

MY FIRST THREE WEEKS IN INDIA



By Harry Jivenmukta

My first day in India

On the plane I sat next to a six year old girl who talked about everything under the sun. I enjoyed it but after a while had to pretend I was asleep so that I could get some peace. She was very talkative when her child's meal arrived and showed me all the stuff she had. Cheese dips and frooty juice and all that sort of stuff. Her mother was relieved that I was entertaining her and smiled a lot at me but didn't do anything to help.

The plane was on time and I got to my new apartment very quickly. My driver Anil and my PA Jince were there to meet me and the housekeeper, Kali Rai was waiting at the front door. She is a very short woman and looks very efficient. She can speak good English but says she can only read if the letters are spelled in capitals. We talked about my diet mainly and she told me about the wholemeal bread, ham slices and cheese that were available if I wanted packed lunches for work. She sent Jince and Anil out to do some shopping that they were not really pleased about and to make it worse, when they returned there was a huge monsoon downpour that soaked them completely. I was quite amused!

I decided that she didn't need to stay and cook on the first day and let her go home. She had a room above the apartment but turned it down and said she'd rather travel from her house 3½ miles away. Need to sort out some payment for travel with her.

I have had some problems. Firstly, I did about 10 deals in the first hour but had no money to pay. In India if you don't have the dosh you have to be quiet. But it should get better once I can get to a cash machine. Jince took me to a 5 star hotel for a meal and the head waiter let us eat a fantastic Chinese and Indian buffet free!! But I'll remember and repay him sometime. The food was brilliant but I was so tired and it's so hot. After the rain, the heat is like a sauna.

The other main problem I have had is that the apartment doesn't have a back up power supply, so when the electricity goes you're in big trouble. I have already ordered a battery generator. Also, there is some more furniture to buy. There is no coffee table and the wardrobes are pretty rubbish.

I think I'm going to like the apartment though. It is big. At the rush hour time there is a lot of traffic outside. In the cooler months I can imagine sitting out on the balconies watching the world go by.

The first day is nearly over and I have had a few hours sleep. It now all depends on the electricity. When it comes back on I'm going to put on all the coolers and fans and hopefully will collect enough cool air to see me right through the night.

I feel so far away from everyone I care for but at the same time feel at home.

My second day

Well, I'm in a real pickle. I've completed deals that means I need to raise almost one million rupees immediately. The head office demands results. I have met all their demands but now need to pay. It is Saturday now and the office in the UK doesn't open for another 48 hours or so. I will stop doing business until I can get hold of a million rupees. I can't wait to hear their voice when I ring up on Monday and ask them to transfer the money, although it is only about 15,000 sterling. One million sounds so impressive!

I went to see Mr Kataria the personnel consultant and he was much more positive about finding us the right candidates to interview. Ranjit wants to place an advertisement but I have decided to wait and see what Mr Kataria comes up with.

I now have about 20,000 rupees that are my own and spent 8,000 of it today but 4,500 is returnable by the company. I think that after Kali has bought a bit more stuff, the money will last a lot longer.

The day was very hot but more like Bombay because of the dampness in the hot air. I had lunch in a restaurant in a 5 star hotel that was really excellent, and Jince and I ate until we almost burst: a chicken dish and a really brilliant mixed vegetable curry including mushrooms that were out of this world! I have made a mental note to go there again. And it didn't cost much either!!!

The housekeeper, Kali Rai, is excellent! She made me chicken, a vegetable dish, some rice and chapattis. She unpacked my suitcase, moved furniture and served tea to people who were waiting to see me on my return from a day of meetings.

There are lots of things to do to make the apartment a real home but Kali is doing some of the things before I even suggest them. I wanted satellite TV but have already got 70 channels so I don't think I need any more unless I can do a deal on Sky Sports. I do need a telephone, though, if only to get a high speed broadband connection. I'm going to get a DVD player and a Hi-Fi and keep lovely Hindi film music playing all the time when I get time to relax.

The apartment becomes more comfortable by the day. I think you need a bit of time to get used to it but it grows on you. It's about 5 times bigger than my apartment in the UK. I haven't explored the neighbourhood yet because it is too hot to go out walking. There are a few shops nearby that will be easy to walk to in the cooler months.

India is so good, it's impossible to describe. In the UK I always have depressing moments but here you feel uplifted and free. Anything you want is immediately supplied, everyone is so nice, even in hard business meetings, and although the weather is too much at the moment, it makes you feel different. Inside I feel full of something that is so

good it is very hard to describe. It is like being complete; like something was missing but now it is there.

Anyway, that was my second day in India. Tomorrow I want to relax and plan my strategy of how to get the money. I will write a report for head office and relax. Kali has left some brown and white bread, eggs, a vegetable dish, ham and cheese, etc. and other stuff. It's her day off tomorrow.

My third day

It is Sunday and the housekeeper's day off. I moved the TV into the living room and basically rested all day. I watched Antakshari which is the only Indian TV show I ever liked when we had Zee TV in the UK. It is so funny. There are three couples, two presenters and an audience. It's a Hindi music quiz show where the contestants have to remember songs and sing them. What makes it brilliant is that if the contestants get it wrong, members of the audience can try and sometimes the presenters get so carried away, they start singing as well!!

I realised that I am a million rupees short in order to honour the contracts I have made and so called Ranjit in the UK. In this bizarre world of mine he said he'd ring me back within the hour. He did and said that he would send someone to me with 900.000 rupees tomorrow, in cash! I can't wait for that meeting.

I almost called my driver to take me to a fancy restaurant but decided to rough it out on my own at home instead. I ate ham and cheese sandwiches and eggs. There is no margarine so it was a bit dry. The housekeeper said she would get more stuff including margarine and cornflakes tomorrow. I have only had a housekeeper for two days and already feel utterly useless in the kitchen. I am going to slide into uselessness with all the people surrounding me. You don't have to lift a finger here and if you did want to, someone would lift it for you!

Before I went to bed I noticed that I had left the living room and dining room in a complete mess. Whatever will my housekeeper think of me in the morning? She's probably seen it all before, I hope.

The only things missing for me are the people I love who are so far away. If I could wish anything in the world it would be that those people were here. Anyway, today I didn't go out or spend a single rupee. It makes a change after the million I have spent since arriving a few days ago!

My fourth day

This has been a day of waiting. It was too hot to go out and I haven't got the money I wanted. Two chaps came visiting me to verify who I was and to check me out. This is how it works. Someone in the UK hands over the sterling. The contact in the UK then phones the chaps in India who visit and supply the money in rupees. It is black market business, money laundering. Money made in India and not declared for tax is supplied to people like me and they get the sterling that they can then lose in their UK accounts. Finally at 1am India time I have been informed that the deal will go down tomorrow. By tomorrow evening I will have the 900,000 rupees. I have asked that the same cartel members deliver the cash that visited me this morning. I don't want to get involved with too many shady characters.

On a lighter note, I continue to be amazed by my housekeeper. For lunch she made me sandwiches but she said the bread seemed a bit dry. So she made me a vegetable and coriander soup as well. When I said made, I mean from the raw ingredients! It was fantastic! She makes everything fresh and just enough for that meal. She will not make tinned stuff or make food and chill or freeze. Whatever I want, she makes it then and there, absolutely fresh. Yesterday I made a real mess on her day off. She sorted it all out without a word. Everything was ship shape in no time. She is a gem! For my evening meal she made me a chicken biriyani and has already promised a special break-

fast tomorrow; potato paranthas with fresh yoghurt. WOW! I am already salivating all over the place.

A chap came round in the evening with a draft contract for the office space. He is a Jain. In world religions there is a massive debate about which was the first religion; Vedic, (Hindu), or Jain. The Jains claim to be the first. They have a very strict code of practice that excludes them from certain work like farming and times they can eat, (never after sunset) etc. In the end the only thing they can do with certainty is business and most Jains are very rich. This chap has brokered the deals on both the apartment and the office. He's about 80 and very clever. For two hours work the other day he gave me a bill for 45,000 rupees, that's about 600 Sterling. That's a lot in any currency. He's got a mobile phone that always makes me smile. He is just too old for such technology and peers strangely at it when it rings, although he can use it easily. He talks into it like he is talking to some supernatural being. It's probably just me, but I smile a lot watching him answer a call. And he rides a scooter. When he left I watched him from my balcony fearing for his life. But he just got on and melted into the traffic. 80 and going strong. I really like him. He grows on you and makes me feel almost responsible for him in some way, although he could manage in India much better than I could on my own.

I've asked Jince and Anil to come tomorrow morning for a planning meeting. I will go out and try to find a cash machine and do a bit of shopping. I am going to a food supermarket to investigate what's available and add to the already excellent larder. Mainly, I want to find out about what's available for Kali's day off that's easy to make and tasty to eat.

Well it's 2am now and I'm wide awake. I slept for a few hours but don't feel the need to sleep any more. After all, I've done nothing for two days.

My fifth day

Today has been a very busy day indeed. Originally I had planned to do just a few things, but one thing led to another. I wanted to email Pavan and Helen and get another mobile phone for local calls. I wanted to visit a cash machine to check whether some money had been transferred to my account for petty cash expenditure. After that I was going to hide inside from the heat.

I managed to find an internet café that took a USB pen drive. Most Indian systems still run on Windows 98 and that means that USBs are not automatically detected. I sent my diary entries completed so far, to Pavan and Helen. Then I needed to get a new SIM card for an old mobile phone. People calling me from inside India have to pay international rates and especially candidates for jobs are not going to pay huge amounts to enquire about our vacancies.

To get a SIM card in India you have to fill in two forms, get a photocopy of your passport and visa, and present a photograph and a million other things. In the end it took a while and then the phone still wouldn't work. I joked with the shopkeeper that if I'd known I could have brought him a copy of my autobiography. Jince got it all sorted later. Now I have two mobiles. I used to laugh at people with two phones. Who's the joker now?

The cash was in the account as agreed so that didn't take long and I withdrew 20,000 rupees for good measure.

Then we went to see the office property landlord to discuss some amendments to the lease because I wasn't happy with four points. I promised him 200,000 rupees for the next day although I had no money on me really.

I got back home at about 1.30pm and started the ongoing saga of getting a million rupees transferred from the UK. I made about twenty phone calls and insisted that people be called out of meetings. I threatened to default and therefore go into liquidation if the money

was not sorted. At about 5pm the deal was finally done. There are two types of management and the crisis management style of my company doesn't suit me. I am organised and will make sure that this incident never happens again.

The money man said he could either deliver at midnight or first thing in the morning. I thought about getting in some hard men but then opted for the morning. There is a risk that morning might mean lunchtime but I couldn't risk a late night exchange without bodyguards. In India a million, or 900,000 is a fortune.

I also ordered broadband internet for my apartment and for the office. I should have it all sorted in a few days time. Jince fills in all my forms and I just sign them. There are more and more each day and sometimes I'm not sure what I'm signing.

Otherwise, I appointed a peon. His rate is 5,000 rupees a month and basically he is a gofer. He will fetch and carry, bring drinks, open and close doors, and generally be helpful. I met him yesterday and he seems to be a happy chap. I was told he is married and maybe it might be a good idea to give him a tip on festival days to make his life a happy one. I will remember this.

I also signed an agreement for a car and driver. At the moment I am paying the equivalent of about 50,000 a month on taxis. This deal will give me a designated car and driver for six days a week, 10 hours a day, for 23,500 rupees per calendar month. It's a good deal bearing in mind the savings but perhaps a bit expensive by Indian standards. I get the first 1500 kilometres a month free but must pay for additional ones and a premium for night and out of hours driving.

I am very tired indeed but need to keep focussed on the task of distributing 900,000 rupees tomorrow. By this time tomorrow I will be penniless again.

My housekeeper wants me to give her daughter a job. I have asked her to supply a CV and if she is half as good as her mother I will appoint her. Apparently she is skilled in secretarial work. Time will tell on that one.

The hectic pace of life here is magnified by the massive heat. Except on the first day there has been no monsoon rain. The temperature is down to the mid 30s but it is stifling and very draining.

I had a bit of a ding dong with Helen today on the phone and got very upset. I am sure she is upset as well. We are two fools. I don't think I want to say anything more about that.

I phoned Anil and asked him to pick me up to go shopping for a DVD player and Hi-Fi but he said it was too late and the shops would shut before we got there. So that will have to wait till the day after tomorrow.

My housekeeper has just left, having cooked me two vegetable dishes; a cauliflower dish, and paneer which is like cheese, and chapattis, all of which I am sure will be delicious.

PS The food was excellent and so is my mood. I remember an old Zen story. The disciples were always amazed by the happiness of their master and one day asked him his secret. The old man answered that you have to get through the day in any case, whether you decide to laugh about it or cry. So why not choose to laugh? This will be my attitude from now on. I used to laugh all the time but now certain people often make me sad. I will remember the story at moments like those.

My sixth day

What a day it has been. It's been 40 degrees or more and I have been out working for 7 hours. The money man came at 7am and staked out the place before deciding we should lock ourselves in my bedroom. Then he produced a huge number of bundled notes. In India the banks

collate notes into 10,000 one hundred rupees bundles and then staple them together and stamp them to say they are correct. This chap brought bundles of 50, 100, 500 and 1,000 rupee notes. It all made sense in the end but it is difficult to understand that some bundles are bigger but have only 5,000 rupees (50 rupee bundles) whilst others are slim and are worth 50,000 (1,000 rupee bundles).

I emptied my briefcase and we managed to force 850,000 rupees into the bag. I owed 50,000 rent anyway so I left that behind for the landlord. I met him later in the day, and he was very prompt when I told him I had the money upstairs.

Anil came at 9.30 and we met Jince at 10.15. We went to the computer supplier first and gave him 410,000 rupees. He will deliver 18 machines tomorrow and other hardware, and I ordered one more that Ian recommended as a back up. Ian also wanted a server but because I don't know enough about it I have decided to wait until he comes to India and then he can clarify the specification himself.

We then went to a restaurant in Gurgaon where we had agreed to meet the furniture man. Apparently, there are certain localities in Delhi that have certain days of during the week. The furniture man's area is closed on Wednesdays. We gave him 106,000 rupees to cover the furniture cost and the carriage and a coffee table for my apartment.

We then went to meet the old Jain and paid him his 45,000 fixer's fee. Then we went with him to see the office property landlord and gave him 200,000 of the 247,500 we agreed. The rest we will pay on the 25th. We signed all the legal papers.

I then returned with Jince to my apartment and paid him 56,000 rupees to cover all the costs of fitting out the apartment, the fixer's fee for finding the housekeeper, an advance on a car and driver, and some other bills he had run up.

Finally, I paid Anil 6,000 rupees for the two days of driving he had done for us and a small bonus for him.

In all, I have distributed 860,000 rupees today. I feel tired but relieved that all the contracts I agreed have been honoured. The next thing is to take possession of the computers, furniture and office property. After that I will chase the personnel consultant and then fly off to Mumbai to sort out our operation there.

Wow! What a day!

And to make the perfect end to a hard day, my housekeeper has made me spaghetti bolognaise for supper with a side salad and an extra mozzarella cheese topping if required. It smells so fantastic I feel like burying my face in it right now. But first I want to cool down, reflect on the day and chill out.

My seventh day

After eating my spaghetti, which was delicious, I got to thinking about my situation and especially my wife. I have been angry for so long that her family have acted improperly. I do accept that the fault lies with me as much or more than with Surinder but nevertheless there are protocols.

I decided on radical action and called Anil at 11pm. I told him to get hold of a car and two drivers immediately. He was surprised, but in India if the boss calls at any time everybody jumps. Fifteen minutes later we set off on the eight to ten hour, 400 kilometre journey overnight to the Panjab. I phoned Surinder in the UK and she went ballistic. I laid it on thick and told her to get her family ready for a dawn confrontation. I was out for blood and told her that.

Ten hours is a long time. But to make it even more dramatic I decided that I would stay for no longer than one hour, refuse all hospitality and then return. To refuse hospitality, especially a meal after a long jour-

ney, is very insulting. That's 20 hours and 800 kilometres for a one hour confrontation. In India people know the rate of a long distance taxi. I paid 15,000. The family would be in no doubt about my intentions. 15,000 is the equivalent of a manager's monthly salary and 4 months of a village teacher. I could have hired a car and done it all in about 6,000 rupees or paid 650 rupees for the air conditioned coach but deliberately got a taxi.

When we arrived, my father in law and two of Surinder's brothers were up and ready for me. I had cooled down a bit but told my father in law that I wanted to speak only with him and in private. I told him everything, every little detail, including all about Helen. He said that no-one had told him anything until last week and even then he knew very little, and he was devastated. The implications and shame for his family are huge and his son in the UK, by not acting properly, had brought shame on their whole extended family. He was completely wiped out and agreed with me that the proper steps had not been taken. As the oldest son in law I carry considerable authority in their family. There was no need for me to take any more action. I think the raking I gave him was enough retribution. I remembered to use all the banned words; divorce was one word that is not allowed. I used it liberally.

There is only one other thing that a person can do that is more significant than this. That is to call the Panchayat. These are five village elders who can be called upon in the final instant where everything is put out in the public domain of the village square and any decision is binding. Every village has one. I was playing with the idea but did enough on my own.

After that, I did accept a bit of hospitality; tea and biscuits. Then, as a final insult I offered both brothers jobs in the company, and left. A nuclear explosion couldn't have done more than what I had just done. I bet the phone lines to the UK were ringing all day and probably their

family will have to call a big meeting to try to salvage a scrap of self respect.

I left my address and phone number with my father in law and expect a visit within a week or so of him, uncles and brothers. I have been wronged. At least now they know, accept and will try to make it up to me. I don't know what they can offer me but I can ask for anything I like. In the end I could even have Surinder sell up and live in the Panjab for a suitable time so that their family can be reminded every day that they are shamed. Am I that much of a bastard?

None of this makes me happy. It's just that there are processes and systems that have been ignored. My father in law is old school. He is finished. Maybe I don't need anything more than that.

But, remember, I haven't been hasty. They have had a year to act. Heads will definitely roll, especially my brother in law's because he is the oldest son and represents his father in the UK. Surinder is the oldest child of the family. She will carry all the blame of any future issues that occur with any of her younger brothers and sister. After all, they now no longer have any role models. It means free range for the others. With what face can either of the two admonish or influence the others? And by not telling their father, they have undermined his authority. The whole chain of the family has been shattered. But they did it themselves. If they had acted properly it might have been my fault. Now I am completely cleared because they have broken many of the rules that govern and control Indian society. Inside me, there is a little bit that is glad. But overall it is something that I had hoped I would never have had to do. It is worse than death for my father in law.

I lost a whole day of business and will pick up those pieces tomorrow. I think Anil will see me differently in future. He was awed by it all. Big time. I am like that. If you're going to make a statement don't do half; do treble!

My eighth day

I have been thinking a lot about what happened in the Panjab yesterday. I feel mixed up because now the families will have to take action. My dilemma is either to cooperate or to set the price so high that no one can meet it. Knowing you have almost unlimited power is no help at all. There will be a big clearout in Surinder's family, with some people unable to show their faces in public again. Time will tell.

If there were no children involved it would be easier. But I can't compromise the security of Pavan; she is too young. I will wait for their next move and then decide. Either way the power balance has changed and if played carefully, I have them all ends up.

Meanwhile, half the computers were delivered yesterday and the other half are due today. It's about 40 degrees and so we have left the peon to wait for the delivery. I feel a bit guilty about that but that is his job, or part of it. The furniture comes tomorrow and again the peon is waiting. The day after that I have asked him to get a day labourer to help him set up the office spaces and also contracted Arvin, a man I am trying to entice into the company, to put the computers together, install the software and do the cabling to the server.

Jince and I had an excellent lunch in a nice restaurant which was so cool after the heat outside that we didn't want to leave; chicken and a mushroom and vegetable dish. I am getting very partial to mushrooms. Jince thought that I was like a pregnant woman who starts to crave for certain food. His wife is pregnant with their second child. We had a really good laugh.

I contacted Anand in Mumbai and he is very keen to get started on his project. I have said I will travel probably on the 25th or 26th. I've told him I will let him know and that he should book my favourite hotel, the Sea Princess. I will stay for about three or four days. I asked him to find some secondary school maths teachers for me to interview and

appoint. Then I will deliver national curriculum training to him or her and also to Anand. We can then start the project in Mumbai. Anand also wants to know when we can deliver two days of teacher training. I told him I would probably return to Mumbai in a few weeks with Ranjit and or Ian. It might be that Ranjit will want to deliver the training with Ian rather than me in which case I will stay in Gurgaon.

I bought a printer today which means I can finally print out important documents like contracts etc. I bought an Epson 210 which is almost exactly like my printer at home, including CD label printing.

Tonight my housekeeper is cooking pork chops. In India people don't call it pork, but pig, which somehow loses its attraction a bit. She will also make boiled potatoes and vegetables with a side salad. There are lots more things in the fridge now and I can see myself sneaking mid-night snacks.

Late tonight I finally secured the employment of Arvin George and his assistant Amit Sharma as the Company's technical support staff. We negotiated salaries and finally I agreed to let them do the first job as contract work and then employ them full time on 12,000 and 10,000 rupees per month respectively. In this way they earn a bit more but I also get my people. I am printing contracts today and will get them signed and faxed to the UK as soon as possible. After the business of employment and money, we listened to 1970's classic bollywood songs on my laptop and marvelled at the poetry of the Hindi language.

I also got a late night call to say the computers have now all been delivered. Tomorrow I will go and do a bit of a check and ask Arvin for a full inventory. Things, it appears, are beginning to move.

Incidentally, the pork chops were excellent. I had three, all well trimmed of fat, with a variety of potatoes and some small onions that were special.

Tomorrow I want to get my hi-fi and DVD player. It seems like ages since I announced this intention but business and the heat keep getting in the way.

My ninth day

This has been a defining day in many ways. I have appointed my personal assistant by using great craft. Jince will not agree to join the Company full time. He is a fixer and makes a lot of money on the side. Working at the Radisson Hotel, he gets to meet lots of business people just like he met me. He then sorts out their issues and earns a lot of money as well as his team leader's salary. So, I have appointed a young man, Pradeep Pathania. I had half a personal assistant salary and a full office assistant salary totalling 16,000 rupees and have merged the two to make one post. I have poached him from an American outfit. He has only been working for two years but is sharp, and a graduate of Delhi University; Bachelor of Commerce. So now I have two part-time PAs and a half time office administrator. Jince will take care of external relations with suppliers and Pradeep will be in charge of the office in my absence and second in command when I'm in Gurgaon.

All the computers have arrived and all the office furniture. The peon, Surjit Singh, is a very honest and hardworking person who has taken good charge of the office premises. I intend to change his title; peon is too British Empire, and when I have some spare money, I will raise his salary to something more reasonable.

There is no such thing as a weekend in India. Today, Saturday, was just as hectic as any other day. I went shopping and bought a DVD player. I also bought a company mobile phone for Surjit. After that, Anil, Surjit, Pradeep and I went back to my apartment. They set up the DVD and we listened to music and made plans and ate samosas.

Personally, I have been a bit pissed off with Helen. She will not talk to me at weekends, still playing these stupid games. She hasn't commit-

ted herself either which is very stressful for me. I think she wants me to get into life here and forget all about her and so avoid all the issues we have created. I could certainly do that and choose any woman I want. It is just that a certain matter of love is involved. I have never thought Helen understands how much I love her.

Pavan called me and told me about the accolades and recognition she had got on the last day of school. She was very proud to now officially be a year 9 student. She got two awards in Maths. I am very happy and proud to be her dad.

My tenth day

Today all the hard work has paid off. I assembled all my staff and we went to the office. Whilst I tried to hold a special meeting with my two administrators, two others were arranging the desks and two technical support officers were calculating the cabling and electrical requirements. When I say I tried to hold a meeting, I mean that Indians have no idea of protocol and anyone can barge in to the office and just do their own thing. I had to politely but quite forcefully eject several people, including the landlord.

The office space is just ideal for the number of desks we have, and I have an office of my own! I set out our initial objectives and assigned duties for everyone. Tomorrow I fly to Mumbai and it is up to my administrators to manage all the work in my absence. I was gentle with Pradeep because he is young and lacks confidence, although he is in charge in my absence.

The work has been slightly delayed because we need an electrician. I left Arvin and his assistant behind to arrange the electrical wiring side and told them to be tough with their demands and get exactly what they require. I informed Jince to pay any extra costs and I will reimburse him on my return to Gurgaon.

Even Jince is learning, although anyone meeting him for the first time would think he knows it all. I instructed him to book my flight to Mumbai but it took him quite a while to do. I have an e-ticket now. Let's see if it works tomorrow!

When my housekeeper has her day off, I struggle to survive. As a diabetic I need to eat but don't. I asked Anil to get me anything resembling food for my meal in the late afternoon. He got an egg and chicken biriyani which was very tasty and a dal dish. I have not told him yet but I intend to give him a 25,000 bonus when my car and driver arrives. In India you have to pay a finder's fee which is one month, whether it is rent or salary. Anil has found me two people whose combined salary is 21,000 and I will pay him an additional 4,000. Just because he is a taxi driver and not a personnel consultant is not a valid reason for not paying him. Had Mr Kataria found them we would have happily paid the fee; so why not to Anil? For him the amount comes to 3 months salary! He will be happy!

My main problem now is an internet connection. I have several CVs waiting for me to inspect but have failed for three days to get to an internet café. I awake at 3 to 4am and could easily do this kind of work then. When Anil comes it is all go and everything in India takes time. Every day we run out of time before I can get to the emails. I will try to do it all in Mumbai. The hotel there should have a business centre.

I think I have done a good job. In Mumbai I expect to put the icing on the cake. I have asked Anand to arrange interviews and I will appoint a maths expert immediately. After that, I will train the appointee and Anand in the UK National Curriculum and get them working on our first project.

My eleventh day

Today started off by my being very lazy. I woke up at about 5 and my housekeeper came at 7. She made me my breakfast and then I laid down and fell asleep again for a few hours. I was due to go to Mumbai

on a 12.50 flight and so had decided to rest until it was time to go. I had set tasks for all the staff the previous day and so could just lay back and enjoy the morning.

Jince phoned at about 10 and that brought me back to life. Then Anil and Surjit came. They were early but again it forced me to at least sit up and take notice of the passing day. The telephone man came next. Eventually, I got washed dressed and packed and we set off to the airport.

The flight was fine. It takes about 90 minutes and by the time the lunch has been served and cleared up, there are only about 20 minutes left before landing. We landed in a monsoon downpour and I noticed with some satisfaction that no-one else on the plane had a raincoat either. The problem is that, although it was raining, the temperature was still 30 Celsius. There was a very strong breeze as well. We had to board a bus from the plane to the terminal and at the baggage retrieval my case was one of the first which was pleasant.

I called Anand and he booked my hotel there and then. I had texted him from Delhi but he said he hadn't received anything. Both my phones decided that all non-Mumbai numbers were wrong and I haven't been able to use them. When I got to the hotel everything had been sorted and I got straight to my room. I was brought a complimentary bowl of fruit by a very polite young chap. I arranged to meet Anand later for a working supper but then decided I was too hungry to wait. I cancelled and told him we would meet at Podar International School in the morning. I had a lamb and spinach dish with a pile of small plain naans. Brilliant, and stuffed to the gills, I went to bed and got a few hours sleep.

An important thing I noticed in the restaurant was that more than half of the staff were new. That's the problem that I'm going to have. No-one, it seems, has any loyalty. People leave at the drop of a hat. Retention of staff will be the biggest challenge for me.

I eventually got to my emails at the hotel business centre and sent emails all over the place. I sent my diary entries to Pavan and Helen with day 7 censored completely. I also censored day 8 but sent the complete entry for that day by accident. Helen texted me to say she had lots of questions!!! Day eight somewhat gives the game away about what happened on day 7.

Anyway, there it is. I have saved some CVs sent to me by email and also forwarded them on to head office in the UK. I might even get round to reading them in the next few days. It's 30 minutes past midnight and the distant roar of Mumbai traffic reaches me through the monsoon winds. The Arabian Sea is thrashing itself against the beach. I am going to try to get a few hours sleep, if it comes, and tomorrow is another day.

My twelfth day

I had two morning meetings today; one with Anand and one to interview 3 Maths teachers. The monsoon is brilliant. Normally the traffic is dead frightening but in the monsoon it is even better because no-one uses windscreen wipers and everything is just a haze of rain and spray. Somehow I got to the place I was supposed to go, Podar International School. In the end I appointed all three maths teachers on a freelance basis. I am meeting them for the next two days as well, to deliver national curriculum training.

For lunch I had just a light meal because at 4pm I am supposed to be accompanying a beautiful young daughter of a big businessman for tea at the notoriously expensive Marriot Hotel. I have told everyone I am spoken for but you know Indians!!! They never take no for an answer. Anyway, I will return her politely to her home as soon as possible and have a quiet Ghazal filled evening at the Sea Princess. I fancy kebabs or something fiery tonight to counter the beauty of the music.

Two massive breaking stories live on Indian news.

First: The whole of Maharashtra is under water. A state of emergency has been declared. Army and navy mobilised. More than 30 dead with many more expected. Roads in Mumbai have turned into rivers and hotel door men are refusing to let guests leave for any reason. Schools have been closed for at least the next two days. Airport closed and flooded even inside the terminals; 'resembles a lake more than an airport', and all trains cancelled. I have never seen anything like it before. People are stranded wherever they happen to be. The wind and rain is incredible. It is impossible to see the buildings across the street. Sheet lightning and thunder are continuous and sometimes so loud as to make you jump. Two Dutch guys next to me in the business centre earlier nearly jumped out of their skins!! We all laughed afterwards. The hotel management had the bright idea of clearing the clogged up drains. One chap undressed down to his boxers and went out. As soon as he cleared the clogging all the water from the bursting drains underneath shot out to make the situation worse. Good Indian thinking that!!

Second: in Gurgaon where I have the apartment, there has been a huge police and workers battle. Some workers were complaining about lay offs from the Honda company. They beat up a policeman. When riot police arrived they went berserk and beat people up with lathis which are long thick sticks about 5 feet long. Live pictures show continuous violence even when the people were unconscious. More than 300 civilians hospitalised and 350 arrested. It is a national scandal with government ministers visiting hospitals to try to ease the situation. Today, the relatives of the injured have rioted again. The live pictures are disgusting. There is no defence at all for the police brutality. Indian television is showing all the violence live. Today, a woman relative is shown charging and hitting a police chief on the head with a big stick. That started another riot. Women have led the rioting today!! All shops are closed and the whole area is in turmoil. No-one is in control. I am watching live pictures now and the violence is incredible for the second day running. One woman MP has called it second

only to Jalliwala Bhag when the British opened fire on Sikh civilians in the early 20th century and killed many. The lower House of Parliament are nearly rioting over the matter. I am watching pictures of it now. The Prime Minister has intervened and Sonia Gandhi is visiting later today. There are pictures of house to house fighting. I hope I have a house to go back to.

These are the only two stories on television at the moment.

Is it better to be here in Mumbai or there?

Back to Mumbai. Throughout the evening there have been more and more restrictions because of the weather. In the end a decision has been taken to cut the electricity supply to the city in case of falling live cables. After a few minutes all the TV stations went dead and remain so. There is no longer any TV at all. The last bulletin I heard was that the next 24 hours will be very severe. Everyone is urged to remain where they are and make the best of it. People like me are the lucky ones because big hotels have their own generators. At least we have loads of food and power. Even the waiters have slept at the hotel. There are no landlines or internet access and mobile calls are failing.

It's 2.30am now and the winds are increasing. This is Harjinder Singh, for CNN, in the eye of the storm....

My thirteenth day

It's 7.45am and I have had breakfast. No staff have made it into the hotel, so the staff from last night are working still. Everyone is mucking in. The latest advice is the same; do not attempt to move from where you are.

Latest: airport waist high in water (a guy in reception managed to get a mobile line to Bangalore for that information), no trains, no TV because the cables are swamped, no landlines for the same reason, no electricity (although we have a generator), no mobiles, no Internet and

no newspapers. Basically, we have food and drink and the hotel generator is working. Essential power is reserved for guest rooms and elsewhere power is being reduced.

The forecast for today is severe weather. The winds have not let up, although there is only a little rain at the moment. Lots of people are missing, failed to get home rather than anything else, but in outlying areas there have been many deaths from landslides and flooding.

Today is cancelled. It will be a case of eating and drinking and waiting. The weather yesterday was devastating; it puts you in your place. We think we are so in control. Maybe that's one reason Indians are so fatalistic; they know that nature is massive compared to humans. It is very interesting to note how people adapt to a crisis. Before, no-one really spoke to one another; today there is camaraderie between guests. It's the old Dunkirk spirit, (Mumbai spirit)!

Some people have slept in the lobby area because they came for meetings and got caught up in the floods. The otherwise immaculate manager of the hotel is fraying at the edges, although he is still remarkably resilient. He ate breakfast at the table next but one to mine. That is unheard of in normal times; guests and staff never sit together. The team leaders are maintaining their standards but the ordinary waiters and support staff are getting weary with the same requests and demands for information. I have given up on the mobiles and will not carry them again until after the crisis is over.

My room cleaner said he spent the night at the hotel but managed to contact his home last night before everything went down. He says his house is waist high in water and he is frightened for the lives of his small children. There are many similar stories, with rumours that some areas have simply been carried away in the floods. It is heart rending stuff, especially when almost all of the guests are concerned with only when the airport will re-open. It is the worst weather in Mumbai in 20 years.

At lunchtime our hotel lost all power. The generators have consumed the last of the diesel. Even the Marriot has closed its doors to visitors and a few have trickled into our hotel in search of food. All corridors are lit by candles. The manager has arranged a buffet lunch for guests: I had chicken, rice and naans. I nearly punched a chap who came in with a European woman and insisted on the menu. After all, the waiters are now into their 36 hour shift. He's the sort of bloke who would have sunk on the Titanic because he would have waited for ice in his drink.

I ate lunch with a French chap and we agreed to meet this evening for the ghazals if the singers turn up. He is due to fly to Paris tonight but has no realistic chance.

And a bit of very bad news; a new incomer reports of two dead children found nearby, and an unidentified adult.

Electricity back on now at 5pm and I'm watching a live helicopter flyover of Mumbai. This is the highest daily rainfall ever recorded in India; up to 94.4 cm in one day yesterday, (average 66.6cm). Damage estimated at 500 billion rupees. Airport is still waterlogged and public holiday declared. Santa Cruz area (89.6cm) where my meetings were yesterday morning is still cut off. There is a live interview with a parent whose child has spent the night at the very school I was in! Hundreds of children have been stranded along with their teachers in that school. Good job my meetings were in the morning! All roads, rail, and air still closed. Heavy rains expected for the next 48 hours. I think I will be in Mumbai for days yet because when the airport opens, tickets will be like gold dust.

7.30pm all power has failed again. This is a real situation!

My fourteenth day

The worst is over. The hotel staff have worked for 40 hours and finally have been replaced by a trickle of replacements. I met the General

Manager of the hotel chain, and in the presence of the manager and deputy manager hailed all the staff as heroes and heroines. They worked under extreme pressure both because they were tired and because they were worried for their own families.

The newspapers were delivered today and estimated more than 100 dead in the City, with 700 dead state wide. The most frightening thing about a crisis like this is that the people at the centre of it know nothing of what's going on. The TVs are now back on and the power restored. I won't go into any more details here but will scan newspaper reports and add them later.

The chap who cleans my room told me that his wife and small children were safe but that the floods had destroyed most of his things in the home. He asked me for help and I gave him 500 rupees. It's not enough, but there you go.

Today has been declared a public holiday and nothing is open. I stayed in the hotel for most of the day.

I did get to my 4pm tea appointment with the young lady I mentioned a few days ago. I will not even say her name because she was the most obnoxious and badly behaved woman I have ever been out with. She turned up with a chaperone which surprised me. The chaperone was everything that my date was not; more beautiful, polite, intelligent and sensible. My young lady ordered iced coffee. Of course, it wasn't cold enough so it had to go back. Then she ordered kebabs that she insisted were no good. The chaperone's iced coffee seemed fine and she ordered a chicken sandwich. I wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible and didn't order any food. I don't even understand how and why I had to be there in the first place. The chaperone politely insisted that I share her sandwich and asked me to cut the sandwich into two equal portions. I then pointedly ignored my young lady and talked with the chaperone. I asked her about her plans and ambitions in life and she said she wanted to be an air hostess, had attended a

course, and was waiting for the right opportunity to apply for a position.

My young lady declared she wanted to go shopping and I leapt in with my pre-planned story that I had another meeting to go to and would otherwise have loved to go shopping with her. I called a taxi and got dropped off at my hotel and then left the driver with enough money to drive my young lady around all night if required. Just before I left them she held my hand for a few moments more than was required and said something about meeting again. I ran for my life! So I had spent a huge amount of money for what? Sometimes things are so unusual that the significance eludes me. She even hinted about visiting me in Gurgaon! I wish Helen were here and then I could escape women like that. It won't be the last I see of her and I expect other young ladies whose parents probably see me as a bottomless pit of rupees.

I went to bed very early and slept for longer than ever in the last year or so. The tension of the last few days was very tiring. Hopefully, tomorrow I will find my maths teachers and Anand and get on with my business.

My fifteenth day

I had breakfast at 7am and then chatted with the waiters and hostesses. The whole experience of the last few days has forged a special relationship between guests and staff. Then I thought it would be a good idea to take in the air and reflect by the Arabian Sea. Unfortunately that was a bad idea. The amount of detritus carried in by the incoming tide meant that the beach was strewn with branches and rubbish and some bodies of what looked like buffaloes. There was an awful stench of rotting carcasses. The whole city stinks of death.

The final figures are almost 300 dead in the city and almost 1,000 state-wide. Last night there were rumours of a Tsunami and a dam breaking that drove the inhabitants of Santa Cruz onto the streets. In

the ensuing terror, 18 more people were killed, trampled, of which at least 10 were children.

I have decided to try to not to refer to this whole tragedy again. No doubt there will still be bad news to come. It's just too much to bear.

I managed to contact Anand, the first telephone call successfully made in three days. It took him two days to get home! He is going into the office and will try to locate the teachers so that I can complete the training and then get back to Gurgaon. Schools are closed, so if I'm lucky I might get a whole day with them today or tomorrow, at my hotel. I have extended my stay by three days more to make sure I can complete the training I originally came to deliver. I can't wait to get back to Gurgaon and my apartment!

I am going out to find some music DVDs and CDs to cheer myself up. I left all my others in Gurgaon and, although the television here has loads of channels, there are too many adverts and interruptions to really enjoy the music. I really want to sink into it, lose myself in the beauty of what is Hindi poetry. I need the music back in my life.

Anand returned my call and said that there was utter chaos at the school with angry parents laying siege, so there would be no chance of getting to the teachers today. I went out and bought 4 DVDs (attached 2 brilliant songs), and saw the Podar International School buses abandoned everywhere on the way. They had obviously tried to get the children to safety but failed. I am sure some of them must have died.

I went to the Holiday Inn with some friends and relaxed for a while in the restaurant. The outside beachside restaurant was closed because of the smell of decaying animals.

Jince got through to me to say that everything in Gurgaon was OK and that the carpenters and electricians were working. He said he was

short of money and soon the work would have to stop. I told him that I was stranded but would try to get back by the 1st August at the latest.

I am going to try to enjoy an evening of music and good food. I am not too optimistic that I will enjoy myself as much as I would like. Let's see and hope that all the news that comes in is good, or at least not too bad. These past days have been a horror!

My sixteenth day

Anand contacted me by text late last night to say that the three mathematics teachers had decided they didn't want to do the project after all. I suppose it's understandable taking into account the turmoil of the last several days and the time it will take to put their lives in order. Also, I am sure that some of them will have lost children to the floods. That whole atmosphere in Mumbai is one of resignation and loss.

I immediately decided to return to Gurgaon and booked a flight for 7am this morning. The cost is almost three times the normal fare because everyone has had enough and wants out. The excitement, though, is not over by any means. One runway is still closed and an Air India flight has just slewed off the other runway delaying us by three or four hours at least. We are sat on the plane and the pilot says that the congestion being caused by the delays means that off loading passengers would only make matters worse in the terminal building. So I am writing the first part of my diary on the plane. It's almost 9am, that's already two hours late.

I got up this morning at 3.30am and am tired both physically and mentally because of the last week's events. Today's newspaper broadsheets still contain the first 8 pages of news about the floods; people are still being recovered and new fears of renewed rains and tsunamis are making people very nervous. There is also talk of disease and infections due to carcasses of animals not being removed. The city stinks of rotting everything. Personally, I can't wait to get out of Mumbai as soon as possible and return in a month or so to pick up the piec-

es of our business. At least some of us have the option of getting away.

I arrived in Delhi at about lunchtime and Anil picked me up. After the feeling of impotence in Mumbai, being unable to do anything about what was going on, I burst into action immediately I arrived back. The broadband internet connection and a telephone line have been fitted but I didn't have the leads to connect. I phoned Jince who promised action. The guy who called from the Internet Company advised me to phone their support line. I insisted that someone come personally and immediately to set it up for me. In India you can do that. In about an hour I was up and running. I sent Anil, Surjit and Pradeep to the office to bring back a computer workstation, a PC and all the accessories. I have decided to leave the internet on 24 hours a day. Arvin came to install everything. I now have a proper 24 hour broadband connection.

One thing that made me curl up in agonies of laughter for ages was when Anil forgot who he was driving. There is a pretty strict protocol between driver and passenger; especially no swearing, (even in the UK). Our office landlord is called Mr Shokeen. In Panjabi there is another word, shakeen that usually refers to a young person who looks smart and on the ball. We had nicknamed Mr Shokeen, who is an old and fairly miserable sod, shakeen. As we were driving to the apartment there was an advertising hoarding about a property dealer also called Shokeen. I said to Anil "look, Shakeen". Forgetting himself, Anil came out with a string of expletives which were as about as disgusting as you can get, (references to mothers and sisters that my Indian readers will be able to translate for themselves). Then he remembered that he was driving me and fell into a sudden silence. I told everyone at the office and now every time someone mentions Mr Shokeen's name or he calls, we can't talk without bursting out laughing. Poor chap, Mr Shokeen Shakeen.

I have called a meeting for 11 tomorrow with Jince and Pradeep to update me on what's been going on and to plan a strategy for the coming

weeks. I also asked them to sort out my phones; two mobiles that decide by themselves when they will work and when not. I want them to sort out the codes required when I am not in this State so that I can continue to communicate effectively from anywhere in the country.

Sleep will not come. The memories of Mumbai haunt me. It will take time to get back to something resembling normality.

My seventeenth day

Last night, Pradeep and Arvin stayed quite late, talking and listening to music. As they were leaving, they smelled gas. Usually, I am very keen with my sense of smell but missed it this time. On further investigation they discovered that one of the gas cylinders was leaking. In India there is no such thing as piped gas into homes. You do a deal where you pay about 2,800 rupees and the gas supplier gives you two large gas canisters that you then connect to a two or four ring setup. Mine is a two ring system. It's a bit like going camping in the UK where you snap the connector onto the canister. Anyway, I turned off the gas, opened a few windows and had a miserably coldish chicken dish. I left most of the food alone and just went to bed. The first job today was to get the canister changed and I ate a brilliant spaghetti bolognese for supper.

I had an 11 o'clock meeting with Jince and Pradeep and then we went to the office. I was very impressed. The techies have wired up all the cables, the electricians have extended the power supplies and the carpenters were hard at work partitioning the office space into 4 desk sections. All the equipment is there and tomorrow the carpenters should finish. Then I have got cleaners coming in to tidy the place up before we connect the computers. It really does look good. Whilst I was away struggling in Mumbai, everyone in Gurgaon was working hard.

I signed several contracts in the afternoon; most notably for a car and driver available from tomorrow morning. It will be much cheaper and

personal to have the same air conditioned car and driver without having to be worried about paying huge taxi fares every time I want to go out. I also asked my admin people to do the sums and see where we are. I have to justify all my spending and balance the books by the day after tomorrow when Ranjit arrives. At the moment the books don't balance very well.

I have borrowed the company scanner to add scans from Mumbai newspapers to my diaries. I am now converting the diaries into a web site that I will update from time to time. I haven't done any scanning yet though.

I miss Helen a lot and am also angry with her. She won't even reply to my messages let alone commit herself as she said she would. I think it might be time for a visit back to the UK or more drastic action soon. After all, I am now renowned for my huge gestures after all the hoo haa in the Panjab.

I have been feeling very tired lately but now that it's night I am wide awake. It is a time for reflection and maybe for sadness sometimes. I have lots of people around me during the day, but it's at night that I feel alone. The irony is that I don't have to be.

Tomorrow the housekeeper comes back. She will sort all the mess out and, listening to her bustling about the place is always a good feeling. Some people, it seems are just... I will not say anything more about some people.

In Mumbai I bought some DVDs. There is one in particular that is brilliant; duets sung by Alka Yagnik and Udit Narayan. Every day those songs get better! Fantastic! They are better than any medicine or counselling. My favourite song is Haai Mera Dil from the film Josh.

My eighteenth day

My driver and car were supposed to start working for me at 8.30am this morning. As usual this did not happen and the driver was almost an hour late. I told him that I didn't care for any excuses and that if he was ever late again I would book a taxi for the whole day and charge it to his boss. It wasn't a very good start to what will be an important relationship. Pradeep and Surjit accompanied me to the office where I inspected the ongoing work.

I asked Pradeep to produce an expenditure folder for all the money spent to date and a forecast expenditure report for the next month. In total I have spent nearly 11 lakh rupees in my first two weeks but the receipts are short by about 15,000 rupees. It may well be that some of that was my own spending. I will tell Ranjit that I am prepared to cover the shortfall. The problem was that the Company put some extra money into my account that got mixed in with my salary. I am sure, though, that some of that money is lost in missed business lunch receipts and bribes.

The forecast is that we need about another 10 lakh rupees to complete the work. After that, the major expenses will only be salaries. I will ask Ranjit to produce the money as soon as possible so that we don't end up in difficulties like last time.

I contacted Mr Kataria and arranged to interview 8 people, a week on Wednesday and Thursday. The panel will be Ranjit, Ian and me. Hopefully, we will find some suitable candidates.

My phones are still useless so I am relying on emails. No-one has told me anything about Ranjit's arrival time, flight number or anything, so I sent an email to the Company saying that I was assuming he didn't want to be met or delivered to my flat. That elicited a response. He arrives tomorrow evening at 11pm. I will take Anil with me to meet him.

I was also supposed to have a long telephone conversation with Helen, and put 2000 rupees on my mobile. She failed to text me so I wrote her a curt email saying that she probably had nothing to say to me. It will hurt her a bit but most of all it will annoy her. She didn't lower herself to my level, and I did not receive a reply. For me, love is a thirst that cannot be quenched. I miss her every moment of every day. For her, it seems, love is a cup of tea; you can do without for a while or even leave it on the table until it goes cold and then spill it down the sink. I know she isn't that bad but I hurt inside when I think of her and want to be with her always. I'm sure she has a good reason for not texting me earlier but for a thirsty man dying in a desert that is meaningless. We continue to have a most painful and excruciating relationship. I don't think I will ever be at peace again in this life, despite all the beauty that surrounds me.

I got Surjit to sort out my leaking gas problem. He is a great bloke. Destiny isn't fair; he deserves much more in life than he has. I will promote him as soon as I can sort out the salaries budget.

It has been another day of making people jump; carpenters, electricians, the landlord and others. I was almost making myself jump! Soon, we will be able to do the work we are supposed to be doing; multimedia design.

American companies work during the night in India because it corresponds with their day. Someone is supposed to contact me regarding additional staff at 4am tomorrow. I astounded quite a few people when I said I awake at about 3am and a 4am meeting was fine! Then I laughed at everyone because of their expressions. I am sure that my eccentricities have been noticed by almost everyone.

One of the funniest moments today was when I decided to set up a computer in my office. Ordinarily Arvin would do it but he wasn't due in until later. So, in 40 degrees heat, although we had fans and stuff, Pradeep and I set it up ourselves. All we had to do was connect a few

leads. I don't think I have ever sweated so much in my life. The sweat was dripping onto my glasses and off my chin. It was so funny. In the end Pradeep took pity on me and did most of the work himself. Then we relaxed and instead of working on reports, we listened to Hindi music on the computer. I had, of course, carried some DVDs with me for just such a moment. Really, westerners are useless in the Indian heat!!

When the driver returned from some errand, I can't even remember his name, we played SaReGaMa which is a television music programme like Antakshari. I played some music and he had to guess the film. As with most Indians he knew almost all of them! It lightened the mood between us and we laughed a lot and then swore some more at Mr Shokeen Shakeen, the landlord.

My nineteenth day

Today, I have been amazed at the dedication of my staff. In total, I think that they have each worked at least 16 hours to get the office as close to ready as possible for the visit of Ranjit. In fact, they have all worked many more hours each day than they are required to do. I have never had to ask anyone to do extra. Even when I was in Mumbai and effectively the business was decapitated, the work continued. The carpenters and electricians are finished and the dust is being cleared vigorously. Arvin was installing the computers even at 2am in the morning. I had to telephone them to tell them to go home.

I called Anil to tell him when Ranjit was coming and we went to pick him up from the airport. There was a small mix up when he waited in the arrivals lounge whilst Anil and I waited outside. We talked until 3am.

I am writing this entry in the morning of the 20th day and having slept for only 2 hours, this entry is suitably short.

My twentieth day

Today I awoke after only two hours sleep. After sending various emails and stuff I went to sleep again for another two hours. I awoke Ranjit and we had a superb breakfast of fresh papaya and bananas followed by a spicy omelette and tea.

We set off for the office at 10.30 and I introduced Ranjit to the team. I then left him to discuss matters and went with my driver to get some money from the cash machine. At the moment I am spending my own money and the company owes me 55,000 rupees.

Ranjit then went off to meet our accountant whilst I spent my first real day at the office. I think Ranjit expects more of us but will soon come to understand that this is India; it has its own dynamics. I think he has already started to grasp the idea. Anyone who has not been to India can never understand why you can only do one thing each day.

In the afternoon I felt so sleepy that I dropped off once or twice in my sumptuous office whilst my workers kept their foot on the accelerator. They are incredible.

Mr Jain came and I got the details of the Times of India and the Indian Express. I am going to place an eighth or a sixteenth of a broadsheet advertisement for applicants. It is going to cost a bomb but Ranjit insists. We are also ordering a server tomorrow. I didn't feel able to spend so much money myself based on my current knowledge of servers but Ranjit is prepared to take the risk. I enjoy being the person who doesn't have to commit hundreds of thousands of rupees, at least for the next three weeks. The responsibility of spending so much is no pleasure at all. I think Ranjit and then Ian are going to spend at least 1 million before they return. That will leave me with much less expenditure after that and free to do the job I'm being paid for.

It has been a very busy day and I will eventually get to bed at about 10 and get up and start again at 3 or 4 am. Ranjit says that he thinks I love this job so much and he is right. For me this is the dream job and

lifestyle: car, driver, PAs, administrators, unlimited money! He says it is a playboy lifestyle and I reminded him that I have a 5 thousand annual sterling salary increase next month (37,500 rupees)! I can hardly spend the money I already get.

Today, I withdrew 20,000 rupees. That leaves me with 113,000 in the account. Add the 55,000 I am owed and that is 168,000 left after two months of working. The average **annual** salary in Delhi is 55,000 a year!!!!!!! Mine this month: 168,000 plus expenses.

Ranjit and I went to a specialist vegetarian restaurant and ate a lovely early evening meal from south India. And it cost less than 3 pounds sterling! Is there anything left to say? And there were numerous waiters attending us.

The housekeeper has made roast chicken and chips for the evening meal. Ranjit had his straight away but I always enjoy moments for reflection and completing my diary in the evening, after the heat of the day. I am nearly ready to eat now and then sleep. Ranjit has been on the phone for about three hours. No wonder he struggles to wake up early. He doesn't know it yet, but tomorrow we set off for the office at 8.30am, not today's leisurely 10.30! Bang, wallop and wow!

My twenty first day

Today it's three weeks since I arrived in India. Everything is going very well on the business front except Ranjit. His style and mine are opposite. He refuses to accept the Indian way of doing things. In India there is a middleman for everything and you just have to pay. It's like when you buy a house in the UK; you use an estate agent. In India there is an equivalent for nearly everything. Ranjit has decided we should not work in this way because it means that we have to pay extra. My opinion is that using middlemen is both the Indian way and it saves money because it saves time.

A good example is that Ranjit wanted to place an advert for recruit-