

Past the lava lamps in the lobby

and the cubicles decorated with cricket jerseys, a programmer sits in front of two flat-screen monitors touch-typing code. Another is plopped in a beanbag chair balancing a laptop on his knee. In a corner, near an electronic keyboard, a turbaned Sikh relaxes in a massage chair, eyes closed. Interspersed among the cubicles are a foosball table, billiards, darts, a chessboard, and a board game called carrom. A tent-shrouded chair sports a sign, FORTUNES TOLD HERE.

Oh, and there's A.C. Narendran, a former Microsoftie in the U.S. who defected to Google in California before decamping here, to the company's research center in Bangalore, where he thought up the idea for Google Finance. He sits in a cubicle like everyone else,

GOOGLE BANGALORE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A.C. NARENDRAN, THE BRAINS BEHIND GOOGLE FINANCE; A CUBICLE AT THE R&D CENTER; ENJOYING THE ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD; FINDING NIRVANA IN A MASSAGE CHAIR

near the free food—cans of Pringles, bags of *chaat* (fried snacks), and piles of candy bars, including one appropriately named Perk. In the cafeteria, steam trays serve an array of Indian curries. “The key here is we are not just Google, but Indian,” says Prasad Ram, who heads the research center and spent 18 years in the U.S., much of it at Xerox. “This is the perfect hotbed for finding the next set of ideas.”

Google's experiment in replicating its Silicon Valley workplace indulgences and luring back the Indian talent that helped fuel the dot-com boom in the U.S. is a deliberate strategy. This is not outsourcing in the usual sense of seeking cheaper labor. Rather, it's a brain drain in reverse. Google chose Bangalore in 2004 as the site of its first R&D center outside the U.S., says Sukhinder Singh Cassidy, who heads Google's Asia operations from the company's Mountain View, Calif., headquarters, in part “because so many Googlers who are Indian want to move back to India and participate in India's growth.”

And with the U.S. now issuing half the H-1B visas for skilled high-tech workers that it did in 1999, combined with fewer foreign students coming to study at American universities, the newly minted versions of engineers like Narendran and Ram haven't been coming to the U.S. in the same numbers anyway. It used to be that you had to go to the U.S. to participate in technology's cutting edge. It used to be that Indians thought it was more prestigious to get a U.S. education and work in California. Not anymore.

Google is riding this trend, as are many other companies in India. Yahoo employs about 900 engineers at a research center in Bangalore, roughly nine times more than at Google's. And IBM has hired 53,000 people in India, becoming the nation's largest foreign employer. That's not to mention the 285,000 employed by India's four tech giants: Infosys Technologies, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, and Satyam. But

what Google has in India is the cool factor. Its online lure, “We're Hiring,” is seen by everyone using Google's search engine—an estimated 75% of India's 25 million regular Internet users who prefer Google over Yahoo and local portal Rediff, according to online research firm JuxtConsult.

Those who work at Google speak of a halo effect. Landing a job at Google is said to increase

marriage prospects in a culture where title and income are critical to the practice of arranged matchmaking. Google says it pays on average about three times the annual salary of a tech services company in India. Depending on experience, that means \$13,000 to \$30,000 a year, according to industry watchers, who say that Google engineers with five years of experience make \$40,000, and those who have developed a patent can make up to \$100,000—plus stock options, taxi service to and from work, and health insurance that includes a worker's par-

