

MY JOURNEY THROUGH THE PUNJAB

by Simran Gill

It was decided, and I wasn't even asked - we were going to India. I'm not sure I want to go but everyone keeps telling me what fun I will have. Heat, flies, mosquitoes, long travelling was not my idea of fun - but we will see.

My first impressions of India were formed quite quickly as I entered Amritsar Airport. The hustle and bustle of the crowds of people, all trying to exit the airport, not aware that they were pushing me about made me feel queasy. Tears came into my eyes as I struggled to keep up with my family. I felt suffocated with the hot air and thought I was going to be sick. Was it too late to turn round and go back home I thought?

Finally we left the airport and began our journey. Our first destination was my uncles' house in Amritsar where we had lunch. A cool place at last - you couldn't feel the heat in the AC rooms. After lunch we got into the car to begin the long journey to my grandparents house - I sat in the boot with my uncle, who was intent on squeezing my cheeks and teasing me - I smiled at him - quietly thinking when will he realise I am not 5 years old but nearly ten. I had two hours of his misguided humour.

It was a bumpy ride as the roads were unmade. There seemed to be no system for driving - how did the driver ever pass his driving test. He kept overtaking other cars and honking for them to move out of the way. I've never heard so many horns going off. It seemed that all the cars were doing this - I can still hear the echoes of the horns.

GRANDDAD'S HOUSE

We walked through an alley and entered a light and airy courtyard. People came to greet us - I learnt to smile sweetly a lot while I was in India - as they all spoke to me in Punjabi I tried to pretend that I understood them.

We walked up the stairs to the apartment that Granddad lived in - he rented out the downstairs. It looked clean and was freshly painted - very modern I thought. Inside I was given a bedroom to share with my brother - the bed was massive. We could have all slept in it. There was a modern bath and kitchen. I began to feel more comfortable as this felt like home - Granddad even had Sky and were able to watch the cartoons. While I was having a bath I began to think that India may not be so bad after all.

However it wasn't until the second day that I began to change my mind. While having a bath the bathroom went pitch black - I shouted for mum - who told me not to worry that the electricity will be back on soon - it was only a power cut - only a power cut I thought! I could hear dad trying to find the torches and Umman and Kiren running about as if it was an adventure. All I could hear was Grandma saying don't open the doors the mosquitoes will come in - Mosquitoes - it was getting worse - I was having a bath in the dark and felt all alone - I began to cry - there was no sympathy for me. Granddad said he would get a generator so that if there was a power cut we could still have electricity.

LUDHIANA

This was our first real trip out. We were going to do some shopping. I was told that there was a Pizza Hut here and that we could all have dinner together there. It would take us at

least two hours to get there - a long way to go for a pizza - no wonder they didn't deliver.

Journey as I suspected was very bumpy. Umman and kiren thought it was fun as they could move around the car, they didn't need to wear seat belts and every time we went over a bump they screamed with delight.

In Ludhiana we went to a record shop where I bought some really cool DVDs - I got the new Simpsons, Lord of the Rings and even Spy kids 3. We had a brilliant lunch - pizza and chips. I wanted to go home now but everyone else still wanted to shop - mum wanted some Indian Suits - went into shop after shop where the shop keeper took out millions of suits for mum to look at - she didn't like any - even when she said she didn't want to see any more he took another one out, then another. Dad said that he wouldn't stop until we leave - but how could we leave a man with fanta and pepsi bottles came round to make us more comfortable.

I was tired, my legs ached and I wanted to go home. Just another shop I heard mumbled behind me - Umman and kiren wanted some instruments. People kept pushing past me, it was really hot now and my legs felt heavy. This women in torn clothes kept following me - she had a baby with her and was asking for money - granddad gave her some money and shoed her away. Tears began to fill my eyes and as they rolled down my cheeks I thought about being back home where there was a lot more calm and order. Granddad suggested I went on a rickshaw back to the car. This is a boy on a bicycle pulling a seat on 2 wheels along. What an experience - the boy rode really fast and I felt as if I was having a fairground ride - it was brilliant.

On the way back we stopped at Nanaksar gurudwara - this was beautiful. We then stopped at big Haveli for meal - now that is what I call a restaurant - the place was really clean and two men opened the door to let us in - they even sold libbys orange juice and walkers crisp. Around the restaurant there were rides and an arcade. I played ice hockey and began to feel better. The food was really tasty.

CHANDIGARH

I sat with my gran and refused to go. Mum said I had no choice and that I would enjoy the trip. We were going to the capital of Punjab and she said it would be more modern with so much to see. This trip was going to take nearly 4 hours. When we arrived in Chandigarh we checked into our hotel - wow it was fantastic. There was AC in the room, it was clean with a really cool bathroom, lounge and bedroom - we even had sky. We went to have dinner at a place called Hot millions - how can I describe it - it had arcade and home corner built around the sides so the children could play as they ate. We had a chicken burger and got a free toy - it was really cool and the food was delicious. Maybe mum was right. The city was a lot calmer - there were traffic lights and police everywhere and not the hustle and bustle I expected.

In Chandigarh we visited the rose garden which has the largest collection of roses in the whole of Asia. The roses had weird names and some were named after the American presidents. From here we went to the manmade lake and then went to visit the Rock garden. This was like a maize. A man had created it from waste material but it was beautiful and almost told a story.

I really enjoyed our trip here and feel I could come again - if only to eat at Hot millions and stay at the beautiful hotel where they cooked whatever you wanted.

On the way back from Chandigarh we stopped at a really nice Gurudwara. This had a lot of monuments that were displayed to tell the story of the struggles that took place in the Punjab.

GOLDEN TEMPLE.

This was one place I really wanted to visit. I had heard so much about it and wanted to see if it was true. Peaceful, calm and beautiful I thought.