

Hyderabad – Monday – Day 4

Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India - February 11, 2008

Amy & Naresh:

Kripya. Kind attention please. A&N announces that the information in this entry was written many days after the events described. It is regretted that much of what follows may be incorrect. Thank you.

Woke up to the sound of pouring rain, which was unusual for this time of year in Hyderabad. The guide had called Tapas earlier in the morning to see if we were still interested in taking the tour in the rain. Tapas said that we were, so the guide came over at 9:00 and chatted with Tapas, Madhumanti, Brent and I while we had breakfast. Tapas bought a copy of the book on Hyderabad that the guide, Abbas, had written. Abbas used to work at Tata motors for 40 years, but his passion was photojournalism and he'd won several awards. He had an amazing knowledge of Hyderabad and we spent a full day with him exploring the city.

We left Tapas' house, riding in Abbas' big 4-wheel drive jeep, onto a big 6-lane highway. We were told that the highway was called "Clinton Highway" named after Bill Clinton, and was changed from a two to a six-lane highway for the day the Clintons visited. At the time everyone said "what do we need 6 lanes for, when two have always been fine" but as soon as it was completed it was jammed with traffic. Indians in Hyderabad have a "soft spot" for Hillary because Bill Clinton visited Hyderabad and drove through (contrasted with Bush's quick helicopter flyover), therefore increasing Hyderabad's clout and tourism.

We drove past many huge boulders huge (2.5 million years old) for a beautiful view of the city. From the overlook, we had seen a fort in the distance, which was Golconda Fort. This fort had been built by the (Muslim?) kings ruling the area, and later expanded with a send outer wall to prevent Arengzeb (same guy was in Delhi, Agra, and Aurangabad) from conquering it. That didn't work. Aurangzeb expanded his dynasty to Hyderabad, capturing the last independent ruler of this region and



Tombs. A little bit of the old tile remains.

forcing him back to Aurangabad (or maybe we got that all wrong; it's hard to remember everything if you have to remember it all correctly). We were told that the last



Tombs.

king kept his humor about it, saying "ok, fine, you win, take me, but please wait until I'm done with my breakfast." That guy's tomb was unfinished (like his breakfast?), but we viewed the large tombs of six of his predecessors. We drove through one of the outer gates of Golconda City; the gate was an "S" shape to thwart and slow down attacks

on the city. The gate, like many we've seen, had large spikes to hurt/maim animals attacking the gate. Inside the gate, we drove through Golconda City, the oldest part of Hyderabad, even older than the "Old City" of Hyderabad. The Old City was much like Old Delhi; both had unpaved roads, poor sanitation, with many Muslim people walking around (men wearing white, women wearing full burkas). We also noticed meat shops, with beef hanging outside the store (a sure sign of Muslims). Abbas told us that when he worked for Tata motors, his Hindu friends would ask him to buy beef for them, and bring it to work so their wives wouldn't know....

During the tour we learned many things about Hyderabad – and about India – such as "hotel" means "restaurant" in some cases, and a "hotel" is often called a "lodge." Abbas mentioned that there were "bullet carts" (or maybe "bullock carts"?) in the old city, which are basically motors (looks like a lawn mower motor) attached to a cart that a driver rides on. According to Abbas, Hyderabad is a very laid-back place with friendly people, though the work ethic of many is poor; i.e. waking up late, starting work at 10 or 11 am, taking the day off because your brother-in-law prepared an excellent biryani, etc.

Abbas was very flexible in what he showed us on the tour. For example, instead of just showing us the known forts we got to see the unknown giant baobob tree (story being that many trees from all over the world had been brought here over the many hundreds of years of wealth,



India's baobob tree.

and this one baobab tree had survived). We also went to see the wetlands around the fort where very many birds lived, water buffalo grazed, and people cut down the long grasses for sale and carted them in for sale on bull-drawn bullocks. Before reaching these wetlands the



A cart and bull story.

water went through some factories, and so in places we saw so much foam in the water that it looked like isolated snow piles. Also probably not on most tours, we drove past a low-income housing project (one-room houses and larger plots but with no bathrooms).



Ho Ho Ho. Where Santa gets his foam.

We did a lot of hiking early on, because we were worried that the rain may return (it didn't). First we hiked along some parts of the outer fort. From those edge ramparts we could see an old cannon with Arabic engraving, and where the moats had been, the water buffaloes grazing below, and in the far distance HiTec City looking from afar very much like Silicon Valley (is that the Adobe building I see?



Housing project.



Moat.

Is that Google?)

We drove to the main entrance of the fort, where we waited for Abbas to



Is that Silicon Valley?

park the car (Amy took some pictures and video of a sugarcane juicing. We hiked very high up to the inner fort, and up the mountain/fort to the aptly-named “high court” where the king would do his kingly business each day. We got pretty hot and tired on the way up. Luckily, there was an ice cream vendor about halfway up the path. The breeze at the very top was nice. Also unusual was a Hindu temple made by coloring images on the huge boulders. By the time our



Video Pressing sugar.

hike around the fort was over, the sun had come out in full force, and Amy realized that she had gotten a sunburn.



Hindu temple painted on boulders.

We next drove through various sections of the downtown part of Hyderabad. From the top fort we went through the “old old city” of narrow alleyways (especially narrow for Abbas’ big jeep) inside the fort, then through the “old city”, then out to just the “city.” Along this tour we viewed a few Muslim temples, the High Court, Charminar, and vendors selling everything under the sun (from old old stalls in old old city, to rows of dense stalls in old city, to malls in city). We took a tour break at Minerva Coffee House for lunch. Very clean. Abbas had dosa, Amy has a cheese sandwich, and Naresh had a thick pancake like bunch of dough and peppers and onions.



Afternoon delightful snack.

We went next to Chowmahallah Palace, a series of four separate palaces that were recently restored and opened to the public. Abbas lamented the fact that



Video Typical city traffic.

Andhra Pradesh had not marketed the palaces and the historic landmarks in the way that Rajasthan had (many Maharajah’s palaces were made into hotels and are also open to the public), and therefore had fewer tourists (and tourist income).

Chowmahallah Palace was impressive, with beautifully engraved walls and ceilings, and huge chandeliers filling the ceilings. There were displays of the clothes worn at the time of the Nizams, which were beautiful and ornate, saris with gold and silver thread on silk cloth. There was a time, before India took over (in a tragic invasion just after independence) that the Nizams were perhaps the wealthiest people in the world. The wealth showed at Chowmahallah.

We were tired from the sun and touring all day, so we

were looking forward to coming home. Abbas had mentioned that his friend had made a small souvenir box from a copy of an old Hyderabad coin. He wanted to show us the coin (and see if we perhaps wanted to buy order some for souvenirs) so he invited us to his house to see the coin box and have tea. We accepted, so we drove to his house, which was near Tapas and Madhumanti's place.

We ended up staying on Abbas' porch for a long while, drinking tea and chatting about the changes that had taken place in Hyderabad. (One of the most common things Abbas would say through the day was "very bad" and "terrible" when he would point out some landmark and contrast it with how things had been 10, 30, or 50 years ago.) One of his recent concerns is that the Hi Tech companies had driven up the prices in Hyderabad so that regular people weren't able to afford basic necessities. (ex: 3 rupees/kilo of vegetables was now 30 rupees). With an already-existing disparity between wealthy and poor in Hyderabad, the tech companies increase those economic tensions further. We also spoke about the craziness of Google, which coddles its Indian children as extravagantly as it's Mountain View kids.

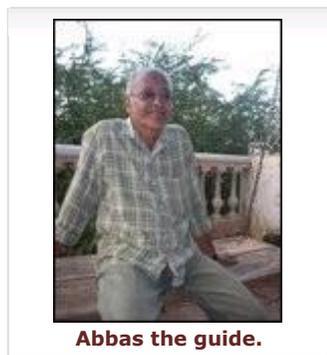
Abbas told us that his family was Muslim and was originally from _____, and had moved to Bihar, then to Hyderabad. His house was sparsely furnished, but had a beautiful balcony with flowers and a swinging chair. He drank many cups of coffee throughout our tour, but his job at home is making tea. His wife was out of town, visiting his daughter in northern India, then his



Tea on guide's patio.

son who lives in Dubai. After our tea and chat, he drove us back to T&M's house.

Back at the apartment, Madhumanti had prepared a delicious Chinese dinner. One of the recipes was from her mother, and all of the dishes were great (a green bean dish, pork dish, fried rice with shrimp, and a chicken dish). The Indian take on Chinese food is interesting to me and Brent; many of the dishes we've had in restaurants taste like Indian food, with soy sauce added and called "Chinese". Madhumanti's food was more authentic, and definitely Chinese!!!



Abbas the guide.

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