

16-Oct-17

Dear Dad,

I've arrived safe and well in Lucknow. The journey was routine, with no mishaps. I was received at the airport by Geeta, her mother, and Roshan, each carrying a big bunch of flowers (although I did have to compete for attention with the State Minister of Health, who happened to be passing). So far so normal, then!

I will write again in a few days time, when I have settled in.

Love from Roger xxx

17-Oct-17

Dear Dad,

All is well here. The weather is hot, but not excessively so, and the air is polluted, but again not excessively so. I thought you might be interested in the following extract from the front page of today's 'Hindustan Times':

"Indicating towards the approaching winter, the night temperature witnessed a 6.6 degree Celsius fall in the last five days. This has prompted doctors to advise people to guard themselves against the changing weather. "It's time that people, the elderly in particular, delay their morning walk a bit so that the chill does not harm them," said Dr Sandeep Kapoor, director, Heathcity Hospital and Trauma Centre, Gomti Nagar. He said the difference in day and night time temperature should not be ignored by those suffering with respiratory distress. The night temperature slipped to 19 degrees Celsius on Monday from 25.6 degrees on October 12. There is, however, not much change in day temperature that is still around 35 degrees Celsius."

Love from Roger xxx

23-Oct-17

Dear Dad,

All's well here. The weather is pretty good, with the air pollution much less than last year, so we get to see the sun, which generates a healthy breeze, which in turn disperses the pollution: a virtuous cycle, at last. It may have been particularly bad past year because of the El Nino fluctuation in global air patterns. In any case, it's much better now, and long may it last like this.

Here it's been the Diwali (pr. 'Dee-var-lee') holiday for the last few days, during which the schools are closed of course; which gives Geeta &c the opportunity to get along with tasks not related to day-to-day operations. I've been getting involved in my own way, by sorting out the contents of a steel cabinet in which Geeta's father keeps the more valuable school archives, going back to 1960. I've also been working on a talk that I've volunteered to give to the senior students (Class XII, which is the Indian equivalent of the upper sixth, i.e. the A level class). And in my spare time I've been reading a couple of history books that Arjun & Marika gave me for my birthday, 'The White Nile' and 'The Blue Nile' by Alan Moorehead, about the 19th C exploration of that part of Africa. The books are fascinating and very well written.

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Love from Roger xxx

30-Oct-17

Dear Dad,

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It's been life-as-usual here in Lucknow, with the school's unique combination of huge one-off 'functions' (i.e. conferences/gatherings) overlaid on the regular school timetable. For example, at the moment Geeta is giving a talk on 'Recent Trends in Economics' to the 4th International Youth Convention on Commerce and Economics. The 'international' aspect of this gathering is that it is being attended by a dozen schools from Brazil, Nepal, Sri Lanka and (I think) Bangladesh, as well as schools from all over India. As for the regular school timetable, this isn't all bookwork, as they also do interesting things like celebrate 'World Post Day'. See attached photos of very little children dressed up as post boxes, posting letters, visiting a post office, and standing beside the mail train.

Meanwhile, I'm working on a theory of ideology, with help from Roshan.

Love from Roger xxx



CMS Aliganj Campus II



CMS Asharfabad Campus



CMS Rajajipuram Campus II



CMS Gomti Nagar Campus II

30-Oct-17

Dear Roger,

Back to your news from India for which I thank you, also the attachments. You were going to give a lecture. What was that about? a theory of ideology? A level students I believe you wrote?

Love from Dad

30-Oct-17

Dear Dad,

Well remembered! Yes, I am due to talk to the senior students, but not until the eve of my stay here (16 Nov), and not about ideology, rather, I shall talk about Kahneman's two-system model of the mind (see 'How to Make a Mind' chapter 3), and apply it to their situation (with some advice about how to prepare for exams and how to prepare for life). My discussions about ideology with Roshan probably won't result in anything for the school, that's just for our own entertainment. Roshan of course completed his degree at Oxford last year, his subject was PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics), which makes him very knowledgeable in my areas of interest.

Love from Roger xxx

3-Nov-17

Dear Dad,

This is a quick update, and in advance, because early tomorrow Geeta and I are going on a 4-day trip to Delhi, Pune (= Poona) and Goa, returning Tuesday evening. For Geeta it's a work trip and for me it's a jolly! I'll tell you about it after I get back.

We've just had a very interesting dinner with a gentleman called Ruskin Bond, who is an author of (mainly) children's books. He was born in India in 1934 and has lived here for most of his life, apart from a few years back in the UK when he was young. Indeed when he returned to India in 1951 he sailed on the Strathaird. Was that your ship in that year? For your interest I've copied below his brief biography from Wikipedia.

Must dash - we have an early start tomorrow!

Love from Roger xxx

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruskin_Bond

Ruskin Bond was born on 19 May 1934 in a military hospital, to Edith Clarke and Aubrey Bond, in Kasauli, Punjab States Agency, British India. His siblings were Ellen and William. Ruskin's father was with the Royal Air Force from 1939 till 1944. When Bond was eight years old, his mother separated from his father and married a Punjabi Hindu, Hari. Ellen lived in Ludhiana until she died in 2014.

Bond spent his early childhood in Jamnagar (Gujarat) and Shimla. At the age of ten, Ruskin went to live at his grandmother's house in Dehradun after his father's death that year from jaundice. Ruskin was raised by his mother and stepfather. He did his schooling from Bishop Cotton School in Shimla, from where he graduated in 1950 after winning several writing competitions in the school including the Irwin Divinity Prize and the Hailey Literature Prize. He wrote one of his first short stories, "Untouchable", at the age of sixteen in 1951.

Following his high school education he went to his aunt's place in the Channel Islands (U.K.) in 1951 for better prospects and stayed there for two years. In London, he started writing his first novel, *The Room on the Roof*, the semi-autobiographical story of the orphaned Anglo-Indian boy named Rusty; he did various jobs for a living. It won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, (1957) awarded to a British Commonwealth writer under 30. He moved to London and worked in a photo studio while searching for a publisher. After getting it published, Bond used the advance money to pay the sea passage to Bombay and settle in Dehradun.

He worked for a few years freelancing from Delhi and Dehradun. He sustained himself financially by writing short stories and poems for newspapers and magazines. On his youth, he said, "Sometimes I got lucky and some [work] got selected and I earned a few hundred rupees. Since I was in my 20s and didn't have any responsibilities I was just happy to be doing what I loved doing best." In 1963, he went to live in Mussoorie because besides liking the place, it was close to the editors and publishers in Delhi. He edited a magazine for four years. In the 1980s, Penguin setup in India and approached him for writing a few books. He had written *Vagrants in the Valley* in 1956, as a sequel to *The Room on the Roof*. These two novels were published in one volume by Penguin India in 1993. The following year a collection of his non-fiction writings, *The Best Of Ruskin Bond* was published by Penguin India. His interest in supernatural fiction led him to write popular titles

such as Ghost Stories from the Raj, A Season of Ghosts, and A Face in the Dark and other Hauntings. Since then he has written over five hundred short stories, essays and novels, including The Blue Umbrella, Funny Side Up, A Flight of Pigeons and more than 50 books for children. He has also published two volumes of autobiography. Scenes from a Writer's Life describes his formative years growing up in Anglo-India; The Lamp is Lit is a collection of essays and episodes from his journal.

Since 1963 he has lived as a freelance writer in Mussoorie, a town in the Himalayan foothills in Uttarakhand and lives with his adoptive family in Landour, Mussoorie's Ivy Cottage, which has been his house since 1980. About what he likes the most about his life, he said, "That I have been able to write for so long. I started at the age of 17 or 18 and I am still writing. If I were not a professional writer who was getting published I would still write." In his essay, "On being an Indian", he explains his Indian identity, "Race did not make me one. Religion did not make me one. But history did. And in the long run, it's history that counts."

3-Nov-17

Dear Dad,

Correction, Ruskin Bond's biography says that he came to the UK in 1951 and returned two years later. Amazingly he also mentioned the Chusan - but no other ship - so I think he was saying that he sailed to the UK on one of your ships and returned on the other. When he casually mentioned the Strathaird I did a double-take and asked him to repeat what he'd just said, which he did, and he then threw in the Chusan for good measure. After I explained that these were your ships, and we talked about which ship went where, we then went on to other topics, so I'm unclear which he took for each journey: either he was on each of your ships just when you were there, or just when you were on the other one! But in any case it's quite a coincidence, isn't it? After all, there must have been other passenger ships on the UK-India route in those days, just for the P&O, let alone the other lines.

Another coincidence is that just three or four days ago I'd read out to Geeta a passage in a book I'd been reading, 'Quest for Kim' by Peter Hopkirk, in which the author lauds Ruskin Bond's description of Mussoorie, saying that it made one want to sell up and go and live there. Then this morning (Friday 3rd Nov) Geeta said, 'Oh, Ruskin Bond is coming to Lucknow today, do you want to have dinner with him and his publisher this evening?' And neither of us had heard of him before this week.

Rxxx

8-Nov-17

Dear Dad,

Geeta and I arrived back in Lucknow yesterday evening after a very enjoyable four-day excursion, as follows.

On Saturday we flew to Delhi and went to the Bahai House of Worship, where there is also a big conference centre, at which the Bahais had organised a seminar on 'Education and Moral Empowerment', with Geeta being one of the speakers. (Her contribution was outstanding, as usual.) In the evening we flew on to Pune (= Poona) for one night. Sadly the flight was delayed by 4½ hours because a politician commandeered our aircraft for his trip to Jaipur. Several other flights were disrupted because of similar interventions by other 'VVIPs'. I suspect this is a regular occurrence now that the central government has directed that MPs should go back to their constituencies at weekends. The official line parroted by the newspapers is that the flights were delayed by "air traffic congestion". In the event we didn't get to bed until after 1am.

On Sunday we were driven east into the hills above Pune to a resort called Lavasa. It was lovely to get above the flat plains for once, and to see plenty of trees, but I was disappointed that none of them (the trees) appeared to be particularly old or of different varieties. I strongly suspect that the original native forest has been cleared and replaced with a much sparser coverage of just a few species with not much in the way of undergrowth. In Lavasa there was another seminar at which Geeta had a starring role, this one was organised by the Centre for Civil Society (a non-governmental think tank, Geeta is on its advisory board) for the purpose of appraising journalists about the realities of education policy and practice in this country.

On Monday we were driven back to Pune where we flew down the coast to Goa, and at last found the real India! Unlike Pune and district none of the native forest has been cleared in Goa, which to me makes it my idea of paradise - much closer to the proper dense jungle that I've always expected to see, having been brought up on Mowgli stories. We were staying in a hotel with direct access to the sea, across a wonderful golden stretch of sand. In the afternoon we visited the factory of a firm that designs and makes furniture for schools and offices, and in the evening we had dinner at the home of the firm's owner-directors, Sanjeev and Sunali Trivedi. It's likely that CMS will be putting in a big order for classroom furniture in the near future.

Yesterday (Tuesday) we visited the furniture factory again, before taking a leisurely detour back to the airport, which included a visit to the Basilica of Bom Jesus to see the dessicated remains of St Francis Xavier. (For your interest I've copied below some of the Wikipedia entry about him.) Then we flew back to Lucknow via Mumbai (= Bombay), getting here around 8pm, tired but happy.

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Love from Roger xxx

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Xavier

Saint Francis Xavier, S.J. (born Francisco de Jasso y Azpilicueta, 7 April 1506 – 3 December 1552), was a Navarrese Basque Roman Catholic missionary, born in Javier (Xavier in Navarro-Aragonese or Xabier in Basque), Kingdom of Navarre (present day Spain), and a co-founder of the Society of Jesus. He was a companion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and one of the first seven Jesuits who took vows of poverty and chastity at Montmartre, Paris in 1534. He led an extensive mission

into Asia, mainly in the Portuguese Empire of the time and was influential in evangelization work, most notably in India. The Goa Inquisition was proposed by St. Francis Xavier. He also was the first Christian missionary to venture into Japan, Borneo, the Maluku Islands, and other areas. In those areas, struggling to learn the local languages and in the face of opposition, he had less success than he had enjoyed in India. Xavier was about to extend his missionary preaching to China but died in Shangchuan Island shortly before he could do so.

He was beatified by Pope Paul V on 25 October 1619 and canonized by Pope Gregory XV on 12 March 1622. In 1624 he was made co-patron of Navarre alongside Santiago. Known as the "Apostle of the Indies," and the "Apostle of Japan", he is considered to be one of the greatest missionaries since Saint Paul. In 1927, Pope Pius XI published the decree "Apostolicorum in Missionibus" naming Saint Francis Xavier, along with Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, co-patron of all foreign missions. He is now co-patron saint of Navarre with San Fermin. The Day of Navarre (Día de Navarra) in Spain marks the anniversary of Saint Francis Xavier's death, on 3 December 1552.

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He was first buried on a beach at Shangchuan Island, Taishan, Guangdong. His incorrupt body was taken from the island in February 1553 and was temporarily buried in St. Paul's church in Portuguese Malacca on 22 March 1553. An open grave in the church now marks the place of Xavier's burial. Pereira came back from Goa, removed the corpse shortly after 15 April 1553, and moved it to his house. On 11 December 1553, Xavier's body was shipped to Goa. The body is now in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, where it was placed in a glass container encased in a silver casket on 2 December 1637.

14-Nov-17

Dear Dad,

All's well here. The Chief Justices' Conference has just ended, with no major mishaps, while being more interesting and relevant than last year's conference. Indeed it is steadily improving year-on-year. Geeta and Roshan both worked incredibly hard to ensure its success. Geeta is now at the centre of the conference administration, allowing her parents to take more relaxed roles. Meanwhile Roshan took charge of various unexpected last-minute crises, such as yesterday's announcement from his grandfather that to celebrate Children's Day (today, 14 November) CMS would be giving a bar of chocolate to each and every student. So it was up to Roshan to procure 56,328 chocolate bars overnight - which he did!

What's really a problem at the moment, which you may have heard about, is the appalling air pollution. For the last week it's been really bad throughout North India, and particularly bad in the cities. The good news is that the press are now referring to it as air pollution or smog, and not 'haze'. The bad news is that they all parrot the official line that it is due primarily to stubble-burning on farms in Punjab and Haryana and/or 'moisture' in the air. Where they do mention the real reason - too many cars - this is always as a minor footnote. Essentially no-one (who writes or reads the newspapers) wants to face up to the fact that they will need to reduce their own use of vehicles.

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Much love from Roger xxx