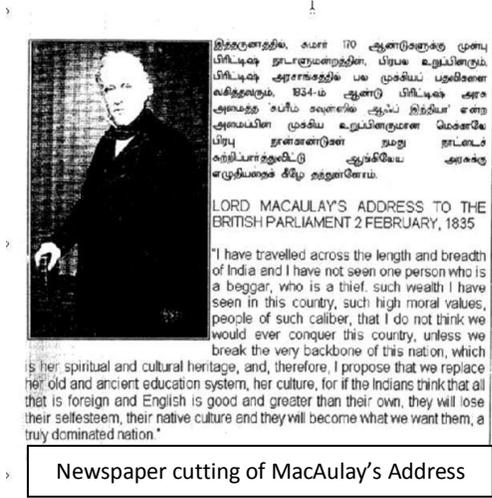


A Diary of an AAPI Indo-US Health Summit Delegate



Newspaper cutting of MacAulay's Address

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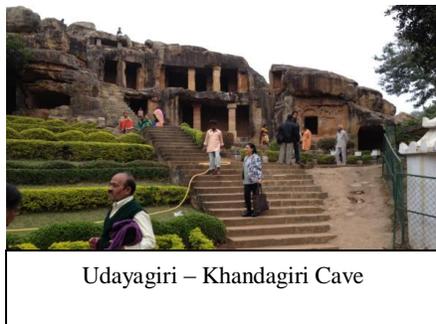
Lord MacAuly in his address to the British Parliament on February 2, 1835 proposed to replace our old and ancient education system and culture with all that is foreign and English in an attempt to have us lose our self-esteem, our native culture in an attempt to turn us into a dominated nation.

I traveled to Mumbai this year and crisscrossed India and I must say that an awakening of India is truly evident across India. My journey for the most part was with the Indo-US Health Summit Delegates spearheaded by the AAPI president Dr. Sunita Kanumury.

Day1

Chander and I landed in Mumbai on 26 December 2011. Our friends had arranged to have their chauffeur receive us at the airport and take us to our hotel at Nariman point in Mumbai. As we drove through the bustling streets of Mumbai and drove over the Sea-link Highway and crossed the Sanjay Gandhi Bridge I was amazed with the architectural design of the road system and the bridge that is a look-alike of the new Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge in Boston. However the erratic driving that is a signature of Mumbai traffic system remained unchanged. We were at our hotel room in about thirty-five minutes which I thought was a record time travel from the airport to downtown Mumbai as in the past days prior to the new road system and bridges it would have taken at least an hour if not more. At the Oberoi Hotel¹ we were greeted with the signature Indian hospitality and quickly taken to our room which was distinctively classy and much better than hotel rooms in the USA. As we entered our rooms we received a telephone call inquiring into our immediate needs and if we would like to have fruits sent to the room! I had forgotten such hospitality since my visit to Hawaii where we stayed at Halekulani an iconic hotel known for its hospitality and most likely the only truly five-star hotel in the USA. After freshening up we visited our friends in Bandra who occupy a penthouse apartment overlooking the Indian Ocean. I also connected with people so as to establish a relationship with one of the local hospitals where we plan to extend our free care program in Mumbai. We also visited the Mazaar of Haji Ali and the famous Shree Siddhi Vinayak Temple

Day 2



Udayagiri – Khandagiri Cave

We traveled to Bhubaneswar in Odisha (Orissa) and we were lucky to meet our friend Amit Chakrabarti who was on the same flight thereby easing our transit to the beautiful Mayfair Resort Hotel. We met others from the US who had traveled to India as delegates of the Indo US Summit. That evening we were escorted to the Jain Udayagiri (Hill of Sunrise) and Khandagiri (Broken Hills) Caves about six kilometers west of the city. These caves were the dwellings of the ascetic Jain monks who inhabited the caves in the 14th or 15th Century mostly likely after Jainism no longer enjoyed royal patronage of an era past.

¹ President Clinton stayed there with the American delegates during his visit to Mumbai



Rishabh Temple

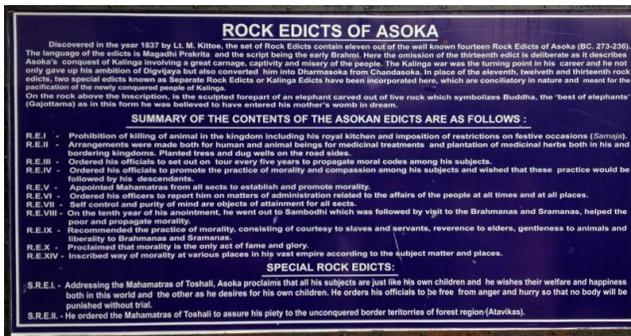
The 18th Century Jain Temple on the top of the hill that can be seen from the caves is dedicated to Rishabh Nath and most probably built on the site of an earlier shrine. The temple enshrines some old tirthankers and commands a panoramic view across the plains. The site attracts holy man each January who intone versus from the Hindu epic and meditate.

Day 3



Lingaraj Temple

Bhubaneswar is rightfully known for its temples and holy places. Immediately after a quick morning tea we piled into a bus that took us to the Lingaraj Temples located within the city. The temple itself is an architectural marvel that boasts the largest Shiv ling. The temple is 1100 years old and dedicated to Harihara which is another name for Lord Shiva. The compound wall is made up of sandstone (laterite) measuring 520' x 465' and the wall is about 7'6" in thickness! In this temple both Shiva and Vishnu are worshiped which is a testament of a growing Jagannath (form of Vishnu) influence. However the top of the template is adorned neither by Shiva's 'Trishula' nor Vishnu's 'Chakram' and it has only Rama's arrow as Rama was a worshiper of Shiva. After the temple visit we turned back to Mayfair for breakfast.



After a very sumptuous breakfast we piled back into the bus and travelled to the site of Ashoka's scriptures carved on rock. Ashoka was a Mauryan king in the 274 BCE a Chandragupta ruler of the Mauryan Empire. He was known for his capital punishment for even the smallest infraction. It is told that his cruel heart showed no mercy. The invasion of the Kalinga Kingdom to access the Ganges River is known in the history as one of the bloodiest warfare in ancient



Stupa

India. The atrocities during the invasion of the Kalinga Empire are responsible for his subsequent adoption of Buddhism and rejection of violence and hatya.

From thence we piled back in the bus and travelled north to one of Ashoka's 84,000 stuppas housing sacred relics of Gotama that he built all over his empire.



The Dancing Hall- Konark Temple

Edward D'cruz interprets the Ashokan dharma as a "religion to be used as a symbol of a new imperial unity and a cementing force to weld the diverse and heterogeneous elements of the empire". Ashoka's intent was to instigate "a practice of social behavior so broad and benevolent in its scope that no person, no matter what his religion, could reasonably object to it".

Our next stop was the Konark Sun Temple built with oxidized and weathered ferruginous sandstone by King Narasimhadeva (1238-1250 CE). The temple is a great example of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty. It is also one of the world heritage sites and it is considered as one of the seven wonders of India. Legend has it that the Samba the son of Lord Krishna who was afflicted with



Solar Calendar

leprosy and subsequently cured by Surya, the Sun God in whose honor he built the magnificent Konark Sun Temple. The chariot wheel in the picture is actually a sun calendar and also a sundial which is marvelously accurate especially considering that it was built in the twelfth century.

The next stop was the famous shoreline of Puri where our host had planned a lunch under shamianas and the cooks had been awaiting our arrival since eleven o'clock that morning until the time we actually made it to the location at about 7.00 PM. Even though the lunch was delayed the food was sumptuous and the hospitality wonderful. Unfortunately the prevailing darkness denied us the pleasure of enjoying the shoreline to the fullest and the



Jagannath Temple

mosquitoes had awakened for their feasting pleasure! After the usual bathroom visits we were back in the bus traveling. Our next stop was the Jagannath (Lord Krishna) Temple of Puri that is on the shores of the Bay of Bengal approximately 60 km from Bhubaneswar and it is one of the four most revered temples of India. This temple was built in the twelfth century by Raja Ananta Varman Chodaganga and in its present day it is also famous for the Rath Yatra chariot festival that takes place each year.

AMIT CHAKRABARTI DESERVES A SPECIAL THANK YOU FOR HIS EFFORTS IN KEEPING US ON SCHEDULE AND ENTERTAINED IN BHUBANESWAR

Day 4

Visit to the Kalinga Hospital arranged by our local sponsors. The hospital is very much like most midsize hospitals in India providing emergency medical care and also state of the art medical and surgical specialty care.

Kalinga Hospital hosted a joint CME program with AAPI that covered a gamut of medical topics presented by local and US speakers.

Following a quick breakfast we boarded our Yatra bus accompanied by fellow AAPItes to our next destination, the



AAPI Delegates- Visiting the Kalinga Hospital

bird sanctuary at the Chilika Lake (Chilka Lake) a brackish water lagoon spread over some districts of Orissa at the mouth of the Daya River. It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest in the world. It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian subcontinent. This lagoon hosts about hundred and sixty species of bird in the peak migratory season. Birds from the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, Aral Sea and remote parts of Russia, Kirghiz steppes of Mongolia, Ladakh

and Himalayas come to this sanctuary. We were lucky to see some snub nose dolphins that live in the lake however we could not go to the bird sanctuary as we had to return back to Bhubaneswar to attend the impressive Annual Dance Festival.



In a motorized gondola on Lake Chilika

Day 5

We boarded a local Indigo Airline flight to Hyderabad on December 31, 2011 where we spent the night at the Taj Krishna Hotel bringing in the New Year with a bang in the company of friends and acquaintances.

Day 6

Heralding the 2012 New Year



We boarded the Indian Airline flight to Tirupati where we were received by the president of the Indian Medical Association of Tirupati who also provided us refreshments at the airport. From the airport we were taken to Dr. Mallam's house in Tirupati for a home cooked late lunch following which some of the members attended a dinner meeting of the Indian Medical Association of Tirupati whereas others



went directly to the Venkata Hills in near proximity of the famous Tirupati Sri Balaji Temple where we spent the night.

Early next morning we visited the ancient and sacred temple of Sri Venkateswara that is located on the seventh peak, the Venkatachala (Venkata Hill) of the Tirupati Hill, and lies on the southern banks of Sri Swami Pushkarini. It is believed that by the Lord's presidency over Venkatachala, that He has received the appellation, Venkateswara

(Lord of the Venkata Hill). He is also called the Lord of the Seven Hills.



Blessed by Sri Venkateswara – The Lord of the Venkata Hills

attain mukti, only by worshipping Venkata Nayaka or Sri Venkateswara.

The temple of Sri Venkateswara has acquired a unique sanctity in Indian religious lore. The Sastras, Puranas, Sthala Mahatyams and Alwar hymns unequivocally declare that, in the Kali Yuga, one can

The benefits acquired by a pilgrimage to Venkatachala are mentioned in the Rig Veda and Asthadasa Puranas. In these epics, Sri Venkateswara is described as the great bestower of boons. There are several legends associated with the manifestation of the Lord at Tirumala.

We were very fortunate to have a great darshan at the Sri Venkateswara Balaji Temple very early in the morning where we also enjoyed the Arti and received the blessings of the Lord.

Day 7

We returned to Hyderabad for the Health Care Summit that was well attended. Our AAPI President, Dr. Sunita Kanumury extended a warm welcome highlighting the goals and achievement of the AAPI at the inaugural dinner also hosted at the Taj Krishna at its annex across the street. This was the first summit that I attended and I was impressed with the number of attendees and I am informed that this year the number of delegates surpassed past summits.

Day 8

Chander and I took a detour to Goa where we spent the next three days at an all-inclusive resort on pristine Colva Beach in Goa. The interlude was welcoming as we had been traveling non-stop for the past few days and we were greatly in need of rest and recreation. This was my second visit to Goa the first during my medical school days when I visited Goa with GMC field hockey team in 1968. Goa is now one of the most commercial seashore resorts in India and most likely in the world where tourists from Britain, Europe and Russia come to enjoy the sun and sand as well as the wonderful cuisine. The sea water was warm and the sandy seashore extended as far as the eye could see.



R & R at the famous Colva Beach in Goa



Day 9

We took a tour of Goa visiting the famous St. Francis Church, Maha Luxmi Temple seen in the picture and the famous Miramar Beach.

Day 10

We decided to spend at the seashore enjoying the wonderful breeze, warm seawater and a great Goanese cuisine.

Maha Luxmi Temple - Goa



Moinuddin Chisti's Dharga-Ajmer

Day 11 We took the flight to Jaipur to attend the Pravasi Diwas, conference and celebrations. The next day we planned a detour to visit the tomb of Moinuddin Chisti in Ajmer, a Sufi saint who is revered by many. Chander had brought a 'chador' from Boston that she placed over the tomb. Later we travelled to Pushkar to pay homage to the only Brahma Temple in the world (A rock formation in the

Colorado Canyon is named Brahma Temple as it has the configuration similar to the temple).



Lord Brahma's Temple - Pushkar

Brahma the creator of the universe according to Hindu mythology was cursed by his wife Savitri when he married a Gujjar by the name of Gayatri. The sanctum sanctorum holds the central images of Brahma and his

second consort Gayatri. The priests in this temple are traditionally from the Gujjar community as Gayatri was a Gujjar.

Day 12 The inaugural session of the 10th PBD held at the Birla Auditorium was a spectacular gathering of 1500 delegates from 24 countries organized by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. Following a Diva Ceremony the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh welcomed the audience and introduced the chief guest Kamala Persad Bissesar

the Prime Minister of Trinidad who gave an awe inspiring speech. The days at the PBD and the evening events especially the one at Sisodia Palace was a visit to the bygone days of Maharajas and Maharanis.



Delegates at the Sisodia Palace – An evening to cherish

Day 13

We flew back to Mumbai staying overnight at the Hyatt Regency in preparation for our flight home next day.

“Lord MacAuly in his address to the British Parliament on February 2, 1835 proposed to replace our old and ancient education system and culture with all that is foreign and English in an attempt to have us lose our self-esteem, our native culture to turn us into a dominated nation”

I travelled approximately sixteen thousand miles from US and back and I traveled from the West Coast of India to the East Coast of India. I traveled to Mumbai, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad, Tirupati Goa Jaipur, Ajmer and Pushkar and I am convinced that any attempt to change our heritage, culture or language was miserably unsuccessful. I believe that India has claimed itself as a nation of integrity, national pride and heritage ad within my lifetime a recognised world power.

Congratulations and special thanks to the AAPI President Dr. Sunita Kanumury, the executive committee and the executive staff for their tremendous effort in making the Health Summit and PBD a unique experience for each of us.

Onaly A. Kapasi, MD, FAAOS, FAANOS (Hon)