which also has the Café Fresco Deli and the Pacharan Spanish tapas bar within the property. We go up to the first floor to have a drink and look out at the great Mekong river, the glass panes gives you one of the best view of the river, pretty damn brilliant if you ask me.



Famished by lunch time, Mahtani asks me if I want rice, curry and daal ? I tell her that is the last thing on my mind, let us find a local Cambodian restaurant and do justice to the local cuisine. Our driver Saron takes us to a touristy spot full of busloads of tourists and we find a lovely restaurant with a humungous buffet spread of Cambodian, Indochine and continental spread. Saron joins us and explains each dish to me; the Cambodian cuisine is quite like Vietnamese, Laotian & Thai but not as hot and spicy as Thai. Lunches usually always has to have a *samlar* (a watery soup) which is eaten with the main course , I fill up a bowl of *Samlar Machu Trey* (sweet and sour soup with fish), a very refreshing broth with a distinctive flavour of *prahok*, a pungent fermented fish sauce similar to the Vietnamese *Nuac Cham*. Saron comes back from the buffet station with a plate of *Muang An*, a Khmer styled grilled chicken drumsticks, nice juicy wing drumsticks with skin on, crispy on the outside, smothered in a sweet chili sauce. The Cambodian styled fresh spring rolls are delightful, it seems that the rice paper is steamed, it's soft and rubbery with plenty of mint leaves, just the way I like it. Coming to the main course I go for the *Khar Si Kreoung*, beef curry made with coconut water and tamarind. Succulent soft beef chunks cooked in a thick gravy of coconut water and tamarind (low calories here) , not bad at all. Mahatani , a vegetarian comes back from a salad bar on the terrace with a Cambodian styled papaya salad with strands of long beans and exotic spices mixed with sugar and lemon juice. It is hot as red chilies had been grounded with the lemon juice in a mortar, but the chili heat makes you want more and more. I heap a plate of filleted catfish rolled like a "nari maki" with some sort of a cream sauce in between and topped with *wasabe* (definitely not Cambodge) but absolutely gorgeous, flavour of the catfish with the creamy sauce and the kick of the *wasabe* is amazing.

After a hearty meal, Mahtani says that its time for some siesta! Apparently the locals start work by 8 am and then take a two-three hour break for lunch, returning back to work till evening, wow! I thought only the Spanish did that? Mahtani says bye to me, walks across the street to her house and Saron takes over as my guide for the rest of the day. How about shopping he says, "Phnom very good for good shopping Mr. Farhan". He is taking me to the "Russian Market", we arrive at this closed market, a huge cluster of open stalls covered in tin and plastic and my heart stops, oh no Phnom Penh's "Chatuchak"!, Phnom Penh's own "Bongobazar"! The last I stepped into Bangobazaar and Chatuchack was in 1993 and haven't gone back since. Saron proudly shows me the local products and handicrafts as we lose ourselves in a maze of bustling shops selling cheap curios. With a strained smile and the occasional nodding of my head I touch, browse, haggle with the sales ladies, all the while wondering how much oxygen is left for me to get out of this hellhole. I know my wife and my mother would like this place but I need an escape exit and tell Saron to take me to another market. "Oh Mr. Farhan, you want air condition right, no problem, come on lets go".

Our next shop is a tourist handicraft shop, fully air conditioned and I know I am going to be persuaded by beautiful hostesses to spend all my money here in this one shop. I am prepared and relieved by the cool air and refreshing green tea as I am led like a lamb to the slaughter to the jewellery section. Jade and precious stones are abundant in Cambodia and good quality too, their silks are also very good, I do not find the art works as exciting as I did in Vietnam, you can only appreciate Buddhist art for so long. Cambodian wood crafting is very good , the works are intricately designed. The hostesses bow and smile graciously as I hand over the plastic and pay for the