

Mel's Musing for June 2008: Move to Delhi

Time for another news update. For those that do not know I (Melanie) decided to accept an invitation to work in a struggling but growing Fair Trade company in Delhi, as the Office Manager. I really enjoy the challenge. We have just made the big move from a beautiful cool vacation paradise to the sweltering congested city of Delhi.

How we found our new home.

This is a long story but I will just tell you a little. It took 6 days of Scott's life and 3 of mine over three weekends and gave us a lot of cultural exposure, some exercise and lots of practice in being a visitor in other people's homes, and being totally out of control of the situation, and patience for waiting many hours for the House Agent, Lucky, to turn up. However, on the upside, we made new friends; Kiran, (Lucky's wife who gave me a ride home twice), an Iraqi student Ali, Rakesh who would always tell us "no problem", Salim and Suresh who lived over the shop. Salim works in the Hilton at the front desk. Bobby, who did not want to put in a kitchen for us in his house, his wife Shelly and daughter Tiya. Also now our new landlords, Bobby's Uncle , Suresh Kukar and wife Naveen, who were persuaded to add a living room and kitchen to the existing two bedrooms on the roof. So we were forced to learn a lot about the area before we moved here which is an advantage; where to get take away food, etc. I love the neighbourhood with its small streets, interesting houses, quiet back roads with a few trees and parks. It reminds me of Kathmandu; little shops, beauty parlours, small printing shops, all you need within a stones throw.

Leaving Mussoorie

Leaving Mussoorie, Woodstock, Sister's Bazaar and all our friends was really hard. But once again we were able attend the graduation ceremonies and be part of a wonderful international celebration. Next year it will be Hilary, our last child, finishing high school.

The Long Moving Day

8 am: Truck came to Sister's Bazaar

9am: Four daily workers came to help move our stuff. Clouds rolled in but no rain. Raveen's mother came with sandwiches, John Montgomery, physics teacher at Woodstock School, took over loading the truck. Devina was around offering help. Immu came by to pick up my office key and few things I wanted to give her.

10 am: Shiv came with his taxi to drive us to Delhi with the truck.

12 noon: Left Mussoorie, stopping at Char Dukan to say goodbye.

8 pm: Arrived in Delhi, at Lucky's property office, with one stop on the way. Was fed & watered, then juiced ,then tea-ed. No sign of the truck.

9 pm: Decided that Shiv (driver) should take Hilary and myself and a car full of the most important things to the Hudson's in South Delhi, so Shiv could drive back to Mussoorie that night. He was booked again the next day. Outside the Hudson's house gate was locked but after working with flashlights and keys and doorbells we got in, and were welcomed by Sue, Dave, and Mary.

10.30: Scott went to our new home but was told we could not store our stuff there as they wanted to finish work on the rooms so was told that Bobby (the house owner's nephew) would store our truck load of furniture.

Scott stayed waiting for the truck that eventually phoned at 10.30 to say it was in Delhi but did not arrive until 12 midnight.

11pm Coolies fed a meal to keep them from leaving.

12.30: Truck was unpopular as it backed down the side road where Bobby lives. Bobby not happy with the time of night or the amount of belongings we were storing.

1.30am: Scott was given a couch in Lucky's office, for the rest of the night.

The next day we visited and were welcomed as usual with water then tea. There was heavy construction going on in our potential new home. The windows look good and we discussed where to put the wiring and plugs, sink, fans, air conditioner, water tanks, kitchen counter, floor covering (it is marble now we said leave it) etc. They really want to do the right thing. Bobby, (the nephew storing our stuff) was there giving advice.

My new office mates, Monica, Vinod, Christiaan and Sanjay.

I went to work thinking there was not much need to go but Christiaan (my boss, on holiday in South Africa) sent an 18 item list of things to do, so there was plenty to do. Open Hand mostly deals in exporting textiles and furnishings but also prides themselves in selling "the best coffee" in this tourist area, Pahar Ganj. The shop is really hard to find because it is down a narrow alley that one normally would not stroll down. It has just moved here so not many customers come.

The internet connection is not working nor is the office phone, one of the many problems of doing business in Delhi.

The main production this week is high quality sheets (about \$100/ set) There are about 12 people working on them, but we do not even have the space to lay the fabric easily on the floor to cut it. We have to step over the cutting to go upstairs.

Scott's Training in Fatahpur

Scott is away for a week doing training for the community health staff who are hoping to develop women's groups in the communities. The staff worked on the technique of focusing the community on one problem at a time. They worked on the real problem of the inaccessibility of the hospital to women at time of birth. They discovered several ways of addressing the problem such as proposing the hospital have special rates for the 40th week so the mothers-to-be can come to the hospital early, talking to the whole family, including the mother in-law, on making a delivery plan. (who and when to take the mother to the hospital, who to phone, care before delivery, etc)

On the way back on the train he was number 1 on the waiting list, thinking someone would cancel. However he had to spend the night sitting on his suitcase outside the bathroom in third class sleeper. It makes the A/C two tier sleeping class seem very luxurious.

On June the 29th we are going to the USA, mainly for Kelli's wedding on the 19 July in Iowa City. We have seen Iowa City on the news every day this week, with the flooding. Thankfully, Kelli lives on high land. We look forward to seeing many friends and family at THE WEDDING.

Let us know your news, and please note our new postal address and phone numbers. In the USA you can contact through Kelli at 857 204 4637 or Kelli Smith 943 Davenport St, Iowa City, IA 52245

Melanie

NEW ADDRESS

Scott and Melanie Smith

Block Z, House 3, Naveen Shahdara, New Delhi 110032, India