

Dec. 14, The Journey Begins

This is the big day we fly out of Raleigh-Durham airport. Bryce and I are all packed and ready for our journey. Josh is driving us to the airport and with security so tight now he just drops us off at the door and heads back home. Wouldn't you know it, but we flew to New York only to be returned to Raleigh to spend the night due to the fog. The next flight out was 6 a.m. to Chicago, then to London so I opted for that one. I wanted some time to relax in London before another long flight to Delhi. We arrived at the airport at 4 a.m. and the lines to check in were awful with only 3 desk clerks to check in 400 people. We met this British fellow that was so outdone about it that he kept saying we Americans should take a lesson from the Brits about security. He did have somewhat of a point. Heathrow is much more organized and things move along swiftly there. After waiting to get checked in, we were finally cleared and headed for the security gate. There was another long line and our flight was almost ready to take off. I put on my best begging face and went to each person in line asking to get in front so we wouldn't miss our flight. OK OK. I didn't ask EVERYONE as I should have so one guy said NO and called security. The British fellow had been tagging along with us complaining the whole way so I told him to hush and let me do the talking. When the security guard came for us I explained nicely our dilemma (now I was pretty proud of myself to keep my wits about me) so he let us through. We made the flight with about 2 minutes to spare. No more hitches after that one. Thank goodness!!!!!!!!!!!!

Interesting Note: On the first flight to New York, I met a guy from Argentina that teaches Spanish in the school where my great nieces attend. He knew all the people there that I know and lives only about 15 minutes from me. In the meantime I met another man from Argentina as well and a British lady so we all had dinner together that night. One of the best parts of traveling for me is the people I meet.

Dec. 15, London Stopover

The first leg of the journey is complete. The stopover in London provided us with a much needed break from flying. Denis, Sylvia, and Alaric picked us up at the airport and we headed to Allan and Maureen's place. The next day, Denis treated us all to lunch before heading back to the airport. A car ride around London reminded me it was the Christmas season but I was shocked that UK doesn't decorate as much as we do here. There were fir trees in railings decorated with lights and some lights strung above the streets. I was told the trees were from Norway. Nice touch though.

Heathrow airport is a cultural shock in itself. Monitors display such exotic destinations as Singapore, Thailand, Sydney, Bangkok, and Dubai. We watched the people from all cultures Asian, Americans, Europeans traveling to every continent in the world

We are heading to a land of awe and wonder filled with new sights and smells. Am I prepared for the culture shock? I have no idea but in a few hours I'll find out. Bryce is ill due to lack of sleep and the time change. Patience is not one of his virtues but he is only 12. This trip should prove to be a lesson in limitations, tolerance, and goodwill. Will we be accepted? Will we be noticed too much? How will Americans with white skin, blond hair, and blue eyes be received? And so we travel to India. God grant me peace of mind and openness of spirit to receive the lessons you have for me here. It is 5 a.m. Delhi time, we fly into the sunlight as the new day dawns with much anticipation and excitement. We are passing over the mountains and see the snow capped tops of the Himalayas. Bryce constantly is spotting what he believes to be Mt. Everest.

I've been chatting to my seatmate who is from Scotland but lives in the UK. He and his family are on a holiday to Agra and Calcutta as well. His wife is from New York and he has just returned from there bidding on a project to build a memorial on Staten Island to the victims of the Sept. 11 attack. I think we must be the only Americans on this flight (besides my seatmates wife). Everyone has on turbans or sarees.

Interesting Note: There are two Indian students sitting behind me. One goes to a university in USA, the other in UK. They are discussing the pros and cons of each school but are extremely loyal to their respective universities. Some things are the same no matter where you go.

Dec 16, Getting Ready

We are in the air now heading to India. Bryce does NOT like British Airways because the seats do not have individual TVs on them like American does. Plus he is not crazy about the food they are serving. Veggie or Non-veggie. Neither choice too good. He is reading *The Hobbit* now so maybe he will sleep soon.

Dec 17, Delhi Arrival

We finally arrived in Delhi and had to wait in a long line at the immigration desk. This is where I had my first experience with an Indian public toilet. When you walk in the door there is an attendant handing out toilet paper but it is after the toilet and used for drying your hands. The toilet is a bowl in the floor. Ok, use your imagination here and remember this is India. There is a cup and water faucet to use as a bidet. Think about it!!!!



On to pick up the luggage, which was another long, line before we finally saw Joe and Allan waiting for us. We head outside for our first glimpse of India. Small cars, motorized rickshaws and peddlers covered the airport parking lot. Joe rented a car and driver for the day so off we headed for our hotel. I told him the only requirement I had was a western toilet, a bed, and hot water. He obliged, plus a quaint place with marble floors and a big quilt on the bed.

Driving along, we were amazed at the cows loose on the sides of the roads feeding off the fruit peelings. Did I say on the sides of the roads??....Cows go anywhere they want here. Vendors selling vegetables, fruits, and flowers were too numerous to count. Again we see hundreds of motorized and peddling rickshaws. The streets are paved but littered.

As we walk along the streets we saw many store fronts opening into tiny shops that looked like holes in the wall but when you went inside.....oh my ...the beautiful silk, wool, chiffon, and lace materials made my head swim. Joe pulled me out before I did something nutty. A mix of old and new shops lined either side of the streets.

Banyan trees are considered scared here so many pots of flowers and gifts lie beneath as a form of worship to the trees. Allan said one man was cooking a dish called "char", a kind of hollow potato

dish filled with hot chili peppers. NOT FOR ME!!!!

For dinner we went to the International Coffee House, which serves all kinds of cuisines. Nan bread remains my favorite. While walking along the street, beggars with babies constantly ask for rupees. Maureen and Allan warned us not to give them anything because more would follow.

Hotels are not like in the U.S.A. The showers are not enclosed so you have to be remember not to take you clothes in the bathroom with you or they will get soaked. I learned this the hard way. Ha! On to Agra!!

Interesting Note: At baggage claim I met a young man who is studying for his MBA at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. His name was Vik Singh and he was going home for the holidays. We exchanged cards so I'll give him a call.

Dec 18, Agra here we come

The road trip to Agra was long but exciting. Joe rented a car and driver for the duration of the trip. I swear these drivers could drive anywhere in the world after driving in India. There seem to be no rules of the road at all. I am not sure why they painted a line down the middle of the road because no one seems to pay any attention to them. They simply drive and blow the horn. Everyone uses the same roads.....horse and camel drawn carts, vans, rickshaws, bikes, cars, and walkers. We passed an old fort built around the 17th century and fields of mustard greens and wheat. I asked Joe if the farms were government



or privately owned. He said most government owned but some were family owned. Our car broke down along the way and so we had to wait for someone to come along with a jack. This was one of the only times I felt a bit uneasy. No one seemed anxious to stop and help and being stranded in the middle of nowhere was a bit disconcerting. Finally, one car stopped and after the tire was fixed Denise, Nat, Bev, Carl, Joe, Baron, Bryce and I piled back into the car for the final leg to Agra.

We arrived at night and the streets got more and more crowded the closer we got into town. You can definitely tell this is a tourist town. We spent the night in a charming hotel and ate dinner. I have never had such fine service. The waiters watched our every move and were there with whatever we needed before we asked. The food was good too.

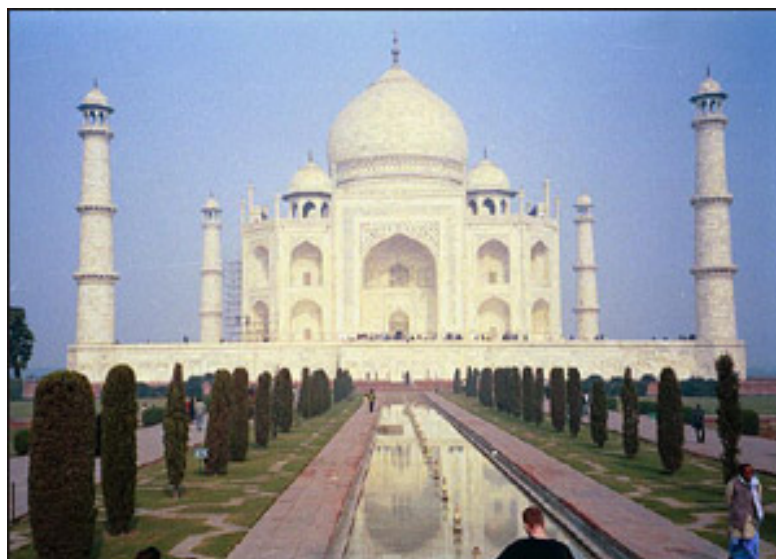
Joe took us to meet Alaric's brother-in-law Maqbool the next day. He is one of the managers of Cottage Industries in Agra. OH NO! As soon as I walked in the door I knew I was in trouble. Silk rugs, marble inlays, silk materials and silk prints were everywhere. "Mac" ushered us into a showing room where we were served tea. Each man came out with a different rug and laid them in front of us. These silk rugs are hand made. Each knot tied individually and the patterns are passed from generation to generation. The men of the family design the patterns and the women do the work. It takes 8 months to 2 years to finish each run and no two are alike. I knew as soon as I walked in that I would buy one of these gorgeous pieces. Which one was the question.

The marble pieces Mac showed us were fabulous. Beautiful white, green, and black marble tables with colorful inlays were too numerous to count. But the real treat was the jewelry. Mac designs and makes the most gorgeous pieces. I tried on emerald and diamond necklaces, estate jewelry of 22-karat gold, and sapphires as big as your thumb. They were heavenly. Joe, and the others, were patient with me but tried to hurry me out before I got into more trouble. But I know I WILL go back there for sure one day. HA!

Interesting Note: Traveling at night is a bit scary. The police stopped us once but Joe paid them so we were again on our way. I don't think if I were in trouble I would stop to ask the police for help over here.

The fog the next morning was heavy and the oddest shade of blue pigeon sat on our window ledge. NOW it is time to visit one of the Seven Wonders of the World and what I have been waiting to see for a long time----**THE TAJ MAHAL!**

Taj Mahal



This is more incredible than any picture you will ever see. As you approach the gates, beggars and vendors line the sidewalks selling postcards, bracelets, Taj statues, and anything else you can imagine. They are a bit overbearing and extremely persistent. We had a choice of riding a bus, horse or camel drawn cart. Joe wouldn't let me ride in the camel cart so we boarded a bus and headed down the dusty streets to the grandest monument in the world. The Emperor Shah Kahn Jahan had many wives but he built this as a tomb for his favorite wife who died giving birth to their 14th child. It was not meant for the King to be buried here so his tomb was put higher than the Queen's to break the symmetry of the building. The King's son imprisoned his father to gain control of the throne. The inside and outside are covered with precious stone inlays. This is the birthplace of religion as all are represented here. The lines of symmetry represent all religions. Recessed archways-Christianity, Upside down moons-Islam, Geometric shapes-Muslims, bell like arches---Hindu. Built so many years ago, it is amazing to think sheer manpower could produce such architectural genius. I was in awe of the symmetry and splendor of the tomb.

Across the river Yamuna the emperors palace was built. It is called Fort Agra. Every room has a view of the Taj Mahal. There was a huge piece of solid black onyx where the king put his throne to hold public audience. Can you imagine sitting on black onyx? Well we did too to take a picture. Our guide told us about the history of the King and his palace. That only made me want to read more about the Indian dynasties.

Dec 19, Another night in Delhi

Back to the same hotel which is now beginning to feel like home. M.D. International is the name and the people at the desk recognize us as we come in the door. I am amazed at how these small men can carry MY luggage. Sheesh I can't lift it at all. Must have strong backs.

Dec. 20, The Embassy

John Nay is the Assistant Consulate General of the Embassy in New Delhi. I made an appointment with him so I could meet the man who had trusted his heart and given Joe a chance to visit the USA. He ushered us into his office and spent about 30 minutes talking with us. Mr. Nay recommended some places for us to see in Delhi so we took his advice and visited the place where Ghandhi was murdered. This was very moving and filled with many memotoes of his life.

Interesting Note: Martin Luther King, Jr. took many of Ghandhi's teachings and applied them to his own faith and beliefs.

Dec. 21---Delayed in Delhi

Today we were supposed to leave for Mussoorie and a visit with Joe's uncles Ed and Ron. Bryce was not feeling too well so we decided to stay put for another day. I was glad we did because we got to see the market place and do some dickering with the sellers. Well Joe did the talking, as I know about ten Hindi words. Raghu and Shobana in the USA taught me those but then Shobana said, "Nan, What will you do if they answer you in Hindi?" That was a good point so I kept my mouth shut and let the others speak for me. The favorite saying of all the sellers is, "You are my friend. I will give you 10% discount." Good lord, have they been watching American TV or something? I did find some beautiful hand beaded silk bags and some incense for Gabe. Bryce bought a leather belt.

Interesting Note: One guy followed us along the whole market trying to sell me a small chess set. He kept telling Joe to leave me alone and then I would buy it. I must say persistence was one of his better qualities.

Dec. 22, Off to Mussoorie

We took a train to a small town called Saharanpur. Uncle Ron was supposed to meet us there but our train was delayed so he went back home. Joe rented a car and off we went to Dehradun where Uncle Ed lives. Ed, Sharon, Ron and Jackie met us with open arms at Ed's house. Beautiful marble floors and tiles adorn the décor, which is typical Indian since those things are plentiful. We spent the night here and Sharon and Jackie were up early to fix us a delicious breakfast of eggs, sausage and toast. HOT SAUSAGE!

A land of many faces, we traveled to the mountaintop to have a glimpse of the Himalayas. Winding roads took us to a small village called Mussoorie where silk rugs from Kashmir and wool shawls were sold in shantytown shops. We roade the cable car to the top which overlooked a breathtaking view of the valley. Green vegetation and farms littered the sides of the mountains as children played in the streets of the small village. The local cooks concocted delicious looking dishes in storefront shops that I was warned not to eat.

Interesting Note: Bryce bought a magic set at the top of the mountain from a local young man who could have his own TV magic show. We were all spellbound by his slight of hand. By the way, we were at an elevation of 6,500 ft.

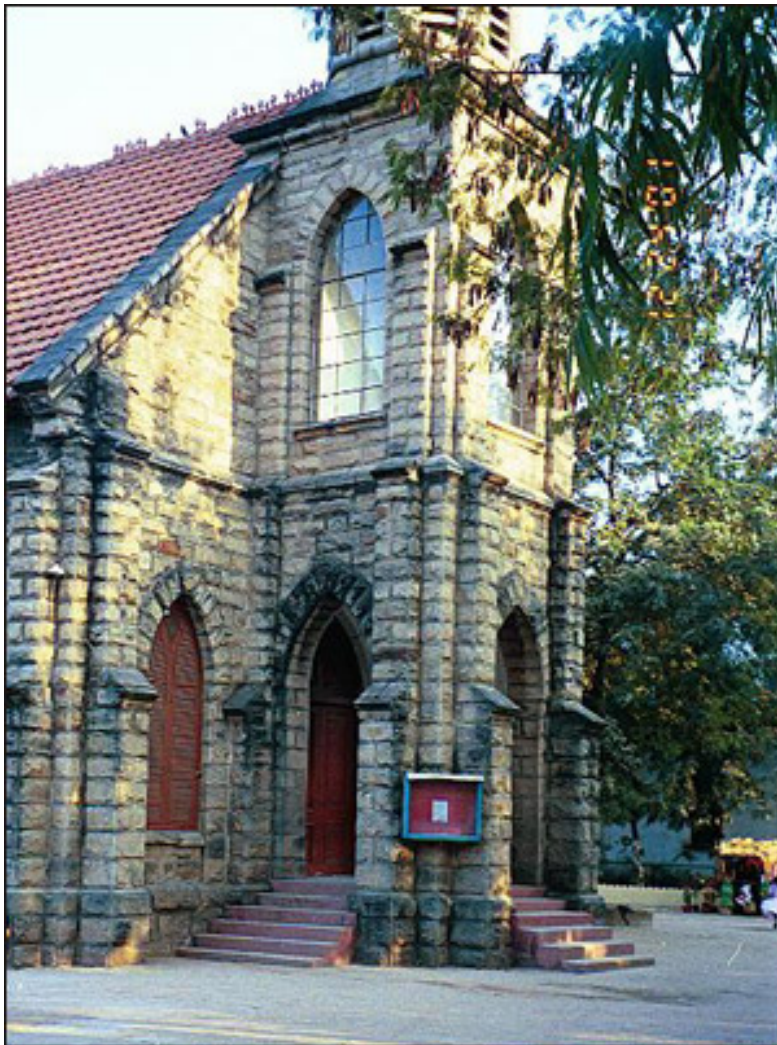
Dec. 23, Traveling to Dhanbad

Our first train overnighiter on the Indian railways was an experience to say the least. It is very crowded and people are packed like sardines on the seats. Joe booked us three sleepers so Bryce took the top one. Two other families were seated in our same section and of course I started a conversation with one of them. The man's English was broken but I understood him to say he was a professor at a university. His young son was fascinated by Bryce and wanted to sit on the top bunk with him. Bryce showed him magic tricks and his antics enthralled even the parents.

Well it was my turn to crawl into the middle bunk for the night. Not an easy task I might add. I think Joe stayed awake all night watching our bags. The fellow I had been talking to offered me some sweets or they looked sweet. After I ate them, Joe warned me that some give you sleeping potions in the sweets and then while you are sleeping steal your bags. I guess I got lucky because everything was there when I woke up or Joe scared everyone away. The next morning we landed in Dhanbad. Allan was there with a car to meet us and off we headed to the home place.

Interesting Note: The professor I spoke with spent the whole time telling me about how much he wanted to move his family to the USA. I think everyone must want to come here. A four-year-old boy spent about 20 minutes teaching me some Hindi. The only one I got was the word for water-Pani.

Dec. 24, Dhanbad



Christmas Eve in Dhanbad was delightful. We met Allan's brother Andre and his nieces Michelle and Angela. When we arrived, everyone was in the church yard having a Christmas celebration for the children. This is such a lovely spot and reminds me of old movies you see on TV of village life many years ago. St. Anthony's is the church where Allan and Maureen were married and where Father Larry Hunt was the priest. He is the priest that is now in Winston-Salem, N.C. We took Joe to visit and listened to his stories about starting schools in India. I can't wait to contact him and tell him I have been here.

Allan took me on a long walk around the Hill Colony. The street overlooks the church and school yard. As we walked, he told me about his father and his job working on the railroads. Employees were provided housing with servants and the children went to the Railway Schools before going off to boarding school. Maureen and Denis' father also worked on the railroads but he died when both of them were young so they were sent to live with their older sister and brother-in-law in Dhanbad. Many memories

flooded from Allan as he told me of growing up here with his friends. One close friend I met was Lancy. Allan told me a story about his friends. (See this below.)

I didn't know that Allan played in a band and wrote a song. Once his band was playing for a dance

and he spied Maureen. Well the rest is history.

This is the **ghost story** as told by Allan:

One night, my friends Stephen, Lancy and myself sat on the wall around the lamp-post in front of the house chatting into the the night (the usual boy's talk)and then decided that it was time to go home so we said our goodnights and each went towards our home. Now, Stephen was living where Andre(my brother is living now)and Lancy was living in a building behind Stephen's house and had to take a short cut by the side of Stephen's house to get there. There are 2 trees to the right of the house one is called a "Neem" tree and the other is a "Jalebi" tree. He passed the first tree and before approaching the second tree, that is the Jalebi one he saw a dark figure peep out from behind the tree. For a while he thought it was a crook(burglar) as there had been reports of burglaries around the railway colony. So, the first thing he does is asks in hindi "Who is it?", but gets no reply. He then goes closer but could now feel a very errie feeling about it as he found it was immensely cold and he had become frozen. He yelled out to Stephen for help as he could see Stephen going into his house but nothing came out of his throat...he yelled and yelled but nothing happened so he started to back track and praying . With great effort he managed to get away from there and was one terrified chap. He then went home using the long route ,but when he got home his family were astonished to see his face white with fright. He then relayed what had happened to him and since then never dared take the short cut to his house.The next day we got to know about his experience with the ghost.....as we learnt later that on contact with the supernatural these are common things that happen to people...that is freezing and finding that though they yelled out loud but could not be heard.

I saw where Denis and Maureen lived and also where Amit lived. Amit's parents were in the USA while I was in India. I wish I could have met them. Well there will be a next time I am sure of it. Looking at the places where my friends grew up, I could imagine them as children walking to school, playing with friends, running down the street, or maybe working in the garden. I can only imagine what life must have been like here. This is a peaceful place, so beautiful yet wild. It is here I saw bamboo scaffolds and laundry men washing clothes in huge pots. A glimpse of the past makes it hard to believe it is really 2001.

Interesting Note: Another tree near Andre's house was a Jackfruit and is sometimes used for medicine or I think that is what Allan told me. I must look this up and find out more about it.

Dec. 25, Christmas in Dhanbad

Christmas morning Bryce and I go to morning mass with the family. It is a simple service. I am thinking of my sons and other family in the USA. It is an odd feeling for me to be away from them on this day. Bryce said we can't be gone for Christmas again but this one will be remembered forever as something very special. It is here, I began my journey and here I it will end. I know what I have been searching for now and I am peaceful. I have seen what I needed to see and heard what I needed to hear.

Maureen is busy with preparations for a big



dinner. She has told the cooks to prepare something special for Bryce and me. NOT HOT!!!! Everything is delicious and the people are so very warm and welcoming. I have met so many lovely people and I don't want to leave out any of them. Please forgive me if I do because it does not mean you are not in my heart just that my feeble old mind can't hold things too very long. Michele and Clyde, Cleo, Andre, Angela, Lancy, Clarence, Sharon, Bev, Denise, Carl, Gavin, Joe, Maureen, and Allan have made our Christmas wonderful. It is here Bryce learns the meaning of Indian fireworks. My goodness, what a bang they have. He loved it!

Many family members and friends come and go throughout the day and evening to say hi and to meet us. All are so very warm and loving making us feel so welcome. I am envious of this large family since mine is so small. It makes me want to hold on tighter to the memories and make sure my children know their past and mine. It is by visiting the past and healing those wounds, one can move forward and realize how far they have come.

It is hard to believe that Dhanbad has such a large population yet feels like a small town. Is it possible that I have been here before? Everything feels so familiar. Oh probably because Allan and Joe have told me so much about it before now. Yes that must be it.

This afternoon we visit the cemetery. Allan's children have not seen their grandmother's grave and Maureen has not seen her mother's grave for a long time. On each one, candles are lighted and prayers given for their souls. Candles are also placed on the lost children of Bridgett and Lionel, Allan's sister and husband. I was pleased to learn that Denis will be visiting here after 29 years away. I am sure this journey will be a nostalgic one for him and I am hoping a good trip down memory lane. I am hoping he remembers who he is and learns to be as proud of how far he has come as I am for him.

Dec. 26, Calcutta

What is wrong? I woke up in the middle of the night with stomach cramps. I am feeling yucky. When Allan calls for my wake up, I told him my stomach was sick but I could ride ok on the train. We were leaving at the crack of dawn. By the time I got to the train I was sick as a dog so we were given a first class berth. Bryce and I slept the entire way to Calcutta. Joe came to wake us up when we arrived and I am feeling worse. I was so looking forward to Calcutta and seeing where Mother Teresa lived and Victoria's Memorial. All I saw was the Harrah Bridge and the Ganges River coming into town. It was hot, dusty and so crowded. Well I wasn't feeling too chipper so my perceptions were not very clear.

After checking into the hotel and sleeping more, I called Nitin's friend Uday Pandit. He came right over to the hotel when he found out I was sick and brought me some medications. I was sorry about not being able to have him show me more sights there but this stomach virus really made me feel awful. In fact, I put off flying to Bombay an extra day because I was so sick. No one else got sick....just ME wouldn't you know. Finally Allan called Uday and asked him to fetch a doctor, which he did right away and brought him over. It would take several days before I would feel back to normal and could eat something.

In the meantime, Bryce went kite flying with Gavin and Andrew. They taught him the finer points of Indian kite flying. The string is made of a fine glass like material that is very sharp. The point of the competitions are to cut the other fellow's line and keep your kite under control while his goes flying off into the wild blue yonder. Bryce got pretty good at it I hear and is taking string home with him.

The kites are made from paper and are very light. He also found a video arcade so he got a taste of home. Maureen and Allan did some shopping in the markets and then Maureen headed back to Dhanbad while Allan, Joe, and Andrew took care of the sick. (ME) I told Allan that I knew I would have to hear a "I told you so." from Denis about catching something over here. HA! So I road into Calcutta and rode out of Calcutta without seeing very much at all. Ok put this on the list of things to do next time. Thanks for your help here Uday and also in Goa.

Dec. 27, Calcutta Hotel

What can I say but sick, sick, sick.....ooooohhhhhhhh.....sleeping and toilet.

Dec. 28, Finally on the way to Bombay

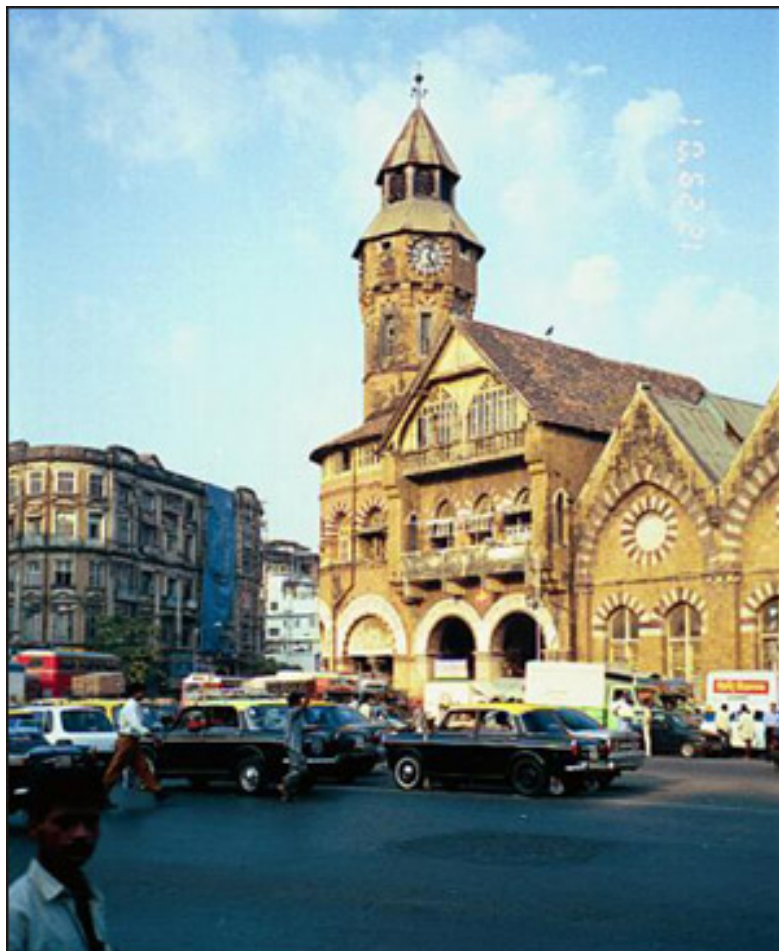
No entries for the previous days except to say I was mostly heading to the toilet or sleeping or watching TV. Allan, Joe, Andrew, Gavin, and Bryce came and went doing their own things. Allan brought me some tangerines and water so I wouldn't get dehydrated.

On the 29th I decided I was strong enough to fly to Bombay. Allan and Joe took us to the airport and I promised to call as soon as we arrived in Bombay. Allan looks so Caucasian the guards let him through the gate with us. He hired someone to carry our bags for us and then he and Joe headed to catch the train back to Dhanbad. When the man came back to take the bags he asked Bryce where his father was. All I could think of was his dad back in the USA so I told him that. After much confusion and lots of hand waving I finally realized he was talking about Allan. Try explaining without speaking Hindi who that man had been and now where he had gone. This was another affirmation that I could never have made this trip alone or without someone who spoke the language. Ok Denis, you were right again. (My, I do hate to admit that.)

Wouldn't you know but as soon as they left, it was announced that our flight had been delayed. I called Nitin to let him know we wouldn't be arriving until later and we sat down to wait. When the guards tell you a certain time the gates will be open to let you go through security, they aren't joking. Not one minute before that time will they let you through.

Interesting Note: On this flight I met a young fellow from Bombay. He said he was born and bred there but had gone to N.C. State University right here in North Carolina. His major was in textiles. He had been all over NC and the United States. I asked him how he had been received in the south. He told me the people were very friendly and that he liked Bojangles chicken but NOT grits. Unfortunately, I didn't get his name but he did give me much information about Bombay. If you are reading this now and are from south Bombay and remember a blond lady on the flight from Calcutta to Bombay, then contact me so I can include your name here.

Dec. 29, Bombay



Nitin and his children, Radhika and Karan, were at the airport to receive us. Smiles on their faces and flowers in their hands, this was the first time Nitin and I had met in person but I immediately felt as if I had known him all my life. Thank goodness he had another car to take our bags to the hotel. Will I ever learn NOT to pack so much? And I thought I had done well to get it all in one bag. (One enormous bag!)

We headed to Nitin's home to pick up his wife Aarti and to visit their home. This would be our home away from home for the next week or so too. Aarti was just as lovely as her pictures but even more so in person because of her personality. I felt we hit it off right away though she is a bit more reserved than me. We all went to Pizza Hut for dinner and then to the hotel.

Flowers and a nice card awaited us in the hotel from the Raichuras but I still wasn't feeling so well and I am afraid I didn't thank them

properly so I will do that now. They were lovely and the thought was so sweet. The Hotel Classic would be our base while in Santa Cruz.

Interesting Note: We went to meet Nitin's parents the first night and they are wonderful people. Neither speak English so we did a lot of nodding and smiling at each other. Nitin explained why I looked green around the gills or at least I hope he did. It is custom in the Hindu religion to touch the feet of your elders as you leave their home. I think I must have been considered an elder because I didn't have to touch their feet. HA!

Dec. 30, On the road again

Today we leave for a beach resort called Goa. Sagar, Nitin's nephew and his friend are our guides. The roads are not so bumpy but the driver has a heavy foot on the gas. He seems to love to jerk the car by pressing his foot on the gas then letting up which seems to be typical of all cab drivers. They must go to the same driving school. This isn't helping my sick stomach and even Bryce is looking a bit uneasy. Sagar speaks to him and puts on a tape soundtrack from the latest blockbuster Hindi movie. This song will stick in my head the rest of the trip. It is a catchy tune. At least it took our minds off the jerking car.

I didn't realize that on the way to Goa there would be hills with such lush green vegetation and so many palm trees. It looks like the west coast of the United States somewhat. We began winding up the hills much like the roads to Mussoorie and again I am amazed at the driving skills of these cabbies. I tell you, I think the **NASCAR** circuit should look into recruiting these guys.

A few hours into the trip Sagar instructs the driver to stop for gas and a rest. Bryce and I head to the toilets and the restaurant for a cold Pepsi. As in Europe, if you want ice in your drink you must ask

for it. Again, we were warned not to use ice if we weren't sure if it was boiled water or not. The place was crowded since there aren't many rest stops along the way. Sagar called Nitin to let him know our progress. Only 8 more hours to go.

Arriving in Goa at night, was beautiful. Goa was settled by the Portugese and many Christian churches surround the area. There are thousands of Christmas lights as we drive across the bridge into town. Many hotels and beautiful homes line the beaches much like the resort areas here. The hotel I chose was the Hotel Mandovi right on the beach. Nothing is by chance but I was surprised to learn this is the hotel Uday's in laws own and his daughter lives here as well. The world does get smaller doesn't it?

Interesting Note: I wondered where the driver would sleep. Sagar said he would manage in the car so we left with him the remainder of the sandwiches Aarti had made us for our trip and a few rupees. The song on the tape says something like this: "Kabhi Khushi, kabhi Gum !! = Sometimes happy. Sometimes sad.

Dec. 31, New Year's Eve

My stomach is still not feeling very well. Bryce decided to order Lobster from room service. By now we were beginning to want something that was slightly American to eat. Goa is loaded with seafood and of course they cater to European and American visitors. All around the town are beaches, beaches, and more beaches. It is a bit deceiving and appears to be one long beach when in fact there are many different beache areas. The sun sparkles on these tropical waters and the soft breezes blow just enough to keep you cool.

Sagar took Bryce to the beach last night where he learned to bungee jump. He told me at first he was nervous but some young lady sat with him and talked to him about being confidant. After a few dances with her, he tried again and this time dropped the 150 feet to the air bag below. My baby is not a baby anymore and I am bit glad I wasn't there to see this. Then again, next time I may try it too.

Bryce spent New Year's Eve on the beach with Sagar and company, dancing the night away. A few more bungee jumps under his belt and he declared he had found a new passion. Next he wants to try hang gliding. OH MY!

Still not feeling well, I stayed behind to rest. About the time I closed my eyes, a knock came on the door and a bellman called out to me to wake up. He said you must get out of this room Madame. It is New Year's Eve and the town is buzzing. He was right of course. When would I ever be here again on this night so I must join in the celebrations. Loaded with a bottle of Tums in my pocket I quickly existed the hotel and headed down to the beach. Across the street, a huge bandstand was set up and lively music filled the air. Of course, I wasn't dressed formally so I headed straight to the beach where many other people were gathered. Lots of tourists from around the world were dancing and drinking around the night lights. This was fun even though I didn't eat or drink anything. Just the dancing and meeting new people was worth getting out of my bed.

The next day was a bit of a blur and we all used it to rest up for the long trip back to Bombay.

Interesting Note: Amit told me of the beach with silver sand that crunches as you walk. I didn't get to see this and am not sure where it is so that is definitely on my list for the next trip.

Jan. 1, 2002 in India



This certainly is a new experience. Christmas away from home and now the first day of a new year in a country on the other side of the world. In some ways I feel this is the dawning of a new day for me and I had to come here to realize where I have been but more importantly, where I am headed. Each experience, each person I meet reminds me of what I want and of who I am. Raju was right. I always knew in my heart but just needed to be awakened and reminded.

How appropriate to come full circle and to come to the land where many of the people I love call home. This is my season and no matter

where I am led or what I am led to do, I walk the road with confidence and with God as my guide.

Jan. 2, Back in Bombay

Second leg back in Bombay and a day to rest up for a while. Nitin's office is about a block away so I called and asked him if I could come check my email and get a driver to take us to Pizza Hut for lunch. OOOOO my inbox is loaded with junk mail. Took me a long time to delete them but soon we were off to Pizza Hut with the driver.

AHHHH....cheese pizza and watermelon was a nice break from rice and noodles. Nitin and Aarti picked us up and took me downtown Bombay while Bryce went with Sagar to bowl a few games.

Stretched along the waterfront are a string of lights called "The Queens Necklace". The way they are positioned, they do look like a necklace. Bombay is a bustling town with markets everywhere. Along the streets we passed places making leather shoes. I remember when I was a child a man here repairing shoes so it reminded me of the handicrafts that are being lost to machine made things.

We spent some time meeting Minesh and Rajesh, the software people. It was nice to finally sit down and talk with them face to face about the things we had discussed only in emails. Now I think we all understand each other much better though I do say they have done an excellent job trying to read my mind all these many months and from so far away. Brilliant!

This evening is the Rotary Conference and Nitin is doing the catering. Aarti accompanies me since Nitin is working and we sit with her friends. There is a visiting group from Italy presenting pictures from their country and telling all they are doing in their club. Host families from India house the group. There will be an exchange soon and a group from India will go to Italy as well. Good lord! Nitin has given my name as a guest so I am introduced and have to parade in front of the audience to receive a rose from the District Governor. I just might kill Nitin Raichura for this. HA!

It was interesting to meet the president of Nitin's club, Poonam. She is an outgoing and charming

lady. She told me the club would soon be sponsoring a diabetic clinic to inform people about the disease. This club has approximately 80 members and is only one of many in and around Bombay. It was interesting to meet a fellow president-elect Ramesh. We seemed to have a lot of Rotary Business to discuss and promised that we would stay in touch with each other.

Interesting Note: The Rotarians here are very active and highly educated people. There was another Rotary Conference scheduled for the 5th and 6th with about 3,000 people expected. Awesome. Though Bombay is a bustling metropolis there seems to be some organization and traffic rules here unlike any other city I have seen so far. Santa Cruz is a suburb and very upscale and much cleaner than everyone had led me to believe. The homes here are enclosed in compounds with gates. A gateman stands watch over the comings and goings.

Jan. 3, Nitin's Birthday



Today is Nitin's 40th birthday and he is taking his family and us out to eat at The Regent, a new seven star hotel. I do think Nitin knows everyone in town because here we are the guest of his friend, another Nitin, who is the purchasing agent for the hotel. The banquet room is outstanding with a buffet so filled with food it makes your mouth water. I don't think I have ever seen so many desserts in one place. Bryce was not exactly happy with the buffet as he is sick of Indian food and a bit in an ill mood.

Our host took him to see the buffet but when he couldn't find anything that looked enticing, he was introduced to the chef. He was allowed to place a special order of anything that he thought would be appetizing. He ordered a pasta dish with cheese sauce. The waiter brought out his dish and we all waited in anticipation to see if it would strike his fancy. I have never prayed so hard for him to like something in my life. After one bite, he said nothing. The second bite came and went and finally he looked up at the waiter and nodded his head YES. The whole table let out a sigh of relief and we all enjoyed a delicious meal. I couldn't help but rub it in to Nitin that he was now "over the hill". I was in India to celebrate his 40th birthday and I am hoping his family will

all be here in USA to celebrate my 50th in October. We shall see.

This hotel is elegant and luxurious. Aarti and I walked around the looking in the shop windows and at the Christmas decorations.

Interesting Note: Many tourists stay in these elegant hotels but miss out on the essence of India I feel. It is with the locals that I like to live to see the culture up close and personal. Bryce bought a

guitar today at a music shop near our hotel. He got an excellent deal and was thrilled with his new purchase. The cost with the guitar and a nice padded case was Rs. 2700. That equals about \$60.

Jan. 4, Town Centre

Another trip downtown to visit Mukesh and his wife Naha. Lovely people and very talented. A trip to the United States embassy was very eye opening. I have always been told that it was our right as a citizen to be able to take refuge in our embassy. Bombay was not like Delhi but then again I had not made an appointment either. I registered with the embassy and gave my Bombay address and my itinerary, I was allowed entry only after I spoke with Mr. Fredrick Polanski, the chief visa officer and given clearance by him.

That night, Aarti, Karan, and Radhika took Bryce and I on a boat trip around the harbor. We visit the Gateway to India where the British first made port in Bombay. I told Bryce Columbus was headed here for spices but lucky for us he hit the USA instead. It is a breathtaking view and the trip is scenic even at night. Aarti hired a horse and buggy to take us on a tour around town and then through the Taj Mahal hotel. The shops here are very expensive and I was glad I bought my silk rug in Agra. These places cater to the tourist.

Interesting Note: I just thought of this. Nitin told me everyone added the greeting "bai" on the end of men's names. It is much like our sir or mister. Nitin is known as Nitinbai.

Jan. 5, Shopping in Bombay and the IMAX



Nitin took off early today from work to take us all to the new IMAX theater. They advertised it as being the largest dome in the world. The movie was an hour long documentary on the Grand Canyon. I had forgotten how astounding the colors and graphics are on the IMAX screen. It is like you are really there and flying around with the pilots over this magnificent wonder. We all enjoyed this treat. Of course they had a game room which caught the eyes of the children. Nitin and Aarti enjoyed a cup of tea while the rest of us played games. (Notice I included myself in the children's group.)

Tonight we are eating all Indian. Nitin and Aarti insisted that our last day and night would be Indian food. I was about ready to once again taste some Indian myself but not Bryce. He couldn't wait to hit London and get a cheeseburger with real beef. He says the cheese pizza with Indian cheese tastes different and I suppose it does since the cheese is goat cheese.

I can't believe this is the last night in Bombay. The time seemed to pass so quickly but we did so much here. We were supposed to go to Pune to visit with Denis and Sylvia but time simply ran out before we could. I was sorry not to be able to visit with Father Walter and Satish there too. Another thing on my list for the next trip.

After dinner we went to the Hara Krishna Temple, one of the biggest in the world and a famous tourist spot in Bombay. This place is simply awesome. Watching the people saying prayers and crowding to get as close to the monks as possible is testimony to their faith. We rush to the catholic church across town. I am told that whatever you pray for at this church the prayer will be answered. I bought a candle and placed it on the steps to the alter after my prayers. One of my prayers was answered before I even got here. That was to be in India one day and here I am.

Aarti took me shopping to buy material. The shop is filled with silks, chiffons, and wools. I tell you one thing, this woman knows how to bargain. The owners have no chance with her. I told her she would get along great with my sister and friend Patsy. All of them love a good bargain. On the way back, we stopped on the sidewalk to buy some interesting material that is what I called typical shiny and colorful Indian. Again, we let Aarti do the talking and the bargaining. She is fabulous!

Interesting Note: All the things here are hand made. Nothing by machine. Aarti told me the material is unfinished and she takes it to a beader to finish the edges. Here and in Delhi you can take your material to a dyer and have him match any color you have. Big vats of dye are lined along the streets.

Jan. 6, Final Day in Delhi

Joe greets us at the airport and then we head for our old standby Pizza Hut for dinner. He tells us that his friends Adrian and _____ are having a party later. We were the first to arrive though we thought we were running late. The apartment is filled to the brim with people. Delhi is freezing now so I am happy to have the shawl from Mussoorie to keep me warm.

Oh the food is so good and the young ones dance to western music. I should have brought some Patti LaBelle or Tina Turner tapes. Everyone is having a great time and we leave late. An old friend of Allan and Maureen's drops in for a surprise visit. They have not seen her in 25 years. Her name is Janice and her children Michelle and Jason are with her. Her husband works for McGraw-Hill book company. Of course I am very familiar with this company since they are the publishers of many textbooks for schools.

Interesting Note: I do believe that nothing happens by chance. The many people I have met and the many places I have seen have been for a greater purpose and for lessons I needed to learn. I am not sure where this will lead me yet but I am positive God has a bigger plan for me. See you soon Delhi!

Jan. 7, On to London



Joe and Allan took us to the airport for our flight back to London. It always seems you have so long on a vacation until the last days get there. I tell Joe it is time for us both to focus on what is ahead of us. Isn't it odd to think no matter where we are in the world we all are looking at the same stars, wishing the same wishes, and dreaming the same dreams. There is more going on than we know. See you soon Joe!

LONDON---Alaric, Bridgett, Lionel, Justin, and Keith met us at the airport. Al had to borrow

Denis' car so we could fit in all our luggage. First thing we wanted was a MacDonald's cheeseburger. I am not sure who enjoyed it the most but I sure was glad to have some beef finally.

Arrived at Allan and Maureen's to drop off the luggage and then a visit to Bridgett and Lionel's place. Bryce made plans with Keith and Justin to go to a martial arts store in Acton Town and to PlayStation Skate Park.

Alaric stayed with us and showed us where everything was at Allan's place. It was nice to have his company. We stayed up late and talked about our trip.

Interesting Note: Last time I was in London was two years ago. That was when I drove to Stratford, Warwick, and Bath. Seems like yesterday.

Jan. 8, PlayStation Skate Park

This day was dedicated to finding PlayStation Skate Park for Bryce. Alaric accompanied us and we rode the Tube to Ladbrooke Garden then walked the few blocks to the park. It is located under an overpass and is partially outside. Ramps have been built on either side of the park and are used for BMX bikes, skaters, and skateboarders. I decided to buy Bryce and membership to the park. Cheaper and he gets a 10% discount on merchandise as well.

Ally and I went for tea while Bryce skated. We had a lovely chat and he really does have lots of interests. One thing I wasn't aware of was his expertise in martial arts. I hope one day he can meet my sons Gabe and Josh. Both are black belts in Taekwondo. Hey I am a recommended one myself. I must get back to the training.

Al took us to the market for some snack foods and we headed for home to watch TV and relax. I fixed some sandwiches and cheese and fruit for dinner and Al helped Bryce with his maths.

Interesting Note: The girl running the skatepark pro shop was from Portugal. She was very nice and helpful. Remember her Al? HAHHAHAHAHA! Her name was Sara.

Jan. 9, Lion King

Bryce and I took the Tube downtown to see if we could get matinee tickets for the Lion King. Good

luck was with us and we got tickets in the first balcony. There was time for lunch at MacDonalds and a trip to Nigel Williams rare book store. I am on their mailing list so I get their catalogs. They have an excellent selection of children's books and their new purchase was a signed copy of The Goblet of Fire by R.K. Rowling.

The Lion King was fabulous and the costumes were the most unusual I have ever seen. A mixture of puppetry and humans made the animals so realistic. Bryce loved it and of course the musical score was outstanding.

We were supposed to go to Al's place in Croydon and he told us to give him a call when we reached Victoria station so he could meet us at the station in Croydon. When I couldn't get up with him I decided to return to Acton and then give him a call. Finally, we were able to connect and off we went again with Justin coming along for the ride.

Al's place is lovely. He has (with lots of help I was told) done a lot of work. A new fireplace, new wood floors, beautiful molding upstairs, and new ceilings downstairs. Poor Allan, I heard, fell through the roof. Ouch!!! Alaric cooked us dinner and it was delicious but I am not supposed to tell Maureen that he can cook. I swear this man is really shocking me. We had a lovely time and got home late.

Interesting Note: I have been told that Croydon is the new millieum town. There are now cable cars traveling down the streets and a new shopping mall. If you want to know more ask Alaric. At the play I met a lovely lady named Clementine from South Africa. She works at the United Nations in Geneva. I must get in touch with her and find out more about what she does.

Jan. 10, Downtown London

Today, Bryce, Justin, and I went downtown London and caught the tour bus around town. Bryce and Justin wanted to see the martial arts store in Picadilly but we didn't make it that far. It was rainy and cold and we were running out of time. St. Paul's Cathedral was crowded with people even today so we didn't take the tour. Bryce did get to see Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and the Tower of London. I think the boy has done about all the sightseeing he wants for a while. After a quick boat tour down the Thames we headed to Salisburys to eat a typical English dinner but they wouldn't let children under 18 in until after six. No idea why they just wouldn't. We grabbed a quick bite from an Italian place nearby and headed for home.

Bryce wanted to go to the martial arts store in Acton so we took a cab from the station and went to see what they had to offer. He bought some shoes and then we went back to the flat. The cab cost 10 pounds just to get from the store to home. Now I see why everyone walks a lot here. Sheesh!

Interesting Note: The tube is an easy way to travel all over the city. Justin said he had not been on the tube much because he always went by car. I think if I lived here I would buy a car as well. The tube is nice but some of the stations close early at night which would be inconvenient. Justin took Bryce back to the skatepark again for another round of skating before we go home.

Jan. 11, Resting

This is our last day in London and the day Allan, Maureen, and the kids return from India. I decided today would be a slow day for us and we would stay in to rest and wash clothes and straighten up a

bit. Bridgett, Allan's sister, came over and brought food to cook for dinner. We had a nice long chat and she told me more about her family in Dhanbad and Lionel's family in the south of India. I really must travel south the next time I go there. She tells me of the many beautiful churches there and how the food is different than in the north of Indian.

I decided to try again to retrieve my mobile phone from Chiswick. The last time I was in London I bought one since I was alone on the road driving around and I left it with the people at the B&B where I stayed. They didn't have the phone with them so while I was there I went to the sweet shop around the corner to buy English sweets for Allan and Maureen's homecoming.

I called and rented a van to pick them up at the airport and Al, Justin, Keith, and Bryce drove over in his jeep. They arrived right on time and all their luggage this time too. Home we went to spend the last night together until the next time we meet.

Interesting Note: The van driver was from Afganistan but had lived in London for the past 10 years. He didn't agree with what the Taliban was doing and he was upset that his countrymen were having to pay for it with their lives.

Jan. 12, Going Home

Our flight is at 10 a.m. which means a 7 a.m. airport arrival. Good thing we got there early because Bryce and Justin headed off to play video games and I had to wait to check in while Allan frantically searched the airport for them. Heathrow does have a good system, though delayed we checked through with time to spare. Finally, we said our goodbyes and boarded the plane.

As I leave London again, I think of all the places we have been and the people we have met. It seems like a dream now but the memories will be with me always. I asked for a blessing and lessons to learn on this trip and that is exactly what I got. We are all on a fantastic journey. Filled with wonder and hope, I remained open and kept my faith. Thank you Lord for this wonderful experience and for blessing me with beautiful friends.

See you soon.

Nancy



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Taj Mahal



This is more incredible than any picture you will ever see. As you approach the gates, beggars and vendors line the sidewalks selling postcards, bracelets, Taj statues, and anything else you can imagine. They are a bit overbearing and extremely persistent. We had a choice of riding a bus, horse or camel drawn cart. Joe wouldn't let me ride in the camel cart so we boarded a bus and headed down the dusty streets to the grandest monument in the world. The Emperor Shah Kahn Jahan had many wives but he built this as a tomb for his favorite wife who died giving birth to their 14th child. It was not meant for the King to be buried here so his tomb was put higher than the Queen's to break the symmetry of the building. The King's son imprisoned his father to gain control of the throne. The inside and outsides are covered with precious stone inlays. This is the birthplace of religion as all are represented here. The lines of symmetry represent all religions. Recessed archways-Christianity, Upside down moons-Islam, Geometric shapes-Muslims, bell like arches---Hindu. Built so many years ago, it is amazing to think sheer manpower could produce such architectural genius. I was in awe of the symmetry and splendor of the tomb.

Across the river Yamuna the emperors palace was built. It is called Fort Agra. Every room has a view of the Taj Mahal. There was a huge piece of solid black onyx where the king put his throne to hold public audience. Can you imagine sitting on black onyx? Well we did too to take a picture. Our guide told us about the history of the King and his palace. That only made me want to read more about the Indian dynasties.


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My Journal

It's a feeling you get like something is missing that brings you into the reality of the essence of India. It is a feeling of great proportions, of a lesson that needs to be learned even when you aren't sure of the questions. It is a travesty of contradictions, old and new, rich and poor, and the haves and have-nots. This is India!



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