

18-Jan-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

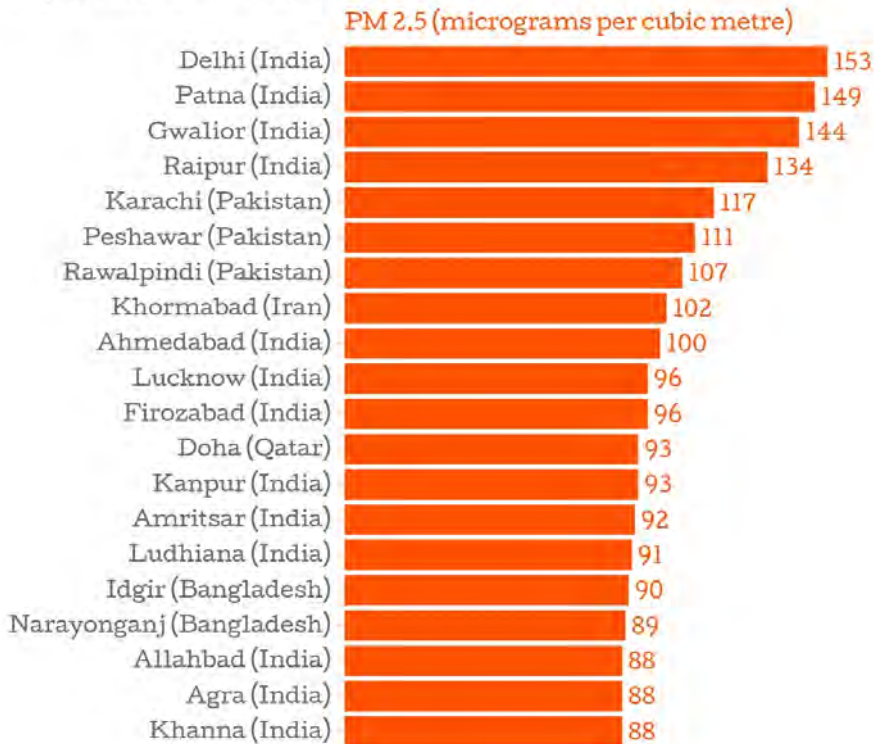
All's well here... apart from the fact that we subsist under a permanent 1000-ft blanket of photochemical smog. Being generated by vehicle engines rather than coal fires the pollution is more like a mist than a 'traditional London' fog - but it's still pollution, none-the-less. The locals have no idea, they think it's a water vapour mist (which it isn't, otherwise it would burn off rather than build up during the day), they don't think that anything can be done about it, and they can't see its damaging consequences. Being like an insulating blanket, the smog ensures that it never gets really cold at this time of year, which is seen as an advantage. But on the other hand if you catch a cold it can easily turn into a nasty cough that is difficult to shake off. Geeta's maid Puja has been sneezing and coughing throughout this past week, and I suspect I've caught her cold. And Geeta's father has some sort of bronchial restriction which isn't helped by the foul and filthy air. Cities in northern India dominate the list of top-20 worst places for atmospheric pollution, and Lucknow is amongst them, see attached chart. But all this is ignored by the newspapers, which prefer to focus on the latest political scandals, Bollywood celeb tittle-tattle, and the cricket.

...

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

Top 20 cities in the world with the highest level of PM 2.5



26-Jan-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. Last Tuesday it rained all day, which had the beneficial effect of clearing a lot of the rubbish out of the air, so now we can see the sun at last! It took a few days, but yesterday and today it's been sunny and warm - very pleasant weather. Whereas I see from the forecast that you're in for another deluge...

As I write I am keeping tabs on the cricket score. There's another England wicket gone, they're now 83-6. Oh dear. Well, at least the series is wrapped up already.

Now 83-7! Oh dear oh dear.

Today is Republic Day. Geeta and I got up early and went together to watch the parade outside the grand building that houses the state legislature. There were thousands of people there, 20-deep all along the route of the parade, with others watching from the buildings. After the national anthem (to which, strangely, no-one sang the words) a helicopter flew over, showering us with flower petals. Then the parade began with a few tanks and similar military hardware, followed by several companies of troops from different regiments, interspersed with military bands, all dressed in their finery and marching very smartly. Then there were various dancing troupes, including several from different CMS branches, each raising a different social concern. One CMS branch highlighted the dangers of using polythene bags instead of paper ones. Another branch advertised the hotline to call the emergency services, with a re-enactment of a road accident and featuring the real live arrival of the police, ambulance, and fire brigade! And all surrounded by the dancing troupe, waving banners with slogans, flags, etc., as you'd normally get at a road accident in this neck of the woods. After the dancers came the various floats (tableaux) prepared by the different government ministries and one or two others... principally, the CMS float, which was far-and-away the best - as usual. CMS makes a new float each year, on a different theme. This year's message was to the effect that hindus, muslims, sikhs and christians should be nice to one another. Or something like that. Anyway, when the CMS float rolled up Geeta, her mother and young Robert joined her father who was walking along in front of the float waving at the crowd (like, I imagine, Mickey Mouse at a Disneyland parade), but that wasn't my cup of tea, so I legged it back to the flat.

England all out for 101. Oh dear of dear oh dear.

In an hour or so Geeta will go to the State Governor's House for afternoon tea. Hopefully I'll be excused that as well, as I don't think I'm on the invitation list, and in any case this particular Governor is reputed to be quite nationalistic and probably wouldn't want to serve tea to a sahib on Republic Day. But just-in-case I'll see if I can acquire a pith helmet (so he can tell me to pith off - sorry, silly joke, from 'Carry On Up The Khyber' I think).

Much love from Roger xxxxx

1-Feb-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. Super-well, in fact, owing to a recent meteorological miracle: yesterday morning there started a gentle breeze which cleared away all the polluted air! As a result we could at last feel the sun, and see into the distance, just like we used to do 20 years ago before everyone here had cars. It suddenly became a lot warmer (completely contrary to the forecast, which doesn't take the air pollution into account), and in the afternoon we sat out in Geeta's 'plastic garden' (an open area in her flat, which has been paved with luxurious artificial indestructible turf and decorated with attractive artificial indestructible plants) and dozed in the sun. Geeta and her mother had some smelly unguent rubbed into their limbs by the maids Puja and Manju (so that people sitting next to them in smart parties might feel quite faint), while I held forth with my latest ideas on international law. It was heavenly. Though some of the birds downwind of us started up a loud squawking when they caught a whiff of the unguent. There's no pleasing some creatures!

On Saturday I gave the CMS environment coordinators the benefit of my views on atmospheric pollution. Being based on my work 20 years ago in this field (when I was at Culham Laboratory) this wasn't just opinions, and I had some practical suggestions for what they could do in the schools branches to raise awareness and improve their environment. In particular, searching on the internet I'd found some cheap-but-effective facemasks, and also some (relatively) cheap electronic devices that measure concentrations of particulate matter in the air. There'll be nothing more effective than a hoard of facemask-wearing, gizmo-waving schoolgirls to shake the state government out of its present policy of pollution-denial. Truly terrifying, I reckon.

...

Much love from Roger xxxxx

26-Mar-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. It's very hot, around 38 deg C, but there is usually a good breeze so it's not smoggy, and the humidity is low. Still, we don't go out in the sun if we can help it.

Tomorrow Geeta and I fly to Delhi where we will meet Arjun and Marika who are flying tonight from Heathrow. Also Marika's parents (Kaj and Toyoko) are arriving around the same time from Sweden. We six have two days in Delhi, one of which we've decided will be a day trip to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, and then on Tuesday we take the train to Corbett Park, which is in the foothills of the Himalayas, close to Nainital. We'll be there for two more days, one of which will be a jeep trek to see if we can creep up on any unsuspecting tigers (highly unlikely), and then on Thursday we take the train to Lucknow. Then they (Arjun, Marika, Kaj and Toyoko) have three more days to experience the delights of the biggest school in the world before flying back to the UK or Sweden on Sunday 3rd April.

We have been very busy getting Geeta's flat ready for the fine company, also Geeta and her parents have been planning some kind of wedding reception cum school function type of thing. The full works, I expect!

I hope you're well and that the forecast wind and rain haven't caused problems?

Much love from Roger xxxxx

30-Mar-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. I am sitting on the balcony of our villa in a self-contained resort on the border of the Corbett Park. We arrived here last night by train from Delhi. This morning we got up early in order to go on a birdwatching ramble, led by a knowledgeable guide, after which we had an enormous breakfast. Currently Geeta and Toyoko are having massages, and I think that Arjun, Marika and Kaj are heading to the swimming pool. This afternoon we go on a jeep trek into the Park in search of tigers. We are just where the foothills of the Himalayas begin, there are trees all around, it is a proper jungly paradise! We have another day here and then tomorrow afternoon we go by train to Lucknow. The balcony looks out into the trees and just now there is passing a herd of goats, being driven on by three brightly-dressed women waving sticks and calling 'Heh, heh, heh, heh', which I suppose is goatese for 'Get along there'. There are a lot of large dried leaves fallen on the ground, which rustle noisily as the goats go by. Also there is an intermittent breeze which stirs the leaves on the trees to make a similar rustling noise, like when it rains. There are many different trees, and each variety is in a different state: some are in flower while others are fruiting, some are bare and others are dense with leaves. And there are birds all around, again of many different species, all twittering away with their different songs.

We've come here from Delhi where we had two nights in a very nice hotel near to the centre. On Monday we had a day trip to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, along with many thousands of other people. The car journey from Delhi to Agra is now quite easy as there is a three-lane motorway which is largely empty because they charge a toll. We got to Agra in less than 4 hours, but the return journey took more like 6 hours, because the main bridge across the Yamuna river at Agra was unexpectedly closed for some reason, and we spent ages sitting in an almighty jam in the city, counting the cows and the monkeys.

Everyone is well, relaxed, and very, very happy!

I hope the weather in Yeovil has improved?

All my love,

Roger.

4-Apr-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. The weather is getting pretty hot, around 40 degrees Centigrade, but the pollution is not too bad, and it's not humid yet. Arjun and Marika departed for the UK yesterday, as did Kaj and Toyoko for Sweden. Late last night Geeta got a call from Arjun saying that they'd arrived safely. They've had pretty much the full range of experiences that we've come to expect from India - except that they've been able to avoid serious illness, thank goodness. After my last despatch we went on a jeep trek to Corbett Park, where we were lucky enough to see a tiger, although this did require the services of a tame elephant to flush it out of the long grass, see attached photo. The next day (Thursday) we took the train to Lucknow, where on Friday we visited the Residency (of 1857 mutiny fame), and on Saturday we attended a grand CMS function followed by a wedding reception lunch for family and select CMS work colleagues. A&M&K&T received the full red carpet treatment, and responded with great appreciation and thanks. So it all went well. Geeta and I will now get back into the groove, she with CMS and me with my reading and ideas for my next book(s).

...

All my love,

Roger.



12-Apr-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. It's been very hot, with the peak temperature around 42 deg C, which is quite a lot more than usual for this time of year. The weather forecast is for more of the same and a summer drought is feared. Fortunately I'll be out of here by the time that happens!

Life here has settled down into the usual routine following the excitement of our very own 'royal visit'. It even made the newspapers - see attached. Although it has to be said that this particular paper is wholly owned and edited by the CMS Press Officer, Hari Om Sharma (whose photo appears on the right). Sharmaji is a very sweet gentleman, but completely incompetent as a Press Officer, and there's something about him that always reminds me of a mafia henchman. Whenever I see his picture or hear his name, I can't help humming the theme to The Godfather: Dee, de-dum dee, de-de dum, ... ! As for the other royal visit, of Wills and Kate, that seems to be progressing in a very good spirit, with no sign yet of any protests or demands for an apology for 200 years of British Raj. There's still time for that, I guess! But it was a very good thing that England never had to play against India in the recent Twenty20 cricket world cup here. After the West Indies beat India in their semifinal there were riots in some places, which required the attention of lathi-wielding police to restore order.

On Sunday Geeta and I took young Robert and one of his friends to the cinema to see the new 3D 'live' (well, motion-capture) remake of the Disney animation of 'The Jungle Book'. I was a bit reluctant to go, because I didn't want anything to spoil my very fond memory of the (Disney) original. But in the event it turned out to be hugely enjoyable. Indeed, because it also incorporated some details from Kipling's original stories (principally 'The Law of the Jungle', but also snippets from lesser-known tales, in particular, 'How Fear Began', 'Letting in the Jungle', and 'Red Dog'), it comes across as a much more 'authentic' version. And while it's a lot more 'realistic' than the Disney animation (albeit still with english-speaking wild animals!), and tremendously suspenseful and exciting because of that, at the same time in many places it's just as happy and joyful as before. In particular, they still do the best songs. I loved it.

I'm glad you got to see the tiger in the photo, Dad. Well done to Richard for helping with that. That afternoon we also saw spotted deer, sambar deer, ordinary monkeys (bandar), langur monkeys, wild elephants, and many different birds. I took photos but as with the tiger the camouflage of all these creatures is so good that in most cases it's very difficult to make them out.

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

“मैं को भूलो, अपने को पहचानो! जिस दिन यह कठिन कार्य कर लो, सब आसान हो जायेगा।”

# पब्लिक की आवाज

उपदेश सुनना है तो माता-पिता के सुनो, उनसे बड़ा ज्ञानी इस संसार में कोई नहीं है!

लखनऊ से प्रकाशित पब्लिक का अग्रणी साप्ताहिक समाचार पत्र पं. हरि ओम शर्मा 'हरि'

पृष्ठ 10 अंक 37 लखनऊ, मंगलवार, 5 अप्रैल 2016 पृष्ठ 12 मूल्य 100

## स्वागत



श्रीमती मोनेशरी शर्मा, लखनऊ की प्रेसिडेंट प्रो. शोभा गोपी किशनन के मन-विधागत पुत्र एवं पुत्रवधु अर्जुन एवं मारिषा के इन्फैन्ट से लखनऊ पधारते पर मंगल स्वागत हुआ। उन्नीस का एक दृश्य। पिता में, प्रो. शोभा गोपी किशनन व उनके पुत्र डॉ. रोजर बोधि किशनन भी उपस्थित हैं।

**कालेक्षण का खलासा करने का मौका** असम के मुख्यमंत्री को कठिनाई की जीत का मरोसा

## विशेष सम्पादकीय

### सुस्वागतम् नववर्ष



पं. हरि ओम शर्मा 'हरि'

वासंतिक नवरात्रि के प्रथम दिवस से नव संवत्सर यानि कि भारतीय नववर्ष का आरम्भ होता है। वसंत का वैभव एवं नव किसलयों का प्रस्फुटन, ऐसा प्रतीत होता है मानो प्रकृति सज्जजकर नववर्ष का अभिनन्दन करने को आतुर है। 'पब्लिक की आवाज' यही कामना करता है कि इस मंगलमयी बेला में आपसी स्नेह व सौहार्द की अभिवृद्धि हो। यही है हमारी महान संस्कृति व सभ्यता जो देश ही नहीं अपितु विश्व के कोने-कोने में रहने वाले प्रत्येक हिन्दुस्तानी को प्यार, सौहार्द व एकता के अदृश्य धागे में बंधे रखती है। अपेक्षा यही है कि 1 जनवरी की तरह ही नवरात्रि के प्रथम दिन भी हम सभी भारतवासी इस पावन अवसर पर एक दूसरे को नववर्ष की बधाई व शुभकामनाएं प्रेषित करें, इस तरह का वातावरण समाज में आपसी मनमुटाव को समाप्त करने में सहायक होता है। लेकिन हमारी विडम्बना यह है कि वर्तमान समय में हमारी भावी पीढ़ी शायद ही नवसंवत्सर के बारे में जानती हो क्योंकि पारध्यात्य संस्कृति की आदी हो चुकी हमारी भावी पीढ़ी 1 जनवरी को ही नये साल के रूप में जानते व मानते हैं। उन्हें नहीं पता कि नवसंवत्सर क्या है और उसका क्या महत्व है। ऐसे में उन्हें यह बताना अतिआवश्यक है कि हमारा संवत्सर समूचे विश्व में सर्वप्रथम, सर्वश्रेष्ठ और नैसर्गिक है। भारत के विद्वान मनीषियों द्वारा रचित धर्मग्रंथों के अनुसार नव संवत्सर पश्चिम के दिन पश्चिमिमा सुमर्यात्त दे अर्थात्



18-Apr-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. The thermometer has continued to rise, with peak temperatures around 43 deg C (which is 5 deg higher than normal for this time of year, apparently), but we're OK because we are lucky enough to spend most of our time in an air-conditioned room or car. How the rickshaw-wallahs and the labourers cope with the heat, I can't imagine.

Yesterday morning Geeta and I attended the CMS Careers Day, designed to give CMS students and their parents access to people working in all sorts of fields (medicine, engineering, the armed forces, media, etc), so that they can choose which subjects to take for A-Level (equivalent). The Careers Day is one of Geeta's innovations, and it has been getting better year-by-year, with this year all of the separate parallel sessions being very lively and well-attended (Geeta tells me - I'd sloped off by that time). I just attended the opening plenary session, in which the chief guest, Dr Vikram Singh (Vice-Chancellor of Noida International University and former Uttar Pradesh Chief of Police), gave a good impression of Colonel Hathi in 'The Jungle Book': "In my day, we had it tough, none of these distractions, today you have Email, Texting, Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, all these things, but that is a road map to self-destruction, you should be like the warrior Arjun, aiming your arrow at the pupil of the eye of the fish...", etc etc. It was all very entertaining and effective, but rather undermined by a 5-minute video which he showed after his talk, which comprised clips from the film 'Rocky III', in which Sylvester Stallone and Mr T beat each other to a pulp in the boxing ring. Apparently this was meant to show how we can be victorious and triumphalist and American, or something like that. What the girls and the vegetarians in the audience thought of that, I can't imagine.

Speaking of 'The Jungle Book', yesterday I read a very insightful article written for the Guardian, arguing (in effect) that Shere Khan was right to want to get Mowgli out of the jungle, because his presence there threatened the existence of all. And it struck me that this interpretation of Kipling's original stories (which is revived, to some extent, in the latest film) can be seen as analogous to the situation in the final decades of the Raj: the Indians wanting the Brits to just get out, regardless of the previous history or the future consequences. For your interest the URL is <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/apr/15/mowgli-the-heart-and-troubled-soul-of-the-jungle-book-film-kipling>.

...

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

30-Jun-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

I have arrived safely in Lucknow after an uneventful journey. The weather here is hot (39 deg C) and humid, and feeling as if there might be a big downpour at any time. Tomorrow Geeta and I go by train to Rishikesh, where we will stay for two nights. On Saturday Geeta has an all-day meeting with a group of journalists from the national newspapers, telling them her side of the education debate in this country. I might sit in on that or I might join the hippy trail in search of the ashram where the Beatles stayed in 1967. Either way I'm sure to be offered enlightenment...

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

7-Jul-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. It has continued hot and humid, eased somewhat by rain yesterday. Everybody is well and in good spirits. Since returning from Rishikesh on Sunday Geeta has returned to her groove of working all hours, while I have returned to my groove of keeping a low profile: an arrangement that suits everyone! It's aided by the presence of Nita's son Roshan, who arrived here a few days before me, having finished his final exams (studying PPE - Philosophy, Politics and Economics - at Oxford), and having a couple of months off before the ceremonials. Roshan accompanies Geeta on many of her excursions and during the evenings when she goes through her 'dak' (literally, the 'post' from the various CMS branches). Also, I am enjoying discussing with him the ramifications of the EU referendum, and yesterday's Chilcot report; and we are watching 'Brideshead Revisited' together (him for the first time, me for the umpteenth time, because it's one of my favourites).

Currently I'm reading 'Quartz and Feldspar', a new history of Dartmoor by Matthew Kelly, which sets out the different perspectives that have been taken of the moor throughout the ages. For example, in 1826 "H E Carrington argued that Dartmoor should excite the interest of a range of specialists." These are "the poet", who "will muse amid fallen columns and arches, and sigh over the by-gone renown of fabrics which have passed away, even as the flower that withereth"; "the antiquary", who "will image ruined castles lifting high their tottering turrets, and crumbling abbeys with their wind-swept aisles and mouldering cloisters"; "the moralist", who "will be reminded of the awful wrecks of human ambition"; and "the misanthrope", who "will exult in the solitude of spots where he may indulge his gloomy imaginings undisturbed." And in 1873 a reporter for The Times, assigned to cover military manoeuvres on Dartmoor, during which three-week period it rained incessantly, wrote that "Nothing strikes one as more extraordinary than the modest pride with which the inhabitants speak of this howling waste. They are proud of its bogs, proud of its fogs, proud of its prison, and proudest of all of its rain." No change there, then.

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

14-Jul-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. As before, Geeta's working hard and I'm keeping a low profile. But all this will change on Saturday when I will be the special guest at a new 'Current Affairs and Critical Thinking' club for the senior students in one of the CMS branches. So I have just been preparing some notes for that... in between seeing who's in and who's out of the cabinet and at Lord's...

I was quite amused by the following article on page 2 of today's 'Hindustan Times':

Steps to ensure planted saplings' survival

Lucknow: The district administration on Wednesday chalked out a detailed strategy to boost the survival rate of saplings planted a couple of days back under the biggest ever plantation drive that sought to bring the name of the state in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Under the drive, altogether 5 crore saplings were planted across the state in just 24 hours. Of the total, around 12 lakhs were planted in the state capital. "The survival of the plants is equally important," said Raj Shekhar, district magistrate.

The district administration's special plan includes 'watering'. "We have directed the irrigation department to ensure watering of the plants, using drain irrigation, pipe irrigation, manual watering and watering through tanks," said Shekhar.

The administration has also ordered the departments concerned to replace the dead plants with new ones. Besides, a third party would be appointed to check the growth of the plants and to ensure their survival. "One person would be appointed for every 10 hectares of area. The person would ensure the plants' survival," the DM added. He also ordered fencing to protect the plants.

The DM said presently the average survival rate was around 80%. "We expect the survival rate to go up further by 10%," he said. The state has found a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for planting the maximum number of saplings (10 lakh, on November 7, 2015) in 10 locations in one day and is again pitching for a record of planting 5 crore saplings in 24 hours.

My observations on this:

\* The state (of Uttar Pradesh) already holds the world record for tree-planting. In 2007 our walking companion Mr V N Garg was responsible for organising the planting of 1 crore saplings in 24 hours. (1 crore = 10 million, 1 lakh = 100,000 or 0.1 million.)

\* So the district administration's 'special plan' includes 'watering', and appointing a third party to 'check the growth of the plants'. That sounds like common sense, but it's not exactly a 'detailed strategy', is it?... even allowing for the work that's gone into preparing a comprehensive list of all the different ways one can water a tree...

\* Replacing dead plants with new ones doesn't boost the survival rate of saplings.

\* Cynicism aside, isn't it great that they are planting trees? I wish there was more tree-planting in the UK!

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

21-Jul-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. The monsoon rains have arrived, reducing the outside temperature and humidity, which is a great relief. It's still hot and sticky, however.

My talk at the Current Affairs and Critical Thinking Club went well. I gave the students a brief account of 'Brexit', and told them why I think that "holding a referendum is one of the worst ways of coming to a collective decision". (This is not just sour grapes: I came to this conclusion on the evening before the vote.) I spoke for 30 minutes and allowed them to have their say for the remainder of the one-hour session. Some of their points were really interesting and insightful – much to the surprise of their Principal, who also attended. I have agreed to speak at the Club on the next three Saturdays as well. My next topic is 'Killer Robots'.

I've spent most of the last week researching our family name, and I've made a number of very interesting findings. In summary, it looks as if:

- (1) We can trace our Kingdon ancestors back to the Domesday Book;
- (2) These ancestors didn't come over with William the Conqueror (that is, they weren't Normans but English);
- (3) Our original 'Land of our Fathers' was not Bridgerule or Coldridge or even Quethiock, but a place now called Kendon Farm in the parish of North Bovey (on the east side of Dartmoor and, coincidentally, in the region where Arjun and Marika spent their honeymoon a year ago).

...

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

28-Jul-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. Last Friday we had a terrific downpour, the first of this season's monsoon, which flooded the roads and cleared the air. Since then it's been overcast, less hot, and less humid. Even so, by UK standards it's still like living in a greenhouse!

My talks/discussions on 'Current Affairs and Critical Thinking' are continuing, to universal acclaim (which is no big deal here: CMS students are a well-trained, appreciative and kind audience). In each session I apply Daniel Kahneman's two-systems theory of psychology (as summarised in chapter 3 of my book) to a current affairs story. So far I have analysed 'Brexit' and 'Killer Robots' in this way. In the next session I ask, 'Was Tony Blair a liar?' Each session involves 30 minutes of me talking and/or showing how to get information from the internet, followed by another 30 minutes of open discussion. I'm also planning to have a fourth session (just before I return to the UK) which will be entirely open discussion, with the students effectively setting the agenda. This is because the organiser is hoping to continue the forum as an out-of-school club, to be run by the students themselves, with occasional input from guest speakers such as myself.

When not doing these talks/discussions (which I'm now repeating for three separate student audiences), I'm continuing to follow up my genealogical researches, as reported in my last email. I've spent the last week checking out the source documents that are the basis of last week's conclusions. Virtually everything is now available for free on the internet - it's absolutely incredible what you can get now, if you know where to look. There's rarely any need to visit a library, even. So far, I've not found anything to challenge my conclusions. To me this is very exciting; but I can understand why it would leave others cold.

...

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

4-Aug-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. We've had several downpours and the air is lovely and clear outside, allowing the sun to come through, which itself sets up a strong convection current, with gentle cooling breezes.

...

There's not much to report: I've been spending most of my time preparing and delivering talks/discussions for the senior students on 'Current Affairs and Critical Thinking', and also following-up my recent discoveries about the 'Origins of the Kingdoms'. It keeps me occupied...

Much love, see you soon,

Roger xxxxx

31-Oct-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

After a long but uneventful journey I have arrived safely in Lucknow. Here it's not too hot (low 20s Centigrade) and quite comfortable out, which would be OK if not for the the air pollution, which is appalling. Otherwise, all is well. I'll write again in a few days when I've settled in.

Love from Roger xxxxx



7-Nov-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. There's not much news: I have been busy writing up my notes on 'the origin of the Kingdons', while Geeta is fully occupied as ever. We are both happy and well, as are the rest of Geeta's family, including Nita's son Roshan, who has been here for two months now. Roshan is living with us in Mall Avenue, although he is quite independent, having his own driver and car, etc. He is working full-time in the school, at Geeta's behest, he focusing on the more long-term things that she no longer has time for. It's working out quite nicely.

The local politicians here are gearing up for the state assembly elections next spring, and as a result even less real work is getting done. It's just a lot of hot air. Speaking of which, the air pollution is now so bad that in Delhi they've just closed the schools for 3 days. Yesterday I read that the measurements of concentrations of fine particulate (so-called PM2.5) in the Delhi air were ninety times the limits set by the World Health Organisation. I guess it's not that bad here in Lucknow, but the general trend towards more and more pollution seems inexorable. The newspapers are blaming it on the fireworks that people set off during the Divali holiday, which is a convenient scapegoat. Of course the fireworks won't have helped, but the main cause is too many cars, and no-one wants to do anything about that. On the contrary, our chief minister has just taken delivery of a ten-wheeler luxury battlebus, kitted out to make it look a bit like the mobile emporium driven by Mr Chedzoy the tinker (remember him?), in which he intends to tour the state in an attempt to drum up votes. The Grand Tour was flagged off on Thursday, but after 500 yards the battle bus broke down and the chief minister had to complete the day's journey in another pantehnicon. There were plenty to spare: apparently there were over 100 vehicle in the convoy. But the strange thing about this Grand Tour is that the next day the chief minister was back in Lucknow attending another political rally. As for the battle bus, that's disappeared without trace.

Much love from Roger xxxxx

14-Nov-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. Today is the last day of the annual Chief Justices' Conference, which has occupied the last four days. This year we had an even better crop of attendees, including the Prime Minister of Mauritius, the Prime Minister of Guyana, the Governor-General of Tuvalu, several former Presidents of various countries, a whole bunch of Chief Justices and Supreme Court Judges, and many more High Court judges from around the world. What was achieved...? Well, there were no major international incidents, and no casualties... and the Conference Resolution is less highfalutin than before... and we made some good friends in high places...

The smog has eased slightly, which is a relief. I mean, one can still see, taste and smell it, but it's less choking than before.

Otherwise, there's not a lot to report. I'm still writing up my research on 'the origin of the Kingdons'. Having started at 1066 I've got to 1355. Roger Kyngdon of Quethiock was born in 1393, so I'm getting close. It'll all be over by Christmas!

I hope you're both well,

Much love from Roger xxxxx

21-Nov-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

This will sound rather like last week's update! The school has had another international event - 'QUANTA', which is a science, maths, computing and robotics competition - at which I have spent many hours as one of the judges of the debates, and handing out prizes, including 20 copies of my book. Otherwise I have been getting along with OOTK ('The Origin of the Kingdoms'), currently 18 pages long and counting. And it's still smoggy outside.

Yesterday there was a dreadful train derailment near to Kanpur, not far from here. The death toll is 120 and rising. Fortunately we hardly ever go by train these days. e.g. yesterday Geeta needed to go to Delhi in order to monitor the progress of one of the many court cases that the school has to pursue (otherwise the government would just take control), so she went by air. She'll be arriving back shortly.

Other than a nasty cold that's been doing the rounds, all is well here. I hope you are both ok?

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

28-Nov-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

This is another rather boring and routine weekly news update - sorry! But no news is good news. We are all well, and working away. There is a brief break in the international conferences, so I am getting along with OOTK. I've finished the main part of it, and I reckon that I should be able to finish it with another 4 or 5 full days of effort. Geeta and Roshan are working together nicely, he really seems to have adapted very well to the different ways of doing things out here. Otherwise... there has been the usual 'felicitations' of high-powered guests, including the serving President of Mauritius (don't ask me why) and Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister... and we have had some time out (last night) to watch 'Anna Karenina' with Greta Garbo and Basil Rathbone... which somehow seemed much more interesting...

All my love,

Roger xxxxx

5-Dec-16

Dear Mum and Dad,

All's well here. Well, all apart from the smog, which has been particularly bad for the last week, and it isn't getting any easier. In fact the air pollution has been dreadful throughout this trip, but in the last week it's got worse because the temperature has dropped and there is mist/fog, which has combined with the pollution to give a proper thick smog. It's horrible outside - so we stay indoors as much as possible. We are very fortunate that the flat in Mall Avenue is on the 4th floor, and Geeta's office is also on the 4th floor of the new building in Station Road, and up here the smog is less thick. But at ground level one can't help coughing most of the time. I'm really looking forward to coming home in one week's time!

Being cooped-up most of the time, I have been able to finish 'The Origin of the Kingdons'. Geeta has printed several copies which I'll bring with me. I haven't attached the file because it's 29 pages long and has colour photographs, so it would probably be too much for your little printer. But I will give you a copy or two on Tuesday week. Arjun and Roshan have read it and they each have told me that they think it's 'brilliant'. And so it is! I am also canvassing the views of Lorna and others before it's finalised for publication. Coincidentally this year it's 42 years since the publication of the last Kingdon family history (in 1974), and that was 42 years after the publication of the first Kingdon book (in 1932). So it's the right time to have a say.

Well done Yeovil Town, winning 5-0! My goodness, they're unpredictable. And it's great that the England rugby team are doing so well once more.

Much love from Roger xxxxx