

The surprise was the reception we got upon our arrival at Boys' Village. Fifty-four boys, lined up by size, cheer and clap as we enter the gate and step off the bus. With the women going first, we are ritually blessed with incense smoke and given the traditional "dot" on our foreheads with a red and saffron yellow paste, then beautiful garlands of flowers are placed around our necks by the oldest boys. Such is the tradition of giving "special guest" status to honor and welcome someone into their village and lives. From that moment on, I knew this was going to be an interesting experience. It was an honor I had not yet earned.

We retired to our rooms. Jim and I shared a cottage, which was spartan but adequate. Two beds, two windows, a large ceiling fan, two chairs, wall hooks, and a second room with shower and bathroom facilities.

6/19 Brothers Mark Murphy and Joseph Fernando are amazing people. They both radiate a humbleness that is so refreshing. Looking at the beauty of Boys' Village and seeing how kind, smart, and talented the boys are - these men have reason to be proud. I like them both very much already.

We visited the Boys' Town today, which has a population of about 100. A trade school teaches woodworking, metal working, and welding. They construct and sell furniture to help finance the school. They also raise coconuts and sugarcane for consumption and sale. We had an opportunity to meet Brothers from other areas who were there for a meeting.

6/20 Father's Day Attended Mass, where Brother Lawrence made his first vows. A celebration followed. Today Nesa taught me to write my name in Tamil.

Smiling at a job well done, Elizabeth Mullen proudly displays the hundreds of tiles she "red washed" for the rebuilding of the chapel roof. Very little is wasted in India, and through the recoloring, these tiles took on a new appearance without incurring additional expense.

Working on his morning Tai Chi, this young Indian is thought to be an albino. His grace, so obvious here, is equally displayed in a hat dance that involves balancing a two-foot-tall piece of headgear while performing traditional movements to Indian music.



The Gateway to Boys' Village is marked with both Tamil and English, as are most signs in Southern India. The compound has a large metal gate which is closed at night. The night watchman, armed with a flashlight and a whistle, guards the hundreds of drying coconuts in the center of the courtyard.

After a long day at school, these boys came back to the compound to wash the overwhelming number of tiles before they could be stained red. The boys began their day at 5:45 each morning, sweeping and cleaning the compound and watering the plants.



Enjoying the great beauty of Southern India, Paula Orozco photographs the scenic countryside.