

EUROS

My son lives in Belgium and has been pestering me for a long time to visit him. I am apprehensive and excited. I have been postponing the travel but I will have to make a call now because his tenure there is going to end this year. I decide to take the plunge.

Travelling alone to a foreign country for a middle aged lady like me is a challenge. Navigating the immigrations, customs, etc. is all new for me. Once I reach Europe, I quickly forget the travails and feel like being transported to a different world. The wondrous sights, the disciplined lifestyle and the new experiences feel exhilarating. I visit the Eiffel tower, the Atomium, the Venetian canals, the gardens of Kukenhof. I feel that people living here are lucky. Wouldn't it be fun to live here permanently?

One day as I stroll past the streets of Seville, I see a person selling trinkets on the footpath. He is brown haired and appears to be of South Asian origin. There is struggle writ large on his wrinkles. Possibly he has quit a life of

squalor for a better existence here. I smile as I pass him. A fleeting smile escapes his determined face. He walks close to me. I feel he will pester me to buy something and I make up my mind not to spend costly euros on such worthless trinkets.

He speaks in Hindi steeply accented in Bangla and asks, "*Didi... Is baar ka holi chala gaya kya?*" (Is this year's Holi festival over, sister?)