

Andreas Kotulla



Of Tigers and India

An Offshoring Diary

**OF TIGERS AND INDIA
AN OFFSHORING DIARY**

to Maria, Katharina,

Mayra and Jonas



OF TIGERS AND INDIA

An

Offshoring Diary

Andreas Kotulla

translated from the German by Heidi Stiene

2007
local global
Stuttgart

© local global GmbH, Stuttgart 2007

Publisher: local global GmbH, Marienstraße 5, 70178 Stuttgart

Cover: Manuel Kotulla

Printing: Gebrüder Knöller GmbH & Co. KG, Stuttgart

Printed in Germany

ISBN: 978-3-9811781-0-4

www.localglobal.de

CONTENT

Prologue	9
-----------------	----------

Diary

May 2005 to August 2005 India, Russia, Bulgaria and Poland Selecting an Offshoring Partner	15
--	----

September 2005 to January 2006 The Pilot and the Letdown	59
---	----

January 2006 to May 2006 Second Chance	73
---	----

Juni 2006 to November 2006 Keeping up Pays off	97
---	----

Epilogue	117
-----------------	------------

Cooking Recipes	121
------------------------	------------

*Who is on the prowl for a tiger,
should reckon that he finds one.*

(indian proverb)

Prologue

Almost daily media reports on ‘outsourcing’, ‘offshoring’ and the ‘migration of workplaces to low-wage countries’. Not a day goes by without companies or other announcing the relocation of parts of their production to China, India or one of the Eastern European countries: from motor, electronics, furniture and textile industries all the way to the supply sector. Everyone is at it. While the labour market of some western countries profits from this trend – studies have shown that, for example, in the USA for every job that has been relocated on average, more than one new one is created. Other nations are still analysing the impact and are looking for suitable strategies. But what exactly lies behind it? What does it mean for the national software industry? How do ‘the others’ do it? And with what results?

With this mixture of reference book, travelogue, anecdotes and recipes I address those readers who are interested in the effects of globalisation and also wish to understand how countries like India, Russia, Poland or Bulgaria utilise this chance. How they have geared up the training of information technology, mathematics and natural sciences in order to teach a large number of students on an almost industrial scale. How in those countries thousands of kilometres from home highly mobile graduates display an incredible level of effort and ambition and work almost twelve hours a day for roughly two Euros an hour. How the companies recruit and try to bind qualified personnel, because the choice of jobs for highly skilled labour is immense. And how the industries located over there sell their services over here.

The basis of this treatise are the several years spanning experiences of one of the largest companies in Germany, which chose to source out part of its software development to India. It tells the story of an almost two year long project aiming to find competent partners and establish a joined team. With a twinkle in its eye it will guide the managers in charge through two painful, surprising, exciting and unpredictable years. High tech and poverty in India, corruption in Russia, a ‘no holds barred’ approach in aspiring Bulgaria and treachery in Poland. From the idea’s conception, over the choice of suppliers and their lofty promises up to the first projects and their results. Especially exciting for me were

the people I was fortunate to meet on my journeys. Impressive their culture and their warm welcome and hospitality, unforgettable the many excursions, the towns, the customs and traditions, and occasionally I will of course not deny a brief insight into the actual work we did during this time – but only by the bye. And only if the conclusions drawn are valuable.

But let's start at the beginning: In 2004 our board decided that the predicted margin of 40% for the coming year was insufficient. One competitor had announced predictions, which were fractions of a one higher percentage. Swiftly schemes for the reduction of expenses and the increase of profits were developed. For months employees are working to their very limits, though extra staff is out of the question in this financial calculation. The idea: let's get help from someone who has sufficient numbers of skilled personnel at low costs, like for example India: after all they have 140.000 graduates in Information technology subjects annually (by comparison all IT-graduations in Germany, inclusive of on-the-job training and university degrees just about scrape by the 10.000 marker. With tendency to decline!) and the wage bills are on average a mere 20% of ours. Let them handle the maintenance and care of the software, which leaves our time free for new technologies.

For over a year a colleague and I had prepared for the 'Off-shore Outsourcing', read through books, visited exhibitions, researched articles, bought in advice, attended training sessions and seminars and intensively exchanged experiences with many who are already practising 'off-shoring'. Outsourcing in this context means the subcontracting of single processes or parts of the production to an external supplier or producer. It is a long practised method to allow companies to concentrate on their key competencies. The term itself says nothing about where in the world this service is delivered. Off-shoring on the other hand, means the shifting of functions and processes abroad, often to low-wage countries like India or China, and more recently North Africa and Middle America. The background to this are the lower running costs in those countries. Off-shoring can be practised either by building an own subsidiary in the specific country or by subcontracting a local company, a process called 'off-shore outsourcing'. In the following text it is this model I shall be referring to, even if I am sometimes a little generous and flexible with the terminology.

We had heard that more than 70% of outsourcing and off-shoring attempts fail: unrealistic expectations, erroneous calculations, insufficient quality, inadequate contracts and securities, missing legal contracts, underestimation of the tax expense, sluggish support from one's own employees to list but a few of the factors. We, of course, wanted to do better than that.

The results of the first projects, however, were utterly insufficient. It threw up problems I had never heard or read about during our preparation phase. The original plan foresaw the installation of the entire infrastructure, definition of all processes and validation of the methods during a six month pilot project; if successful the off-shore team were to grow to more than 40 members within year one. The results, however, were sobering. I imagined much to be easier and different. So we extended the pilot phase and added two further projects with altering frame conditions. After all, the preparation phase had taken two years and cost more than one million Euro. Conclusion: we aren't that bad and expensive in Germany after all.

But I don't want to get ahead of myself. As I could never have penned this report without help I would like to take the opportunity to mention a few people. Special thanks goes to my family, above all my wife, who tolerated this project with extraordinary patience and never stopped to encourage me or support me with advice and suggestions. Equally grateful am I to Vishal and Lex, who tirelessly and with every resource at their disposal aided my work and obliterated problems in my path. I would also like to stress their outstanding and thoughtful support during our travels in India as well as their hints and tips towards this book, for which they supplied many details and explanations about the country and its culture. My thanks also to those who helped clear up obscurities through their suggestions, questions and criticism and tested recipes, allowing this book to grow into a more rounded account, especially Veronika and Wolfgang, William, Ritchie, Manuel, Barbara, Thomas and Cornelia, as well as Klaus, Hajo and Torsten for many content related tips. Sincere thanks also goes to Heidi, who translated all of this without losing the humour between the lines.

Last but not least I extend special recognition and thanks to our hosts in India, Russia, Poland and Bulgaria. They made it possible for me to feel almost at home in each of these countries.

Enjoy immersing yourself in “global sourcing”.

Bonn, February 2007

May 2005 to August 2005

India, Russia, Bulgaria and Poland

Selecting an Offshoring Partner

Tuesday, May 17th, 2005

When I step dog-tired off the direct Lufthansa flight from Frankfurt to Bangalore in the middle of May, the temperature is a pleasant 28 degrees centigrade.

At 0:15 a.m., mind you.

The much too small airport is humid and throbbing with people. Thanks to the malaria prophylaxis I feel slightly ‘spaced out’, rather battered and only partially receptive to my environment. Exhaustedly the passengers trudge in long queues to the arrivals desk and onwards. I suspect it is because of the late – or rather extremely early – hour that everyone wants to collect their suitcase as quickly as possible, get through customs and to their hotel so they can catch at least a few hours of sleep. Everyone, therefore, is piling around the luggage belt. Seasoned India travellers come prepared with a damp cloth in order to erase any possible traces of the white chalk cross, which would mark them out to customs as deserving a more intensive examination. I have never before been to India, and neither has my colleague Klaus, who will join me for most of my journey. It is planned that someone from the hotel **Leela Palace** will be expecting us at the airport exit.

My employer has sent us to find a suitable partner for our software development – anywhere in the world, for the nice thing about software development is that, providing certain conditions are adhered to, it does not matter where in the world the developing is taking place. The ‘product’ can be sent anywhere without incurring costs – or such is the theory. The ‘reality’ we were about to experience rather painfully over the coming weeks and months.

Originally it had been my own idea in these times of cost cutting to expand the capacity of our team more effectively. Klaus and I each lead a team of software developers. Obviously we had both heard a lot about

,outsourcing‘ and ,offshoring – terms on everybody’s lips these days. We had also heard that more than 70% of outsourcing and offshoring attempts fail. We, of course, wanted to do better than that. The coming month would see us in India, Russia, Bulgaria and Poland, with offers from Vietnam, Egypt, China, South America and other regions having been previously discarded for various reasons. From several directions we got warnings especially about India: “They drop you instantly if the profits aren’t right” – and yet it was India we would opt for after intensive evaluations. But more about this later.

Now I have actually landed in India. Already on our first day we were going to be in for a big surprise: In Germany we – and many others – feared that India was eventually going to leave everyone standing in the field of software technology. This fear is utterly unfounded: India isn’t going to leave anyone standing – they have already done so! And it doesn’t look like they want to give up this hard earned head-start in their knowledge any time soon.

The **Leela Palace**, which we arrive at after a short and speedy journey in separate taxis, is quite nice. Actually Klaus and I – happy to find our welcome committee from the hotel – wanted to take the same car, but the hotel had sent two and the drivers, even after a long-fought battle of words, could not decide which one of them should give up his charge and were pulling our cases back and forth between their cabs until we gave in. Not that it took us long: It was almost one o’clock in the morning by now and we were longing for our beds. The **Leela Palace** was one of the most impressive hotels I had seen to date. I had been pre-warned that there is no such thing as a ‘mid-range’ hotel in India. So the decision was between paying two Euro a night for simple accommodation, or 200 Euro for the better class. As the anticipated standard of the Two-Euro-establishments seemed too risky for both my firm and myself, the expensive stay was granted – far above the daily expense recommended in the company’s guidelines.

Now I am standing in the foyer of this hotel, a five-storey Indian palace. It is massive. Even the driveway is more spacious than an average soccer field, a delicate marble fountain in its midst. Three members of staff are responsible for organising the taxis and cars, the transport of luggage and alerting the drivers when guests wish to leave the hotel. The style is art-deco: Pillars everywhere, archways, turrets, little balconies

and windows all made from the finest materials, apparently a homage to the royal palace of Mysore, reminiscent of the '1001 Nights' fairy-tales. The ceilings are incredibly high and the floors peopled with uncountable members of staff. There is an orchestra playing Indian music in one corner. The view onto the well-kept tropical palm garden in the atrium, subtly lit at this late hour, is splendid from here. The foyer sports a flower bouquet of several metres in diameter, in a hall which could easily accommodate a one family house. Marble floors and Persian rugs, carved chests, silk wall hangings: I can't open a single door without a strategically placed employee beating me to it.

Every hour a pageboy appears in the massive bedroom to fold away carelessly discarded clothes and hover up dust, crumbs or whatever else he suspects to be dirtying his spotless domain. Satellite TV and Internet access are standard. After dinner the bed is made and the towels returned to their proper place. Next to the bed is a pair of slippers, everywhere throughout the room fresh flowers. The bathroom is about the size of my living room at home, and the shower alone could accommodate a large family. To the left and right of the mirror are little baskets containing dried rose petals. As you leave the hotel, you are handed an 'emergency rations' pack consisting of water, fruit and several cereal bars. Despite all the attentive service and available leisure facilities, the first thing I do is to fall into the soft bed and sink into a deep sleep. At this moment in time I would not have believed it, but there was even better to come.

Wednesday, May 18th, 2005

The breakfast buffet is incredibly colourful and comprehensive: Exotic fruit and juices, cooks preparing fresh omelettes and pancakes with a variety of vegetables – many of which I have never seen before – various sweet pastries and different types of breads, rolls, croissants, all kinds of sausage and cheese and a large fish counter. Dozens of types of jam and honey, fresh yoghurt and curd cheese, cereals of every variety and a number of Indian dishes I don't yet know. To avoid falling prey to stomach troubles on day one, I make do with a slice of toast and jam while enjoying the fresh air at almost 35 degrees next to an artificial waterfall. To be extra cautious, I take a sip of 'Williams', a strong pear schnapps,

after every meal, which I have brought with me from Germany especially to maintain a healthy stomach, even though I have to force myself to drink it at this early hour. Never mind – at least it works.

Unfortunately **Electronic City**, the heart of the Indian IT nation, is situated on the opposite side of town to the better hotels and the airport, across the ten million strong metropolis of Bangalore, the third largest city in India. I had been warned that the drive there may take a while and had rather naively agreed to be collected from the hotel at 7:00 a.m.. After an eight hour flight, the four hour time difference, and just three hours' sleep this proved to be rather ambitious. However, I did not notice this until the afternoon of the first day – and I notice it now as I try to reconstruct the day for this report, for I can find only fragments of it in my memory.

Primarily I remember getting up early, followed by an hour-long sleep-inducing car journey through a traffic jam of never before encountered proportions: Cars, bicycles, people, women in colourful Saris, car-rickshaws (three wheeled taxis designed for up to two passengers – we find them crammed with six or seven people!), cows, vegetable traders, newspaper peddlers, car-window cleaners (who lurk predominantly around traffic lights), beggars (who ambush you everywhere and knock on your window as soon as the car slows down sufficiently), police: Everyone is on the streets at once. At regular intervals the central crash barrier provides gaps allowing you to turn around – although for many donkey-carts those intervals appear to have been too big, and so they chose to move down the road against the flow of traffic. All the road-users try to force themselves across the junctions at once, every temporary gap allows a moped, laden with five crates of printers or at least two passengers, to squeeze through. Traffic does not flow in lanes like it does at home, but at random: Everyone drives where they please and everything is in constant motion. Slow, but relentless. Those who have a car horn use it constantly. Not all the roads are necessarily finished, either: Every now and then there is a sudden hole, the drains have no covers, construction firms are pouring sand and gravel straight onto the road. Traffic signs and signals are only taken note of if a policeman happens to stand directly next to them, calling offending vehicles to order with the help of a whistle. Without a car horn, you are lost. The houses and huts are barely visible beneath the advertising boards and neon signs.

From time to time I spot a modern mirror-glass clad high-rise and glass palaces glittering in the sun, as well as American-style shopping malls, then we're back to homes pieced together from driftwood and plastic bags. The route we are taking makes it hard to see why Bangalore is also known as the 'garden city', ostensibly because of its large number of public parks. All I see is chaos.

It's a good thing we set off this early, because apparently it gets worse later. Then the impressive company premises, a perfectly organised program with many presentations and an incredible number of delegates, all taking place in ice cold rooms, the longing for my bed, lunch-break on the sun terrace in 40 degrees heat, back to the freezer for several hours, the drive back through more traffic chaos, still the longing for my bed, dinner with our host stretching out late into the night – thankfully in the restaurant of our hotel, so it's only a short way to bed. I follow the recommendation and choose Chicken Tikka Masala – and finally I can go to sleep.

So much for day one. Very vaguely I also recall a guided tour through a network control centre, allowing remote surveillance and maintenance of IT systems across the globe. Day one.

Thought of the day: I will never drive a car in India myself! Never!!!

Thursday, May 19th, 2005

Again an enormous breakfast buffet. As it worked out well for me yesterday, I once again chose toast and jam. 7 a.m.: Pick-up. Though I drove the same way yesterday I spot more details on today's journey: The official **Madivala market**, where fruit, vegetables and incredible amounts of mala (pleated flower chains for the gods in temples, at weddings or important family occasions) are sold in tents, stalls and carts. The place bustles with shoppers, cows, merchants and excitement.

On entrance to **Electronic City**, the so-called 'Silicon Valley of India', the part of town where IT firms have settled since the nineties, we leave the 'old India' behind, like crossing the border into another country. The impressive buildings of familiar firms like Intel, IBM, Dell, Oracle, HP, SAP, Motorola, Siemens and Novell spring up either side

of the well-kept avenue. No beggars, no poverty and no shoddily erected wooden huts here. We are driving towards the headquarters of one of the biggest Indian IT companies. At the entrance, our car is searched as if we were about to enter a military exclusion zone. With the aid of mirrors on long sticks the entire underside of the car is checked over and the serial numbers of our laptops are noted down.

Vishal, the account manager I have already met during preliminary talks in Germany, greets us heartily. Once we are past the gate it feels like a typical American university campus. I learn that this is an intentional and calculated impression, company research suggesting that this environment is most conducive to a sense of well being, and thus productivity amongst the employees. Landscaped green spaces, combining parks and a one-hole golf course (which is now only in sporadic use due to the neighbours taking offence at the amount of stray balls in their gardens), swimming pools, palm gardens – each plant a donation from a more or less famous guest speaker or visitor – and a structure resembling an amphitheatre. In between the individual company buildings are speckled, none taller than five floors. Already in the foyer, a large display panel greets us: “Today we welcome our guests Andreas and Klaus”. The rest of the day we shall once again spend in ice cold air conditioned rooms – I guess this must be a clear status symbol and sign of wealth in India.

Chicken Tikka Masala

<i>2 onions</i>	<i>750 g chicken breast</i>
<i>60 g tomato puree</i>	<i>2 tbs. butter</i>
<i>1 tsp. cumin</i>	<i>3 tbs. of onion seeds</i>
<i>2.5 cm ginger</i>	<i>2 green chillies</i>
<i>2 tsp. chilli powder</i>	<i>200 g tinned tomatoes</i>
<i>5 tbs. lemon juice</i>	<i>120 g natural yoghurt</i>
<i>5 gloves of garlic</i>	<i>120 ml coconut milk</i>
<i>pepper</i>	<i>1 tbs. fresh coriander</i>
<i>60 g tomato puree</i>	<i>1 tbs. fresh mint</i>
<i>1 tbs. coriander</i>	<i>½ tsp. garam masala</i>

One of the best known Indian dishes – at least outside of India. First documented by Indian immigrants in Great Britain and undergoing a variety of changes since, its origins probably lie in the Punjab region.

Mix ½ of the roughly chopped onion, the tomato puree, cumin, chopped ginger, 3 tablespoons of lemon juice, 2 pressed garlic gloves, chilli powder, salt and pepper in bowl and blend. Finely chop the coriander and combine. Cut the chicken breast into 4 cm cubes, fold it into the spice mixture and leave to marinate for about 2 hours. For the sauce melt the butter in a big pan. Fry one finely chopped onion until glassy. Add the black onion seeds, 3 pressed garlic gloves and chopped chillies (if you don't like it too hot, just use ½ chilli) and cook until they unfold their full aroma. Stir in the tinned tomatoes, yoghurt and coconut milk, bring to the boil and leave to simmer for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile fry the chicken evenly on both sides and add to the sauce. Stir in freshly chopped coriander, mint, 2 tbs. of lemon juice and garam masala. Garnish with coriander leaves. Serve with various accompaniments like rice or naan bread.

Although I never forget a face, I have a terrible memory for names. Even familiar names I retain barely, and if at all then only for a short period of time. To be on the safe side, I tend to address my companions at discussions and meetings with the polite or familiar ‘you’ to avoid the embarrassment of constantly getting their names wrong. Now looms the first round of introductions in India. The delegation leader introduces himself: “Sivakumar Viswanathan”. I ask politely if he might repeat it, but there is no chance of me ever remembering that one. “Balasubramanian Valluri”. Should you be allowed to have a name like that? “Suryanarayana Subash”. To top it up they all look a bit similar to me. I give up. But our hosts have long since recognised the problem – it seems I am not the only one who has been flattened by the length of Indian names. So each member of the delegation has assumed an anglicised ‘stage name’ which appears on their calling card: Sud, Rick, John or Ritu. At least I can pronounce that, even if I am still struggling to fit faces to names.

A further status symbol in India comprises the achieved level of the **Capability Maturity Model** (CMMI). Just like many of our native firms suffer ISO 9000 certification in order to feign high production quality to potential customers, India has the CMMI, specially designed for software development, in which one of five stages can be achieved, and which is supposed to make both the process and product quality transparent for the client. Level 1 comprises the basic state of any organisation without defining and implementing a process of software development. Costs, development periods and quality cannot be predicted, development successes are subject to chance. By level 5, the entire organisation is focused on the detection of weaknesses and the continued optimization of the processes. ISO 9000 presumes the basis for quality management to be copious documentation. CMMI focuses more on the creation of the software and considers the product itself.

Having learned from experience that the ISO certificate can be sneakily obtained without any actual achievement through clever and cunning lies and appropriate payments alone, (in a previous employment I myself had been involved in the rushed edition of hundreds of pages of process description solely for the purpose of creating a revision necessary to achieve the certificate, made up over the course of one weekend and bearing no resemblance whatsoever to reality), I

expected nothing much from the CMMI certificated company – and got it absolutely wrong. No country in the world boasts more companies with CMMI level 5 than India, with the first firm achieving level 5 five years ago. Obviously the companies we had chosen were also level 5 holders.

The organisation and process accuracy in our host company is indeed awe-inspiring, and not only on paper: I sense in every conversation that here they live and breathe it. While my experience with German and US firms has shown me that it is predominantly the quality control officer and a few people who accompanied the audits, who are privy to and capable of divulging information on the alleged processes while the rest of the work force is largely spared any involvement, here in India even the most humble employee had an overview of the processes and knew what was expected of him and when. I was impressed! (Only later was I to discover that this wasn't necessarily always the case). Especially by the further details we were to discover about the software quality control. At home it may be considered excellence to find a firm where the developers control each other's code through reviews, here this is considered standard. If in Germany consistent and up to date documentation is considered desirable but can be sacrificed to the demands of time and cost constraints ("we'll definitely update it later...."), in India it is the basis of industrial software production ("we transformed software development into assembly line production"). While at home exhaustive testing is seen as the yardstick of quality, our Indian counterparts have created an in-house special unit which has started to toy with the idea of fully automating quality control at the coding stage, and had developed metrics and key data which will predict the likely occurrence and specific location of errors in the code. They could also document their success statistically! Developers would automatically be informed if their software was probably faulty: Too complex, too nested, hard to maintain, too long, too little annotation or not enough tests for its level of complexity.

I was agog. In Germany we are trapped in endless debates about if and when metrics can be considered significant – and a considerable amount of 'software specialists' don't even know what it is – while in India the dependency and relevance of hundreds of metrics had been analysed and the five most significant ones had been incorporated into the development process

as standard. In this field, at least, India is several years ahead of us! I was equally impressed with the testing of the software. In our experience a test team is considered good if it has automated half of its test cases. In India, automatic testing is performed in 90% of all cases: Every night computers check by means of thousands of variations whether the newly developed software is robust enough to cope, error-free, with a wide variety of applications. I was going to learn a lot here!

The day is rounded off with a guided tour through the in-house conference centre: Halls with 500 seats, one wall covered by the largest flat screen monitor in India, measuring almost 50 metres diameter, to facilitate video conferencing. Fittings are in exotic wood cladding, every place has its own microphone. I am asked to press the 'speak' button and immediately my face appears on the massive screen. Next door is a showroom, opened by Tony Blair, which demonstrates the history of the firm and its most significant projects: Banks, energy companies, aviation, aerospace, car manufacturing and telecommunication: All branches of industry trust this firm. In a display cabinet sits a miniature replica of the company premises. Illuminated miniature glass models of buildings emerge in chronological construction order from the floor. There is also a metre high map of the world which shows the global data connections of the company. I am convinced to have found a good contractor and am a little anxious about what else is going to come our way, for what we have to give in return appears almost medieval by comparison.

Then we get to a high security area: Only few are allowed to enter the electronically secured building. It's earthquake-proof, too: The **Network Operation Centre** (NOC). A massive hall with large screens at the front and news channels from several countries running along the sides. Graduated upwards like a lecture hall are several rows of seats with workstations consisting of three monitors each, all occupied by highly focused looking Indians. From here the networks, bank systems, money transfer, telephone connections and much more are supervised across the globe, 24 hours a day. Locally there are only a few technicians left capable of exchanging defective hardware or perform simple routines, which can be controlled from India. There even is an emergency back-up plan: If this building – for whatever reason – was to cease functioning correctly, there is a copy plant with the same capabilities in another location at a

safe distance: In Mauritius, equally manned 24 hours a day.

The highlight of the installation, however, is the research and innovation centre called **Setlabs**, a 200-strong department dedicated to the observation, interpretation and assessment of all new developments worldwide (be it by the competition, research projects or universities). Seminal trends are being analysed and pilot projects evaluated. Promising ideas are published in the in-house 'innovations newsletter' and are spread throughout all departments by Setlabs personnel, who also contribute a small percentage of their time to 'normal' projects. Already there are more software patents held in India than in the US. I hate to repeat myself, but I am impressed. With particular pride our host presents us with books and articles published by company employees. Anything we find of interest we can take with us.

Thought of the day: We don't need to worry about India overtaking us in the field of information technology. They already have.

On the way back we stop at a small souvenir shop: There are carpets, beautiful, big and small, expensive and very expensive, brightly coloured ones and more subdued ones, but also many carvings, especially little boxes, jewellery cases, coffers, furniture and elephants in white sandal wood. I am especially taken by the animal figures made from delicate wooden mesh, which contain another, smaller animal inside, which has been carved by the artist with very fine specialist tools through the holes in the mesh. Of course there is also silk in all variations: Scarves, saris, table cloths, wall hangings and even carpets.

Immediately I am beleaguered by a merchant who wants to sell me a very pretty necklace: "Very precious stones!" For roughly 40 Euro, which seems an amazing price for a precious stone necklace, for glass pearls, however, which I suspect to be the actual 'ingredients' of the chain, it's a bit much. How I could say something like that! These are beautiful rare stones, and my wife would love this necklace. He only has highly satisfied customers. He also has a chain made from semiprecious stones, not quite as stunning, but also very popular and only ten Euro. I glance at Vishal who shrugs and gets expert advice on the phone. As I suspected: For the real article the price is far too low, for a fake far too high. The merchant is still asserting the exclusivity and authenticity of his goods. I decline graciously.

It is early evening. The two lane highway is crossing a train line. The barriers are just coming down, so my driver joins the waiting queue on the left – in India they drive on the left-hand side – and stops, as you would expect. My Indian host, however, advises me with a smirk to keep my eyes open and enjoy the spectacle. Other vehicles quickly join our queue. Several motorbikes slowly overtake us and stop just in front of the barrier, a few bicycles are being put on their side and pushed beneath it – because we can't yet see the train. Pedestrians, too, seem unconcerned by the barriers and continue to cross the line. When our queue reaches about ten vehicles, some drivers start to pull out into the right hand lane. Now that the train is visible in the distance the space between the two queues is quickly filling up with bikes, pedestrians, rickshaws, mountebanks, children, vegetable sellers and loads and loads of other people who no longer dare to cross over. Those who squeezed through the barrier but have not yet reached the other side press themselves against the barrier from the inside to avoid being caught by the train. On our side is utter chaos – and of course the opposite side looks just the same.

The train shoots past us and the barrier opens. And now the spectacle unfolds: As the opposite side of the crossing has not remained free for either lane we have an immediate, colourful, slowly untangling ball of cars, cows, carts and people. Whosoever has a car horn, uses it, others shout and try to direct the crowds. It takes about a quarter of an hour for the tuft to dissolve, and the game can start a fresh with the next approaching train...

Dinner is once again at **Leela's** in-house restaurant Jamavar, and this time I enjoy Chicken Do Piazza.

Every meal is accompanied by a variety of flat breads: **Roti**, a simple wheat bread, or **Naan**, made with yeast, both stone-baked. **Paratha**, a flat bread fried in butter, often stuffed with different vegetables, for example potatoes (**Aloo Paratha**), goats cheese (**Paneer Paratha**), eggs (**Anda Paratha**) and many other types. Unlike the simple Roti, it is often served at special occasions or for important guests. Finally, **Puri** is a deep fried wholemeal flat bread, a bit fatty according to Vishal, but the tastiest of them all. Some of the breads are eaten plain or with a little butter, torn off pieces can also be shaped into a spoon and used to scoop up stubborn food bits, which can not be picked up with the fingers, like rice, beans and curries. To drink we

have had **Kingfisher** beer recommended to us, a type of ,Pils‘ brewed locally in Bangalore. It doesn’t taste bad at all. Kingfisher, I am told, is a product of one of the largest breweries worldwide, founded over 100 years ago in India by a Scott, although I have never heard of it. Later at the airport we will discover the recently unveiled **Kingfisher Airline**, the newest pillar of the organisation (where they will no doubt exclusively serve beer during the flights, as we jokily remark).

Chicken Do Piaza

2 Onions

150 ml orange juice

75 ml water

1 tbs. ginger

2 gloves of garlic

2 tsp. coriander

2 tsp. curcuma

Chilli

1 tsp. salt

8 chicken legs

2 tbs. butter

150 g natural yoghurt

pepper

Cut one onion into thin strips and wash with cold water in a colander. Shake off the water. For the sauce roughly chop the second onion and blend thoroughly with the orange juice, water, freshly ground ginger, chopped garlic, coriander, curcuma, chilli and salt for 2-3 minutes.

Meanwhile dry the chicken legs thoroughly and salt them. Melt the butter in a pan, then fry the chicken legs evenly on both sides. Place on a plate. Pour all the fat from the pan except for 1 spoon full. Pour in the blended sauce and let it simmer, stirring regularly. Add the chicken to the pan and leave to stew on a low heat for 40 minutes, turning the legs after half the time.

Arrange the chicken on a plate, add the onion rings to the sauce and leave to cook for a moment. Stir in the yoghurt, and reheat carefully but don't let it boil. Salt and pepper to taste. Return the chicken to the sauce once more.

Serve with rice.

Friday, May 20th, 2005

Connecting flight to Pune, a town northwest of Bangalore, close to Mumbai. Our hosts respond to our carefree information that we are flying with **Indian Airlines** with a stunned ‘Oh’, trying hard not to sound too horrified. I am not quite sure what to make of that reaction, possibly a tad worrying. They cheerfully offer to assist us with our next flight booking if we wish as there are good airlines in India, too. Or better ones, anyway – don’t fret! And in order to dispel our growing concerns, they all book the same flight with Indian Airlines as well.

Pune houses our contractor’s largest research centre. They are currently in the process of building new offices for 20,000 employees: India is determined to become the global number one with regard to software production, and our contractor wants to be right at the top.

Again, well kept green university-style grounds, fitness club and swimming pool. At the gate we are greeted once again by a sign, “Today we welcome our guests Klaus and Andreas from Germany”. Almost 30 delegates answer all our questions throughout the day, and my impression from the previous evening is reinforced: With this contractor I feel comfortable. I can learn a lot here.

There is an application for remote project monitoring, which at any given time automatically displays the current contributors, their assignments, hours worked and planned, running costs, milestones, the quantity of code produced and a whole lot of other project information on a concise and freely configurable password-protected website. Additionally, the agreed quality parameters and the degree of compliance are listed: Has the developed software achieved a sufficient number of comments? Has the complexity of the method – for example the amount of nesting – remained below the predefined level? Is no function longer than one page? And much more. Of course, it also gives you the quantity of test cases and the number of successfully completed tests. Most of the metrics are calculated automatically as soon as the developers complete their software and check it into the code database. Compliance with these quality parameters predominantly aims at a reduction in maintenance costs, which on an average software project can account for more than half the overall costs. I want to introduce this system back home immediately.

Especially noticeable is the thirst for knowledge, at every level and for every subject. Whenever we mention something that is new to our host, the director of the department concerned with the topic of discussion is called to give us his expert opinion. I think about Germany; 'My' students, who are currently attending their work placement in my department, could do well to take a leaf out of this book! They have to be motivated almost by threat of physical violence to research and investigate the unknown. This quest for knowledge and new directions permeates through everything here. Almost one year later it would once again surprise me during a lecture in Mysore.

As on every other evening, we once again follow a dinner invitation from a potential contractor. So far I have stuck firmly to my principles and have eaten neither raw nor uncooked food. Today Vishal recommends **Mango Alphonso** for desert, stemming from the Goa region and famed for its unforgettable flavour. I graciously decline. But the flavour really is incomparable and unsurpassable! And the Mangos from Goa are the very best! And this is the perfect season for them! Klaus gives in, he wants to try one. I remain steadfast. Everywhere these mangos are famed for their sweetness and fullness of flavour, the best in the world! Nothing compares to the full-bodied taste. Even the smell will beguile my senses! Maybe just a little piece? I won't regret it in a lifetime, Sonali, Vishal's wife, assures me with a smile I can no longer resist. So I order a portion of freshly-peeled and diced Mango, which is served in a little glass dish like our local strawberries. I try a small piece, allow it to melt on my tongue and yes, I admit the taste is pervasive, sweet, incomparable, delicate, but above all it has nothing at all to do with the taste of mangoes as occasionally bought in German supermarkets, which tend not to be ripe, a bit woody, too soft or half rotten, tasting dull rather than aromatic and with only a touch of the exotic about them. Another little piece... it enchants my senses, it smells of 'more', it tastes of even more, and even the eye gets involved: The fruit is of such vibrant orange, I have to try another piece. I don't remember ever having eaten such delicious fruit before. Another piece surely isn't going to harm me... Klaus has already finished his bowl. I am glad I have followed Vishal's advice to try those mangos at least once. Before I know it, my bowl is empty, too: It would have been a sin to leave anything on the plate. I am overwhelmed, and even my stomach isn't complaining at this daring experiment. I have to

admit I haven't touched a supermarket Mango since, unless I reduce it to a sauce. In future I shall bring a box of Alphonso Mangos home from my journeys to India – much to the envy of American travellers, who aren't allowed to import fruit or vegetables.

After dinner they serve different kernels, spices and silver pebbles in small bowls: **Sweet Supari**, Vishal tells us. They aid digestion. I recognize aniseed and try the other specialities with care. Some are hot, others taste of mint. **Sheetal**, silver covered Betel nuts, are especially delicious, although too many of them isn't all that good for your health, apparently.

Saturday, May 21st, 2005

Our last stop in India is New Delhi, which can be reached smoothly from Pune via Indian Airlines. Well ... almost smoothly. This is the first time my universal stomach remedy, my German import 'Williams' schnapps, is being questioned. And it has been so useful to me until now! At the airport control an attentive official notices the unsealed bottle of clear liquid in my hand luggage. How else was I going to carry it? Behind me a long queue of waiting passengers is forming. I can't possibly take this, he will get rid of it for me – he assures me with a glint in his eyes. I believe him immediately, of course! No way, I reply, as my stomach isn't used to Indian spices and dishes I absolutely need this for my digestion and surely he wouldn't want me to remember India for an upset stomach? The bottle has been opened, so it can't go into the hand luggage! I promise faithfully not to get drunk on this flight – I won't even touch the bottle, because what's left in it is only going to last for the remaining dinners anyway. He asks his colleague, who shakes his head. The queue behind me gets restless. I tell them about European food, how it isn't anywhere near as nice as theirs and much less spicy and what a change this represents for my stomach, even where we have been and where we are going. He remains stubborn and demands the bottle. And how much I have enjoyed India – so far. How nice the people are, how well organised their flights are, how clean the airports. I assure him, a bottle of alcohol in the hand luggage is normal in Europe, and I'm only here to find some Indian partners for collaboration, which would bring

even more money into India and amongst other things secure his job. I explain and explain. Something in this litany must have convinced him, or maybe just the fact that the flight is about to leave, or the waiting passengers, but he finally concedes to let me take my 'Williams' on board the flight.

Vishal did warn us: New Delhi is supposed to be even hotter than South India – and so it is. The sun beats me to a pulp. Almost 45 degrees is a bit warmer than I would have liked, and of course there are the obligatory crowds at the airport. Within minutes I am bathed in sweat.

Our pick-up is quickly located. Unfortunately I cannot stop an overly keen yet uninvited helper from trying to tear a bag from my hands, in the process smashing a wooden casket, which I had secured after strenuous haggling, and still demanding payment. Annoyed, I send him away. Once inside the taxi we are again plunged into freezing cold. Then on the way from car to company, another heatwave. Everything sticks again. The rooms of this software firm are once more chilled to an unpleasant 16 degrees centigrade. I again strongly suspect this is some kind of status symbol. After all, it seems to be considered a pleasant temperature here in India. In the conference room I sit directly beneath the air conditioning unit and cannot avoid the draught. I can feel the first ice crystals forming in my veins. My throat hurts, my head aches, my neck stiffens, and this despite the jacket I have dug out of the deeper recesses of my luggage. I dream of a thick scarf. My voice cracks. Outside the window, the sun is smiling down on us. Happy days! Am I concentrating on the presentation? Am I heck! My thoughts circle solely around the room temperature and how to improve it. I ask politely if it would be possible to increase the temperature just a smidgen – no problem the Indians inform me, and select 17 degrees instead. After a few minutes I ask again – still no problem. Now we get to 18 degrees. And so the game continues for a few more rounds and as the thermometer reaches 20 degrees and as I begin to relax a little I notice the first drops of sweat appearing on my Indian hosts' foreheads. After a few minutes they have difficulties breathing, now their shirts are soaked in sweat and they cast pleading glances in our direction, to see if maybe we may have been exaggerating the temperature a little? I put on another jumper, take a painkiller and agree to anything, providing we have some kind of break soon. But that would still be a long time coming.

Because it's the weekend, they want to impress us of course. Sticky with drying sweat and utterly exhausted, I am being shipped onto a five hour trip from Delhi towards Agra, which we reach late at night. The street scenes resemble those of other cities and as always the car is thoroughly chilled. Despite all this I am looking forward to the journey's end: The **Taj Mahal** – a childhood dream.

During the long drive I once again notice the many advertising boards along the road and on the sides of houses. One firm in particular seems to be covering every market: **Reliance**. Reliance Communication. Reliance Energy. Reliance Capital. Reliance General Insurance. Reliance whatever you can think of. As Vikram, the representative from Delhi, explains from his point of view the entire country is ruled by a few large families and their respective companies, like **Tata, Birla, Godrej, Mittal**, or Reliance, all involved in a number of market ventures and indeed these are names I spot everywhere. "Whatever these families do, they do it on an amazing scale". Every little village we pass through boasts a one-room-video conference-shop by Reliance, where private individuals can undertake video conferences. I don't quite see the market opportunity here: Who on earth needs private video conferencing? But according to Vikram the idea has boomed in India. Especially since the IT sector is desperately scanning the country for new talent and, instead of forcing potential candidates into a long journey to Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi, or one of the other IT centres (and paying for it!), they invite them into a local shop where a preliminary telephone interview is conducted. Only those who pass this hurdle are invited personally. Not a bad idea, after all.

Sunday, May 22nd, 2005

The best visiting time for the Taj is from September to December, avoiding both the rainy season and summer, but that's not particularly helpful to me. Now it is May and thus the height of summer in India. As you are only allowed to enter the mausoleum barefoot, the whole complex, apart from a few locations covered in a foamy black plastic carpet, is laid out in white marble, which gets rather warm in direct sunlight, they advise you during the summer months – that'll be now – to visit early, better still ridiculously early, to avoid getting hot feet.

That makes sense, so I am ready outside the hotel at 5:00 a.m. – without breakfast. The taxi is waiting already and at 6 a.m. we, Klaus, three leading representatives of the firm, the driver and I, reach the grounds of the Taj Mahal. A creaky electric bus – fumes will harm the marble, according to the driver – carries us from the car park to the main gates. The luggage is examined: All visitors go through an airport-style security check. The backpack is x-rayed, mobile phones are prohibited, because they can be used to remote-detonate bombs. Only much later I shall find detailed instructions for such a device on the internet. Knives or any other objects with which one could scratch the marble and leave behind greetings for friends and relatives are not allowed. And then finally the incredibly impressive building itself, which the great mogul **Shah Jahan** had erected in memory of his main and favourite wife, while losing track of costs. (Only half of the original plans were ever executed. On the opposite side of the river **Yamuna** the counter piece to the Taj should have been built in black marble, but until today they have got no further than the foundations). Presently I learn that this, however, is merely the entrance hall. Once you have moved through the main gates the view onto the massive marble mausoleum opens up. The grey-black veils along the bottom edge of the Taj, recognisable from many photographs, in the flesh turn out to be crowds of people. To this day it has remained a riddle how the architects of this period managed to erect a building this size to such exact symmetrical blueprints. In the pools around the fountains between the main gate and Taj Mahal, the architecture is reflected in its entirety. The black Arabian inscription shimmers in the sunlight. Inside there are delicate carvings, all in marble. The four minarets, which border the base plate and tomb are tilted slightly outwards so they can

never collapse onto the building itself, whatever happens. Inside colourful precious and semi-precious stone inlays are inserted into the marble, which have been brought here from around the world. To prove that it really is all marble, a guide shines his torch against the stone and indeed everywhere the stone is translucent. The technique that allowed such different types of stone to be so tightly conjoined is known only to very few specialists even today.

At 9:00 o'clock, and with the sun starting to beat down on us again, the guided tour comes to an end and I am looking forward to going back to sleep at the hotel, but only after breakfast. Unfortunately this was still some time coming: Our driver has disappeared. In the courtyard camel drivers try to persuade anyone who looks like a tourist to a ride on a camel. I at least capture them on digital camera. After a few calls our car re-appears. On the way through Agra we stop at the **Akbar**, the red fort, which can't be missed apparently. It really is rather impressive: Big, beautiful, grandiose architecture and a historical building offering fantastical views onto the Taj Mahal. Unfortunately, the sun is singeing again and temperatures have once more reached 45 degrees. Apart from that, my stomach is growling. As the mogul has implemented many changes to the palace over the years, I suddenly start plotting changes to my own house, which will surprise my wife in a few days time! Thanks to the heat, a lot of those modification plans will require all of my beloved's patience to talk me out of it again. After a very late breakfast and a quick nap we set off towards the most impressive hotel of them all: The **Trident Hilton Gurgaon** in New Delhi.

From the outside it looks like a small Bedouin city: Only a few ochre coloured pyramid peaks and domes can be seen. The path to reception leads through a row of pillars separated in the centre by a pool, measuring more than the common 50 metres of an Olympic Swimming Pool. At night meter high fountains of flames will be shot from the water into the sky. The entrance doors – roughly four times the size of the well-built page boy hovering in front of them – are being flung open and I find myself in a gigantic white marble hall with torch-like black lamps along the halls. It contains only two black reception desks with black leather clad laptops on the right and an over-dimensional flower bouquet the size of a small car on the left, surrounded by a group of brilliant white sofas. Immediately we are each surrounded by three helpful members of

staff. The hotel has only two floors and is built in the shape of an angular figure of eight around two fairly large atriums and still it has over 100 rooms. Everywhere are fountains and breathtaking water reflections: In the smooth watery surface of the inner courtyards, the entire hotel is mirrored, in the centre of one of the yards, lowered into the floor, is the swimming pool, bar and fitness court with waterfalls on all sides. The rooms are beautifully expansive, elegant, modern but still Indian in feel. But first I lay down by the pool and relax. Here a gardener is picking dead leaves from the trees, there someone is scrubbing a spotless marble staircase, another one dusts lamps and teak sun beds – several times a day! In an annex the guest's drivers can stay free of charge – a service offered by most Indian hotels, incidentally. I think I could live here!

Dal Fry (Lentils in a curry sauce)

<i>1 cup of lentils</i>	<i>1 tsp. chilli</i>
<i>1 onion</i>	<i>salt</i>
<i>1 tsp. garlic</i>	<i>1 tsp. lemon juice</i>
<i>1 tsp. ginger</i>	<i>½ tsp. sugar</i>
<i>½ tsp. aniseed</i>	<i>½ tsp. vegetable stock</i>
<i>1 green chilli</i>	<i>2 tomatoes</i>
<i>½ tsp. curcuma</i>	<i>coriander leaves</i>

Soak the lentils in water for ½ hour then cook until soft but not pappy.

Combine chopped onion, garlic, ginger, aniseed and green chillies in a pan and fry on a medium heat for about 3-4 minutes, stirring continuously. Add curcuma, chilli, a little salt, lemon juice, sugar, vegetable stock and finely chopped tomatoes, and simmer for 3 minutes on a high flame. Add this to the lentils and mix well.

Serve with coriander leaves.

Monday, May 23rd, 2005

In the morning, I find the latest news from Germany in front of my door, printed directly from the internet: 'FAZ', 'Spiegel' and 'Die Welt'. What service! I have hardly heard anything from home over the last few days. Happy, I return to my bed for a while to read.

Klaus appears a little nervous at the breakfast table: His shoes have gone and, more seriously, so has his passport. One day before we are due to leave India that's a bit inconvenient, but I offer to send his love to his wife and kids. I also offer to carry his souvenirs should he find himself detained in India for another few days or weeks. Maybe they'll keep him indefinitely ...

As Klaus has brought more than one pair of shoes the first problem is easily solved, and even the location of the passport is quickly established in a few phone calls: It's in the hotel safe! Unfortunately the Hotel in Agra, not in Delhi. That's a five hour drive – one way! Still our host doesn't hesitate to send his own driver on the journey because 'you can't rely on anyone around here, especially not couriers. Klaus promises eternal gratitude if only he can see his family again.

Another day of presentations, this time with a special nuance: The toilet is in the middle of the conference room (to be more precise: It's in a little add on to one side, but you can only access it from said conference room.) There is no urinal, instead a shabby WC and an old basin – with urinal blocks. Even though the location of those makes me wonder for a little while I resolve to use the toilet for any pressing 'business'. On every trip to this establishment I try to limit body – and other types of noises so I don't irritate the other delegates. The cardboard walls, however, are so thin this isn't always possible. After a while I stop caring: Needs must! And sometimes you can't avoid making a noise.

The keynote speaker introduces several customer references from Germany, first and foremost the publisher of a well known private 'personal finance manager' programme. I don't recall this particular programme for its stability and quality of software development. The speaker extols the virtues of this collaboration. Carefully, I ask if he is aware that this particular product is renowned for its erratic and mediocre performance in my country. Yes, he has heard about that, but he as the producer can't explain the bad reputation. He is very satisfied with

the quality. A very telling statement! I can just about imagine working with someone like that. Definitely a minus point.

Information technology is a boom market in India. Many companies open branches here, especially from America and Europe, and they start with the help of a 'local' outsourcing specialist, who also offers to support a later divestment. Growth in double figures is standard amongst the IT outlets, leading to incredibly tough competition amongst the companies to recruit the best newcomers in order to keep up with the demands. A common practice to quickly get your hands on well trained employees is to head-hunt them from the competition, forcing companies to continually develop new strategies to encourage their staff to stay – but more of this later. Another good access route to potential employees are the university organised 'recruitment days', where interested companies can introduce themselves to the students, and erect an information booth on the university campus. Because of the large number of firms looking for computer scientists, these events tend to last several days and the bigger, more important and more generous the company, the earlier they are allowed to attend. At each of the presentations of potential contractors I attended the – for me new and difficult to comprehend – point of "on which day they are allowed to attend the university" was stressed. Apparently the most popular amongst the promising graduates are the 'Day One Companies', those firms allowed to attend right from the start and pick off the cream of the newly graduated students. Only one of the contractors managed to better that. They called themselves a 'Day Zero Company' because they contributed so much to the local universities that they were allowed to approach students even before the official recruitment day. This one here is a company, which attends 'early', not even on day one therefore. Another minus point.

Just before the close of day the driver returns with the passport. Overjoyed by his own achievement he storms into the conference room waving the document. Klaus breathes a sigh of relief, gets up, heads for the driver and wants to thank him, but he doesn't get very far because the company director immediately intervenes, takes the passport from the driver and hands it over himself, sending the driver from the room. After all, he is only a driver and that's what he is paid for. Driver and director evidently belong to different social classes.

Tuesday, May 24th, 2005

Today we fly home, via Dubai with **Emirate Airways**. Acquaintances have told me only good things about this airline: First class service, roomy seating. And they weren't lying, either. My seat would happily have taken a second person, even if I stretch out my legs I can't reach the back of the seat in front of me, in fact I could probably fit comfortably lengthwise between the seats. Not necessary, of course, as the seat can be tiled down like a bed if you wish to sleep.

By contrast, the airport in Delhi is incredibly old and in need of renovation. I ache everywhere: The last few days have been a little more strenuous than I had anticipated. I want to sleep. I am hungry. Our flight is delayed by nearly an hour – a phenomenon I am familiar with from just about everywhere – except for India, so far. This is going to make the transfer in Dubai exciting because we only have 90 minutes for that anyway, minus the hour delay that will leave us with 30 minutes. On leaving the plane those wishing to catch the connection to Frankfurt are immediately encouraged to hurry up, and are waved down a corridor. I run as well as I can with my hand luggage, because I'm not in the mood to wait for the next flight, which will leave four hours later. Soaked with sweat I reach the immigration officer, show him my passport and try to carry on, but he isn't in a hurry. First the hand luggage is x-rayed at leisure, then my shoes. Even the belt has to go. When the machines refuse to set off an alarm and no amount of rummaging in my hand luggage unearths any kind of explosive or other dangerous devices, I am finally allowed to proceed and reach the plane just as they are about to close the doors.

Originally I had fancied a stroll through the duty free area. They say you can pick up very cheap jewellery and gold here – but there is no chance of that. At least I am on the plane, fall into my seat, breathe deeply and in my mind wave goodbye to my luggage. How on earth was that meant to be transferred in such a short period of time? Nevertheless I optimistically join the queue at the baggage area in Frankfurt and wait for a miracle. And really: There is my suitcase! To this day I don't know how they managed this back in Dubai, because we really weren't there more than 30 minutes! The first country is finished. And I am pretty exhausted.

Monday, June 6th, 2005

Russia. Before our departure the company's security department hands me the 'survival' information. Here is a brief excerpt: "Petty crime and car theft present a constant threat. Organised crime, serious assaults and kidnapping target mainly locals, but foreign firms will also be subjected to blackmail." So much for the introduction. "Organised crime has a decisive influence on politics, economy and the public. The creation of a suitably chaotic environment is in the interest of the mafia... the majority of police is open to bribes, some of the mafia organisations are being run by police officers. Low police wages often result in any foreigner being pulled over having to pay small sums to get their papers back, the going rate being 100 roubles, and it helps to carry a few loose notes in your wallet so you don't have to show them how much money you carry in total. Avoid in any case being taken to a police station as this can get very expensive. Conversations and telephone calls are frequently listened in to, and some of the hotels are considered legitimate exercise yards for the local secret service." And so on. Sounds lovely! I am already looking forward to this journey when we get a few more important tips on how to conduct ourselves: "While in the country, only travel in the company of a guide with local and language knowledge. Arrange the transfer from airport to city in advance. Expect electricity blackouts. Should you find yourself surrounded by gypsy children while in St. Petersburg, find shelter in the nearest hotel or restaurant. Don't try to fend off any attacks and carry at least 50 Us-Dollars, which you can hand to a mugger. Don't use cash dispensers and never change currency on the street."

And there is another four pages of this!

The trip to Russia starts worse than I feared: Only at the last minute – just two days before the flight – we get our visa, having paid roughly three times the going rate for it, because the price for the visa rises in direct relationship to the urgency with which it is required. While the Indian people waiting in the departure lounge of the airport had been a patient folk, clad in fine Saris or white shirts, sleeping or waiting, at this gate there is smoking, drinking (not just water), deliberately loud phone calls and equally noisy discussions. On the journey from lounge to bus,

which leads through a revolving door, an unshaven man smelling strongly of alcohol has trouble to control his staggering as he reaches the door, finds the entrance, but misses his exit after half a turn and after a further half turn he finds himself back in the departure area. Twice! Suspiciously he eyes the revolving door, then the approaching stewardess and starts to swear. He goes for a third attempt, but the stewardess tries to stop him with the words "I don't think we can take you on this flight". He stares at her incredulously, shows her his ticket, mutters something – possibly in Russian – and off he goes again. The stewardess calls for back-up and an interpreter. The traveller begins a rowdy monologue, intermittently interspersed by the calming words of the stewardess. The man is taken aside, we can pass. Just as it was getting interesting! Something new at last.

Somehow the man must have managed to convince the crew that he was fit to travel, for in St. Petersburg we meet again at the baggage conveyor belt.

I have no problems entering the country, but it's different for Klaus. He joins the queue for the second booth at the passport control and the kind lady there first studies his passport, then his visa and then his face, she sends him with a sharp "Njet" back to the plane. Baffled he looks to me on the other side of the barrier, decides to try again with 'my' official and without further problems gets permission to enter. Only later, after a few other 'interesting' experiences we guess that the lady at Klaus' booth had simply expected to find a more or less generous amount of Euros between the pages of the passport, which would have smoothed his path considerably.

The aforementioned security information does not appear to be all that exaggerated, because our host company sends us very detailed instruction for the collection: "You will be picked up in a black Wolga, registration no. 074-92A0, by Eugenie and a driver. Under no circumstances get into another car." Someone must have had pretty bad experiences here, but our pick up is there and in the correct car. Welcome to Russia!

Our travel agent did not have a great choice when booking the hotel: Not that there aren't any number of hotels in St. Petersburg, but only a few are permissible for foreign tourists. A guaranteed booking is essential for the visa application. Later I learn that the reservation cannot

– under any circumstances – be cancelled, so even if I had been refused the visa, I would have had to pay for the room. I am thrilled: What a great idea to make money! I dream of ruling my own country, and this will be one of my first decrees!

The hotel, by the way, is the most expensive one I have been allowed to stay in on my travels so far. And in my life! And I have travelled a fair deal. A whopping 590 US-Dollars a night, at least breakfast is included. This is more than five times the accommodation budget recommended by my employer. Not that it is worth it: The entrance is guarded – very subtle and silent – by men in black suits and black sunglasses, shaven heads, stony expressions and a visible earpiece, but the room is old fashioned, the bathroom primitive, the fruit basket, which makes my heart beat faster at first sight, turns out to be a fake, the duvet is sticky, the curtains dusty, the carpet worn, and the wallpaper discoloured. The mattress is saggy and the breakfast is no more generous than in your average local bed-and-breakfast in Germany. Even in the much advertised ‘fitness centre’ there are just three rusty ergometers, other extras, which you would expect to find in a hotel of this price class, are absent altogether. At least the location is quite central. Neither Klaus nor I are at all sure how safe we will be leaving the hotel for dinner in the evening. We gather all our courage and cross the road, heading for a restaurant that looks typically Russian. The food is generous, cheap and good. Every corner of this city features heavily advertised striptease bars, something we never saw even once in India. But tonight all I want to do after the meal is sleep.

Every large scale software development suffers from the same problem: That the client at the time of ordering has only a vague idea of what is actually wanted. Unfortunately he doesn’t realise this, until he holds the first demonstrable version of the software in his hands, when he suddenly recognizes exactly what he wanted differently or not at all. An old fashioned development concept, which utterly ignores these principles and is therefore – obviously! – frequently chosen, and which tries to deliver a first testable version of the software as late as possible, is the **waterfall model**. It requires the customer to document in detail the expected behaviour of the system in advance, before the development team begins its work. This team in turn then disappears from the radar as far as the customer is concerned until the software is finished. At this point,

the reader may return to the start of this paragraph. Tellingly this model is also called ‘predictable’.

The company we visit here had been recommended to us by a work colleague, who had collaborated with them in a previous life. We learn that, as an alternative to the aforementioned dilemma, this company propagates the concept of **agile development**, unfortunately a method diametrically opposed to the one used by my own company for software development. The agile development tries to minimise risks by delivering roughly four-weekly intermediate versions of the software components to the client, so they can gather an early and continuous picture of the programme. After each iteration, features can be re-prioritised or added. Agile methods further assume that for the duration of the project client and developer work closely together, which isn’t quite suitable for our particular needs. Agile methods are also called ‘adaptive’, as they focus on a flexible approach to changes. Unavoidably, both these methods tend to run through all departments and processes of a company. A cooperation with this contractor would therefore pose logistic and technical difficulties even before taking into consideration the unpredictable elements, which so delight in surprising those responsible for outsourcing.

Agile development must not be mistaken for **cowboy coding**, a description for software development without any method whatsoever, where every member of the team does whatever he considers important. This is the most common development method around – to the woe of many. In my opinion, it is the root of all evil. But back to the company: It is located in an ancient building in the middle of St. Petersburg, boasting a mere ten developers per office. During my guided tour I notice a lot of ‘stand-up-meetings’, conferences, which are conducted in the morning involving the whole team standing up, which astonishingly reduces the time taken by such meetings drastically; and because of the agile method daily meetings are necessary where the next functions to be developed are being discussed and the tasks are distributed amongst the team members. Apart from this, everything else seems quite simplistic and improvised. The walls are covered with handwritten schemes of the project plans. But everyone is polite, and to secure against the accidental exchange of company secrets between different clients, client specific development teams are located in their own building sectors.

On the eve of the first day dinner with the Russian firm in a restaurant with the promising name '**Restaurant**', close to the Nawa, the river running straight through the whole town. We are curious – given the Russian's reputation for their sociable evenings. The restaurant flattens us with its ultra-modern design: Empty, grey, cold, rough walls, the odd empty picture frame, all this in a large vault. Nothing comfortable or welcoming. But still the evening starts very jovial and entertaining. For starters a large bowl of noodles, which on closer inspection turn out to be strips of fat. Yummy! Trying to be a good guest I attempt to swallow a couple of strips. Then follows fish marinated in oil. I presume this was meant to lay a foundation, for then we are presented with the restaurant's Vodka collection – this place is famous for its locally distilled vodka in various flavours. Proudly the owner indicates an infinite row of large flasks containing liquids of different colour: Ginger, cranberry, raspberry, plain and many more. I try the cranberry one first. Then ginger. And then I'm more or less done, and so is Klaus, for the 'tasters' are well filled tumblers. The Vodka is not bad, but it seems a lot stronger than the varieties I know from home and I am starting to feel it. I don't really fancy being brushed up from under the table later – even if that is supposed to be the norm for Russian business dinners. I decline the next round graciously, and appear to have utterly humiliated the host with this decision, for the joyous mood is instantly curtailed. The rest of the evening progresses rather frostily. Drudgingly I haul myself through the evenings conversation with small-talk. Main course and desert are edible. I am glad to return to the hotel. As it is June, St. Petersburg never really gets dark and despite all the safety warnings we spend a few hours strolling unaccosted along the **Newskij-Prospekt**, the main road of the city. Probably encouraged or made careless by the consumption of vodka.

Schtschi*800 g boiling meat**1.5 l beef stock**2 tbs. butter**1 onion**250 g potatoes**1 bay leaf**600 g Sauerkraut*

In Russia, every district has its own recipe for stew, which often differs only marginally. The steaming stockpot is always a symbol of shelter and warmth.

Add the boiling meat to the hot beef stock and bring to the boil, leaving it to stew for 1-2 hours. Then remove the meat, sieve the broth into a stockpot, roast the chopped onion and add together with chopped potatoes and the bay leaf to the broth. Simmer for about 15 minutes. Cut the meat into strips and add together with the Sauerkraut.

Cook for a further 25 minutes.

Tuesday, June 7th, 2005

I had heard a lot about the legendary corruptibility – or the need for bribery – but I had never experienced it. After a long day at work we are invited to go for a walk in the winter palace. According to the published opening hours the palace, which has been converted to a museum, should be open for another couple of hours. According to the lady selling the tickets it is already closed. Our Russian companion starts a wildly gesticulating incomprehensible discussion and starts to slowly push notes from her wallet towards the cashier. After a while the woman nods, our companion winks at us, the cashier winks at a few guards and leads us past the official entrance to the back gate of the museum. So this is how it's done. Our escort immediately assures us she has never experienced nor done anything like this before. I believe her – of course! The palatial building itself is definitely worth recommending. The erection of the winter palace was started as early as 1754 under tsarina Elisabeth, in the following centuries extended to the **Hermitage**, and is now one of the largest art museums in the world: 400 gorgeous rooms, three million exhibits, over 2,500 collections by artists like da Vinci, Picasso, Monet or van Gogh. They recommend you visit the exhibition in comfortable shoes. I didn't bring any, but we only have a few hours anyway. I am still thrilled: I've never been this close to so many artists before – even though I shall learn shortly that already at this point in time many of the paintings have been stolen and replaced by replicas.

Wednesday, June 8th, 2005

Before the return flight we have time for a little trip to the **Peterhof**, a country retreat originally commissioned by Peter the Great, which he wanted to use as a resting place during his travels. The building works expanded a little, and today it is known as the Versailles of Russia. Along the way from the centre of St. Petersburg to the Peterhof grand mansions can be found every other kilometre. The tsar considered these essential so that he and his entourage could have a break or spend the night on their travels. When you look at these buildings – like the palaces in St. Petersburg as well – it is easy to see why the revolution started in this country.

The demonstrated wealth and pomp is simply too much. Nestled between these mansions are the interchangeable large high-rise estates in fashionable grey. The traffic, by comparison to India, is pretty bearable here. There is a lot of movement on the roads, but at least it is exclusively done by motorised vehicles, and there is a definite direction to the traffic flow. A lot of people actually seem to stick to the highway code and they even read the signs.

Sitting comfortably in the back of the car, both Klaus and I leaf through our passports and compare stamps and visa applications. By chance I discover a stamp in Klaus' documents from the hotel in St. Petersburg, which we have just left, with handwritten notes regarding the dates and duration of his stay. Approved accommodation had been an important factor when we applied for the visa, but in my passport there is no trace of this. I am not sure if this could have a negative effect on the rest of our journey, especially us leaving the country shortly, and so I ask our escort. Her assessment of the situation is clear: She gets the car to turn round and we drive back to the hotel.

A long queue has been building up at the reception there and after an impatient wait the receptionist suddenly decides that I have not stayed in the hotel the last few days and refuses to stamp my passport. He also isn't inclined to look it up in the computer. Unhappily I glance at the company representative. The porter wants to see to the next guest. She starts a noisy discussion with him, but he remains stubborn. As she refuses to give in, and neither she nor I are willing to pass any more money towards the hotel employee, it turns into a rather lengthy debate until the man finally puts his stamp into my passport and irritated, grumpy and reluctant signs the damned thing. We have lost almost one hour, but at least I should (hopefully) be allowed to leave now.

The Peterhof, located directly by the sea, boasts an impressive array of fountains and cascades besides the palace itself, gilded rooves, pavilions, gardens and parks, and I register the 'water games' with amusement, which the tsar, keen to be seen from his lighter side, had installed in parts of the park.

On some paths I suddenly find myself in the midst of a shower, the trick fountains unexpectedly turning to spray the passers-by or water suddenly seeps through the gaps in the flagstone path itself. The technology behind it isn't all that clever, however, because on closer inspec-

tion I discover levers and taps, which are operated by park attendants in disguise, who try to look innocent while waiting for the right moment to flick the switches unnoticed.

For a snack we get to try some Blini. Yummy. Later, when I make them myself at home, my guests unexpectedly almost rip them from my fingers and can hardly get enough. We reach our plane punctually and without the need for further bribery. The second country lies behind us – and I am a lot less befuddled than after the previous journey.

Blini

500 g buckwheat flower

1 l milk

25 g yeast

3 eggs

2 tbs. butter

1 tbs. sugar

salt

250 g whipping cream

Mix flower, warm milk and yeast thoroughly and leave to rest in a warm place. When the dough has risen sufficiently separate the egg and mix the yolk with melted butter, sugar and salt, then add to the dough. Whisk the cream until stiff, add the egg white and whisk again, then add to the dough, mix again and leave to rise in a warm place for 15 - 20 minutes.

Place the dough into a hot greased pan. When the Blini turns brown on one side and throws up bubbles on the other turn with a wooden spoon. Pile the cooked Blini on top of each other, spread with some butter and put in a warm place.

Blini are best eaten while still hot. They are generally served with lard, fresh or pressed caviar, sour cream and smoked salmon.

Tuesday, June 15th, 2005

Bulgaria is just around the corner – at least by comparison with our previous destinations. By now I know the way to Frankfurt airport off by heart, and I almost feel at home there. After just under two hours I am in Bulgaria's capital Sofia. This time I am on my own, for Klaus is sick in bed – hopefully not from all the travelling – and he has to rest. In order to keep to our schedule I reluctantly decide to go this one on my own. The company I visit here was one I came across at CeBit. It's nice not to need a visa this time, and also that the flight happens during daylight hours for a change, so I can actually enjoy the view. Looking down onto the grand mountain chains and endless forests, I suddenly feel quite small. At the airport, Andrew and his colleague Dimitar have been waiting for me for a while, because the flight is late. There is half a day of presentations, then hotel and bed.

Wednesday, June 16th, 2005

Andrew and Dimitar persuade me to skip breakfast at the hotel as they want to invite me to 'the' place to be in Sofia. I agree only reluctantly, partly because the breakfast is after all included in the hotel's price but also because I am useless without breakfast. Totally useless. But my honoured colleagues are about to realise this soon enough. At 7:30 a.m. they collect me hungry from the hotel and hand me a 'red bull' to fill a gap. I absolutely have to get to know the legendary 'in' location – a bar which 'occasionally' serves food, – and it is open. Unfortunately it isn't 'occasionally', as the chef hasn't made it out of bed this early, but they expect him any minute now. At least there is coffee and I don't need to worry about my caffeine level for the next few days. My stomach rumbles and I longingly think of the 'inclusive' – as mentioned above – large breakfast buffet at the hotel. No sign of the chef. What's keeping him? My stomach is complaining, I try hard to hold polite conversation and not to make it too obvious about my hunger. Sofia is a dead cert for property investment, Andrew explains. Since Bulgaria has applied to join the EU, the prices have sky rocketed, but despite this the current price level is still far below the European average. The minutes pass, the hand of

my watch starts to go into slow motion. In vain: The chef is not coming. I can't stomach another coffee. Eventually we leave, still hungry, for our first meeting, because Steve, the chief executive officer (CEO) awaits, having set aside a few hours for us. Apparently, I am not that good at disguising the state I am in after all because his first question is about my well-being and how the start to my day has been. Andrew and Dimitar look away embarrassed and I try to suggest as subtly as possible that I haven't had a lot in my stomach today apart from caffeine. Horror on his face. Immediately he summons his assistant Eva (a very pleasant apparition, by the way: Pretty as a picture, always smiling, young, semi-transparent shortish – well, okay, quite short – skirt, skin tight, revealing top: Looks like they try all tricks here.) and charges her with the organisation of breakfast, a task she accomplishes splendidly: Within a short time she is back in the conference room, laden with rolls, croissants, cheese, sausage, scrambled egg, orange juice, pancakes, a large bowl of fresh strawberries and so on. Finally I regain my energy and, after a short delay, I can divert my attention from hunger to business again.

Kyufteta (spicy meatballs)

500 g mince meat

1 onion

2 dry bread rolls

1 egg

black pepper

white pepper

1 ½ tsp. thyme

1 tsp. nutmeg

salt

Chop the onions finely, soak the dry bread rolls, then mix with the rest of the ingredients in a bowl.

Form the dough into little balls and bake in the oven at 180 degrees for 15 minutes until golden brown. Turn, then bake for another 5 minutes.

Dry briefly on a piece of kitchen roll. Serve with salad.

The presentations are all convincing. Especially the automatic testing of graphic user interfaces has been paid a lot of attention to. I am satisfied, even though it is not quite as refined as in India. And not quite as big. The processes are not as omnipresent and the lack of strict hierarchy within the company will probably contribute to making any future tender from this company more competitive than the Indian ones.

For the evening I am invited to the **Vodenitsata**, a typical Bulgarian restaurant in the mountains near Sofia. Again with the support of the smiling assistant. Andrew explains with a mischievous wink that if I needed anything else, I just had to ask. Eva smiles. I am however quite content at the moment and try to study the Bulgarian menu instead. After a brief fruitless attempt I hand the responsibility for this over to Andrew.

Salad is served. Suddenly everything goes dark and the guests pour into the back yard. Glowing coals have been laid out into a circle of roughly five metres in diameter, and the audience spreads out around them. A couple – **Nestinari**, as I learn later – takes up position at the edge of the ‘dance floor’ and shuffle with small steps barefoot into the embers. And there they remain for a good while, turning, hopping, performing several lifts and appear to be happy as Larry. I step a little closer to the coals, but they really are hot. I learn that this art form is only practiced by very few these days and is passed on within families from generation to generation. I immediately suspect an inherited high pain threshold. After a while they are looking for volunteers from the audience to be carried across the floor. Eva is picked first. She doesn’t look too happy about it, but is soon persuaded. She assures us afterwards that it really got pretty hot, even though she was being carried. When the coals are disturbed from the movement, the dancer pushes them back into place with her bare hands.

Andrew has chosen well: Something typically Bulgarian, accompanied by plentiful salad with goats cheese (I would have considered this Greek, but my host assures it is authentic Bulgarian fare), local wines and spirits. After a few hours I feel pleasantly full and comfortable, and reach my hotel rather late.

The flight back is unspectacular and according to plan. The third country is in the bag. This one was almost a day trip.

Tuesday, July 5th, 2005

Warsaw. Originally, Poland hadn't made it onto our shortlist because of the relatively high wages there, but a new colleague from Poland had some contacts and references which looked promising. So several Polish companies were included in the round of evaluations, and the decision making process was extended by a month.

First of all, I did – as always – invite the potential candidates to Germany. Two companies from Warsaw, one from Krakow. After a few presentations by the Polish companies I am pleasantly surprised to find such quality-conscious firms in such relative proximity. To cut a long story short: All the companies had geared their presentations very thoroughly and professionally towards our needs, without too many cares about the real content of their claims. I set off immediately to inspect two of those companies more thoroughly. Confidently, I booked a Lufthansa flight to Warsaw and I am rather surprised to suddenly find myself sitting in a LOT – the Polish airline – plane instead. Thanks to 'code sharing'. I don't feel quite as safe and relaxed as usual, but we land without problems. Once in Warsaw, however, the positive impression I had made of the first company is quickly disassembled.

Wladyslaw, who reminds me from the start a little of 'Greulix' from 'Asterix and the Great Divide', looks after Klaus and me. We enter the company building. Already in the foyer we find to one side a wide open room without a door, filled with dozens of servers and computerish equipment – possibly the highly praised secure data processing centre, where the data and programmes of all clients are stored. Grey and black cables span across the room, about throat high. On simple steel sheet shelves various processors hum away without any obvious order. The sticky room has no air conditioning and any visitor could happily help themselves to whatever they want. In the following presentation there are a lot of gaps, and many questions are answered rather vaguely. Often I just get a shrug. Automatic testing? No joy. An independent quality department? No such thing. Outsourcing experience? Zero. Development method? "We do whatever the client wants". No knowledge of the subject. Considering maintenance during development? Unknown territory. When I ask how information is kept secure between different clients I just get amazed looks. Why would I

be interested in that? Here they work on the most basic level, any DIY tinker could do this well – or better. My questions with regard to quality assurance and metrics aren't even understood. Bored, I look over to Klaus, who just raises his eyebrows. This trip is a total waste of time. And this after the first presentation had been so convincing!

I survive a social dinner and am glad to be able to fly back the next day. No further comment.

Tuesday, July 12th, 2005

A few days later the second destination: The 'secret capital of Poland', Krakow is a breathtaking city in the South and has recently acquired a direct connection from Cologne. My hotel is almost in the centre of town, a short walking distance from the main market **Rynek Główny**. Here are the headquarters of one of the largest IT service centres of the country. As always, the whole of the first day of our visit is taken up with presentations about development processes, methods, quality assurance, financial stability, reference clients and projects and we are reminded time and again that only this contractor could make us truly happy. As always, everything sounds great. Just before dinner with our host in **Restauracja Wierzynek**, a restaurant founded in 1364 by the Polish king Casimir the Great and thus the oldest restaurant in Krakow, I have a few minutes to soak in the old town atmosphere. The sun is shining, there are musicians everywhere and street traders. Crowds are pushing across the market square. Krakow is well prepared for tourists, unfortunately I haven't exchanged any Złoty, Euro are not yet established currency and my credit card isn't accepted by the merchants in the market. Pity, I had spotted some nice souvenirs.

During dinner, Klaus praises the precise methods which were presented to us with regard to software development, and he thanks them for the day. From the corner of my eyes, I notice how two of the company delegates nod to each other, wink and grin. Experience tells me this does not bode well. We decide to follow this up the following day and ask to speak to the team. There is a moment of shock – but then: Of course, no problem!

So now we are questioning the employees. Proudly they show us their projects, the documentation and development methods. Then a few detailed questions about the methods we had been told about yesterday. Silence. Baffled faces. Now the employees haven't got the faintest idea what we are asking about, neither have they heard of the things we had been told were standard practice here. One of the delegates clears his throat, looks a bit sheepishly and quickly leads us onwards. Another project, the same scenario. At least this time we eventually find a team member who has recently been charged with the task of researching the kind of development technology and quality assurance measure we might be expecting, but he didn't really understand all of it. The presentations turn out to have been pure fantasy. At least the data processing centre is of the highest standard.

Once again, there is an unbridgeable gulf between this company and the ones we checked out in Bangalore, despite the hosts' best efforts. The only advantage of this company is its close proximity, a flight taking less than two hours and no need for a visa (a factor that should not be underestimated as I was to learn painfully). But with regard to software development, which is, after all, the reason we are looking for co-operators, this is a dead loss. Fairly annoyed, I embark on the return journey.

Thought of the day: Watch whom you trust!

At Krakow airport it is suddenly back: the wink. Like in Russia at the winter palace. The building is packed beyond capacity, for ten flights departing simultaneously from the only terminal, exactly three check-ins have been opened, and one of them is reserved for business class. Cost-conscious our travel guidelines dictate economy-class for short trips. Two check-ins is sparse. Very sparse. The queue of passengers runs the length of the building. At the counter there is a rather unfriendly lady distributing the customers more or less evenly between the two check-in stations and keeping the queues in order. This could take hours, I think. I don't, of course, know yet that I have all the time in the world, as a coming storm is about to delay every flight for hours. I also don't know yet that the ticket I hold in my hands is not valid and I will have to queue a second time. From time to time a man, apparently a passer-by, pushes certain passengers and their luggage past the queue, underneath the bar-

rier, winks at the security lady, winks at the check-in personnel, loads the cases onto the conveyor belt and disappears again. His 'customers' have checked in. I see him do this several times. Annoying. After roughly 45 minutes of bored waiting in a humid airport without air conditioning, I have reached the check-in counter, lift my suitcase onto the scales and hand over my ticket. My legs ache from standing so long. Friendly smiles. Some typing. Strange look at the monitor. Puzzlement. Frowns. A few telephone calls. Then the polite information: "That's 600 Euro". I am delighted as the ticket – as far as I know – has already been paid for and my case is unlikely to have this much excess weight. But there is no discussion with the nice lady, she sends me straight to the ticket booth, barely visible at the end of another queue. Another wait. But I have a lot of time since they now have announced the flight as delayed. At the ticket counter I am told that my ticket has not been paid for yet and I am presented with the alternatives: Cough up or stay. I hesitate only briefly and pay. Now I may rejoin the first queue again. As it turns out afterwards the ticket really hadn't been paid for: The money had left my account, but the recipient could not be found so it had been returned. They just forgot to tell me.

Maybe I should have enlisted the help of the queue-avoider at the check in, I briefly wonder, but the wait at the gate after the security check is even worse. There is only one. A rather small one. Every single passenger in the airport meets up here – as mentioned above belonging to about ten different flights – and they fight for a place to sit. Everywhere is full. It is still humid, through a small steamy skylight we can guess at the looming storm. To pass some time, I along with 50 other waiting people, squeeze through the two shelves duty-free shop and I would like to describe the offered ware here politely as 'marginally uninteresting'. I suspect some of the guests have taken up station on the toilets because of the lack of seating, because the cubicles are continuously occupied for hours on end. I don't fancy lying on the floor like some of the others, although it has been wiped relatively clean by now. Oh how I'd love to be at home! Or in the departure lounge where there are restaurants with chairs and tables, and a much larger shop. After a while the rain fizzles out, the first flight is allowed to leave and I get to sit down. Finally. Now I can tolerate the wait – and only a few minutes later my flight is called up.

On arrival in Frankfurt I miss my train – as always, incidentally, and always only by a few minutes – and now have to wait for an hour for the next one. The station has a little bistro that I have often hurried past, envying those with enough time to rest and recharge their energy there. Here I will be able to pass my time happily. Exhausted I sit down, relax for a moment and look at the other guests. A beer would be great, and a little something to eat. The man next to me bends over and starts to throw up, again and again directly underneath the table. My hunger disappears. I wonder which dish he had picked? Maybe this isn't such a great place to eat, and so I stroll back onto the platform.

The fourth country has been sorted, and this means my travels are over for the moment.

Thought of the day: I always have to check things out myself on location.

One challenge all outsourcing providers have to face is how to safeguard the client's know-how. They all offer some kind of secrecy clause, but this can be open to interpretation as demonstrated above in the case of the data processing centre in Warsaw. Should two competitors accidentally settle on the same outsourcing provider, however, it would be difficult to assure that, for example, employees don't occasionally discuss their projects over lunch. Even more difficult is the scenario of one company's project having been finished, and the same employees being afterwards assigned to another project from a rival company since they are unlikely to just forget the experiences they gathered on the first project, the second company is likely to profit from the accelerated timeframe facilitated by the previous' problems solutions. Only India has a solution for this dilemma: The 'cool-down-period', a period of say six months after the project has finished in which they guarantee none of its team members will be assigned to competing projects. They also offer separated work spaces, if desired even in a different geographical location. But this is only going to be one aspect of our decision making process.

August 2005

It's done! At least part one. I have had a good look at the efficiency of each company. For each candidate, we have analysed more than 80 different criteria. The choice is not difficult: The two Bangalore companies are neck on neck, but miles ahead of the rest, followed by the Bulgarian contractor. Last place is reserved for the Delhi company.

Our three top choices are asked to submit a tender for the pilot project. And once again the Indians surprise me with a detailed three part proposal: Part one contains our requirements as prescribed. Part two and three describe other possible extensions, colourful options and user friendly additions with potential time scale. Added to this a detailed 'the first 90 days'-plan, listing each day's proposed job, split into onsite, offshore and tasks for our partner and ourselves. Looks like they've done this before! I have a good feeling. These are the ones. They are professionals. With their experience we will set up our out-sourcing programme in record time. They are chosen. Unfortunately, I celebrate too soon, but more about that later.

Back in April, I attended a seminar on the subject of offshoring and quality in preparation for the planned activities. The core message was: Without assurance of technical quality you are buying a 'cat in a bag' – and one that often turns out to have died already. This is underlined with thrilling examples:

An attempt with a Russian firm exceeds its time schedule only marginally, turns out to be only slightly more expensive and fulfils almost all wishes. Unfortunately, the code is useless after all, as it has been annotated in Russian and can only be translated into a running programme by the contractor themselves. As the largest percentage of cost in software development lies in maintenance, which in the cited example could neither be taken on by the client directly or handed to anyone else, the Russian company was laughing all the way to the bank for years to come.

Another project with a Rumanian company, where requirements and concepts had been stipulated, where intensive and regular exchange of employees had been practiced, and which had foreseen eventual in-sourcing. Here the client discovered on completion that all programme parts and databases, instead of being labelled with signifi-

cant names, had simply been labelled numerically. The table translating those numbers into programme parts had unfortunately not been part of the agreed contract ...

In many other cases the codes, for various reasons, turned out to be almost unmaintainable: Badly constructed, only partly modelled, sparsely documented, not portable, spaghetti code, too complex. The list is endless. At least the seminar convinced me that we would have to check the code itself and not just its functionality. “Code Quality Management” was the buzzword and should become part of our offshoring contract.

Thought of the day: Examine also the **inner** quality of the software.

First of all, however, our purchasing department would negotiate a framework contract. As a rule this is a very conscientious process and takes months. The Indian company’s offer will be turned down on principle and replaced with our own conditions. These, in turn, will then not be accepted by the supplier. Eventually week-long negotiations will produce a common text, in which every single word suggested by one party will have been replaced by a better suggestion from the other: “Six months” will turn into “half a year”, “daily” will become “every day”, “working days” will morph into “Monday to Saturday”, and “software” will be replaced by “computer programme”. Or the other way round, depending on which term will have been suggested first. This is exactly what happens. The negotiating teams turn things over for weeks, daily (!), till late at night. In irregular intervals, individual parties leave the conference room to re-adjust and align their strategies. I, as a purchasing novice, am agog. After two months of negotiation-marathon the legal department examines the resulting document and replaces the last few comprehensible paragraphs with some legal jargon. Everyone is satisfied. The framework contract, which decides how much one contracted hour will cost, spans almost 50 pages. Only now the functional details can be filled in.

September 2005 to January 2006

The Pilot and the Letdown

September 2005

At home in Bonn. First, we have to find a suitable project for the pilot. From literature, seminars, advice and common sense, Klaus and I have drawn up a shortlist of possible candidates. Now I am discussing possibilities and strategies with each of the affected heads of development, probing their enthusiasm and possibilities for project expansion, and I feel reminded of my school days, when the teacher's questions were met with as speedy, subtle and concentrated a sideways glance as possible, or a quick look in the book, in the hope that he would not notice you this time. Each of the heads of development understands the advantages and future importance of the pilot project, but none of them wishes to be the first and they try to wiggle from my field of vision. So it is down to Klaus and me to select a suitable project. We should probably have done this from the start, although I do consider the selected system fairly complex. It has grown over many years, has a small core and a lot of interfaces to external systems, but Vishal promises this is the perfect type of system for offshore outsourcing.

With my previous employer, a multinational company with branches in all the major countries, I had spend years witnessing how easy it is for colleagues sharing a common goal but different cultural backgrounds to misunderstand each other, and how much effort it costs to rectify the damage caused by varying interpretations. So, as a precaution, I book an Indian trainer and sent the entire team to a workshop to shed light on the cultural idiosyncrasies of our supplier – hoping to avoid or at least limit future misunderstandings.

Bored because they don't quite see the point in this kind of further training, the team members let the statistics, data and facts regarding India float past them: Climate, geographical location, cities, size, religion. Many images from the IT metropolis contrasting with the poverty next to it. Each of them thinks they could have sourced these quicker themselves on the Internet. Then a mime presentation: A common Indian ritual is depicted and they all get to guess at its purpose. Every

single one of them gets it wrong. The first of them wake up: If every day things can be so easily misunderstood, then maybe there is scope for error in a project with tight deadlines? Quickly the whole team is infected. The rest of the time flies by. Very conclusive is also the image India has of us Germans: “Cold and brutally direct”. Ours of India: “Friendly and incredibly long-winded.”

At the end of the presentation, most are convinced to have learned something useful and in many situations, which will surprise us in the coming months, they will quickly remember: Wasn’t there something there? And instantly we treat each other more carefully, making enquiries, explaining matters again, or just laugh with each other.

October 2005

The first pilot project. For the first few days we design a detailed project plan, the most complicated one I have ever attempted, for the colleagues are worried about the implications of this experiment on their own working employment future. Over twenty days four German team members are to introduce the Indian colleagues to the software bit by bit. Goals and yardsticks are soon set. The rest I believe to be simple and I set the tasks for the four team members during a communal meeting. Everyone agrees. The very next morning, a member of the team comes to visit: “I’m unavailable on this day.” I swap him around. Everyone is happy – again. The next day: “Day thirteen’s topic should be better placed prior to day eight.” I redraw the schedule. “On day seven an important project is signed off, there should be two of us present for that.” Another new schedule. Everyone nods their heads. Until the next morning: “Well, actually I can’t afford to spend this much time on this ...” “And day 14 very inconveniently falls onto a Wednesday ...” “I have swapped day three with B, but he doesn’t want to do it any more, and C can’t cover because he is on holiday ...” Once again the plans are adjusted accordingly. The next day sees another re-shuffle due to lack of enthusiasm and other important factors. Eventually, the conclusion that my plans are totally unrealistic. So the five of us start all over again. Hours later we have a new plan. Everyone accepts it, nodding happily. When, on the following morning the first

of the ‘gang of four’ appears in my office to voice his doubts about the applicability of this plan, I am starting to get a bit ratty, refuse any further changes and hand the responsibility for the first 20 days over to the trusty team itself. They can coordinate their own efforts from now on and I don’t want to hear another thing about it. Astonishingly, the introductory phase of the project will suddenly run smoothly and without any further changes.

Monday, October 17th, 2005

Today is the day: ‘Our’ Indian team’s first working day. Jovially we greet our new colleagues in our foyer – and have to learn immediately that the journey from Bangalore and Pune caused no problems at all. The hotel, however, did. After all, who would trust seven Indians arriving late at night in reception, wishing to stay in Germany for four to six weeks, speaking not a word of German and a kind of English one has to get used to first? Well, apparently not this hotel – despite reservations made by the company – and so the whole group had to pay up front for their stay in cash. Almost 10,000 €! Per person! Via our travel department I complain to the hotel, but what has been paid is paid. I guess the porter has long since done a runner with the money. A pity, because we wanted our guests to feel welcome. The introductory presentation starts. Everyone is a bit on edge. The first nickname for one of the Indians is quickly established: Thanks to his specific after shave he becomes ‘Diesel’, in reference to the well known fuel. Well as they say: There is no accounting for taste.

Bhuna Chicken

<i>1 onion</i>	<i>1 chicken</i>
<i>2 cloves of garlic</i>	<i>1 tbs. garam masala</i>
<i>1 tsp. ginger</i>	<i>juice of 1 lemon</i>
<i>1 tsp. chilli powder</i>	<i>1 tsp. salt</i>
<i>1 tsp. curcuma</i>	<i>1 bushel kitchen herbs</i>
<i>60 g butter</i>	<i>15 g desiccated coconut</i>
<i>2 tomatoes</i>	<i>1 tsp. coriander</i>
<i>2 tbs. curd cheese</i>	<i>1 green chilli</i>
<i>beef stock</i>	

Peel onion and garlic cloves, chop and mix with ginger, chilli and curcuma. Fry this mixture in butter for several minutes, then add chopped tomatoes, curd cheese and finely cut chicken.

Allow to simmer for several minutes, then add garam masala, lemon juice, salt, kitchen herbs, desiccated coconut, coriander, and chillies. Pour beef stock into the dish until everything is just covered.

This curry is supposed to be served quite dry, so don't add too much liquid. Simmer on an even heat for about 2 hours and serve with boiled rice.

For the first pilot project we want to hand over a rather old piece of software for maintenance and further development in order to relieve the German team's workload. After successful completion we already have seamless plans for the next offshore projects. I had no idea at this point that our outsourcing future would look rather different. First, the Indian team is supposed to analyse the documentation and code of the selected system, understand and update it and, because we were so impressed with the Indian's testing systems, they will develop an automatic test environment for it. Future versions of the software could thus be easily tested for unwanted side effects during continued development. After the project is signed off, we expect an official statement declaring our partner's willingness to continue care and maintenance of the system. According to the Indian company representative this is a standard procedure, successfully implemented a thousand times. So it didn't sound terribly complicated, and yet we were in for a bitter disappointment. But only right at the end of project one.

My first challenge, however, is our own team. "They ask such weird questions". "They'll never understand that!" "Outsourcing is crap!" I hear day in day out – even without the project actually having started yet. I suspect the real reason behind these statements is their fear of losing their own jobs. Fear for the future. Will India take over the whole of software development? Will there be any need for a German team in future? Have the Indian colleagues the same or even better experience, but work for half the money? It was precisely to combat these fears that I had outlined the goals of the pilot project and the results of our selection process, including the very specific work ethic, which had impressed me so much amongst the Indians, in an open presentation and discussions. Didn't look like I had been all that successful with it.

I claim that, because of the kind of work we do and the way it is structured, we will never outlive the need for a local development centre, and the coming weeks and months would confirm this believe many times. This the team neither knew nor believed at this point.

The biggest resistance, by the way, I encounter amongst those employees who weren't actually part of the pilot and got all their information second hand.

In order to calm things down a bit, I introduce regular meetings for all – including those who aren't involved with the pilot – in which we

present the project and what has been achieved so far and open it up for discussion. Gradually the mood is improving.

Thought of the day: I still have to prepare the team better.

November 2005

Especially noticeable amongst the Indian team is a ritual which has long since died out here in Germany: That as soon as a superior enters the room, everyone rises to their feet. Even when I just pass a desk to ask a quick question, the colleague immediately stands to attention by the side of the table.

Other idiosyncrasies are noteworthy, too: To signal that they are listening, Indians continually tip their head from right to left and back, just like we tend to mumble ‘yeah’ and ‘hmm’ and other such noises, especially during telephone conversations, in order to show our opposite that we haven’t fallen asleep yet. And this nodding is terribly infectious: After a short while I catch myself tipping my head – at first as a joke, but soon unintentionally – during conversations with the Indians to start with, and then all the time. It costs a conscious effort to keep my head still.

We have set up an ‘island’ in our company network as a common development space for this project. This is where the outsourcing colleagues deposit their completed software, and we can access the data from our normal workspace without giving the Indian’s any further access to the network. On the one hand, this allows us to control the actual progress made and quality achieved, while on the other hand securing in-house company information. We are, however, soon to learn that the quality of a system can be judged only insufficiently before the entire project is completed.

One evening, I invite the entire Indian team for dinner to my home. The search for something they can all eat is proving a bit of a challenge with the Indian team: Beef is largely taboo. Some eat no pork either, but lamb and chicken. Others prefer wholly vegetarian fare, some won’t even touch eggs. Some of them like beer, others don’t touch alcohol. Given these criteria, Raclette appeared to be the perfect solution and they seemed to like it. As a welcome I brew a ‘Devan’s flowery orange

pekoe Darjeeling tea', which I acquired on my first trip to India. Very strong in flavour! The team enjoys the native drink, each one taking a tiny sip before placing the cup back on the table with a grateful smile. And on the table is where it will remain. A little disconcerted I ask if there is something wrong with the tea. Oh no, it's excellent. Did I brew it wrongly or serve it the wrong way? No, everything is great. I ask an indirect question: How would they prepare this tea in India? Well, for this quality tea – by the way a very good one – a small teaspoon of tea leaves would be sufficient for the whole pot, which would be briefly scolded with hot water and the leaves removed immediately. I take it my tea is a bit too strong then, for I had measured one whole teaspoon per person and allowed it to stew for a good five minutes ...

As the host I am presented with my first Bollywood DVDs. Of course starring the inimitable and world famous **Shah Rukh Khan**, whom I hadn't heard a thing about to date (although meanwhile he can be enjoyed regularly on German television, too). Exotic colours, catchy Indian rhythms, dynamic dance scenes, fantastic costumes and robes, and always far too long – three hours appearing to be the minimum duration. Tradition and family are the most important omnipresent topics, usually surrounding a commonly tragic, sad or romantic love story. The films form a nice contrast to the usually rather Hollywood-biased evening schedule of most broadcasters, and they are very entertaining. Although it takes some getting used to the crying men ...

My guests were extremely surprised by the custom of 'Feuerzangenbowle' (a flambéed red wine punch), which does not appear to be very well known outside Germany. With interest they follow the preparation of heating plate, glass bowl and pincers with sugar cone. Carefully I drench the sugar in warm rum and ignite it. First they rather cautiously pull out the cameras and try to take pictures of the flame, then they taste it with anticipation, finally praise it with enthusiasm. They will tell their grandchildren about this German tradition! Not a drop remains. For the journey home they will stock up on Feuerzangenbowle-pinchers, sugar cones and over-proof rum, which you cannot buy in India. So this core element of German culture can be introduced to the mother country. The rest of the weekend the Indian team spends time visiting Cologne where they climb the cathedral. Apart from Vheba, who watches the imposing building rather shyly from the ground.

Feuerzangenbowle

1 bottle of red wine

2 oranges

5 cloves

1 tbs. lemon juice

1 stick of cinnamon

sugar cone

1 l rum (minimum 54%)

Pour the dry red wine into a large bowl and heat gently, add freshly squeezed orange juice, cloves, lemon juice and a stick of cinnamon. Place a sugar cone onto the pinchers and drench with over-proof rum.

Dim the lights, ignite the sugar cone and slowly drip rum onto the cone until it has completely dissolved.

The first part of the project, the ‘re-engineering’, e.g. the understanding of our software and its accompanying documentation, is summarised in one paper, in which the offshoring partner delineates the functions in their own words. After reading it, I am convinced the Indian colleagues have understood everything. The whole system is described in nice, concise diagrams and clear words. This would become the basis for the induction of new team members, or the hand over to another development team. After such a promising start, the second part of the pilot project, the implementation of the automatic test environment, should be child’s play.

Or so I think.

December 2005

Bonn. A perfectly ordinary afternoon. You are never safe from the experts anywhere or any time! Especially not from the self-styled experts working in sales. A well known German distributor, whom we had

known for some time, had heard of our outsourcing ambitions and activities and asked for an urgent audience, as he believed to have important information to pass on. During the planned conference, we were to meet their 'India expert'. I was looking forward to this with some degree of curiosity and excitement, because every bit of help was welcome to us – or so we thought, because we ourselves were outsourcing novices. After the usual 'business inherent' greetings ("By the way we have this brand new product, just for you, which we can offer today only for a special introductory price – obviously exclusively to you, and only if you sign on the dotted line immediately ...") the conversation turns towards India. Avidly I tell them about my first impressions, the culture, my experiences, gush about the cooking – and stare into open but utterly blank faces. Possibly my opening lines were a little-ill judged or too enthusiastic? So I hand over to my guests. What was that important information regarding India they wished to talk about? Brief pause. No answer. Which offshoring and outsourcing experience did they think could help us? Another brief pause and a clearing of throats. Well, obviously they can assist us with any kind of project in every possible indispensable way. They have years of experience with project management. Somehow I am not completely convinced yet. What exactly has that to do with outsourcing? I expected something else altogether, so I try again: Which Indian firms are they working with? After a brief hesitation, finally the revelation: They most likely will be opening their own subsidiary in India shortly. The first trips to India are already planned ... Grateful for such potent support I end the conversation politely and assure them I will contact them should future needs arise.

Thought of the day: Not everyone who thinks he is an expert is one.

The Indian team is developing and developing. Dusk till dawn they can be found working diligently on their computers. Although I receive a weekly updated report, the content of which can be sufficiently summarised with: "Status: x% completed", with 'x' growing slowly from week to week, I do not receive any other information. And I don't get to see anything. There are no enquiries, even though the entire development team is right here in the building. Did they really understand everything this quickly? Don't they wish to discuss any of their ideas with us before

implementing them? That would make outsourcing ridiculously simple. How can it be that so many projects fail, as the media screams at us daily? The developer Vheba can be even found in front of her computer between Christmas and New Year. We are later to realise that she is, at this time, writing the part of the software which turns out to be utterly useless. Occasionally I ask her about an overview of the status of the entire project – in India I had been convinced that thanks to CMMI 5 and the ‘lived’ processes, every team member has this overview at any given time – but I only get a smile and a shaking of her head. She only writes the installation routine, and has no idea about the rest of the project. Given what transpires later she should probably have made an effort to get an overview after all.

The offshore developers use every free day to explore a part of their host country and its neighbours: A weekend in Paris, the next in Rome, a quick detour to Munich or Barcelona. European distances seem negligible to them. Vheba, however, dreams of climbing the cathedral in Cologne after all.

I would have expected our new supplier to occasionally voice some ideas of their own, but with regard to suggestions or innovations they are rather noncommittal. Nothing is forthcoming. Just before Christmas, I ask one of the development team leaders if I could have a look at something. “Soon. Very soon.” They are still in the middle of development and time is short. But they will get there. Hans, one of my own team members, asks (carelessly as he later has to admit himself) if they couldn’t possibly utilize a few freely available software components from the Internet to reduce their work load. The suggestion is immediately followed up, without proper research or enquiries, and only afterwards they discover that this idea does not fit the particular problem, because nothing works. But by then it’s too late: This decision cannot be reversed at the point of realisation. I am a little taken aback that none of our hints and proposals are being commented on, but everyone, who has worked with Indian teams, reports surprisingly similar experiences.

Procurement has already been partly outsourced, to a local team, however. In order to cope with the amount of incoming bills, on average over 600 a day, the department has to follow strict rules. The bill has to be accompanied primarily by a purchase order number and in the case of software development, it also requires a signed statement of work

from the relevant department to acknowledge that the invoiced work has indeed been performed. These rules and accompanying instructions are always sent to suppliers along with the order. For my contractor on this pilot project we have agreed a monthly invoice on an hourly basis to allow us to quickly and flexibly change requirements.

Lex, Vishal's accounts colleague, calls: He has had the first invoice returned to him with a brief standardised covering letter. Apparently, it's missing a purchase order number and statement of work. Well, I haven't received any statement of works from him to sign, so this is entirely possible. Shortly after I get the very document to sign, I once again send him the purchase order number. He apologises for the inconvenience and assures me the next invoice will be produced correctly.

Beginning of January 2006

The development phase of the pilot project is over. Time just flew by. The final inspection begins. The entire Indian offshore development team has gathered with us in a large, windowless and well chilled – after all, we know what we owe our guests – conference room. The demonstration computer's monitor display is being beamed onto the wall. With flying fingers Anindita types various commands into the computer, one after the other the processes start up and open their input windows on the display. It all looks satisfyingly colourful. Then the test runs. Everything works, everything is automatic. I am happy with the successful project. But only very briefly. When Anindita tries to type in some further commands to show other functions, the computer decides not to play ball. I know all about this – every computer has a 'secret personality' which it will only display during presentations. She tries for a few minutes, the sparse error messages are cryptic. Eventually she reboots the system. This time there are no colourful input windows, the computer gives up instantly. She is puzzled. We break for an early lunch, thus giving her almost one hour to plead with her programmes to work for us. In the afternoon the software is dutifully up and running again, but the results are different, wrong or unusable. Anindita has a quick explanation prepared: "It's in the timing. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. You just have to try a few times. She has already noticed this, but with a

little patience you can get the right results.” A test programme that only occasionally gives you the right results? Maybe the project isn’t as successful as I thought – for a programme with unpredictable behaviour, the price is a little too high.

As I am not convinced by the presentation, Sud – the developer with overall responsibility – tries towards the end of the week to install the collected development data into another computer and prepares for a second presentation. The rest of the team has already returned to India. Vheba didn’t manage to climb the cathedral in Cologne after all, despite her best intentions. Again the commands are swiftly typed into the computer. Again the computer surprisingly starts to work. Again a different result. After a little while, pearls of sweat begin to form on Suds forehead. It should be working – so he believes. And he does not give up. Again and again he tries with varying combinations of reboots, command chains and differing ‘timings’ to achieve the desired results. His brow is knotted into a frown, his shirt is soaked in sweat. (My guess: It isn’t because of the temperature, because its winter and thanks to our brand new all singing all dancing heating system only moderately warm). Unfortunately he has no lasting success. And now he is in a hurry not to miss his flight, too. A little stunned, we suddenly find ourselves alone with a programme that doesn’t run. The code review reveals numerous instances of shoddiness and a few algorithms which can’t possibly work. We don’t even test the automatic metrics anymore, which not too long ago impressed me so much. My offshoring enthusiasm has suffered its first set back. What lesson can I possibly draw from this?

Thought of the day: 70% of offshoring projects fail.

‘First set back’ is a bit of a euphemism, actually, because at this very moment the results of months worth of work and travelling around the entire globe simply evaporate. My dream of expanding the development capacity of our German teams short term, and in a cost effective and professional way, just bursts. Can I really recommend software offshoring to anyone with a clear conscience? And this after all our evaluations? How could I have got it this wrong? First of all, I am bitterly disappointed. Is this really the same Indian company that I thought had left us standing in the field of computer technology? I know 70% of offshoring

projects fail, but we had specifically prepared for this and followed every piece of advice published on the subject. How could this happen? I am stunned and I have no explanation. Did we overlook any kind of clues hinting at this disastrous outcome?

Lex calls. He has had the second invoice returned with an accompanying letter complaining about the lack of statement of work, despite the fact that this time it had the right purchase order number with it! What a great moment to send an invoice. Annoyed, I once again sign the statement of work and send it back to Lex. At least the first bill has been paid by now.

Our supplier quickly tries to calm the situation. Shortly after the disaster Vishal – the Indian account manager – appears over here. He can't understand the world anymore. Apparently, he has never experienced anything like this before – only much later he was to turn out not quite so innocent, given that he had left no stone unturned to meet the deadline, including bypassing or even avoiding the very processes, tests and quality assurances demanded by CMMI level 5. Even the above mentioned metrics had simply been dropped altogether “to save time”. Unfortunately, no-one had informed us of this. A little later, the manager responsible for the whole of the western market comes to visit. He apologises and assures us nothing like this has ever happened before. I don't think it is the first time that I have heard that statement. Especially the ‘copy-and-paste’ errors have shaken him to the core: This is where a developer copies an already existing code with comparable functionality and modifies it for his purposes. For the pilot project they did a lot of copying, but skimped on the modifying. This is a beginner's error. He swears his clients are usually very satisfied. He tries to prove this by showing that more than 70% of projects undertaken by his company are follow up orders, which wouldn't happen if the customers weren't satisfied. But for this very reason we had already included the criteria of ‘follow up orders’ during the evaluation process for possible contractors. And another concern is the age of the team: How could the supplier have dared to send us a team of young and inexperienced developers? Next time we won't allow anyone under the age of 30 in our hallowed halls.

Eventually, the Indian manager gets to describe what he sees as the source of the problem: There is currently a generation shift amongst his employees. Those developers, who have helped the company reach its

dizzying heights, have quickly been promoted to team and department supervisors due to the rapid growth. Now they are responsible for passing on their recipe for success, their working methods and knowledge to their own teams. And thus the company is learning that exceptional software developers don't necessarily make exceptional team leaders. Apart from this, the development teams commonly contain a mixture of experienced developers and newcomers. In our case, this was a bit unfortunate as the pilot project was rather small, but the ratio of experts per team is a constant. Furthermore, we are expecting rather broad knowledge of the subject while in India each department tends to have its own specialists. There simply weren't enough experts on our project. On larger scale projects, nothing like this was ever going to happen again, the 'big bang' approach – the commissioning of a large scale project requiring, say, 50 team members – is much more successful in offshoring. I recall hearing the exact opposite from our contractor only recently. I assure him that there will be no projects of any kind in the future, especially not big ones, if they can't even complete the small ones successfully. If I commission an offshoring project, I simply assume that the Indian project will consist of suitable developers. Given the tender, it should be easy to research the necessary expertise and design the team accordingly. He understands and promises that on the next project, no matter how small, a thoroughly experienced team will be at our disposal. And he keeps his word, at least for the third pilot. But there is still some time to go until then, because first I have been persuaded to venture a second attempt.

January 2006 to May 2006

Second Chance

End of January 2006

In India no one ever says no, at least not in a way obvious to an European. I have read this several times, but only after some painful personal experiences do I finally understand it. The Indian is also unlikely to express himself directly, especially not critically, and so the writing of e-mails – those containing complaints, at least – can become an adventure. Instead of

“This is unacceptable! The delivered software is totally useless. We need a workable version by tomorrow with the following minimum functionality ...”

the same topic discussed with an Indian counterpart will read like this

“Honoured friend! Many thanks for the punctual delivery of the software. By and large, the programme is very nice and exactly what we expected. Again, many thanks to the whole team. Especially the colour scheme of the user interface is excellent. Almost by accident I have, however, discovered a rather negligible special set of circumstances, which is unlikely ever to occur, where the expansion of one function, the importance of which only dawned on me yesterday, would prove incredibly helpful to me. There may be a possibility to deliver this one function at a later date. There is no hurry as I am sure I can persuade the client, who originally wanted to look at the programme tomorrow, to wait a little longer. Otherwise, I greet your family and friends, wish you a successful week and look forward to our next meeting.”

The very next day the new version of the software is in my inbox, all errors eradicated. Vishal calls, thanks for the quick response with the error list and asks if there are any more inconsistencies we have spotted. The Indian team is on stand-by. If necessary someone will fly out to us

immediately. Within a short space of time, the writing of letters has developed into a type of sport. We gather around our monitors, each member of the German team trying to find an even more flowery formulation, or an even more vague description of the problem. And our e-mails score a 100% success rate.

The second pilot project starts with a skeleton staff. Only one single developer from our offshore partner is initially required. And this only providing he fulfils three criteria:

1. We need an experienced developer.
2. We will only work 'on site', e.g. locally.
3. The project will take one year.

After this, the continued development of parts of the software can carry on in India with a larger team. "No problem" – or so says our contractor's account manager. The three criteria are perfectly understood. We will be thrilled this time. How wrong he would be.

In order to avoid any more unpleasant surprises with regard to personnel this time, we demand the team members CVs and telephone interviews with them as well as conducting brief tests with the suggested candidates. By the end of January, we have a candidate, 'Sharat' for the rest of this text, who really appears to be older than thirty. He has been a software developer for more than fifteen years and actually understands the subject. Only his English is a bit hard to understand. After the first package of work has been delivered, my hopes rise again: This is really good! Maybe the first attempt was just a glitch?

Lex calls again. His last two invoices have come back again. The statements of work are missing again. He asks if he could speak to the head of purchasing. Gladly. During this conversation, Lex learns that for the payment of invoices the purchase order number is the most important item – with hundreds of bills per day accounting is otherwise not able to follow a purchase through. On top of that a signed statement of work is necessary, with which the specific department proves that the invoiced activity has actually been performed. Together they draw up brief guidelines for the invoicing department back in the Indian headquarters.

After four weeks, Sharat has disappeared. In the middle of the project. One Monday morning he simply does not come to work. Our quickly

instigated investigation reveals that he is back in India. Apparently, there are problems with the visa and residence permit. Not so good. But Vishal promises to sort it quickly. After one week, I get a call from one of the ladies in reception: Rashmi is here and would like to be collected. With a smile I am greeted by a dark-haired, beaming, friendly, pretty, very young and completely inexperienced Indian lady, who has temporarily stepped into the breach. "She is a quick learner", so says the account manager, "and she's only temporarily here, short term until Sharat's visa problems have been sorted out. A maximum of one to two weeks." Sharat will support Rashmi from India via telephone, so there will be no delay through inductions to the material. The next work packages don't look promising, but rather alarming. After four weeks, we test Rashmi's code: It's bad. Neither high-performance nor robust and this despite the fact that Rashmi works like a trooper: Every day she sits at her desk at 7:00 a.m. the latest, and she never leaves before 7:00 p.m.. Even at weekends she is here at least on one day. Still the completion date has to be postponed. Rashmi really does learn quickly. She makes no mistake twice, however for the kind of money I am investing here, I expect an expert who doesn't make any mistakes in the first place. There is still no sign of Sharat: The new government in Germany is supposed to have changed the visa rules, and there are communication difficulties between the embassies in Bonn and Berlin. But we need not worry: It's all going to be sorted, probably in a few days. I wait in vain. To pacify us, Rashmi occasionally brings some **Kaju Barfi** to work, a tasty Indian sweet made from cashew nuts and reminiscent of marzipan.

Another four weeks later, during a business trip, I receive Rashmi's farewell mail, thanking me for the friendly and pleasant collaboration. Her visa has run out and from next week she can be reached in India again – all the best. No sign of Sharat, the required work permit is in progress. Vishal asks if they can't simply continue work in India, now that both the employees familiar with the project are back there. Politely, I point out clause two of the agreed criteria to him: "1. All work on the project is to take place locally". "Oh well, so we really have to push through Sharat's visa application". Didn't they promise this weeks, no months ago? This statement finishes the project for me, and we look for a local team member instead.

In the aftermath of failure number two, a head of department in India admits that the working model of the second pilot doesn't fit in with the business model of the company. So why did they accept the tender? I rather start to suspect that the local engagement of experienced developers proved too expensive for the contractor: On the one hand, they lose an expert back in India – where there is a shortage of experienced personnel anyway. On the other hand, Sharat back in India could be teaching a whole team of newcomers at the same time. This knock-on effect makes the agreement unviable for the supplier.

Thought of the day: Only large scale projects pay off.

Bombay Curry

<i>1 tbs. butter</i>	<i>1 tbs. coriander</i>
<i>2 onions</i>	<i>½ tsp. chilli powder</i>
<i>2 cloves of garlic</i>	<i>500 g lamb</i>
<i>1 chilli</i>	<i>400 g tinned tomatoes</i>
<i>1 tbs. ginger</i>	<i>½ tin of coconut milk</i>
<i>2 tsp. curcuma</i>	<i>peanuts</i>
<i>2 tsp. cumin</i>	<i>salt</i>

Melt the butter in a large pan. Fry the onions on a medium heat until they turn transparent. Add garlic cloves, chilli, ginger, curcuma, ground cumin and chilli powder. Heat while stirring constantly.

Add the lamb and fry on a high heat until it is coated in the spice mixture, stirring continuously. Add a little salt and tinned tomatoes in their juices. Cover and allow to simmer for 1 - 1½ hours until the meat is tender. Mix in the coconut milk. Simmer for another 5 minutes uncovered, until the sauce starts to thicken slightly. Decorate with peanuts and serve.

During our lunch break, Lex hands over another pile of returned invoices. From the accompanying letter I gather that purchase order number and statement of work are once again missing. He explains that the invoices are now directly drawn up in India, and he has instructed the team there personally. He is confident that things will run smoothly in future. I sign the statements of work.

Parallel with the second project, I had started planning a further test. In this, guaranteed to be the last part of the experiment, an entirely new product was to be designed from scratch and entirely in India. Maybe at least this model would be successful. No inductions, no local involvement. No difficult learnings. No visas. If this went wrong as well, I would have to accuse the supplier of deliberate sabotage. But as always, Vishal assures us this time it will work. He has a very experienced team, support from the very top, a motivated workforce, the help of the Quality Assurance department, and everyone understands the topic perfectly. I entreat him to succeed this time, and for one moment consider myself the most patient man in the world.

March 2006

German helpfulness in any kind of public service is known world-wide. Still spoiled by the excellent service in India I invite Vishal and Lex to Cologne. We find a restaurant directly by the cathedral, which advertises itself as “one of the most beautiful cafe houses in Europe”. It is early evening. Carelessly we sit down at an empty table and ask for a snack. The kitchen is closed, the waitress informs us – visibly annoyed that we dared to interrupt her work. A few minutes later, the same waitress is serving food to the next table. A questioning look to her. Well, the next table belongs to a different section, we should sit at a table where warm food is being served if we want to eat. Visually I can spot no difference between the so called ‘sections’ – we are in a rectangular room with evenly distributed identically decorated tables and chairs – and in the indicated ‘food’ section there are no more empty tables available. We can wait, can’t we? The waitress disappears. Vishal gives me a puzzled look. I am very annoyed and want to leave, but he is so hungry he can hardly keep himself upright anymore.

So I stop the next passing waiter, who takes our order without hesitation, which is swiftly delivered to our table by 'our' waitress. So first we get a lecture: This is a total exception, she would never have served us here! Yes, we know, we were there when she refused to do so earlier. It's against her most deeply held convictions, after all there are clearly defined (and probably only known to her and changing depending on her mood) areas, in which food can be consumed. I would like to slap her, apologise to Vishal, who hungrily swallows a few bites and off we go again, leaving the Cafe in a hurry. Beautiful it may be and admittedly their self-advertisement didn't say anything about the customer being king. However a brief exchange with Indian staff regarding helpfulness and service wouldn't go amiss with this lot. The Cafe makes it onto my list of establishments to be avoided in future.

Welcome to Germany!

May 2006

The second trip to India. This time, part of the development team – Thomas, Hans – and I. Booking the flight unfolds like in the previous year: For a few years now, the quickest way from Germany to Bangalore is the Lufthansa direct flight from Frankfurt – without a stopover, Bangalore can be reached in roughly nine hours. Happily I book the flight. Yet when I hold the booking and travel details in my hands – exclusively collated for me by our company's own travel department – I rub my eyes in astonishment. The department has so far supported me on all of my journeys: It consists of several friendly and helpful ladies, who organise flights, hotels, visas, security and all other travel sundries and who, as a condition of employment, must never have travelled themselves at all.

Or so I suspect.

The main and only goal of the travel service department is to minimise travel costs: My flight, therefore, will be with Air France and take me from Frankfurt to Paris, where I will change to the Emirate Airways flight for Dubai, connect with another Emirates flight to Mumbai (for-

merly Bombay). From there transfer by bus from the international to the national airport where I will finally embark on the last leg of my journey to Bangalore, courtesy of Jet Airways, an Indian budget airline. The duration of this trip is 25 hours. On the Internet I find dramatic stories, especially with regard to the bus transfer and the likelihood of luggage surviving intact – if at all. At least we agreed on the start and end point of the trip! The travel department assures me this is the cheapest way to make the journey – and they are right, of course, providing one takes into account the flight costs in isolation. The fact that this version of the trip will incur two entire working days more is of little consequence to them. So I start collecting the signatures of numerous superiors – as prescribed by the company's travel guidelines – for permission to book the direct flight. And I succeed.

Tuesday, May 16th, 2006

Unfortunately the **Leela** is fully booked this time, and so we spend the night in the **Windsor Hotel**.

In the previous year, the government promised an intensive regeneration of the traffic infrastructure, especially a motorway on stilts leading directly to **Electronic City**. In the morning, Thomas and me are ready and waiting outside the hotel in good time. The driver has arrived, but there is no sign of Hans. We wait. After ten minutes I call his room and several rings later hear a sleepy voice: "Oh, is that the time ...". A little after that we can finally set off. While we slowly creep through the morning traffic jam, we inspect the innumerable construction sites: Not a lot of progress has been made. There is no motorway on stilts, but my last visit here is only one year ago, after all. Suddenly there is a loud bang, a honking of horns, and some cursing by our driver. He jumps from the car. We have had a shunt, not particularly surprising in this traffic. It's been our first and only accident, which, on the contrary, is very surprising indeed. The car behind has taken out our entire rear lights. Despite the permanent jam, the police are at the scene in minutes (I suspect they take up strategic positions along the major routes first thing in the morning, where they loiter, awaiting irregularities), take record of the damage and wave us on.

When we arrive at the supplier's headquarters – we called ahead to apologise for the delay due to adverse circumstances – the first question is: “Was our driver at fault?” Of course not – but I can just about imagine what would have happened to him had my answer been “yes”. Each of us is handed a massive bouquet of flowers by especially called-in flower girls, then the tour of the site follows. This time my team is speechless, and I think I am right to expect better software quality than what we have had delivered so far. This company simply has to be able to achieve more, and I should be proved right this time.

Lunch between the presentations on this occasion is entirely geared towards the German visitors: The Indian curry is served with potato salad – not badly done at all, actually. For hours, we debate the technical details of the coming project, and haggle avidly over the development's necessary effort. Almost all outstanding questions are answered.

Wednesday, May 17th, 2006

To promote the integration of the German and Indian teams, we embark on a day-trip to the remote **Kabini Wildlife Resort**, one of India's better known elephant and wild-life parks, located in the forests of **Karapur**. It's somewhere in the middle of nowhere, a long way from any airport, train station, city and any other mod cons. Unfortunately, it is also a long way from any hospital, but I don't want to have too bleak an outlook here. Thomas and I are ready and waiting outside the hotel first thing in the morning. The driver has also arrived. No sign of Hans. Sounds familiar? I don't waste time waiting and call his room, let it ring a sufficiently long time and sure enough get to hear the sleepy voice “Oh is it that time again?”. A little later we are on our way. The first three hours of the journey to the resort are along a motorway which is still under construction. Never before did I fear for my life as much as I did on this trip. Of course, at this moment in time I had no idea what was to await us on our journey back. There are no markings on the road to indicate the lanes. The ‘motorway’ consists of two broad strips of tarmac, separated by a medium height concrete wall. Often in fact, there is only one strip, especially when crossing rivers or obstacles where the bridges and tunnels have not been built yet, forcing the traffic from both directions to

flow over one single track. As mentioned above, without any visible lane markers. There are no signs, although from time to time there is a gap in the concrete wall, which allows you to change directions. At which point you may wish to perform such a change is left to the discretion of the driver. A wrong turn will lead to a (hopefully) timely abrupt halt in the face of an un-bridged river, a pile of soil, a gigantic hole or the unspectacular unexpected end of the line. At least particularly dangerous spots are marked by a pile of sand tipped into the middle of the lane (or the victims of bad accidents are buried under sand alongside their vehicles in order to save clearance work and dampen the smell of decomposition. My imagination knows no bounds ...) Most of the time the traffic from both directions, like trucks, cars, construction vehicles, cows, pedestrians, rickshaws, chickens, scooters and much more, shares one side of the road, and our driver is concentrating hard on circumscribing obstacles while doing 100 kilometres per hour under constant honking of his horn and avoiding oncoming traffic or forcing said traffic to avoid us. Our only accident, though, the rear-end collision, did not occur on this stretch but – as mentioned previously – in the early morning total jam on the main roads of Bangalore.

Remarkable, especially as a testing ground for the robustness of ones' stomach, is the traditional road house **Kamat Lokaruchi**, half way to Mysore. It is so busy we have to wait for a seat. About five open wooden huts are grouped around the dirty kitchen complex where the food is cooked in the open. The dishes are washed in an old battered tin bath. It is impossible to determine when the washing up water may have been changed last. Some time ago for sure, and probably not today. There are mosquitoes and flies aplenty, and I don't even want to know what the other ever present creepy-crawlies are called. I decide to be especially careful here. To while away the waiting time, I visit a nearby stall where two elderly Indians offer various wood and clay figures. A perfect souvenir! Subrahmanya tries to convince me that I do not need to shop here as Mysore will offer many more and bigger souvenir shops, with a greater variety and higher quality of products, but I still snatch at the chance. In hindsight I am glad I did, because the shops in Mysore without exception turn out to be governmental shops, which, similar to the 'friendship stores' in China, offer some very pretty, but hopelessly overpriced goods. It's actually cheaper to buy at the airport. On top of that, those traders did not go in for my beloved haggling.

I am interested in a figure with the head of an elephant, **Lord Ganesh**, which comes with one, three or five heads. Subrahmanya assures me the three headed Ganesh is “no good”. He recommends picking a figure with one or five heads, and provides the following explanation for this advice:

Ganesh is one of the most widely known gods, son of Shiva and Parvati. One day, when Shiva was out, his mother Parvati wanted to take a bath, but was left without servants to protect her during this time and prevent strangers from entering the house. So she created Ganesh and charged him not to let anyone into the house. When Shiva returned a little later, he met Ganesh at the door, who was guarding the house, and would not let him pass. Shiva got angry and argued that he was the man of the house and Parvati's husband and he demanded to be let in at once. Ganesh, who did not know his father, declined. A terrible fight ensued during which Shiva drew his sword and cut off Ganesh's head. At this moment, Parvati came outside and saw Ganesh's lifeless body lying on the floor, and she became sad and angry. Unfortunately, they could not find the head again, and so Shiva called on Brahma who recommended using the head of the first creature they would find heading north. Shiva sent out his troops to find this creature, and the first thing they encountered was a sleeping elephant. This head was given to Ganesh, who then came back to life.

Hence Ganesh's appearance. The five-headed figure symbolises one's current position as well as the four points of the compass, while the three heads have no mythological value. Today Ganesh is worshipped as a God of luck and against forgetfulness. I like both of these interpretations and so I pick two one headed sculptures.

Finally, we are shown to our seats. The food arrives. Carefully I try the snack recommended by my Indian colleague: **Kotte Kadubu**, a ball of rice and lentil flower the size of a yeast dumpling, wrapped in a banana leaf and served with various dips (ranging from 'hot' – like Coconut Chutney – to 'incredibly hot' – like **Sambar**.) My tongue is on fire.

Masala dosa
(pancakes with spicy potato filling)

<i>175 g rice</i>	<i>1 whole chilli</i>
<i>100 g lentils</i>	<i>3 tsp. ginger</i>
<i>1 whole chilli</i>	<i>2 tsp. cumin</i>
<i>½ tsp. brown sugar</i>	<i>2 tsp. black mustard seeds</i>
<i>½ tsp. salt</i>	<i>1 ½ tsp. curcuma</i>
<i>½ tbs. oil</i>	<i>2 tsp. coriander</i>
<i>10 potatoes</i>	<i>2 tsp. salt</i>
<i>4 tsp. desiccated coconut</i>	

Soak rice and lentils in separate bowls over night, wash and drain and puree one after the other with an electric mixer. Add just enough water to form a fine pulp. Mix both purees in a large bowl together with the finely chopped chilli, brown sugar and salt. Stir the dough, cover and allow to rest for 2 hours. Heat oil in a pan on a medium heat and fold the dough once more - it should be runny.

Bake the dosas like pancakes.

For the filling: Boil potatoes until soft, peel and mash roughly. Mix desiccated coconut, chopped chilli, freshly crushed ginger and a few drops of water to a pulp. Heat the oil in a pan and roast cumin and mustard seeds while stirring continuously. When the mustard seeds start to jump add the pulp. After one minute add the potatoes, curcuma, coriander and salt. Fry for 5 minutes under constant stirring then put to one side.

Fill the dosas with the pulp and fry again briefly. Serve masala dosas fresh tomato salad.

Only afterwards they tell me that you can also simply dip Kotte Kadubu into sugar. I wish I'd known that before. The food is accompanied by an unforgettable coffee, as tough as silicone and as strong as it is black. Just sniffing it assures a caffeine high, sufficient to keep me awake for the rest of our journey. The taste on the contrary is rather modest. With some effort, I manage to consume more than half a cup.

Originally there should have been a recipe for Kotte Kadubu at this point, but it proved to be rather difficult to source some of its ingredients. Where in Germany am I going to get fresh banana leaves? Subrahmanya recommends the simpler variety **Idli**, but even this recipe is still quite demanding: Rice cooked the previous day, dried, ground, the same procedure for **blackgram pulses**, a particular type of lentil. I receive uncountable recipe suggestions from the Indian team, some handed down through generations, but they are all fairly complex and require ingredients unbeknown to the German market. In exchange for sugar cones and 'Feuerzangenbowle'-proof rum, I even receive an 'Idli maker', a special insert for a pressure cooker to aid the production of Idli. As an alternative recommendation you can get a ready mix in many Asian shops, 'Gits Idli Mix', which I try immediately, but which considerably lags behind the original in the taste stakes. So I settle for the comment that the Kotte Kadubu served in Kamat Lokaruchi are divine and you should definitely taste them, should you happen to be passing.

Happy, we reach the old emperor city of Mysore – capital of Karnataka province under the **Wodeyar Dynasty** – for a brief midday break and then carry on for another four hours through the Indian jungle until we reach camp, far from any civilisation. The 'road', meanwhile, has turned into a badly maintained, rainwater eroded, un-tarred single lane dirt track. Sporadically, we pass some pitiful mud hut villages and watch the farmers work their fields with their bare hands, only a few using progressive tools like ox and ploughs. What a contrast to Bangalore's 'Electronic City'!

Eventually we arrive: Somewhere in the middle of a bamboo nowhere. Our huts stand beneath gigantic bamboo shrub: A square room in typically colonial style, constructed entirely from wood, no air conditioning, instead of a window just an opening with a mosquito net, but very clean. And each room has its own bathroom – luxury. Astonishingly, my mobile phone, here at the end of the world, shows 100% cov-

erage – I can even choose between several service providers. A little later I find the transmission station right in the middle of the camp. So I can comfortably access my e-mails, even from here. Just what I longed for, having originally feared I may have to relax! The rising IT nation greets: Progress doesn't stop even for this remote area of India. As always there is free accommodation for chauffeurs where our driver can stay the night.

My worries regarding dangerous or even poisonous snakes in this area – I would change my sandals for proper shoes if there were – are allayed with a smile by my Indian colleagues: "Oh no – not here!". Given my experience with the Indian way of answering questions, and my knowledge of just how far the Indian host will go to make his guest feel welcome and secure, I decide to wear the closed shoes after all – a good decision as it turns out later. When I pose the same question to one of our guides he spends several minutes reeling off a list of all the local snakes classed as dangerous, amidst which cobras and pythons stick in mind. There is no way I am going to be voluntarily strolling through the undergrowth here.

We spend the evening barbecuing food in front of our wooden huts at the banks of a reservoir, in the steady hope that the crocodiles, who live there, are asleep at this hour. To accompany the food we enjoy a little keg of 'Koelsch' we smuggled in from Germany, which, because unknown to them, delights the Indians especially. In addition to this there are Indian snacks like peanuts with Masala Chai.

Thought of the day: India is dangerous.

Mutter Paneer
(vegetarian curry with beans and cheese)

3 tbs. oil	1 clove of garlic
2 onions	3 tsp. ketchup
1 ½ tsp. cumin	4 tsp. yoghurt
1/4 tsp. curcuma	500 g beans
1 cinnamon stick	250 g goats cheese
3 cloves	masala
3 peppercorns	coriander
1 tsp. ground ginger	

Heat the oil and briefly fry the chopped onions, cumin, curcuma, cinnamon stick, cloves and pepper corns. Add ground ginger and crushed garlic. Simmer with the ketchup until creamy. Stir in the salt and yoghurt then add the cooked beans and goats cheese. Masala and coriander to taste.

Serve with rice.

It's easy to prepare in large quantities and tastes great, though visually one needs to get used to it. Can be prepared one or two days in advance.

Thursday, May 18th, 2006

Six o'clock the following morning we stand by the jeep, which is going to take us into and through the early morning park. Even Hans has made it out of bed in time today, instead we are missing two of the Indians – it is possible they enjoyed our beer too much. But they are kindly awoken by the team. This early in the morning is meant to be the best time for observing the animals. Later in the day they hardly come out. I hope the animals know this because during the constant efforts of the Indians to offer as much as possible for their clients – i.e. us – and to entertain them around the clock their – i.e. our – need for sleep is often overlooked. I am incredibly tired. Only half alive, we finally all find ourselves in the rickety jeep, our guide turns the key in the ignition, it smokes and crackles, there is a bang, the smell of burning and something drops to the floor. The driver, muttering a curse of “Oh no!”, climbs out of the car, looks underneath the jeep and finds a shoe box sized piece of the engine lying on the ground. Everyone alights. Can we get back into bed? “Not necessary, I’ll repair this in no time. I just screw it back on”. Suspiciously we weigh up the potential truth in this statement and the chance of success. Good thing this happened in the camp and not in the middle of the jungle. The tigers would have had a field day. One of our Indian colleagues asks about a replacement vehicle, but this one is the only one.

Half an hour later, the jeep is indeed roadworthy again. The two Indians who had to be woken up by the team look particularly grim, they would probably have preferred to sleep through the waiting time. Along a forest track – the emphasis here is definitely on forest rather than track – we move deeper into the jungle. I don’t see a single animal. The diesel engine drowns out the bird song, too, which I can at least guess at. After half an hour I declare the park a flop. After all, they warned us right from the start that it would be difficult to spot any animals. There probably aren’t any. Hence the photographic exhibition at reception. After a while, in the far distance at the edge of the forest I see a deer, the ‘white spotted deer’. My enthusiasm is limited – we have those at home, too. Behind the next group of trees a whole ‘white spotted deer’ family: Two large and two small ones. And then more and more. Hundreds. Thousands. Everywhere. Soon there are more deer than trees, watching our passing, bored and churning grass. Many stand in the middle of the path

and can barely be persuaded to get out of the way. Allegedly, every tiger eats one deer per week. I consider the sheer number of deer more proof yet that there aren't any tigers in the park at all. Eventually, a monkey shows its face – but only just long enough for me to move the camera in its direction – it is gone amongst the trees before I can take the photo. At least I now own several beautiful pictures of Indian tree tops. Over the following period of time, I once again see innumerable 'white spotted deer'. Large families and loners. Sleeping and eating. Standing and lying. Bored and interested. Maybe we are driving in a circle? The jungle certainly is the same in every direction: One forest junction looks like another. In between metre high bamboo shrubs. At least I grasp where the expression 'oh my dear' comes from: It used to be 'oh my deer' and was first coined by British big game hunters in the Indian jungle. Finally, some other animals rear their heads: A family of elephants (yesterday there were 'more than 300' here), several buffalos and crocodiles, which we can enjoy close up while paddling across a lake in a **Coracle**, a round home-made, oversized plastic sheet covered, wobbly bamboo saucer.

Suddenly, our guide stops and points to some dried up bushes covered in only a few leaves, directly by the side of the road. "There – an elephant!" I try to focus my dust crusted eyes, and true enough: Less than three metres next to me, a small herd of elephants munches happily away in the shrubbery and still they are barely visible. Suddenly there is a deafening screaming from the trees. Allegedly, this is the warning call of a small monkey, alerting the other jungle dwellers to the coming of a tiger. Indeed several dozen 'white spotted deer' fly past us, followed by some buffalos. Then another warning call. There are no more animals to be seen. It is deadly silent. Our guide stares concentrated into a bamboo shrub. There is nothing to see, not even a 'white spotted deer' and I suddenly am not at all certain I would like to be this close to a tiger. Can they jump into open jeeps? Despite a long wait, we aren't going to see a single tiger, however. The only one I spot in the evening is stuffed and stands in a glass cabinet in a restaurant.

Amazingly, the jeep holds together for the drive back into camp. We round off the excursion with a quick breakfast (spiced flat bread, hot noodles, fresh milk, rice and curry and – thank the Lord – for the western tourists toast and marmalade, which I settle for), so we can get to Mysore in time, where our partner's training centre is located. This we have to

see because we have already questioned the school education and capability of their developers several times.

Our host's Mysore campus defies belief. A green oasis with well kept gardens, mirrored glass palaces and marble cladding. The 3,000 quarters alone, in which the trainees live for three months at a time, form a small town. They consist of apartments for two, each grouped together in small buildings of four units. The centre of the campus is taken up by the monumental library, reached by an oversized staircase, which makes the Spanish stairs in Rome look like a poor relative. Spanning 20,000 m² the library offers everything one could desire for one's studies, several times over. The lecture halls are spread over more than 20 buildings, with seating for up to 200 students per hall, and to make sure that no one misses anything, even in the furthest seats, the whole lecture is recorded live and simultaneously broadcast onto several monitors. Apart from the core subjects, there are lessons about all the other countries, which may potentially become clients, their mores and culture, language, population and idiosyncrasies.

Leisure time – which according to campus regulations doesn't start before 17.00 hours – is spent by the students lazing in the company-owned swimming pool, strolling through the campus shopping centre, having fun in the (originally German!) bowling alleys, climbing the 15 metre climbing wall, sweating in the fitness centre, running around in the tennis courts or amusing themselves in the recently opened 1,500 seater cinema. Everything located in the company grounds, and for the exclusive use of its employees. Small contrast to the rather pitiful homes patched up with plastic sheeting and spare bits of woods, which lie just outside the company gates. Here rests a gigantic amount of offshore winnings. I try to work out how many of our jobs would finance this. Probably several.

The campus' mission statement is to train 3,000 newcomers each quarter and get them ready for the outsourcing business. These are selected from roughly 80,000 applications per week. I ask twice, but I heard the figures right the first time. Given my Indian experience so far, I still decide to translate it to 'quite a lot' instead of an actual figure. To compare this with the one or two applications I receive whenever a vacancy arises in my team! And I would rather not even start on the content of those applications ...

For a while now, I have suspected that our supplier's hierarchy isn't quite as 'level' as our own and that they practice a high degree of task specialisation. Occasionally too much so. And so it is unavoidable that we should broach the subject. I am amazed: The Indian hierarchy is almost twice as steep as our own: The **software engineer trainee** has only recently graduated and is not yet allowed to program unsupervised. He works for the **software engineer** who has already acquired some project experience. The **program analyst** defines the tasks for those two subordinate levels. Above him is the **technical architect**, who designs the looks of a system and who is on level pecking with the project manager. The **senior technical analyst**, like the **senior project manager**, too, overlooks several projects in parallel. Both report to the group project manager, who in turn is responsible to the **delivery manager** whose ultimate responsibility is the delivery of the product. Above him we find the **associate vice president**, only marginally below the **vice president**, who in turn is subordinate to the **chief technical officer** (CTO). That's ten levels. In Germany, by comparison, the common developer and CTO are separated by a mere five levels – for some of the Indian grades I can't even find a translation. How am I supposed to decide which decision can and should be made on which level?

Far too often I am fed lines like "Oh, I don't know about that", "That's not in my brief", "Only X knows about that", where 'X' usually stands for the next level in the hierarchy. If in doubt, I shall in future turn to the highest available level straight away.

Thought of the day: Indian hierarchy is high.

To round off the day of presentations, I am asked to prepare a brief talk on a subject of my choice – possibly something technical. No problem – I thought, bringing with me a pile of transparencies about a recent topic. Today at 2:00 p.m. it's my turn. At some point between the presentations I am sure to find a few minutes to discuss the topic with my Indian team members. Long before 2:00 p.m. my hosts, including the local head of department, are getting very nervous. The talk is to take place in another building as a few more listeners have been invited. Our current conference room can hold almost 30 people, but whatever. A golf buggy collects us from the conference centre and drives us to the training

block, where we are immediately greeted by a five headed welcoming committee and taken to an overcrowded lecture room seating more than 200. One of the walls is covered with eight large monitors showing the equally cramped lecture halls in other company buildings, to whom my presentation will be broadcast live. To facilities without video conference equipment a 'web-cast' is organised as an alternative to allow the colleagues to follow events from their desk. The head of department opens the lecture, then hands me the microphone. There is to be 20 minutes of presentation followed by 20 minutes of questions, open also to the video linked participants. If I had guessed at the scale of this 'talk', I would have prepared some more material! Still, there is applause. Hopefully they understood my English. This was without doubt my largest audience so far. To compare this level of interest with the number of visitors our company's internal training programmes attract.

Thought of the day: The Indians can't get enough of new learning.

After the presentation it's starting to drizzle. Utterly unexpected for this time of year, as the host assures us. The clouds are bound to part immediately. It starts to rain in earnest. We make it to the car and want to set off, because it is a good few hours' drive to Bangalore, where a long day awaits us: Almost ten hours of discussions are planned for tomorrow. Now it is getting dark: Instead of parting, the clouds have thickened rapidly. We don't even make it off the campus. Instead I am treated to the spectacle of a monsoon-style downpour, as mentioned above, completely un-seasonal – as the Indian colleagues are still confirming – but how is the rain supposed to know that? Within minutes the water stands almost to knee height. Visibility is around 20 metres. I hope our car isn't going to get washed away. I hear one thunder clap after another, the constant lightning illuminates the scene only fractionally. The storm tears down everything that isn't bolted to the ground. The sunscreen at the entrance, which we have just passed, has three security personnel hanging off it, who are trying to prevent it from being blown away – they ran out of time to take it down the normal way. A soaking wet gate guard collects our visitor passes, but he can't open the gate yet because of the weather. We wait. After ten minutes the gate opens and we drive, or rather swim, towards the centre of town. I decide to hire an amphibi-

ous vehicle for my next visit. It is still pouring down, everywhere is littered in broken trees, fallen branches, roads have turned into torrents. The roofed bus shelters are crammed full of people all desperately trying to remain a little bit dry at least. We cast just a fleeting glance in passing onto the famous maharaja palace **Amba Vilas**, a visit to which we had planned for the return journey. I am seriously worried about being hit by falling trees, which have – visible to everyone – already taken out a few vehicles. Somehow we make it to Bangalore. In addition to the usual road conditions, mentioned earlier, we now also have to contend with rain, darkness, tiredness and fallen trees, but I only once jump from my seat when a tottering pedestrian lurches towards our car, missing it only by centimetres. We reach the hotel at 2:00 a.m. – just five hours away from the morning collection.

Friday, May 19th, 2006

Last night's dinner didn't sit too well with Hans. He is up and outside the hotel on time for once, but he looks dreadful. Deep sunken eyes surrounded by inappropriately dark rings. Very pale. Unshaven. He struggles to stay upright. He skipped breakfast, didn't sleep a wink all night, but instead spent most of it on the toilet. He is especially angry, he forgot about the 'peel it, cook it, or leave it' -rule. And so he drags himself through the day, slurping black tea at regular intervals. I give him a tablet which turns his diarrhoea into constipation within minutes. He will spend the entire following weekend in bed in order to recover.

We spend the whole day on campus and once again we learn a lot: How do I find the solution to a problem one of my colleagues has already solved? In a 'knowledge database'. Many companies in Germany have these 'knowledge databases', too, where co-workers can post tips and 'best practice' advice. Unfortunately in my experience these databases are badly maintained and insufficiently structured, the longed-for information can't be found and interesting news doesn't even make it into the data, because as a rule there is no reward or acknowledgment for those who bother to make the effort to collate the information. Quite the opposite is often the case: Knowledge is power, and people try to share as little as possible of it. Not so our hosts: They,

too, have a company wide accessible common knowledge database. In order to motivate their employees to contribute to it, however, the number of supplied articles is taken into account for personal annual reviews. On the other hand there is a control entity, which examines each article for quality before it is admitted to the database, in order to allay temptation to submit a large quantity of trivial nonsense (my spontaneous idea to boost personal ratings). Furthermore, the readers can rate the articles they have read, how useful or valuable they were to them. And whosoever received the best ratings becomes annual champion. Another nice idea.

Gajjar Halwa (carrot desert)

250 g carrots

2 tsp. butter

100 ml cream

50 g palm sugar

2 tbs. coconut flakes

1 tbs. almond slivers

1 pinch of cardamom

rosewater

almond flakes

Wash and grate the carrots. Heat 1 tsp. of butter in a pan and simmer carrots, cream and palm sugar for 20 minutes on a low heat. Stir in coconut flakes, almonds and ground cardamom.

Cook for a further 20-30 minutes.

Add a few drops of rosewater and 1 tsp. of butter to taste and decorate with almond flakes.

Can be eaten hot or cold.

Unfortunately, the lovely internet project supervision tool, which had enthused me so during our contractor selection phase, and the use of which I had demanded on all our projects so far but had only received in a very limited capacity, has disappeared from the delivery portfolio. Lack of customer interest, Vishal explains. Whilst clients generally showed great enthusiasm during the demonstration of the tool and asked for it to be incorporated into their projects, they then failed to cast another glance at it once the process was up and running, as the website hit counter showed. Pity. Could this possibly be because the delivered software boasted a lot less functions than the demonstrated version? I had already wondered why the contractor suddenly seemed to struggle to provide up to date information via this particular channel. Of course they will still maintain all agreed quality parameters and stick to the threshold values. Which, by and large, is true.

In the evening, we are able to freshen up in the company-owned living complex – resembling a five star hotel. On the way to the entrance, I spot bright green almost rabbit sized giant frogs, hopping (still) happily across all the paths. Horrified I notice Thomas almost stepping on one of those creatures because it is slowly getting dark and those frogs, hard to spot as they are now, have an uncanny way of jumping directly underneath the feet of any passer-by. Stepping back I call out a warning to Thomas, but my step ends unusually soft and squishy and I look down aghast to see half a shocked looking giant frog peering out from beneath my shoe. Hastily I withdraw my leg, the frog drags itself into the nearest piece of grass and I hope to have grazed him only marginally. I apologise to Vishal the same evening for potentially afflicting pain on one of the company's amphibians.

I am still concerned with the question of how to get hold of an off-shore team consisting only of experienced developers. For it is this and only this I, as the customer, wish to have. Especially given our experiences so far. The answer appears to be simple: In India, I can't. Not because the Indian outsourcers won't play ball. The customer is king after all and gets (almost) always what he desires (not taking into account what has happened to us so far). The problem is that there simply aren't enough 'free' experienced developers to field entire teams made solely up of them. With the rapid growth they experience, and several hundred or thousand new employees per month, all experienced staff

are needed to train and supervise the newcomers. Good developers rise sharply through the ranks or set up their own companies. And so the typical offshoring model stipulates one or two experienced ‘senior technical analysts’ leading an army of inexperienced developers. Unfortunately they mostly tend to forget to mention this during the marketing and sales presentations. Who cares for such details, after all? Only a ‘solid’ mixture makes the offshoring business profitable for most suppliers. It makes the comparison ‘for the price of one German, I can have five Indians’ a very shaky one. At least our partner has agreed – for this last pilot project in any case – to provide exclusively experienced staff. And this was not easy: It required the nod from the company directors, and the prospect of a sufficiently large volume of future orders, which I propose could follow the successful completion of the project. Even though it is with the unpleasant feeling of once again getting a ‘well mixed’ team hereafter.

You have no topic for the communal supper? Need to hold small talk? Uncomfortable pauses in conversations during dinner? The subject of cricket will open every Indian’s heart. Even if, after several years of co-operation and a multitude of attempts to have the rules explained to you, you are still none the wiser as to the finer points of this sport, the mention of this topic will still effortlessly bridge any gaps. In the widest sense, it is a kind of baseball: Two teams face each other, one throws a ball, the other bats it away and runs. Occasionally points are scored. **Sachin Tendulkar** counts amongst the India’s foremost personalities and is celebrated as a hero.

Saturday, May 20th, 2006

The flight back. Happily, I lumber two crates of **Alphonso Mangoes**, which have been handed to me as a last minute surprise. I am (this is often the case on these journeys) dog-tired, but I desperately need something in my stomach before I try to carve at least a few hours tortured sleep from the tight and uncomfortably hard seats on the plane. The entire week, I (in contrast to Hans) have stuck to the ‘boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it’ rule and have avoided fresh fruit and salads. The five course in-flight menu ends with fresh fruit! Famished I indulge – after all, this

is a Lufthansa flight, so I trust the origin of the food to be German and thus its compatibility with my stomach. Bad choice, as I discover soon. Only a few minutes after I have eaten my stomach begins to rumble. I happen to be talking to one of the stewards and ask casually if the food, as I assumed, is really from Germany. He shakes his head and laughs. No, that was loaded in India. But he has never witnessed chaos like this time. Thank God the toilet is only in the next aisle ...

Thought of the day: Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it.

June 2006 to November 2006

Keeping up Pays off

June 2006

The next attempt. This is now the third pilot project and the last chance we give to the Indians to prove to us that offshoring can work. And finally this hits home with the contractor, too. We send the specifications, which contain all our implementation demands and receive an offer back, in which the contractor estimates an involvement of six man years. That means, one developer would take six years to complete the project or six developers would be busy for one year. I had estimated six man months. But of course, I could be wrong. As I am a little surprised by this astonishing level of estimated time and effort I contact the Bulgarian firm for a counter offer and quickly find my thoughts confirmed: They, too, estimate no more than six man months. They are, of course, not yet familiar with our way of working, but still the contrast is too great for me to hand the order to India with a clear conscience. I therefore offer the project to India for the price we had expected – roughly half the figure they had in their first offer, and initially I earn only horrified head shaking, then long, clarifying monologues and suddenly I have an offer confirming my stipulated conditions.

Without noteworthy changes in our demands. I accept the offer. I would have liked to send the same order to Bulgaria as well, but unfortunately the pilot budget does not stretch that far.

Thought of the day: I always have to estimate the effort myself.

Now we get weekly visits from ‘area sales managers’, ‘senior sales managers’, distribution specialists, heads of department or ‘account managers’ to reassure us of their full co-operation. The Indian team suddenly consists of twelve people, all practised developers with ten or more years experience on the job, all of them team leaders themselves by now. I hope they still remember how to write software. Vheba is no longer amongst them, she has got married in the meantime and left the firm. The cathedral in Cologne will have to remain on her wish-list

for some time to come. A permanently local, only recently employed, German speaking ‘customer relationship manager’, – whom we shall call Frank from here on – is given a desk in our offices and sees to it that our requirements are aligned with the distant development team, that communication is kept up, and misunderstandings detected. The general manager for Europe and America visits us twice. There are weekly telephone conferences, which include high level Indian directors, despite the fact that they concern themselves largely with detailed technical queries. The contractor’s quality assurance latches into the process at every step and queries project plans, milestones, documents and so on. The test department produces thousands of test cases. There are monthly workshops in Germany, which lay out and discuss the state of the development in detail. Every document is forwarded for our approval. And all this for a rather concise pilot project. But this is the work ethic I had expected after my first impressions during the contractor selection and the presentations we were given. Now Frank is off to India for a few weeks of induction.

End of June 2006

During one of our regular lunches with our partners I casually ask how their other German projects are going – having received a ‘short and sweet’ summary of catastrophes from a colleague and acquaintance of a competitor the previous day. I guess this was the right cue because Vishal and Lex are suddenly overflowing with information. Well, they tried the ‘big bang’ approach there, the environment was difficult, they struggled to find competent contacts, and had not been given any concrete delivery deadlines. They had stepped in on short notice for another contractor who found himself unable to honour his obligations. The transfer of knowledge was proving difficult. There were no established process guidelines and documentation was incomplete. There is no stopping them.

Anyway, one should always calculate for at least half a year’s delay on the first project. They talk and talk. In short: There, too, the first project failed miserably and they were given a ‘last chance’ second chance. So it seems my experiences are no exception.

Friday, August 18th, 2006

Today another workshop: Despite complications with travel conditions – due to latent terror warnings and the intensified security measures they bring with them, travel times have increased considerably – Sud arrives from India in time. In our conference room, called **Cyberlab**, we work through the design step by step, and it's looking good. The design. The offshore team has clearly spent a lot of thought and effort on this. Their design appears at times a little over-sized, but it only serves to make it more extendable and flexible. We still find a few minor flaws, which are, however, easy to fix at this stage. Another confirmation that an offshore team can only be guided by local experts.

Thought of the day: Check every detail at every milestone.

Tuesday, August 22nd, 2006

After the abandonment of pilot project number two, we soon find another 'native' external co-worker for the outstanding tasks. It's as different as chalk and cheese. The team member is present every day, an attribute I have learned to value after my first offshoring adventures. No communication difficulties. Joyfully, Thomas tells me that in just two weeks the newcomer has managed to get so familiar with the system that he can be left to work on his own. With only bullet point descriptions of the desired new functionality at his disposal, he has spent the weekend reading up on the topic and has worked out several suggestions and highlighted especially noteworthy points. After a further week, he has a prototype. And the code is beautiful, like a poem. What a professional. This is rather what I had originally expected from offshoring. The hourly rate for the newcomer lies marginally above the offshoring partner's, but there are no extra expenses like management, co-ordination, quality assurance, account manager, distribution, travel expenses, adjustment of the specifications and others. The offshoring concept would not even have provided a rough description of functionality in this time span. Not to mention the extra work Thomas incurred trying to make the Indian code functioning and fast. Life can be so easy. At least these types of

project, where the complexity is rather limited and only a few team members are needed, I no longer consider suitable for offshoring.

Wednesday, August 30th, 2006

Today, Hans and I fly to London to meet some offshoring-experienced friends to share some of the experiences. The whole journey is planned rather tightly – almost too tightly. In fact: Set off 1:00 p.m., flight departure 2:00 p.m., arrival in London 3:00 p.m.. Drive to company, meeting between 4:00 p.m. and 6 p.m., drive back to the airport, return flight 8:00 p.m., arrival 10:00 p.m.. Any kind of leeway for delays, traffic jams or queues at the airport are simply ignored this time because the alternative flight would take us a good five hours longer. Surprisingly, it runs like clockwork: No traffic jams on the motorway, not even on the M25 around London – this is almost unheard of. No queues at the check-in. No waiting at security (except that Hans' lighter is confiscated due to new safety regulations). The same crew that looked after us during our flight to London is also at hand for the return flight, greeting us with a friendly "Haven't we met before"? There is no delay before take-off.

The British company had started roughly at the same time as us to think about outsourcing software development and approached the whole thing a little more pragmatically – not to say carefree. Instead of our long term careful evaluation process and test projects they took the approach of sacking forty of their employees and handing their project over to 'external'. Advantage: No protest from within the team. Disadvantage: The contractor isn't delivering. So far, there are delays of twelve months. And the alternative of internal development is no longer an option. Instead, they get regular escalations. According to the contract, the supplier ought to be paying huge sums in compensation for the delayed delivery, but the extent, effect and reasons for those delays are a bone of very strong contention. From time to time, software fragments are being delivered, which don't even pass the preliminary tests. Should a running version of the programme ever appear, there is no one left to check aspects like maintenance and quality – which gobble up roughly 70% of costs, the experts agree. Thanks to the wishy-washy formulation of accountability the supplier doesn't seem overly concerned during any

meeting. The slightly desperate sounding project leader now wants to see how we approached things. He hopes for pointers how to save his project. And he gets them, because on transparency no. three of my presentation he realises, thanks to a list of criteria which weigh up certain software projects' suitability for outsourcing, that his project isn't suitable. Add to this that one of the largest risks in outsourcing springs from the inability to return to internal developers in the case of project failure, he has a real problem on his hands. He still, however, lives in hope that his contractor will one day deliver. We agree on a follow-up meeting. Also at the table is a rather unimposing colleague, Jo, who hardly says a word. He is visiting from a different department. Some of his comments make me conclude that he, too, must have had some offshoring adventures, but as time is very tight, as mentioned above, we decide to speak the following week on the phone.

Friday, September 1st, 2006

Friday. As every week, I meet at close to midday with Hans and Thomas in one of our 'aquariums', fully glazed meeting rooms, to learn of the latest project status and possible problems from India via telephone conference. The status, always presented by Subrahmanya, is 'dark green', which means everything is in order. Casually, he mentions that four new members have joined the team. My alarm bells start to ring, because these two statements seem mutually exclusive. Out of the blue, a minor increase in effort has been experienced. About half a man year. I exchange astonished glances with Hans and Thomas, who shrug their shoulders. It's a bit much, both the extra time and manpower. I still remember **Moore's** golden rule from my time as a student: "Adding more people to a late project will make it later". Subrahmanya tries to allay my fears. Really everything is alright. It's just a precaution with no extra cost implications for ourselves. Now the alarm bells go into overdrive. A careful hint like this from the Indian side I have learned by now to interpret as revelation, as a catastrophe report. Subrahmanya promises to explain everything in a brief letter, and by and large he is only running slightly behind the original project plan. A few minutes earlier the project was running precisely to time! I expect the worst, but first of all release the team for the weekend.

Kheer (rice pudding)

<i>1.25 l milk</i>	<i>40 g dried apricots</i>
<i>75 g rice</i>	<i>2 cm cinnamon stick</i>
<i>125 g sugar</i>	<i>40 g almond slivers</i>
<i>1 tsp. cardamom</i>	<i>2 tsp. rosewater</i>
<i>75 g raisins</i>	

Bring milk to the boil, then add rice. Stirring constantly bring to the boil once more, then simmer on a low heat for a further 90 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add sugar, raisins, apricots, cardamom and cinnamon. Cook for a further hour. Then add the almond slivers and cook for another 30 minutes.

Let it cool down before adding the rosewater, then pour Kheer in glass bowls and decorate with a few almond slivers.

Beware: Stick to the cooking times otherwise you'll end up with milky rice rather than rice pudding.

One of the greatest challenges for any supplier in typical offshoring countries lies in finding and keeping competent personnel. Due to the strong growth of the whole sector many companies are wringing their hands looking for anyone who can even spell 'software development'. For computer scientists of every shade it is easy to find better paid jobs in a six monthly rhythm. And they exploit it. Staff turnover rates of 20% and more are no rarity. For clients and projects, on the contrary, it is a real challenge to constantly have to battle the induction of new team members. So the strategy of Indian companies consists of designing the projects in such a fashion that the task of one member can easily be transferred to the next. On the other hand, they try their best to keep their staff. And it is these strategies that I especially give greater consideration to during my selection process. From the German point of view, the ways in which staff are encouraged to stay seem at times downright ex-

traordinary. The better ones amongst the companies I visited hand their employees a veritable treasure chest of extras, bonuses and further training, not just in their field, but also languages or foreign cultures. Wages increase dramatically with the length of service. There are stock options, which can only be cashed in after a certain amount of years spent with a company. On company expenses, staff are picked up from their homes in the morning, driven to work and dropped off again in the evening – all in the company's own buses. After work, the company premises turn into a leisure park: Swimming pools, cinemas, bowling alleys, fitness centres, volleyball courts, climbing walls, tennis courts and whatever other sports facilities the employees desire. Of course for free. Medical care is covered by the company. Those who are interested are offered placements abroad. Following American examples an 'employee of the month' is crowned and offered extra bonuses. On a monthly basis, they hold parties and get-togethers for staff members and their families – like we used to do until a few years ago. This, too, is of course free of charge. Despite all this, the number of employees seeking a 'better life' elsewhere and changing companies to get it remains – in my eyes – frightfully high.

Tuesday, September 5th, 2006

I look forward to the chat with Jo, which we had to postpone last week. A telephone conference. Politely, he once again applauds me on my presentation and tells me – under the special proviso that he does not mean to blow his own trumpet – he has spent almost ten years running offshoring projects, two of those in charge of a subsidiary with 200 staff members in Beijing, China and several hundred co-workers in South America, an Indian branch with 400 software developers in Calcutta, as well as smaller team in South Africa, Singapore and Spain. He reckons he might have picked up some valuable experience in this time.

First I learn that China does not have any problems with a high staff turnover. As more or less everything there is state regulated, a company simply registers its staffing needs with the ministry for labour, and a short while later suitable workers with matching profiles are dispatched. As the independent market is very small, those workers tend to stick with the companies they have been assigned to. If they were older than 30

they wouldn't speak English, and even the younger one's struggle with anything that isn't Chinese, but written communication worked well. And thus he proceeded accordingly, even with co-workers seated at the next desk. Even the most trivial of thought exchanges happens via e-mail. We ourselves decided against China early in the process because of concerns about data security. Jo selected his partners mainly on the basis of proximity to the client: His client was based in China. Furthermore, he only ever commissioned fixed price projects from the offshoring providers and advises us to proceed likewise. Unfortunately, that means knowing right from the start exactly what will be needed. This does not fit our model of the 'extended workbench', which is based around an offshoring team working hand in hand with our own staff in the design of the product and remaining flexible to changing demands – for this, alas, is what my reality looks like. Jo's model has the disadvantage that the inner software quality cannot be examined, tests can only determine if functionality meets the specifications. This leaves him unable to get a picture of maintenance costs, which after all usually account for more than half the expenses. I, however, want a model that allows me to examine the system from the inside, too. He has never really shown such a detailed interest in software development, and yet many of his projects concluded successfully.

We finish our chat after almost two hours and I haven't learned all that much new. His way of outsourcing and offshoring isn't ideal for our boundary conditions.

And I have heard from a good few 'quick, easy and risk-free' outsourcing fixed price projects which did not deliver what their name promised.

Friday, September 8th, 2006

Frank is back! About three weeks ago he took a job with our Indian supplier in order to become the Indian team's 'bridgehead' on location here in Germany. Over the last few weeks, he had his induction in India where he got to know all the important contacts. He returns with very familiar impressions: Impressive company grounds in Bangalore and Mysore, chaotic traffic, excellent food, but he didn't spot any frogs

and his flight was a turn-off. He booked the journey version with change in Mumbai and had to spend several long and boring hours there in the middle of the night waiting for his connection. But he got to see some live tigers in a zoo near Bangalore.

It is a relief for me to have a German speaking, culturally compatible member of the contractor's team directly with us. First of all, I ask him if he has brought with him a panacea on how to best practice offshoring, after all you'd think the supplier with their many years of experience should know. How do we need to adjust our model to finally succeed? In India the customer is king and you should never contradict him. Never. This is rule number one. So, if the customer has only vague ideas of the processes and products, it would be the job of the Indian team to incorporate them as much as possible into the offshoring model, no matter how ridiculous or complicated. Hence our experience with the 'open-source' software from the first project, which had been built in without comment, even though it did nothing to solve the problem. The Indians he got to know were programmed to read their client's wishes from their eyes and not to query them. This is all very nice, but its not exactly conducive to successful projects. He promises to make it part of his job to reflect on all our comments in the future.

Frank brings a rejected bill: Could I sign the statement of work? He gets the document. A statement of work signed beforehand could directly be added to the bill and possibly simplify the process, I remark with a smirk. He is going to see to it. The very next day he has a meeting with a lady from bookkeeping, who pours out her heart to him: With a sigh she points to the centimetre high pile of bills, which cannot be allocated to a specific procedure in the company because of insufficient or missing details. He understands, comforts her, and promises to do whatever he can to avoid this inconvenience in the future, at least where offshoring projects are concerned.

Thursday, September 28th, 2006

Our weekly telephone conference. Frank has introduced an orderly reporting system: Instead of a brief e-mail outlining last weeks completed activities, we now get a graphically well prepared project dia-

gram transparency containing all the planned milestones with added dates ('originally', 'planned' and 'current'), risks, open and closed action points, traffic lights and similar. This makes it easy to see that the project status has meanwhile risen to 'yellow' because the milestone 'code complete', that is the completion date for the software, has been postponed for two weeks. Despite the extra team members. And despite all Subrahmanya's assurance that neither was the final deadline in danger, nor was there any possibility that the costs would exceed the agreed budget. He put his hand into fire for that. I am sceptical, for the next week is unlikely to bring much progress in India: Monday is a public holiday, Wednesday there is a region-wide strike. We are not being told the reason, but at least we now know that they also strike in India.

But now it's my time to disappear on holiday for a few days.

Wednesday, October 15th, 2006

Hurray! Back to work! Well rested I dive into my overflowing post box. I am curious what developments there have been over the last days in the world of outsourcing and offshoring.

To cut a long story short: Everything is looking rosy again and the following month will be rather uneventfully and almost without surprises until the final approval.

Today I meet my colleague Radek from the Czech branch. He runs the local software development there. At the end of our meeting we more or less accidentally hit on the subject of outsourcing. Radek produces a tortured smile. He has collected his own valuable experiences in this field. Together with a partner he had tried to build a large system with the Russian company I mentioned earlier. The partner had already co-operated with them on a few projects with more or less success. Unfortunately, they were no longer interested in the continued development of the system, which left him the lone remaining outsourcing client working directly with the contractor, who in turn had recently announced that the scope of the contract had become too small in the meantime, and they would therefore not continue to develop the system. He was welcome to do it himself. He has mixed feelings about this for, on the one hand, he

has now been given a task he is not sure how to complete, and on the other hand the quality of the software had been miserable in the past and many clients had complained about its lack of user friendliness. Maybe we could help him? I compare my own experience with his and together we decide to wait for the successful completion of the experiment first.

Frank, it seems, has been successful in the meantime: There have been no more unpaid bills. The project status is back to 'green'. We have been given a prototype of the code as well as the first test reports, and the results of the Indian's review of performance measuring and the degree of compliance with the agreed metrics. All boundaries are adhered to. The software's performance, i.e. the speed with which commands are executed, is sufficient. The reviews have noted a few problems, which according to the plan, will be ironed out by the delivery deadline, just like the errors the tests have thrown up. Next Tuesday, the vanguard of the Indian developers will arrive for pre-integration, where the co-operation of the newly developed software with our existing system will primarily be tested.

It's looking good. Frank beams and wishes to discuss the follow-up order for the next project. As he does in almost every conversation. I put him off until after delivery and only if it is successful. Only three more weeks!

Friday, October 27th, 2006

The delivery date has been agreed: Sud, Anindita and Subrahmanya will arrive here mid November for one week in order to prepare for final inspection, conduct an induction and presentation, and support our tests. Hopefully, it will work this time. With what I have seen so far, I consider it likely, but given my previous project experience, I don't want to break out in premature euphoria.

In India, there are hundreds of different languages: **Kannada** in Karnataka, **Bodo** in Assam, **Konkani** in Goa, **Asamiya** in Assam, **Tami** in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and many more. Each province has its own dialect, and a North Indian from the borders with Pakistan has about as much chance of understanding the East Indian from Goa as the East Frisian has of understanding the Bavarians. Only **Hindi** and English

are officially spoken across the whole country. A British acquaintance laughs about our first offshoring projects, and tells us about a whole string of attempts by British companies to outsource telephone customer service to India, because in India the call-centre hour costs only a fraction of what it does in England. Theoretically, this should work without problem. As mentioned before, however, the Indian accent takes some getting used to and it requires some time to be understood fluently. I particularly like the clicking sounds, which are incorporated into every English sentence in the areas around New Delhi. At least the pronunciation is according to 'Oxford English'. Unfortunately that isn't spoken by everyone in England either, and so the Indian customer care employee often had a very hard time understanding angry and outraged callers with broad accents, using colloquialisms who, after a brief and fruitless attempt to complain, hung up even more angry and determined never to use this particular company's products again. The corporations involved realised this fairly quickly and moved customer services back to England.

We, however, seem to understand each other quite well after a period of adaptation.

Tuesday, October 31st, 2006

Frank and Satish, one of our partner's employees I haven't met before, spend the whole day with Thomas in pre-integration. So far, our partner had only been able to test the functionality of the interfaces via simulator, but the integration with our system works flawlessly. Thomas is satisfied. It is still looking good.

Lex returns enthusiastic and well rested from a longish holiday to Australia – he has never seen a country this empty before – and he won't hear of not popping by. The brief detour of 300 kilometres is hardly worth mentioning. He is excited to hear about the first positive results, and is confident that everything will go as planned this time. Vishal calls from India: He has just moved and his new home is full of handymen whom he wishes to supervise personally, but he promises to be with us shortly.

Monday, November 13th, 2006

Today we meet with Marion from ‘internal communications’ – a lively, always jolly, outgoing and rather extroverted colleague. As most of our other employees conform to the typical picture of the inward-looking computer scientists, Marion tends to stick out. As everyone involved in the project has a good feeling about it by now, I prepare a little announcement in the internal media, so other departments learn of our trials and results and are possibly able to draw some advantage from it. Lex and Vishal are looking forward to being able to tell of their impressions, too. They represent the project’s greatest challenges from the perspective of India. Amongst other pleasantries, Lex mentions the courteous German way and the lavish distribution of praise. He has had to comfort many Indian team members who, after weeks of tremendous effort to stick to deadlines and iron out unexpected problems, had to settle for a modest “Finally – what took you so long?”. Lex explains it to his colleagues with the help of the often used Swabian saying “No telling off is praise enough”, which stands very much in contrast to the Indian ‘high context’, wordy and exuberant appraisal of even the smallest of tasks. I am quite embarrassed by this as the Indian colleagues have without exception been utterly charming, courteous and accessible, and after our courses on cultural diversity, we should have been aware of their need for demonstrative appreciation.

Thought of the day: I have to show more appreciation.

During lunch, we philosophise about the future possibilities for the industrialisation of software development as it is generally noted that projects are getting more and more voluminous, the number of team members larger, and their management more complex. Their success rate, that is the completion of the projects within time and budget, is nevertheless – or possibly exactly because of this – getting smaller. Most of the software is hand-stitched using labor-intensive methods, and most software is written as though it’s the first of its kind. Software reuse has been an elusive goal, patterns exist, but still need to be manually applied for a particular problem domain. Software development today is slow, expensive and defect prone.

Does automatic code generation work? Many have tried this for some time and as many have thrown in the towel in frustration. Can efficiency be increased through **Model Driven Architecture** (MDA), which no longer utilises automation for the entire system but only for selected parts of this? In presentation examples, it often appears to be working, but in practical applications the story is different. We ourselves are trying smaller steps, and have built a flexible component library which offers building blocks for often needed basic functions, and to which the Indian team also has access. One by one, everyone adds another idea. The ‘software development business process’ needs to be industrialized and move from craftsmanship to ‘manufacturing’. Focus should be on rapid assembly rather than manual coding. Systematic Reuse can be based on a repository of patterns, reusable assets, frameworks, domain-specific languages for rapid development and things like that. And it looks like we are discussing a new business idea. Will this be the future?

Vishal tells me a little later that the low staff turnover Jo pointed out with regard to China is no longer the case. A few years ago maybe, but everything there is changing rapidly and the software industry in China is growing even faster than in India. The budding offshoring countries hotly contest the market for a talented workforce. Even in Bangalore, the first US companies have started to pay wages on a par with the U.S. – much to the dismay of their competitors.

Thursday, November 16th, 2006

In several workshops, we have prepared the presentations and demonstrations, which have been planned for senior management next week, in great detail and tested them several times. Vishal is a little stressed, and he has travelled to Germany frequently to leave nothing to chance. By now, however, everyone is happy with the structure and set up. Only Thomas still has to come up with a use case for the software demonstration. I am not really in the mood to chew through the whole running order minute by minute yet again, but Frank won’t take no for an answer.

Wednesday, November 22nd, 2006

Now it's getting exciting. Cheerfully, I greet Sudarsha, Subrahmanya, Vijay and Satish who arrived yesterday from Bangalore – which on November 1st changed its name back to the original Indian name of Bengaluru. In India it is autumn, too, and the colder season sees temperatures regularly drop below 20 degrees. Subrahmanya thinks this is unreasonably cold, and so he has covered himself with winter clothing suitable for Siberian temperatures for his trip to Germany. Wrapped in a thick scarf and with his woolly hat pulled down low over his face, he arrives at our headquarters. The originally announced Anindita and Jeton are missing – problems with the visa. A 'wrong one' had been issued to them and they are now trying to follow on the next flight. The issuing of visas has been outsourced by the German consulate in India to a local company, which has brought a change of all processes with it. But they are confident it will all work out. I silently translate that we will have to do without them this time.

Once again, we all meet in Cyberlab. For today we have firstly planned the integration and then the induction to the system. And this time, it is our technology that goes on strike: The overhead projector refuses steadfastly to project the images from the connected computer. Catering also appears to be on strike, for the morning coffee is taking its time. The advice of one of the technicians to simply move the mouse a little in order to revive the projector-computer unit isn't all that helpful. But a complete reboot is. And half an hour later we get our coffee, too. The order of it had been overlooked. We can get started.

A little nervously, Subrahmanya delivers his introductory speech, then we take a look at the software. It installs and configures almost entirely by itself. Starts without problem. The prepared examples flicker error-free across the screen. No problems. Repeats achieve the same results, a uniform picture. The software works beautifully with our system. As almost all the responsible developers have taken the trip to Germany, any questions can be answered instantly. The software architecture is well structured, flexible and easily expandable. A variety of programme behaviour can be set up with a simple change in configurations. I take a deep breath. This is what we had hoped for right from the start. Computer specialists aren't known for the exuberant

way in which they voice their emotions, but even my own developers find praise and commendations for the effortless application of the system. The documentation is excellent, and all our stipulated development guidelines have been adhered to. This time round, our partners have put in a lot of effort. It was a good day.

For the evening the team still has a lot of plans: Firstly, factory outlet sale by Haribo followed by the Christmas market in Cologne. But this isn't going to be easy: Given the intricate system of one way streets and construction sites, quickly erected to beat the onset of winter, all aiming to make it impossible to reach any given destination within the town, rainy autumn weather and high volume of pre-Christmas traffic, this is a programme for several hours. We are still a long way from Bangalore conditions here, but still there is no fun travelling in a car right now. Good luck!

Gualb Jamun (Indian milk balls)

½ l water	1 tsp. baking powder
300 g sugar	600 g chip fat
6 drops rosewater	rose petals
½ l milk	almond slivers
4 green cardamom	pistachio slivers
75 g flour	

Heat water and sugar in a pan and leave to boil without a lid for 5 minutes. Take off the stove and add rosewater. Pour the syrup into the bowls in which you will serve the balls later.

Bring milk to the boil in a high lipped pot, stirring thoroughly. Simmer until milk begins to thicken slightly. Then put the pot to one side.

Break open the cardamom bulbs and crush the seeds with a spoon. Sieve the flour into a bowl and mix with baking powder and cardamom. Add the milk and knead until the dough is nicely soft and sticky. Form into balls of roughly 2 cm diameter.

Heat the oil on a medium heat and fry the balls for roughly 15 minutes until they have turned brown. Lift the ready balls from the fryer, drain off excess oil, then place them in the syrup. Allow to marinate for at least 2 hours, turning them regularly.

Garnish with rose petals, almond and pistachio slivers as desired and serve.

Thursday, November 23rd, 2006

The evening programme turned out to be too ambitious, indeed: On the way to Haribo, Satish got lost, and after roughly an hour the team frustratedly reached the hotel instead of the desired sweets. To still their budding hunger, they decided to visit an Indian restaurant they remembered from the previous year – and promptly got lost again in streets altered and made unrecognisable by the Christmas market. Somehow they still managed to find something to eat in the end, but only at the expense of every single planned programme point.

At least they arrive here punctually, as always. It is the day of the test. After yesterdays more passive demonstration, we – that is Thomas and I – get to play with the software ourselves. Thomas has prepared numerous test sequences. Early afternoon, I meet him in the corridor. He beams with joy.

“We’re ready! The tool is great! The test was good fun. Very fast and easy to use. Only one tiny error, which has already been fixed. I eventually ran out of things to throw at it! We’ll be able to use this a lot in the future”.

Another good day!

Friday, November 24th, 2006

Shortly before lunch, I meet up with the team, which is currently putting the finishing touches to the final presentation with demonstration of the software for upper management. It’s still looking good. Everyone is confident. Vishal and Lex have also arrived. Just a quick lunch in the canteen.

The last presentation. Upper management arrives on time. Once again, Subrahmanya starts a little nervously. Many critical questions are being asked, less relevant to the software and more to outsourcing, offshoring, success rates, costs and alternative models. Everything is answered immediately. Now the demonstration, tested a hundred times over. And its working. Subrahmanya lists five cornerstones of successful offshoring: Well defined processes, precise specifications,

communal reviews at every milestone, joined workshops to discuss the framework, and an early shared integration. He gets a few friendly comments from the audience, and the advice to work on this model. The supplier will be recommended internally. Time is up and the high-powered guests with overflowing calendars leave as punctually as they appeared. Excellent. Klaus praises the demonstration euphorically. The Indian team breathes a sigh of relief. Happy faces everywhere – nothing like the last time. Lex thanks everyone from the heart for not throwing in the towel when success was not apparent in the beginning.

Lex and Vishal could not have wished for a better outcome, for now every door in the company is open to them, and so all the effort was worth it in the end. For the following weeks, I was going to take our model on a promotional tour.

When we bid farewell to Subrahmanya, Vishal, Lex and the rest of the team in our spacious foyer, the temperature is a lousy eight degrees Celsius. And this on an early afternoon in a November, which will make it into the history books as one of the warmest on record. It is raining and a damp wind accompanies the grey day perfectly. I can hardly wait till our next meeting in India.

Epilogue

Finally, our perseverance has been rewarded: We have a successful project. On the third attempt. We really have found a model for the utilization of offshore teams for successful software development. With a lot more effort than we had originally anticipated, incorporating more instructions, a lot more control, significantly more tests and needing a much longer test period than we had planned. And it only works for one of the three piloted models. But maybe it just takes a little time for geographically separated teams to amalgamate the way ours have done now. After all, our supplier's commitment and the will to succeed was constant and remarkable from start to finish.

Handing over old systems for maintenance did not work, despite careful selection and the assurance of the partner that this kind of work was their daily bread. We had expected help, support and leadership in the selection of projects and execution of shared activities from our offshoring and outsourcing experienced partner, but either it was too simple and therefore wasn't given the necessary care, or it was too convoluted and could not be clarified. Whatever the case, the overall complexity had been massively underestimated. When the true level of complexity was recognised by the supplier, they secretly tried to keep to the agreed deadlines by skipping all tests and quality controls. The offshore team boasted instead of the expected experts many young and inexperienced university graduates. Careless suggestions from our side were being adopted without comment or thought, even if they were at odds with the overall architecture of the system. Often we described a function, thinking it was so clear that there could be no misunderstandings, and the Indian partner thought this had been described in such detail it had to be adhered to literally, and as the offshore and local team did not really know each other at that time, and the offshore partner was eager to leave a good impression, doubts were not voiced, even if interpretations varied.

One thing we learned for definite was not to expect too much too soon. First you have to find a common base. The contractor initially misjudged many requirements, including for personnel skills, despite their

long years of experience. We had to demand experts, and we had to document in more detail, control more and enquire more. And, most importantly, do whatever necessary to facilitate the amalgamation of the teams.

The ‘body leasing’ model, allowing the flexible utilization of team members in Germany, had failed. For wholly different reasons: Possible work permits and visa problems had been talked down by the supplier, but in fact forced a new and inexperienced team member on us every three months. And we realised much too late that this particular working model didn’t fit our partner’s portfolio at all. The typical ideal project required only a few of the contractor’s employees on location with the client, which were to supervise a much larger offshore team back in India. The ideal system is big enough to keep at least 25 members busy, has few interfaces to the outside, which are precisely specified, and it will last at least half a year. Smaller projects aren’t worth the effort in management.

Only the complete development of a new system, described and specified to much greater detail than is commonly done, had been a success. And only after we insisted on exclusively experienced developers, estimated the effort ourselves, analysed and debated the results of every project milestone precisely with the specially flown-in Indian team, had read and understood almost every line of code ourselves, and run thousands of test cases for what was rather a small project. And – possibly one of the deciding factors – the teams had got to know each other well enough by then for the Indian developer to feel no shame about picking up the phone in case of doubt and discussing the question with their German counterparts. Thus, we had laid a foundation on which to erect many other projects.

Our initial fears that home-grown software development would become superfluous was shortly followed by the recognition that we need not worry about the safety of our jobs, but could achieve a whole lot more with the help of the offshore team. And we have learned a lot. I reserve some scepticism about whether offshoring has paid dividends for us at this point in time, because the efforts of the local team during the requirement, design and delivery phases should not be neglected. A detailed analysis of the overall expenditure, however, reveals an al-

most 20% saving as compared with a completely local development – and this already in the pilot phase. That is significantly more than we had expected. Despite our dictum “never underestimate the effort, never overestimate savings” one thing is clear:

Thought of the day: It can be done!

The contributing factors for the success have been the careful selection of a supplier and the selection of suitable projects. Continuous communication, experienced developers on both sides, constant reviews and abiding integration helped to keep a good overview at all times. And the steady participation of the management allowed the projects to gain the necessary attention. In hindsight I have to confess: It was good fun, too!

Cooking Recipes

Chicken Tikka Masala	21
Chicken Do Piazza	28
Dal Fry (Lentils in a curry sauce)	36
Schtschi	45
Blini	48
Kyufteta (spicy meatballs)	50
Bhuna Chicken	62
Feuerzangenbowle	66
Bombay Curry	76
Masala dosa (pancakes with spicy potato filling)	83
Mutter Paneer (vegetarian curry with beans and cheese)	86
Gajjar Halwa (carrot desert)	93
Kheer (rice pudding)	102
Gualb Jamun (Indian milk balls)	113

Asia Changes Everything



The Asian locations transform the world. And above all the industrial enterprises there.

sourcing_asia documents the change. Six times per year the magazine supplies information and field knowledge on Purchasing and Manufacturing in Asia.

sourcing_asia publishes its contents in German and English language, thus providing its value also to your international Management and Purchasing teams.

Decide for a trial subscription of **sourcing_asia** now and you will receive two issues for 19,90 EUR plus VAT incl. shipping charges only.

local global GmbH

Phone: (0711) 22 55 88 24

Fax: (0711) 22 55 88 11

eMail: marketing@localglobal.de

www.sourcing-asia.de



sourcing_asia

Magazine for Procurement, Manufacturing and Cooperation



Know-how for your international business

Johannes Wamser, Peter Sürken

Wirtschaftspartner Indien

Ein Managementhandbuch
für den Mittelstand.

[Buch, 238 Seiten, € 39,00]

Andreas Kotulla

Of Tigers and India

An Offshoring Diary

[Book, 128 Pages, € 16,95]

Fons Tuinstra

Der wilde Osten -

Fünfzehn Missverständnisse
über China und die Chinesen

[Buch, 268 Seiten, € 19,80]

sourcing_asia

Magazine for Procurement,
Manufacturing and Cooperation
How Asia changes companies.

[www.sourcing-asia.de, 52 Pages, € 15,00]

InterGest City Guide

35 Metropolen für Business Traveller

[Buch, 78 Seiten, € 19,00]

Johannes Wamser, Peter Sürken, Mike Batra

Indien - Reiseführer für die „Business Class“

[Buch, 100 Seiten, € 12,90]

Christian Rumpf

Recht und Wirtschaft der Türkei

[Buch, 198 Seiten, € 25,00]

Business Türkei

Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Unternehmen

[Magazin, € 7,50]

Order

All books and magazines at
www.localglobal.de/shop
or at the bookshop.



Your Advertisement

Off-shoring of IT-tasks is one of the major trends in modern globalisation. Okay, some projects fail. According to consulting agencies up to 70%. However almost every major player, or those aiming to become one, have either set up their off-shoring business or plan to do so. Reasons for the limited success are manifold: Communication issues or cultural diversity deem to be only some of them. Andreas Kotulla presents the exciting and cumbrous real life in off-shoring. From finding and selecting a suitable partner up to establishing a permanent remote team – and all the small steps which turn so called “challenged projects” into a prosperous working relationship.

With a twinkle in its eye this book guides the reader through months of surprises and unexpected turns. It is a colourful composition of analysis, business blog and guidebook.

Hollow promises in Bangalore, corruption in Moscow, a ‘no holds bared’ approach in aspiring Sofia and treachery in Poland: The author often finds comfort only in the local cuisine, and thus presents the most famous recipes from the visited locations.



Dr. Andreas Kotulla has been working as IT manager and project leader for several global players for over a decade. His main interests are the management of complex software projects, software quality, offshore outsourcing – and cooking.

Financial Times Deutschland: “ ... an amusing and illustrative book about day-to-day- life in outsourcing.”

Computer Reseller News: “A remarkable management diary!”

ISBN 978-3-9811781-0-4



9 783981 178104

