Kali Temple
by Brock Davis

For my field trip I am going to talk about the experience that I had at the Kali Temple in Kolkata, India. The Kali Temple is located at Kalighat, Kolkata, West Bengal 700026, India, and is use of the Hindu religion. I visited this location while I was attending a medical mission with Operation Smile in February of 2013, which yielded 102 successful surgeries to those in need.

The temple was close enough that we could walk to the temple from our hotel. Along the walk there, we walked through a very poor community. It is surrounded by beat up houses, homeless people everywhere, and just complete poverty everywhere. The most memorable thing about walking there was that there were a group of children that were playing a game of soccer with a very small rubber ball that did not resemble a soccer ball at all and used lines drawn in the ground as goals. Since I had brought extra soccer balls and pumps/needles, it was one of the most heart-warming feelings to be able to leave them something as simple as a soccer ball just to play with.

As we came closer and closer to the temple, we had to walk through sketchy back allies that seemed as if they led to no-where. There were paintings all over the walls and the most common symbol was a backwards swastika which I found out from the locals is a sign of peace. Surrounding the temple itself were many little places and they were making little bread rolls but it was not really bread. I am still unsure on what it actually was because of a language barrier, but I was able to find out they were used in worship and to eat. They were also very good. There were also many little stores where they were selling objects for worship such as pictures, beads, flowers, and many other objects.

To enter the Temple you had to walk through a metal detector that was guarded by two guards with assault rifles. The guards told us that we were not allowed to take any pictures inside the temple and they took our bags and cameras. We were put with a member of the temple who spoke English and he was our tour guide of the temple. He told us to enter the temple we had to remove our shoes and he took paint and put a dot on our foreheads between our eyes. The dot stands for your “third eye” and your third eye sees the world as how it is. This means the power of the third eye allows each person to make judgments not made out of hast, but to make the right or wrong decision.

Inside the temple seemed to be a bit like a party in some areas and ritualistic in others. The tour guide explained to us who Kali is and why they worship her. She is the Hindu Goddess of destruction, and that they worship her so that she does not bring harm to yourself and your family. The first thing we came across was a small building that they used to sacrifice young male goats. They will only sacrifice a
the temple, which surrounded a very old and very large tree that was beautiful. When you get to the tree you make another wish and pray for the safety of your family, friends, and yourself. Then, you take a sip of warm milk and pour the rest onto the tree. He then took our names down in a small book of his and we each gave a small donation to the Kali temple.

The Kali temple was the first time that I had really been out of my norm in terms of religion, and it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life thus far. I got to go to a temple in Kolkata, India that most people have never even heard of and it will open my light on religion for the rest of my life. I was also able to take pictures of around the temple and other parts of my trip and can be seen on a short video that I created at YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkbSSdzEABE&feature=youtu.be.

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