

# FINEPRINT

Mount Carmel College (Autonomous), Bengaluru

Department of Communications, March 2018

## How Ayurveda Heals the Economy

*What have the herbal and Ayurveda industries of India been doing to keep up with the modern market and its demands? Sheryl M. Yaseen finds out.*

An Indian household's first step to good health: use of ghee, over processed oils, and butter. It is a known fact that Indians love their ghee over any other factory-manufactured edible grease. According to a report in the *Economic Times*, more than half of Indian consumers prefer natural based products over chemical based ones. This affection for natural, healthy products has over the years extended to other places, such as cosmetics, body care, and even healthcare, not just in India but across the world. This world of health consciousness is not just beneficial for peace of mind or body care but also for the sustenance and development of a country, especially India.

The market for herbal and ayurveda based products in India is massive. Companies such as Dabur, Patanjali, Vico, etc., have huge shares in the market. In fact, *Patanjali Ayurved Ltd.* claims to have upto 15% of the shares in the shampoo market. Demand for natural care products has gone up exponentially, with local shop owners claiming sales have gone up anywhere between 200-400% over the past few years. The owner of a local beauty parlour, Geeta Kalbande, says herbal bleaching has become incredibly popular, while shop owner Janesh Unnikrishnan claims that around 70% of face washes/creams sold by his store are herbal based products. This can be used as a template for future

Ayurveda will also allow investment opportunities from genomics and nano technology, according to the *Business Standard*. "Ayurveda presents a personalized approach in the predictive, preventive, and curative aspects of stratified medicine with molecular variability, which intersects mind and body. It embodies the study of interindividual variability due to genetic variability in humans," according to [Sciencedirect.com](http://Sciencedirect.com) on Ayurvedonomics. Due to a commonality in the medicinal techniques in great parts of Asia, an East-East research

nanomedicine for efficient therapeutic effects, without the concern of harmful effects. Head Research and Development scientist India has successfully pioneered yoga across the world, causing earnings of about \$80 billion globally, according to the *Economic Times*. Efforts to help the growth of Ayurveda could help improve the economy greatly. Ayurveda based drugs as the side effects are "virtually non-existent in comparison," thus requires usage of indigenous knowledge systems, which will result in the creation of a lot reducing medical costs exponentially.

nature excessively," Dr. Chelageri claims. Head Research and Development scientist at Himalaya Drug Company (Bangalore office), Dr. U. V. Babu, says medical products based on Ayurveda are "much better and far more economical" than chemical based drugs as the side effects are "virtually non-existent in comparison," thus reducing medical costs exponentially. of jobs and Tourism in India, more specifically medical tourism, has also benefitted largely from Dr. Kumar ayurveda. While Coimbatore is still a rising Chelageri, tourist destination, the entire state of Kerala scientist in has shown incredible earnings. By the year 2020, the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) expects to issue Culture increase its turnover to 5,000 crore. Medical Department Tourism in Kerala is so big, that it has attracted celebrities from across the world, such as Himalaya pop star Madonna, actress Demi Moore, football player Neymar Jr., Italian film director Bernardo Bertolucci, German TV and film actress Ingeborg Schoener, and many more.



ed that increase in herbal and ayurvedic treatment in India has led to massive growth in employment of tribal people. Himalaya alone trains and hires numerous tribes for the purpose of harvesting and plucking herbs. "Using the tribes also means natural balance is maintained because the tribes know how to gather the ingredients without disturbing da to the country, on 17th October, 2017.

In October 2017, Union Minister for State for AYUSH Shripad Yesso Naik said that, a three-fold increase in ayurveda industry sales can be expected by the year 2020, from \$2.5 billion to \$8 billion. Our Prime Minister has already dedicated the All India Institute of Ayurveda to the country, on 17th October, 2017.

## Straight from the Jockey's Mouth

*Minnal Paranan shines some light on the behind-the-scenes of horse racing – a sport that hasn't got the recognition it deserves.*

These gentle creatures have been constant companions to humans since time immemorial. A symbol of freedom and passion, a horse reflects what every man desires. Horse racing is one of the oldest sports man has indulged in. In India, the 'country bred' had gained recognition by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Starting in Madras in 1780, racing took its place as an elite sport. Famous horses from Arabia and the local Indian breeds took to the tracks in The Derby of Bengal in Calcutta. The number of racecourses increased and land to cater to these races expanded in Calcutta, the then British capital, as its nerve

centre. But why is it that this sport still fights for expression? Why is it that we are unaware of the men and women who have dedicated their lives to these equines?

Jockey MV Jagdeesh, who has been on the tracks since 2000 says racing is a sport, and that he is a proud sportsman. He affirms that the life of a jockey is not easy, and it takes not only physical but mental fitness to excel in the game. With over 400 horses, the Mysore Race Club is one of the few in the country that gives aspiring riders like Jagdeesh a chance at the sport. Built in 1991, this club is now

trotting towards establishing itself as an independent authority in the country.

Prashant Dhebe, a budding jockey, has been riding for 8 years. He describes the rigorous training and strict diet that he and his fellow comrades have to follow every month – from protein shakes to Electrolytes. He says

that working with the horses is the best form of exercise they get. "I'm lucky because I'm light, but those who have bone weight have to be even more careful. Their life is very difficult," he exclaims. He says some racers have to live on Electrolytes or juices for a month before the race.

Along with austere physical demands, these jockeys practise one of the most risky professions in the world. Trevor Patel, one of the leading jockeys in India says that one will hear of two to three deaths every year. Ranging from neck and head injuries caused by falling off the horse to stampedes in the stables, the perils in this sport are many. These jockeys take their chances and risk their lives for the love of riding. "But yeh sport mera passion hai (But this sport is my passion)," says Trevor, proudly.

The troubles in this profession don't stop with injuries. Even today, many are oblivious to the lives of these jockeys and the atmosphere of the sport in general. In our cricket-loving country, Trevor claims that only when the sport is given national recognition will it reach its potential. "If the government backs it, it will surpass cricket and football," he says with confidence. Even with the little facilities that they get, many like Trevor and Jagdeesh have made their way to represent India internationally. Talking about how racing is viewed in other countries, Trevor brings to light the racism in racing. Recalling his time in Australia, he explains how he was

treated differently because of his complexion. "They look down on you. I was denied many facilities and given smaller rooms because I'm Indian," he brings out. The media is a medium, they say, that can make or break anything. "With the right exposure, the sport can be as big as cricket," says Prashant. "It comes down to how the media portrays the sport." Jagdeesh shines light on the way betting is seen as gambling, tainting the image of the game. Comparing it with a game of cards he says, "Cards aise hi khela toh accha hai. Paise dala toh it's gambling (Cards played for fun is fine. Put money into it and it becomes gambling)." He emphasises that racing is a professional sport and betting is only one aspect of it. These jockeys want to convey that with the right exposure, this sport will gain momentum and the popularity it deserves. They wish for the sport to be recognised in its former glory, seen as the elite sport it is. With more clubs opening and the circuit expanding, they hope that people will come and show excitement towards watching these pristine creatures gallop and glide through the wet grass towards the finish line.

The lives of these jockeys need to hit the lime-light, so that the whole country feels what people like Trevor feel. And in his words, "I'm very proud that I chose this profession. It is a choice I do not regret. It is an honour to be a part of such a royal and beautiful sport. And one day it will get the fame it deserves."



*Find a surprise from Desserted on page 2*

## Amar Chitra Katha or History Textbooks?



*Ever thought about how Amar Chitra Katha came into being, and why it's so loved? Bhargavi M.S. is here to tell you!*

"If Indian children were made aware of their past, they would develop confidence and have self esteem," said Uncle Pai. In the time of Phantom, Superman, and Archie comics, there emerged a new comic series – Amar Chitra Katha. Anant Pai, or Uncle Pai, as he was fondly called, started this Indian comic series in the 1960s. It was after a conversation with his niece and nephew, that he realized how kids didn't know much about Indian history. Uncle Pai was shocked to see that college students knew more about Greek mythology than Lord Rama. When his work was sent to different publishing houses, Pai was rejected, and he received comments like "Gods in comics!" But finally, Indian Book House agreed to publish it, but made a deal – the first ten books were to be European. The 11<sup>th</sup> copy was the first comic book on Indian mythology - *Krishna*. This was followed by *Sons of Rama*, *Hanuman*, *Shakuntala*, and so on. A series which has shaped the knowledge of many children regarding the history of India, Amar Chitra Katha has come a long way.

The history textbook failed to do as much justice because visual portrayal of information always wins. There are many reasons why visual repre-

sentation works – it engages better with memory, captures attention, and portrays emotion better than text. An Instagram poll revealed that 89% of the readers remember the stories and imagery in the comic series, compared to information in their history textbook. Case in point being *Shakuntala*. The jasmine flowers and orange draped attire is stuck in everyone's head. In the online poll, 11% say deriving information from both is necessary, and you can always start off with ACK, but history textbooks are better.

Bala Panchanathan, a political science undergraduate student from Miranda House, says, "A history textbook doesn't seem nearly as interesting when compared to ACK. Initially, ACK was the best alternative to rejuvenate interest in our history, and primarily our mythology. By characterizing our Gods, ancient myths, legends, folklore, it makes a colourful and compelling case luring even the most historically disinterested person. Whereas, our history textbooks, not totally colorful and in a non-comic format, also makes an interesting read – with case studies, biographies, historical anecdotes, etc. So it's unfair to say that history textbooks are bad."

Sridhar, a 55 year-old educator, believes that "Putting information through simple medium is the best way to go. The point is to get the information across to a larger audi-

ence and as a teacher, I believe that the comic version is better at doing the job. The people who read the information should gain something out of it. This concept was revolutionary, especially in the 1990s period."

Lalitha, an 80 year old avid reader and history lover claimed, "After seeing the images, I couldn't think of any other visual depiction of the characters. The emotions, the focus on details, and most importantly – it is easy on the eyes. As a woman of my age who loves going back and reading up on things I've grown up hearing, this is the perfect choice!" For primary reading and gaining knowledge about our history without dealing with heavy information, Amar Chitra Katha seems to be the go-to choice in many Indian households.

The comic series now steps into the future – new icons such as Tenzing Norgay, Salim Ali, Dhyan Chand, and MS Subbalakshmi will be added as new titles. The stories have now moved to a digital platform and the organization will continue to put out works honouring the heroes of our country and those whose names have been recorded in history. "A tree is only as strong as its roots," Uncle Pai said, as he started this comic series. The tree has been growing ever since, strengthening its roots in our mind."

## W-indie music

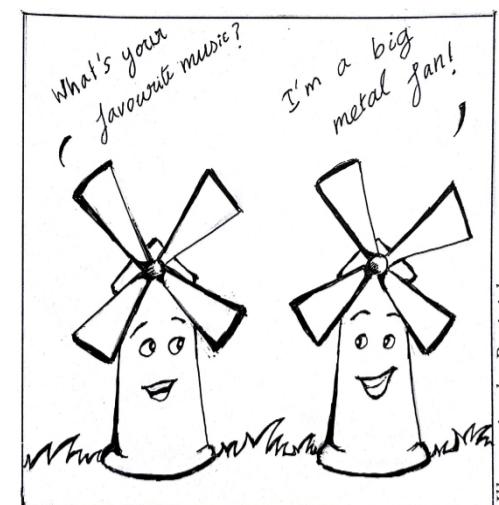


Illustration by Parinisha

## Before it's too late

AARUSHI TURAKHIA

If I die tonight,  
what would you do?  
Would you cry?  
Would you finally stop fighting?  
"It's too late," you'd hear.  
How did you not realise sooner,  
that every time you stood up and raised your  
voice,  
my strength fell and lowered it's own?  
You only saw me pulling you away, screaming,  
crying, trying.  
But there's something that you didn't see.  
I begged, I fought,  
I prayed for it all to end.  
I went to bed every night, only to find  
myself waking up to the same monsters that  
would leave me exhausted.  
Eagerly I would rattle my pillow,  
each morning.  
Hoping;  
forcing the nightmares to tumble out.  
But you didn't see;  
you didn't try.  
All you saw was temper tantrums,  
a child who didn't understand your problems.  
"Don't worry, go rest. It'll be alright."  
You don't understand.  
It's not my body that's tired.  
It's my existence.  
It's my will.  
It's my soul.  
Behind the teary eyes,  
is a girl who has lost all hope.  
She'd already died a thousand times every  
night.  
"One last time," she said to herself,  
trying to find the strength.  
You poked, pinched, patted;  
no luck.  
"It's too late," you suspected.  
"It's too late," the doctor confirmed.  
But don't ask why;  
don't cry.  
Just stop fighting.  
For, I found strength to do so, myself.

## Light of Shadows

*Not all art is limited to a physical form – relive the art of shadows and light in its finest with Thejaswini Khagargadde.*

Soft music plays on the speakers. The traffic noise is promptly ignored. The auto-rickshaws slow their vehicles down and stare. The brave ones pick up their phones and take pictures. Behind the huge white mass made of cloth, supported by bamboo structures, are the storytellers of this city.

The series of overhead projectors casting shadows, right beside the Cubbon Park Metro Station, attracts the attention of many teenagers walking by. "It looks like a cave. It reminds me of my childhood when my grandmother used to tell me stories," recalls Sayeed, manager of the sound systems, as he looks at the colorful shadows portrayed on the huge screen that took almost a week to build.

Shadow play or shadow puppetry has been one of the oldest forms of storytelling. It began thousands of years ago in China and India. According to the TravelChina-Guide website, it has been very popular, both among children and adults as a medium of conveying folk tales and legends. The threshold interactive shadow installa-

tions are public and participatory. Anybody can walk in, use the props and throw shadows, while dancing to the music. It is for the people to break free from their everyday lives in public spaces. "It feels good to control 3D spaces," says Daksha Suryavamshi, as she plays with the shadows. "It's a relief from controlling a computer all day long with a mouse."

This is part of a bigger organization known as 'Art in Transit', a part of the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology. They bring art into the metro station and present it for free for the public to enjoy. "We want to just simply activate the public. In today's world we are consumers of culture instead of creative agents of culture," says Jackson Porretta, a teacher at Srishti, and the curator of the show. He hopes for some social change to occur and people to become creatively active in their daily lives again. "We're hoping to kind of communicate and deal with narrative and story within these spaces. What I love about the shadows is that it's temporary. It's a moment. So it's got a very light footprint. It's there and then it's gone. And it didn't do anything to the Earth," he states, confessing the love affair he has had with shadow as medium.



Illustration by Thejaswini



Illustration by Parinisha

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## Zaika-e-Qadeem

*Zoha Fatima wanders the lanes of Hyderabad to discover noteworthy dishes from the City of Nizams.*

Whether or not you've visited Hyderabad, you may know about biryani, kebabs, haleem, qubani and double ka meetha. But digging deep into Hyderabadi roots, you would find other food items that Hyderabidis relish over their everyday meals. Did you know that during the time of the Nizams, ice cream was made manually, Irani tea was more than just its ingredients, and that the Jauzi halwa came into prominence after a rebellious act of its maker? Introducing – Zaika e Qadeem (taste of the old).

### Hand-churned Drum Ice Cream

Visualising an ice cream is tempting, but visualising an Ala ice cream is heavenly – because it looks like a creamy scoop of extra soft ice cream that melts like cold butter in your mouth. Resisting its taste would be hard, as it's the cold, fresh-fruit taste you crave during summers, but with a twist. Ahmed, the maker of Ala ice cream from Bilal's says, "Bilal's Ice Creams opened in Moazzam Jahi Market during the last Nizam's time. The owner, Mr. Aasimudin, started his shop 60 years ago. Alas (wooden barrels) were used to prepare the ice cream, and the churning was done by hand. The barrel was



filled with ice and salt [as the salt lowers the ice's melting point], keeping the mixture colder for a longer period of time. After this, a container of ice cream batter (a mixture of milk, sugar, and any fresh-fruit puree) was placed into the centre of the barrel, surrounded by the salted ice. A handle was then manually rotated in order to churn the insides. The making of Ala ice cream has been handed down generations, and has been sold in the same market for years." Nowadays, a huge motorized container is used instead of barrels, and the filling consists of salt and calcium water instead of ice. A metal cylinder containing the batter is placed inside the motorized one and the motor is switched on. The churning takes a total of 45 minutes for every 9 litres of batter. "Seasonal fruits are used to give personalized flavours. But chickoo, muskmelon, banana, guava, and mango steal the show. Two scoops are sold for Rs. 25-40 depending on the availability and market price of the fruit. 160-300 litres of ice cream is made every day as the demand doesn't decrease", adds store manager Ansari. Local customers find this ice cream different from others because the texture is creamier, and it is 100% natural. Families come in and buy bulk orders for the weekend or functions. Ali, a dedicated customer says, "It is hard to find everything natural these days. So, anything with everything natural sells, [just] like fresh Ala ice creams." He visits Bilal's every year to order 20 litres of mango ice cream for an annual family function.

### Irani Tea

The aroma of Irani tea and its steam can persuade you to drink it. With every chuski (sip) of this brown coloured beverage – preferably from the saucer – you can taste a fusion of not just the perfectly proportionate ingredients present, but also an answer to the ques-



tion – Why do Hyderabidis like Irani chai so much? Irani chai was introduced in Iran, but evolved in Hyderabad after the opening of Irani cafes. Originally, it was drunk just as black tea, but milk, sugar, and Indian tea powder had to be added to cater to the Hyderabadi taste buds. It was always meant to be made for large gatherings, so it was never made in small quantities. Hashmat, owner of Chaska Chai, which sells around 3,500 cups of Irani chai everyday, tells us the procedure. "The milk is boiled for 45-50 minutes. Then water is boiled separately in a tamba (copper) vessel and Assam tea leaves are put in it. A copper vessel has a thick base which doesn't let the tea leaves stick to it. This tea is mixed and given dum (steam) for 45 minutes. Then this is filtered through a muslin cloth and put in the big kettle. It is served in a specific manner to each customer. Firstly, sugar is added in the cup (to cater to different tastes), then the dum tea is poured into the cup and lastly, milk is added."

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## Mysophobia

*Kruti Suresh takes a look at mysophobia – its causes, symptoms, and treatments.*

"I have 8 hours of office, out of which I spend 7 hours cleaning," cries Mohan Lal, a 32 year old man who has been suffering from mysophobia for the last 10 years of his life. Germophobia, also known as mysophobia is the pathological fear of contamination and germs, usually seen in patients of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). "We can call an abnormality as a disorder when it affects our emotional, social, and occupational functioning. They (patients) have a compulsive urge to clean and cannot resist it." states Dr. Rakesh Jain, HoD of Psychology at a mental institution at Agra.

This disorder is due to a mixture of etiological, biological, and psychological components. Triggers for OCD patients can vary. Patients suffering from germophobia are triggered when encountered with unclean environments. "This phobia is generally dormant until there is an interaction with genetic propensity and environmental factors," Dr. Jain says. The phobia's onset generally occurs late in adolescence, with the primary emotion being an irrational fear of impurity, followed by excessive washing of hands, avoidance of any task deemed unclean, and are generally caused by traumatic events, genetic vulnerability, or dysfunctionality. For those suffering from this condition, the fear of transmission of germs is greater than the fear of getting dirty themselves. This fear is further

compounded with the guilt of being responsible for the transmission, resulting in a physiological compulsion which causes them to feel responsible to prevent the transmission with a varied intensity. People with this phobia have an irrational component as well as a rational component of the mind. Doctor Jain explains this, "They know what is logical. They are aware that germs do not spread so easily. But yet cannot resist the act of prevention. This is where the role of psychotherapy and medication comes into play." Amygdala is a part of the brain which alerts the brain to the possible dangers in the environment. In mysophobic patients, the amygdala becomes overactive. Other parts, including the hippocampus, are responsible for symptoms of this phobia. There are multiple types of psychotherapies for treating mysophobia such as, psycho-analysis, behavioral therapy, etc. "In behavioral therapy, we expose the patient to germs repeatedly. Initially the patient will get scared and the anxiety will increase. Slowly, an inverted anxiety curve will be formed. This process will continue till the fear is subdued or removed," says Dr. Jain. "The best form of therapy for mysophobia is exposure and response prevention therapy, i.e., exposure to germs and prevention of cleaning." Further, medications like anti-anxiety pills, beta-blockers, and antidepressants are used to subdue the symptoms of mysophobia. They regulate and optimize the quantity of serotonin, a neurotransmitter, in case of deficiency.

Dr Jain continues, "This year, I have analyzed 13 to 14 mysophobic patients. The most interesting case I saw was of an upper-middle-class man who once owned a factory. However, after the onset of this phobia, he locked himself in the third floor of his house. He believed that he was so filthy that even stepping on his footprints would contaminate others. He even stayed away from his family for years. It took him 4 months to stabilize during and after receiving treatment." As for Mohan Lal, he suffered alone for 10 years before finally finding peace after consulting Dr. Rakesh Jain. During an interview with him, he confessed, "I used to bathe 12 to 13 times a day. My wife lived with my parents and I faced great shortage of money. It took me 3 months and after the therapy I have shown great improvement! I have re-established my business and work for 8 hours out of which I clean for 1 hour."

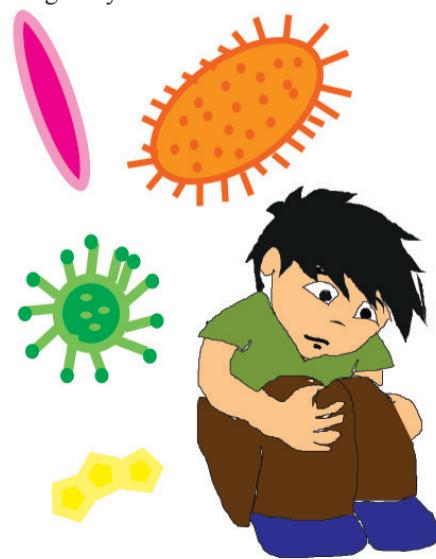


Illustration by Bhargavi

## Shining Through the Odds

*Divija Khater talks to an award-winning jewellery designer.*

"My mother had a necklace which broke and although, she told me that it was fine, I was hell bent on fixing it. So, I took it and did whatever my kid mind thought of. I fixed the necklace with rubber bands and I was extremely proud of my achievement. That was when I started enjoying fixing things," says Raksha Reddy, a home-grown Bangalore girl and the proud owner of Raksha Reddy Bespoke Jewelry. She has always had high ambitions. As a kid, her dream would change every two days. One day, she'd want to be a doctor, the next an astronaut, and the day after, someone working in hotel management or even a part of the Indian Air Force. She had all the family support she could ever ask for.

The talented jeweller mentions that her interest in jewellery design only increased during the 3 years of her degree. "At the beginning, they introduced us to every mode of design and technology and eventually, we had to pick one. I chose jewellery design because I always had OCD when it came to detailing and jewellery had it. I was good at it, I enjoyed it and it also, let me give it the attention it needed."

At just age 19, Raksha became the first Indian to win the MIJF (Malaysian International Jewellery Fair) award in the necklace category. Her design was chosen over hundreds, maybe thousands of participants from all over the continent and the U.S.A. "It was unexpected... I was shocked and overwhelmed. And being the first Indian to win it, just enhanced the feeling. Everyone

thought that, an Indian's designs would be very Indian-like but what they got was the absolute opposite. And what motivated me to take part in the fair was the fact that, if you don't keep trying you'll never know where you stand." Raksha's necklace was later manufactured by the sponsors, and she's extremely proud of this.

On her experience while studying, Raksha says, "When I was researching for my store, I needed to travel to various parts of country to get gems and diamonds. One of the places I travelled the most, was Surat. Being the only girl amongst hundreds of men wasn't easy. I was told to go back home and get someone to do the work for me because I was a girl and a girl shouldn't be doing this. I had to go through streets where the men would sit half naked without any shame. I couldn't avoid it because I had to do my job. So, I held my head up and moved forward." Even with troubles of that degree, Raksha didn't give up or stop. She worked harder, and the result is her store, Raksha Reddy Bespoke Jewellery. It opened in October 2016, and has gotten a great deal of recognition. Raksha has also won the Times Retail Icon Award for Emerging Jewellery Designer 2017. Raksha says her future plan is "to open another store in the next year or two." She wants to promote the store more so that it's known, at least, in the country. "I don't want to stop working. Right now, my work is what's giving me life along with my family and my dogs," she concludes.



# BENGALURU marches ahead

Take a walk with Mekana Murali, as she celebrates Namma Pride 2017 with the LGBT community of Bengaluru

There is colour everywhere. Gold glitter smudged on a young girl's cheek, bright red heels shining as a young, bearded man strides down the street, and the many, many rainbow colored flags that the procession of people, making their way from Tulsi Park to Town Hall hold up proudly.

There are so many people present, it's impossible to be alone. Volunteers run about, diligently spreading information as it comes to them via walkie-talkie and handing out dazzling masks to anyone who wants one. The masks are a clever way for individuals not yet out to their friends and family, to safely take part in Karnataka Queer Habba's 2017 Pride March.

It's not just masks that adorn people's faces; nearly every other person has a rainbow painted on their cheek, or in view somewhere else on their body. A girl with a shaved head walks by, and she has the rainbow flag painted on top of it. There are people with rainbow nails, hats, socks, and even someone who's decked out entirely in traditionally Kannadiga male attire, with massive rainbow wings made of feathers. "It's a place where we can be ourselves, and wear whatever we like, without any fear or worry. It's a place where we can truly celebrate who we are," explains Raja, a student at a nearby university. This is Raja's third march, and for today's event he's decided to go with a pair of classic, black heels.

There are men in heels, women in suits, and individuals, who don't identify as either gender, wearing whatever they please. It's a celebration of pride, of who they are, of a unity between people from the same community along with those who aren't, but support it nonetheless. "Not gay, but very supportive!" signs are common, often accompanied by an illustration of a multi-colored bra.

"I felt [like I] belonged, and was happy to be a part of it. It was the best day of the year, to be honest," Soumya Varier, a first-year student at Mount Carmel College says. She's not a part of the community, but her smile is warm and her tone is happy as



she talks about the event.

in San Francisco. Four years ago, he'd been travelling in an auto rickshaw down a street in Bangalore. When he first saw the parade of people marching, he'd assumed it was a religious procession, something that's very common in India. But then he saw the flags. "I told the auto rickshaw driver to stop, got down immediately, and joined the march!" He's participated in the very first Pride March



This is also the first year that the Namma Pride March has been disability-friendly, with the organizers of the event ensuring that disabled folk were able to efficiently participate in the march and activities that followed.

Year 10 of Namma Pride brings with it progression, the likes of which have never been seen before. "There are so many women marching this year," a long-time participant, Asha Ganesh, age 48, gushes in admiration. The organizers finally reveal that over 7,000 individuals marched - a staggering number that leaves the crowd cheering.

Aside from the colour, there's another common theme in attendance - the love and acceptance. There's so much positivity; everyone's a stranger, but no one isn't a friend in the crowd. There's not a silent person, and a smile is offered to everyone. A girl holds up a sign that reads 'Free hugs!' and isn't left dis-



appointed; she almost doesn't have time to hold the sign up with the number of people taking her up on her offer. There's not an ounce of negativity present, and the crowd exudes pure determination in its bilingual chants - "One-two-three-four, open up the closet door! Five-six-seven-eight, don't assume your kids are straight!" "Nanna deha, Nanna hakku! (My body, my choice!)"

As they walk, other crowds begin to form around them, as people passing by stop to watch them go. Tons of spectators hold up their phones, recording the march, but this doesn't stop the people of the pride march. They just cheer louder, and keep moving forward.

It takes around three hours to reach Town Hall, but there's never a dull moment and the procession never seems to tire. An auto rickshaw leads, a large megaphone attached to it, adding to the chanting. Another auto rickshaw carrying gallons of water follows, and stops every so often so that the marchers can quench their thirst and fill their water bottles. The event's organization is seemingly flawless, and it only takes seconds to spot a volunteer if anyone requires assistance.

Upon reaching Town Hall, the crowd settles into the amphitheatre present, and the organizers go up on stage. The after-show is hosted by Zara, a local drag queen who is otherwise known as Adam Pasha. "Boys, girls, and those who still haven't decided," he playfully jests, opening the show. He makes friendly jabs at those who clamber onto stage, and introduces the performing acts that follow. The first performance is by a male duo who dance very intimately to a tender love song. There are many acts that follow - so many enthusiastic last minute additions that Zara chides the audience for not signing up earlier. "Really, sign up earlier, you guys!" It's past 9 pm when all of the acts conclude, the event finally wraps up, and everyone heads home. It's deadly silent afterwards, quite a contrast to the noise and liveliness that had took place just minutes before. Namma Pride 2017 is not gone, but rather, spread throughout the entire city, with every child, teenager, and adult who took part. The LGBT community in Bangalore has taken strides forward—in more ways than one.

## To follow the (he)art or not?

Vrinda Dabral speaks to artists about their conflict with their calling.

Artist Henri Matisse said, "Creativity takes courage." An arts degree has always been deemed 'less prestigious' and as something that will not support a future. So, is art a safe career option?

"In one way, arts is a safe career option and probably the safest there can be as one is doing what they love as a job," says Ritu, a 26 year old artist. "I would have been awful with anything else except art; I am glad I followed my dream." There are many stereotypes of the starving artist although people who do well in this field are some of the highest earners.

Abhin Shirvastava, a 29 yr old painter and designer believes, "It's not the kind of profession and the pay cheque that determines the worth of the person; it is actually the amount of potential one puts into it that decides the actual worth." There are artists throughout history whose work was worth more than millions. Joy

D'cruz, a 23 year old Goa based boy initially pursued art. However, he left it and joined the family business. "It is extremely difficult to persuade your parents to let you become an artist. In our country art is not considered a noble profession and is demeaned."

Nashville Rebelo, a Goan sculptor shares his story. "As a child I was always fascinated by colours, patterns, and shapes. When I went to school I won many drawing and painting competitions, later I discovered that my interest grew toward sculptures. Despite being a Christian I was fascinated by the sculptures and idols in temples...I studied sculpting in an art school.

The initial days as an artist were difficult but I grew with that phase. It took me little time to set foot, but eventually all fell right into place."

Casa 29 aims to provide homely comfort to the girls living here, as it's name suggests. The little quirky details and the colour theme gives it a very youthful feel. With all the bright colours, and breezy interior, it feels all the more like home. More than a hostel, Casa 29 is a way to bring together girls from different cultures. The approach is simple, "Mi Casa es su casa (my home is your home)," and this place is really a beautiful home away from home.



"CASA 29, MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME"  
- HARSHITA CHHATLANI

"LOOKING FOR A POSITIVE VIBE? COME TO CASA 29"  
- ALEENA ELSA

# *“Coming out to yourself is the first and most important thing to do.”*

**Malavika Raje Wadiyar sits down with Syed Ayan, LGBT activist and a member of the community himself.**

In a crisp white shirt and dark blue jeans, he walked into the cafe, greeting me with a warm smile. With a young face and neat hair, Syed Ayan seems like any ordinary 28-year-old guy; but his powerful, bold, and rebellious character makes him special.

#### **Syed tell us about yourself.**

My name is Syed Ayan but for an unusual reason everyone calls me Ayan Syed. I am from an orthodox Muslim family in Bangalore. I work a regular job at VM-wareMB (an IT company) but alongside, I am also an LGBT activist and I am gay.

#### **When did you first realise you were gay?**

Though everyone part of the LGBT community does have some sort of a ‘realization’ moment in their lives, we always just somewhere deep within know. In school during the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> standard when everyone started developing crushes on their female teachers or the girls in the class I always found myself being attracted to the male teachers and the boys in my school. All the boys would talk about the girls and all the girls would talk about the boys, I would sit and listen and wonder for hours together what was wrong with me; I thought I was the only one who felt like this.

#### **Do you have any memories of being bullied in school or college?**

I was constantly teased and made fun of in school for being slightly towards the feminine side. My seniors would hit me and make me write their homework and other school notes. Since they had a little bit of power in school, they would threaten me saying if I didn’t do their work they would approach the heads of the school and say I bullied them. My brother was always witnessing me getting bullied in school but he would never stand up for me; instead, he would complain to my parents saying that I waste time and don’t concentrate on studies.

#### **Could you share your first experience of being in a relationship and dating?**

I made my first real friend in my 1<sup>st</sup> year degree at RV College of Engineering. He was the only friend I had that would support me and accept me for who I am. He forced me to join a dating website, that’s when I realised that I am not the only guy

that’s like this; there are others like me and I even learned that the LGBT community exists. Soon through the dating sites I started meeting people. I made this one friend called Mayand who introduced me to his close friends and over time they became my family. This was the happiest phase of my life, being with that close group of friends that turned to family made me believe that life can be good.

#### **Did you ever date a girl before coming out?**

I did actually, I was never attracted to them but as a social norm I would force myself to just ‘fit in’. They would try to hold my hand and get physical but I would never reciprocate so they would get fed up and break up with me.

#### **Did you ever face any confusion regarding your sexuality before coming out?**

I always thought I was bisexual because I am part of a strict Muslim family and I was conditioned to think being gay is a sin. I convinced myself that I would be with guys till I could and in the end, get married to a girl. It wasn’t a confusion as such but more of a forced mindset. For society’s sake, I used to label myself as bisexual even though I knew I was gay.

#### **What’s your coming out story?**

It was very intentional and planned. I woke up one day and decided I would come out so I posted everything on my Facebook profile. My cousins saw the posts and they told my mom. One of my transgender friends posted a picture of me kissing her on the cheek and it got circulated to all my cousins and family groups. Mom and dad asked me to explain what was going

on and I said this is what it is; this is how I am and this is how it will go on. Mom was not happy. She took me to people – to a counsellor, to saints of all religions – in order to ‘cure’ me and said, “I didn’t give birth to a hijra.” I realised there was no point in explaining any further; I knew she would take time to understand so I stopped trying to explain. Later, I came out to my colleagues in Accenture as gay and they replied with statements like, “You don’t look like a trans.” I was shocked that people confused gay with trans and realised I needed to spread awareness about the LGBT community so I approached the human rights and social welfare department of Accenture to share my idea.



Illustration by Thejaswini

#### **... continued from page 3**

He adds that the secret is the proportions of ingredients. He also adds, “I would sell the recipe but would never sell the ratio of the tea for anything.” A frequent customer, Zareen, expresses her love for this chai, “Somehow every sip gives me peace. It is not too sweet or too strong, it is just perfect.”

#### **Jauzi Halwa**

This saffron-coloured grainy sweet containing crumbles of dry fruits, help you experience the royal essence of what the Nizams used to eat in Hyderabad. Each bite sticks to the roof of the mouth owing to the creamy milk and ghee, giving a burst of warm sweet flavour and making you ask for more. Sabyasachi Ray from the Indian Express explains that Jauzi halwa, a milk and jauz (Turkish nutmeg) based sweet dish has been popular in Hyderabad since Muhammad Hussain’s arrival in the 19th century. The 7th Nizam impressed with the delicacy, had sent an official letter for permission to name Hussain’s shop after the King. Yaser, manager at a Hameedi outlet, and grandson-in-law of Muhammad Hussain, adds more to the story. He tells us, “When the Nizam travelled, the shops were supposed to be closed as a mark of respect to him. But, Muhammad Hussain who had just come from Turkey didn’t. Instead, he kept the bulb of the shop open, which caught the Nizam’s attention. When called to



the palace, Muhammad Hussain took the Jauzi halwa with him as an offering to the King which obviously impressed the Nizam.”



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#### **Are you currently in a relationship?**

Yes, I have a boyfriend, Siddharth. We had to face a lot of ups and downs. We were in a long-distance relationship for 1.5 years, then Siddharth moved to Bangalore.

#### **Tell us about our journey towards becoming an activist.**

As I mentioned earlier... I needed to spread awareness about our community and I approached the human rights and social welfare department of Accenture to take this idea forward...so we have awareness programmes, campaigns etc. That’s where it all started and then just continued. I was with Accenture for 4 years; the awareness programmes began 2 years after I joined. I got to meet many people from my community, I learned a lot about myself and the community I belong to. The first year I joined the LGBT awareness committee I was scared and didn’t do much work because there were way too many people around and it made me shy, the next year I joined the committee and then became an organiser.

#### **What is your opinion of the LGBT community in India?**

People think we are some sort of a ‘disease’ and not humans, they think we don’t deserve equal rights. They think it’s a choice and some people believe that if you mingle with people of this community you will become gay or lesbian as well. It’s unbelievable. Even though studies show it’s not a choice, people just don’t accept it; because well, being gay, transgender, bisexual, or lesbian is against our ‘Indian culture’ right?

#### **As an activist where do you see this community 10 years down the line?**

There is less awareness, so that leads to more of us staying in the closet and not coming out because we think ‘what will people say? Will parents accept us?’ There are grudges in this community between each other. There is no unity within our community as of now, and that’s why we always fall short and are treated as ‘lesser’ compared to the heterosexual community.

#### **What does ‘Namma Pride’ mean to you?**

Namma Pride is nothing but celebrating yourself and your identity – your sexuality, your preferences. There are many communities that call Pride a protest but we need to understand that it’s not a protest – it’s a celebration for yourself and people like you. It’s where we belong.

#### **What was the best thing about coming out?**

It honestly feels good that you don’t need to care about what others think and their opinions and you aren’t trapped anymore; you can finally feel yourself. Coming out to yourself is the first and most important thing to do. It gives you a sense of freedom; it’s almost like being imprisoned in jail for several years and you finally get bailed out.”

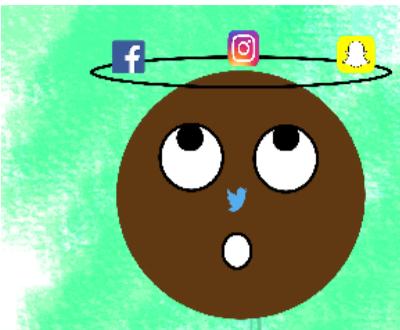
This halwa includes pure ghee, nutmeg from Kashmir, milk, dry fruits, saffron, sugar, and a secret ingredient from Afghanistan, known only to the sons of the maker. “The secret ingredient and jauzi are the backbone of its popularity, and the consumers wouldn’t want it any other way,” says Yaser. Save for the nutmeg, all other ingredients are brought from the same ancestral farm that has been used from the very start. The sweet takes about 3 hours to cook and is manually mixed on a bhatti (wooden stove) in the same manner that it was years ago. Everything is cooked in one kitchen and then sent to the three outlets. With the passage of time, two more variations of this halwa have been created and everyday around 60 kilograms of this halwa is sold. The original outlet at Nampally remains open 24 hours. It is exported to Falaknuma Palace, Kerala, Mumbai, and Dubai.

When asked about the future of his store, Yaser says, “Logan Qayamat tak khate, aur jab tak logan khate tab tak humara pakwan bikta toh humara pakwan Qayamat tak bikingga

(People are going to eat till the arrival of the doomsday, and till people eat, our dish will be sold so our dish will be sold till the end of time.)” Hamsa, a customer, says, “Logon ka kya hai? Insaan khata, peeta, haspatal jata aur phir qabar dekta. Phir insane khana kayku bandh karna? (A human being eats, drinks, goes to the hospital and then ends up in the grave anyway, so why should one not eat?)”

## SOCIAL MEDIA: *The People's View*

*Susan Jesudian goes on a journey to figure out the impact of social media.*



With Facebook claiming 2.07 billion active users, and WhatsApp and Instagram owning 1.3 billion, and 800 million users respectively, it is no surprise that the media is constantly abuzz with stories around the various social media platforms. But what does social media actually mean to the people behind the statistics?

For many, it's the thread that connects them to their loved ones – especially friends and family separated by geographical distance. "It's a convenient way to communicate easily if you live in different countries but still want to feel close to them," says Ashken, a 31 year old Armenian currently living in India, who spends 6 to 8 hours on various social media apps. Nicole, a 24-year-old content-writer recounts a similar reason. "My best friend lives in Bombay. Social media is how we keep each other in the loop." And for 40 year old Nivitha, whose only sibling lives in the US, social media is the primary way of keeping in touch. "My brother Skyped me during a snowfall in Houston. It made me feel like I was there myself." Many young millennials use it to keep the spark of romance alive. "I used social media a lot to talk to my wife, back when we were dating," says 32-year-old Qatar-based Arun. But for senior citizens like Esther, 62, who is a recent user of social media, the friend requests sent by strangers on Facebook have left her bemused. "Middle-aged strangers, all men, including some foreigners too, have sent me friend requests. I haven't accepted any, though." Her husband John, 65, responded

to this saying, "They want to steal my wife." Heartwarming stories of reunions are not uncommon, with many users having reconnected with friends. Niranjan Jesudian, 75, has found many such old friends. "I met a few schoolmates on Facebook after 50 years. It is so pleasant to meet so many friends and family almost face to face," says Sudha, 47. "I reconnected with a friend after 25 years, and we have met every year, since." It can, however, not be an overly pleasant experience. "It's odd when people you don't know feel the need to express an opinion on your life. Especially men who feel the need to share inappropriate images with you," says Nicole. As Mekana, 19, recounts, "There were those times when I have sent the wrong messages to the wrong people." An embarrassment we have all experienced! Social media sometimes becomes tedious and boring too.

Retired geology professor, Dr. Linda, 61, says, "I use Facebook once a month. It's something my children forced me to try. My daughters wanted me to use it since they live away from home. But it needs a lot of time to work, which is hard to find." Soundaraj, 70, has found a different use for the networking tools of this age. "I use Facebook and WhatsApp daily. I find it useful for spiritual matters." For some, it is a tool that bridges the age gap between mothers and daughters as Hemalatha, 46, explains, "I like memes, I talk about them to my daughter." 8-year-old Kevin used social media to get help. "I messaged on my family WhatsApp group to ask for help when my mom was sick." Ravishankar, a 45 year old teacher, also finds it useful. "I use it to get constant updates about my mother's health, especially when I am away from home. It keeps me from worrying." Social media may not be perfect, but one thing is for sure: No matter where you are, or how old you may be, it has grown

*Vajra Ajai spreads awareness about net neutrality.*

When we're browsing the Internet, we expect all the content to be easily obtainable. By no means should the Internet be a place where any information is blocked from anyone who logs in. This is the whole point of net neutrality: for the Internet to be a free and open space. On 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2017, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) voted to repeal net neutrality. Internet service providers (Verizon, Comcast) would now be required to follow certain rules and regulations, instead of providing us with free and equal access to the Internet, despite where we stay or how much we pay. How does this move affect us?

### NET NEUTRALITY IN INDIA:

Technically, there are no laws governing net neutrality in India. As of August 2015, there was no regulation on the Internet but when Internet service providers like Airtel, Facebook, and WhatsApp violated the principles of net neutrality, the government ensued the democratic move of calling for comments and suggestions regarding net neutrality. Within a day, anyone who was concerned was to leave their comments on mygov.in and protect their rights to a free Internet. On February 2016, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) ruled in favor of net neutrality by restricting telecom service providers from extracting discriminatory rates for data, bringing India one step closer to net neutrality. Nevertheless, the American decision will have a major impact on India's telecom regulators. This also means that small business owners who rely on the Internet will have to face disappointment. Without net neutrality, these entrepreneurs will be exploited.

Most people explain net neutrality as 'Making the Internet free and accessible for everyone'. Although, this is essentially the property of net neutrality, Divyanshu Dutta Roy, deputy news editor for NDTV disagrees. "The definition for net neutrality has been slightly altered by these telecom companies to shape and sell their offers the way they want to. Net neutrality isn't just the Internet being free and equal for everyone; it is more importantly, everything on the Internet being free and accessible to everyone. Altering the meaning of such things even slightly can trigger a huge change in the way it's perceived," he stated on his online portal.

Ajai P Mangattu, chief sub editor of *Malayala Manorama*, responds to questions regarding the awareness. "The media and press did not exactly highlight the American decision to repeal net neutrality in the following day's papers. It was sidelined in the global news page into a tiny corner. Most of our front-page news were local and trending topics so it wouldn't be a total surprise if the youth for certain didn't know of it or its possible repercussions. But fortunately, a very huge population of the Internet-dependent youth has at least heard of net neutrality and is almost afraid that what's happening to America might happen to us. Then again, the repealing of net neutrality decision isn't exactly final and even if it is carried forward, we are assured by various experts that it wouldn't affect us the way we fear."

The US Congress may still have the power to veto and reverse FCC's decision, but once this fire settles, in a few years another such revolting incident could shut down our free access to the Internet once and for all. For this to never happen, we must slowly build up the awareness of Net Neutrality in India and make it a legal concept.

## Not content with original content?

*What does it take to become a YouTube sensation? Simran Bhatnagar finds out.*

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010, a girl named Lilly Singh (22 years old, at the time) posted her first video ever on YouTube. By 2015, she was declared the 8<sup>th</sup> richest YouTuber by Forbes magazine and today, she has a fan base of over 13 million. Her channel is named *IISuperwomanII*, a title she is still recognized by.

During her 3<sup>rd</sup> year at university (before she started her channel), she dealt with severe depression for a year. "I lost my appetite and my desire to wake up in the morning. I wouldn't answer my phone and I lost a lot of friends. I had no goals, no aspirations and no motivation," she details, in her 'Draw My Life' video (Draw My Life was an ongoing trend during 2013 in which YouTubers would give their viewers a brief history of their life with the help of doodles). In this video, she shares her success story and talks about how making videos on YouTube really helped her win her battle against depression. "I used to call myself 'Superwoman' because I felt like the name gave me strength. Pretending there was an 'S' on my chest really helped me through a lot of hard times growing up."

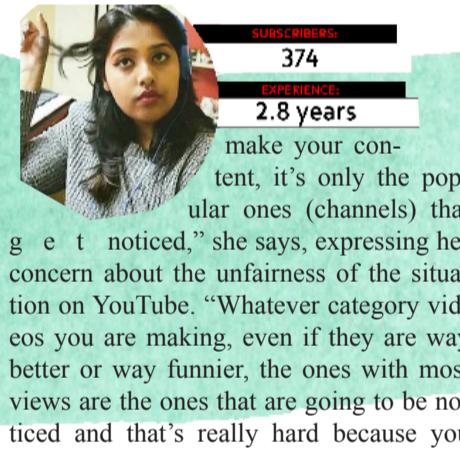
Inspired by her, thousands of people started creating content for their own YouTube channels. According to [www.tubefilter.com](http://www.tubefilter.com), in 2010, there were only 5 channels across the globe which had a minimum of 1 million subscribers. Today, there are more than 2,000. This means that with millions of people taking on the task of content creation, the competition has risen greatly. There are tons of beginners on YouTube who are struggling to grow and establish themselves. Let's look at some of the struggles they face:

Ananya, who has been trained in Carnatic music for 14 years, is now pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Western Music, Psychology, and English. Her channel consists mostly of song covers and a few comedic skits. Her most viewed video is called 'Worst Sleepover Ever!', which is a skit loosely based on a true story. Some of the songs she has covered are *Thinking Out Loud* by Ed Sheeran, *Wrecking Ball* by Miley Cyrus, and *When I Was Your Man* by Bruno Mars. "There's obviously a lot of content on YouTube. And no matter how unique you



"It's kind of hard and it's quite complicated," Kyle tries to explain. "In YouTube videos, you obviously have to be interesting enough to let the viewer watch the whole entire video and it's hard because I don't really know what the viewer wants precisely." One of Kyle's biggest struggles is finding time to pursue YouTube alongside college

"I didn't really struggle as much as, you know, a beginner YouTuber would; I guess I just got lucky," says Niharika NM, whose channel has blown up ever since it was created. "But I did have a stagnant stage where my numbers just wouldn't grow, and in the beginning it wasn't about numbers to me because I was just getting them anyway, but when there was the stagnant stage I was like 'Oh shit, is this it? Is this how big I can get?'" With the click of the 'upload' button on her first ever video in 2016, she im-



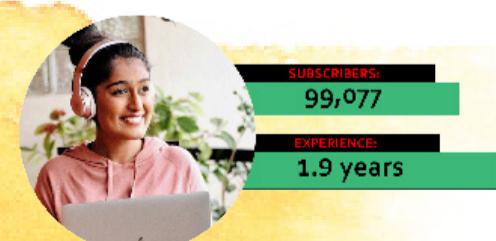
make your content, it's only the popular ones (channels) that get noticed," she says, expressing her concern about the unfairness of the situation on YouTube. "Whatever category videos you are making, even if they are way better or way funnier, the ones with most views are the ones that are going to be noticed and that's really hard because you

and work. "Thinking of new video ideas every single week, and editing them is so much work. A four minute video takes 2 hours to edit for me. But the reason I keep going is I really want my dream to come true and if it does, I will be really proud of myself." He adds, "Sometimes I don't have the motivation at all because I start comparing myself to those bigger YouTubers who already have everything, but then I just keep in mind and I let myself know that they've been where I am right now too". When asked about his views on the amount of competition on this platform, he said, "There are those channels that don't

immediately managed to bag more than 500 subscribers and her fan-base never stopped growing. Thinking about her earlier days, she comments, "When you start out new, people love to sh\*t on you. It's only when you get big, people start respecting you but as a beginner, people think it's okay to make fun of you and they just underestimate you."

could be putting a lot of effort into making your videos and the fact that you are a small YouTuber and you are not getting any views makes you want to not put any effort." She also goes on to say, "I know this is the worst thing to say, but the way you look also matters and I wouldn't call myself really attractive." Another struggle she brings up is about how her viewers don't really understand the importance of subscribing to her channel or sharing and liking her videos. "Giving one extra view actually matters," she explains.

give a f\*\*k and they just get so much recognition. That's what sometimes makes me lose my motivation too. It makes me wonder 'what the f\*\*k am I doing wrong?' because I'm uploading once a week at a precise time and I'm trying my best." His channel is named *Basically Kyle*, and his videos usually centre around his life, interesting incidents or situations he has been in, his opinions on controversial things, updates about his personal life, and so on. His most popular video, *My Reaction on Listening to K-Pop for the First Time (BTS and Black Pink)* has over 12,000+ views.



# Handy Man

Bhargavi M.S. interviews a local barber, only to find out about his other passion.



## 'MAHESH HAIR SALON'

The faded text was painted on a cream background, right above the door. The room was lit with two fluorescent tube lights. An air of aftershave hit me as I entered the four-walled space. I spotted a dull-framed photo of six men sporting six hairstyles that was placed above the door. The styles looked retro, mostly originating from the 70s. Right next to it was the 2018 edition of a calendar in Kannada. A bunch of small posters here and there with hairstyles on it were stuck on the dusty pink walls. The aftershave was right there on the table – I spotted the source which hit me earlier.

"Come, Madam," Mr. Shankar said as he was cleaning the table-top and placing his combs on it. It was almost closing time and he was arranging all

his tools in a plastic cup for the next day. I sat opposite to him on a waiting bench.

"Water?" he asked politely. I did a quick review of the room – a TV was stationed at the top right corner of the room, a few magazines were placed on the table and there was a grey haired, well groomed, 51 year old Shankar. His hair was well trimmed, he wore a crisp white half-shirt and his pocket had a comb popping out of it. He went on to sit on one of the brown, rexin-cushioned chairs. Trying to clear my first doubt I asked, "Why is the shop named 'Mahesh Hair Salon'?"

"This was started by another man 44 years ago and I bought it from him. For the past 24 years, I have practiced in this shop. My hometown is Chickballapur. I come from a family of hairdressers. My father got me into this practice since I

was six or seven."

"Did you want to get into the line of hairdressing?" I asked. "I actually wanted to join the military. But that wasn't possible, so I entered this profession. I wasn't fit for it and having studied only till 4<sup>th</sup> standard, this seemed like the best idea."

"Do you regret not joining the military?" "I am doing something I love – I play the nadhaswara!"

Looking at the puzzled look on my face, he said, "Other than cutting people's hair, I play the nadhaswara. I do it for myself and professionally for weddings and other functions."

A man who's great with his hands, living a dual life, and catering to two kinds of audiences went on to say with a big laugh, "It's actually funny. I wanted to join the military but now I'm playing the nadhaswara for military temple! Other than weddings, I play it exclusively twice a year, during the Thyagaraja Aradhana music festival."

"Why nadhaswara?" I asked out of curiosity. "Tripti (peace)" he said while taking a pause.

Tripti. Looking visibly excited, he explained, "It's a religious experience – to play in front of God and devote your performance to God. It takes you to a different world." At that moment, Shankar made me feel like I was interviewing a music maestro. The look on his face when he said the word 'tripati' was stuck in my head. He was passionate and peaceful at the same time – a rare combination.

"I love Carnatic music. Cinema not so much. Even when I'm cutting a customer's hair, Carnatic music plays in my head. I don't need external music. There is no use of that TV and radio."

"Do you share the same passion with your children?" Fifty-one year old Shankar, married with 3 children said, "My children don't look at music the way I do. They want to become officials. At the end of the day, it's their life and I don't want to force anything on them. For me, music is a divine experience – it's like going to Devasthana (temple)."

On asking him why he wouldn't permanently get into the music profession, he smiled and said,

"I don't regret my profession. I am happy being a barber. I meet new people; I have made good friends out of old customers. Before, there used to be around 30 customers per day but now there are maximum ten. I am happy with that. Whatever I earn through this is sufficient for a day-to-day living. I focus more on playing nadhaswara."

"Is your wife supportive of this?"

"My wife makes me very happy. We are a happy family. My wife and family know that I love playing the nadhaswara. They may not share the experi-

ence, but for me, it feels great to hold the instrument and play it front of God."

At first, I entered this shop with the idea of interviewing a barber but I left with the experiences of two people – the barber and the musician. I met Shankar, a man who has a good relationship with both his tools – the scissors and the nadhaswara. He went on to switch off the lights and came out to pull the shutter. As I walked out of the door along with this happy man, I thought about his expressions throughout and felt a sense of tripti in me.



## The Tale of a Wanderer

Parinishta Thirumavalavan chats over Parsi chai and akuri on toast with 49 year old Kyoumars Freeman from Iran – on travel, love, success, and how it's okay to be lost.

'Kiss me and say goodbye,' singer Edward 'Sonny' Bivins' soulful voice floats from the speaker around the small but richly decorated café, which has a wooden wall decorated with porcelain plates, and glass tables surrounded by wooden chairs. A green coloured glass lamp hangs from the wooden roof as the breeze plays with customers' hair. "Hello Kyo!" greets a bunch of Vietnamese students. Kyo grins back at them, and apologising, jumps up and starts taking their orders.

His long salt and pepper hair set in a messy ponytail hangs across his shoulders. He is all confident strides and easy smiles as he chats with a couple on another table, serving them chicken farcha with Parsi chai. He then sits down, looking every bit the chic café owner. "We just want this to be where people can relax in this noisy city and enjoy authentic Iranian cuisines," said Kyoumars Freeman gesturing towards a couple he introduces as his wife, Poornima, and his friend Farrokh, with whom he co-owns the café.

Despite his evident comfort and enthusiasm at running Café@Sanchi, Kyo didn't always do

this. The 49 year old's past professions range from being an editor of an Iranian magazine, a professional translator of English to Persian, English teacher to CEOs of several businesses in Dubai, to a manager of a shopping mall. Kyo grew up in Tehran, as the only child in a family consisting of his father, grandmother, and aunt. His mother passed away when he was 7 and his aunt, who "worked in the Iranian Air Force," he adds with a hint of pride in his voice, has been his mother figure ever since. "She raised me up to the man I am today. She's my mum." Upon completing high school, he studied a course in philosophy and a professional course in translating, after which his father entrusted the management of his aquaculture shop to him. "He said it was my first step towards being independent...and he was right," says Kyo nodding. He recounts how the shop was 400 kms away from the city and he was always busy. He recalls an incident when he required some equipment available only in a shop in Tehran. After

calling his dad who said he probably wouldn't be able to bring it, on an impulse, Kyo drove all the way to Tehran, bought the equipment and drove back. It was a mountainous region with narrow roads made worse by continuous snowing. The policemen on the way warned him of a blizzard. "When I woke up the next day, there was about 4 metres of snow in front of my house. I was shocked. I hadn't told anyone about the trip the previous day, and the thought that the blizzard could have had

so was still on my way terrified me," Kyo exclaims. "It woke me up. I couldn't be reckless and impulsive like before. It was perhaps a turning point in my life." Soon after this, he completed his service in the army, which lasted for 2 years. He then set out travelling. He wanted to pursue his under graduation in Italy but it was only after he visited the country did he discover that it was too pricy. He then visited cities like Romania and Bulgaria. Finally, at 23, he arrived in Delhi and from there wandered across the northern states. "I had a really strong accent back then, so the auto drivers would try and cheat me," he sighs amusedly. But this stay was short lived, due to the widespread political unrest that arose because of the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. And so, his new found friends advised him to travel south. Taking their advice, he covered places like Dharward, Gulbarga, Hubli and Thirupathi. "I stood in long lines, amidst the crowd. I even climbed all the steps and everything. I was just curious; I wanted to know what the big deal was about. It was an interesting experience." In Gulbarga, the food was too spicy for his taste, and tired of the spice, he befriended a cook in a restaurant who agreed to make something less spicy. "It was chicken biriyani. It was delicious. I packed large quantities of it and ate it for every meal," Kyo recalls happily.

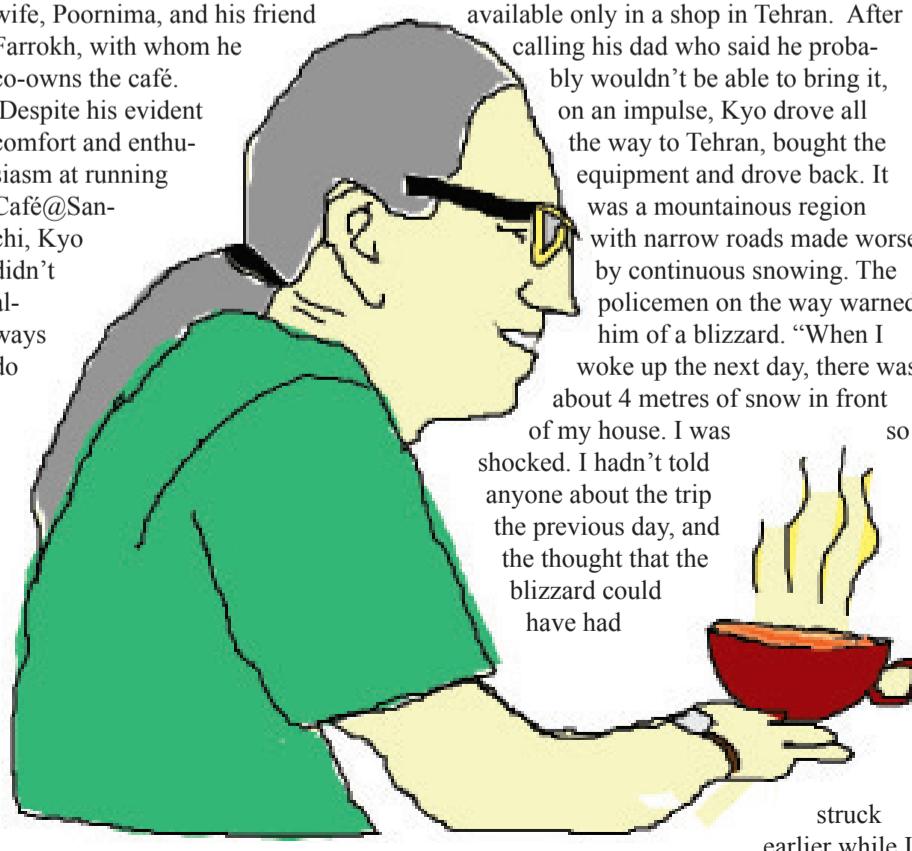
Arriving in Bangalore, Kyo got into Christ University where he studied political science along with sociology and economics. Up till then, he had only studied English for translating books. So he could understand the written text but found it next to impossible to comprehend the lectures in class. "I just sat through the class and borrowed notes from a friend and took photocopies of it." After several weeks of doing this, his professor sent him another teacher to personally coach him. "He talked about the news, the weather, and if I had gone to the cinemas that weekend," he says. "It was really helpful. I was able to understand the classes after 3-4 months. I think any foreign language should be learnt in the same way." At Christ, he met Poornima, fell in love and got married. In 2000, the couple had a baby boy named Arshan. He recalls a funny incident when he was invited to his in-laws' house. "I was sitting nervously on the sofa when Poornima's mother came from the kitchen and

gave me something, which was dark brown in colour, and looked like chocolate fudge. Thinking it was chocolate, I popped a huge chunk of it into my mouth. It was a ragi cake and apart from the shock of the unexpected taste, the large piece got stuck in my throat and I couldn't swallow. After great difficulty when I had finally managed to swallow it, I signalled to Poornima to take it away. That was the moment when my father-in-law entered the house and seeing the plate in front of me said, "Ragi mudhe eat, eat...it's good for you." He sat down, watching me so I had no choice but to finish all of it. Poornima was giggling the whole time," he laughed.

Cooking, photography, travelling, and learning new languages are his hobbies. He has been writing poetry ever since he remembers. "I remember when I was a small boy, I was alone at home. It was snowing hard and the kitchen windows were rattling. When I looked out, I saw a funeral procession passing by slowly in the snow, and all of a sudden I felt very sad and I sat down and wrote a poem," he recalls. "It just has to come to you naturally, you can't force it." He has also worked as a part-time editor in an Iranian magazine, called Rasana at Dubai, where he had two pages to himself. Translating is also something he's very passionate about. "There are several wonderful books in English and vice versa, that I want everyone to read but they can't." Kyo has taught English at several cities. "If they're well to do, I would take certain fees from them, but if they can't, it would be for free." He even taught while his business was failing, all because he found a unique comfort in teaching in class, surrounded by students.

"I miss it [Tehran]," he says. "It is snowing now in Tehran and if I were there I would go out and make snowballs." He misses the streets of Tehran, even the yoghurt drink that he would only find there. He says he once attempted to make it, by buying a big packet of buttermilk from a dairy centre in Bangalore and then mixing it with soda. "It was good...yeah. It was a success," he grins crossing his arms and nodding.

He says it took some time getting used to India but now, he feels a sense of belonging here. "I like it here... I'm at peace here," he says as he sips Parsi chai.



# BEHIND THE SCENES AT CHINNASWAMY

*Sanvidha Rajesh finds out about what goes into setting up, before cricket matches*



A batsman's paradise or a bowler's friend? A pitch could be anything, but either way, it's one of the most influential factors of a match. Walk into Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, any day and you'll find at least 20 groundsmen at work. From preparing the pitches to removing the dew on the outfield, the ground maintenance unit works year round to put up a good show on match days.

With an in-house solar rooftop powering the entire stadium, a rainwater harvesting system, and a one-of-a-kind sewage treatment plant watering the ground, the Chinnaswamy Stadium stands tall with pride.

Originally named Karnataka State Cricket

Association (KSCA) Stadium, it was renamed to honour the immense contributions of M Chinnaswamy, also an ex-president of the Board of Control of Cricket in India (BCCI). The four-decade old stadium, having a seating capacity of 40,000, sees the maximum footfall amongst all stadiums in India.

In 2016, after the IPL season, the entire ground was dug up to install the sub-air system, making Chinnaswamy the first cricket

stadium in the world to do so. Sub-air systems drain any excessive water on the field and return the ground to a favourable playing condition. "An application installed in our phones is used to operate the system," says Jacintha Kalyan, one of the three pitch curators of Chinnaswamy Stadium and also, one of the first woman pitch curators in India. While the system boasts of draining 10,000 litres of water within 35 seconds, the downside, is that it makes a sand base for the outfield as compared to a fertile, red earth base. Thus, the groundsmen have to de-thatch and thatch the grass once a month to avoid dry outfields. "It has definitely increased our work but the matches that used to get washed-out are now played after a 30-minutes break," Ramanna, a senior groundsman at the stadium discloses. The use of both liquid and seed fertilizers is

done in calculated amounts to grow a standard height of 8 mm grass or above.

Ramanna explains, "We work for about 8 hours a day, non-stop. We don't find a second to catch our breath." The 13 pitches in the stadium and 22, in the practice ground,

demand a huge deal of attention to ensure a quality venue for all the three formats of the game.

A duration of 15 days is taken to prepare the pitch for a test match using the 'pre-season rolling' procedure, and it remains untouched during the 5 days of the game. "We repeat the process of watering, drying, and rolling the pitches with the different rollers we have here, until the moisture is locked 3-4 inches deep in the wicket. Just about 2 days prior to the match, the watering is stopped and the wicket is allowed to dry completely," informs Jacintha Kalyan, "We roll in every direction to make the pitch even. Any slight difference with respect to soil or grass affects the game a lot and the players could catch hold of us," says Ramanna. Anjan, a junior groundsman adds immediately, "You know, just like rolling a chapati. Unless all the sides are equal, it isn't right."

Each length of the pitch gains the same kind of

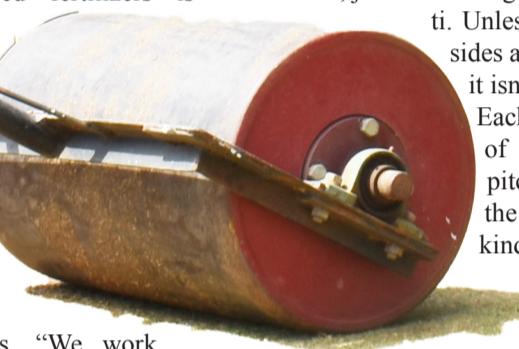
attention while prepping, regardless of its importance during the match. On an average, 30-40 litres of

water and about 4-5 groundsmen are dedicated to prepare a pitch.

"The process remains the same across the formats, however, the number of days reduces from 15 to 2-3 during ODIs (One Day Internationals) and T20s," clarifies Maruthi, another groundsman dressed neatly in a brown KSCA uniform and matching KSCA hat. He informs that a day for watering and around two for rolling is required to produce the hard and bouncy pitch for the shorter formats. Also, a constant height of 2 mm grass is maintained in any match. "The pitches are also kept comparatively dry as the need to maintain moisture content for a longer period is cut off in this case," he adds.

"During the IPL season, when the frequency of the matches is high, the 3 main pitches (out of the 13 pitches) are used alternatively," says Jacintha. The groundsmen make sure that each pitch gets about 4-5 days of rest until it's used for play again.

Sometimes, at the ground manager's discretion, patterns are created in the field – like the chequerboard pattern that was done during the India-Australia series, early last year. Their efforts were not left unappreciated, as this team of 3 curators and 25 groundsmen received the 'Best Ground Award' for two consecutive IPL seasons (8 and 9). The picture of the team and their award hangs proudly on their office wall.



## TOO MANY ENGINEERS?

*Sanjeevani Bardhan tries to answer one of the most asked questions – Are there too many Engineers?*

Around 3,345 colleges in India produce a whopping 1.5 million engineering students every year. Although the rate seems impressive, it does not cater to the engineers or the economy. The alarming number of engineers leads to two issues in the industry – low salary and unemployment.

Reshma Roy, project team lead at Accenture, Pune, says, "The biggest problem here is that parents feel that engineering is a more stable job and hence push their kids towards it. They slog through the 4 years and in the end, do not get a job, either because there are people better than them or because they want to discontinue from the industry. Also, companies these days don't look at specifications. They simply pick up employees based on if they are capable enough to learn the job or not. If they are, then they are hired at a lower salary count than a professional. That way the company is benefitting."

A study from the Aspiring Minds National Employability Report (AMNER) states that 80% of the 1,50,000 students that graduated from 650 engineering colleges in 2015 are unemployed, solely because of these two issues.

Debika, a work-from-home recruitment solutions consultant says, "There are so many engineers with great experience and marks who are being offered packages that are half of what they deserve and they don't seem to have a choice but to agree. All of it boils down to the fact that there are way too many of them and much lesser positions. The competition is really high. You see people who are working for too little

money and then you see people who are simply unemployed for months on end." Rizwana, a computer engineering graduate (2011) from Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Technology, Bangalore, faced immense difficulties in getting a job even after having a decent 75% in her final year. She gave multiple interviews over the period of 1.5 years but all in vain. "Nothing worked out, I tried every place, it was a very bad time for me and my family. Imagine being rejected constantly by every company for 1.5 years," she says. Finally, after a tumultuous time, she tried at Allahabad Bank, as a cashier, and finally got the job. It has been 4 years since and she says she is happy but feels like the 4 years that she spent doing engineering were of "no relative use."



Ruby Thampi, a counselor at a reputed PU college explains, "Every year, I have students walking in and asking me to stop their parents from forcing

them to pursue something that they don't want to pursue. Many parents force their children to do engineering because they stay in Bangalore, which is an IT hub, and assume the possibilities are endless. That is when I have to sit down with parents, with stats, and explain to them that this may not be the smartest decision and also to just let their child focus and build their own career with his or her family's support. As years go by, we are witnessing so many different fields coming to the lime light. A student can find stability in every field, if they enjoy and work hard."

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