, for example, food, adventure sports, shopping, etc. But as far self-discovery goes, Mariellen, who took to yoga to overcome pain caused by personal tragedy and traveled to India to find peace, gives us a wonderful book that could serve as a template to anyone looking to explore themselves by exploring the world.

Mariellen's writings can be accessed and her book can be bought on her website BreatheDreamGo.com.

– Mini Kolluri

**Mariellen Ward at
Aurovalley Ashram 2010**

