

SAICE

A SLICE OF SAICE

THROUGH THE LENS
FACES OF SAICE

BUCKET LIST
TOP TEN DESTINATIONS

FACE TO FACE
WITH BATTI-DA
& KRISHNA DI

CULTURE
HINDUSTANI
MUSIC

SOUP VERANDAH

GRAFFITI

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Vers L'avenir was a print-only version of a student magazine that used to be published about two and half decades ago. For a variety of reasons, including the cost of printing copies, it did not have a continuous print life. After multiple attempts at revival it was stopped completely.

We, the students of EAVP 5 (2014), decided to take another shot at putting out a school magazine with encouragement from Satya. The result is "Slaice, a slice of SAICE" (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education). To add a modern feel, we decided to have only a 'soft copy' edition which would not only enable us to learn about design and layout from Bubu (Shashwat) but also keep costs down to zero. We hope that this version will find students taking more interest in carrying it forward, so it can keep going!

Designing Slaice took many nights of work but the fun part was learning new skills and watching the magazine slowly take shape. We realise that there are improvements that can be made, e.g. publish two or more issues annually to keep the interest from flagging. Now that we've given it a basic framework, the future editions should be easier to execute and we

expect each batch would like to add its own touch.

In this issue we have some interviews of early inmates of the Ashram, some of our articles and classwork, and the section "Through the lens" that has portraits submitted by photography students. How would you have ever learned about what happens inside the Ashram's accounts office or how our PED activities that we take for granted took shape? How would you have known the amazing photographer in your school? Slaice is how!

Well, we have launched Slaice - a labour of love and hope that future classes will pick up and pass the baton to succeeding batches and make it more alive and interesting. We will be watching eagerly!

NISHTHA

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REMINISCENCES OF CHILDHOOD DAYS

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HOW DID PHYSICAL EDUCATION START HERE?

Pranab-da came here I think in February 1945. I came in July 1945, about the same time. He came and took over and slowly started organising the physical education.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO BEFORE THAT?

We used to go and play croquet. There were not many things around to do. Many of the ladies were playing that only. They'd just put their sarees up a little and play. One croquet set is there, which I think belonged to The Mother. I hope it is still there. For the older gentlemen, right from Albert-da to Ravikant-bhai, there was an empty yard where the current bodybuilding gymnasium is there.

FACE TO FACE





PHOTO CREDIT: GLORY PAL

The gym's gate opened to a godown on the other road of which Purani-ji was in charge. Our tennis balls would land there and he would come once a month and we'd wait for him to collect all the balls. We used to go there in the evening. School always closed at 4 p.m. First we'd finish our dinner because dining room would close by 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. At 6:30 p.m. there used to be a general meditation in the Ashram courtyard. Mother would come to Dyuman-bhai's terrace. Remember, there were no lights at that time in Pondicherry. Tube lights were not known we had only these 25 watts bulbs and the Playground had no lights.

So, we used to finish our dinner, play some circle ball or something like that and the older people would play volleyball. The side wall of the godown had two hooks and there was a palm tree planted on the other side so they would put a net across and play. In the afternoon when our parents were asleep we used to quietly slip away, jump down the wall and play football with a tennis ball. And when the school bell would ring we'd go. We'd sit in the last bench and 4 o'clock we'd be out. Then after playing in Playground we'd wait for our parents and go home, wash up and go to sleep by 7:30 p.m or so, until next morning 6:15

a.m. when Mother used to come out on the balcony. So that was the life then until Pranab-da took over. The Playground developed and developed with a lot of effort. During those days Mother was not coming there but later She started coming.

Slowly everything started falling in place. We got the volleyball ground near Sweet home. Then we got the Tennis ground. It was just a dumping place.

YOU DID NOT HAVE THE TENNIS GROUND THEN? HOW DID YOU GET ALL THE GROUNDS?

Jayanti-bhai and Chandu-bhai used to go walking every morning to the distillery side. One day they thought it could be a ground for us as the number of children was growing. The 'terrain militaire' was a plain ground. So we requested the Municipality and they allotted it to us for a specific day. It was Sunday morning. It was near Maret garden. We used to jog till there, play football and come back. That one day in the week we had football, later on they



also played cricket there. In the same area there was a mill owner who was a devotee. He had some land so he let us play. So like that we shifted here and there till we got our Sportsground. Then we took over and leveled it and slowly it developed into what you see today.

Biren-da the incharge of body building would say to any new comer who has not done sports before 'ek sho dond, du sho baithaks, take your time but finish it'. Somehow we'd do it. Keshav-ji had once done 500 push-throughs!

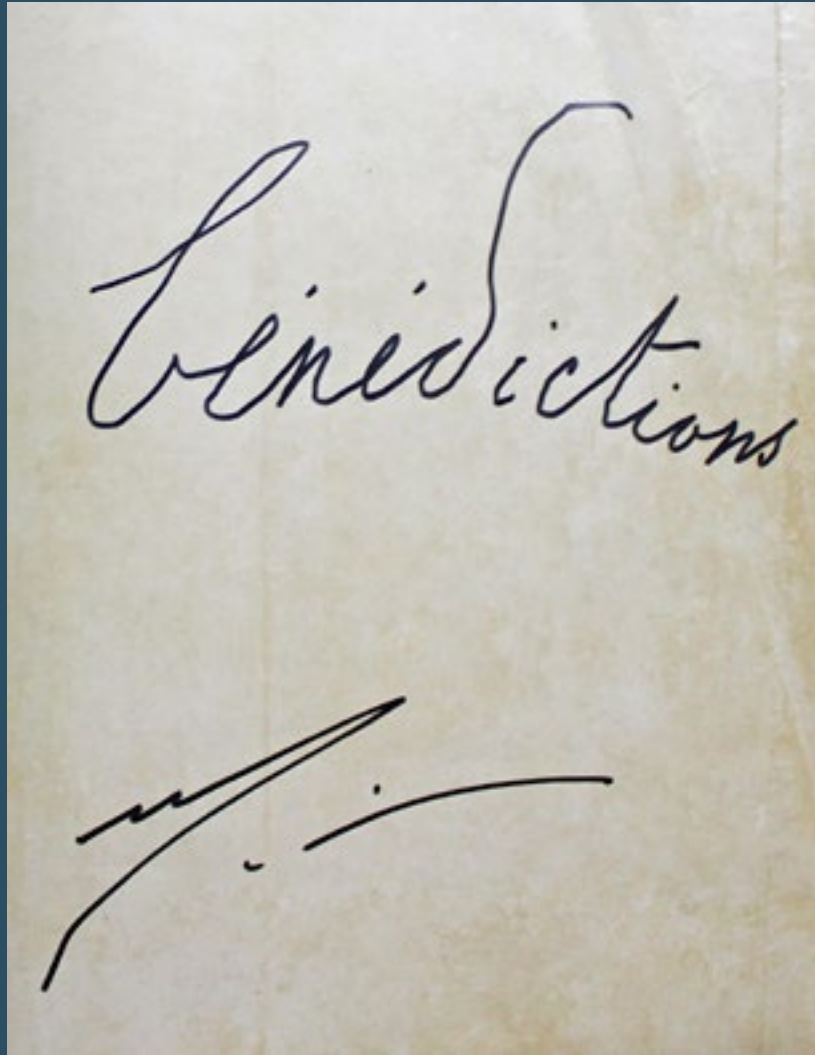
Biren-da would hardly come to see. He would keep an eye from far and at the end of one hour he'd come and say 'Hoe galo? Hein baadi jao'. He would not take your exercises until he was sure you were really interested. That was the climate we went through. Today if I ask you to do it will you do? You may do it but initially you'll grumble and then you'll do it reluctantly. Now you know how it was during those early days!



KRISHNA-DI

I came to visit the Ashram for the first time in 1956, when I was twelve. My father was a devotee and he brought my mother, brother, sisters and me here to spend our Durga puja holidays. I started liking everything about this place, especially the march past. During the march past I observed how everyone was marching in front of The Mother and saluting her and I was moved. I don't know how to explain this better but after having witnessed that, I just wanted to stay back here and The Mother let me. There was no waiting list back then so we were taken in immediately. My sisters (Ratna and Rina Chakrovarti) and I were made to stay in Rajkumari-di's boarding. Norman-da took a small test to see which class would suit us best. After October when the school holidays started we were given training for certain languages.

**FACE TO FACE**



The teachers were very friendly and most students were eager to learn. The overall atmosphere here was very inspiring.

School used to start on the tenth of December then. I was put in class zero where we were about ten or twelve students, more or less of the same age. My sisters were put in different classes. Paru-di was the teacher in charge of my class. In the beginning of the year, someone told me, a teacher would come and ask the new comers what their name and age was in French. She would ask the name first and then the age specifically but when she came to me, she asked my age first and I answered Krishna, and I said twelve when she asked me my name. Everyone laughed that day and I decided that I would make a real effort to learn French. I really loved the French language because Paru-di was a very fine teacher. One day Paru-di asked Priti-di to replace her and Priti-di asked us to write an essay in French on any animal. In my previous school we were forty to fifty students in a class and the teacher gave us a book where lots of essays were written and we had to just learn them by heart and write them in class. I picked a cow as my animal and I wrote about the most obvious things like, it has four legs, a

tail, etc. When I showed it to Priti-di she asked me if I had never seen the distant and dreamy eyes of a cow sitting alone and just ruminating. I said no and she told me that what everyone sees in a cow is no use writing about. My essay could have been anybody's and would not be worth reading, but if I wrote about what the cow symbolised for me alone, it would be an essay that only I could have written. Every individual mattered here and that struck me as a very prominent contrast to my previous school. The education here was not about what was superficial but about finding something more meaningful.

I enjoyed doing sports very much. We played against people much elder than us some were also our teachers. In the beginning that unnerved me a bit because I thought that if a teacher did not like something you did in group you would have it in school but that never happened.



I used to be a very bad student outside and I was mortally afraid of exams. Mother takes you through exactly what you don't like. I went from class zero to four and then six where Kirit-bhai introduced quarterly tests. The most annoying part was that we were the last batch that did those tests, they were stopped the next year. But sitting for three hours and writing non-stop really helped improve my concentration and the coordination between my mind and hand improved, these qualities proved to be very helpful for the department work later. While I was in school I also learnt typing on an old typewriter with a French keyboard, there weren't any with an English one. I was a completely science oriented student and maths was my favourite subject. Now I'm sure children use calculators and other gadgets while we used to do every calculation on our own, you children have the whole world on your computer. The system of education in school has changed very much due to technological progress. Today children have access to a much more wide range of information.

In 1962, I was fortunate enough to have played a role in the play "L'âme Souveraine" in front of The Mother on her birthday. That was the last play seen by her.

When I finished school I joined an Ashram department. Not just me but my age group in general wanted to experience and see whether the life of an inmate was for us. I asked The Mother where I should work and she told me that I should join Amrita-da's department (that is what the accounts office was called formerly). I joined the department and I was asked to take classes in school as well. I decided that I would take classes once I had enough free time. The next year I started taking maths classes. I taught for ten years in total and during those ten years all my cohorts went out. We were about ten twelve of us and after the ten years only two of us were left. I too had a desire to go out, leave the Ashram and explore. Most of those that left went abroad and I wanted to go too. I asked the Mother twice or thrice and went out but when I was away from here I wanted to be here and as a result I am still here. I have no regrets related to that, though previously I felt like "na, kichhu hochhe na" (nothing is happening)

because the whole concept of going to a foreign land was so rosy.

I had joined the department in 1966, and Pondicherry had been a part of the central Indian administration for only two years then. In the accounts office we worked according to the French system and a little bit after I started working, we received a communication saying that we would have to keep our accounts according to the Indian method and for that we would have to allocate a number of trained people for the job. Mother named the account "Compte Centrale". Within three years of my joining Amrita-da and satinath-da passed away. It was no doubt a big loss but accounting was easy in those days, just receipt and payment for a few departements and about 320 rented houses. Preparing, filing and making new receipts for the rented houses was the main part of the work. I started keeping the accounts after that with whatever knowledge I had gathered.

There was no diary or any specific record of where we spent how much money, The Mother would write how much money she gave to a certain department on bits of paper and those were used as voucher for the

account that was called The Mother's cash. In 1970, trusts had to start submitting all their accounts to the income tax office, mind you we had no calculators then. The first copy that we prepared was taken by Tulsiram-ji (the chartered accountant) and me to The Mother. She had been very happy and she had signed the copy too. That is the only copy signed by her and it is a prized possession of the Central Office, the copy for the income tax office was signed by Counouma-ji (the managing trustee after Amrita-da passed away). We were just two of us working in Counouma-ji's house in the afternoon. In the morning Rose-di, Saroja, Kumuda and I worked from Amrita-da's office. Ashram didn't have a proper property register. Every time we bought property a sheet used to be filed but Tulsiram-ji insisted that we have a proper one in 1971. I decided that I would do the work as an offering for Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary. I asked for a fat book and I was told that we would not be able to afford it so I would have make do with whatever I could get my hands on. That was the Ashram's condition then. I finally turned a cash book printed by

the press into a property register and took to it to the Mother after Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary and she signed that too.

In 1972 there was a slight change in the Ashram's financial situation and for the first time we made a fixed deposit in the bank, before that whatever money used to be collected would get spent before time. We used to have perpetual money worries.

In 1976 my mother had fallen ill, my parents were old and they had health issues so I went to Calcutta and returned a few times. Matri Prasad who used to work at the audit office started assisting me in the department also the accounts office was shifted by him from Counouma-ji's house to the Ashram. I stopped teaching then and Matri later shifted to another department.

Many people call our office the Accounts Office, it is okay to say that but Harikant-bhai (the managing trustee around 1992) had named it Central Office. The Central Office is supposed to function under the managing trustee of the Ashram like Counouma-ji, Dyuman-da and Harikant-bhai who used to

come and spend some time at the office, though that does not happen anymore.

Our daily work now has increased significantly, because we used to keep accounts for receipts and payments only but then we were asked to prepare a balance sheet around 1997-98. A balance sheet contains information about what your assets are and today maintaining one is a big job. When I started working there were eight departments and today the Ashram has eighty departments though the number of rented houses has dropped to twenty. Today we are able to keep the department going with Lumi, Priti, Satchi and some others. I am really glad about the fact we have some people who have come out of our school and joined the department. There is a certain understanding among people who grow up here and that comes in very handy when we work. I will have worked for 48 years this November and I don't feel like I have worked for that long at all.

I am forever grateful to the Mother for giving us the opportunity to be a part of this unique world that she has created.

GRAFFITI

What can you say about graffiti, apart from saying that it's a way of painting (done on public property)? Well, there is a lot to ask and a lot to say. Where did it originate from? When? Why? Is it an art form or just vandalism? This article is going to answer these questions from my perspective and give you an idea of graffiti all around the world.

What does the word graffiti mean? Graffiti derives from the Italian word "graffito" which means to scratch, as the cavemen would scratch onto the walls of caves in order to draw.

Graffiti emerged from the Hip-Hop culture that started in the 1970s in South Bronx, New York. In those days, there used to be a lot of fights between neighbourhood gangs.



SOUP VERANDAH





And so, graffiti started appearing on walls, marking gang territories. The painting (graffiti) to mark territories was called Tag. In the beginning, it was a simple, one stroke, unicolored name on the wall. Then, it started getting bolder and more colourful. And each gang had its own style of Tag, just the way artists have their own styles of doing graffiti today. In the 1970s, paint was used but later aerosol sprays came and added a new page to the history of graffiti. Today artists use all kinds of things to do graffiti such as chalk, stencils, thread, Lego...anything and everything (almost).

Tag slowly spread from walls to subways to postboxes. And from small decorations such as stars and shapes, drawings started to accompany Tag. In no time, graffiti evolved from Tag, in the sense that the drawings were given more importance. All the things that were being written about were being portrayed in drawing. People used Tag to spread their thoughts to inform the public about politics and society, where as graffiti went to the next level and helped in communicating or spreading awareness about things such as love, racism, global warming etc.

Even though the concept and the art are beautiful, graffiti is illegal in most of the countries. Why? It is because it's done on public property which means that it is vandalism. Writing your lover's name on a wall with yours is vandalism, but what about masterpieces such as Banksy's and VHILS's? Many countries have hotlines where people can report a graffitied public place to the police and get it removed. As it is illegal, street artists usually do their work at night.

Recently many countries and cities have started allotting space for graffiti artists where they can exhibit their work.

War driven places such as Afghanistan have people standing up for peace by drawing graffities.

Having read this article, I leave it up to you to decide whether graffiti is art or not!



"Listen to your heart"

Painted on a wall of Chinatown, San Francisco, by Banksy "Listen to your heart" is a reminder, the doctor putting emphasis to the message .

SOUP VERANDAH

THE FALL

It was the last leaf that made me think
As it fell towards the others.
They were all falling,
Falling like they were in love with the ground
But pulled away reluctantly
By a breeze. They found themselves
Slowly drifting down the stream
Like drifts all my happiness.
I have it all, only to lose it too soon.
Wish I wouldn't be here all alone.
The lush green trees stand bare now
The colourless sky hovering above.
Life's dark passages empty as this
Leave me clueless and pondering o'er them:
Why am I still here trying,
Pushing myself to limits unknown?
Like the unbounded horizons,
Meeting life in the deadly, timeless zones.
The fruits hang down
Ready to rot and fall.
The gnarled branches reach out for me
And like the screeching owl I cry,
"Let go, let go you burden
Let go of me or watch me die."

SOUP VERANDAH

Nobody's there to answer my call
It's the season of the fall.
I hear its footsteps approach
Now distant, now near...
Go not wandering here and there
Where lies the terrible fear.
The thorny mildness of the flowers
Cannot be felt in the fall
So many good things are left unfelt
Going through life in this numb mode.
Looking back and looking forward I see
A cycle of spring, summer, fall and winter
The spring turns to the fall
And the fall springs forth:
This too shall pass, I'll not give up
'Cause I shall see you again happiness
Blooming like fresh leaves
To soothe the parched branches
And I shall live in the spring of joy
After bearing through the fall of grief.

BEING SOMEONE I WAS NOT

I tried so hard
To be what everyone wanted to see.
I tried to be someone I was not,
For everyone I cared a lot.
I tried to be for my mother
A girl, sharing our sorrows together,
Always there to understand her problems
Even though I didn't, I pretended,
I stood firm beside her
It was what she wanted me for.
I tried to be for my father
A girl - strong, confident and bolder.
I knew he needed me to understand
Life would turn hard
Once I stepped out from his protective circle.
I had to be prepared from the start
He wanted to see me ready and
Wouldn't believe me when I told him I was not
Ready for all he thought.
In truth I was as scared as a baby
Who hadn't seen how ugly the world was
Hidden inside my parents' strong protective walls.
And when my time came to step out and see,
The baby had no courage



SOUP VERANDAH

And I needed my parents to keep me steady.
 I made my life a stage
 I dried my tears so my father wouldn't know.
 I tried to be a perfect sister
 For my little brother.
 I tried to teach him
 About the world he lives in
 He refused and I didn't insist.
 And now he blames me.
 I was too soft on him. In reality
 The world changed so fast
 The truth dawned on him at last.
 If he had really tried harder
 And if I had taught him better
 He would have been ready
 For the tide, rushing in suddenly.
 I tried to be an ideal student
 Working hard, giving my best,
 Following the rules, being obedient,
 But inside I could no longer stand this test.
 I was too afraid I would fall.
 Like every human being scared and small
 Being ideal outside
 Showed me even more who I faked to be.
 But all the time inside
 I didn't want to put up with this story.
 I tried to be a friend
 To everyone,

But I realized in the end
 I was wrong.
 Not everyone looked for a friend,
 Just someone strong
 To help them cross the road ahead
 When they couldn't do it alone
 Because of what they were.
 And with a heart made of stone,
 Once the work was done
 To leave me behind
 Left by myself to unwind
 And let me know I wasn't needed anymore.
 Their minds told them it's time
 To find someone different next time
 Old "friends" grew too old,
 They were afraid to be told
 Old was really gold.
 Just one phrase could stop them cold
 Hurt their conscience
 Tell their soul
 Not everyone was dyed in innocence.
 I tried to be
 All that I really was not
 But who they needed me to be.
 Their happiness was all I wanted to see
 All I wanted is to see them smile

Like a puppet who only speaks
What people want to hear and
Who only acts
While people choose to ignore facts and
See that illusion,
I started to make a division
Of good and bad in my mind
And left all the bad behind.
All that I had tried to become
Once upon a time
Was the past.
Now at last,
This time I promise to be someone else.
The real me this time.
All along I had tried
Being someone I was not and
In the end, I cried
Realizing who it was
I was fooling.
It was only me believing
I could put up with this act
Make my life a stage
And be the star.
But I lost my courage,
I gave up defeated
Knew I had lost in my head.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

'Why don't you go and study?'

'Ohh I do that all day long

My days are full of work and my nights are full
of toil,

I have no time to breathe

I work hours and hours a day

Do you think I am a robot?

I tell you, I am not.

I know I am a student

And i know I have my duties

But really, I am dying

From overwork and worries.

I am sick of hearing complaints

That I am just not good enough.

Yes, I am not perfect,

But nor are the rest of you

So right now I am exhausted

And tired of explaining to you

That I am the lovely gem

That God had made one day.

You want me to shine

And so our wishes are same.

SOUP VERANDAH

But please let me fall down
So I can get up again.
Let me make a mistake
So that next time I am right
Let me learn the hard way
How to live with life.
I know you are my mother
And you always want my good
So now that I am hungry,
Can you please get me some food?

HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC

Indian classical music , instrumental and vocal, is rooted in antiquity with traces of its origin found in ancient scriptures, traditions and Vedas that has been passed down for thousands of years. The prime form of music here is the ancient complex patterns called ragas merged with talas or rhythms that affect energy centers laying emphasis as a tool of meditation, relaxation and self-realization.

This music is a blend of ritualistic folk and cultural expression of the Indian sub-continent. This tradition probably took shape during the 13th and 14th centuries A.D. The origins of Hindustani classical music can be found in the Samaveda. 'Om' is believed to be the beginning of all creation in which is rooted sound and music.

A photograph of a man with a mustache, wearing a red kurta, playing a bansuri (flute) into a microphone. He is seated and looking down at the instrument. The background is dark with vertical light patterns. A large orange diagonal overlay covers the left side of the image, containing text.

CULTURE

Indian classical music is unique in that it is highly spiritual in nature. The singer/artist tries to reach God through his music.

Indian classical music is categorized under two distinct genres: Hindustani and Carnatic. Broadly speaking, Hindustani developed in the north of India and Carnatic developed in the south.

The Hindustani classical is based on the raga system. A raga is a melodic scale which has basic notes: sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni. Re, ga, ma, dha, ni may be in a major or minor tone but sa, and pa, are constant. These notes can make innumerable combinations.


There are ten basic thaats or ragas which are recognized and the other ragas are considered to have derived from these. In addition to this, a raga must have at least five notes in its melodic scale. The main architect of the present organization of Hindustani classical music is Pandit V N Bhattachande who classified the ragas into the ten thaats.

Depending on the notes included in a particular raga, each raga acquires its unique and distinct character. The form of the raga is

also determined by the particular pattern of ascent and descent of the notes, which may or may not be strictly linear. Melody is built up by improvising, creating and elaborating within the given scale of the raga. This improvisation is at times rhythm bound and at other times, free from any rhythm.

Formal compositions or songs and instrumental compositions in a fixed rhythm and meter are positioned with the improvised portion. Two major types of composition within the Hindustani genre are khayal and dhrupad. Of the two, dhrupad is an older form and requires rigorous training in rhythm control as well as voice culture. Khayal developed as an easier and a more popular alternative, as it contains both slow and lively compositions, though it retains totally its classical style and character.

There is a rich tradition of Gharanas in Hindustani classical music. Gharanas are styles or ways of singing. They have their basis in musical training and education. Every gharana has its own distinct features and the main difference between the Gharanas is

A man with glasses and a plaid shirt is playing a harmonium. He is looking upwards and to the right. The harmonium is a large, light-colored wooden instrument with many keys and a microphone in front of it.

the manner in which the notes are sung. The gharanas emerge from the creative style of a genius who gives existing structures a totally new approach, form and interpretation. This includes the tone of the voice, the pitch, the intonation and the specific application of the various nuances. Some of the well-known Gharanas: Gwalior Gharana, Agra Gharana, Kirana Gharana, Jaipur or Atrauli Gharana, Rampur Sahaswan Gharana, Patiala Gharana, Delhi Gharana, Bhendi Bazaar Gharana, Benaras Gharana, Mewati Gharana.

'Guru Shishya Parampara' or the teacher-pupil relationship is an important part of India's teaching tradition. In ancient India most of the acquired knowledge was passed on from teacher to his pupil through oral tradition. In this system the pupil lives with the teacher or guru. The pupil learns different aspects of music by observing his guru and by following his instructions. The tradition is based on the shishya's surrender to the Guru and the Guru imparting the knowledge only to sincere shishyas who are ready to embark of the journey.

This tradition has evolved some unique techniques to accommodate the needs of the student as well as the teacher.

The first thing that happens during this teaching process is the formation of a unique bond between the student and the teacher. This deep bonding is absolutely essential when someone is learning an art.

In this tradition, the student gets the sole attention of the teacher and can progress faster. Even if there are many students studying under one teacher, it is possible to give training to each and every student separately.

It is in the domain of music in particular where Muslims contributed most. What they have practised since medieval times is Hindustani classical music with its 'Guru-Shishya Parampara'. The gharana system is the extension of this 'Parampara' or tradition. Most of the great Muslim musicians were and are originally Hindu and they have continued with the tradition of singing an invocation to a god or goddess before beginning their performance.

Be that as it may, all Muslim rulers and nobles had musicians, singers, players of instruments in their courts. They patronised the meritorious by giving them high salaries and rich rewards. They got a number of books on Indian classical music translated from Sanskrit into Persian. We all know about Mian Tansen who was in emperor Akbar's court whose singing is legendary. Tansen was originally a Gaur Brahman of Gwalior and he had been trained in the school established by Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior. Tansen was the disciple of Swami Haridas. Political or religious barriers have failed to divide musicians and lovers of music into narrow and antagonistic camps, as the Indian classical music remains the common legacy of both Hindus and Muslims. As Ustad Bismillah Khan Saheb said so eloquently: "God knows no religion. God belongs to mankind. I realized this while playing at the Balaji temple."

Here is an interesting and enlightening quote on one important aspect of Sangeetam - nada (sound or resonance) from Sarangadeva, the 13th Century Indian musicologist, who was the author of the classical Sanskrit text on music, Sangita Ratnakara, the first modern book on Indian music.

Nada is produced thus:

- The Atma or the soul desiring to speak or sing, stirs the mind.
- The mind strikes the fire residing in the body.
- The fire strikes the wind in the body.
- The wind residing in the Brahmagranthi and rising along the upward path, manifests successively on the navel, heart, throat, head and mouth.

Thus the nada is produced by the conjunction of prana or life-force ('nA') and anala or fire ('da').

To conclude, the divine psyche or Atman is the foundation of music. Thus music is looked upon as a spiritual sadhana which elevates the level of man's consciousness and seeks to light in the cave of his heart the light of divine knowledge. The composers of the music of India were fully conscious of this secret and made this music one of the best and purest means for attaining God.

HUMOUR

What is humour? The dictionary defines it as a mood or a state of mind and the quality of being amusing or provoking laughter through speech, literature or actions.

"Comedy is acting out optimism," Robin Williams said. With ordinary life being as stressful as it is, most people love humour because it relieves the daily grind and releases the pressure through a good laugh. As they say, nothing drives away the blues like a quiet smile or a hearty chuckle. Even in our own lives, every time we recall a funny incident it brightens our day.

But as those in the entertainment industry have often told us, humour is a serious business as being funny is an art in itself which takes talent, time, and training to become good at.

**HUMOUR**

There is often a fine line between humour and slap-stick comedy. The former seeks to tickle your intellect while the latter makes you laugh through an overdose of physically funny actions or absurd situations with a sense of impeccable timing, e.g. the pie throwing or crazy chase scenes.

Humour helps us develop a sense of awareness in our behavior and gives us the ability to laugh at ourselves. Through it we realize that life isn't all that bad after all. It helps us appreciate little things and be grateful for them.

As that great comedian, Bill Cosby tells us:
"Through humour, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. And once you find laughter, no matter how painful your situation might be, you can survive it."

One of the exercises we did was to write humorous pieces on every day situations and see if we could bring smiles to the faces of our colleagues.

We present some of the humorous essays and hope they do the same for you!

“OODIBABA”

If you want to go to Bengal and come back alive here are some things that may help you survive.

1. First you must keep talking at all times even if you have nothing at all to say. And also, while talking you must praise the people around you (Bongs love being praised). But that is not all, you must talk to your immediate neighbour as though you were communicating with your century-old and deaf grandmother. If you don't talk loudly then Bongs assume that either your mother doesn't feed you enough or that you definitely do not belong to this planet.

HUMOUR



2. You should never work more than necessary because anybody who does that has to face this dialogue: "Rosh kosh nei bujhi (you don't have any feeling)?" Bongs are very lazy so they consider all those who work extra "machines".

3. Bongs love jokes and laughter so even if you don't feel like laughing at a particular joke, just do it unless you want to be laughed at!

4. Bongs are very filmy so they exaggerate everything so don't be taken aback if you were introduced as an Oxford University Professor instead of just mentioning your humble graduate degree or if your mediocre basketball skills were stated as "extraordinary, a total national level player". But they can also say just the opposite for themselves. If you ask a multi-millionaire about his profession, he will humbly say, "I have a small cloth business."

5. If you don't appreciate art then Bongs will certainly not appreciate you. So before attempting to learn anything at all, educate yourself a little about art and music. And if by chance someone starts singing you must sing with him or at least hum even if you are absolutely clueless about the song. (It will nearly always be a Rabindra Sangeet). If you fail

to do so you may receive a "gentle" thump on your back with a, "Sing man, don't feel shy".

6. If this is not enough, Bongs love eating FISH, RICE and SWEETS. If you are not much of a fan make sure you are not at the dining table when these things are served. This task is close to impossible and you may not be lucky enough to manage it, nevertheless keep your spirits up and don't say that you do not love them; it may make your life just a "little" more difficult.

7. Last point: always remember that they are as intelligent as they are emotional so do not try fooling them.

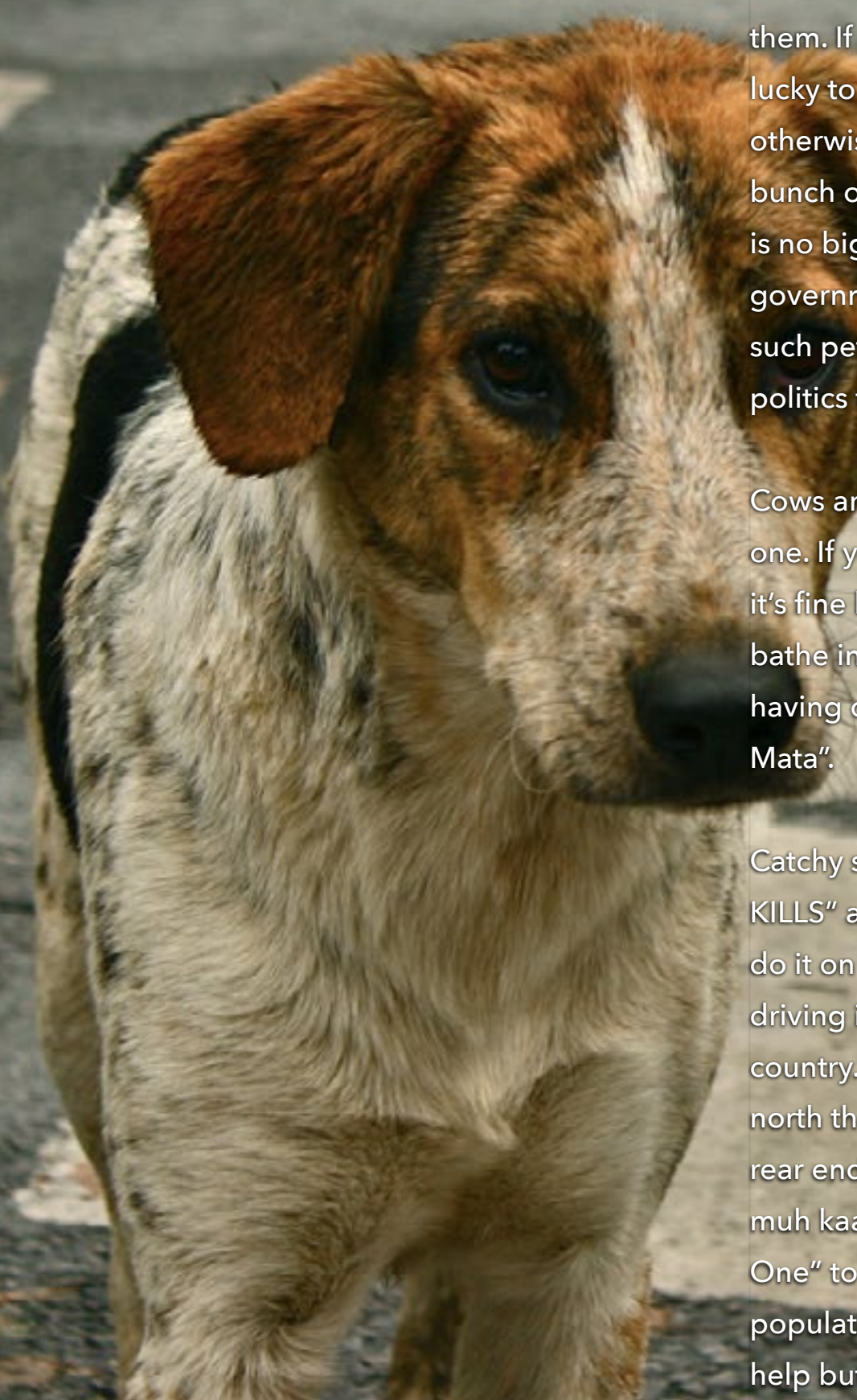
INDIAN ROADS

Indian roads look like the proud winners of a contest for the “World’s Worst Roads” despite which sometimes it looks like people try very hard to drag them to an even worse state. You will find everything unusual on these roads, to such an extent that it wouldn’t surprise me if the tourists thought that roads were made for cows, beggars and stray dogs.

Beggars are dangerous. Firstly because they beg and are capable of making you feel guilty for not giving them the five hundred rupee note when you didn’t have change. Secondly because they sleep on the roads and with street lights being a luxury in this country, you’d better find yourself a good lawyer if you don’t notice the bodies and run over them.

A silver Chevrolet car is shown from the front, driving on a road that is in a state of severe disrepair. The road surface is cracked, uneven, and covered with large potholes. A large, deep pothole is visible in the foreground, filled with muddy water. The car's license plate reads "MH-14 BX 4454". The background is a dark, overcast sky.

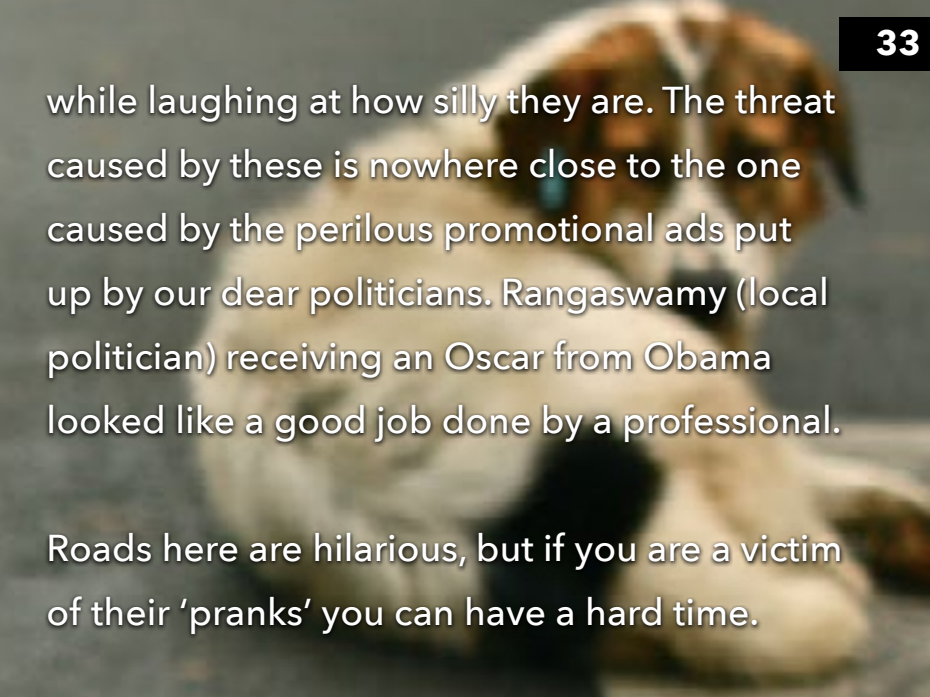
HUMOUR



The stray dogs are harmless, except that occasionally they run after people and bite them. If the dog did not have rabies, you're lucky to get a only few (about six) injections otherwise eleven to twelve injections and a bunch of tablets with a remarkably big wound is no big deal, not like you are dying! Our government does not bother to waste time on such petty issues. After all you don't usually join politics to solve problems!

Cows are actually harmless, unless you run over one. If you don't follow Hinduism very faithfully it's fine but if you do then you will have to go bathe in the Ganga and do some rituals for having committed a terrible sin by killing "Gau Mata".

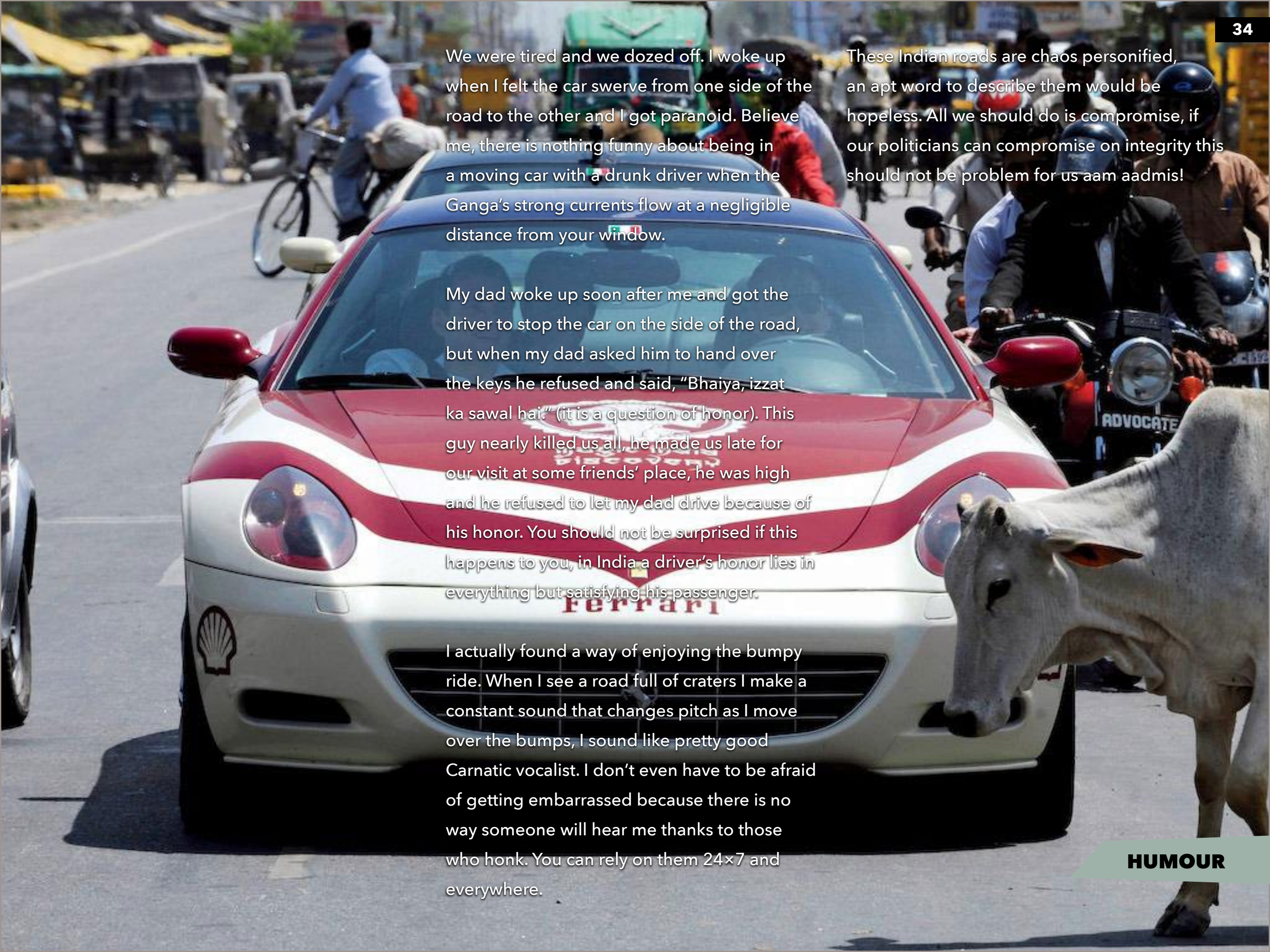
Catchy signboards saying "Speed thrills but KILLS" and "You want to donate blood don't do it on the road" or "After drinking whisky driving is risky" are common all over the country. In Delhi, U.P, Punjab, and rest of the north there are phrases in neon paint on the rear end of trucks that say "Burinazar wale tera muh kaala" or in other places "We Two Ours One" to control the country's ever growing population. The signboards are supposed to help but someone could ram into something



while laughing at how silly they are. The threat caused by these is nowhere close to the one caused by the perilous promotional ads put up by our dear politicians. Rangaswamy (local politician) receiving an Oscar from Obama looked like a good job done by a professional.

Roads here are hilarious, but if you are a victim of their 'pranks' you can have a hard time.

Two years back my family and I got stuck in a car with a drunk driver. He was sober when he picked us up. He took cash from my dad on the way saying that he would buy chips for my brother, who was crying. He brought chips for my brother but he never returned the change, which he possibly couldn't - after all he'd just spent it on some drug that is sold discreetly in small stalls on the edge of highways. Whatever he'd had was strong but it took a while for its effect set in. The rest of us were totally oblivious of the fact that this guy was going to be high in fifteen minutes.



We were tired and we dozed off. I woke up when I felt the car swerve from one side of the road to the other and I got paranoid. Believe me, there is nothing funny about being in a moving car with a drunk driver when the Ganga's strong currents flow at a negligible distance from your window.

My dad woke up soon after me and got the driver to stop the car on the side of the road, but when my dad asked him to hand over the keys he refused and said, "Bhaiya, izzat ka sawal hai." (it is a question of honor). This guy nearly killed us all, he made us late for our visit at some friends' place, he was high and he refused to let my dad drive because of his honor. You should not be surprised if this happens to you, in India a driver's honor lies in everything but satisfying his passenger.

I actually found a way of enjoying the bumpy ride. When I see a road full of craters I make a constant sound that changes pitch as I move over the bumps, I sound like pretty good Carnatic vocalist. I don't even have to be afraid of getting embarrassed because there is no way someone will hear me thanks to those who honk. You can rely on them 24x7 and everywhere.

These Indian roads are chaos personified, an apt word to describe them would be hopeless. All we should do is compromise, if our politicians can compromise on integrity this should not be problem for us aam aadmis!

THE ART OF BARGAINING - "KOI INSE SIKHE!"

We Indians work pretty hard to earn money and when the time comes to part with it, we obviously don't want to. So in comes bargaining - a 'ritual' every Indian woman performs every time she buys something from any shop, malls included!

The Indian man is too lazy to bargain for a mala worth Rs. 10/- , but he will find a way to the black market, bargain and buy the latest gadgets.

Here is a typical Indian shop scene and you are the customer: There will be 4 mannequins outside the shop that are occupying 2/3rds of the footpath and there are dresses hanging so low over your head that you inevitably get brushed on the face by them.

HUMOUR



You enter the shop and are greeted with a smile from the manager above whose head there is a notice board that says: FIXED RATE'. You tell him what you want and a boy shows it to you. When you have finalised a dress after having gone through a whole shelf and a heap of dresses on the counter, you ask the manager for a discount by saying, "Hum toh roz ke annewalein hein, discount nahi doge?"

You look at the dress' price tag - it says Rs.800/-.You take out a few hundred rupee notes . You count Rs. 700/- . You place Rs. 600/- on the billing counter and put back a hundred rupee note in your purse - all the while looking at the manager. He nods his head. You pull a Rs. 50/- note out and smile. He smiles as he takes the money and as you come out, you start thinking about whom to go to boast about your big bargain.

The bargain that you just made seems acceptable still, how about this one?

You are walking on the beach and a little girl of 10 comes to you with a roll of flower garland and pleads with you to buy it, as you keep on walking. You ask the price and she says Rs. 10/- for 2 hand-lengths. You keep walking without

saying anything. She gets the price down to Rs. 8/-. You stop and offer to pay Rs. 5/-. If she takes the money you smile at her but if she doesn't smile back, then you look at her as if she was selling you sub-standard stuff and walk off.

And now at last we reach the height of bargaining.

A man goes to buy watermelons on the streets with his daughter. The lady says the price is Rs. 15/- per kilo. He buys 2 watermelons, 4 kgs each. She asks him for Rs. 120/-. He tries to bargain. She asks him to go elsewhere if he wants to bargain. The man says, "Why elsewhere?" and gives the two watermelons to his daughter, who is sitting on the bike, puts Rs. 80/- in the lady's hand and rides off as the woman screams @#**?#!**?!#!!! .

So if you want to master the art of bargaining all you have to do is go shopping with an Indian (housewife preferably) and I'm sure that you'll be a pro at it within no time!

(P.S - All the incidents are true.)

FASCINATING PLACES TO VISIT IN INDIA

Whenever we discuss places to visit during the vacations, we wish we could go to new and unexplored places rather than the usual, much visited ones. We decided to research and come up with some destinations that are not on the regular lists.

So here is the countdown of our top ten places to visit in India. We have chosen those that have fascinated us and we hope you make some time to visit them!



BUCKET LIST

10. GOMATESHWARA STATUE, KARNATAKA.

The statue of Gomateshwara, also known as Bahubali, at Shravanabelagola towers, is carved out of a single block of granite. It is 60 feet high and so large that it can be seen from 30 kilometres away. Gomateshwara was a Jain saint, who according to legend was the first human to attain liberation halfway through his life.

The monolith was built by Chamundaraya, a minister of the Ganga Dynasty between 978 and 993 CE and is one of the most important pilgrimage sites for Jains across the world. Standing at the feet of this massive monolith and looking up is something we would like to experience.





9. STEP-WELL, RAJASTHAN.

The Chand Baori step well was built by King Chanda of the Nikumbha Dynasty between 800 and 900 AD. It consists of 3,500 narrow steps that are about 13 storeys high. It extends approximately 100 ft into the ground making it one of the deepest and largest step-wells in India. At the bottom of the well, the air remains 5-6 degrees cooler than at the surface.

8. ORCHHA, MADHYA PRADESH.

Orchha (or Urchha) is a town in the Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh that was established by Maharaja Rudra Pratap Singh. You must visit this town for two reasons, the Chhatris (cenotaphs) and the Laxminarayan temple.

Representing the rich architectural skills of the local craftsmen of the ancient period, the fourteen Chhatris in Orchha were built in honour of each ruler of the royal dynasty of Bundelkhand to crown their success in the several wars with the neighbouring rulers and intruders.

The Laxminarayan Temple has walls and ceilings that are engraved with beautiful paintings and colourful frescos that portray the rich artistic caliber and imaginative skill of the local artisans of the ancient times. It is a mix of a rich Bundel and Mughal style of art. This fusion in architecture is definitely worth a shot.





7. THE AMAR MAHAL PALACE MUSEUM, JAMMU AND KASHMIR.

The Amar Mahal Palace Museum was once the residence of Raja Amar Singh. This palace made of red sandstone is beautiful. It is situated at a great location between the Shivaliks (mountain range) and the Tawi River.

The palace has a magnificent golden throne made of 120 kilograms of gold placed in a hexagonal room and bears the design of golden lions on it. It is rare to find gold at such a grand scale.

Now converted into a museum, it also has an art gallery and a heritage hotel adjacent to it. The art collection in the gallery is very impressive, with paintings of M.F Hussain, Laxman Pai and other famous Indian contemporary painters on display. Another interesting aspect is the pahari paintings displayed here, depicting tales from the Mahabharata and other folklore, especially those of Nala Damayanti.



6. MEHAO WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, ARUNACHAL PRADESH.

We love nature that is why we want to visit this wonderful place. Situated amid the lush green forests of Arunachal Pradesh it is paradise on earth. It has been named after the Mehao Lake found within the sanctuary. A recommended destination for bird watchers, it is one of the special wildlife preserves in India. What will stun you is the untouched beauty of this place.

BUCKET LIST

5. THE ROCK GARDEN, CHHATTISGARH.

The Rock Garden is spread over an expanse of 40 acres, and is made up of sculptures made of curiously shaped pebbles, and waste materials like broken glass bangles, porcelain, forks, discarded fluorescent tubes, play marbles, metal wires, clay and coal, etc. This should draw the attention of recyclists. The style of structures in the garden reflects high resemblance to Mughal ethnicity. The 14 incredible chambers show waterfalls, ponds, statues of animals and birds. Walls made of terracotta pots, the maze, the valleys and chambers make you feel like you are in a lost kingdom. Some of the fascinating things that can be found in the garden are armies of stone ducks, papier-maché soldiers, animal statues and elves.





4. GURUDONGMAR LAKE, SIKKIM.

Located at a height of 17,100 ft, Gurudongmar Lake in Sikkim is one of the highest lakes in the world. It is believed that Guru Nanak Dev Ji, on his way to Tibet, stopped here to quench his thirst. With his stick, he cracked the ice, which led to the formation of the lake. It is said that even during the roughest winter, there is always some part of the lake that remains unfrozen.



3. LIVING ROOTS BRIDGE, MEGHALAYA.

People build bridges, but the Khasis, tribal people of Cherrapunji in Meghalaya, grow bridges. *Ficus Elastica* or the Rubber Tree produces strong secondary roots from its trunks. The roots have been trained to grow in a particular direction with the help of betel-nut trunks, forming sturdy living bridges over decades. Some of these bridges are more than a hundred feet long, and over 500 years old. The Umshiang Double Decker Bridge is among them the most fascinating one.

2. TEESTA AND RANGEET RIVER, DARJEELING.

River Teesta and Rangeet gush down the mountains of Darjeeling to create foaming white icy water that has stretches with varying rapids that are excellent for rafting for both beginners and seasoned rafters.

River Teesta originates from the Tso Lhamo lake in North Sikkim, that has an altitude of 17,500ft. Rangeet originates from the glacier of Mount Kabru in the lower Kanchenjunga region. Both finally meet near the Teesta bazar. This meeting point is known as Triveni. The Teesta Rivers are graded internationally because they present one of the finest rafting stretches in the world. Scenery along with a sport offers a lot of memories to take back home.

1. KHONGHAMPAT ORCHIDARIUM, MANIPUR.

On the northern side of Imphal, a few kilometres away from the main city is Khonghampat Orchidarium. This place has more than 110 species of orchids, including several rare ones. It is spread over an area of 200 acres. The Orchid Yard is maintained by the Forest Department. Orchids thrive on their host plant but here the trees and the orchids seem to look like a single plant. The vibrant colours and the multitude of sizes and shapes will mesmerize you. The best time to visit the orchidarium is from April to May when the orchids are in full bloom.

We hope this list has tickled your fancy and encouraged you to tread away from the beaten path and explore newer destinations. Imbibe the beauty that is India.



MAYA

40MM / 1/30S / F/4

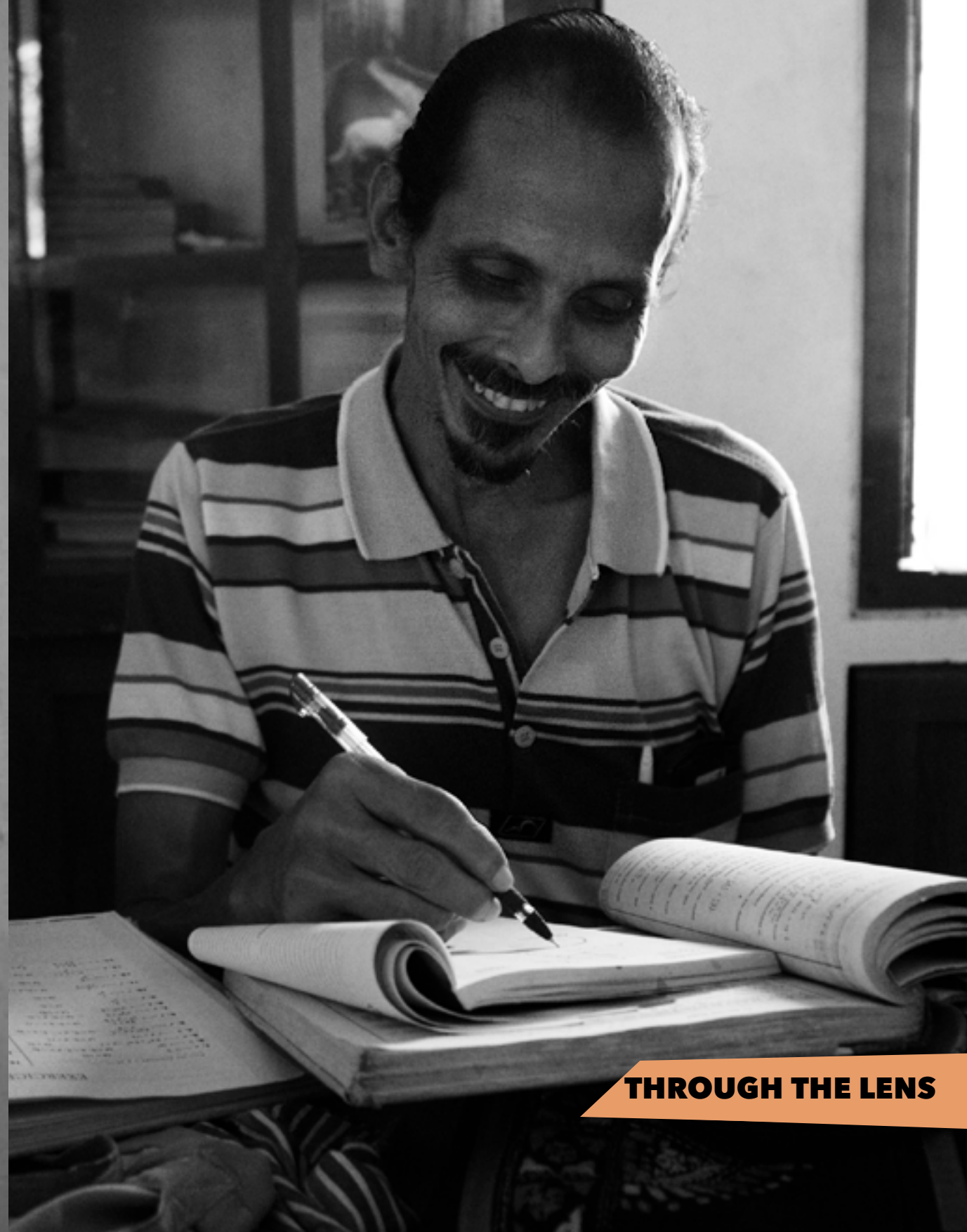
THROUGH THE LENS

HARDIE-DI

44MM / 1/80S / F/5

**BHARAT-ARYA**

28MM / 1/80S / F/4

**THROUGH THE LENS**

MADHUSUDAN-DA

55MM / 1/80S / F/6

**THROUGH THE LENS**

A portrait of a young woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a dark-colored top with a floral pattern on the shoulders. The background is an outdoor setting with a brick-paved ground, a large tree trunk, and a building with a window in the distance.

POOJARANI

55M / 1/60S / F/5

THROUGH THE LENS

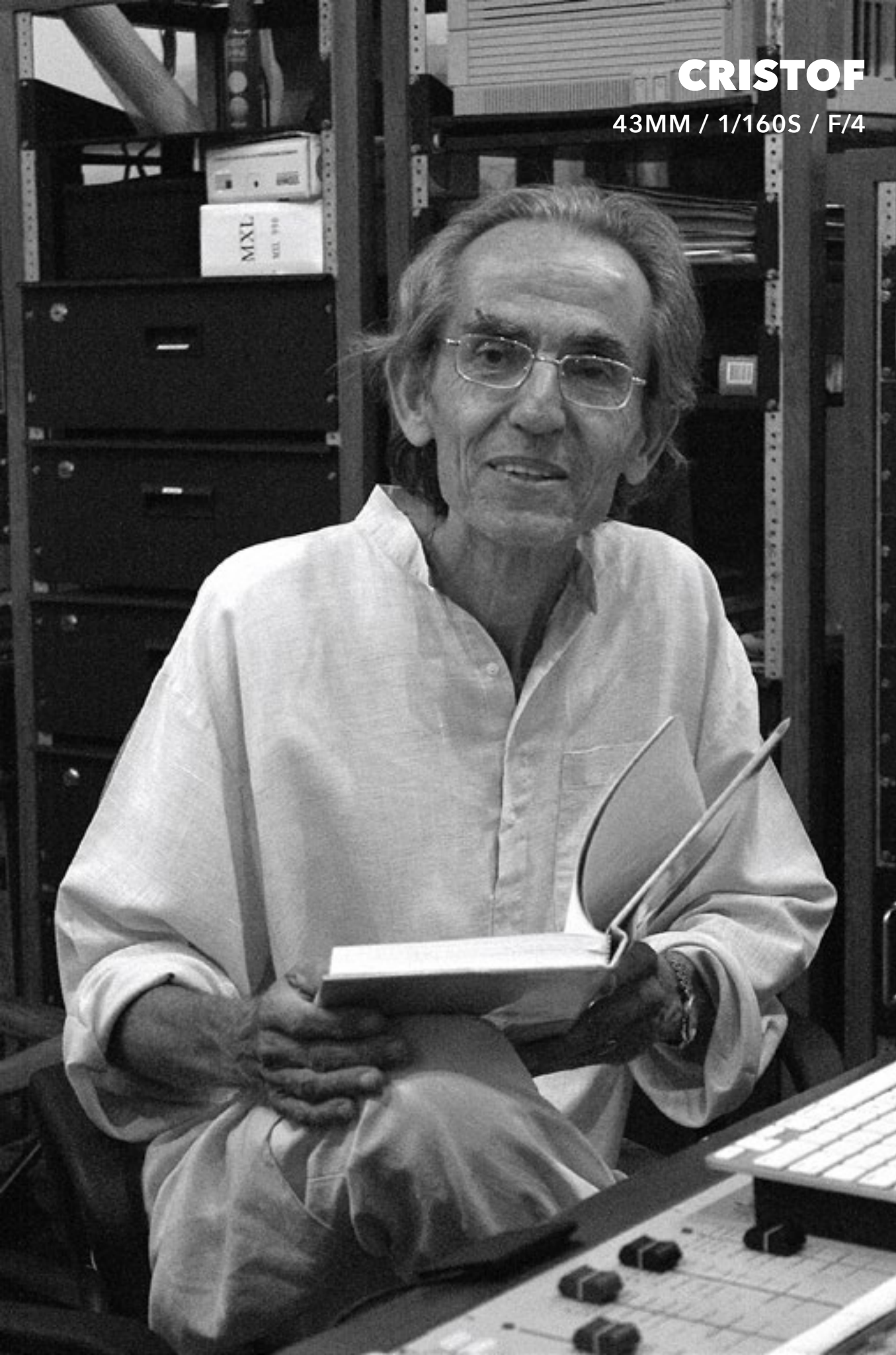


DAVID

40MM / 1/15S / F/ 4

CRISTOF

43MM / 1/160S / F/4

**PRAVEEN-BHAI**

33MM / 1/25S / F/4

**THROUGH THE LENS**

SO WHAT DID YOU GUYS THINK OF THIS?

We'd love to hear what you have to say. How often? Too much?

Drop us a line...

Thank you,

Nishtha

slaicemag@gmail.com



THE TEAM

(FRONT ROW L-R): RATI, CHINMAY, NISHTHA

(SECOND ROW L-R): SATYA, RAJALAXMI, MIRA, SATYAMAYEE, SUDAKSHINA, ARAVINDA, SANCHARI