It all started about 125 years back when a Parasi banker wanted to have home cooked food regularly in office and gave this responsibility to the first ever Dabbawala. Other people also liked the idea and the demand for Dabba delivery soared.

A Dabbawala  takes the lunch box from a house and delivers it to destination. Sounds straight and simple, isn’t it?

Join us in this journey with Dabbawala!

**The journey starts:**

Early in the morning a Dabbawala takes bath and do his pooja. Puts a tilak (religious mark) on his forehead and by 9 am he is out on the streets with his bicycle.

These bicycles are heavy. Their carriers are designed with extra iron to be able to take a lot of weight.

He moves through the Mumbai traffic to his assigned area and move up and down the multi-storied buildings to collect the tiffin boxes from homes.

Many old buildings don’t have elevators. But that’s not an excuse!

Just imagine running up and down a building a couple of times. Now multiply it by…10!  May be 20, depending on the area!

By the time he collects all these tiffins, it’s already about  10.30

On an average a destination is about 40 Km away!

He carries about 30-40 tiffins on his bicycle, fighting the bad roads, mud, traffic and now even Mumbai monsoons. No excuses!

But thankfully he is not alone. He reaches the nearest railway station where Dabbawalas from different areas gather. The tiffins are sorted as per their destination according to Dabbawala coding system.

By now, most of his tiffins are handed over to other Dabbawala teams going to different parts of the town.

Our Dabbawala joins one of those teams. So he is also carrying tiffin boxes which doesn’t belong to him.

This teamwork and trust is what makes a common Dabbawala do extraordinary things.

He and his teammates pick up tiffin boxes for their assigned destination and transfer them in head crates.

Want to do some calculation? There are about 60 tiffin boxes in one head crate. You keep gussing about the weight. The Dabbawala don’t have the time to pause.

They carry it on the heads and run towards the railway platforms. The Mumbai platforms are jam-packed at the peak time, but the dabbawalas move fast, climb up and down the railway bridges with those crates on their heads.

A Dabbawala must catch the right train. Otherwise the Tiffin will be late. No excuses!

Even on the railway platform some sorting is done if a tiffin is going on a complex route.

There are more Dabbawala teams there. They all help each other to put the wooden crates inside the railway luggage compartment.

Now in the luggage compartment they have some time for each other! They share the news and other information. Each team alights on their assigned stations.

Our Dabbawala alights at Churchgate the last station on the track.

**By now, it’s going to be 12 pm! One must hurry.** He takes the crates on his head and rushes out.

Outside churchgate it’s like a grand gathering of Dabbawalas. All doing their work. A great example in team working.

Even Prince Charles visited this site to see them in action.

Here you will see them sorting dabbas as per their final destination.

Our Dabbawala once again give away his share of tiffins to other teams.

Once again, he joins one of the teams. They put a large number of Dabbas in trollies and run towards the business centres which are the final destinations for these tiffins.

The traffic is heavy in these centres. They shout and scream and make their way. Pedestrians make way for the dabbawalas. They know Dabbawalas don’t stop for anyone.

Once the dabbawala team reach a business hub, they split once again. Each dabbawala takes the responsibility of delivering the Tiffin boxes for separate buildings.

Now you have to move up and down the skyscrapers. Thankfully most of these buildings have elevators.

By 1 pm all tiffin boxes are delivered. Task done!

Dabbawalas all gather at a place. Pray together and have their lunch!

You think it was a simple task?

**Let me remind you, the job is only half done!**

Dabbawala will take the empty tiffins from the offices and will go through the same process again, till the tiffin reaches home before 6 pm.

**It’s a 9 hour work cycle!**

We are doing it diligently for 125 years.

Thanks for being with us on this journey!

Feels good when someone takes pains to understand you.

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The word “dabbawala” in Hindi when literally translated, means “one who carries a box”. “Dabba” means a box (usually a cylindrical tin or aluminium container). The closest meaning of the dabbawala in English would be the “lunch box delivery man”.

So, literaly speaking, a Dabba contains Lunch.

But if you ask us, there is much more then lunch that goes in the dabba.

The foremost is love and caring of the housewives who make sure their loved ones get the healthy food from home.

And trust! That they have on dabbawala. If the Dabba system is going strong even after 125 years, we must thank the Mumbai housewives.

Trust is also seen in everything that we do. A typical dabba changes hands 3-4 times in its journey… Sometimes even 6 times. So the chances that the dabbawala who took the tiffin box from home will deliver the same dabba to final destination is almost remote.

If you ask us what actually goes in a tiffin box, we can’t tell you. We don’t open the boxes. But customers have told us that they even share messages from home to office through these dabbas! A Cinema ticket, a flower…an apology note…

A dabba weighs about 1.5 KG. We guess, pulses, vegetables, about 4 chapatis and rice is also there in the Dabba.  
How we know? That’s what we get from home in our Dabba!