

REFLECTIONS INDIA: LYNDON'S FOURTH LETTER FROM INDIA; HYDERABAD



Every morning from about five, the cacophony of motors and motorbikes hooting starts to wake me up. I discovered that in fact most of my classmates start hearing the sounds as the campus we are staying on is near to two main roads. The roads are called the Raj Bhavan road and the Panjagutta road.

Last week a few of us walked down Raj Bhavan road and I noted the houses of the chief Minister and other important dignitaries and other government offices. We walked until we got to the statue of Rajiv Gandhi and then crossed the busy street. Now crossing the street is an art form as you need to be mindful of motorbikes, cars, buses and the ubiquitous Tuk-Tuks. It was reported in the newspaper this morning that half of Hyderabad owns a two wheeler motorbike. That means on average there are over two million of these motorcycles in use in Hyderabad. And for some reason they all seem to ride past our campus when we sleeping! It has become commonplace for us to see passengers wearing a sari or a family on a two wheeler as they called. I am told that most people in their twenties get a motorbike because a car is too expensive. The Tuk-Tuk can be found anywhere at any time. We generally walk to places close by and take the Tuk-Tuk back. They operate just like in other countries. Three to four people can get in alongside and at the back of the Tuk-Tuk, we then swerve and weave through the traffic at generally break neck speed to our destination. These drivers with consummate ease however take everything in their stride and follow the London metro: keep calm and carry on and of course Mind the Gap!

I have also been following the food we receive with interest. I have to date not fallen foul of the infamous Delhi belly although there were some close calls. I generally try to take the vegetarian dishes and then take the less spicy food. The campus distinguishes between spicy and less spicy food. So the typical meal will always have some curry and hot stuff but if you watch what you eat then you should be ok. The website will contain some photos of dishes. I

don't know the names of the dishes but my Bangladeshi, Indian and Sri Lanka friends are educating me!

Every day we receive newspapers in our rooms and I was very surprised when I saw the coverage given to chess. Every single day there would be a newsworthy article published on a chess event where Indian players are participating. I have been following the chess event in New Delhi. The event was well covered in various newspapers and ends today as I am writing this'. The favourite to win is a Tajikistan Grandmaster Farruk Antonov whom I saw at the Olympiad. The Indians are of course pressing for a home victory but we shall see what develops.

Everyone is following the participation of GM Pentyala Harikrishna at Wijk aan Zee. He drew yesterday against GM Karjakin which had everyone happy. The news that just broke was the withdrawal of GM Humpy Koneru from the Women's World championship set to take place in Iran. In 2004 when International Master Mabusela played her they told him that if he beats her then they would name a burger after him. Sadly there is still no Mabusela burger to be found in India!

I have been picking up some new words also here. Last week the words were:

1. Sutra which means a set of laws or rules.
2. Demonetisation which refers to the withdrawal of the 100 rupee note from circulation.
3. Androgogical which refers to the art or science of teaching adults as opposed to children
4. Bogie which refers to a train carriage as we know it.
5. Miscreant. I had forgotten about this word but it refers to a person who has done something wrong or unlawful.

I have been researching Indian chess history a bit so let's delve into this fascinating chess country. The first player I recalled was Mir Sultan Khan who on three occasions won the British championships when he played there in the 1930's. He was born in the Punjab in the then British India.

The Indians trace their lineage to Manuel Aaron who has won the national championship nine times; He was born in 1935 and was the first Indian player to achieve the title of International Master. He was the winner of the national title for five consecutive years in the late 1960's. He participated in many Olympiads and was also captain of the Olympiad team.

The next top Indian player was Dibyenda Barua. He won the national title on three occasions and became the second grandmaster of India after Anand. He was born in 1966 and participated in the national championship at the age of 12 which had the whole country talking then. He became a grandmaster in 1991.

In my next letter I shall continue reviewing India's top chessplayers. I found a chess book in a bookstore here called The Batsford book of chess records by Yakov Damsky. I can't wait to read it!

I shall end off with some interesting facts again of Hyderabad:

1. Hyderabad has the world's biggest film complex in terms of area: Ramoji Film City which I visited on Sunday
2. Hyderabad is leading in terms of hospital tourism and will now try to lead in Eco tourism.
3. Hyderabad has Asia's biggest and one of the world's biggest convention centres
4. Hyderabad is India's most connected city with the highest Tele-

density.

I trust that you have enjoyed this article and I shall write later again to you on Sunday.

Regards.

Dr Lyndon Bouah
Reporting live from Hyderabad