



EDUCATE - EMPOWER - EQUIP

"If you empower a child in India, you empower the Family, the Village and the Community - Forever"



Dangerous Trip

Maiya balanced the clay jar on her head as she walked alone in the early morning darkness. Her bare feet kicked up a cloud of dust as she traveled, and the miles rolled past almost in a blur as her entire focus became on just taking the next step. It was easier if she focused on the progress she had made already and ignored how far she had yet to go. Her shoulders threatened to knot, but they finally relaxed as much as they could under the circumstances. Long experience had taught her little ways of coping, had hardened her muscles, and trained her to endure despite everything.

Each morning, before the sun touched the



sky, she placed the jar on her head and made the trip from her home to the nearest well. Often, she would travel with other women from the village, but today, she was alone. She had started to the well earlier today because of the change in season, and she wanted to get a head start on the other women. If Maiya made it back in time, she would be first in the gathering of migrant farmers looking for work, and that would give her a much-needed advantage. The local landowners choose pretty much at random, not caring how fit a worker was. If the farmer

couldn't make the quota during harvest time or keep up with the work during planting season, the landowner would cut them loose or worse hold them over until their 'debt' was paid. Too many of her neighbors had become little more than indentured

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servants, stuck paying off what they owed in labor indefinitely as they were forced to borrow from the landowner to feed their families.

That wasn't so much the problem to-



day, however. Maiya needed to be there early and up in front where they could see her to improve the chance they would choose her. Despite the risk of failing to make the quota or being taken advantage of by greedy landowners, she realized that without the work it would mean another season without food. Even with the work, there never seemed to be enough for her family. So, she pressed on, walking another mile to the well they shared with another village.

It was then she heard it. Low voices came from off in the distance. She stopped and turned just slightly to listen. Maybe it was some of the village women who had caught up with her? But that didn't make any sense; she was sure she'd beaten them all. As the voices drew closer, she could make out only a few of the words, but it wasn't women's voices she heard. She went suddenly cold as the realization hit her. It was the rough and low tones of men she heard approaching, and the only reason men would be out here in the dark on the path to the well was...Maiya tucked the empty water jar under her arm and ran, leaving the thought unfinished.

"Hey! Over here!"

Panic fueled her escape. She raced in the general direction of the well, but in her haste, she couldn't be sure she was on the right path. All thought of gathering water flew from her mind. Her feet pounded the hard-packed dirt, sending shock waves of pain up her legs. The jar was awkward and cumbersome, but she clutched it tighter. Some stray thought told her that if she let it go, she would be as good as caught. Then the men would use her and then leave her

bloodied and disgraced in the middle of the wildness with no one nearby to help.

“Hey! She’s over here!” Two other voices answered back and began to shout as they drew closer to where she ran blindly through the dark. There were three of them.

That spurred another adrenaline-fueled sprint. Her feet scraped against the hard soil, leaving bloody patches she hoped they could not see in the near-total dark. Her foot caught



on an exposed root, and she went down hard, somehow managing all that time to keep her water jar from shattering. Her tiring mind had merged the tasks of gathering water with the pursuit behind her. If only she could hold on to the water jar, she might make it out alive.

“Where is she?”

“I don’t know. I lost her.”

“Ah, forget it. The sun’s coming up soon, any-



“Struggling to her feet, Maiya took a long moment to quiet her racing heart and take a breath. Then, with more determination, she set her jar on her head and continued toward the well.”

how. We’ll try again tomorrow.”

She lay very still and, with much grumbling, the voices began to fade into the distance. They must have had as hard a time seeing in the dark as she did. Struggling to her feet, Maiya took a long moment to quiet her racing heart and take a breath. Then, with more determination, she set her jar on her head and continued toward the well.

Apart from the economic and social inequality women face every day in India, Indian women are often the victim of crimes such as rapes, molestation, trafficking, and abuse. Daily, women and young girls in rural villages travel long distances to rivers

or wells to collect the family’s drinking water. These trips are often dangerous as there is very little to protect them except their numbers. Women are undervalued, and Dalit women are considered the lowest of the low in society. Too often, crimes against them go unanswered, especially in rural areas where the perpetrators can escape long before help arrives.

At Global Helps Network, we are always trying to teach women about the inherent value they have as human beings and equip them with skills like tailoring, reading, and writing which can increase their value in society and lessen the abuses against them. One person, man, woman, and child at a time, we are trying to change the way



women are viewed in society. Our literacy courses and vocational schools also open the door for many to hear about the love of Christ.

Written by, Michael Eash