

## Pesky Indian reporter floored by gentle Obama magic

A young Indian reporter was 'walking on air' after being treated to a bit of the old Obama magic at the end of the G20 summit here Thursday.

Actually, the magic's still kind of new - this was Barack Obama's first major international outing since becoming US president in January.

Two hours after Obama drew her into a prolonged, casually stylish and good-humoured banter toward the fag end of a packed press conference, television reporter Simrat Ghuman said: 'Yes, I am still walking on air. it certainly seems that way.'

'I had my hand up all through and had nearly given up hope, when he suddenly picked me,' she said.

Ghuman, who works for the Times Now television network, had reason to feel like the world Thursday night was her oyster.

There were some 2,500 journalists from around the world at the summit, and a big chunk of them - certainly the huge American contingent - had filled Obama's press conference to standing room only.

When Obama picked her out of nowhere, Ghuman asked how his meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh went, and whether the two had discussed Pakistan and terrorism.

'Well, first of all, your prime minister is a wonderful man.' Obama began, but Ghuman interrupted: 'Thank you, I agree.'

Obama: 'Well.'

Ghuman: 'I agree!'

So, you get picked to ask Obama a question at his first big international press conference, and you interrupt him?

Cue, the Obama magic.

'Did you have something to do with that? You seem to kinda take, take credit for it,' he asked with an indulgent laugh, in turn sending the assembled hacks into a loud collective burst of laughter at the close of a very long day filled with funless fiscal issues.

'Sir, I'm really proud of him,' Ghuman blurted out.

'Of course. You should be proud of him. I'm teasing,' said Obama with gentle charm before going on to give an account of his impression of Manmohan Singh (this was their first meeting).

'I think he's a very wise and decent man. And he's done a wonderful job of guiding India, even prior to being prime minister, along a path of extraordinary economic growth that is a marvel, I think, for

all the world,' Obama said.

And then he talked about terrorism and climate change for a full three minutes 55 seconds.

Not bad for a young Indian journalist. Not bad for a young American president.

*Dipankar De Sarkar* ( © IANS / India eNews)