

Namaste to Bollywood!

Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India - February 12, 2008

Amy:

After a delicious pancake & egg breakfast, Brent and I lounged around the apartment. Brent read his Gita books, while I continued my seemingly-never-ending quest to find a homestay in Kerala (a homestay is like a b+b in India). At around 11:00 a.m., we went with Madhumanti to pick up Akanksha from her school, the International School of Hyderabad. (Akanksha's school is close to their apartment, which is why they chose this



Schoolgirl.

particular apartment). At the school, we met a few of the other mothers, one from Seattle and one from Denmark, tres international! After a few minutes, Akanksha came running out of the school,

book bag in hand! Her teacher, Ms. Maggie, told Madhumanti that Akanksha had had a good day, and that she was looking forward to a swimming trip that was planned for the following day.



Schoolgirls.

Madhumanti and Akanksha dropped us off at a restaurant near the apartment called "Hyderabad House" which Raj had recommended. We sat down (and may or may not have seen a mouse) and ordered a delicious meal of mutton biryani (a specialty of



Proper eating etiquette?

Hyderabad), chicken kebabs, and a veg appetizer (I can't remember the name but it was in a doughy crust and was great). We



Clean hands club.

were almost too full to order desert, but then we remembered a Baskin-Robbins store on the way home. The Baskin-Robbins was actually a "Baskin-Robbins" lounge, with a tv and comfy chairs. We ordered some ice cream and got a scoop of chocolate to go for Akanksha. (trivia: in India, the flavor rocky road is called "dusty road") On our way home we saw the driver, who was supposed to pick us up at 1:00 (it was 12:45) so we tried to explain that we had walked home b/c we were early and that we'd see him later (I don't know if that was communicated).

Back at home, Brent posted some blogs and I did some laundry and hung out 'til the movie.

We were dropped off at 3:00 at a nearby mall to see a movie at 3:30. Madhumanti had gotten us tickets the day before – it is very difficult to get tickets and nearly impossible for new movies, so we were lucky to have tickets in hand. We walked through security and a pat-

down and bag check, and wandered around the mall,



Mall.

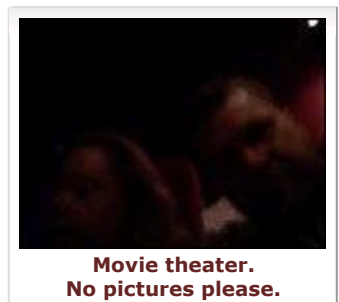
which seemed to be 5 floors of the same store, Marks and Spencer, one floor womens' clothing, one floor men's, etc. We tried to get up to the fifth floor where the theatre location, but the escalators only went as far as the 4th floor. So we walked around to

the other side of the mall, took 2 elevators, and made it to the theatre.

After another security check, there was a near-confiscation of my camera; the security checker wanted to take it, but I said "no, it's expensive" and she told me "just don't take any pictures". Sometimes, it's as if security, police, or other people-in-charge feel that they have to do or some something, whether or not it's true or helpful. (I don't know if Brent has observed the same)

The theatre looked similar to new ones at home, except for the security and the menu, which was more Indian-ish cuisine. There was popcorn and soda, but also dosas (flat pancake-like crepes) and tuna and "veg" sandwiches. Inside the theatre was stadium seating, like at home, but every seat had a number and row. We found our way to our row and sat down. Before the movie, a boy walked up the row and asked us if we wanted any popcorn or drinks. Naturally, I thought that he would probably take our money and run and that this was an elaborate scan on foreigners. Not

true! Shame on me for my cynicism.



Movie theater.
No pictures please.



Movie theater lobby.

The lights dimmed and the previews started, and, though in Hindi, the movies seemed easy to understand

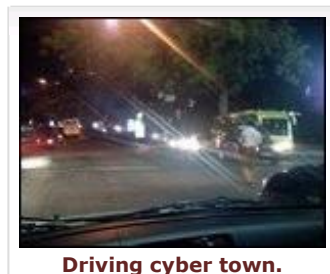
and looked funny, [Naresh: I think one of them was a sequel to that hilarious smash, "The Krazees," or something like that.] which gave us hope for the upcoming film. The film was called "Taare Zameen Par" and was excellent! The producer & director also had a leading role. The movie was about a dyslexic boy who is misunderstood, abused, and shipped off to boarding school. At the school, a teacher diagnoses the boy and helps him overcome his learning disability and reach his full potential as a painter. The movie was in Hindi (with no subtitles) with many words in English (and we understood a smattering of Hindi words). Basically, the acting was so good that we had no trouble understanding the plot or any of the scenes. If anyone has a chance to see Taare Zameen Par, you should take it! Superb! [Naresh: Madhumanti later explained that the star / producer/ director is tired of not winning any Oscars, and so intends to secure one this year by inserting a lot more English, covering the topic of a mental adversity, making a tear-jerker, and inserting the musical numbers in a more holistic way than we've

usually seen in the Hindi moves on TV.]

After the movie, we walked downstairs to the entrance of the building, where Madhumanti and Akanksha were waiting for us. From the movie, we went to “Hi Tec city” pick up Tapas at work. Poor Akanksha was very hungry by this time, so Madhumanti, Akanksha and I were dropped off at the Novotel restaurant to get Akanksha dinner, while Brent went with the driver to pick up Tapas.

The Novotel Hotel (a Russian chain) was very fancy and upscale, but surprisingly, only had one restaurant!

There was a piano bar-lounge and a pastry shop, in addition to an outdoor courtyard. Madhumanti explained that many of the tech company employees stay at the hotel during their time in Hyderabad.



Driving cyber town.

At the restaurant, Akanksha ate some pasta and an egg, while we saw there was a full international buffet, so we snuck some breadsticks for Akanksha. Tapas and Brent



Buffet.

arrived soon after, and we all ate at the buffet, which had a full Indian menu with lots of dishes I hadn't seen before, as well as a desert table (with a sundae bar!) soups, salad bar, cheeses, pastas,

and seafood. Brent said that we had topped our eating record once again! We rolled out of the restaurant and back to the house.



Fine Dining.

On the drive home, we were treated to a duet by Tapas and Akanksha. The previous night, we heard Tapas singing to Akanksha while he was putting her to bed, and learned that he has an excellent voice! You learn something new every day, eh?



Video
Akanksha count to 3.

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- Previous entry: [Hyderabad – Monday – Day 4](#)
- More Hyderabad Day 5 pictures [here](#)
- [Index of all blog entries](#)