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Return of the Goras: The Americans are coming!

Trawling the worldwideweb recently researching some outsourcing stuff, I stumbled across a 'blog' – a web log – of an American techie from Portland, Oregon, who has recently moved to Bangalore. From her entries, it appears that "Cecilia," a web developer, has had a hellish time in the two months since she took a job in what is arguably the hottest 'tech town' in the world, at least in so far as job growth is concerned.

But she is finding her feet slowly and things are getting better all the time. She has moved into her own apartment (rent \$ 155 a month; about the cost of a garage spot in the U.S), her commute to work is five minutes (in a three-wheeler) and she has found tofu and Diet Coke at a market just two minutes away. "I am now finally starting to feel and flow with the rhythm of life here," she writes. "That is a beautiful feeling."

Part of that feeling comes from a sense of being pampered -- no more picking up after oneself or doing laundry. The entry that will jolt her American pals most is when she falls sick and calls a doctor. "The doctors here actually do house calls!" she exults. "The cost for the house visit -- \$ 11. And cost of the medicines prescribed? \$ 3.33."

That's not all. Cecilia says she was feeling "extremely sick" but a couple of hours after she took the medicine she was feeling 80 per cent better. "I was able to get up, my headache went away, and my swollen throat eased up. I was so amazed," she writes. "This is the fastest recovery to any sickness I've ever encountered."

Is it possible that Cecilia is among the first few of the many hundreds, even thousands of Americans who will come to work in India? A few more blogs like that, and you can bet on it. And it won't be just in the tech world.

I forwarded Cecilia's blog to her fellow Portlander, a business journalist friend of mine. A visit to India nearly two decades ago made an indelible impression on this friend and she has been longing to return ever since. For months she has been talking about doing a series on India's tech boom for her paper. Now, after reading Cecilia's blog, she's wondering if she and her husband can't move to India now that their kids have graduated.

Another friend who's been laid off from Reuters Television after 22 years on the job also doesn't mind taking a stab at Bangalore, especially since Reuters is opening hundreds of new positions there. A computer jock buddy who works for NASA foresees the possibility of working in India too, especially since he believes Indian villages are full of Aishwarya Rai-like (an impression he developed after seeing the movie "Taal.")

For the longest time, Americans have disdained from working in India, put off by stories of our hopeless infrastructure and dismal hygiene and sanitation (all true). But the job situation continues to remain tight here and things are getting better in India. And Americans, who are basically pioneering, adventurous people, go where opportunity beckons. The Americans are coming. You read it here first.

A decade back such news on this day might have been a red rag, innit? But the feedback I get from Boom-tech town – "Let them come. They won't change us; we'll change them. And who knows, it may even change some perceptions on outsourcing." At 57, we've finally grown up. Happy Independence Day!

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