

File 4 p. 48 • My Super Dense Crush Load Commute

Every morning I start the day by squeezing into a train that is 'super dense crush loaded'. These local trains carry more than twice the number of passengers than their capacity, which means I am crushed and sandwiched between at least eight other women from all sides¹, hugging me from head to toe. [...]

There were times during my college days when I was almost hanging on the footboard² of my train, trying to get myself inside the heavily loaded compartment. I would scream to the highest of my voice asking the women ahead to keep moving in to allow me and other women hanging outside to get inside the compartment. We don't have any concept of doors closing before the train starts moving away from the station. This is what is really shocking about the world's busiest railway lines here. [...]

Another amazing aspect of travelling on the local trains is that people have to board trains even before they halt at the station. I usually time my jump, leap inside the compartment holding the door handles, or even another commuter's arm, then grab a seat before anyone else. Once this is done it is a feeling of great accomplishment!

Kinjal Pandya-Wagh, *bbc.co.uk*, August 2016

1. Mumbai's suburban trains have ladies' carriages. **2.** *marchepied*

India can have no better symbol for national integration than the railways. The railway reservation form doesn't ask you anything beyond your name, age, gender and address. In trains, people of two castes who would otherwise not like to be seen in each other's company, cohabit without fuss¹ for hours, even a couple of days. [...]

The journeys are not just about the levelling², but also getting acquainted with each other's cultures, especially food habits. Marwaris³, when they travel as a large family, carry a stock of food that would last them the journey. The piles of puris⁴ are in proportion to the number of travelling members, the eating capacity of each member, and the number of meals they would have on the train. Just when you are hungry and waiting for the pantry-car boy to deliver your meal, you find them taking the lid off their food basket and releasing into the compartment the delicious whiff⁵ of puri, sabzi and pickles. [...] At times there are so many puris being passed around that I have felt tempted to ask, 'Can I have a couple of them, please?'

Bishwanath Ghosh, *Chai Chai*, 2014

1. *sans faire d'histoire* 2. reducing differences 3. Indians from Rajasthan
4. bread 5. smell

File 4 p. 50 • India's railway slumdogs

Shanty towns where children play on tracks while their parents cook in shelters just feet from speeding trains While India's economy continues to boom, its 360 million poorest citizens remain among some of the most impoverished in the world.

Now these astonishing pictures—of a community living amid the dangers of an active train track—reveal the country's slum conditions at their worst.

Incredibly, children play on the tracks throughout the day and do their best to step aside whenever a train whistles by¹.

Located in Kolkata, India, the slum is home to around 1,000 residents and their makeshift² shelters sit a foot away from tracks where trains roar³ past every 20 minutes.

Indian photographer Debosmita Das visited the slum, which stretches for 1.8 miles, to document the dangerous living conditions.

The 26-year-old, also from Kolkata, said: 'Trains pass by every ten or twenty minutes, just a foot away from the makeshift shelters. The fact that the slum-dwellers do most of their daily chores⁴ on the train tracks means it's likely that someone will get hit by a train.

'Most of the people living in the slum have come to Kolkata from different districts of West Bengal, or from the adjoining states, to earn a living.

'Due to the lack of permanent homes and the ever increasing cost of living in the city, these people made makeshift homes beside the railway tracks, ignoring all adversities.

'The residents of this slum live like one big family. They play and celebrate together on these tracks, irrespective of religion or gender.'

Corey Charlton, *dailymail.co.uk*, 2015

1. *siffler*

2. *de fortune*

3. *rugir*

4. *task*

When I was growing up in Hobart¹, I had a map of India on my bedroom wall. My mother—my adoptive mother, Mum—had put it there to help me feel at home when I arrived from that country at the age of six to live with them, in 1987. She had to teach me what the map represented—I was completely uneducated and don't think I even knew what a map was, let alone the shape of India. [...] The map's hundreds of place names swam before me in my childhood. Long before I could read them, I knew that the immense V of the Indian subcontinent was a place teeming² with cities and towns, with deserts and mountains, rivers and forests—the Ganges, the Himalayas, tigers, gods!—and it came to fascinate me. I would stare up at the map, lost in the thought that somewhere among all those names was the place I had come from, the place of my birth. I knew it was called 'Ginestlay', but whether that was the name of a city, or a town, or a village, or maybe even a street—and where to start looking for it on the map—I had no idea. [...] At first, Mum and Dad didn't know how I'd become lost. All they knew—all anyone knew—was that I'd been picked off the streets of Calcutta, as it was known then, and after attempts to find my family had failed, I had been put in the orphanage. Happily for all of us, I was adopted by the Brierleys. So to start with, Mum and Dad would point to Calcutta on the map and tell me that's where I came from—but in fact the first time I ever heard the name of that city was when they said it. It wasn't until about a year after I arrived, once I'd made some headway³ with English, that I was able to explain I didn't come from Calcutta at all—a train had taken me there from a train station near 'Ginestlay', which might have been called something like 'Bramapour', 'Berampur'... I wasn't sure. All I knew was that it was a long way from Calcutta and no-one had been able to help me find it.

Saroo Brierley, *Lion: A Long Way Home*, 2013

1. a city in Tasmania (Australia)

2. full of

3. progress

File 4 p. 52 • The megal mural movement

How India's rundown railway stations have been transformed.

In India, 23 million people travel on the railways every day, and the stations are full of life. The poorer passengers don't just pass through the stations – they sleep in them, cook meals on kerosene stoves, eat and wash on the platforms as they wait for unconscionably¹ delayed trains. As a result, many Indian stations have become a microcosm of the squalor² that afflicts much of the urban landscape.

But all that is changing. There are now 80 stations (and some metro stations) across India where every inch³ throbs with colour and imagery. Indians who would normally never enter an art gallery now encounter new art by local artists.

The movement began in 2014, when conservationist and tiger expert Valmik Thapar wondered why Sawai Madhopur station, which is close to Ranthambore national park, home of the tiger, couldn't be decorated with tigers. Why couldn't people visiting Bharatpur bird sanctuary get off the train to be greeted with murals of birds? Why couldn't the station at Bhubaneswar, known for its crocodiles and Buddhist statues, reflect this heritage?

Thapar contacted railway officials and, with the help of the World Wildlife Fund, the stations began to change. Tiger eyes now follow you through Sawai Madhopur station. With a few brushstrokes, a decrepit dump⁴ has become an open air, public art museum. [...] "What we have been attempting to achieve is a freedom meant not just for the artists, who stand to gain a wider canvas, but also for those who would be able to appreciate art they might never have had access to otherwise," says the creative director [of the project] Hanif Kureshi.

Amrit Dhillon, *the guardian.com*, 2018

1. excessively
2. ugliness and misery
3. (*ici*) le moindre recoin
4. ruined place

File 4 p. 57 • Taking the train in India: a story

I arrived at the New Delhi train station in the muggy¹ predawn hours, amid the usual chaos of honking autorickshaws² and hordes of people. A pack of red-turbaned porters stood at the ready³ as the fat Ambassador taxis disgorged their passengers.

I didn't really need a porter to carry my bag, I could do it myself, but I needed one to help me find my platform, my train and my bogey⁴. [...] I followed my porter, who was of course running ahead, thinking it was my lucky day: he was very tall, which made him easier to spot as he raced through the crowd with my luggage on his head.

We arrived at the platform and I showed him my ticket. After some confusion, he pointed out that I had a waiting-list ticket only. Number 48 on the waiting list. I thought 48 was my seat number. Panic. "I need to get on that train!" I told my porter. [...] He grasped the situation immediately, and sprang into action, sprinting up and down the platform looking for a conductor. [...] All the trains to Haridwar were booked for weeks.

But still, my porter didn't give up and neither did I. With only minutes left before departure we found the second-class conductor, a handsome man with a thoughtful face who simply said, "You can have my seat," and told the porter the number.

On to the train we jumped, together, united in our sense of urgency and exhilarated⁵ by our success. The train was packed, but the porter found a place overhead to squeeze in my bag as the final boarding call resounded up and down the damp, cavernous platform.

The porter and I looked at each other and smiled, accomplices now, and I gave him a heart-felt thank you as I thrust a small handful of 100 rupee notes in his hand.

Mariellen Ward, *breathedreamgo.com*, May 2018

1. humid 2. *tricycles à moteur* 3. *se tenaient prêts*
4. *wagon* 5. very happy