

REFLECTIONS INDIA: LYNDON'S FIFTH LETTER FROM INDIA

It is Sunday today as I am composing this letter. Two weeks have passed since I left South Africa. Normally I only stay away for two weeks but this time the four week course has beckoned me. Of course I miss South Africa but I am enjoying the course and India immensely.

Week two started off with project management and contract management, an enlightening session. In India they follow similar steps to us with the concurrent and consecutive steps aligned to the Gantt Chart. The lecturer Professor Shah also sent us an e-book reader which is a good text book for us to follow. One of my colleagues from Russia, Dr Nikita Sorokin, also advised me to read up on Scrum which is what the Americans use in Project management. It seems from a quick google glance that the originators looked at rugby as the motivation! We ended the Monday off with looking at the Fiscal and monetary policy of India and the role of the Indian Reserve Bank.

On Tuesday we had a very interesting lecture on Cross Cultural Communication. Professor Samson enlightened us on various aspects of cross cultural communication. He used examples from across the world but what stood out for me was the fact that in most Eastern and African countries discussing business first up was a no-no. People first wanted to speak about matters like the family, the weather, the rains and various other things. Only after that do you discuss business issues. Perhaps us getting down to business too quickly nowadays defeats the purpose of getting to know your clients, stakeholders and partners?

The rest of the week focussed on marketing from a customer orientation and digital marketing perspective. We spent two days looking and discussing various aspects and how the world was changing. We also completed various exercises. We ended off the week reviewing decision making and envisioning. The professors are all leaders in their niche areas and one important aspect that everyone emphasised was the life, work and family balance. It is important to look at this aspect and ensure that you spend time with family and living life! Some food for thought there! I will definitely be reflecting on all these aspects!

We also spent considerable time on the Sustainable Development Goals. Perhaps we are not doing enough in South Africa to promote the Sustainable Development Goals. I think a bit more promotion and marketing must be done so that we can infuse it in our planning.

Our last lecturer introduced us to the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi spent 21 years in South Africa. He was in South Africa from 1893 until 1915. It was in South Africa that he took up the challenge to build up his organisational capabilities in a bid to fight non-violently against the racist South African regime. I have bought a book on his life and will be reading up on Gandhi.

South Africa, of course, has a relationship with India which stretches back to the 1860's when the first Indian labourers were transported to work on the sugar cane plantations. I know too little to write about that but what was surprising for me to find out was that India hosted 14 prisoner of war camps in India during the South African War from 1899-1902. Professor Floris J.G. Van Der Merwe from the University of Stellenbosch published a paper in the International Journal of The History of Sport in 2007 in which he indicated that from April 1901, Boer prisoners were sent to India where they were exposed to terrible heat and sandstorms. Research indicated that in most camps football was played in the late afternoon when it was cooler. In other prisoner of war camps rugby was the featured sport and was played in Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka), St Helena and elsewhere. It is an interesting feature of South Africa - India relations that I was unaware of.

India of course was the first country to welcome back South African sport when the late Clive Rice led a team in November 1991 to play against India at Eden Gardens. 90 000 people attended that match. I noted from my visits to bookstores that the biography of AB De Villiers is in the top ten selling books here. He is hero worshipped and I have been following the controversy of him not playing against England when the IPL is on.

Our linkage with cricket still continues. The Hyderabad Sunrisers are the current IPL champions. In 2015 Dale Steyn played for the Sunrisers but was released in 2016. In 2016 the Sunrisers were crowned champions. So I shall be cheering for the Sunrisers when the Indian Premier League starts in three months' time.

Of course I have been following the chess scene closely as well. Grandmaster Amonatov from Tajikistan won the 15th Parsvnath Delhi International Open after settling for a quick draw in the last round with Grandmaster Ghosh in the tenth and final round. He scored 8.5 and ended above grandmaster Ghosh and Grandmaster Marat from Uzbekistan. Both these grandmasters scored 8 points. I have noted that GM Marat plays many events in India and always does well. The 2016 African Champion Grandmaster Hichem from Egypt participated alongside Spencer Masongo from Zimbabwe as well as WIM's Laubscher, February and WCM Fisher. I am sure they picked up valuable experience in this tough event.

Today I want to focus on Indian women's chess. The top five women chess players in India are

1. Grandmaster Humpy Koneru 2557
2. Grandmaster Harika Dronavalli 2539
3. International Master Tania Sachdev 2429
4. International Master Karavade 2418
5. International Master Vijayalakshmi Subbaraman 2393

India has 11 woman grandmasters of which the first two above has been awarded the male grandmaster title. The most successful Indian woman player has been grandmaster Koneru. She started to play at the age of five and won many junior events. At the age of 16 years she participated in the World Cup in Hyderabad where she lost to Ju Xuhua of China after winning her initial rounds. Some of her successes of which there are many, include the fact that she became a woman grandmaster at the age of 15 years and that she is the first Indian girl to have obtained her woman grandmaster title and the men's grandmaster title.



In November 2012 at the Women's World Cup in Khanti Mansiysk three times SA Closed and current SA women's champion Women International Master Denise Frick nearly caused an upset when she attacked GM Koneru fiercely in round one of their two game contests. The attack alas didn't come through but provided the world with a nice game in which WIM Frick showed her prowess.

This week we were very fortunate to also visit a few places of interest. On Saturday we attended the market Shilparaman where about thirty acres have been set aside for arts and crafts. A kite festival also took place there.

On Wednesday we visited Charminar. The Charminar was built by Mohd Quli Qutb Shah and is a unique symbol of Hyderabad. It is surrounded by bustling bazaars of pearls, jewellery, perfumes and bangles. It is located in the heart of the old city. It was nice strolling in this part of town and looking at all the potential souvenirs.

On Thursday after class we visited a temple which was quite an experience. We left our shoes and cameras at the front and proceeded to walk to the temple. There were various gods in the lower section. My Indian classmates Naveen and Rajesh explained to us the significance of the various gods and why some of them had different features. I quite enjoyed learning the history of the various gods and their fascinating tales.

On Saturday we visited an Indian theme park where we were introduced to Indian folk dancing, puppet shows from Rajasthan and various other cultural activities. Note to self I must start watching Bollywood movies!

We then ended Saturday afternoon with a visit to Lake Hussain Sagar.



It is a lake in the middle of Hyderabad. The lake is dominated by the largest statue of Buddha in India. It is said that the Buddha Statue in Hussain Sagar is the largest monolithic statue of Gautam Buddha in India. It was carved out of a single granite rock by 40 sculptors under the guidance of Ganapato Stapathi. It was transported from Raigiri on a massive carriage with 192 wheels over a distance of 69 kilometres and installed on 1 December 1992. It's height is 17 metres and its weight is 320 tonnes. India is a very religious country and very diverse. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity live next to each other and one can see the spiritual side in most Indian aspects of life.

The website will have some photos as well.

Enjoy the reading.

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah

Reporting live from Hyderabad