
India-Dharamsala working group

Trip preparations

The “Delegation” which visited Dharamsala, grew from an email group initiated by **Sasha Noble**, of **Kundrel** (<http://kundrel.org/>), which had expanded over six (or so) months to include around 15 individuals. Prominent among these were many Internet experts. The group is strongly oriented toward Internet security, especially web and email, though it is certainly broader than that. For example, it includes **Greg Walton**, who has researched and written on the subject of *China’s Golden Shield* and information flow and human rights, **Errikos (Erik) Pitsos** and **Laird Brown** of **Ciphire Labs** (<http://ciphire.com/>), a company that provides secure email solutions, **Theodore Forbath**, who is CTO of **Wipro**, and **Locke Berkebile** and **Dan Haig** who have provided support for various Tibet Support Groups on **Cyborganic** for almost ten years, and founders of the new entity **Serving Tibet**. **Jim Schuyler** (myself) is CTO of **The Dalai Lama Foundation** (<http://dalailamafoundation.org/>), and organization dedicated to promoting **His Holiness’s** non-religious writings and ideas on peace and ethics. The founding group from Kundrel includes Sasha, **Jim George** and Greg Walton.

A few months before the visit, **Thubten Samdup** (Sam), founder of the **Canada Tibet Committee** (<http://tibet.ca/>), who had been a member of the group since its initiation, was asked to take on general coordination responsibilities. Sam coordinated the trip to Dharamsala, and without him it would just not have happened.

Kundrel has existed for several years, and its primary accomplishment is the creation of the web site <http://xijang-zhiye.org/> the content for which is created by the **Department of Information and International Relations** (DIIR) of the **Tibetan Government in Exile** (TGiE).

The initial working idea of the group was to help secure the systems and networks of the TGiE. Over the course of planning for the visit, we agreed that we would instead go there with open minds to “*listen to the needs of local groups.*” The **Central Tibetan Authority** (CTA, which is actually the TGiE) has a group within DIIR called the **Tibetan Computer Resource Center** (TCRC), and **Dorji Tsering**, the new head of TCRC was our host for this visit. Dorji sent out invitations to a large number of agencies within the CTA as well as to other Tibetan NGOs in the area.

The delegation that visited Dharamsala, consisted of Thubten (Sam) Samdup, Jim (Sky) Schuyler, Errikos Pitsos, Laird Brown and Locke Berkebile. Sam and Locke arrived a week earlier than the rest, and had a chance to talk with numerous people, including **Yahel Ben-David**, who has been helping many of these local groups and had just the week before put his Wi-Fi “wireless mesh” in place over much of the area. Jim stopped in Munich to visit with the Ciphire Labs team and he and Erik and Laird traveled to Dharamsala together.

MON FEB 28 : I flew from San Francisco to Washington DC and then on to Munich. Not too much to say about that except it’s an early morning departure from San Francisco, so I had to be up at 4:30, and the arrival is the “next day” at 8am local (Munich) time. A short stopover to change planes



in Washington D.C. MARCH 1: The temperature in Munich was -21C/-6F and it had snowed. It was indeed cold. Flying in, early in the morning, I could see that the German countryside is different from the US - instead of large farms and few cities, there are little towns all over the place, each one served by roads and with fields around it. The towns also seemed to be predominantly at the tops of hills - and in the US I'm used to cities almost invariably being located in valleys. The German Alps appeared on the horizon. I was informed that people take the train from Munich in the morning with their skis and



ski all day - and drink beer - and then take the train home again that evening. There were a couple of inches of snow all around, and Munich takes care of sidewalks by spreading pea-gravel everywhere. So it's not slippery to walk, but if you're coming in from the airport with a wheeled luggage bag, you can't wheel it anywhere because the gravel gets caught up in the wheels. I found the train, rather than taking an expensive cab, and in 45 minutes was across from my hotel in the heart of Munich. Each little berg along the train line had its own central planning, and all the houses in each town were of similar style - there

were Bavarian-design white houses with sloped red roofs in one town, and modern "industrial" glass and concrete in the next, and then matching townhouses in another. The train is a very civilized way of getting around! The 200 meter walk from the train platform to the hotel was easy to manage, even with my baggage.

I checked in, and then Laird and I went to lunch. He taught me that one drinks beer with every meal. The Ciphire Labs guys all use English around the office, and Laird is Canadian, so he has not picked up much German while he's been here, so the waitress interpreted the entire menu for us and we chose a nice lunch. As Laird and Erik



still had tons of work to do, I bummed around Munich for the afternoon, meeting Laird and Sandy and friends of theirs for dinner. Munich has its share of modernity, with more than a few Internet Cafes, coffee shops, and loads of cellphone stores, but it also has buildings dating from the 1500s. The city hall is a particularly interesting example of architecture, with its animated clock consisting of little puppets that move around and do things when the clock strikes (I did not actually view this as I didn't have the patience to wait around for this to happen.)

Being an ancient city, there are not only the public government

buildings, but lots of churches all over the place. Münchner Frauenkirche was one I visited and it's a huge edifice with stained glass windows and all of the trappings you'd expect in a big old church. It looks to me like the graveyards that used to exist alongside these churches have probably been relocated, but gravestones (or at least stones memorializing those who were interred here)



are now fastened to the outside walls of the churches. Some interesting and old artifacts. Dinner that evening was at a Mexican restaurant in the university district. Subway tickets are sold on a per-ride or an all-day basis – I had purchased tickets at the airport and was thus able to ride the subway all day, including going to dinner and back. That finished off Tuesday.



MARCH 2: After a good night's sleep, I then had all day Wednesday as well to bum around town. I saw the Residenz, an old palace, and further explored the university district, as well as walking back from there to the Ciphire offices where I got a tour and met a few of the people I had worked with via email.

Nice to put a face with a name. Bitter cold all day. I had packed well, and was

able to wear a great waterproof coat as well as a down vest and sweater underneath. So though my hands got cold if I didn't keep them in my pockets, I was perfectly comfortable. Certainly no more cold than when I'm skiing.

Then we were off to Delhi. Laird and Erik and I had booked the same Lufthansa flight for Wednesday evening at 8pm, and I took the train out to the airport (as I was concerned that Erik would wait until the last minute and I hate hurrying). I was correct. I had plenty of time to check in for the flight, and Erik and laird arrived at the very last minute – just in time for boarding. This flight was an overnight flight, arriving in New Delhi at 8am the next day. MARCH 3: India from the air was also a new experience for all of us. There were smokestacks everywhere, spewing thick white smoke into the air, and the air on the ground looked positively brown. I figured out later that the smokestacks were kilns for baking bricks – there is constant building going on all over India and bricks seems to be in great demand.



Upon landing at Delhi and clearing customs, we were picked up by a driver arranged by Yahel (mentioned earlier). Yahel was on his way out of town from Dharamsala, so although he had been able to meet with Sam and Locke a few days earlier, we would not have been able to talk with him – except that he arranged to come to Delhi a day earlier than he had planned, and he then spent Thursday with us in Delhi. We had a car with driver for the full day. I will tell you that my first impression of India was twofold 1) driving on the left drove me nuts; and 2) traffic was abysmal with people all over the place and constant horns honking. In fact, they drive with their horns – there's a standard set of horn signals meaning such things as “pull left because I'm going to pass you” and “get the *#@\$%” over because I need to go by. Nobody is the least bit agitated by all this honking – it is just part of the process of driving in India. (And Delhi was actually not the worst – traffic wise – I will say more later.) Traffic consists of regular autos, some SUVs, lots of 3-wheeled motor-powered cabs, rickshaws, bicycles, motor scooters, and pedestrians intermixed everywhere. And it gets pretty dense. Yahel was not to arrive for another two hours, so we instead went to the train station to purchase overnight sleeper tickets so we could take the train from Delhi to near Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh (Himachal state). The Indian railway company reserves a small number of seats in sleeping compartments for foreign tourists, and those can be purchased if you show up at the train station in the morning. We showed up and they, of course, said the quota was full. Then sent us to the “help” desk. It turned out we had just asked the wrong thing – not all seats were full, only certain classes. So we got 2nd Class AC



(air-conditioned) which is about as well as you can expect to do – once they straightened us out. Yahel arrived 15 minutes after we got the tickets and we then went to lunch.

Following a long lunch we went to the gardens containing Humayun's Tomb, dating from 1562AD and a precursor to the Taj Mahal. An interesting place to walk around, but we spent most of our time discussing the IT needs of the Tibetan community in Dharamsala. Of course.



The photos below are Yahel, Laird and Erik at the restaurant.



Yahel informed us that everything in India gets recycled. Nothing is wasted. (I have contrary evidence as there were piles of junk and trash everywhere, but this is apparently the last resort.) So we went to the electronics market. (I have no pictures because it was just too crowded.) Here hundreds of tiny stores, each a single room fronting on a street in which two people could pass shoulder-to-shoulder. And overhead the sky was not to be seen – the street was a real street, but covered over with awnings and overhanging balconies everywhere. Each store contained miscellaneous merchandise – some new and some repaired. Cell phones, boom boxes, radios and every electronic appliance you could imagine. Yahel said that these guys could fix things that even the manufacturers could not fix – he once had a shop owner work on a digital camera of his and for 400 rupees (\$10US) he fixed something the camera's manufacturer said could not be fixed.

At this point it's worth saying that the streets were wall-to-wall people. This area of town was overrun with people. (It's near *The Red Fort*.) crossing a street was insanity. You just had to step out into the flow of bikes, cars, rickshaws and people, and make your way across. Somehow the drivers do not hit you if you're predictable and playing by their rules – I cannot articulate what the rules are, I just know that it was terrifying to cross the streets.

From here we board the train. Yahel is the gracious host and takes us to the train station where he hires porters (this is mandatory) who carry the bags to the compartment on the train. We get set up and although the train is an hour late leaving the station, we are assured that it will make up the time on the way to Chakki Bank, which is our stop at 6:30 in the morning.

Now, of course, this country was an English colony, and one of their official languages is English, but the porters and the conductor on the train speak only Hindi, and though we believe we've made ourselves understood, we are not entirely sure the conductor will actually wake us in time to get off at Chakki Bank. So we all set our own alarms.



MARCH 4: I'll clue you in – the trains do not always run on time. And no time was made up. Our alarm clocks rang, and we got our bags all ready, and moved to the passageway between cars so we'd be prepared to get off at our stop, but 6:30 passed and the train did not stop. Then it did stop – in the middle of nowhere. Finally we awoke the sleeping conductor, who somehow conveyed to us

that the train was an hour late. Still. And then, at 7:30, the train stopped at Chakki Bank and we disembarked.

Our driver from Yahel's *Summit Adventures* travel business, which he had arranged in advance, was waiting with a 4wd Toyota to take us up into the hills to Dharamsala.

We had expected it to be a different world here, 500km from Delhi. And it was, but it was still overrun with people. Himachal Pradesh is in the foothills of the Himalayas (thus "Himachal"). It's hilly and rural compared to the flat terrain of New Delhi. Arriving in mid rush-hour, we found hundreds of school children, dressed in their school uniforms, headed for a day at school. Some were clustered around rickshaws – the youngest ones riding, and the older ones holding on the the rear of the rickshaw dutifully. We saw a few school busses, but not many. Groups of children in matching uniforms walked to school in every town we passed thru.



What else did I notice on the streets? Where you'd expect to see one person, you saw six. You might expect to see a man in front of a store, but you saw five men talking with the shopkeeper. You might expect to see a few men repairing the road, but you saw eight sharing the work. And no power equipment on road repairs either – everything done with simple tools. As someone put it, "If you replaced the men with a earth-moving equipment, then how would they earn a living?"



There were few beggars. I had been warned that there would be many, but my impression was that there are far fewer than I was led to expect. Yes, a couple of them at the airport pickup. And a couple at the train stop. And a couple in Dharamsala. But, nowhere near the number I had expected. I am also told that today in India few are starving. I don't know whether it's true, but there was food growing everywhere in the fields, and food for sale in every little village, so I suspect things are indeed better than they have been in the past.



Our driver winds his way up the mountain roads now. The road is full of potholes, and narrow, and there is no rational use of lanes to my way of thinking, but he knows how to drive and can somehow avoid head-on collisions with the oncoming (and huge) trucks. (The trucks are another story – later.)

Our first view of the Himalayan foothills appears over the next crest in the road. For foothills, these look like the real thing. Steep sides, covered with snow, and jagged peaks. But these peaks are only close to 5,000 meters, and the real mountains are ranged behind them, twice as high as these. We do not know where Dharamsala is yet, but we know we are close to the home of the Dalai Lama. Even though



we're still many kilometers from it, we can understand why Tibet has been called "The Roof of the World."



By early afternoon we arrive in lower Dharamsala where Kashmir Guest House is located – our home for the next 8 days. Dharamsala is a rather large settlement, almost entirely Indian, just below a winding road that leads upward to Namgyal Monastery and the home of The Dalai Lama. The Tibetan colony is actually in McLeod Ganj and not



Dharamsala. People refer to it as Dharamsala because that's the biggest nearby city. Arriving at Kashmir House, we had tea and dropped our packs in our rooms. Each room offers hot water, a private bathroom, no heat, and a bed with four blankets. We later on discover how much we need those

four blankets.



In the afternoon we got the entire group together for the first time. Meeting at Hotel Tibet, which was Sam's base of operations. (Thubten Samdup – picture at left) (Locke Berkebile – picture at right) The restaurant actually. The restaurant was empty – mid



afternoon – and with the place to ourselves, Sam introduced the plan for the weekend, which would consist of a tour on Saturday and other activities on Sunday.



The rest of the afternoon we acclimated – walking around the McLeod Ganj central area. Stores are the size of a garage, usually covered by a rollup steel garage door when they're closed. We had been told that upwards of 40 Internet cafes had sprung up in the past year or so, and our observations confirmed that. There were many. At Green Hotel, for example, there were 8 or 10 computers, networked together and connected to the Internet thru a 64kb dedicated line. And next door, the Green Internet Café had another 15 or so computers using the same connection.



There were another half dozen Internet cafes within a short walk from the central square in McLeod Ganj. The central square is really a big open space where buses and taxis can pool



and can turn around. Not much there except vehicles and people, but it is the center of activity. Again we recognized that the streets here were never designed for motor vehicles – they're narrower than you can believe. There are limited numbers of places where vehicles can pass



each other, and large vehicles such as buses can barely get thru. But they do. This picture shows a bus slipping thru a narrow spot – the shopkeepers pull their wares off the street so the bus can pass. And this all happens seemingly without major mishaps.



MARCH 5: On Saturday morning, two cars from CTA picked up Laird and Erik and myself at Kashmir House. From there we went to McLeod Ganj to pick up Locke and Sam. And on to the Upper Tibetan Children's Village. A week before we arrived, McLeod Ganj and Bhagsu had been hit with a couple of feet of snow – and very cold weather. By the time we arrived, the snow had melted, though the mountains were still covered. But it continued to be rainy. So Saturday was a bit rainy. This means that streets are muddy, and since cows and dogs run wild, the muddy streets are pretty smelly. Today we avoided this hazard by riding. The Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) institution houses children who have come from the Tibetan region of China, most of them over mountain passes, without their parents. They get a rigorous education, consisting of about five hours of classes each weekday. They live in dormitories, in groups of about 20, with an adult in each unit. Our visit was to the computer center at the Upper TCV (there are several TCVs, here and elsewhere in India). The computer center at Upper TCV contains 60 computers. All

of the kids here (ages 6-8) get a couple of hours a week of computer instruction. It centers on the user of the Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) so these kids are pretty computer literate by the time they finish. There is no Internet access here, so I'd compare this to computer education in grade schools in the US around 1993.



Students have an extra-curricular chance to use computers at the community center (photo at left), where there are an additional 10 or so computers available on a pay-per-use basis. These computers are connected to the Internet (again, they share a single ISDN line) and give students a chance to connect a bit with the outside world.



Following our TCV visit, we motored to Bhagsu to see the Bhagsu Internet café (photo at right), a creation of Yahel



Ben-David and Milap Nehria. And to have lunch. The Internet portion is a small room downstairs which contains a number of computers. These are connected to the net in several ways. Upstairs, Wi-Fi has been installed and was available to us while we had lunch. The data connectivity



while we were there was provided by a single GPRS cellphone. A trickle of connectivity, but enough to pull down some email. Our lunch was great.

Following lunch, our drivers took us down thru McLeod Ganj and Dharamsala to the Norbulingka Institute. We went there because the institute is digitizing photos and video from Tibet. But that's a small part of what they do – the institute has an impressive program, which we toured, in which 350 artists are learning, preserving and using



artistic techniques from ancient Tibet. The institute is self-supporting, with sales of its goods providing all operating funds. The 350 artists are part of a community of 500 staff and family members. At left a *thangka* painting is being created. These paintings are created using pigments from natural sources which do not bleach out or change over long periods of time. The artists themselves create the pigments, crushing the mineral rocks and creating the

natural adhesives that secure them to the cloth backing upon which they're painted.

We had tea with Kim Yeshe, the founder of the institute, in her office at the conclusion of the tour. It is clearly our vision that the reach of the institute could be greatly increased by both



promoting its products online and by making its digital archives (once they've been created) available online. This will come in time, of course. It is all they can do at the moment to keep up with the demand for places in the institute and for its products.



MARCH 6: I suffered no jet-lag during this trip – at all – and we met early Sunday morning at Nick's restaurant up in McLeod Ganj to plan the upcoming three days of meetings. The snowy peaks were brilliant over our heads. Sunglasses were required. Over a breakfast of something or other (we had many types of breakfasts over there) in the bright sunlight (for a change) we discussed our reactions to

what we'd seen so far, and did some planning for the upcoming sessions. Both Locke and I (being from San Francisco) were anxious to hike the mountains, and the German contingent was anxious to something other than hiking. Sam had his fans to attend to – we had discovered the Sam was a famous song-writer and performer and had many fans in Dharamsala. He could hardly turn a corner without being stopped and greeted!



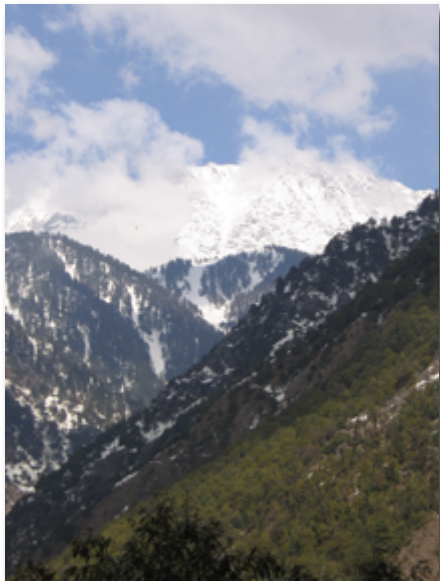
Following the breakfast discussion, Locke and I took off up the hill. Locke had spent three months studying here a few years ago and knew many places to go outside of the town. We went thru Bhagsu and up toward the upper village of Dharamkot. The path had changed somewhat since Locke's last visit, with more new buildings everywhere. But it still passed thru what must be a "suburban" landscape here – dwellings here and there, with tethered goats or cattle, and plots of land cultivated (but



not now – it’s too early). Because of the recent snowfall, melt, and rains, there were yellow flowers everywhere. All over the place. I would say “in the fields” but cultivation takes place here on a smaller scale and “plots” would be more like it. Across the valley we could see terraced landscapes where crops clearly were grown.

Dharamkot consists of a number of buildings and many terraces – if you examine the buildings you see that some consist

of apartments – very small – perhaps as many as 8 per building. Clearly crowded living space. But, in the time we were there we always saw food and apparently people do make a living here. It was certainly a contrast to the urban landscape of Dharamsala and McLeod Ganj. We continued upward thru the urban landscape to a road junction where we started thru the forest toward the mountains.



At the top of the trail we reached a junction where there was a strategically-placed “tea house” and on the other side of the hill it was obviously far less developed. Here one had a view upward, over one mountain, of the snow-capped higher foothills of the Himalayan range. Again, these are mountains in the 14,000 foot range, which is still only half the size of Everest. But they are magnificently impressive. Sheer sides with rock and snow. And constantly-changing cloud formations. From one second to the next a peak might come or go.

For a couple of hours we hiked on the path thru the pine forest, seeing just a few people, with the Himalayas to one side, and only minimal civilization visible. At one point we saw a monastery, and a



new village below us. Clearly visible in the middle of the village was its cellphone tower. (My cellphone coverage was many times stronger and clearer while in Dharamsala than it is in San Francisco!)



Coming around the mountain we had a clear view of Upper TCV below us, and then of McLeod Ganj in its entirety, spread out below us.

The rest of the day was spent hiking around Bhagsu, where we visited the local waterfall, and then hitting the Internet

café to pick up email before dinnertime. Each day a little snip of Internet time, but not enough to pick up all incoming email. Further and further behind. The East meets the West. Or the developed meets the undeveloped? A further illustration of why the flood of unwanted spam email can be overwhelming to people without the bandwidth to handle it.



MARCH 9: Monday has arrived, and we have our first meeting at the CTA. Dorji Tsering has sent the invitations to governmental and non-governmental groups, but nobody's sure who will come and who won't. However, the time arrives and perhaps twenty five people show up. (Picture at least if Thubten Samphel, DIIR Secretary, and Thubten Samdup our delegation head.) Representing a number of orgs.

Our task is to listen to these IT professionals explain what problems they face that they can't solve with local resources. So that's the first day task - listen. And we mostly did. Buildings are unheated, so we are all sitting in a conference room, in various stages of dress, but some are wearing down parkas, and others are down to sweaters. And at times it was downright chilly. Both Sam and Locke, who sit on either side of me, are coughing like crazy. I hope I do not catch their disease! Very interesting to hear what they're saying about local problems. The "connectivity" between locals and the global Internet does seem to be a big problem. A Google search can literally take an hour - not because Google is slow, but because it takes 5 or 10 minutes to receive (on a slow connection) each retrieved page! With 60 people sharing the equivalent of a couple of phone lines, it is excruciatingly slow to try to get anything from the Internet. We are greatly encouraged by the inclusion of NGOs in this conversation - they bring a new perspective that the governmental group has not seen (directly) before. And it is clear that when questions are raised by a member of the group, it will often be the case that others in the group can answer that question—without the need for outside experts. Our task is to help determine when experts might be needed.

I have far fewer photos from these days because, well, we were busy! I have 14 pages of notes, but almost no photos. Very productive days.

MARCH 10: Now it's the day to see how to organize for a better future. The question is thrown "out on the floor." From the start it's clear that a local organization, combined with a global support-organization will work best. Inclusion in the local group is discussed and it is decided that it will be broad. Tibetan groups and Tibet-support groups, will all be included. The group's coordination will come from the TCRC, but there will be a steering committee composed of representatives of five local groups. This day we also have an interview with Kalon Lobsang Nyandak, who is the minister newly in charge of the DIIR.



Tonight, in combination with dinner, we work thru our recommendations, based on what we've heard and what has been suggested today. A six-page presentation is created. Laird, Erik and I worked on this until almost 2am.

MARCH 11: Yesterday we had compiled a list of "problem



areas” and today we came prepared to hold discussions and demos on a couple of them – those being 1) network security; and 2) e-learning. Erik and Locke installed network monitoring tools on two computers and walked thru discussions of network routing, DNS and other services. They also showed how to monitor traffic on the local network. Jim held a shorter discussion of e-learning and compiled a list of action items for later. But, it was clear that security, and network infrastructure, were the hot topics. And topics for which we should hold future conferences or demos!

Today we also had a 15-minute audience with (Prime Minister) Kalon Tripa Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche. During this audience we showed and discussed our six-page presentation, including recommendations. Rinpoche that the meeting was historic, and understood and agreed to our recommendations, thus giving us support at the highest elected level of the Tibetan government in exile. Returning to the group meeting, we also presented our recommendations, and with great ceremony and some number of speeches, we closed the three-day event.

MARCH 10: This is the 46th anniversary of the 1959 uprising of the Tibetan people against the Chinese occupiers of Tibet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama makes an annual statement, as does the Kalon Tripa, and we were invited to attend. From seats in a special visitors’ gallery we heard the speeches (though I do not understand Tibetan, so it was mostly a visual experience). English copies of His Holiness’s speech were also distributed. Erik and Laird had left for Delhi, so Locke and Sam and I were the only attendees – Locke and I followed the parade/demonstration which wound from the Namgyal monastery (where the speeches were given) down to lower Dharamsala. (See



photo at right of children from TCV with banner and Tibetan flags.) In lower Dharamsala the hundreds of marchers assembled in an open square and a couple of speeches were



made. Again it was a rainy day. It rained during the addresses at Namgyal monastery, and it rained during the march.

This was the end of our official visit. Winding down, the afternoon of the 10th, I visited Bhagsu again to try to pick up the rest of my email, which had clogged up with an enormous amount of spam. I was unsuccessful with the email cleanup, but had a couple of very good espressos and some delicious food. And a lot of walking.

MARCH 11: In order to see more of India, Locke and I had decided to take a private car down to Delhi today. (We hired it thru a local tour agency.) Our driver arrived at 8am and

we took off. Because of the rain the previous days, the air was clear and visibility was great. At the start, we repeated the 2.5 hour downhill ride from Dharamsala down the mountains. But with the better visibility, the mountains were spectacular.

The trip took us thru hundreds of kilometers of countryside. Initially rural, then changing slowly into more urban landscapes. Roads in the rural areas were narrow, and there

were many cargo trucks. Each profusely painted up with designs and signs. (Hmm, no “advertising” per se.) Each truck advertised “cargo carrier” on the front, with a designation of which states they were licensed in. And on the back the omnipresent “BLOW HORN/Use dipper at night,” because these trucks had no side mirrors (they came too close to each other when passing and mirrors would have been scraped off long ago).



Again, one gets the impression that there six times “too many” people everywhere. It is crowded. As we approached the more urban areas, it interested me to see “party gardens” in several towns. The phrase “party garden” is my phrase – they are large walled enclosures with a kind of “Indian palace” in the center – serving as a party pavilion. And clearly advertised as for rent. Rent this for your party or celebration. A commercial equivalent of the Elks or Masonic Hall or Irish Cultural Center. In one city there were a half dozen or more of these all in close proximity. I saw this phenomenon in a couple of towns.

We arrived in Delhi at dusk. Checked into Wangdhon House which is in the small Tibetan enclave in Delhi. They said “don’t go outside the gate at night.” Streets were very narrow – and even there we saw a car or two from time to time. A village square in the middle. Crowded buildings and lots of people. For the first time I had a few extra minutes

and was able to buy a few goodies at a shop.



MARCH 12: I had arranged for a taxi at 5:30 am so I could make the 9:30 flight from the airport...including the “be there 3 hours early” lead time. The taxi didn’t arrive. So by 6 the desk clerk called another one. A passerby had offered to take me to the airport for Rs300 (same as the taxi fare) but I was a little leery when he asked “Do you know the route?” – so I waited for the second taxi. Traffic



was very light and it was easy to arrive early. Customs and passport control and all of that were easy, with very short lines. The air was thick enough to cut with a knife - haze and smoke - as we had observed the day we landed in Delhi the prior week. People tell me the air has been cleaned up drastically over the past few years, with more vehicles using natural gas which pollutes far less. Hard to know. The Lufthansa plane loaded up and left almost on time.

Because of the way the return works on United, I returned to Munich and stayed overnight. Munich airport is well-designed, and one fun item is the almost-lifesize Lego figures on one of the promenades. The Lufthansa plane had wireless Internet access available, so I again had the computer

try to pull down more of the spam that had clogged my system. By the time my battery ran out (over 6 hours) it still was not clear. But I was also able to get a lot of other things done on the computer.

In Munich it was warmer than the previous week, but it was snowing again. I took the train into town from the airport - again a pleasant and quick experience. Checked into the Meridien and went out to grab dinner. And it snowed some more.

MARCH 13: This was the longest flight of the entire trip, lasting almost 12 hours. A short hop from Munich to Frankfurt-Main, where I waited several hours. Then the 11.5 hour flight. Mostly I read and used the computer to compose meeting notes, and



because the flight left in mid-afternoon and took a polar route, it also landed in mid-afternoon (12 hours later) in San Francisco. Marvelous photos of Greenland showing mountains in the snowfields and calving glaciers! The ice floes coming off these glacial rivers are not the size of houses, they're the size of towns.

Flew in over northern California (because of the polar great-circle route) and landed right on time. Welcome home.

