

# REFLECTIONS INDIA: LYNDON'S SIXTH LETTER FROM INDIA

It is the end of my third week in India. It was a very interesting week I must say. My typical day starts at 6:10am here in India. The reason for this is we have yoga for one hour each day from 6:30am. I generally get to the lawn where the yoga sessions are held at about 6:15am. I then proceed with the assistance of some of my colleagues to set up the mats for the instructor to be ready at 6:30am. Yoga is said to have been developed in India over 5000 years ago. It involves physical, mental and spiritual exercises. We start with breathing exercises and for the last three weeks we have been doing standing, sitting and prone (lying on back) exercises. I am told that for our last week we will concentrate on supine (lying on stomach) exercises. The exercises vary in difficulty and complexity and let's just say I found some of the going tough especially when the instructor who is a qualified medical doctor then gently says " touch nose to toe" as if this is physically possible! Mmmmh let's just say I came close but no cigar!

At seven thirty we all retire to our rooms and then get ready for the day, each student at their own pace. I generally get to breakfast at 8 am and then have a nice chat usually with Sonam from Bhutan ( a mountainous country adjacent to India), Hussein from Sudan and Seham from Iraq. We are the early breakfast practitioners and I have gotten to know a little about their countries as well.

Our class starts at nine am and we have different lecturers from the Administrative Staff College of India and guest lecturers. We started Monday off with public private partnerships and then proceeded to the environment versus development. Both are very topical matters. The first one I was familiar with but the second one again asked those poignant questions about development versus the environment. The afternoon provided a surprise when we went to Cyderabad which is where all the tech companies in Hyderabad are situated. We went to a place called Dialogue in the Dark. The aim was to, in pitch darkness, have a conversation and make coffee. We also went for exercises as well. The aim of the afternoon which was achieved was to make us aware of blind people and what their lives must be like. I perfectly understood the aims and I began to think again of our Braille chess players in South Africa and how difficult it must be for them. We were also surprised when we found that our guides who took us through the entire afternoon were also visually impaired!

The rest of the week was dominated between the themes of marketing, problem solving, how to deal with difficult people and situations and various psychometric tests. We were introduced to an Egogram which revealed which of your egos dominate in your work situation. My assessment was very interesting and the lecturer opined that I take on too much and that I should allow others to complete tasks as well!

During the week we visited the Chowmahalla Palace. The Palace was built by the Nizams as the rulers were called. It was in its day a truly magnificent palace and one can see from the handcrafted furniture the opulence and the care that had gone into the palace. I enjoyed reading the history on the walls and one phrase caught my eye "after the first railway lines were built in 1857 the Nizam Afzal ud Daula said it would give the British simple access to my Dominion and my relatives an easy method of escaping"! I was able to find some nice Indian chess boards at the Palace which I immediately bought for my collection.

The surrounding boards describe the Chowmahalla Palace as an amalgamation of architectural styles, a tuned fusion of liveliness and serenity. The construction of Chowmahalla Palace lying on the south west of Charminar was initiated by Salabat Jung, IV Nizam of Asaf Jahi in 1750. It was the official residence where the Nizam held ceremonial functions such as coronations and receptions.

We then proceeded to visit the Charminar which consists of four corners. We went up the Chaminar where we viewed the charm of the old city and brought to mind the ancient splendour when the Chaminar was constructed. On the upper side of the Charminar is a mosque oriented towards the Qibla of Mecca. The entrances of the mosque consist of five arches framed each by crisped arches representing the Panjtan of the five great personalities of Islam who are ' Prophet Muhammed, Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Hussain. Charminar got its name from the four massive minarets that add elegance to the structure. These minarets are four storeys high and rise to 184 feet from ground level.

The historical part of the city is a must for any visitor. There will be an assault on your senses with bangles and bright clothes and motorbikes and various nice assortments to choose from. So come prepared to bargain once you leave the palace and Charminar.

I have been following the Indian newspapers every day and it makes for very interesting reading. Here are some of the highlights that I thought worth sharing. If you are single and non-vegetarian and a woman there is a good chance you will be turned down if you try to find accommodation! Yeah those are some tough requirements! India has developed an ATM like hand-device to roll out in the rural areas that will allow pensioners the ability to put their fingerprints on the machine and then access money. The French DJ David Guetta played earlier this month in India and people turned out in their thousands to watch him!

Hydrabad was voted one of the world's most dynamic cities but according to the Times (19 January 2017) Hydrabad still needs better roads and 24x7 water supply. A recent survey found that Hydrabad has potential to be a world class city and I can imagine that once the metro is built that it will indeed be in that class once some of the basic amenities are resolved such as roads, water and sanitation.

On Thursday 26 January 2017, I was present when the Indian flag was hoisted to celebrate Republic Day in India. The Director General of the Administrative Staff College of India made a speech in which he asked the audience present whether they are fulfilling their duties in terms of the constitution. He recounted that the Constitution guarantees rights for everyone and that we must work together to make the Constitution alive and to make India great!

According to the Indian author Subhadra Sen Gupta (yes yes I know!) Rupa Publications, 2015, the Indian constitution is the longest in the world. The constitution has 395 articles divided into 22 Parts

and 12 Schedules. The original document had 117 369 words! The Indian flag is divided into three colours. According to the first Vice President of India, S. Radhakrishnan the significance is as follows:

Saffron stands for sacrifice and the spirit of renunciation.

White represents the path of truth and

Green is the Indian connection to plants and the soil.

The Ashoka Chakra symbolises the law of Dharma, and ethical and moral living.

The newspapers have been following the fortunes of Indian grandmasters all over the world as they have been performing this past month. Let's have a look at some notable events.

Hastings (England) 2017: Grandmaster Deep Sengupta won the event with 7/9. He has been around for some time but the player who was the star of the show was second placed R. Praggnanadhaa from India who is the world's youngest international master at age 11. He became an international master at the age of 10 years and ten months and 19 days. He did not lose a single game and finished with 6.5 to share second place. He had a number of wild games including some impressive grandmaster scalps!

Rilton Cup in Sweden: Grandmaster Krishnan Sasikiran won the traditional Rilton Cup with six wins, three draws and no losses. The annual end of the year draws some big names. Sasikiran was born in 1981 and is an experienced grandmaster. He obtained the grandmaster title in 2000 and has won a number of strong Open events over the years.

Tata Steel 2017: In the main section Grandmasters Harikrishna and Adhiban are flying the Indian flag high with some inspiring play and enterprising opening choices.

Chennai 2017: the 9th Chennai international opened ended a few days ago. The winner of the event was won by Grandmaster Tukhaev Adam from the Ukraine. A number of African players competed in the event as well. The results can be found on [www.chess-results.com](http://www.chess-results.com).

We are entering our final week. Most of the participants are completing the individual and group assignments today. It has been a hectic week and many students are becoming homesick. Of course this experience is one to treasure.

I shall do my wrap up from the air next week when I travel back to South Africa. I am supposed to now rehearse some dance steps as we still have a cultural evening this week. Mmmmh Nkalakatha or Brenda Fassie or the Minstrals. I must choose. Please write with some suggestions!

I went to a barber this morning. Yo what an experience. I said shave and trim and when we were done the guy then proceeded to perform all kinds of head yoga with his hands. Gosh the barber was so skilled I thought my cerebrum, cerebellum and medulla oblongata was feeling the pressure on my head! But all barbers are the same. It felt like I was back in Belhar even with the rickety chair!

Enjoy the week and this is my last live post from Hydrabad!

Regards

Dr Lyndon Bouah