

COMIC
Pralaya is Coming

ISSUE 3 / OCTOBER 2016

FACE TO FACE

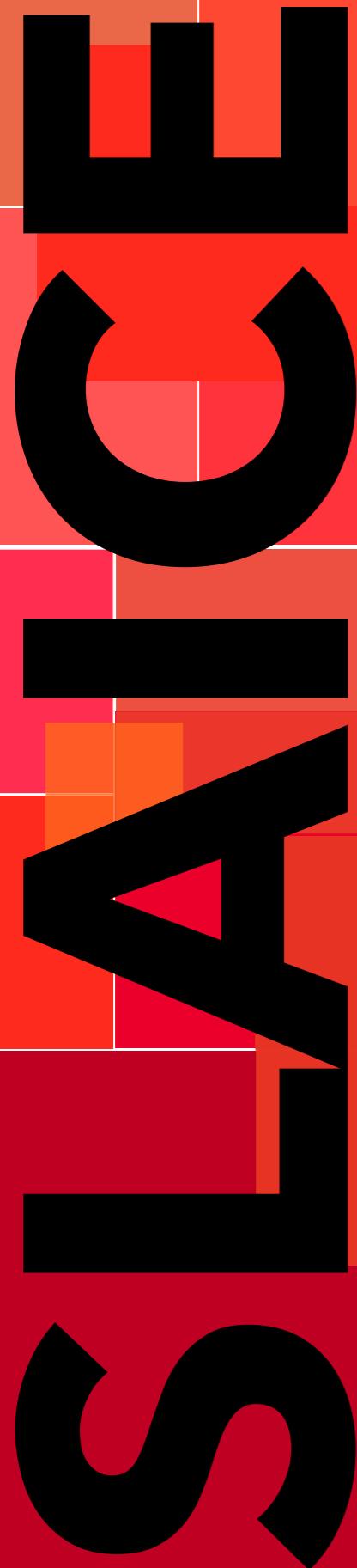
THROUGH THE LENS
Mysteries of the free period

SOUP VERANDAH

BUCKET LIST

HUMOUR
Eulogy to Subtlety

CULTURE



EDITORIAL

From an attempt to immortalise the current mood of our institution, to capture a slice of SAICE, comes the third edition of Slacie. Finally, after having run after the authors, having sat on the heads of the photographers and having coaxed the designers into bringing all the supposed diligence to fruition, we can humbly say that we have not dropped the baton. Hopefully, we have done more than just that.

The following pages are a treat for the reader. We meet Ashram's strongest man, delve into the beauty of Islamic art, and wonder at the lives of army men. Poetry and prose will take you on their wings from the heights of Courage to the baseness of female infanticide. We have kept the best of what we have inherited from the past two issues, but we have left our mark, a part of us in the magazine – we are, after all, children of the Age of Selfies.

Our photo team has made sure that most of the images in this issue have been taken by them, and you will see that their cameras have worked really hard. Not forgetting the gravity of the world we live in, if we don't laugh at ourselves, we are dead.

Thankfully, then, all the seriousness paves the way for our photo essay, which will provide the reader with an investigation into the mysteries of students' lives, and we'll follow that with an Eulogy to Subtlety. We finish this year's edition with the very first comic that Slacie will carry, one with the fatalistic warning that Pralaya is Coming.

The design team has done all it can to make the *joie de vivre* latent in our institution seep through your screens. From a tired but happy team, we wish you bonne lecture!

EDITOR
CHIRAG

DESIGN & LAYOUT
RAKSHIT
SHAMBHAVI
YOGITHA

PHOTO TEAM
ADIT
SANJANA

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FACE TO FACE

NAMITA DI

You are an important figure in our developing years. Everyone from our school goes through you. What are the qualities you try to inculcate in us?

Discipline, hard work and a wish to progress. The first thing that I try to inculcate is discipline because Mother gave a lot of importance to discipline.

You were made captain at thirteen. What were the guidelines Mother gave you, or did she allow you a lot of freedom?

There were no guidelines as such, but whenever I faced a problem I went to Dada first. Dada guided me throughout, what to, and what not to do. He made me read books, he taught me day in and day out about what I had to do in group. If ever we had a serious problem, only then would I ask the Mother and she would guide me.



"Now children are more stubborn. I think it's natural. With time, they have changed. I would not like them to be like we were fifty years back."



PHOTO CREDIT: SANJANA

The children in your group were only a little younger than you. Did they respect you as a captain?

The children knew that I was a captain and they had to listen to me. I can't call it respect, but at least they obeyed me. For instance, there was a boy, anything anyone would say he would spit! I asked Mother what I should do. She told me to make him sit for a week and then take him for a day, then slowly two days, three days. That's exactly what I did and the boy slowly understood and became well-mannered.

Another boy, he used to bite! Anything you would say, he would bite! Then Mother asked Albert-da to make something like a muzzle. So, very sweetly, he used to come to me before group and ask me to tie his net. He used to keep it till the end of the group and ask me to take it out as well. So in the course of time he too changed.

Did the behaviour of your friends change when you first became captain?

To be frank, there was a little change. The fact that I was a captain put me a little apart. I don't know why exactly, but maybe they felt that I was different as I was spending so much time with Dada who was teaching me everyday.

Your organizational skills and creativity are put on display during your fabulous 2nd December programmes. What does that day signify to you?

As Mother has given it so much importance, I always try and do my best. I feel that it is my offering to the Divine and it's always pleasing when everything is very well-organised. I like it that way. Every-

thing should run smoothly and anything that you do happily is always rewarding. It's not only about your happiness but the happiness of the participants as well. I have felt very strongly that whenever I've put up a 2nd December programme, if all the participants work harmoniously the whole atmosphere changes!

I put in a lot of time and energy for every programme that I put up. I work on my own perhaps for more than two years before I present it.

You have been a captain and teacher for 64 years. What changes have you seen in the nature of the children?

Earlier if you told the children something, they would immediately do it but now they are more stubborn. I think it's natural. With time, they have changed. I would not like them to be like we were fifty years back. Now they are more vociferous, they speak out their minds. I have noticed recently that there are some bad elements, for example the bad words and the bad actions that they use now were never used before. This I do not tolerate.

You have been here for a long time, so here is a broader question: where do you see the Ashram going?

Well, I have to tell you this: when Mother was physically present it was very different, but now each one of us has to take responsibility for oneself and really be sincere and honest in whatever we do. When it started it was different, I cannot say it was better or worse. She used to guide us in every little thing that we used to do, but now it has become more difficult for the younger generation to re-

ally understand. The world has changed and the children are also changing. That is how I see it. And apart from that who am I to judge? Mother will take care of it.

We are often influenced by what our siblings do. Your siblings went out of the Ashram for higher education and to make a living. Why did you stay back?

Because I wanted to be here. I like to travel, I like to see places, but in my heart this is where I belong. I did go out and it was very important for me to go out during a certain period. Because I came here as a baby – my parents had brought me – this was my home and I knew nothing else. But now that I have gone out and seen the world, I think it has helped me broaden myself. Now I see everything from a different perspective. I have made the choice that I want to be here. This is where I belong.

Could you tell us a little about the book you are writing?

The book is called "Memorable Years With The Mother: The Growth of Physical Education in Sri Aurobindo Ashram". The Mother has given so much importance to physical education. She has spent hours with the children in playground every evening, guiding them and teaching them.

Do you have any advice for our generation?

Well, try and be sincere and honest in whatever you do. Do it to the best of your abilities. Be sincere – that is the first and foremost, not only in words but in practice too.



WITH GOALS IN MIND: THE LEGEND OF SANDEEPAN SHARMA

"Not many people know about it and I like it this way." The brute blushes. Yes, Sandeepan Sharma blushed when asked what it feels like to be Ashram's strongest man. "Look, I feel a little special," the hefty lad with five out of the eight Ashram weightlifting records says, "but it's negligible." Sandeepan's best performance yet stands at a whopping total of 678kg in five lifts, a massive 30kg ahead of the second person. The silent subjugation of gravity, the few facial expressions, the seeming ease with which he breaks records has made him a rather iconic figure.

Such is the romance that we have wreathed him in that Sandeepan has become something of a SLAICE urban legend. The 'legend' himself sums it up like this: "If no one can manage lifting something up, then they think that I am the only one who can do it." There is some truth in this – the numbers prove it. What endorses this further is that his coach, Shanti-da – who has been a D group weightlifting coach for 20 years – explains the phenomenon that is Sandeepan as "raw strength" and "genetically very gifted". With another year in hand before he leaves D group, who knows what he will achieve. Only naturally, "Expectations go up," Sandeepan tells me.

What we see, however, during this demonstration of strength and technique that is the weightlifting competition is only the tip of the iceberg. Behind the spectacle is an extremely regimented, "very scientifically, very calculatedly done" programme of strengthening the body and mind, building endurance and increasing the flexibility of joints. Sandeepan is obviously grateful to Shanti-da: "He has given

Not everyone may know that Sandeepan's dead lift record stands at a huge 217kg, but few forget that, oddly enough, he is always around when help is needed, especially when there are things to be lifted.



PHOTO CREDIT: SANJANA

me five Ashram records that I had never even thought of."

What makes Sandeepan such a romantic character has perhaps to do with how much like – and yet so unlike – us, his peer group, he is. When he is lazy and hungry like most of us D Groupers, the scale at which he functions is equally admirable. "I love food" he confesses and his friends will vouch that it is a love that is gigantic. "I basically joined weightlifting because I did not want to do gymnastics," he laughs guiltily.

Weightlifting aside, Sandeepan got more animated telling me about Ashram's electrical work that he has been steeped in. He answered my questions very clearly. "The goal was to install solar on the building. You first study the energy efficiency of the building so you have to put less solar panels. We studied the energy consumption, we did some data analysis. According to that we implemented some changes like energy efficient fans, lights, AC's, computers. But then we realised that the wiring of the building was very old, so we took up rewiring. We first installed a small plant."

Not everyone is hard-working enough or selfless enough to be part of such a team. "It started when I was young. At the age of eleven or twelve I wired a whole floor of my building." Remembering how he had begun with true interest at the lowest level for our school, he smiles, "My first job was to take down meter readings every day at 7:30, 11:30, 1:30 and 4:00." Today, Ashram's project is a success in terms of savings, while helping the environment. The recognition received has been publicised in newspapers and even the Union Minister

for Power has visited the installation in Delafon.

It is inspiring to be a junior to Sandeepan. He took me through what the team he is part of has done during the past five years in a matter-of-fact way. "School was one of the first buildings in the whole of India to get a smart meter," he says, referring to the system of tracking the consumption of electricity when one is also a power generator and supplier to the town grid. The story behind this makes it even more admirable: "We drafted the net metering policy for the country and the government accepted" their proposal.

And Sandeepan has played a role in these pioneering undertakings. His guiding philosophy is simple: "School has done so much for us, why don't we just help them back." Seeing someone just a couple of years older than I actually living up to such ideals is nothing short of inspiring.

Not everyone may know that Sandeepan's dead lift record stands at a huge 217kg, but few forget that, oddly enough, he is always around when help is needed, especially when there are things to be lifted. He certainly is fun-loving, and he acknowledges that: "There should be a balance between enjoyment and activity." He still has a long way to go, but he has already dreamed and achieved much. Records aside, helping our institution aside, even saving the environment aside, he left me with one thing – one line so sincerely uttered that I have to repeat it: "If each student has a goal in mind, this place will prosper."

– Chirag, E.A.V.P.5

CULTURE



INTOLERANT INDIA

Are we?

India is intolerant. Isn't everyone? Just think about it. We are intolerant towards things that do not please us; we show our disgust towards people we don't like; and unconsciously we tend to not respect people who do not agree with us. However, as long as this intolerance doesn't translate into persecution, it manifests as little more than dislike; and as long as the community that is disliked is allowed to pursue its interests, the country is called tolerant. Many Western and Western-influenced democracies are at this stage.

And yet, no one likes being just tolerated by others. What one wishes for is being accepted – there is a difference between tolerance and acceptance – and respected in society. For a country whose peoples are as diverse as ours in religion, language, appearance and culture, mutual respect has been and will be the path to living in a vibrant and free country. India is not just tolerant, but much more than that – India is inclusive.

Our history shows us that clearly. Indian civilisation dates back to circa 5000 BCE and the reason we have survived the harshness of time and are still existing is because of our immense capacity to engage with, share and imbibe ideas and include others. As Sanjeev Sanyal said when he addressed us about his book in the Hall of Harmony, "This ancient

Being inclusive has been an essential part of our thinking and society for a long time. We have been able to stick to these beliefs because they are deeply ingrained in us.

Indian civilisation that we are proud of is not about people hiding behind walls trying to protect some pure culture. It is about engagement with the world, it's about give and take of ideas, it's about inclusiveness."

Being inclusive has been an essential part of our thinking and society for a long time. We have been able to stick to these beliefs because they are deeply ingrained in us; and it is our spiritual basis – which is the basis of India – that has made us into a receptive community. The belief that every being is essentially One has led India to accept everyone. Our values are derived from the great scriptures like the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The Taittiriya Upanishad tells us "atithi devo bhava". This literally means that our guest should be treated like god. More importantly, we understand that "ekam sat vipra bahudhaa vadanti" – meaning "Truth is one, but the learned refer to it by different names". This enables us to tolerate and accept people of different faiths pursuing their varying routes to realisation, and even the atheists are not left out.

Having read the aforementioned, you might assume that I think India is perfect. The sad reality is that it isn't. We accept all communities that come to us – the Parsis, Jews and Syrian Christians to name a few – but when it comes to accepting our own kind we falter. Why are we intolerant towards the very existence of those of other castes? Why do we judge a person by his last name and not by his achievements and works? Are they not human beings like us? We still haven't rid ourselves of the colonial hang-

over and the recession of our ideals.

The caste system has brought a lot of unwanted divisions into our society. What our ancestors meant to give us through the chaturvanya was a harmonious society where everybody worked according to their 'swabhava' or temperament. Every individual was responsible for doing his part sincerely for the progress of society. This is where we are intolerant.

There are instances of the media creating trouble by fabricating intolerance, but that does not mean that there is no intolerance. Also, I have not compared India to other countries – the only thing I am saying is that our ideals demand much higher standards from us.

When someone says that India is intolerant, I fail to truly understand what they mean by that, because I have not lived in that part of India. There can be no denial of the fact that India is an inclusive country – we have dissolved much sugar into our milk. But we should not be satisfied with where we stand.

We categorise and remember human distinctions of religion, caste and community – and maybe these divisions are necessary to mentally understand the world – but we forget that "vayam tat smah", we are all That. Like with most of India's problems, ridding ourselves of intolerance, surpassing tolerance and embracing inclusiveness asks us to go back to our roots. It would be a stain on our ancestors and an injustice to our descendants not to be truly Indian.

– Aditi.T, E.A.V.P.6

THE LURE OF ISLAMIC ART

In an age of growing Islamophobia, a reminder that Beauty exists in everything

My fascination for Islamic art began with my first visit to the Taj Mahal when I was just nine years old. I was able to see this wonder of the world bathed in moonlight, and to me, in spite of the crowd and the yellowing white marble, it was more beautiful than anything I had seen before.

What was even more appealing than the concrete 'White' Taj was the conceived but unfulfilled idea of the "Black Taj" – on the other bank of the Yamuna there was to be a pool that would reflect Mumtaz Mahal's final resting place, creating a "Black Taj" on its dark, deep and fluid surface.

The Taj Mahal had mesmerised me with its magnificent grandeur, but even the idea of the Black Taj did with its sheer simplicity. What I had failed to realise at the time was how simply I had been made aware of a fundamental truth of Islamic art; now, I have explored the field sufficiently to conclude that behind all the opulence, magnificence and complexity, simplicity lies at the heart of the art form.

This is true especially in the case of Islamic geometric patterns. These patterns are intricate and complex but each of them follows



The tableau on the previous page and the motifs on this page and the next are the author's creation.

an established, logical and mathematical pattern. There is no place for randomness in these works. Islam believes that everything happens for a reason and everything has a designated place in this world. Evidently, their artistic works adhere to this philosophy.

Other aspects of Islamic art, which I think require a little more of the 'artistic sensibility', are arabesque patterns, Islamic calligraphy and miniature art. These fields allow artists more fluidity, while maintaining their structures and their underlying mathematical bases.

Islamic art is an extensively broad field. It includes all the works of art that have been produced in the Muslim world – which, at its height, stretched all the way from Egypt to India – from the 7th century to the present day. The Fatimids in Egypt produced works different from the Mughals in India, and yet, although the arts emerged from such a vast geographical area and over so many centuries, they can be grouped under the banner of "Islamic Art" or "Arts of the Islamic World" because their

fundamental aspects were the same. I continue to be amazed by this unity in variety.

Throughout the history of mankind, so many artistic eras, trends and movements have come and gone, but Islamic art is one of the few that has withstood the test of time. I have often wondered what has made this art form last. Maybe it is because Islamic art was never limited – it ranged from mosque walls to carpets and everyday objects like cutlery, vases and windowpanes – and all of it was created with the aim of beautifying one's environment. According to Islamic belief, everything comes and goes but there is a Beauty in the universe that seeks to persist. Islamic art is a quest to attain this Beauty.

I find Islamic art exquisitely beautiful and I have, honestly, not met anyone who doesn't. This brings me to an interesting question: in an age of abstract expressionism and absolute minimalism, why does everyone still find this heavily ornamented art form beautiful?

Islamic art has a lot of symbolism – the

Art is something that we do create, something that is born from within us. It is perhaps one of the only things we have the power to control.

spirals represent the circular motion of Creation, the fractal effects in geometric patterns demonstrate that in the small one can find the Infinite. Understanding these symbols enhances our perception, but we can appreciate Islamic art even without knowing any of them.

Sometimes, we have to think to appreciate modern art or abstraction, we have to look beyond the canvas, we have to know more than just what the work tells us. But to appreciate Islamic art, we have to do none of these things. It is the heart that tells us what to feel, not the mind – that is perhaps why everybody likes Islamic art. All we need to do is look at an example of Islamic art – be it a mosque's ceiling or a simple tile – and we will be immediately drawn into the intricate web of its magic.

This magic is woven not only through ever-repeating patterns which give us a sense of infinity, but also through the perfection with which they are executed – this is my favourite characteristic of the art form.

Nothing is perfect in this world and

quite often we are not directly responsible for this rampant imperfection. Very often, we do not have the means to control it, because we do not create it.

But art is something that we do create, something that is born from within us. It is perhaps one of the only things we have the power to control. That is why I have always believed that if we create art, in whatever form, and we do it as perfectly as we desire, then maybe some of this perfection will slowly seep into our own lives.

I love Islamic art because it is a realisation of my dream to try and perfect this world. Islamic art is neat, pure and pleasant; it is complex, yet simple, magnificent and silent in its own way.

This is an art form that greatly inspires me and I hope it will continue to do so by helping me create art and, through it, strive for perfection.

– Debaleena, E.A.V.P.6

SCIENCE AS CULTURE

Much has been said for art; now it's science's turn

What a failure mankind is! Wise men say that our goal is true and lasting happiness and most souls are still searching for the secret. The causes are the missing links in the web of our culture – the ideas, values and beliefs, and the institutions, the behaviour and the traditions they engender. That is why there is a pressing need to refine it; what we need, for the moment, is the humble touch of particle accelerators. As I will try to justify below, our thoughts and the forms they take, need science.

It is not surprising, then, that our constitution, which is a living document of our ideas, exhorts, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform". The basis of the scientific temper is the courage and need to question for the sake of the truth and for the thrill of unravelling the intricacies of Nature – "pour comprendre le monde et pour la joie que cela nous donne". Also, the applications of science are invaluable boons, facilitating our lives "by ministering to the luxury, comfort and convenience which all men desire" as Sri Aurobindo explains in *The National Value of Art*.

The first step in developing a scientific temper would be to fall in love with the chaotic, yet orderly, beauty of everything, literally everything, around us. This can be cultivated, as there is no dearth of inspiring material on the subject – that is, all human knowledge. The next step would be to encourage the ability to question all that one does, because everything begins from oneself. It is also important to question all that is around you with the scientist's





We must begin by having faith in something – a higher power, human love, the scientific method – and that helps us arrive at what we call experience and knowledge.

purpose of finding the truth, understanding the causes, the effects. The greatest virtue of a scientist, though, is to espouse the truth as he sees it and have the courage to speak nothing but. What an ideal is the scientist's!

Speaking of ideals, for a country still awaiting its tryst with destiny, it is invaluable to be able to question the hollow remnants of our culture. First, it must be done for the sake of progress, so as to generate new ideas and behaviour better suited to the present mental age. Second, it is our duty to defend the deep truths, of which we are custodians, from rationalistic critique. I concede that a rational defence of those truths cannot be made; a defence just asks for us not to be easily shaken from what we believe in. I cannot prove that God exists, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't. We must begin by having faith in something – a higher power, human love, the scientific method – and that helps us arrive at what we call experience and knowledge.

Another extremely powerful tool that science has faith in is the mind. Thus, when it is said that our material and intellectual progress requires science, it is a call for the mind and its logic and reason to make up a greater part of our thinking. India cannot be hesitant about this; a glimpse of our public discourse through social and mainstream media screams that to us. However, before I am rightly accused of being an "expert" on Indian culture, allow me to strike closer to home. "Douce Mère a dit" I have too often been told. That phrase is only a metaphor for the resistance that all curious minds have felt at one point or

another. Perhaps the resistance is necessary, but, if not explained, it remains unjustified. I rest my case.

My theory goes thus: we must allow the scientific temper to further culture our minds for all the aforementioned reasons and more. Science itself, however, and its proven truths need to permeate our thought. Genetics and evolutionary biology blames extinction on the inability to adapt, reminding us of our need for diversity. Climate science makes us all inseparable from this planet, emphasising our need to consider the reactions our actions have on every corner of our earth. Astronomy reminds us of how small we are and, as Carl Sagan said, "It underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot." There is something deeply poetic about the fact that everything around you – and we ourselves – is stardust. The world is not always what it seems to be; God does seem to play dice with the universe.

Science is obviously not everything. But it can take us to Everything – truth, happiness, God, or what you will. At the end of the day, we have to question, we humans crave for answers, we need to flirt with the ideals of happiness and perfection. Science is but one path, and we need it because we are human. As Yougundharayan asks in Sri Aurobindo's *Vasavadutta*, "Nature must flower into art and science, or else wherefore are we men?"

– Chirag, E.A.V.P.5

SOUP VERANDAH



REVELATION

A splendid sun conquered the Eastern dale,
Its rays caressed the emancipated corpses;
Scattered banners fluttered in a rejuvenated air –
The war was won, peace had prevailed.
A triumphant warrior, on returning home,
Surrendered himself willingly to his wife's embrace
And saw his toddler, for the first time, sleeping.
"Life in its youngest form!" he exclaimed.
His fingers, weakened by the continuous pulling
Of the trigger, reached for the only life
That he had created; his hands calloused
By arms stretched out to fondle those hands
As soft and tender as the trailing clouds
On a cheerful midsummer day.
His wife kneeled down beside the cradle and whispered,
"John is seven months and twenty-one days old."
A silent tear dropped from the warrior's eye
And fell upon the child's chubby cheek,
Like the crystal pearl at dawn
Reposes on a shy, semi-blossomed rose.
The child gained consciousness, and his mother,
Bringing his attention to the stranger, smiled,
"John, it's daddy." And the baby beamed;
With a colossal effort he got up to his knees
And extended his hand towards his father's unkempt face.
Amid the child's constant cheerful chortles
The father's long steady breaths were heard.
The child's gorgeous eyes glistened gleefully
And reflected in those teary ones of the man,
Like the moon's casted shadow on a lake's ripples.
The child then leaned and kissed the man,
Vernal showers' first drop touching parched Mother Earth.
The man's lips curved into an amorphous smile –
It was love that he was deprived of,
It was love that he had found
In the veins of his baby in whom
His blood trickled and ran.

– Aditya, E.A.V.P.6

MOONSHINE AND TRAGEDY

The moon in the sky shone bright
And the lake reflected this marvelous light.
Water's virgin surface did never hint
The temptation to kiss the wind;
Then the prince of the sky,
Not expressing why,
Did gently caress water's skin
That slowly to ripple did begin.
Water broke Diana's image,
Another might say the moon's visage,
And the surface broke into light
That glimmered in the dark of the night.
And that was the night
When my mind and I began to fight;
For my senses and I
Were absolutely on a high,
But I just didn't know
Why the words wouldn't flow;
As the poet in my mind did knock
My mind gave him a writer's block.
And so began the tragedy
Of my writer's block and me.

– Joshua, E.A.V.P.4





COURAGE

"You are free to go," he said.
"After so many years of love care
The world will now hit you in the face.

No more of the warm stable,
Nor the fresh hay and cool bath,
But only the open blue sky
Under the bright distant stars,
And the vast outstretched fields,
And the fresh running water.

Every dawn brings a new challenge,
A new path to be explored,
A new destiny to be reached.

No complaints, no laziness,
No fear of failure,
Nor any hesitation to cross the hurdle,
Nor fear in the face of death;
Only the courage to live life.
Go stallion, run towards freedom."

– Deeksha, E.A.V.P.5



CHOICE

Neel did not return home, like many others, with "all faculties intact". On most days, he spent his time in the study, prone on the carpet, staring listlessly at its intricate designs and making a map on it of the cities he had flown over and bombed. He watched again as buildings were charred and people were blown to bits. He didn't break 'people' into the multitude of children, men, and women, but considered them simply as something concrete like buildings. It made things easier.

Often, for hours at a stretch, he imagined himself back at the hangar with his crew on readiness, fidgeting with their helmets, waiting for orders to take off in their Hurricanes and bomb the world some more. At other times, he held the left side of his face to try to check the spasms, and he felt his skin and muscle move underneath of their own accord to some rhythm that his unbalanced nerves dictated.

When he got out of the study he didn't know why he had stepped out of it then, nor why he had stayed sprawled there for the past two days.

He tried to stay away from his wife Joe; it infuriated him that she didn't consider him a burden. Her calm and total acceptance, her unassuming endurance of all his moodiness gave him an ugly and cruel satisfaction to steer conversations to the war and its atrocities, for only then did she show her irritation. He did not like himself any better for it.

The family came over nearly every night. A week after his return, he had met his four year old son whose growth he had witnessed only through snapshots.

That morning he had woken up with a throbbing headache, and later, as he stood before the mirror trying to ease – even if for an instant – the convulsing muscles of his face, he cried. As he sat at the table, struggling to bring the spoon of cereal to his mouth, the door swung open and his son tumbled in, wrapped in a thick jacket, a muffler, with a cap pulled over his dark hair. The boy ran to his mother, who had been standing at the sink, and wrapped his arms around her legs. Laughing, his mother picked him up and walked towards his father. Then alone did the child notice the stranger. At the same instant, Neel's hand jerked and the spoon clattered on to the floor. The boy saw the jerky movement and the spasms that distorted the stranger's face, and the laughter died in his throat. He squirmed in his mother's arms and, hiding his face in her hair, he wept. The sound cut through Neel and his senses were numbed. He stood up, his whole body convulsed and he swung around and dived for the wastebin and retched into it.

For the next two days, no amount of

persuasion pulled him out of the study. He smoked continuously until both his packs had dissolved into fumes and hung thick over his head. Every time he raised his hand to light a cigarette, he observed the incessant trembles with a spectator's keen gaze, and then he stared at the narrow, indistinct reflection of the persistent tic on his face in the stainless steel body of his lighter.

When the habitual poundings began, he pressed his fingers hard against his temples until the momentary shadows lifted from his eyes and the pain receded to become a persistent throb.

When he got out of the study he didn't know why he had stepped out of it then, nor why he had stayed sprawled there for the past two days. A couple of days later, he went out with Joe to a small restaurant. At her request, a table at the very end of the room had been reserved for them. They took their seats and Neel wondered how many unsuspecting couples had been blown apart as he swerved overhead in his Hurricane, dropping the bombs.

When he looked up, he found a young girl staring fixedly at the left side of his face. Conscious of her eyes on his face, his muscles tensed and body twitched uncontrollably. Joe turned and found the girl's intent eyes on Neel. The girl was smiling at his obvious discomfort and that is when she hid her eyes behind a pair of dark glasses.

The familiar pounding of his brain beginning, Neel ground his knuckles against his temples, stood up shakily and tottered to the girl's table and slumped heavily on to a chair across

her. The girl raised her head and looked at Neal, startled. Joe followed, anxious, unsure of what he would do. But he did nothing; Neel sat there, hunched, staring at the girl. She looked at Neal, tense and taut in every muscle; she was clearly alarmed and even frightened.

Joe could not bear the unpleasant scene a moment longer. She glared at the girl and said, "Now, have you seen enough of this nervous tic of his? Have you laughed enough at another's discomfort?" Joe stopped. The girl had relaxed her shoulders on listening to her, and was stretching her hand across the table towards Neal. Before the perverseness of the movement had reached Joe and she could make a move to shove the hand away, the girl's fingers were already on his twitching face. The fingers moved as if tracing and deciphering the rhythms of his dancing flesh. When Joe finally pushed the hand away from her husband's face, the girl's hand fell to her side and she whispered, "I am sorry, I did not know and did not realise." Then she stood up, waited in silence as if for forgiveness, and picking up her cane that had been leaning at the foot of the table, she tapped her way out.

Neel was still slouched on the chair, wondering how a young girl, oblivious to colour and light and shrouded in a dark world could find reasons to smile.

– Arpita, E.A.V.P.6

THE LOST CHILD

Keshav sighed as he returned to his house at daybreak. He left his muddy sandals outside. Before he opened the door to his house, he washed his feet with the fresh water that was kept in a pot in his courtyard. He opened the door cautiously, wishing not to awaken his family.

They lived on the banks of the river Parbati, which was a boon to them. Thanks to her they did not have to walk miles every day for a bucket of water. Therefore, this river was respected and worshipped by the villagers as a goddess. Parbati was so powerful that they had to stand carefully on her red banks to even dip a bucket into her fast-flowing water.

His wife was sleeping peacefully in his house. Keshav drank a glass of water and wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. He placed the glass back onto the 'matka' and suddenly rushed towards Sarita.

"Wake up Sarita, wake up!" shouted Keshav.
"Where is Anandi?"

Sarita woke up lazily, slightly irritated with her husband for having disturbed her sleep.
"What happened?" she asked with a yawn.
"Where is Anandi?" he repeated.

She felt the bed around her with her hands. Anandi, their one-year-old baby, was supposed to be beside her. "She was sleeping beside me! I had even tucked her under my blanket because of the cold! Where could she have gone?" Sarita panicked.



She tucked a few locks of hair behind her ears, pulled on her ghoongat, wiped the tears off her face and, with her husband, stepped out of the house.

"Let's just check the house before we alarm everyone. She will surely be somewhere in the house," Keshav consoled her. They took a good look around their house before Keshav pointed at the door. It was open.

"No! This is not possible! I was the one who closed the door before we went to sleep!" cried Sarita. "Let us ask our neighbours if they have seen our child." "Uh, no Sarita," Keshav hesitated, "it would not be right to disturb them so early in the morning. We can go out and ask them once they are all awake."

"Keshav-ji, we have lost our daughter! Surely they will understand our anxiety. Anyone in our situation would knock at their neighbours' doors and enquire about their child."

"Hmm, alright," replied Keshav, unconvinced.

She tucked a few locks of hair behind her ears, pulled on her ghoongat, wiped the tears off her face and, with her husband, stepped out of the house.

"Keshav-ji, I'm afraid," she sobbed.

"Listen to me Sarita," he held her slim shoulders, "do not panic. We will find her. I am pretty sure that one of our neighbours has seen Anandi and taken her home."

They began their search. Sarita gathered her courage and followed her husband. They gently knocked at Shiv's door. After a couple of minutes of gentle banging on his door and his windows, Shiv opened.

"What's the matter?" he asked them, slightly irritated. The couple asked him if he had seen Anandi. They explained

to him that she couldn't be found in the house and that they had discovered their door open.

"No, I haven't seen her, Keshav. But surely one of our neighbours has seen her. I guess she is with one of them."

"Yes, that's what I thought. And that is why we have come to you. Sorry for disturbing you so early in the morning. By the way, I heard that your crops were affected by the pests. What are you doing for it?"

Before Shiv could answer, Sarita boldly nudged her husband. "Let's hurry up!" she whispered.

"Okay Shiv, we'll discuss that later."

As the door closed behind them, the couple rushed towards the next house. Raghu opened the door, and a similar situation occurred. None of his family members had seen Anandi. They moved on to enquire about their child in every single neighbouring house. The same response awaited them. Their anxiety grew slowly as their hopes started to waver.

"We could look for her in the next lane. Perhaps she somehow managed to crawl quite far and even escaped all our neighbours' attention!" Sarita suggested. "Alright," sighed Keshav.

They spent the next few hours searching for Anandi. No one could give them the slightest clue on her whereabouts. Gradually, fatigue and despair overshadowed their anxiety. They walked, downcast and sad, towards Keshav's parents' house. As they stepped into the house, his parents were shocked both by the untimely visit of their children and their

A girl child was star-crossed in their community. "She would bring bad luck to our family," he had said.

worn-out appearances.

"What is the matter with you, my beta?" Keshav's mother asked, cupping his cheeks.

"Anandi is lost! We looked for her everywhere," Sarita sobbed, as she explained the day's events to her mother-in-law. "Oh! Have you been to the police station?" she asked them.

"Not yet, sasuma," she replied. Her father-in-law listened to her as he continued holding his newspaper and sitting on his cot. His indifference didn't surprise Sarita; she knew that her sasurji didn't care for her child. He had never liked Anandi. A girl child was star-crossed in their community. "She would bring bad luck to our family," he had said. It was not just her father-in-law who believed in that myth, but most people in her community believed in it too.

"I will prepare some chapattis quickly. First have your lunch. Then, if you want, go to the police station after that," Keshav's mother ordered. She looked at Sarita, "You help me with the food, beta." "Alright, sasuma," replied Sarita, holding back her tears.

The meal was prepared. Keshav and his father had their lunch together while Sarita fanned them and her mother-in-law served them the food. After having the delicious meal made by his mother, Keshav wanted to rest. He assured Sarita that he would just take a small nap. She didn't object. The afternoon would be tiring and he already looked worn out. "Beta, let's have our lunch now. Get the plates," Keshav's mother ordered Sarita.

Sarita handed a plate to her. "No, sasuma. Please forgive me. It is entirely my

fault. I can't eat until I caress my dear child," she explained. Tears rolled down her cheeks. Unpleasant thoughts of Anandi not being found were whirling in her head. What if she was kidnapped? What if she had an accident somewhere? What if wild dogs had killed her? Worst of all, what if she had walked out of their house and straight into the river?

"Alright," she replied, "do what you want."

As his mother finished her meal, Keshav woke up. He washed his face, combed his hair and took his bag. He was ready to go to the police station, which was two hours away from their village. Before leaving the house, he instructed Sarita to return home before sunset. He stepped out of the house and put on his sandals that were covered with red mud. He stared at them for a moment, then immediately washed them with the water that was kept in the courtyard. He bid his family goodbye and set out for the long journey, prim and proper.

"Sasuma, I think I should go home now. The sun is about to hide itself under the horizon," said Sarita.

"Alright. Don't worry about Anandi. Take care of Keshav. Do not forget to prepare some dinner before my son returns home," she ordered her daughter-in-law. "Yes, sasuma. Good bye." She turned towards her father-in-law, "Good bye, sasurji." Keshav's mother closed the door as Sarita stepped out of her house.

When she reached her house, Sarita saw that the door was open. She saw her husband's sandals in the courtyard. Keshav was sitting on the cot.

"Oh! You are already home? Did you find

Anandi?" enquired Sarita expectantly. She had thought that he wouldn't return home before nightfall.

"No," he said.

"Then how come you are here? Haven't you visited the police station?"

"No, not exactly," hesitated Keshav. "I was on my way to the police station when I met the inspector on the road. He was on his way to our neighbouring village to investigate a robbery. I told him about Anandi. He said that he will look for her as soon as he can."

Gathering her courage, Sarita asked, "But still, shouldn't you have gone to the police station?"

"Even if I would have gone to the police station, this is what they would have told me. I have informed the inspector. He is a responsible man, I'm sure he will keep his word. Don't worry."

But a mother has to worry; Sarita was anxious for Anandi. She prayed to the river goddess, whom she considered her mother and protector, for the safety of her child. That was all she could do. Mother Parbati would understand Sarita's pain. She would help her. She would guide her. Sarita stepped out of her house to face the mighty river. She walked towards her red banks, "Oh holy mother! Please save my child!" she implored. "I will even sacrifice myself for her. Take me if you want, but return my child to me!"

Sarita stayed awake the entire night, praying and not being able to sleep. Her quiet sobs were drowned by her husband's snores.

– Yogitha, E.A.V.P.5



KASHMIR DIARIES

While we go to bed without giving the slightest thought to national security, there are those who "stand on a wall and say, 'Nothing's going to hurt you tonight, not on my watch'" as Lt. Cdr. JoAnne Galloway says in *A Few Good Men*. Soldiers in the Indian army have a job that no citizen of India can fathom. As young and curious students almost ready to step out of SAICE into a world of myriad professions, we only thought it fair to take a closer look at the lives of the true heroes of our country. Last December, our wish to get a taste of life in the army led us to the northernmost state of India, Jammu and Kashmir, and one of India's most revered and decorated regiments – the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI).

Since 1947, J&K has squeezed its way

The formality, the discipline, the composure that each soldier exhibits is remarkable, and it has rubbed off on some of us, often simply by means of a firm handshake and an exchange of pleasantries.

At the request of JAKLI, the author has not provided us with any images of the camp.

into the front page of newspapers more often than an Indian would have liked it, and the reasons were clearly not ones that brought smiles to our faces. Hence, as expected, there were worries galore as word of our proposed trip spread. Nevertheless, Lt. Gen. Satish Dua, who is in command of the Chinar Corps and also a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, assured that we would be untouched. After a historic wash-out of the 2nd December programme, we set off on the 3rd, but little did we know that an adventure awaited us.

The floods in Chennai resulted in us missing two trains and travelling 50% of the country's length by road for an almost excruciating forty hours, while the other half was covered within a matter of two hours by air. Upon reaching the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regimental Centre in Srinagar, we boys were so exhausted that we were in no position to begin the physical training routine that the instructors had chalked out for us. Nevertheless, what revived us was piping hot Chinese food served at the Officer's mess, followed by a good night's sleep.

Alarm clocks weren't required as the impeccably punctual officers would wake us up exactly at 6:00 in the morning. At 6:30 we would assemble in front of our rooms where another officer would already be waiting in full uniform to take us to the training grounds. Some light jogging was mandatory as that was the only way to slowly get the muscles warmed-up without suffering from cramps in sub-zero temperatures. Limbering was next, after

which we went for the main course of the training programme. As far as developing the physical ability goes, the army recruits typically go through two phases of exercises: PT and OT. The first phase is PT, physical training, which is the equivalent of the fitness test that we are made to take in SAICE. The second phase is OT, obstacle training, where recruits must complete a circuit of twenty-odd obstacles that involve climbing, crawling, jumping and swinging using a rope. Surprisingly, the tasks weren't too challenging. To be very honest, a couple of us fared better than some of the recruits, thanks to the physical education background we have.

Following a short breakfast, we were off to try our hand at other activities within the campus, such as rock climbing, archery and shooting, the latter of course being the most thrilling experience of our lives. Firing ten real bullets from a light machine gun was blood-tinging. The deafening sound as the rifle fired and the slight recoil was all part and parcel of this unique experience.

The evenings were spent playing team games, as teamwork is an essential component of life in the army. Basketball and volleyball were the two games we played against the recruits and coaches of JAKLI, and there's no shame in disclosing that we were outplayed on both occasions.

The icing on the cake was the rare opportunity to visit an army post at the PoK border near Uri, a town west of Srinagar. This is where we felt first-hand

what soldiers actually go through when protecting the nation's borders. Jawaans living in pitch-dark bunkers that have nothing but sandbags and a whole host of weapons, must stay vigilant during every second of the day in case of an unexpected attack. There's absolutely no room for error for the soldiers at the frontier, as the slightest lapse of attention could lead to serious damage. To a certain extent, we were able to understand the tremendous responsibility that every soldier of the Indian army bears, and the hardship they must undergo in order to carry it successfully.

One of the finest armies in the world, the Indian army has proved their mettle on every occasion since 1947. It's been a distinguished display of bravery and courage by every soldier who has put his life on the line to sentinel a nation in its entirety. Being in the midst of such officers and jawaans was a genuine privilege. The formality, the discipline, the composure that each soldier exhibits is remarkable, and it has rubbed off on some of us, often simply by means of a firm handshake and an exchange of pleasantries. A week flew by as we headed home, satiated with memories archived in an exclusive corner of our minds, and for some of us, with a head full of dreams to serve the nation in the most honourable manner.

– Shubhankar, K3



MY MUSE

On visiting the Indian Coffee House, one believes the Cafe Coffee Day tagline "A lot can happen over coffee".

Here, in this cafeteria filled with cigarette smoke, the Bengali intelligentsia assembles to solve global issues, by quoting Homer, Tagore, Locke, Hobbs or any great personalities, philosophies or ideas corresponding to their problem, while dipping biscuits in their cups of coffee. No topic escapes them; their discussions range from banal household gossip to parliamentarian bills.

Whatever be the situation, come depression in the stock market, unemployment, heavy taxation, rise of vegetable prices, strike, famine or flu, nothing can lessen the throng of people here.

Sitting alone here is not amusing unless a writer is looking for inspiration by eavesdropping or by observing people.

About fifteen minutes had passed when he triumphantly tossed the notebook and toyed with his pen, sighing with relief as he wiped the fresh sweat that burst from his forehead.

Roald Dahl had well said "Writers are nosy people". Soon, my presence served me well.

In this chaos I noticed a clean-shaven young man of about twenty-five walk in hurriedly. He sat down clumsily at the table two rows away from mine, facing me.

Glancing at his simple metallic watch, he breathed heavily and ordered a cold coffee in an impatient and muffled voice. Every now and then he corrected the position of his tie knot while leafing through the pages of a notebook he soon would examine with a proofreader's gaze.

Beside him lay a compilation of three novels of Ernest Hemingway. His jittery fingers held the glass, but his regard remained fixed on the notebook while he drew in the cold coffee through a straw.

Sweat beads emerged on his forehead and a few trickled out of his neat hair. Irritation caused by the sweaty forehead compelled him to take the sky blue handkerchief out from his crisp, black trousers that complemented his starched, white, full-sleeved shirt. This, perhaps, took place a few more times, or perhaps not, but this is what I had noticed until then. He continued to correct the papers, glancing repeatedly at his watch.

About fifteen minutes had passed when he triumphantly tossed the notebook and toyed with his pen, sighing with relief as he wiped the fresh sweat that burst from his forehead. On opening the Hemingway compilation, he went through a few pages, but soon his eyes began scanning the café. They were worried and nervous, lined by frowning

eyebrows intersecting just above his long nose. Other than his nose, his face was not arresting, but not unpleasant either.

I saw a middle-aged man approaching him, middle-aged I presumed because of the grey hair near his ears and his retreating hairline. His grave expression meant business, not friendly chat. They took their seats after a bureaucratic handshake. The older one, with his back towards me, sat with a slight slouch.

They talked animatedly. The young one gradually seemed to gain confidence through the assuring nods of his companion. I tried to understand the conversation through his expressions.

Soon, the cafeteria filled drastically as the lunch break drew near, and the table in between got occupied. I got up to pay the bill reluctantly, but was happy to find a topic for freelancing. While leaving, I noticed the older one patting the other with an impressed smile, carrying the notebook back with him.

A lot can happen over a coffee.

– Akash S., E.A.V.P.4



FREEDOM

Freedom is a very important aspect of one's life, because it shapes a person's character and personality. The right quantity at the right time is what makes a child a happy one. Thus, parents need to judge and accordingly give the needed freedom to their child. However, that is a very tricky thing. This is what I have to say about my freedom to my parents:

"I am glad to tell you that you have brought me up rather well. In the sense, when I was young (well, younger) I had very little freedom, but those were the years when you taught me what's right and wrong, what to do and what not to do, basically how to live a good and happy life. I am glad that I didn't have too much freedom at that time otherwise I might have gone off the 'path'.

"Now that I am old enough you have given me the key to exploring life – you have given me freedom. They are my choices and decisions from now on. You have shown me what the right way is and now it's up to me to follow it."

"Freedom gives you a sense of power and that power is often wrongly used. In my case I was sometimes tempted to do wrong(ish) stuff. In fact, I even misused my freedom a bit (not in a harmful way though), but you didn't stop me. Now I understand why: somethings need to be experienced, only then will we learn and realise on our own that it is wrong."

"I have a lot of freedom, almost no limitations. If I didn't have freedom there would always be a craving to do what's forbidden. But because I have so much freedom I don't have the urge to do bad stuff or want stuff. At home there is no friction. Everyone is happy. Freedom brought me happiness!"

– Satya, E.A.V.P.4

THROUGH THE LENS



MYSTERIES OF THE FREE PERIOD

There are moments when we sit in our classrooms engrossed in the noble pursuit of education, but most of the time we are waiting for the sweet sound of the bell.

"FREE PERIOD!" we gloat, but learning what really takes place in those hours of unbridled teenage lethargy is a matter of grave import.

So, after hours of painstakingly wasting our time chasing after our peers, here are those mysteries revealed.

Here's what our teachers hope
we do in our free periods...





...but here's what really happens.

And yet, in some corner of school lies a bookworm lost in some literature.



While others are catching up on their sleep...





...even when it's evening,
some are out there working in
school.



We are here to learn...
even when we teach

...and what better way to learn about life
than in Care, with the old and the wise?



And some have learnt much by themselves, living by the quote “Time you enjoyed wasting, is not wasted.”



While some have all the time in
the world for sitcoms...

PHOTO CREDIT: ADIT



THROUGH THE LENS



...others have all the time for their very own romcoms.

At the end of the day, you don't always need books to be educated; chess makes use of your grey matter. Period.



A young woman with dark hair tied back is sitting on a wooden bench, playing an acoustic guitar. She is wearing a red sari with a yellow border and a pattern of orange and yellow leaves. Her left hand is on the neck of the guitar, and her right hand is near the sound hole. She is looking down at the instrument. The background shows a window with a view of a brick building.

But if you never chase your
dreams, you will never catch
them...



– SANJANA & SHAMBHAVI, E.A.V.P.5

HUMOUR



EULOGY TO SUBTLETY

"Oh god, I wish I had my camera! Perfect lighting!" I have heard these very words ever so often uttered by one obsessed with the "art of clicking buttons". I gaze in awe and wonder at the beauty of nature and the work of god and contemplate it silently, trying to capture every detail of the landscape in my memory, for I don't know if I may ever see a similar sight again. Just then, I hear a dirge telling me of a forgotten camera, or of a dysfunctional one. I look pitifully at the lamenting soul, for without a camera, without being able to trap a moment in the coil of this mortal world, all this beauty, this divine splendour is unnecessary and redundant. How can one be expected to enjoy this moment if one can never experience it again through a colored sheet of paper! He cries over something which is and never will be!

Behind him I see others more pitifully, for they are further away from the silent hum and beat of nature. Eyes veiled by the trapper, they force themselves to look at the scenery through a small blurred rectangle. Instead of calming and steadyng their mind, they are busy steadyng their hands. Instead of focusng on their lives, they are focusng on the objects seen through a lens. Instead of graspng all the beauty in one glance and translating it into a form of art, they think they have done more than their bit by replicating it perfectly.

This desire to immortalize something is intrinsic in man. First he tries to immortalize himself. Having failed there he constantly wants to leave his imprint on the world.

Neglecting the beauty of subtlety, of spontaneity, they delve into technicalities and realities. They begin analyzing, and stop feeling. Trying to capture the perfect light they forget that god has already taken care of that. How they compare their game, their spoils, and bask in glory for having trapped nature in the best way possible! Sometimes I feel life is about proving yourself more stupid than the others, for I see a group of people turning their backs to Paradise, holding up their smartphones and clicking pictures of Paradise tainted by their mortal heads!

This desire to immortalize something is intrinsic in man. First he tries to immortalize himself. Having failed there he constantly wants to leave his imprint on the world. He fears oblivion; he cannot stand the thought of existing today just to be forgotten tomorrow. He wants to collect all beauty of Mother Nature in his pouch of greed, thinking one day when he has the time he will contemplate it. But rather, instead of collecting, if he had simply breathed it in, it would have been in him all his life and not simply in his pouch. Sometimes I feel fortunate that the dreadful invention of the camera came when it came, otherwise we would simply have an image of the landscape seen by Wordsworth from Tintern Abbey!

Man is intransigent in the pursuit of idiocy, for now I see some people sitting at a dining table and trapping food. Such level of consciousness has man reached that he no longer finds the need to eat food in order to survive. Simply sharing its images with his

friends who pretend to drool over them a thousand miles away is enough to satisfy his 'hunger'. Well, man has always found fulfillment in showing fellow humans what they don't have and what they are missing out on. So here I am, doing the same!

While they adjust their shutter speeds, wait for the perfect lighting, perform the herculean task of turning the lens, and finally with the skill of Michelangelo's index finger press that fateful button, I have dug into the lasagna, gulped the air of Paradise, admired the eagle in all its majesty, and, oh! Too late, it has flown away.

— Dhruva, E.A.V.P.6



PHOTO CREDIT: SANJANA

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

"Nān pēākunnu!" exclaimed Parvati the temple elephant in her native Malayalam as she noticed the perplexed look on my face. She seemed to be going somewhere with a little trunk – the luggage kind.

"No Malayalam..." I said shamelessly, shaking my hands in despair.

"I said I'm leaving. Almost 8 years in this town and all you can say is 'bill venda' at the grocery store, that too with wrong pronunciation," she mumbled angrily.

"Whoaaaa! All that is said about an elephant's memory and hearing..."

"Excuse me! That is borderline racism right there! I didn't judge you by what is said of a Sapiens' smell, did I?"

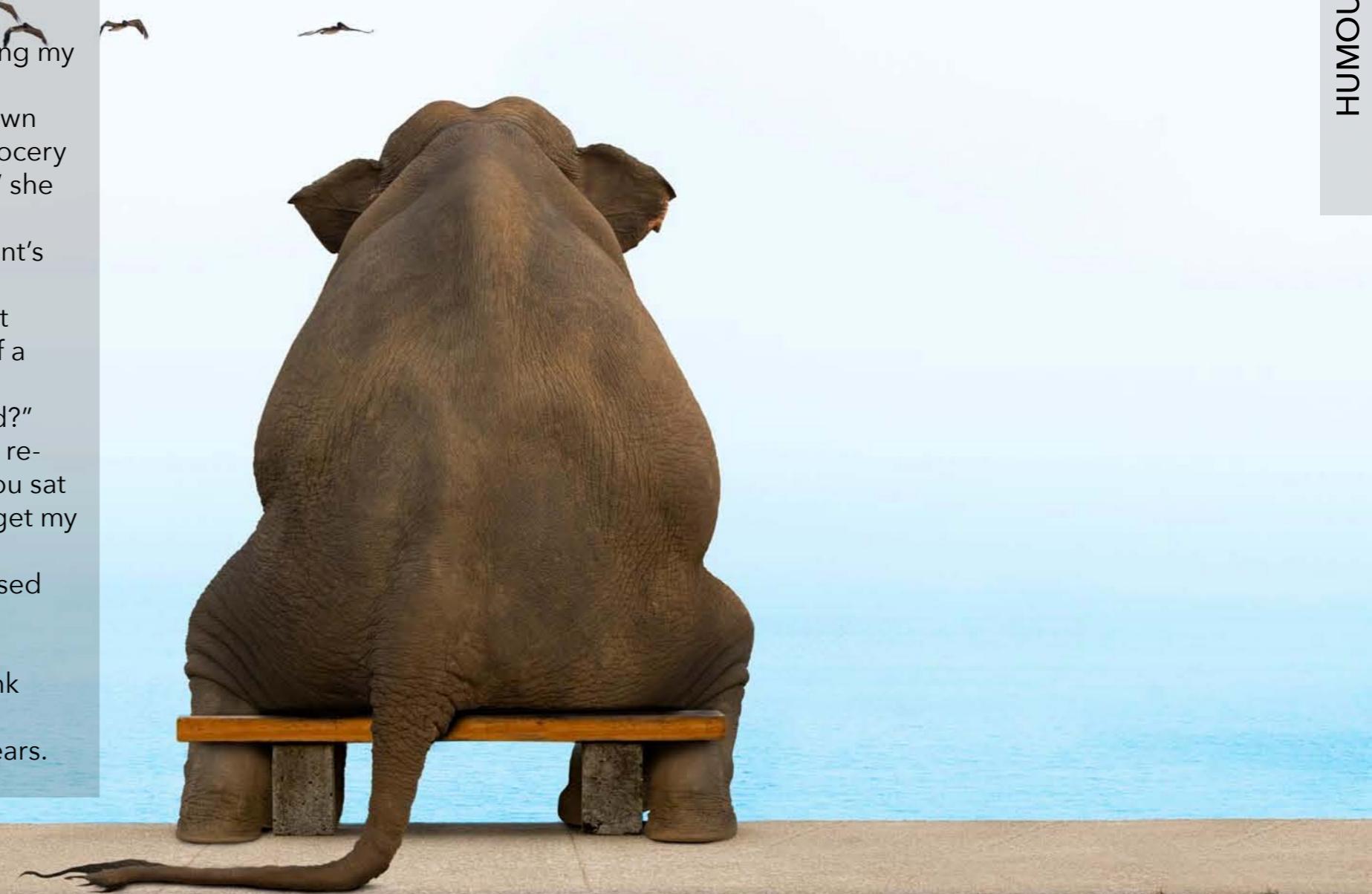
"No, no! What? I wasn't judge—we smell bad?" Sighing, "You have no idea. Never mind. I remember you as a little one, by the way. You sat on my back..." Of course. How could I forget my first experience of acupuncture?

"So...you're running away?" I finally addressed the elephant in the room.

"Why are YOU running away?"

"I'm not running away! Why would you think that?"

"Teenagers sleep like hibernating polar bears.



**"So you're going back to the wild?"
My hopes rose.
She trampled on them without
meaning to.**

Why would you be awake at this hour? I was your age too, once."

"You're a sharp one, aren't you?"

"Well, I'm an elephant. What's your mode of transport? You can't possibly hope to get very far this way."

"I'm just going for a jog."

"Perfect!" Parvati jumped up. "You'll be going to the beach, then."

Being gallant as always, I offered,

"Would you like me to carry your trunk? I..err...meant your sack...I mean your bag."

"Yeah! Sure." I struggled with the elephantine weight. "Sorry! Twenty years' worth of earnings and the occasional bit of gold. After all, I did work at a temple. You really thought I gave them all the change that was handed to me by visitors in exchange for a bump on the head?"

"Earnings?"

"For the last nineteen years, I stood in chains for hours on end on a barren concrete floor as my mahout threatened me into obedience. All my feet have foot rot and I have sustained multiple wounds." There was a long silence after that. "Yeah – I'd say I've earned it."

Finally, after an uncomfortable silence,

"I'm so sorry...would you like to sit down?" She bobbed her large head meekly and thumped down. "Is that why you want to run away?"

"Partly. But it's not all bad, you know. I get sent to a sanctuary once a year with all the other temple elephants. I made a friend there, a certain Laxmi. She complained about the same things..."

"So you're going back to the wild?" My hopes rose.

She trampled on them without meaning to, "The elder of my herd was electrocuted. Left without a leader, the members of the herd dispersed. My mother and I went our separate ways. My mother...she, she was hit by a train. I was found by a man in Kerala...who sold me illegally to our holy Temple in '97." She concluded, "There is no wild. This is the end of living and the beginning of survival."

"Oh my god..." I didn't know what to say. "You know, your English is impressive—"

"For a South Indian? There's the racism again. I expected more from the boy who wrote that little piece on fairness cream commercials in SLAICE 2015."

"How the—"

"I read, alright! What do you think I did all day?"

"You have an Internet connection..." was my best guess.

"I steal from the visitors. Phones, books, newspaper, anything I can lay my trunk on."

"I see..." A pickpocket elephant – out of Dr. Seuss's wildest dreams.

"I hope that's not how you hope on surviving: pickpocketing!" I joked.

"Well...not exactly..." she replied. I could tell she was serious.

"One of the elephants I met at the camp – Sivaa – told me that an emerald Sivalingam had been stolen from her temple...and the temple officials had done nothing to try and retrieve it. Eventually, it made its way to The Land of the Free and The home of the Brave, last I heard. There are tons of stolen artifacts abroad that are

our heritage. Make India Great again!" I could tell she was excited.

"Make India—that's familiar. Are you a Trump person?"

"You know, Donald Trump could do good for India."

"Oh really? Please tell me more."

"There's no need for that tone...Can you tell me why you hate Trump?"

"Cause...he's STUPID and—err—BAD!"

"Look at you! All 'Liberal Hollywood' does is make fun of Trump's orange face and hair and you're absolutely convinced Donald Trump is evil."

"Well then, do tell why a Trump Presidency would be so beneficial for India." I retaliated.

"India has an old love affair with the Democrats, but the Republican Presidents and legislators have done more for India-U.S. relations than Democrats."

"And Donald Trump is the perfect Republican, so much so that Bush Sr. is voting for Clinton."

"That's what I'm here for: I'm going to bridge the GOP between Donald Trump and the Republicans."

"How the elephant?"

"I'm an elephant, their mascot. I'm going to be his little 'Trumpet'!" After yet another silence she explained, "That's my cover. I don't really support Trump but I need to get to the US to complete my mission. Once I get into America and Trump wins, I'll have access to all the stolen artifacts."

"That's cute. Well, I can't physically stop you..."

"I guess this is farewell then," she struggled up.

"You know, I'm wasn't going for a jog," I

grinned sheepishly. "I'm running away too."

"Knew it! But why?"

"You know, the usual reasons. Bad haircut."

"Reasonable. Well, Trump Cruise is going be here soon. You can be my undercover mahout."

And thus began the first of many adventures.

– Tanay, E.A.V.P.4

Coming Soon:

M.I.S.S.I.O.N. K.O.H.I.N.O.O.R.

BUCKET LIST



PHOTO CREDIT: ADIT

BUCKET LIST: STREET FOODS TO RELISH

Can you imagine visiting Mumbai without relishing a few too many Vada Pavs or strolling through Paris and not gorging down some Crêpes? Trying street food is an essential part of travelling to new places; it's a delicious way into new cultures. If you love travelling to countries around the world and if you're skipping what's being served on the street, then you're missing out on a lot. Here are nine iconic street foods from across the globe to add to your travel bucket list, foods that you just cannot miss. Some will be familiar, some completely foreign, but all are worth savouring. Bonnes vacances!

ESPETINHO

Where to Eat: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

In Portuguese, Espetinho means 'little skewer'. The dish is made with a variety of meats, the most common being spiced beef and chicken. You can, of course, choose any filling you like. Sausages, hot dogs, shrimp, cubes of fish, and even a cheese that doesn't melt called Queijo Coalho is grilled and enjoyed. You'll find them sold from small charcoal grills all over Rio and the streets of other Brazilian cities. Vendors often have some sort of hot sauce on hand to spice up the Espetinho, as well as Farinha, the crunchy flour that Brazilians enjoy sprinkling on their meat. Carnaval-time for your taste buds!



BÁNH MÌ

Where to Eat: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Bánh Mì is a mouth-watering sandwich that is best described as a Vietnamese hoagie or submarine sandwich. A product of French colonialism in Southeast Asia, the Bánh Mì combines Western and Eastern ingredients. Fillings vary, but a standard Bánh Mì consists of a baguette stuffed with meat of your own choice, cucumber slices, sprigs of coriander, pickled carrots, daikon (a type of radish), liver pâté, and a swipe of mayonnaise. They're increasingly popular and easy to find, but the best place to eat one is still on the streets of Saigon.





CHICKEN PARMIGIANA

Where to eat: Melbourne, Australia

As the name suggests, this dish was originally Italian, but the Aussies have adopted it and taken it to a whole new level. The part of the chicken that is used is the breast, topped with a rich tomato sauce, slices of mozzarella and a table spoon of grated Parmesan cheese. The cheese that melts in the oven gives the dish a wonderful smell. After being baked, the chicken is served with noodles, but there is a serious disagreement over whether they should be under the meat or served on the side. This simple street food is so popular in Melbourne's pubs, that there is a dedicated website that rates Chicken Parmigiana food trucks and other outlets. Even if our cricket team loses Down Under, we will at least have this.

DABELI

Where to eat: Kutch, Gujarat

Dabeli, meaning pressed or squeezed in Gujarati, is a Kutchi snack which competes with the likes of Pav Bhaji, Vada Pav and Ragda Pattie on the streets of Mumbai. Also called Double roti, it is nothing but a fine mix of mashed potatoes, garnished with pomegranate, roasted peanuts, sev and the famous 'imli' and 'pudina' chutneys. The secret of the snack, however, is the Dabeli masala, authentically found in Mandvi and Bhuj in Kutch. This filling is pressed between a 'pav' bun. You might not want to go all the way to Kutch just to eat it, so don't worry, it's easily found in Pondy too.





CHILI CRAB

Where to Eat: Singapore

One of Singapore's signature dishes, Chili Crab was invented in the 1950s when a Singaporean chef steamed crabs in a chili and tomato sauce. Since then it has become the go-to dish for tourists, but locals flock to it as well. Despite its name, Chili Crab is not very spicy. The dish is traditionally eaten with bare hands so that one can relish the juicy crab meat with its sweet-and-spicy chili sauce. Toasted buns called 'mantou' are often eaten with Chili Crab to soak up the sweet tomato gravy. Chili Crab has become so popular that it's widely considered the Singaporean national dish.

BOBA

Where to Drink: Taipei, Taiwan

Pearl Milk Tea, also known as Boba, is a Taiwanese, tea-based drink. Most Boba recipes are an ingenious mix of tea, milk and cut fruits, to which fruit jellies are often added. But the most important ingredient is the tapioca pearls, which give the drink a unique texture and from which the drink gets its name. Ice-blended versions are usually mixed with fruit or syrup, giving it a slushy consistency. As you can see, there are many varieties of the drink. The two most popular varieties are Bubble Milk Tea with fruit jelly, and Bubble Milk Green Tea with fruit jelly. Although Boba originated in Taiwan, Pearl Milk Tea 'mash-ups' are also becoming popular, where inspiration for flavours comes from other cuisines. For example, we could use hibiscus flowers or saffron, cardamom and condensed milk for Desi Bubble Tea!

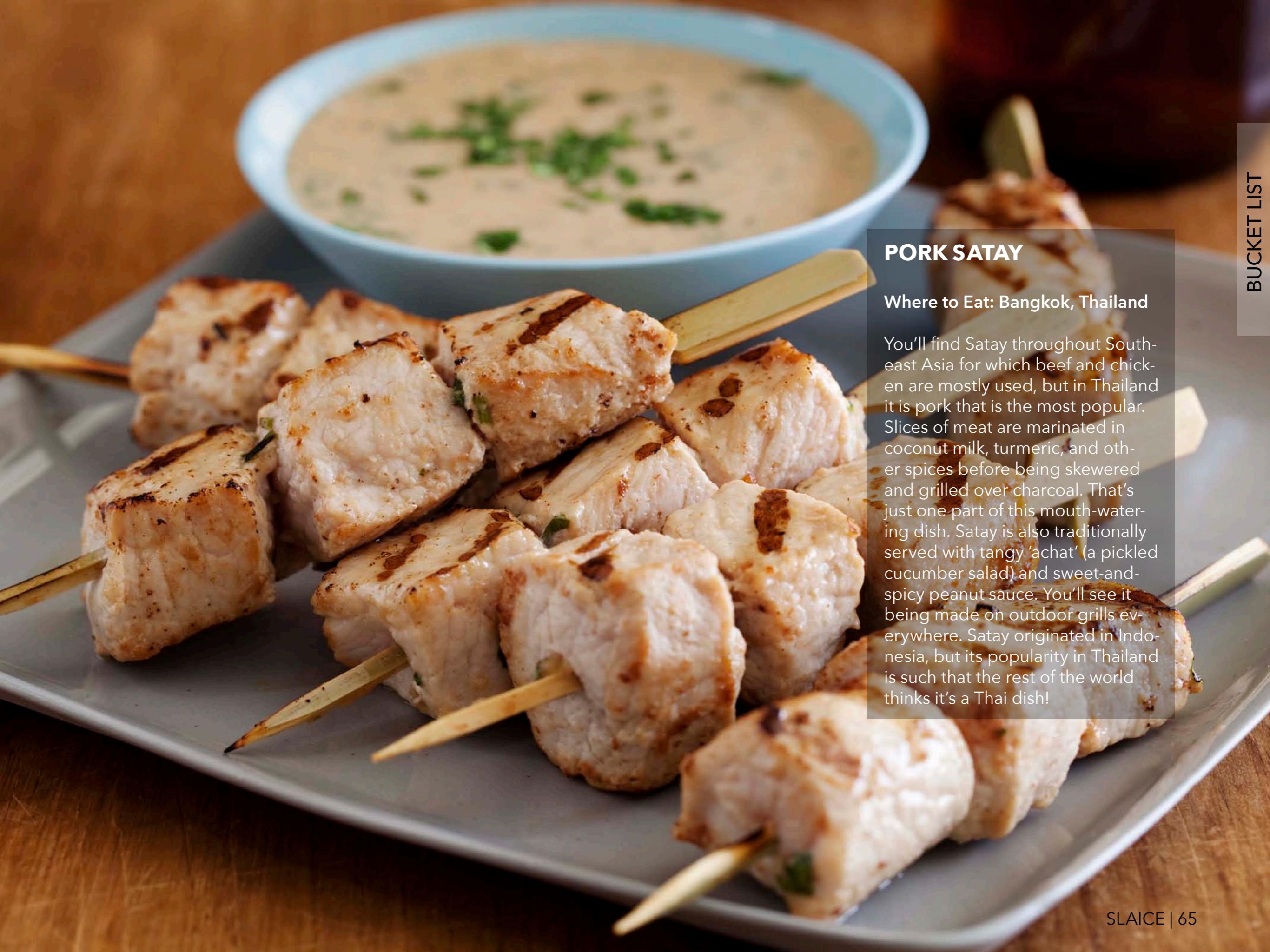


KARJALANPIIRAKKA

Where to eat: Karelia, Finland

Also known as the Karelian pasty, the Karjalanpiirakka is a pirog, which is a term for savoury pastries. Generally made of a thin, baked, rye crust, the filling is a sumptuous mix of potatoes, rice, buckwheat and millet. But the most important flavour in the dish is the generously slathered 'munavoi', which is a special butter with chopped-up boiled egg. Take the 'Where to eat' seriously, because the Karelian pasty has a Traditional Speciality Guaranteed status. This means that the pirog cannot be called a Karjalanpiirakka anywhere else. A Karjalanpiirakka by any other name would not taste as sweet!





PORK SATAY

Where to Eat: Bangkok, Thailand

You'll find Satay throughout South-east Asia for which beef and chicken are mostly used, but in Thailand it is pork that is the most popular. Slices of meat are marinated in coconut milk, turmeric, and other spices before being skewered and grilled over charcoal. That's just one part of this mouth-watering dish. Satay is also traditionally served with tangy 'achat' (a pickled cucumber salad) and sweet-and-spicy peanut sauce. You'll see it being made on outdoor grills everywhere. Satay originated in Indonesia, but its popularity in Thailand is such that the rest of the world thinks it's a Thai dish!

FRIED MOPANI WORMS

Where to eat: Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

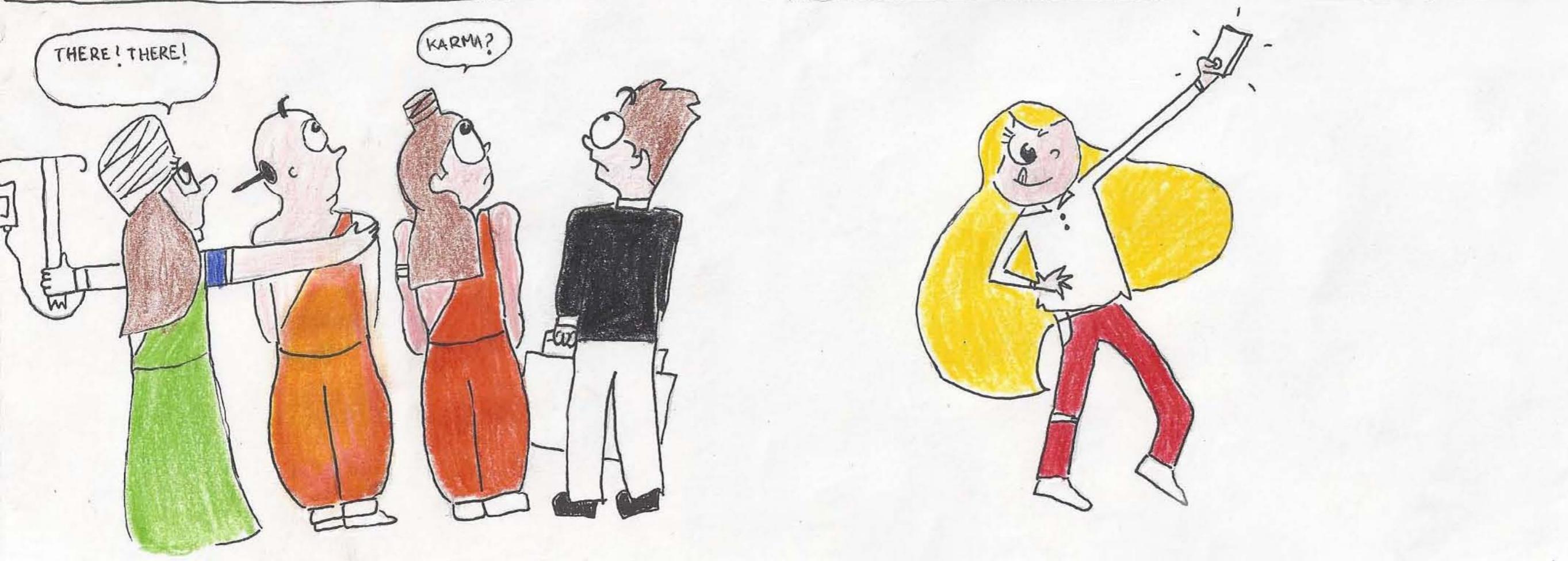
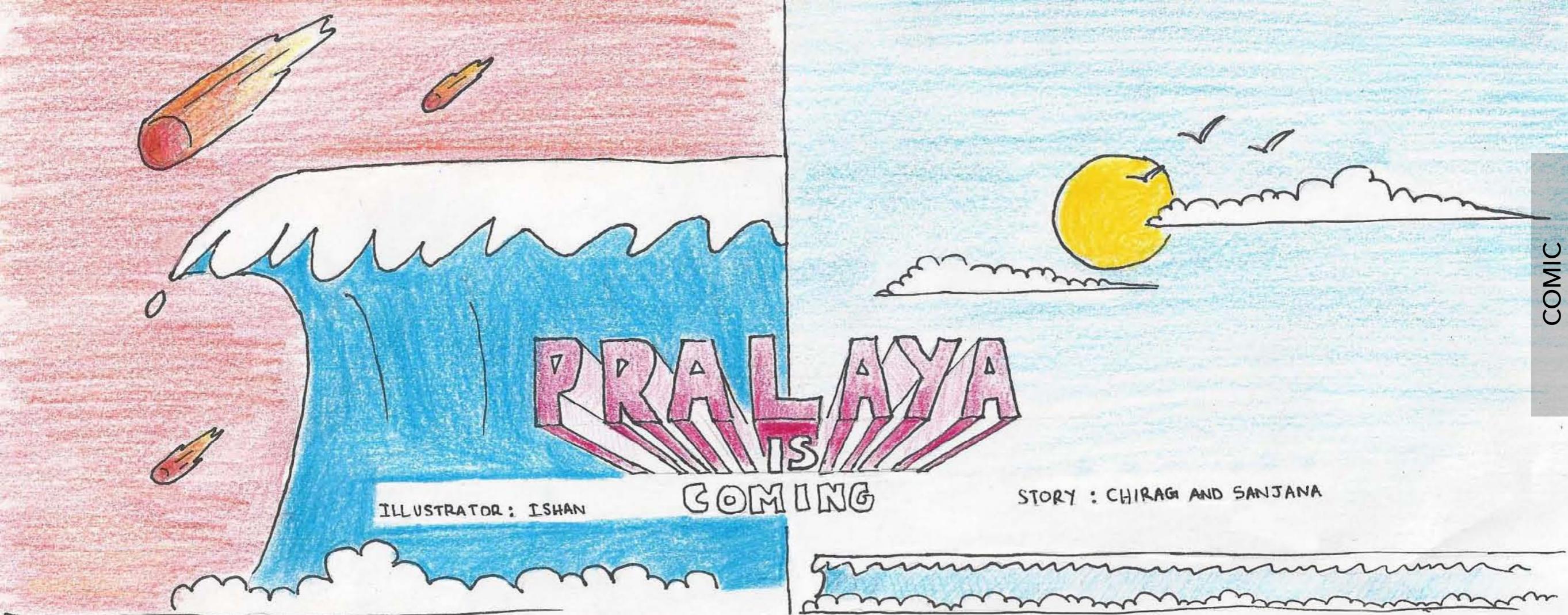
And this is how you die! The Mopani worm tastes like steak – burned steak. The worm can either be eaten dried or as a crispy snack. Generally fried in coconut oil, it is served sometimes over rice and corn. Our brave-hearted, gourmand brothers and sisters tell us that the worm is best eaten with bare hands, as if it were chips. Also, don't miss the worm's eye, though be warned that some prefer to remove it. The delicacy is most enjoyed when had from local village vendors, but to make sure you never forget this healthy snack, the Boma restaurant in Victoria Falls gives you a special certificate if you dare to have one of these.

How many of these foods do you want to relish? Bonnes vacances!

– With Inputs from Ananya, E.A.V.P.5



COMIC



SOMEWHERE IN THE HIGH COURT OF HISTORY





THE GREAT BATTLE OF KURUKSHETRA TOOK PLACE IN OUR TIME!







DROP US A LINE...

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Write to us at slaicemag@gmail.com

Thank you,
Mag team 2016



MAG TEAM 2016

L to R (back row): Satya, Chirag, Adit

L to R (front row): Rakshit, Sanjana, Shambhavi, Yogitha