MEMORIES FROM THE ROAD
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An Anthology of Global Nomads
DEDICATION

To the American School of Bombay
on the occasion of its 35th Anniversary
And what, you ask, does writing teach us? First and foremost, it reminds us that we are alive and that it is a gift and a privilege, not a right.”

– Ray Bradbury

Memories from the Road was born out of two ideas. The first was that writers need an authentic audience. If we wanted our student writers to care about punctuation and grammar, we had to give them a public place to share their hearts and souls. The second idea was to uncover the world of Third Culture Kids, particularly at the American School of Bombay.

The global nomadic experience, ‘on the ground’ in a city like Mumbai is tumultuous and joyous and heart-breaking and friend making. Life at the American School of Bombay is fast paced activity dawn to dusk, filled with learning, playing, and sitting in cars. Funnily enough, sitting in cars and looking at the world while reflecting on our experiences was one of the richest sources of inspiration in this book.

Once we chose the theme of sharing our experiences as global nomads, the writing community quickly grew to include parents and teachers who also wanted to share their memories and learnings from their lives “on the road.” Because we know that language frames our experiences, we asked all contributors to write in the language that could best express their journey.
We were thrilled to have submissions in six languages from students and parents.

*Memories from the Road* has become a place where our joys, sorrows, questions and epiphanies are shared through poetry, memoirs, essays, photos and art. It will become a way for those new to this community to see that they are not alone.

The book could not have become a reality without the incredible passion and rallying of the ASB’s Writers Core Team and the ASB Writers Club. They coordinated workshops for children and adults, met with publishers, helped us to meet deadlines, read and edited each piece multiple times, and kept us all moving forward. They join all the contributors to this publication in hoping you take away some pleasure, insight, or moment of connection to an experience shared here, and that you might be inspired to share your journey in the future.

Fiona Reynolds
*Director of Teaching and Learning*
American School of Bombay
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

‘No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this with gratitude.’

– Alfred North Whitehead

Whenever we have a big project of this sort, we always have to think of its humble origins. A thought and a simple idea blossomed wonderfully into the Memories from the Road book.

Writing or contributing to an anthology is not a particularly easy task. It involves baring a certain amount of your soul and inner experiences in a poignantly honest and yet emphatic manner. The contributors to this book have been inspired to take this to new heights. We are certain that the memories shared in their many forms and languages will touch the readers hearts.

We would like to express our gratitude to a lot of special people that have made this book a reality:

To Fiona Reynolds for coming up with this unique idea and concept for a collection of articles to benefit the ASB community of parents, teachers and students and for keeping us going with her constant enthusiasm.

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meetings and urging the school community to contribute articles on the theme. Their drive kept us moving forward.

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To Vakils for publishing this wonderful book for us.

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Imagining the Past in Rajasthan  |  Joshua Davis, Teacher
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, writes, “A good, sacred memory, preserved from our childhood, is perhaps the best education. If one carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his days.” If Dostoyevsky is right, and I believe he is, then I am safe to the end of my days.

I have memories, and they are my memories. What I mean by “my memories,” is that they often differ (sometimes, greatly) from the memory other people have of that same ‘moment.’ This disconnect (the inconsistency, in our different memories, of content and context) used to bother me. As a teenager I struggled (often with great frustration) to come to terms with why my recollection of something was so different than that of someone else. Today, being married for a really long time, having three grown sons, and being a teacher and a writer…well, today, I know, for a fact, that no memory is ever shared in the same way by any two people. Today, I’m okay with my memories, of a moment, being different from the memories of others. Today, in fact, the inconsistency of content and context makes me happy.

For a little over a decade in the 1970’s, my family lived in the town of Panchgani—a Maharashtrian hill station fifty kilometers south of Pune, India. A community of shop-keepers, teachers, and farmers neatly nestled beneath a dormant volcano on the western face of the Sahyadri mountain range.
In 2010, at the age of forty-five, I returned to India. I’d left her twenty-nine years earlier, in 1982—a few days after my sixteenth birthday. Like I said, I have memories.

For the first few years, say from 1969, through the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, well into Indira Gandhi’s State of Emergency, and to the day my brother and I sneaked into a theater (through the bathroom window) at the age of ten (to see the adult-rated movie *Sholay*) there were only two non-Indian boys in Panchgani: Me and my brother. Both of us were very white, sort of blond, and one of us had green eyes. Like I said, I have my memories.

My brother thinks we bribed the ticket-collector and went straight through the theater’s front door to see *Sholay*. But, he was only eight at the time. So, it’s easy for me to forgive him for being wrong.

The memory of seeing *Sholay* for the first time, for Indians my age, is like asking people my mother’s age, “Where were you when JFK was shot?” Or “Where were you when you heard that Elvis was dead?” *Sholay* was that big a deal. Big enough that everyone remembers their first time with *Sholay*. We all have our “*Sholay* Memory.”

When a memory is a good one, like my first time with *Sholay*, it has the ability to become something more than a memory—something better. It could become a story. And stories are powerful things. Tim O’Brien talks about stories in his novel *The Things They Carried*. This is O’Brien’s sort-of-factual-but-totally-true-fictionalized-tale-of-his-and-others’-Vietnam-experience. According to O’Brien, “Stories are for joining the past to the future.” O’Brien’s narrator says, “Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can’t remember how you got from where you were to where you are. Stories are for
eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story.”

A few years ago, my mother published a memoir of our time in India. It’s called, An Okie in a Sari. It’s all very factual. Very true. A kind of primary source. My mother’s book would do well in a court of law.

My mother was born and raised in Perry, Oklahoma. “Perry, Oklahoma,” according to the census chart I looked up on Wikipedia, “Had 4,209 residents in 1955.” That was the year my mother would have started High School. Based on the stories my mother tells of her growing up in Perry, I would guess that at least 4,200 of the residents were white, most of them blondish, and many with green eyes. My mother has a good memory and our time in India gave her many memories.

I published a novella, fifteen years ago, called Wave Watcher. It is set in Brazil. However, every bit of the plot and almost all of the characters are born out of the memories I have of me growing up in that hill station set in the Sahyadri mountains. The house by the beach, in my novel, is really the camp site my brother and I had by the Krishna river; the river that ran through the valley below our home in the Western Ghats. My stories, however, will not hold up in a court of law.

Both my mother and I published works that emerged from our memories of the same time and place and people. But, you would never know it. Not ever.

Somewhere else in The Things They Carried, O’Brien writes, “It’s difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way. The angles of vision are skewed. When a booby trap explodes, you close your eyes and
duck and float outside yourself. The pictures get jumbled, you tend to miss a lot. And then afterward, when you go to tell about it, there is always that surreal seemingness, which makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard and exact truth as it seemed.”

Of course O’Brien is talking about “War Stories.” He’s talking about Vietnam. But, is that all he’s talking about? Aren’t all our lives filled with “booby traps” exploding? Do we not, as children caught in what will be a memory which may become a story, “Close our eyes and duck and float outside ourselves?” Don’t our pictures get jumbled? Doesn’t the “surreal seemingness” of our stories better represent the hard and exact truth better than what actually happened?

For instance, here are seven things that actually happened?

- When I was five my grandparents had a Chihuahua named Cricket. Cricket was not a friendly dog to me. He would often nip at me when I teased him.

- When I was thirteen years old our doctor diagnosed me with an enlarged liver.

- In 1995 my middle son pushed my youngest son into the coffee-table and he split his ear open. Our dog, prompted by empathy, went over and licked my son’s face as well as his bleeding ear.

- My maid once told me that her son lost the tip of his toe by getting his bare foot caught in between the chain and sprocket of his bicycle.

- One of my nephews was born with a hole in his heart.

- My youngest son’s middle name is Louis.

Here's how those memories became a story:

- *Wave Watcher* begins with, “My younger brother was born with an enlarged heart and only one lung. Nana says God was so busy building him the perfect heart that he forgot to give him a second lung. The doctors labeled it a rare birth defect and said that only one in a hundred thousand children born with it lived past infancy. Dad didn’t think it was a big deal.”

- A few paragraphs later, I write, “Louie had only begun to walk when he chopped off most of his index finger and part of the middle one on his right hand. The doctors suggested prosthetic fingers. Mom disagreed; she said he would just have to learn how to be left-handed. Dad said that it wasn’t such a bad thing because it’s really the thumbs that matter.”

- Towards the middle of the chapter I write, “However, I did feel really bad about Louie losing the top third of his left ear. This happened just about the time that having an eight fingered kid in the family lost its novelty. The ear incident was the final straw. After that, people stopped worrying about Louie’s health altogether. Dad says the ear accident was a blessing in disguise. He said, ‘It made Louie normal.’”

- And I end the chapter with, “The part of the story Louie has always liked best, and the part we’ve always had to let him tell, is the end. By the time Dad and I got back to the house, my grandparent’s Chihuahua, Cricket, had gnawed around the soft edges of the missing piece of Louie’s ear. Louie always thought saying, ‘A Chihuahua named Cricket ate my ear,’ was funny. I guess it sort of is.”

As writers live and try to write, our memories long to become stories. They want us to move beyond what happened to what seemed to happen.
And so we do. We work with skewed angles of vision. We let our pictures get jumbled. And then, suddenly and most beautifully, our true stories, now untrue memories, end up representing the hard and exact truth as it seemed, and, more importantly, as it should be.

Dostoyevsky ends his quote (the one I used to begin this piece), with, “If one has only one good memory left in one’s heart even that may sometimes be the means of saving us.” His prophetic words have always rung true to me, and, therefore, I know – like all writers with heads full of memories morphing into stories – that I am saved.
Mumbai airport late at night
Get your passport out
    once, twice, too many times
The doors swish open
Humid and wet, senses under assault
Myriads of people crowd the entrance
Mosquitoes swarm
In we go.

Breeze from the salty water
    blows in the dust
Bringing with it the aroma of Bombay duck,
    the dried ducks of Bombay!
Smells I turn away from
    bury my nose in my scarf
But then
    masala wafts from an open door
And with it
    sounds of singing and dancing.

Masala chai and vada-pav
Daba walas and street tiffin boxes
Pani puri bursting in my mouth
Finger-licking chutney, green as grass
Foods as colorful as saris and dupattas
India has made its way from my mouth
to my heart.
In we go
Global Nomads
'Klop klop klop'
Ik blijf strak voor me uit kijken.
‘Klop klop klop’ op de autoruit, deze keer luider en indringender.
Nog steeds blijf ik uitdrukkingsloos voor me uitstaren in een poging net te doen of ik het niet hoor.
‘Madam, madam!’
Ik fixeer mijn blik op het oranje-witte Ganeshbeeldje voorop het dashboard van de auto.
‘Madam, madam!’
Niet kijken, zodra je oogcontact maakt ben je verloren.
Nog luider geklop, vanuit mijn ooghoek zie ik een klein meisje dat met haar duim en een paar vingers bij elkaar een ‘eten’ gebaar maakt bij haar mond.
Langzaam trekt de chauffeur op, de auto rolt een paar meter verder langs Chowpatty Beach. Het meisje blijft achter en staat nu voor een volgende auto, waar ze meteen op de ruit begint te kloppen en hetzelfde gebaar maakt.
‘Waarom mag je bedelkinderen eigenlijk geen geld geven, mama?’ vraagt mijn dochter Faye die naast me zit.
Tsja, dat is een lastige vraag. ‘Omdat je ze niet helpt door ze iets te geven…?’
Faye trekt het schaduwgordijntje naar beneden voor het autoraam waar het meisje inmiddels weer is verschenen. Het bedelmeisje is een paar jaar jonger
dan Faye, haar huid is helemaal verschilferd en ze probeert met opengesperde ogen langs het gordijntje te kijken. Het is te vreselijk om aan te zien.

De chauffeur had het ooit al eens uitgelegd. ‘It is no good, madam’, had hij gezegd. ‘Deze kinderen horen bij maffia-bendes en ’s avonds moeten ze alles inleveren wat ze overdag bij elkaar hebben gebedeld. De politie houdt ze de hand boven het hoofd, die zijn onderdeel van het systeem.’ Dat klinkt logisch, waarom anders slapen er groepen bedelaars op het strand precies voor de politiepost waar besnorde agenten de hele dag staan, wijdbeens of leunend op hun lati’s. De agenten houden auto’s aan en verzinnen redenen om de chauffeurs 200 of 300 roepies af te troggen. Maar de bedelaars laten ze met rust, naar de bedelkinderen draaien ze hun hoofd niet eens om.

Ook een twintigjarige Mumbaikar had het me uitgelegd, ‘Je helpt ze er niet mee door ze wat te geven’, had ze haar hoofd geschud. ‘Mijn moeder heeft weleens kleren gegeven aan de ouders, omdat veel van de kindjes in vodden of in hun blote billen lopen. Maar de volgende dag liepen de kinderen nog steeds in dezelfde vodden. De kleren van mijn moeder hadden ze doorverkocht…. Veel van de ouders zijn aan de drugs.’

India is niet het eerste land waar ik bedelkinderen tegenkom. In elk land waar ik heb gewoond zag ik ze, steeds op hun eigen manier en in hun eigen vorm. En elke keer op hun eigen manier schrijnend.

In Hanoi was er een man die elke dag een twee jaar oud kind huurde en dat drogeerde zodat het de hele dag bleef slapen, werd er gezegd. Bijna levenloos hing het kind in een rugzakje op zijn rug. Elke dag stond hij bij hetzelfde kruispunt met een meelijwekkend gezicht om geld te vragen. ‘s Avonds bracht hij het kind weer terug en betaalde de ouders hun deel, volgens de verhalen.

In de metro in Parijs zag je ze ineengedoken naast hun moeder op de trap zitten, handje vooruitgestoken. In Almaty zag je ze op kruispunten in de sneeuw. Overal weer anders en overal weer hartverscheurend. En overal

Hoeveel ik ook houd van het uitzicht als je over Marine Drive rijdt – de gladde zee die naadloos overgaat in de horizon, de feloranje zonsondergang, de paartjes die stiekem gearmd op de kade zitten, zich verbergend onder een grote pashmina, de vrolijke lichtjes van de Pearls Necklace, de grijzende Indiërs die yoga doen of hun ochtendwandeling maken, de vissersboten, de bhel-puri standjes – volledig mooi of paradijselijk zal het uitzicht nooit zijn. Altijd zul je opgeschrikt worden uit je mijmeringen door een bruiit 'klop klop klop' op de autoruit zodra je Chowpatty nadert. In een onbewaakt ogenblik kijk je dan in de ogen van een kindje dat geen leven en geen toekomst heeft. En in de ogen van je eigen onmacht.

Chowpatty Beach | Rajan Venkatesh, Parent
I was eight years old when I left Brazil for India. I didn’t cry as much as I could have because I was convinced that I would return. I built up a teetering mental list of the places I would visit when we came back – the tree stump with the pink leafy plant growing out of it twenty meters from our apartment complex’s playground, the sprawling campus of our school, the tree that had long dancing branches you could hold onto in the wind and fly. My thoughts were like a Jenga tower, and I would pull out each wooden moment and examine it in full.

I downloaded Google Maps on the tiny Acer computer my father let me borrow, and that was my friend throughout my first year in Mumbai (the city’s name itself sounds like a carnival: thumping and dancing, something to tap your foot to). Hiding in my bathroom, I typed in all of the addresses I knew
and went to “street view.” I’m surprised the screen didn’t break, considering the number of times I touched it. From my memory, I procured the textures my fingertip would be meeting: the shining patina of the apartment complex’s lap pool that was like an all-encompassing cauldron. The cracking white lines of paint along my old school’s racetrack. The wet grass of the “gramado,” the field all the kids my age played on (polaroid: evening. Children scream as they flee the tagger, bellies filled with spaghetti eaten at the weekly pasta night they had just escaped from. Thrill pulses through my young veins).

I wanted to escape from my new home.

I remember the first thoughts I had upon stepping through the doors of the Mumbai International Airport: what the heck were my parents thinking? The air tastes like a breeze that tumbled its way through a hurricane, only to skim the surface of the muddy waters, and finally end up swelling in my nostrils. The heat is thick and impenetrable, like a scab that just stays no matter how many days it’s been since you got the paper cut. I cannot hear anything in this deafening noise. I do not understand why everyone feels the need to honk their cars.

During the drive to our new apartment, I tried to hide myself from the window as much as possible. I treated the view of the night outside like the last Christmas present under the tree: afraid to open it, to look, for then the morning would be over and slipping out from under my fingertips. Still I heard honking, and it must have been one in the morning. My parents tried to coerce my sister and I into talking. Our silence was the tea in an overflowing mug, and my parents had lost the string of their teabag in the mess of fluid. They attempted to draw out the string of our conversation, but every time they tried their fingers were burnt by the water (“what’s the first
thing you want to do tomorrow? I know I want to walk up our street, see what’s around our new house.” “The first thing I want to do is run back to the airport and take a flight to Brazil”.

começo
*noun*
the first letter

Ganesha let his graceful fingers paint when Vyasa began to tell the tale of the Mahabharata.

We were on a weekend excursion to the nearby beach when my parents told me. They let me get the meringue with berries and cream at the restaurant with the wooden dolphins to sweeten the news.

“We’ve been thinking...” and slowly it slithered out through their lips. My sister was oblivious to the imminent threat to our normalcy, and frankly, so was I. In fact, I became excited. My parents (who are teachers) started describing the school (“you can read whichever books you want to! And the classes are a little smaller, so it’ll be more individualized”), and all I could do was smile. They explained that they would be visiting Mumbai in a couple months’ time to make their final decision, and my grandmother would fly in to babysit us. I was elated.

My parents took their trip to Mumbai, and returned with grins stitched into the cloth of their faces. I remember the morning on which they finally announced that we would be moving. They had come back from their visit the night before, but persisted that they were “still deciding”. On that Monday, I was awakened by the two of them. “We’re going to India.” My eight-year-
old mind didn’t for a second dwell on the negative consequences. Instead I was dancing and asking for pictures, descriptions, information. We found the school website, and I read the digital version of the handbook cover to pixelized cover.

The last day of school, I received a small book with a picture of my class that everyone had signed. I got a shirt, and a million goodbyes. I think that was the first time I cried about the simple fact that we were leaving. It hadn’t fully registered with me until the last wave of my hand: if my school was a city, I had a comfortable apartment. I fit into the landscape. At this new school, I would have to squeeze into the little world. It wouldn’t just open up to me like the red sea. I would have to chip away at it with my tiny scalpel until there was a place in it for me. I would have to contort myself into the nooks and crannies until finally they molded themselves around me.

transformar

verb
to force the butterfly out of its chrysalis and into the new world
(like waking from a dream, eyes coated with freshwater)

The first day we spent in Mumbai, I did not run off to the airport and schedule the next flight back to Brazil. Instead, we took a walk (I remained silent), we ate donuts (I refused to have any), we experienced India (I shielded my eyes as much as possible). I wore my Brazil soccer jersey, and pledged to myself that I would wear it once a week until we flew back to the place I considered my mothership. That night we went to a dinner for all of the new teachers
and their families. I remember this vividly: I shivered as I walked through
the door of the restaurant, the air conditioning machines racing to out-freeze
one another. I pulled my arms in through the armholes of my soccer jersey
like a turtle would, and wished that I had worn pants instead of my soccer
shorts. There were many excited welcomes for us, and I whispered to Dad
that I didn’t understand why these people thought that having a dinner for
jet lagged travellers on their first night in India was a good idea. He didn’t say
anything. I fell asleep in my chair.

And then the first day came – at lunch I sat with the two other new kids, both
boys, behind a large plant in the cafeteria. And the first week – “Maeve, you
should sit with the girls over there! You don’t have to sit with those boys!”
quoth my clueless teacher. And the first month – I wore my soccer jersey on
picture day. By then I think my parents had received the message. And at long
last, the first year – I eventually made friends who didn’t eat behind cafeteria
plants. We spent much of the year imagining our own world, which existed
beyond a magical portal in the playground. Both of those friends are gone now.

The next year was very different. An entirely new campus was built to house
the elementary students. The walls moved, there were cave spaces to read
in, and there were whiteboards on every flat surface. This place was easier
for me to knit myself into; more welcoming. My teacher mirrored the new
campus: open, arms-out, sincere. She let us dance on our desks, have flash
mobs, and dissect gummy bears. She let me write a novella during Writer’s
Workshop. When we were given math worksheets called “Math Mate” and I
defaced mine so that it said “Math InMate,” she laughed.

As the years progressed, I did too. I feel as though India is a Seurat painting,
and I am one of the dots. I still do not know what “home” is, but we now
have a house in Minnesota, my birthplace. We visit every summer and most winters. Whenever it comes time to leave the house, I feel torn. It’s the same pattern over and over again. I don’t want to return to the delicate chaos that is Mumbai, but I know that if we were to live in the United States year-round, I wouldn’t click with the schools. I can’t pluck any words from the berry patches of my English vocabulary that express my situation, but when I return to my flickering supply of Portuguese syllables (over the years I have lost and bartered my words in exchange for new ones), I find one that molds itself into my emotions and paints them eloquently:

saudade

noun
the feeling that something beautiful
must end
for a new miracle
to begin.
WHERE I AM FROM

Tracy Blair  |  Teacher and Parent

A poem in two parts – I used to think I knew where I came from – the land of New Zealand, found in the deep south. After many years living overseas in different places, interacting with different people and having diverse experiences, I have come to realize that while my roots are still very much grounded in New Zealand, I am really now a citizen of our world. This poem reflects the change in my thinking around the idea of WHERE I AM FROM.

Where I Am From

I was from
where an arc shaped bay
is carved out of the land –
The land rolls back from the sea
to gentle fields
filled with heavily laden vines.
Vines picked bare and later shared
with summer friends,
in a glass,
in the shade of a tree.
A tree ruby red
bristling, bottle brushes poking the clean, blue sky.
I was from
the land of the long white cloud
Now I am from…
where worlds collide
Along artificial lines
Lines crossed in journeys in new lands
with different light and different skies
A kaleidoscope of colors
Colors that touch the eye
in the shade of a temple
A temple draped with saffron laden cloth
Clothes vibrant red in the streets at New Year
Red envelopes in the mouth of the dragon
For luck this year.
A four-leaf clover
in the shadow of the Celtic cross
grey stones rimmed with green
on a blustery day
I am from the world –
a global nomad
It is a bright and cool September Sunday morning, during my second year in Mongolia. The large SUV is full of people when Nyamsuren and his father pick me up at my guarded apartment complex. A twinge of rattled nerves courses through my chest and I remind myself that I will not regret accepting their invitation, even though I will be surrounded by people I don’t know and will not be able to communicate very well with anyone who does not speak English. It was a decision resulting from a battle in my head in which the intrepid voice won, beckoning me to join her at the end of my comfort zone.

“Sain baina uu,”[1] I say to everyone as I climb in and squish myself into a spot, observing that I would have neither a proper seat nor a seatbelt on this journey to the countryside. We are so tightly compacted that I swear I can feel the heartbeat of the woman behind me. But I am not fazed. I grab hold of the seat in front of me and brace myself for the bumpy ride.

We make our way out of the city on run down streets, passing gangs of feral dogs, broken down Soviet blocks, and one ger[2] district[3] after another. Eventually we come to the end of the paved road and veer into the vast countryside.

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*an excerpt from Unpacking: An Exploration Into International Teacher Experience by Megan Bond (can be found on Amazon.com); reprinted with permission from the author.*

MONGOLIAN BOOTS*

Megan Bond  |  Teacher
I step over the threshold and into the circular home where steaming, salty milk tea is simmering on the wood stove. I am careful to accept whatever is passed to me in a proper manner: right hand outstretched with left hand under right elbow. I do not want to offend my student’s family for they are gracious to invite me to such a special event in their annual calendar: the ceremonial branding of the foals.

Nyamsuren guides me to where the foals will be branded and describes the process as we watch his father burn the family’s mark into the foals’ hind legs. I cringe.

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“Watch this Miss Bond!”

The arag[^4] tickles my nose as I swallow another sour sip and watch as Nyamsuren and his father showcase the Mongolian national sport of wrestling, bending over and tugging at each other’s belts. It is a solid attempt by the eight-year-old but it is his father who secures the victory just before all twenty or so of us gather together in one ger for our main meal: boiled goat.

I learn from Nyamsuren that all parts of the animal are treasured and made useful, if not for the body then they would be used for the home; bones kept as household tools and vertebrae adopted as player’s pieces for a traditional game.

Nyamsuren serves me a plate of meat along with some unidentifiable parts. He translates as his grandmother lists the contents on my plate: stomach, intestine, blood sausage, liver, kidneys... While not exactly watering at the mouth, I am reassured that there will be more meal to come.

As a well-mannered Canadian I feel obliged to finish what is on my plate, and the mental coaching begins…
I have to put that in my mouth?
Yes! You must be polite and eat what is given to you.

What if I say I’m a vegetarian?
If you tell them that you don’t eat meat you will offend them even more than if you excused yourself to go and gallop away on a foal.

What if I gag? I could be sick.
It might not be so bad if you just keep chewing. Imagine it’s something tasty or just direct your thoughts elsewhere, and just keep chewing!

As soon as I clear my plate, it is filled again with more goat parts, and this time I don’t bother inquiring about the names. It is mind over matter once again as I attempt to politely chew on what I believe to be a part of the goat’s stomach. I gnaw and gnaw but it does not seem to break down in my mouth. I wonder how one maintains respectable table manners in the presence of one’s host when it is nearly impossible to bite through one’s food? My jaw begins to ache and I divert my attention to the others in the room.

There are exchanges of plates and slices of meat, and one man is reaching far across the ger to pour vodka into cups. Amongst the flying bones and sprinkles of grease are smiling faces and generous offerings. They are together, sharing food, celebrating new life, and as I continue to chew I realize that I, too, am a part of their togetherness. Nobody around me seems to worry about the grease on his or her fingers or adhering to any mealtime protocol. They are just giving and receiving food to honour this day and to honour each other – people connected through blood, friendship, or spiritual attachment, all gathered in this one small felt-covered structure, sharing one goat (one whole goat), and they have invited me, an outsider to be a part of all
of this activity that is treasured in their culture. I assume that I must look
and seem so foreign to them all yet they continue to go out of their way to
make me feel welcome. They honour me with every offering and thank me
for coming to their country to teach Nyamsuren.

I lower my plate to my lap ... with head down, I look at what is left in my
hands ... still chewing on that same piece of stomach, I do not entertain the
idea of giving up and spitting it out but instead find myself smiling. I am
disgustingly happy.

After all the food is eaten I am invited to dress in traditional Mongolian
clothing. A burly and rosy-cheeked old man wraps a deel[^5] around my
shoulders. I slide my arms into the sleeves as another member of the family
swiftly ties a sash around my waist. “Za[^6],” she says as she stands back to look
at me.

Nyamsuren slips through his elders and appears with a pair of decorative
boots; large, colourful, and curled up at the toe.

“Wear these Miss Bond! Then you’ll really look Mongolian,” he proclaims.

Struggling to maintain my balance, I carefully step into the boots, stand up,
and look once again at the faces of the others who have made me one of
their own.

[^1] “hello” in the English language
[^2] nomadic home with a rounded lattice frame covered in felt, also known as yurts
[^3] slums or shantytowns in the poorest area of the city
[^4] fermented mare’s milk
[^5] a long robe, pronounced “del”
[^6] “okay” in Mongolian language
My life was colliding, crashing when it was not meant to be. It was like a car crash waiting to happen and I was in the middle of it. Something I did not want but it was something I was going to have. I wanted to discard the idea from my head like discarding pickle in a hamburger. I knew it was going to happen; I tried to stop it again, again and again. But before I knew it, my bag was packed, I was on a plane, and I was saying goodbye to my old home.
Finding Out!

April 10: Last week, my parents told me that we would have to move to India for a year for my dad’s work. I am excited about it because I have lived in this house all my life and moving could mean a new house and new things. However, I am rather sad that I have to leave my friends behind and say goodbye to my cousins in California. On the other hand, Bombay can be exciting! All the Bollywood actors live there, and I would love to meet them.

Fun with Family!

May 10: I am enjoying spending time with my grandparents before I move to Bombay. I am really looking forward to my birthday on May 19th. I am enjoying all of the summer treats that India has to offer, like mangoes and litchis. I went to Kerala for a short holiday and loved the houseboat and beach. I think India will be fun!

Hating It!

June 10: I have arrived in Bombay and I hate it! It is so different from what I pictured. I had pictured Bombay cleaner and greener. I also thought the apartment would be really big, but I was soon disappointed. There are more people, more noise, and more buildings. I am having a hard time getting used to this city, and I miss my friends terribly. I also don’t like how we have to stay for a month in another house till our apartment is ready to move in.
I am starting Summer Intersessions in school tomorrow, and I am looking forward to wall climbing and creative writing.

Settling In!
July 10: We have finally moved into our house. We are still working on it, but at least it’s fit to live in. Guess what? Our AC just started leaking one day. Now I know that living in Bombay is going to be hard! Oh well. Noor (my cousin from California) has come to Bombay for few days and we were having so much fun! We went all over Bombay to show her sights! The sad thing is that she is only staying for a week and has to leave soon. I cannot wait for school to start. It rains a lot here in Bombay, and there is muck and dirt everywhere.

School Starts!
August 10: We have started school and it is, I guess, OK. I have made some friends and I am kind of getting used to ASB’s ways and its systems. Everyone in school seems to be very friendly, and the teachers are very nice. It’s clean and similar to my school in California. I also really like the fact that when I am inside the school I almost feel I am back in San Jose.

Magic Bus!
Sep. 10: I just came back from a two-night field trip that was in a place called Karjat, close to Bombay. We stayed at an NGO campus called Magic Bus, and we did a lot of learning activities, which were enjoyable. We went on night hikes and walked on ropes tied to 30 foot poles. I felt like I learned a lot over there.

Ok, Bombay!
Oct. 10: It has been four months since I came to Bombay, and I am starting to get used to living here and all the differences. School is also getting more
interesting and more fun. I am still missing my home, but not as much, because I have a lot of friends here and I know about Bombay now, so it does not seem alien to me. Oh, and Halloween was not the best because over here we don’t get to trick or treat.

**Family Reunion!**

**Jan.10:** This winter break, my 91-year-old great-grandfather passed away. So a lot of my family got together at my great-grandfather’s house that is in a small hill town in Himachal called Kasauli. I was feeling very excited that I was going to meet a lot of my cousins – some for the first time. Some of my cousins were at my great-grandfather’s house to receive my family and me when we reached Kasauli. We all got together to celebrate my great-grandfather’s life. I soon realized that it was only because I was staying a year in India that I was able to come.

The next day a prayer ceremony and luncheon was planned in my great-grandfather’s honor. I was looking forward to going to my first ever prayer ceremony. The prayer ceremony was not at all like how I thought it would be. It was just some people singing songs. The next day I left for Bombay.
Ever since I was in high school, I had this idea of wanting to go abroad. Looking back on it now and reflecting on my opening sentence, I am struck by my own choice of words: “idea” and “wanting to go abroad.” Let me start with the “idea” part.

Actually, it was more than an idea. It was definitely not a fling originating from youthful enthusiasm but rather a long-term, steadily growing – though focused – plan to expose myself to other cultures, people, and practices at some point in my future. What I mean is that I didn’t drop everything after my studies to take my backpack and start a new life on the other side of the planet. There’s nothing wrong with that, by the way, but it just didn’t feel like the right choice for me at that point in my life. Rather, consciously and gradually, I made choices that brought me closer to my goal. I finished a Masters in Business Economics followed by a postgraduate degree in International Marketing and Management. I carefully chose a first job at a bank that offered the possibility of an international career. While working at my first company, I changed internally to a job with daily international contacts though still physically working out of the HQ. I took evening classes and seminars in development cooperation and international business topics. Writing this down makes it even more clear to me that I was getting ready for my big international adventure. But what kind of adventure? This brings me to the “wanting to go abroad part.”
I wanted to go abroad, but to do what exactly? Honestly, I didn’t have a clue. I just wanted to go. On numerous occasions, family and friends asked me why I wanted to go abroad. The only thing I could tell them was “because I just want to.” I didn’t know why, but I did know without a doubt in my mind that it was the right thing to do for me. As I said, it wasn’t just an idea, and I realize now that it was also more than a plan. Some would call it a vocation, although there was definitely nothing religious to it.

Unfortunately, due to a takeover and a different strategic focus of the new mother company, the bank no longer offered international career opportunities. I had to make a choice: continue working at the bank and abandon my dream, which was never really an option for me, or start all over at another company and again work my way towards an international job – or, – this time – just go. Luckily, I was able to share my dream with my partner and we decided to just go … to Australia, the land of “The Flying Doctors,” a popular TV series about the outback adventures of the Australian Flying Doctors, of which we both had fond youthful memories.

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And so we started the long and bureaucratic process to get a permanent residence visa. With every new form we had to fill out, we became more and more determined to pursue our goal. About 18 months later, we obtained the permit and from then on things went fast. We both quit our jobs, gave away most of our stuff, threw the obligatory farewell party (much to the disappointment of several family members and friend still not being able to answer the WHY question) and jumped on a plane. There we were, Down Under, with two backpacks, lots of expectations and many more questions on what lay ahead of us, but most of all, eager to start our new adventure.
Before settling down and looking for a job, we decided to travel around the country. We bought a 22-year-old Toyota Hi-Ace campervan – yes, the one with the pop-up roof – and started a journey that would eventually end eight months later in Sydney. I’ll never forget the first night. We found a nice spot by a river, ate our first dinner, enjoyed our first sunset (one of those incredibly beautiful southern hemisphere ones) and crawled into the back of the caravan. One hour later, it started to rain. It turned out that our pop-up roof wasn’t waterproof and together with the raindrops, which with exact precision dripped down on my forehead, doubts seeped into my mind. What had we done?

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The next morning we continued our journey that over the course of a couple of months took us from Sydney all the way through the Australian outback up to Darwin in the Northern Territory. Mumbai can be hot and humid, but believe me, the Northern Territory has its fair share of the burden. We arrived in Darwin on one of those blazingly hot and humid days where the sun ruthlessly burns your skin and where strolling down the street feels like a heavy workout. Right in the city center, we found a guarded open-air parking lot for our campervan. While paying the parking ticket, I started talking to the guard who was standing in the soaring heat – the usual small talk. He told me that I was lucky that I could still use the parking lot as it would soon have to make way for a fancy office skyscraper. Without even thinking about it, my first reaction was to tell the guard I was sorry to hear this since he was obviously going to lose his job. The guard, without even blinking an eye and with a big smile on his face, replied: “Well, we’ll see about that. Maybe someday I can get a job in the new building and become a receptionist in the air-conditioned lobby.”
And that was it! In that single moment, everything came together. There and then, I realized why I had always wanted to go abroad. Subconsciously, intuitively or whatever you want to call it, I had always been searching for a lens through which to better understand the world, and maybe also for a mirror, a mirror to better understand myself. For this man – without intending to do so – taught me something about who I was and where I come from, or at least how people tend to think where I come from. In international comparative studies on cross-cultural differences, the Belgians are somewhere in the grey zone for most of the criteria being evaluated. There is one characteristic, however, where we score clearly on one side of the spectrum: uncertainty avoidance (those readers who are familiar with the Geert Hofstede studies will know what I’m talking about). Belgians are very concerned about uncertainty, don’t like it, and take all necessary measures to avoid it. This man, however, saw the uncertainty coming his way as an opportunity, and he didn’t have to think twice. It just came naturally to him.

I have had many similar encounters like this one over the years, and time and time again, I have appreciated these moments as opportunities to learn about the world, other people, where I come from, and who I am. As for our 8 month road trip through Australia, it turned out to be a life changing experience. In the end, we had to go back to Belgium because of family reasons, but the experience has left us with an impression for life. Back in Belgium, I actively looked for an international job. It or the job has brought us to New York City, Berlin, and Mumbai, so far. Each single place and its unique people have enriched us, and made us more wholesome people. This kind of life is a perfect match for me, and it feels like a second skin. Does this mean that I should have gone for it earlier in life right after my studies?
If I had, I would never had met my wife, who has been my soulmate and travel companion ever since Australia. I’m confident that things happen when the time is right. And wherever our journey takes us, I always have to think of the song “Till we run out of road” by the American singer Jewel. It deals with both the hardships and joys of rodeo cowboys on their endless journeys. We played it so often in our campervan while cruising the Australian landscape:

We’re leaving
Leaving again
Can’t recall
Where all we’ve been
I guess we’ll just go
Go till we’re too old
Or till we run out of road

As for us, I guess we’ll just go … go till we’re too old or till we run out of road.

PS: By the way, it only rained three days during our eight month journey Down Under. That first night with the raindrops was really just a bump in a long and winding road…
I have lived in quite a few places in the world and met quite a few people. In this article I will tell you about these people and places.

The first place I lived in was Indonesia. I moved there from Egypt when I was one. I lived in Indonesia for five years. I traveled from Indonesia to Dubai every summer. My mom’s parents live in Dubai. After staying in Dubai, we go back to our cottage in Canada. Every summer we travel from one place to another.

**ASB is my school in India**
After Indonesia, I moved to India. In India, I made lots of friends including Diya, Linne, Ana, Amelie, Moulika, Malaika, Celine, Radhika, Charlotte, and Sa Myoung. In India I still go from Dubai to Canada.

When I’m done in India, who knows where we will go next and what people I will meet. Well, that’s the fun of traveling and moving. I’ll miss my friends of course, but I can always keep in touch.
Beyond the Bubble

Deepanjali Pandey | Parent

“I will try and create first-world bubbles in Mumbai...” I fervently tell myself, my husband, my neighbours, my PTA buddies at the American School of Dubai – and frankly, to anyone who will listen. When we realized we were going to have to move to Mumbai early last year, around March 2015, because of a new career opportunity for my husband, I was heartbroken. Into the cracks crept an incomprehensible despair that I could not fully acknowledge even to my family as I chose to cheerily chant the “Every move is an adventure” mantra to prop up their spirits. Maybe I was repeating the mantra more to convince myself because I knew exactly what we were in for.

You see, 14 years ago, we had eagerly boarded the NRI train, which whizzed us away from India – our birthplace and home of 27 years – to hyper-international places like Makati in the Philippines, super-efficient Singapore, and dazzling Dubai. It was so easy to “upgrade” to these environments where safety, hygiene and order were a priority for the governments. Even in the Philippines, we stayed in the glass-and-concrete bubble called Makati and viewed life through our skyscraper windows in a building we shared with Imelda Marcos, her shoes, and a swanky rooftop helipad.

We were insulated from the immense and intense India-like poverty that fringed Manila. We considered ourselves lucky to have “escaped” India and gone to the Philippines for our first expat posting. We survived a military coup there, became parents, and after two years we relocated to Singapore.
A Singaporean cabinet minister is rumoured to have once said “All Indians should consider Singapore their eastern-most city.” How true that was for us – there were ample stores selling Indian groceries in this modern city-state, dosas and samosas were available in most food courts, and beautifully carved Hindu temples in Little India welcomed worshippers and visitors with Indonesian incense, Burmese palm sugar “prasad,” and China-made brass bells. All this, alongside pristine sidewalks, cultivated greenery, orderly traffic, prompt public services, and seamless banking transactions (no multiple, self-attested forms). In Singapore, there was peace and order even in a crowd, or rather, especially in a crowd. It was a city where my daughter learnt to walk, talk and stalk birds in the lush Botanical Gardens. It is where I resumed my career in publishing and my husband thrived in his job.

Another career move saw us relocating to Dubai, where I opted for a more laid-back life in an expansive villa, choosing to give my time to my husband and daughter. Both of them faced the same challenges in Dubai – new projects, new peers and new pressures. Helping them through their transition was my “homework” in the first few months before life took on a regular rhythm once again in an increasingly efficient city.

A forward-looking, people-oriented government headed by Dubai’s Sheikh Mohammed (affectionately called “Sheikh Mo”) ensured almost all paperwork was moved online or executed via efficient apps. We were just gearing up for another lovely Dubai winter when the Mumbai offer came through.

Maybe I was despairing because we would finally be getting off the NRI train; out of the bubbles we had encased our lives in with every expat assignment. A friend told me over lunch at her golf villa one sunny afternoon in Dubai, “People keep criticizing Dubai and Singapore by calling these places
Disneyland-ish bubbles. But tell me one thing, if people could get a pass to stay in Disneyland for life, why would they ever want to leave?” I remember agreeing with her as we nibbled our mini falafels and sipped Turkish coffee.

While my former bubbles had burst, I did not fully analyze why I was so anxious to create similar ones for my family in Mumbai. Maybe I wanted to protect my NRI daughter from the rough and tumble of the Indian environment which we had experienced as children; and which my US-born and bred nephew was experiencing as he had also relocated from Wisconsin to Mumbai a few months before us.

He, a bright, polite 8-year-old, was attending a new International school in the suburbs where the majority of students were Indians. His first questions on the phone to his dad (my brother) still working in the US were, “Dad, a boy in my class drank from my water bottle with his mouth. What should I do?” or “Dad, some boys threw stones at me when I was in the garden.” or “Dad, some boys pulled my shorts down in PE class... who do I complain to?” If his school’s environment was so radically different from the protected, politically-correct, “personal-space-respecting” and “no-sharing-food-or-nuts” American pre-school, how would he adjust to his new reality?

I had the same apprehensions for my daughter who had never lived in India for more than a fortnight on our annual visits home. I knew my husband and I could wing it in India where we knew the language and ethos. But returning with a tween who had never lived here was another thing.

Small innocuous things tripped us up in the early days. We took our daughter to see the latest Hindi Bollywood potboiler at a nearby mall one day. She asked me, “Mum, will the movie have subtitles?” I looked at my husband tongue-tied. We were so used to watching Hindi movies with subtitles abroad
that it never crossed our minds that movies here were screened without subtitles. She sat through the movie grumbling and I did a rushed, whispered translation of long dialogues all through. We planned to hire a house helper, but realized many young girls we interviewed could not speak English. How would she and my daughter communicate?

I had often heard the “bragplaint” that expatriate children grow up in a bubble where they are shielded from the trials and tribulations of “reality” – only I could see the irony of me trying to perpetuate this bubble in a country which would prick it in every way, a country which teaches one resilience before real life even begins.

Even our living environments changed drastically from what we were used to. Our home, during our first four months in Mumbai, was a 5-star serviced apartment close to the American School of Bombay, which my daughter attends. I loved sitting at the desk in my little, orderly, quiet cocoon of a living room, which was in front of a glass wall that overlooked lush trees barely camouflaging the urban sprawl behind them – it seemed like nothing had changed in a decade.

Weather-beaten buildings, bright blue tarpaulin covering the roofs of a nearby slum, ubiquitous white dish antennas sprouting like metal mushrooms on rooftops, a construction crane silhouetted like a headless, one-armed scarecrow against the skyline, dusty, rusty iron scaffolding of some half-finished building... Some buildings we looked at had rental units with blinding white walls and yellowing conditioner units that belonged to the 1980s. They looked like a couple of decaying teeth in an otherwise dazzling set. I used to wistfully gaze at numerous Singapore Airlines jets taking off in front of me daily from the airport nearby, their yellow and blue logos almost mocking our
decision to relocate to India and giving me the hope, or maybe the illusion, that escape was a flight away.

The physical inconveniences of Mumbai needed getting used to all over again, that was a given. However, I felt we needed to get used to another sort of adjustment – being anonymous in one’s own country. When living abroad, our identities as Indians came with their own set of experiences – mostly good, sometimes mildly discomfiting, but never indifferent.

In the Philippines, we were mistaken to be “moneylenders” (called “Five-Six”) because back in 2002, many Indians who had settled in Manila were moneylenders. In Singapore, around 2004, it was largely assumed that we were IT professionals - any other industry with a predominance of Indians did not even figure strongly back then. In many ways, we were the stereotype that every other Indian abroad was. In Brazil (we lived there for a brief while), we were the exotic Indian family with intriguing eyeliner and Indian bling. In China, we were the much-photographed Indians with “big eyes.” Our faces are probably stored in assorted flash drives of some cameras in Beijing even now.

A friend who had relocated from Singapore to New Delhi and back to Singapore six years ago had told us once, “The biggest change one feels when coming back to India is that you look no different from anyone else around you.” That seemed like a throwaway observation back then when we were still marked out in Singapore by our “Indians from India” identity. Today, we look no different from any other Indian, and no one looks at us differently. This takes some getting used to as an NRI. In Mumbai, you could be anyone – and unless you mark your forehead with an NRI tattoo, you will be treated no differently from any other Indian out there. There is
little curiosity about where you belong as one blends in so smoothly, so anonymously.

I may hanker to feel different, to feel like a well-heeled expatriate or an NRI, but unless I announce it, no one cares or is bothered about my “NRI-ness”. In a strange way, I am identity-less, no different from another Indian on the roads, in the hotels or airports, cafes and condos. Maybe it is liberating after a while, but to be honest, sometimes I do miss the distinction of being marked out as an NRI.

Whenever we visited India on our annual visits, we lubricated over the myriad inconveniences with our foreign currencies that always came out stronger against the rupee. Today, we have to try to do the same while living here. We can flash the cash to get some sort of special attention or service, but in Mumbai, being the great leveler that it is, you are still struggling on the same roads and same potholes.

Every move changes a family in various ways regardless of the family’s nationality. Today, six months down, I have managed to create some fragile bubbles, far from first-world ones, for my family – but curiously, I find myself wanting to prick them ever so frequently to let some parts of Mumbai in. That way I can immerse myself in the iridescent hues of life here, and allow the colours of the city to present themselves to me like a Rubik’s Cube which is too complex for me to solve, but one where every twist presents a new perspective.

I have walked through a dark, dirty slum only to find a tailor who creates embroidered magic that far surpasses any couture I have seen in Dubai or Singapore; I have throbbed with indescribable energy watching the spirited traditional Maharashtrian Lavani dance performance by the support staff at
the American School of Bombay; I have had coffee with a beautiful French friend who finds the city amazing, in a non-patronizing way, and accepts it warts, noise, chaos and all. I know how grateful my driver feels to have a room to house his family here, and how my young helper was bold to move out of a dowry-demanding marriage.

My daughter accepts blackouts in five-star resorts, queues at mall toilets, blaring music from a nearby school function at all hours of the day, and hustles her way through crowded places matter-of-factly. Her resilience has come shining through at home, and in school. My husband loves the challenge of growing a business in India, delays, government red tape and manpower challenges notwithstanding.

This relocation to Mumbai took us completely out of our international, well-curated and orderly comfort zones, and the road till now has been a little rocky, but nothing like the avalanche of stress and frustration I was anticipating. Maybe we are “downgrading” our expectations so we are not completely miserable here. Or maybe, just maybe, we are “upgrading” our expectations of ourselves by embracing every new opportunity or old challenge, and manifesting the phrase that yes, “Every move is an adventure!”
My name is Yoonji Park. I am a seventh grade Korean student who is attending the American School of Bombay. I’ve been through several schools during my life and I would like to share my experiences as a third culture kid. These are the experiences that led up to making me who I am now, and I have to admit it was quite a bumpy ride from the start.

My first impression of my first Korean school was, “I hate this.”

Before you start assuming things, I’ll remind you that I was a sensitive second grader who had just arrived from an American School in Dubai. It was not that I hated learning, or Korea but I was firstly, reluctant to move and yet was excited too. I got a pet hamster. I could walk to school, and I was able to buy a lot of new school supplies for myself.

It was not a very pleasant experience from the start.

In front of every one of the 20 something kids in my class – my teacher yelled at me for writing a journal entry with illustrations. I had put in so much love in that one journal entry, carefully outlining and coloring everything to make sure it looked good. I expected praise from the teacher and admiration for my drawings, or at least a warm little smile.

I remember trying not to cry as I returned to my seat. The next morning, I refused to attend school. I threw a tantrum in front of my babysitter and
refused to go. My mom went to see the teacher and returned with a bunch of apologies from the students. I assumed the teacher forced them to write those. When I had my journal back, the comments written on the corner were filled with nice words. “Fake,” I thought. Those words just didn’t match with this ‘monster’ teacher. According to my mom, the first thing the teacher told her was that she would not give me any special treatment because I was from a foreign country. Both my mom and I agree that she was the worst teacher I’ve ever had.

For next six months, I just didn’t feel included in the class. There were times at lunch when I didn’t have friends to talk to. No one tried to become friends with me, all I had was the basic relationship of a “school classmate”. There was a boy who would trip me and stab me with pencils for no reason in particular. I got lost in the hallways because I couldn’t find my way around, and I was too shy to ask. I may have not dealt with harsh bullying, but I did know how it felt to be put in a new environment.

I was at that school for 2 years, and thankfully the teachers that followed were wonderful, kind and supportive. They had their own unique methods of teaching and never ceased to delight me with new experiences. I could genuinely feel how they cared and loved me as a student, not as a special third culture child. You could say, I reached my highest point of elementary school when I was in fourth grade: being a good student, enjoying drawing and entering competitions, challenging myself with advanced math…most of all, being the model student of my absolutely beloved biology subject.

Oh, how I loved that class. Call me a typical child, but critters were my biggest focus at that time. I would get to keep hamsters, examine squids and dye with cabbages. Those were only a few of the variety of exciting lessons
we had. Everything about biology fascinated me, how different plants and animals functioned and lived and breathed. My drawing skills really came in handy whilst I described the characteristics of the organisms we would study. I was one of the long timers of the group, participating in every class. I can still remember my favourite biology teacher’s name, Hong Ryu Jin.

You could imagine how upset I was when I had to move to a new school again. I couldn’t bear to leave all the things I’d created in this school! I’d finally gotten used to Korean school life. I had to say farewell to my guinea pigs (they went with my biology teacher, so at least I felt okay), my best friend, my house, my teachers...

My new house was big, very fancy, and recently rebuilt. The new Korean school was barely a five-minute walk from home, and that had been rebuilt too. It looked like a very impressive school and my first impression was fear. How would I possibly fit in here?

Just to make me feel better, my grandmother got me an adorable cockatiel parrot I named Tory, and there began my career as a bird lover. Two more cockatiels called Coco and Harry followed after Tory, and I had the three for as long as I stayed there, taking them on walks and posting on my blog. Along with my hamster Olive, they were my little children and siblings at the same time, my biggest pride.

I remember one time when Tory and I had gone for a walk at our park. Tory accidentally flew in alarm, and because her feathers were short, she fell to the ground with an abrupt crash. Tory’s feathers were disheveled but seemed okay, at least at that time. I later realized her claw was broken, and that she was bleeding. I started to cry at the sight of blood, thought she was dying. I rushed home and tried to stop the blood with flour, feeding her bird
medicine, panicking whenever she fell asleep. My mom would say that I cared a lot about my pets as they were like family to me, and were with me through good times and bad times.

I now had good friends. We were a trio: Kim, Lee, and me. We were in groups together and go to the same enrichment classes and of course, houses. I am very thankful for the fun memories they’ve given me.

Then something new dropped out of the sky. I was going to move to India. I was downright distressed. Not again! I was angry. How come I never get to stay in one place for long? How come I had to say goodbye again? It was unfair. I promised my birds I would live with them forever, but look what happened now. I didn’t want to give them away. I didn’t want to leave!

But, in a tiny part of my mind, I was saying: “yes, I really do want to leave.” Another new adventure for me. Another chance to change, to fix this mess of the state I was in. Korean education had become too overwhelmingly difficult and boring for me to handle, and I was glad I had a chance to return to the school system I missed. Our family packed up, said our goodbyes, and left Korea. I had just finished sixth grade at the time.

And here I am at the American School of Bombay. Everything is very colorful. The hallways, the commons, the classrooms... There are no straight lined desks and not one teacher for all subjects. This big change was, admittedly, quite confusing to me.

The first few days were made of lone lunch times and no friends. True, there were some I met at orientation. They did become my friends, but we were never as close as I’d expected to become. I did find good friends later on, but before that, several older students actually offered me a seat at lunch to sit in.
At the time, I was a bit uncomfortable about how they pitied me, but to think of it now, I am grateful.

I ended up best friends with the most unexpected of people. There was Hanaah, a friendly American girl I first met at badminton practice. I found that I was getting close to her once we started to play badminton with each other, and we stayed in the same house at Chennai when we competed for the ASIAC tournament. As I got to know her better, I was amazed at how similar we were. We both hated to swear, loved to read and were overall big science nerds. And I loved her most because she shared some of my passions. I am very grateful for that.

And there's Juney who I met at my first drama class. Obviously, her being a Korean helped me approach her. She seemed quiet at first, but no, she was pretty clear that she spoke only when she needed to. She could be fierce and argumentative if she needed to be. On first impressions, Juney was that person who did not seem to be likable, but gradually grew to be a great friend. She's a sweetheart.

Then there's Aadya, the most rambunctious of us all. I still don't know how we ended up being friends. She's the kind of person who could hang out with the popular kids with ease and be friends with quiet ones like us. She knew everyone, literally everyone, and she was always confident and seemed to be living an adventurous life. In a way, I admire her.

I could talk about all my close friends all day, but these were the three who were with me from the very beginning, and they feel so special to me. They taught me how to be brave and how to be a good person, and all three of them are my role models in at least some sort of way.
What was fascinating now is that I find myself being admired by other people as well. When people say I’m a good student, when they say I’m smart, when they ask for my help, I can’t help but feel pride. I never thought I’d be someone like that. At ASB, some students were really passionate about their projects and presentations, to a greater extent than the kids back at my old school. Students, who are confident and intelligent, are the ones who inspired me and made me so bold.

I found myself actually growing as a student and a person. I was much more daring now. I as join many ASAs as possible so that I may get new experiences. Studying has become interesting, and I have stopped worrying too much about grades. Hanaah, Sa Kang and I are the biggest biology nerds in our grade. We’re the founders of the Permaculture Club! I now can ask questions to the teachers, something I was reluctant to do in Korea. I could be a leader of a group in some situations, which was a big step for someone shy like me. I don’t think I’ve changed personality wise, but I could see my growth and spot my. At ASB I enjoy journal writing. When I grow older, the journal will be a storage box of my memories. Just thinking of that makes me feel thrilled.

One thing I love the most is how I am able to help new students – the ones that don’t latch onto the groups of students as quickly as others and the ones who end up alone in the cafeteria. I don’t think I was usually the one to step forward and say hello, but after that older student lent me her seat at lunch, I am more determined to try and be friends with new students and talk to them, because I knew that being new and alone was rather tough. All of them turn out to be great people and I’m really glad that I got to know.
I always thought my life story was bland compared to others. I never had a huge conflicts or problems in my school years. Yet it’s still very fascinating for me to look back at what I’ve been doing and embrace the growth I’ve achieved. It seems like, I’m turning into quite a good person, and I’m proud of myself for doing that. Perhaps we all need to look back at our lives every once in a while, and just observe and analyze. I’m completely pleased with the experience ASB has given me for the last two years, how it’s community and its opportunities changed me in a better way. It’s exciting to think what an adventure my life ahead will be.
Artwork by Erin Schamp, Grade 10 Student
On January 26, we joined roughly one billion people in celebrating India’s Republic Day, the day in 1950 that the constitution became the governing document of India. The weather in Mumbai was pleasant, and we enjoyed a barbeque on the porch with friends and played lawn games with the kids. As one of three mandated national holidays, the street below was quieter than usual, and a light and festive mood was in the air.

As I welcomed a cool breeze, my mind reflected on a different Republic Day we celebrated several years ago on the Horn of Africa in our host country of Djibouti. Our oldest son Ravi, then five, attended Kindergarten in a small Indian school. He was the only American, then or since I believe, and while he stood out in a sea of brown faces on wooden benches housed in two rooms, his name opened doors and won him friends. That Republic Day he sang the Indian national anthem with pride alongside his classmates in a small flag ceremony.

Today we celebrated Festival of Nations at the American School of Bombay and Ravi, now a sophomore many years later, again joined classmates in singing the Indian national anthem. He will graduate from high school here in Mumbai, and while ASB is a far cry from the wooden benches of his beginnings, he has assimilated well and feels a deep connection to India. He doesn’t stand out as much in this sea of international faces, cultures, and religions – where everyone is welcomed and respected for who they are and what they bring.
Forty-four countries were represented today in a student population of roughly 600. Students wore ethnic clothing, national colors, and favorite sport jerseys as they marched across the stage, waving their country’s flag. Cultural pride was high, and a feeling of unity and diversity filled the warm air.

Singing a country’s national anthem, even if it’s not my own, is incredibly moving, and I feel a sense of awe and reverence that stirs my soul. I am grateful the kids and I have experienced that feeling, such loyalty to a country, when a group of people gathers to honor their homeland. Many Americans and others don’t ever realize those feelings outside of their home country, and I’m grateful our family has time and time again.

We now have four children and since Djibouti have lived in Sydney, Kathmandu, and currently Mumbai. It is not easy packing, unpacking, planning, arranging, transporting, reinventing, starting over, and continually adjusting as we move our family around the world every few years. In many frustrated moments it’s easy to wonder why we keep choosing to do this, to live this life, to serve our country in this way. Yet, even with its craziness, this life has afforded us more adventure and heart-opening moments than we could have imagined otherwise, and we love it. My children have full passports, but more importantly, full memories of beaches, mountains, volcanoes, elephants, camels, tuk tuks, rickshaws, museums, cathedrals, world heritage sites, temples, ruins, and the like. They feel comfortable and confident in new situations and places and rival the savviest frequent travelers in airports. They have friends from all over the world, and they have a depth and breadth I certainly didn’t know at their age. News stories and current events are real for them, and they feel connections beyond themselves.

For example, we left Kathmandu nearly two years before the terrible April 2015 earthquake, but when we heard the news it was surreal. We had prepared
for it during our time there, and earthquake safety was a very big part of life since the “big one” was long overdue. Places we frequently visited and knew were destroyed. Entire villages were gone. Friends and neighbors were without homes. While the world watched and mourned and sent aid, the destruction and loss was so painful and real for us because we had lived there.

January 26 is also Australia Day; the day the first British fleet arrived at Port Jackson. We lived in Sydney for two years and wore our green and gold and red, white, and blue alongside our Aussie friends as we watched fireworks in Darling Harbour. One child, Adelaide, was born in Sydney, and another, Bronte, shares her name with a popular beach and suburb. Singing “Advance Australia Fair” still moves me, and I remember such kind friends and neighbors who welcomed me into our school and community. I don’t know if there is a city and people in all the world as lovely and real as Sydney.

Eight years ago on January 26, we prepared to welcome a third child to our family, a young boy from Ethiopia. We wrapped up our life in Djibouti and flew to Ethiopia to finalize paperwork, meet his birth family, and ultimately bring him home with us. Shortly after, we introduced him to an entire extended family who couldn’t wait to meet him. This time of year on the anniversary of his adoption, we submit to the Ethiopian government a report on how he’s doing and his growth over the past year. It’s a time to reflect on what he adds to our family and the journey he now shares with us.

I don’t know where we’ll be each January 26 in the future, but I trust the years’ challenges and adventures will be embraced and truly lived. I hope I will enjoy it alongside family and friends, old and new, and relish the smallness of this world, the goodness of its people, and the gift of our coexistence.
My life started on November 29th, 2006 in Denmark. I was born in Denmark, which is where I’m from. When I was 10 weeks old, we moved to Singapore. When I was three years old, I started my new school, ISS. I made some really nice friends: Isabel, Mia and many more. Everyday, when I came home from school, we would go to the pool. When we came up to our apartment, I would take a shower.

On the weekend, I would usually have playdates with Isabel and we would go to the pool, since we lived in the same apartment building. We quickly became very good friends, and she soon became my best friend. We lived for five years in Singapore. I was five years old when we moved to Sweden. When I was 5½ years old, I started kindergarten. On the first day, I was so excited and shy, but I sat next to a really nice girl, whose name was Sara. We played with each other at recess, and we soon became best friends. That was until I met Mary. Mary was so sweet and nice to me. We always played together at recess, and Sara found another friend. Mary and I were the perfect friends; it’s like when you have a puzzle piece and you match it with another – that was how good of friends Mary and I were. In first grade, Mary and I still hung out together, but in second grade: there was a new girl called Emma. I was determined to be friends with her, but she didn’t speak English, so it was pretty hard to accomplish my goal. However, I know that when I set a goal, I work towards it and accomplish it, and that’s what I did. I followed her at
recess trying to make friends with her as she was all alone. Mary didn’t help me make friends so she just left me with Emma. I sat with Emma all the time, and soon after that, we became best friends. We loved hanging out until my Dad got a new job in India.

I was really sad, but excited at the same time. I started my new school (ASB), which is where I am now. I made a friend on the first day named Aaditi, and we always played together, but one day she was sick, so I played with someone named Charlotte. Soon she became my best friend, and she still is (well, my best friend in India). Actually, you can have many best friends: my best friend in Singapore is Isabel, my best friends in Sweden are Mary and Emma, and my best friend in India is Charlotte. The good part is that even though we are not together every day like we used to be, we still talk on “Facetime,” and sometimes we also get to meet. Last time I met with Mary and Emma was last December, and I’m going to meet Isabel in Singapore in March. I am now nine years old.
10 TIPS TO STAY HAPPY OVERSEAS

Kahori M. Roskamp  |  Parent

Living overseas is full of amazing adventures and excitement, but it is not all rosy all the time. The challenges could be generated from the tough conditions of life in a host country, the inconveniences of having a foreign status, the constant and unexpected changes, the unfamiliar environment and languages, being away from families, and friends and more. I feel that staying happy is a bit more challenging while living overseas, since a life abroad comes with more stress factors than life back home. Your life could easily be out of your hands if something loses balance.

I would like to share 10 things I do to stay happy overseas. I have practiced these in the past years – some for a long time, some for the past five years. These core 10 tips are based on my own experiences. I love our little family’s nomadic lifestyle. Everyone is built differently, so by no means am I stating that my way of thinking works for everyone. I would be delighted if this piece can be of help to others who are wondering how to stay happy overseas.

1. **Work Out**

Endorphin, the chemical that your brain produces when working out, is known to make one feel happy. I try to work out 3 to 4 times a week in the morning. It helps me deal with stress. I feel better and stronger, and thus, happier. You just need to find a work out that fits your lifestyle and suits your personality.
2. Make Home a Sanctuary
There is no place like home. Then what do you do if you live away from your home? Here you have to look at “home” in a sense of your domicile. Wherever you are, it is important that you make your home your favorite place to come back to. When we live overseas, home becomes a place where we as a family spend a lot of our time together. Having a home where I feel happy to come back to has helped me cope with some challenges overseas, and I think it’s true for my family members as well.

It may not be as easy to create your home overseas. However, there are creative things you can do to make your home away from home comfortable and lovable without spending a fortune. I usually focus on my favorite colors for our new home.

3. Learn to Filter your Surroundings
Just like many parents develop a filter for their own child’s cry after a couple of years (have you noticed that many parents with toddlers seem to not be bothered or affected by their toddler’s cry or scream?), we can develop our own filter to screen our surrounding noises. Noises, in this sense, are “environmental factors” of living in a foreign country. It took me some time to be able to become unsusceptible to my surroundings and stay unaffected by things that stimulate my senses.

4. Find Passion & Pursue It
My passions at the moment are blogging, photography, and interior design. Blogging has provided me a place to be myself, explore my interests, engage myself with what I feel passionately about, and challenge myself to test my ability.

Blogging does not have to be the answer to happiness overseas for everyone. When you live overseas, you can take lessons to learn music instruments,
languages, or cooking, pick up a new sport, or train for a race. There are online courses available, and in many countries, there are always volunteer opportunities. The options are endless. Listen to what makes your heart bounce and you’ll find your place to be at peace.

5. **Find a Silver Lining**

Is a glass half full or half empty?

I am a believer in “everything happens for a reason.” All experiences, whether positive or negative, give us something positive to learn from. Whether you become negative and dwell on it, or look at the positives and make efforts to embrace it, destiny will change your perspective on life and your experiences. It’s hard to practice this when you are going through a tough time. However, I feel that I come out of every tough situation feeling stronger and wiser.

6. **Do not Compare Yourself to Others**

We all naturally seek a point of reference. It’s very normal that we compare ourselves to others. However, if comparing yourself to others makes you feel worse about yourself or makes you feel down or jealous, then I don’t think you are doing a favor to yourself or your mind. When you live overseas, it is very easy to compare yourself to fellow expats. People compare their housing, cars, children, vacations, jobs, benefits – you name it. When you get in the rut of comparing yourself, try to think of things you are grateful to have in your life.

7. **Prioritize your Relationship with your Partner**

If you go overseas with your partner, the relationship you have with him/her becomes a very significant part of your happiness. I’m not saying that it isn’t when you are back home. Even having a small fight with your partner impacts you more emotionally when you are overseas because you are more vulnerable. Why? When you go overseas, your partner is your best friend,
family, advisor, and supporter. You don’t necessarily have the same support system around you compared to when you were back home. Thus, I find the mutual understanding of each other’s needs and challenges, as well as being considerate to your partner when living overseas holds a key to happiness.

While employed spouses are often under a lot of pressure to be successful overseas for their jobs, their accompanying spouses are also under a big amount of stress for being exposed to the local environment, for managing a family (especially if they have kids), and having to learn everything on their own. The kids who accompany their parents also go through the same stress in a new environment. They seem to become extra sensitive to their surroundings. Focusing on the relationship with your partner by trying to understand and be compassionate will have a trickle-down effect on the children. Thus, I focus on my relationship with my husband first. Inevitably my kids benefit from it.

8. Invest in Friendship
When you live overseas, having friends who can understand you, empathize with you, and share fun experiences with you can enrich your experiences overseas and help you go through tough times if you do encounter difficult situations. You really appreciate friends who extend such help overseas. I notice that my mood swings are affected by people around me, too. When someone does something sweet for me, it makes me very happy. A little goes a long way, especially when someone does a nice thing for you right after you first move to a new country and you feel lonely and overwhelmed.

9. Learn a Local Language
It sounds very cliché, doesn’t it? Learning a host country’s local language can be very hard even if you think you will be showered by the language once you live there. Learning a new language in adulthood doesn’t come easy, but even trying a bit can make a difference. I find it helpful for me to deepen my
understanding of the local culture by learning the local language. You also appreciate more of local people’s efforts to communicate with you in English if English is not widely spoken in your host country.

10. Change your Frame of Reference
Our concept of happiness is relative because the measurement of satisfaction and happiness is based on one’s individual frame of reference. Some might consider a certain situation unsatisfying while others would consider the same situation fortunate. We all create our happiness in our heads. You need to stop analyzing and judging based on what you know from home, and start looking with a fresh set of eyes. Acknowledging the differences in values, cultures and ways of living in other parts of the world removes some frustrations. Whether you agree or not, keeping your mind open to foreign cultures will help you see things more positively.

These are the 10 things I practice to stay happy overseas. Sometimes we are caught up in details and we forget to appreciate the nitty gritty of life. After all, wherever we live, to be able to have good health, be with my loved ones, witness my children grow up, and visit our families back home once a year are the core of my happiness. The rest of the details in life are like added spices.
Thursday August 9, 2007 was when I came into this world in San Francisco, USA. That’s when the great journey began…

People said I cried a lot when I was born. I had lots of hair on my head, and very long eye-lashes for a baby. My doctor said that I was such an adorable and handsome boy. I thought this was really funny when I heard about it. When you’re little, all you do is drink, poop, and sleep. The videos my dad took of me are full of me trying to look everywhere, and my eyes are full of mischief. My sister thought I was her play buddy, and she would tag along with me everywhere. She even helped mom carry my diaper basket around our home. If mom let her have her way, I would be dressed up like Cinderella with glass slippers and make-up. I loved to play with her. She was always laughing and smiling and doing funny things to make me laugh even harder.

We both loved to go to water parks back then. If I went back to New Jersey now, I think the first thing I would do is go to Sesame Street Park and then Dutch Wonderland. We had so much fun in both the parks, especially when the water bucket would topple over. After spending the whole day getting soaked, we would eat burgers and waffle cups filled with ice cream sundaes, as it was very hot. Then we would head over to the video game shop called GameStop. After a long day, we would come back and go straight to bed.

The next day, I would wake up early, eat my breakfast and get ready for swimming, but I had to wait as Mom said that if I swam right after eating,
it was not healthy. I would finish my homework and do my writing. My parents always loved reading my stories. My mother sometimes didn’t understand my characters and their powers, but she still enjoyed reading about them.

Toys R Us was another favorite store that my sister and I loved to visit. There was a giant merry-go-round inside the store, but I liked watching people dressed up as Spiderman and Ironman. I actually thought that they were real for some time. Also, Chuck E Cheese was a fun arcade for everyone. There were lots of games where we won tiny tickets, which I would exchange for toys or cotton candy.

After that, we moved to Paris. Paris did not have as many water parks and there was no Chuck E Cheese either, but there were lots of fete (or fairs). Paris had a lot of tourists, and everyone wanted to go up the Eiffel tower and into the museums. As a young kid, I always wondered why. I found the museums very boring. All everyone did was look at paintings and take pictures. Statues were more interesting. I could play around them and see them from all sides. Baguettes and crepes all over France were the most delicious I’ve ever eaten. Paris also had Disneyland and Futuroscope. Some of the attractions were the giant orange vehicles in the water, which you could paddle, and water boats from which we could spray water at others. There was a fan in the water which sent out strong blasts of air, and we had to try not get blown away.

But then one summer vacation, we had to move to Mumbai. It is very different from all the other places I have ever lived in or visited. The air is smoky, it’s crowded, and my video games don’t work in my WiiU if I buy them here. I haven’t visited any water parks, yet! So I just play with my sister and I guess that’s my favorite thing to do now. I’m 8-years-old, but I think I have a long journey ahead still…
Homework was the bane of my existence. Why did teachers have to spoil vacations by expecting us to do handwriting practice and math problems every day? It was hopeless!

I had enjoyed my holidays grasshopperishly – golden days of playing chor-police and hopping tag, afternoons curled up with a book, nights of brilliant firecrackers – Split! Splat! Light, run back and … Boom! The smell of sulphur hung in the air long after.

And now, back to School Monday loomed ahead. The three of us were equally miserable: me, anticipating the squidgy red remark on an almost full page … my father’s blistering glare followed by punishment; Kitty, because of elder brothers who bullied her and a mum who nagged; and Sandhya – sidelined and ignored, because her elder brother was the family darling. The life that we knew just wasn’t worth living. Something had to be done!

“Why don’t we run away?” I whispered, as we crouched in our dog kennel clubhouse.

“Where can we go?” asked Kitty, chewing on her lower lip.

“We could go to the beach!”

“And get jobs in a restaurant, and earn money, and live there!”

Our plans took flight … “I know Madh Island. We’ll have to take a bus to the railway station, a train to Malad, and a bus to the beach.”
So that’s what we did. On the last Sunday of our holidays, while our families were absorbed in Aradhna on the black and white screen, we slipped silently away. In my faded blue jeans, bright red anchor top, and cap on a mop of curls, I looked like a skinny boy.

At last – the beach – freedom – just sea and sky and coarse brown sand scrunching under our toes! Bags dumped on the dry sand (water shouldn’t touch our stuff), off we ran into the lapping brown waves, swirling, whirling, meeting the water hands held open. Orange sun dipping into the water. “Quick! Make a wish as it disappears.”

“Brrr! Let’s get back before it’s dark. Oh no! Where’s my purse? It was right under my spare t-shirt. All my money was in it!”

“How could you be so careless? Now what will we do? That was all the money we had.”

“I want to go home,” wailed Kitty.

And that’s exactly what we did. Teary eyed, we cooked up a tale of an uncle who did not come to pick us up and borrowed money from some kind fisherwomen. Then into a bus, onto the train, and a long walk home (the money had run out) – to worried faces, recriminations, running around the tamarind tree, being chased by a parent brandishing a twig plucked from the hedge.

What were the consequences of not doing holiday homework? Well, I really don’t remember, but BOY am I glad that somebody stole my purse that evening long ago! What I do know is that after travelling around India and across the globe, Mumbai is the place my feet keep coming back to. My heart has found its home.
I moved to India in February of 2013. I was five then. I joined ASB in the middle of kindergarten. The first few friends I had were Reya, Mathili, and Ai. Then, at the end of kindergarten, Mathili and Reya left, so it was only Ai and me. Ai left in the middle of second grade. The friends I have now are Yashil, Thiya, Ana, Moulika, Shaelyn, Linne, Charlotte, and many more. The teachers I’ve had were Ms. Debbie in KGC, Ms. Forgie in 1C and Ms. Nina in 2B. I have Ms. Bond in 3A now. All of them are kind, and they helped me when I could not understand what to do.

I like the playground at ASB because it is big and the equipment is fun to play with. I like the specials the school offers like P.E, Art, Music, Science, and Host Country Studies. I have also enjoyed after-school activities like Junior Chef, Choir, Weird Science, Dance Mash-up, and Robotics.

After moving to Mumbai, my impressions of Mumbai are that it is very crowded and has a lot of road traffic. People are irresponsible about cleanliness and noise. I love the bookstore called Crossword, Kidzania, and the street food, which I miss when I travel to the U.S.A. I also love the fact that most of my family lives in Mumbai.

I have had a lot of travel opportunities since I moved to Mumbai. I have travelled to Mahabaleshwar, Goa, Shimla, Kerala, Lonavala, Shillim, Agra, Delhi, Dubai, U.S.A., and many other places.
Mahabaleshwar was a family trip and we bonded over games like soccer. We went fishing in Goa and watched a lot of shows every night. Juggling and the fire show have left an impression on my mind. The car ride and playing with snow are my fondest memories of Shimla. We saw the local dances, and rode in a houseboat in Kerala. We enjoyed the backwaters. I absolutely loved my experience at Faryias Water Park in Lonavala, which is the closest holiday spot from Mumbai. It is a two-hour drive on an expressway. We indulged in activities like making clay pots in Shillim. We also explored the place by trekking as a family.

We experienced different things in Dubai like going to see the Burj Khalifa, visiting the biggest mall in the world, going on a desert safari, and playing with dolphins. It felt so nice! The weather was not that good, but it did not affect my experience with the dolphins. At first I was scared to kiss the dolphin, but right when I held the dolphin to kiss it, I felt calm. The moment I kissed the dolphin, I felt like I was kissing rubber. I went to Jaipur in September. I liked the elephant ride and learning about the kings who ruled Jaipur. During our stay in Delhi we went to the Iskcon temple and to a Gurudwara, which is a Sikh place of worship. We also drove to Agra. When we saw the Taj Mahal, I was completely amazed by its beauty and history.

My stay in India has been filled with good experiences, happy memories, and wonderful people.
Okay, I won’t lie: being a Third Culture Kid isn’t easy. But if you put it on a ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ list, the ‘pros’ will always out weigh the ‘cons’. If you are a Third Culture Kid, you are really lucky. You may not realize it at first, but you are. You have experiences and opportunities that no one else has or will have. Like that time when you dressed up in clothes from another country. Or that time when you ate a new food. Or when you visited that amazing temple. These little things, these little experiences, will add up and make your life better on the whole.

I myself was born in Arlington, Virginia. When I was three, I moved to Burma, a little country near China. After three years, when I was almost seven, I moved back to America. I stayed there for three years, then moved to India, where I am now. All three countries I have lived in, I have loved and cherished.

When you are a third culture kid, there’s one part that is always the hardest... leaving. It’s the hardest thing to do, saying goodbye and leaving. It’s the part that I regret about being a third culture kid, the part that will be first on the ‘cons’ in that ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ list. In every country I have been in, I have made deep connections and friendships. Saying goodbye is just so, so hard. But here is my advice on it: Keep up with your email, Skype, and other types of online communication. I know it is not the same and it never will be, but
it really does help. Also, make new friends. Making new friends will help you get over your old ones. Trust me. You may also miss your old country. When I live overseas, I do miss America. But try to find one good, cool thing about your new country every day, and you will realize all the things that it has that your previous country does not.

In all the countries I have lived in, I have always gone to an international school. In India, I am going to the American School of Bombay (ASB). Going to an international school is another part of the great experience of living abroad. You get to be around people from all around the globe and learn about different cultures. Plus, how cool is it to say, “I have a friend from Malaysia?” ASB is a great school, and being a third culture kid is a great experience.

I hope I helped you!
When I moved to Mumbai, I was disappointed that we were leaving Singapore. Confused and upset, I decided to give it a try. I had to move to a new house and go to a new school, which meant making new friends again!

Mumbai was very different from Singapore in many ways. The traffic, to start with! Even short distances can be frustrating because it takes so long to get from one place to another. Food is also very different from Singapore. Even though I ate Indian food at my house every day, I had not seen so much choice before in my life. I got to taste many dishes from the different states of India. They tasted very unique.

The sights were different compared to Singapore. For example, in India, one of the monuments I saw was the Taj Mahal. It was very beautiful. The Merlion in Singapore was a complete contrast from the Taj Mahal in India. So many different things to see and do.

My new house took a long time to be fixed. When I came to my new house in Mumbai, I was very excited because I wanted to see what my room would look like. When I reached my new home, I felt like jumping for joy. It surprised me!

At school, I thought it would be hard to make friends, but now I have lots of friends in Mumbai. I still miss my old friends from Singapore. You know one thing though? There are some things I like in both countries.
2013年1月に初めてムンバイに来たときから2年が過ぎ、異文化を経験して今思うことを二つ、書いてみたいと思います。一つ目として、英語ができなかった小学3年生と年中の娘をアメリカンスクールに通わせて英語の重要性に気づいたこと、二つ目として、異文化に暮らす中で、文化に優劣はないということに気付いたこと、これらについて書いてみたいと思います。

私の娘が通うアメリカンスクールは、50か国以上から生徒が集まり内で、共通の言語として英語が使われています。英語を通じて、たくさんの国のたくさんの人とつながることができる魅力を実感できるところです。ただ、英語が全くできなかった娘を持つ私が最初に味わったものは、その魅力を感じる前の苦しい一年でした。英語という異文化に入った途端、言葉の壁から何もできない・・・できていない自分の子供を見ることになったのは、本当に本当に辛い経験でした。私自身の言葉の壁からも、十分なサポートをしてあげられずまた、すぐに解決できる問題でもなかったがさらに辛かったように思います。言語の習得とは、時間のかかるものだと思います。でもそのような時でも心のどこかで、英語を理解し話すことさえできれば我が子だって、日本にいたときと同じように彼女なりに活躍できると、そんな気持ちを持っていいためも間違いありません。だからこそその時、世界共通語の英語が話せるということが、間違いなくこれからの子供にとって必要なことであるし、子供たちに残してあげたいことだと強く感じたのだと思います。今この2年間を振り返ると、親として子供をうまくサポートできたかといえば、そうではありませんでした。初めての海外生活で私自身にも余裕がなく、子供に怒ってしまったり、過ごしているその時間を大切にすることも、一緒に楽しむこともできなかった日々が

LANGUAGE BARRIERS
異文化体験を通して

原田 有希子 | Yukiko Harada | Parent
続いていたと思います。ただその間子供たちはと言えば、幸いにも学校から、友達から、さまざまな刺激や影響を受け助けてもらいながら逞しく成長してくれていたように思います。インドと日本、場所は変わってもやはり、学校は学校という子供の居場所であり、友達は一緒に遊び学び合える友達であり、このことに変わりはなかったように思います。子供やその周りの環境に感謝しています。2年が経つ今では、子供たちは日常の英語をうまく使って、学校生活を楽しんでいます。私は、少しの余裕ができ、今の自分の置かれた環境を子供と一緒に楽しむことができたように思います。ここでの暮らしなじみっていく中で、私が一番深く考えたことを次に書いていきたいと思います。

二つ目として、私にとって海外生活や異文化の中で暮らしていくことは、初めての経験でした。異文化に暮らす時は、よく異文化を受け入れて暮らすという言葉を耳にします。私も、そうすることで異国の地でも暮らしていけると思っていた。インドは特に、インド人はいい加減だが、自分の主張ばかりするし、街はきれいとは言えない、食料品も日本のように買うこともできない、何かと不便なことが多い国と言われます。それを受け入れなくてはと思えば思うほど、これは日本とは違う、私の知っているやり方は違う、価値観が違うから受け入れ難しい、という気持ちになっていた。この状態が続くと、苦しいばかりです。それでも一時私は、自分自身の基準で物事をとらえていることに気が付き、自分の基準を異文化の中に持ち込み受け入れてもらっておこうとしている、文化とはそういう意味ではないと考えました。特にインドに暮らす私はこの国にとってのお客さんです。この国独自のこの国の習慣を見て習って尊重する立場にあるのではないかと考えたとき、お互いの文化、価値観の尊重が異文化の中で暮らす者にとってお互いに必要な考え方でありそれはまさに、それぞれの文化に優劣はない、という考え方につながっていくのではないかと気がつきました。優劣はない、それが意味するところは、例えばインド人の時間管理、マイペースさを強く感じさせる行動、金銭面の主張を堂々としてくるところに、ほとんどの日本人は良い感情を持ちません。でも、インド人からしたら、10分の遅刻が許されない日本文化を窮屈と感じているかもしれまですし、主張することが少ないために分かりにくいし大人しい文化だなと思われているかもしれません。それでも、その国の特徴や文化であって、良い
悪いの判断を偏に与えるものでもありません。受け入れられなくてもいい、尊重すればいい、それが異文化の中で必要とされる考え方ではないでしょうか。もちろん、仕事が絡めばまた別問題なのかもしれませんね、少なくとも日常の暮らしの中ではこの考え方のもとに暮らすことで、生活の煩わしさが減ったと思っています。私がこの２年の間に、ここインドで暮らすことで気づき、考えさせられたことです。

子どもは英語教育のきっかけをもらいました。言語を学ぶ以上、その学びに終わりはないであろうし、まだまだ続く言語習得学習です。ですが、ここアメスクを通じて得た経験はこれから先、英語を学び続ける十分なきっかけを子供たちに与えてくれたことと思います。また、私自身も文化に優劣はないということを自分の経験を持って学ぶことができました。このことに気づいた後は、インドで起こる様々な出来事を良い距離を保ちながら、不思議と自然に楽しむことができるようになった気がします。この２年の時間は本当に貴重なものであり、私の物事の考え方、見方を変えて広げてくれました。それらを可能にしてくれたホスト国であるインドが、今は私にとって大切な国となっているような気がしています。
Artwork by Fin Sullivan, Grade 11 Student
Life at ASB
Being an international teacher is surely the best life ever. As in: Best. Life. Ever. It is a rollicking, always surprising experience, full of adventure, friendships, and memorable stories to tell. Here’s one of my favourites.

Years ago, when our school was still in Breach Candy, as a Middle School colleague and I were preparing our classrooms for the first day of school the next day, we took a break from our work and met in the hallway for a brief chat. As I glanced into her room, I saw that she had plastered it with all kinds of cheerful signs to greet her students as they walked in. Slogans like, “We’re off to another GREAT year!” “I know you will do your best!” “Three cheers for our school!” and “A new year – a new beginning!” were guaranteed to set the mood of expectation, optimism and joy she wanted to create in her classroom. I, meanwhile, had brought fresh flowers for my room, new curtains, new floor cushions, and new books for my students to enjoy. The same thing, really – just a different way to express it.

The Bottom line: There are few joys greater than preparing a classroom for the children who will soon inhabit it.

As we admired each other’s classrooms and felt the energy of the new year welling up in our hearts, I suddenly turned to her and exclaimed, “Seriously, Ellen, what do people do who don’t teach?! Can you imagine? Honestly, they must have such boring lives. Poor things!”
“Yeah,” she agreed. “What a bummer not to teach. I seriously don’t know why everyone doesn’t go into teaching.”

Now, no offense to those of you who work in, say, the corporate world, but really – how lucky can a body get to be able to work with Middle Schoolers, laughing at their silly antics, marveling at their creativity, high-fiving them as they enter the classroom, teaching them vital skills, crying with them through their trials, encouraging them when they’re frustrated, laughing at their silly antics, tearing your hair at their ridiculous e-mails, learning at least ten new words in a different language every year, watching the light dawn as they suddenly understand an important concept, envying their energy, laughing at their silly antics, moaning at their ridiculous jokes, cheering them on as they compete at sports events, enjoying their sweet presents at holiday times, hearing them scream their way through Uno games during breaks, scolding them when they’re out of hand, sharing ridiculous Hindi-English puns, busting them for their horrible grammar…and that’s just on a Monday. Oh, and did I mention laughing at their silly antics?

I’m still chuckling at something that happened several weeks ago. At about 7:45 a.m., I suddenly realized I needed to ask one of the cleaners to do something for me. There were very few students around; I was vaguely aware of somebody student-sized behind me as I walked towards the nearest cleaner, who was mopping the floor in front of the school store. Most of our cleaners are Marathi speakers, but some do speak Hindi, so naturally, I explained to this gentleman, in Hindi, what I needed him to do. He asked a question or two for clarification, we agreed on a time to get the job done, and that was that. Done and dusted.
As I turned to go back to my classroom, I was aware of a shocked silence behind me. I looked to see one of my little Middle Schoolers – let’s call him Rahil – looking astounded as he exclaimed, “Mrs. Alter! You speak HINDI?”

Now, you must realize that I get this often. From everyone. Taxi drivers. Fellow teachers. Shopkeepers. Urchins. Most locals look at me as if I’ve just sprouted horns and ask, “What ARE you?” It’s not even that my Hindi is that great. But, yes, I do speak it well enough to be understood. And, after a while, I’m surprised when people assume that I don’t speak Hindi.

This time, I decided to make a joke of it. I decided to try a little sarcasm.

“No,” I responded breezily as I swept back to my room. “I was speaking French.”

Stunned silence.

I waited for the guffaw I knew would come as soon as the penny dropped. As soon as this little kid realized the sheer awesome cleverness of my response.

The silence grew.

Okay, come on, I thought. Laugh. Let me know you got my joke. It wasn’t THAT lame, was it?

Then, a gasp. A squeak.

Here it comes, I crowed to myself. About time...here it comes....

“He speaks FRENCH?!” sputtered my little friend.

What could I say? I just kept on walking.
Festival of Nations

Zaid Bangee | Grade 11 Student

We smile by Bharat.
Our community unites.
Colour all around.
MANY TYPES OF PEOPLE

Aadya Daruka | Grade 4 Student

In ASB, we welcome people from all around the world. From Alaska to Australia, everyone is important and special in their own way. We do not accept segregation. Mean and cruel words are not in our dictionaries.

Every year, we have a Festival of Nations (FON) to celebrate who and what we truly are. Every child chooses which country they want to represent. Then, on the day of FON, groups of children march on the stage dressed in their represented country’s clothes. After every group has marched, there are dances from the respective nations. After that, there are stalls from every country, and we can explore them.

Since ASB is in India, we celebrate Indian festivals. During Holi, we play with water guns and color. For Diwali, you might think we light fireworks, but we don’t. We celebrate by having a party in which we sing the national anthem, dance, eat special foods, and much more. Sometime we even have holidays from school.

In my old school, we had a Halloween parade in which we marched around the playground, showing off our cool and innovative costumes. Over here, we also have Halloween, but a better version! At ASB, we do it in the shade! It is so much better!
ASB has so many good qualities and one of them is no uniforms! We can wear anything, except party wear and spaghetti straps. On P.E. days, we have to wear the P.E. T-shirt and pants, which feel just like wearing your own home clothes!

ASB is so diverse. There is respect for every person who steps foot in the building. Cheerful and energetic greetings are all you hear in the morning with bright smiles all day long, and, to top it off, a happy farewell at the end of the day.
I’m going to start with a little of my own history. I was born and raised in a small city in western Montana. I’m a 4th generation Montanan who didn’t even have a passport until I was 20 years old. When people ask where I’m from and they hear my answer, there is usually a lot of confusion: how did I end up going from Missoula, Montana to Mumbai, India? That is a story in and of itself, but here is the condensed version… My journey to India and the American School of Bombay began in 1994 in a basement dorm room at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. That was the first time I met the man who would transplant me to India and become my husband. We came here in 2001 for what was supposed to be a short holiday, followed by a month of trekking in Nepal, a visit to Germany and then a plane back to America. Now it is 2016 and we are still here. Every time I meet someone new, they ask the question: WHY?

There are a lot of answers to that question. What made us stay in 2001 was not the same in 2002, 2005, 2010 or today. Our reasons for staying in Mumbai may have evolved over the years, but I know one thing for certain: ASB is one of the most important reasons for us wanting to remain here at least for the next 13 years and it all has to do with getting a good night’s sleep.

When our son was born in 2004 (and later our daughter in 2009), I did the same thing many other mothers living in South Bombay do – I registered
him for a very prestigious school. It was the same school from which my husband graduated, and had over 150 years of history. It seemed like a no-brainer when he got invited to the very exclusive pre-primary program of that school. This meant that he would be spared having to take an entrance exam at age five. So like any good South Bombay mother in her right mind, I did not lose a minute of sleep over our decision to put him in that school. I was confident in the same system that had produced my husband – after all, my husband is highly intelligent and successful.

Only, I wasn't a real “South Bombay mother.” I wasn't reared in a system of tuitions, memorizing things and piles of homework. For all its merits and faults, I remain a product of the American public school system. The tide started to turn for me when our son was in Kindergarten and First Grade. During that time, the teachers and other parents at school were obsessed with the idea that “the world is such a competitive place” and that we must teach our children to compete if they are ever going to make a place for themselves in the world. At this point most of the other children at school were doing multiple classes outside of the school day – soccer, violin, language, art, and parents were already engaging “the best” Hindi tutors for their children. For several months, this idea would keep rolling around in my head and keep me awake at night – am I doing enough to ensure that my children will be able to compete? Am I pushing them hard enough?

Then one day, just after my son turned 7 and was in the 1st grade, I was speaking to my brother. He lives in Germany and has two daughters in the German school system and we were discussing how his daughter was doing in school. I was amazed – not once during our discussion did he mention the need to compete. Instead, her schooling seemed to be focused on finding the right place for her and helping her succeed. During our conversation,
I had the sudden realization: is the entire world really that competitive? Even if there is more competition now (for college placement, jobs, etc.) was I doing the right thing being stressed out (and stressing out my child), trying to teach him to compete? Or was there another way?

For the next few weeks, it was no longer the questions about competition that disturbed my sleep. Those were replaced by new questions. Was the world of education heading somewhere else, away from memorizing facts and formulas, away from viewing classmates as competition whom you must outshine, away from viewing the world as a finite thing that you must fight to claim your piece of? If so, was the current school the best place for my children? What were the other options? I knew nothing of other schools in the city. I had been invited into one of the most coveted school and had never felt the need to look anywhere else. Where was I to start?

I started by building my argument for changing schools. I incorrectly assumed that my husband was happy with our current school and would want our children to continue there. In building my case, I toyed with the idea of homeschooling. Those who know me will laugh when they read this – I adore my children, but like most families, we do best when we are not together in an apartment 24/7. After much thought, I finally decided to broach the subject with my husband to see what he thought about the idea of change. Much to my surprise, he said straight away to move them to the American School. Now, I had not even looked at ASB because I wasn't sure of their eligibility requirements and the cost, not to mention the distance from our home. He told me that if we were going to move them from “one of the best Indian schools, we would only move them to best IB school,” and he would not consider anywhere else.
I sent an inquiry to the school, but did not follow up as I was still unsure if my children were eligible as long-term residents of Mumbai. I happened to meet another friend who had moved her children, and she told me how happy she was with the school. Finally, I took the plunge and made an appointment with Mary Kay, the Admissions Director. Not knowing what to expect, my husband accompanied me to the meeting. Little did we know that we were in for a wonderful surprise!

I remember thinking, as I walked through the door, “this is what a school should look like.” From that moment, I felt at home. During the tour, we saw kids moving happily around the school, teachers smiling and being respectful to the children, both adults and students asking and answering questions as well as art and posters on the walls that showed the school to be a happy and fun place. It was immediately apparent that the children were enjoying school, and that adults and children alike wanted to be there. I couldn't help but envision my children in this nurturing environment. My husband and I looked at each other and immediately asked, “how do we go about applying?” I still remember Mary Kay’s response: “So I don’t have to give you the hard sell?” This immediately put both of us at ease. We knew we had found the right “fit,” not only for our children, but for our family. We started the application process and brought our son in to see the school a few days later. He was also enamoured with the school and wanted to move that day.

So a couple of weeks later, on a Wednesday in the middle of February, we moved him into the second grade. The first couple of weeks were a challenge for him with missing his old friends and getting used to a different system (one where he was supposed to raise his hand to ask questions). But, he quickly settled down and within a month, when I would ask him upon his arrival home, “how was school today?” he would respond, “awesome!”
That was enough for me and my husband. What more could we ask for in a school?

It has been over four years since that first meeting with the admissions director and we have never been happier. Both of our children now attend ASB (our daughter started in EC3), and I no longer lose sleep over whether or not school is preparing my children for the future. I sleep soundly knowing that my children are developing the skills, courage, optimism and integrity to face whatever challenges life can throw at them. I am confident having them grow up believing not that the world is a competitive place, but a joyful one where they can make a difference.
My name is Sa Myoung and I am from Korea, but India is the country where I have lived most of my life. I love writing and so I decided to write an article about my life so far.

I was born in Jakarta, Indonesia but stayed there for only six months. After that, we moved to Seoul, Korea and lived there for around two and a half years. New Delhi was the first city in India that we moved to. I attended a British International School for a year and a half, then I came to Mumbai.

It was then that I joined the American School of Bombay, also known as ASB. It was all very strange in the beginning. India and Korea are very different places. One of the main differences was that the streets of India are very dirty, and the air has a lot of smoke compared to Korea. ASB, as a school, is also unique as they have carpets, special furniture, and cozy places to read called ‘caves’. The daily schedule is morning meeting, reading, math, snack, P.E., music, lunch, UOI (Unit of Inquiry), writing, and then it is the end of the day. It’s simple.

I don't remember much of the school in Korea as I was quite young then, but my sister, who has seen Korean schools more, tells me about it. Can you believe some kids in Korea are at school until 8 pm and later? My sister says it is also a lot of hard work, and it is very tiring.
The cafeteria in ASB has rules. The Sodexo people are so nice and they clean up for us as well. Lunch in Korea was eaten in class, and you had to clean up your mess afterwards.

The breaks are short and other activities are fun here at ASB. I love school here!
Every story starts somewhere. Mine starts in Potomac Maryland in the United States of America. My name is Hanaah Junaideen, and I am about to tell you the story that changed my entire life.

“Do you kids want to go on an adventure?” Those words started it all. A ten-year-old’s logic is pretty simple: Adventure = YES. So, of course, as soon as that sentence escaped my father’s mouth, I practically screamed, “Yes.” My siblings however, were a bit more practical – they said, “No.” I first thought, “why would they say no? Do they not like adventures? Adventures are awesome!” But then I realized what that adventure was. Moving... countries.

I am used to moving, I guess. I mean, I have moved from state to state, town to town, but countries? Nope! So as soon as I found out that we were moving to Mumbai, India, I changed my mind. I didn’t know much about Mumbai, but I sure did know a lot about India. Dirty, polluted, smelly, and crowded... To sum it all up, I didn’t want to move. I would miss my friends, my family, my school, and my house. I didn’t want to give all of my things up because of my dad’s job, but sadly enough, I knew that we were moving.

Guess what? I was right. As soon as my parents told my brother, sister and I that we were moving, my brother and sister were so happy. Do you want to know why? It was because we got to have phones and laptops. So my brother and sister spent the whole afternoon researching different phones and laptops.
While they were doing that, I was looking at the school we were going to go to in Mumbai – the American School of Bombay. While looking at a video on YouTube of ASB, I realized that moving might not be so bad after all.

Mumbai was not what I expected. For one thing, as soon as we got into the car and started driving, I noticed people sleeping on the ground with nothing but a thin blanket to keep warm. I looked away and tried to sleep, but the honking of the rickshaws and cars disturbed me.

We only realized when we landed that we had arrived on the morning of the first day of school. The day I arrived was the first day of 6th grade! I was so nervous, excited and scared. I had no idea what to expect!

Let's just say that I did not expect ASB to look the way it does. I expected long hallways, metal lockers, and the smell of old chapstick. But ASB was nothing like that. There were no metal lockers, but cubbies with locks, students all around, smiling and happy, and frankly, it just seemed like a really awesome place. Going up to the gym was pretty stressful for me. My parents were not supposed to come into the gym with us, so they had to wait in the atrium. I was kinda sorta freaking out. In the gym, I met my advisory. We did activities that would help us get to know each other better. Everyone seemed really nice and friendly. I was told that I would be spending a lot of time with my advisory, so I should get to know the people in it.

Great. I was only in Mumbai for twoish days, and I was already homesick. Potomac, Maryland was my home no matter where I lived. I vaguely remember that I was thinking about snow. In the winter time, it would snow a lot in Potomac. I recalled one day in December, three or four years ago. My driveway is pretty complex to describe, but you go up, and there are two different paths, one that goes around a garden type thing, and the other also
running up and down that same garden, but in a straight line that leads up to the garage. Anyway, the path that ran up and down in a straight line was kind of steep, so one snowy day, my brother and I decided to “sled” down our driveway. Our version of sledding was a bit different than how it is now. We took my brother’s skateboard, lay down stomach first on top of it, put our gloves and a helmets on, and WHOOSH! We went down the driveway on top of a skateboard with my sister recording it all. It went really fast, and it was really entertaining and enjoyable! Even though we probably looked ridiculous, we had loads of fun. As I was thinking about this memory, I realized that things wouldn’t be the same. Adjustment would have to take over from now on.

The following days were pretty crazy. My siblings and I went to school for a couple of hours to do more tests and to meet the school counselor. After all of that craziness, I finally started school.

Even though it was only a year and a half ago, I don’t really remember what my actual first day of school was like. However, I do remember vaguely that finding my classes was pretty confusing. I had art on the first day, so I had to walk up so many flights of stairs! Going to lunch was also really cool, because I got to sit with my friends, and we had the freedom of sitting wherever we wanted to, unlike the last school I was at. I met a bunch of new students and teachers, got a bunch of homework, and took the bus home. And guess what? It was my first day at school and I already felt at home.

Now you may be wondering, “at home?” how can a school make you feel “at home?” It’s possible! ASB is a lot different than any other school. You can show your originality, personality, and diversity. All of the students are from different places in the world. I find it very cool to tell my friends back
home in America that. Also, ASB has a different way of teaching. Unlike other schools, where the teacher drones on and on in front of a class filled with at least 30 students, talking about a seven page essay that they will be doing about World History, the teachers at ASB make learning really fun! (of course, with limitations.) In some classes you are allowed to sit with whoever you want. You can also sometimes go outside to work (which is very comfortable because of the pillows). And lastly, the teachers know how you learn. The classes are pretty small, so the teacher has time to go to each individual student to help, which I find very cool indeed.

At first, I didn’t know that ASB had activities and sports that you can participate in. But once I found out, I immediately signed up. It’s funny. The first season I participated, I signed up for badminton. Let me just say that I had never, ever in my life played badminton, yet I found myself a month later on the traveling team. That’s another thing I find really unique about ASB. If you walk into a sport not knowing how to hold the racket properly, the coaches train you at a good level, and they teach you; they don’t push or force you. They do whatever they can to help you get better. And that’s how, when I signed up for sports that I never knew how to play, or sports I was really bad at, I walked away either traveling, or not. Either way, I improved so much.

Friends. Friends are one thing that you can’t really “stick” to. Not meaning that you can’t have any friends. You should have loads and loads of friends, and keep in touch with them no matter what. What I mean by that is that at ASB, students tend to leave and come at strange times. If you get really close to someone in one year, they may leave that same year. It’s really sad to see them leave. I had to go through this. I came to ASB in 2014. At the beginning of the year, I became really good friends with a girl in most of my classes,
but she left at the end of the school year in 2015. I had other close friends, but she was one of my first friends at ASB. I obviously was sad – luckily for phones and social media, I still keep in touch with her to this day. Point is, just be prepared.

One quality of ASB that I really like is that you expect the unexpected – bake sales, festivals, new students, activities and much more make ASB so special. Also, no matter what friend ‘group’ you belong to, you have at least one thing in common with others in your grade. We are at a point of time where humans now rely on technology to do many things. There are many bad things about it, but there are also some good things. As I mentioned earlier, lots of people leave ASB at the end of year. It is hard to talk to them because of where they move? but there is technology to help you, both in school and outside. There is social media – Instagram being one example that helps us keep in touch with each other. There is also Skype, which can come in handy. These help us keep connected and be occupied with friends.

Throughout this experience so far, I have learned one main thing: Moving is a huge step in anyone’s life, as well as an adventure. I never expected it to be like this, but I just watched it all happen. I have not finished my stay in India, but my main piece of advice is to make the best out of a move. Good or bad, you moved for a reason. Experience the most you can, and have the time of your life.
NEW SCHOOL, NEW FRIENDS AND NEW TEACHERS

Youmin Kim | Grade 5 Student

On the way to school, when I was just a 3rd grader, I asked my mom.
“What is the school called?”

“American School of Bombay – ASB for short,” my mom replied.
I never went to an international school before. The only people and friends
that I am used to are Korean. Everyone I know is Korean. Nobody was
foreign except my English teacher. I have never met Americans, Japanese,
British, Australian, European, or African people. I also could not believe that
the teaching is all in English.
“This is going to be horrible, Mom,” I said.
“What makes you say that, Youmin? Be positive.” My mom was kind of
surprised by what I said.
“I don’t know anyone or anything!” I shouted.
I just could not be in that school. I was way too scared. I looked at the school
I was about to join. It was a huge, modern building and it said:

American School of Bombay

Wow, I thought. This is much better than my old school in Korea! I’m kind
of excited!

I took a deep breath and I walked into the school. Everything was new to me.
There is a lift in the school? Incredible! In Korea, we only had stairs!
I took the lift with my mom (then I found out that students cannot take the lift without an adult. What bad news!). We reached the 3rd floor. We went to 3A, and now I am a new student!

The teacher walked into the classroom. She introduced some friends to me, and she introduced me to some friends. I understood what they said, but not perfectly. They spoke too fast. There were two Korean boys who never ever helped me, even though I was from the same country. I know it is because they are boys, and I am a girl. I thought following what everyone else did was the right thing to do. They gathered at the carpet. I sat on the carpet too. They sat in a circle. I followed them.

“Good morning, boys and girls.”
“Good morning Ms. Bond!”
Oh, her name was Ms. Bond!
“As you can see, we have a new student, Youmin! Let’s welcome her.”

I did not know what to do. I looked around. American, Japanese, Korean, Indian…. They are new to me. I was so, so glad that I am outgoing, brave, and bold. If I was shy, I would have cried! Also, I was glad that I learned English as a baby so that I would not have any trouble in an international school in English! I noticed that there were some students who did not know English as much as me. I looked at the schedule on the board. I saw ‘snack/recess’.

What is ‘recess’ I thought. In Korea, there was no time for a snack, but there was a rest time – 10 minutes after one lesson. Oh, one more thing, they do lessons on the carpet! This school does not have math, English, or science books! Only notebooks? Weird.
During snack time, a few friends asked me where I am from, what do I like, or to say my name again. I became friends with one Korean girl and kept hanging out with her until we had a fight. My new school was kind of okay, but there were so many differences from Korea.

Recess: I kept wondering what it was, then I figured out that it was play time. I played ‘Don’t touch the Ground’ tag, which was too childish for me. In Korea, we got to play baseball or stuff which is not childish! But in this school they play tag? Feeling weird, I just played with them. The playground was humongous. Well, the field was smaller than the Korean School’s, but there was so much equipment that we could use. Awesome, but still new.

I knew I was going to get used to this. And, I was right. You see, Youmin, is now in 5th grade, has a countless number of friends, and is now used to everything about the school. Are you surprised? Is this the same girl mentioned above? Unbelievable! If you try to get used to new things, you will. Can you believe it? I’m really used to this school now!
A DAY IN MY SHOES

Naman Naik | Grade 3 Student

The worst news that I could get was that I had to change schools. Well that was exactly what I had to do. From my previous school to ASB! It was a Sunday afternoon and my Mom and Dad called me for a little chat in their room. They told me I had to change my school. I was surprised by the news and went into a state of melancholy. The next day at school, I broke the news to my friends. All of my friends were filled with sorrow when they heard that news. Trust me, I know how that feels. The reason is I felt exactly like that. This feeling subsided some time during my first day at the new school. It felt THAT good. The children and the teachers were really friendly. Also this new style of teaching is way better than ‘this is this’ or ‘that is that.’

Basically, a typical day at my previous school would look like this: we all come in the class and the boys, not counting me, were usually a riot. Then, the teacher comes in; she shouts at us. But only after that, we calm down. Later, the teacher picks out a child and he/she goes to the corner to read the schedule. While the child is reading the schedule, the teacher writes it down on the chalkboard. Then we all do what’s on the schedule until snack time.

At snack time, we go outside with our snack and eat it in the hallway. After we finish eating, we go back in for either music, drama, PE, karate, art, or dance. We don’t get to go outside to play! Can you believe it? No play and all work work work work!
Therefore, my favorite class was PE. I liked it because we got to play. The area where we could play was a parking lot! Also, PE was the only class that was active. Once two of our specials (the classes I mentioned before) are done, we go for lunch, and then it’s more classes in our homeroom. Finally, four classes later, we get to go home. We are separated into different buses. There is a bus marshal and a bus lady to take care of us as we go home.

A typical day at ASB is as follows. Just so you don’t get confused, ASB stands for "American School of Bombay." As we enter class in the morning, the teacher is always there to welcome us. If we come early, we sit in our swivel chairs and read at our smooth wooden desks. Once it’s 8 am, we go to the rug and sit in our circle spots. The teacher connects her laptop to the Apple TV and shows us the schedule for the day.

The schedule looks somewhat like the following. After three homeroom classes and one morning meeting, we go for snack. Then it’s two specials which can be either Music, PE, Art, Hindi, or TIG (Technology, Information fluency, or Guidance). Science is once a week on Tuesdays. Lunch in school is twenty-five minutes. Another interesting thing about ASB is choice time. This is a unique part of the day where we get ten minutes to do whatever we want, except playing computer games or talking. After choice time we just have three homeroom classes followed by closing circle. In closing circle we do an activity before we all disperse on separate buses. The ASB bus also has a bus attendant and a guard who take care of us on our way home.

Hmm …. let’s see. In my previous school, when we came in, there was sometimes no teacher, but in ASB the teacher is always there before us. So in my opinion, ASB is better when we come to class. Then the teacher picks out a child to read the schedule in my previous school, but in ASB, the schedule is already set up. So again, ASB wins. At snack time in ASB we go to the playground and first eat, then play. On the other hand, at my previous school,
we ate in the hallway outside our classrooms and then returned to class for our next session. Later, both schools have specials.

Lunch is served at both schools. In ASB we are free to get home lunch and excuse ourselves whenever we want to, whereas in my previous school, school lunch was mandatory. Once again ASB scores over my previous school. After lunch, both schools have homeroom classes, however I like the style of teaching at ASB more. At ASB, bus attendants monitor us constantly and care about our safety, whereas in my previous school bus attendants let us do whatever we wanted, even if it was unsafe. Hands down, ASB wins again. I now believe ASB is towering over my previous school.

In my previous school, I felt like I was learning a little in a lot of time, but I only noticed that when I moved to ASB. In ASB, learning is more understandable, and they give us work that is challenging. Another thing that happened in my previous school was that I suffered through a year of bullying, whereas in ASB, the teachers and students are more welcoming and compassionate. To add on, the teachers are more observant. This makes me feel more safe at ASB. In my previous school, I felt less healthy because the bus windows were always open. You might be thinking so what, Naman? What if the bus windows were open? The reason is they were open even if it was raining. Therefore I fell sick more often at my previous school. Last but not least, in my previous school we had to wear uniforms. This caused confusion in names. On the other hand, at ASB, we only wear uniforms for days when we have PE. To keep from having confusion in names, the PE uniforms come in different colors.

If I now go back in time, to that Sunday afternoon when my Mom and Dad told me for the first time that I was changing schools, one can conclude that I am currently feeling exactly the opposite. This experience taught me to be more open minded about new things and made me open to taking new risks.
Memories from the Road

Shanaya Panjwani | Grade 5 Student

I sat at my desk waving goodbye to two people I loved, not understanding the feeling inside me. Everything felt new, and I just didn’t know what to do. My mind was not focusing, my eyes weren’t looking straight, I answered all the questions wrong, and I knew...this is not me...Everything was happening so fast; my mind was whirling; I looked around and nothing was familiar. Hmm...this wasn’t what I was used to!

But life took a turn. Gradually, I started to get used to the environment. I didn’t stumble on words; I was so focused; and I answered questions I never knew I could answer. I reached higher and higher for that spark that I could feel lighting me up. I saw smiles; I got handshakes; my name got called out and I no longer jumped... I felt prouder and prouder of being here.

A year ago, July 2014, life was boringly normal. It was late evening, I slumped down at my desk at home in frustration, doing my homework as usual. I was feeling stressed. I didn’t know where my mind was and what I was doing. I wasn’t feeling comfortable at school. I felt that I had to second guess everything, especially how I should be learning and what the purpose of learning this way was. All of this was boiling away in my mind since no teacher would answer my questions. From then on I knew that either I had to change or I had to change schools.
My parents coincidentally had the same opinion. They were getting the feeling that I was not enjoying school and they felt that I had lost my sparkle.

Before I knew it, my parents had already checked ASB out and they gently told me that they were thinking of changing schools. I couldn’t believe it! A smile appeared on my face because I had been thinking the same thing for days. Though as the thought slowly sunk into my mind, I didn’t feel so happy leaving all of my friends behind and leaving where I was brought up. I hadn’t even heard of ASB before! I just didn’t know what to do. I felt stuck and a little scared, as though my brain had stopped working. I wanted to run and hide under my blanket. I was surely and slowly developing cold feet.

My parents saw I was getting flustered, so they put on a video which had students and teachers doing a dub-smash of the song ‘Happy!’ and I was speechless. I never thought things like this could happen in a school! It was friendly, colorful, full of energy and everyone looked happy and confident with everyone else. That’s it! That’s where I am going to go! These are the kids I will study with. The teachers seemed friendly and looked like they are interested in the kids. So I sat down with my parents and helped in filling in the application...and waited. I hoped I would get in but didn’t know for sure. It would really change my life, knowing that every morning I wouldn’t feel unhappy to go to school.

After about two weeks of waiting, the results were finally in, and the tension was at its most. Was I going to get in? If yes, how was I going to feel? I flipped open the laptop and scrolled to that email – the email that would decide my fate. It read, “Dear Parents, we are glad to accept your child to the American School of Bombay... your child may start on Monday.”
Yes! Finally, I knew that I was going to the American School of Bombay. I jumped with joy as soon as I heard the news! I felt my heart beat harder and harder! I had mixed emotions... a little sad leaving my friends and leaving that school and location. I also felt happy because I wanted to learn in a different way and discover more about myself. It was going to be a new experience.

I remember clearly what happened. I was introduced to ASB on a Tuesday, since on Monday I went to my old school and said goodbye to my friends. When I came to ASB, my new teacher told me that I was going to have a buddy who would help me around school and tell me how things worked.

As the first day of school went on, I realized I was having fun. I hadn’t thought that I would ever feel so happy about going to school! The reason ASB is different is not only because of the way they teach but because you get to interact with different cultures and learn a lot more about people from all over the world.

Something that is very embarrassing is getting lost. Don’t worry! Everybody gets lost in their first week of their new school. Finding your way around is one of the challenges of going to a new school. It can feel like one is in the middle of a geography test! I remember when in the morning I would come up the back stairs and then walk into a different classroom and then walk out immediately when everyone would turn to stare at this stranger because I had walked into a class that was not mine! How humiliating it was then! However, I now laugh at those embarrassing but funny moments.

Relating to that, the first few days of your new school may seem overwhelming. You might not know where to go. You might feel a little scared of doing extra things, like doing activities after school or signing up for classes or just raising
your hand to answer. My advice is to do those small extra things that will not only improve your grade, but will certainly boost up your confidence for the future.

ASB is a great place to not only learn academics but other things about yourself. I have changed a lot in the past two years and it has been a rollercoaster, but in the end I achieved a lot more things than I ever thought I would. So ASB has sort of changed me!

In ASB, I have been able to explore and understand my hidden talents – for example, writing. I never knew that I liked writing; in my old school I didn’t like it at all. This shows that the way people teach you is actually very important. I think that if you put your mind to something, you might actually end up doing it and really liking it.

In the past two years that I have been at ASB, some of the most memorable moments (out of the hundreds) are around exposure to real life experiences beyond the academics. Like when we had an hour long chat with an astronaut who was asked millions of questions by all of us, or when the rapper Nimo visited. He was spreading the message of kindness through rapping. In 4th grade, one of the topics was around the things that destroy the environment followed by a field trip to dying mangrove forests – what we read and learnt about, we now experienced.

I really look forward to running out of the school bus and up to my floor in time for our morning meetings. We all chat and discuss events that are scheduled for the day/week, followed by a puzzle that we solve together and end with a unique greeting and an energiser to start off the day.

The highlight of the last semester was the field trip to Magic Bus, which is an NGO that helps underprivileged kids learn physical education. This trip was
my first ever overnight trip, something that I really enjoyed because I got to stay in a dormitory. It is cool and fun to stay in a dormitory with friends, staying up when it was time to sleep, chatting with my friends and playing tricks on them. All the physical activities were really fun. Some were super easy for me and some tested my abilities. Importantly, it was really after this trip that I became friendlier with other kids from all over the 5th grade. This is only natural because when you spend a couple of days together, you really can chat as you go for long walks. I came back with new friends.

Everyone says school is very important, but what part of school is important? The teachers, the friends, the subjects, the games? To me, while all of this is very important, it is the way you learn that is equally, if not more important. At ASB, I have felt from day one that I learn because the teacher is interested in me and interested in making everything around me a good environment to learn in. I am being constantly challenged to think for myself, to discuss ideas, to research and plan. I am always encouraged to ask questions of the teacher and also to my classmates. My inquisitive mind has a happy time.

I look back at the last 18 months and when I think of my first few days at ASB, I am amazed that I actually felt nervous and unsure. Today, I know I chose the right school! Choosing the right school is difficult, and the way you know you have chosen the right one is when you get up at 6 AM in the morning without an alarm and rush to catch the bus to get to school... and you do all this with an eager and happy smile on your face!

This school has shown me my true self, and I now very much like what I see and am eager to continue to see a better me.
This is how my life goes at ASB

Arjun Prabhala | Grade 4 Student

Studio has a bunch of options,
Studio is cool,
But don’t bring your Shopkins.
Choose an activity that involves a pool.

You might ask your mom and dad, this one please?
Okay, but please don’t sneeze.

My life is fun at ASB.
I have lots of fun in PE.
There is gymnastics, baseball and T.T.
Who knows what other units there could be?

Math is like a mountain. Some units are hard, such as multiplication and division. Most units are easy. One of our biggest tests in addition and subtraction was the integer quiz. We had a big project in our multiplication and division unit called, The Big Dinner. Who knows what other easy and hard units we will have in math!

Writing is fun, but poetry is the best. We do poetry in our spare time. When we start writing, we do not want to write. When we end writing, we ask for some more time.
After-school activities are a time killer. Some educational, some fun. But beware on what days these after-school activities happen. One mistake and there’s no turning back. Be careful what activity you do. Once you confirm your selection, you can’t change it. Be wise and specific with what choices you make.

Recess at the Kohinoor field is more fun than our Grades 1-5 playground. In soccer we have bigger goals, no height fouls, and we are more competitive on the field than on our normal playground. Thankfully, a tennis court is there for the people who want to play any sport while we wait for our soccer supervisor. We also have a bigger space on the Kohinoor field. Can you imagine all the stuff you can do on the Kohinoor field for lunch recess?

This is how my life goes at ASB.
When I write, I hate starting at the beginning. But this is one instance when the context will help greatly. So sadly this time, let me begin at the beginning … I’m Indian, and a Mumbaikar at that. (I’m still not comfortable with calling myself a Mumbaikar. I’m a Bombayite, but that’s another story altogether.) Many moons ago, while I was single and fancy free, I was expatriated to Singapore. While there, I met my husband, who is Danish. The stars do align in the real world too, and he got transferred to Mumbai right after we married. I was ‘back home’ and a five-minute drive from my mum and dad’s home, the apartment I grew up in, in Bandra. Both our boys were born in Mumbai.

Now that you know this, you’ll already guess that my ASB story is a little different from the norm, in the sense that I was very familiar with the city and everything that it brings to you, or to put it another way, can throw at you. I knew where to go to source whatever I needed. I spoke Hindi. I knew the by-lanes in Bandra. I knew how things worked and how to make them work, and I had family and friends outside of ASB. There was no adjustment process involved. I was home.

And here’s the key … I loved being home.

I clearly remember my first day at ASB when we dropped our older son for his first day in EC3. He started mid-year, in January, after the Christmas
break. The first thing that struck me was the flags. There’s truly a magical, multicultural feel to a school that has so many flags colourfully beckoning you to join in. ASB was a single campus school at that time. I remember being in the then not-so-fancy (but always welcoming) cafeteria during the welcome coffee, and that my eyes kept getting drawn back to those flags dancing in the breeze.

But I also remember feeling very, very awkward and out of place, a very unfamiliar feeling for me. I remember there was someone trying to reach out to me and involve me in some conversation at that welcome coffee in the cafeteria. But while I made all the polite sounds back, I just could not connect or reciprocate any warmth.

It took a while for me to get over this feeling, of not being able to fit in, while being in my own city, in my own country, in my own neck of the woods. It is rather absurd to feel like a foreigner in one’s own country. But get over it, I did. And thank goodness for that! Because it was only once that happened that I truly began enjoying our life in ASB.

I think that what I cherish the most from our ASB days were the friendships. Not just with fellow parents, which you always know will happen, but with the teachers, teaching assistants and staff of ASB. I think ASB, more than any other school, threw open her doors to the parents. There were always so many of us around. In the pre-kindergarten years, parents were welcomed to come in and read, to share about local customs and traditions, to cook... anything really... and anytime. If as a parent, you could make time to come in, basically your ASB classroom would welcome you. This automatically led to friendships with the teachers and teaching assistants as a natural extension. I still consider so many ASB teachers to be my friends.
The other distinct standout for me was the support staff. The friendliness of the security guards, the bus assistants, the cleaners, the cafeteria staff, who would go above and beyond doing what their job entailed, hold a special place in my heart. I know I always saw them smile, I always saw them being polite, I always saw them trying to help me, or any other child or parent, as best they could. Being Indian, I know that most of these people have hard lives outside of their work life at ASB, and I still find it incredible that they would always leave that behind and come to school and help us parents and our children with a smile each day.

I read somewhere that a school is only as good as its teachers and staff, and ASB’s gold on that one. Or in India speak – ASB’s got that one in the bag.

I have so many memories from our ASB days, but one of my early experiences that I won’t ever forget was seeing children sprawled about on the carpets, lying down and reading or writing. I studied in an Indian school where the children sat on a chair or bench, with everyone facing the blackboard in the front of the classroom. So this was new to me. I remember walking into school early to pick my then EC3 son up, and wondering what on earth the children in grade 2 were doing.

I grew to understand and love what and how the children were taught. I grew to open my mind to other ways of instruction. While my second grader did his curiosity project, it helped trigger curiosity in each of us in our family. We all made a list of topics we were curious about and that we wanted to learn more about. Learning to learn differently from the way I was taught as a child helped me both as a parent and as a person.

One of the things I struggled with was the tidal movement of expats leaving each year. Every year, at that end of the school year assembly, where we brought out tissues and cried, my heart would break at seeing one or both of
my sons sad as his best friend was leaving India because the working dad or mom had a new posting. To every expat parent reading this, I must say it is this very thing that helped my children make friends so fast when we moved to Australia. Making friends easily is a skill too. You don’t get to practice this skill to the same extent if you are with the same group of children from kindergarten to graduation.

Which brings me to the day we had to leave. It was our turn. The day we left ASB, my husband, my sons and I started at the top floor of the new ES campus building and made our way down, meeting or trying to meet everyone who had taught, helped, or had an impact on us as a family. It was quite an emotional time for us. I know one of our boys just wanted to slip away. But I tried to explain to him that we couldn’t leave without saying goodbye, without thanking.

I don’t think we met everyone that day. It’s a bit of a blur. But I do think we met most of their old teachers. It’s hard to say thank you and goodbye to teachers who have helped mould your children into kind, more accepting adults; teachers who have played a role in them becoming the kind of adults we need more of in the world today.

We left India a year and a half ago, and just last night, my younger son took out his little green ASB book that he received from his last class teacher, Ms. Radha. There’s a picture of each child in his class on the left hand page, and a note from the child on the right hand page. I need to mention here that he was in kindergarten when we left and a lot of the “notes” are squiggles and not spelt correctly. But you can read love. Love does not need correct spellings or good handwriting. I think it’s my son’s favourite book in the world. He says their names and turns the pages.

And normally drops off to sleep with a smile right after.
This is my story: there is no gripping introduction, there is no beautiful imagery, there is no cliffhanger ending, there is not a rags-to-riches plot, there might even be some cliches, but I will be telling the bare truth, so make of it what you will.

On that note, let’s continue. The strange thing about the American School of Bombay, and all international schools for that matter, is that there seems to be a constant flow of people entering and exiting. Its people go by so fast that my six years seems like an aeon.

In the normal world, I would be a beginner (six years of experience isn’t enough to become a professional at anything). But at ASB, I would be considered a professional. An expert in befriending new kids and bidding farewell to good friends; even though it might be useless in the real world, I know I’m quite good at it. It is strange to know that I have watched some kids grow up and change. But I have. I have watched them come and go. I am a sign on a highway.

I started like many other kids, in a city that isn’t even remotely related to me. Hong Kong. Although I am Indian and go to an American School, Hong Kong is my birthplace.

I am now in the seventh grade, and I am thirteen years old, but even after all these long school years, I still remember my first moment at ASB. I arrived
at my school when I was six years old. I was introduced to kindergarten. You see, in Hong Kong, at the age of six, you are in the second grade. So when I was pulled into kindergarten, I went in kicking and screaming. Fearing that I would be forced to work with toddlers or something.

I walked into the classroom, with every eye in the room on me. As I walked to my cubby, the eyes of twenty six-year-olds persistently followed me. The rest of that day was a blur. Some people say I had a nose bleed, some people say I threw up and had to go home, but I remember it as the saddest, strangest day of my life.

As the school days vanished, the year grew shorter, every day became easier and easier. And before I knew it, the school year had passed.

When I came back, I starting learning more about my school. I learnt that you can sign up for after school classes, and bring your own stuff, such as pencil cases and notebooks.

I made friends, sat at different lunch tables, actually talked to other kids. I didn’t look or feel as weird as I did before. Many people started to actually acknowledge my presence, which was a start for me.

More years passed and more friends came and went. First it was one year, then two, then three. I was now in the second grade, I had made some friends and some enemies in those first years as an international student.

Some of the real fun came about when I was in the third grade. I met two boys named Zurich and Germany, and two girls named Delaware and Minnesota.

We laughed and accomplished together and they introduced me to the internet (and more specifically YouTube). Previously I was used to watching
TV, and in ASB we only used the internet for schoolwork. But now, I had a whole array of options to watch. I remember going to the library after lunch time, and watching YouTube videos and laughing till our stomachachs ached. We even made our own account to watch videos on. We were planning to also make our own videos, but unfortunately that never took off. I have very fond memories of those days.

I thought that YouTube would just be another internet fad, and would fade away quickly. On the contrary, it has stuck around, and has grown with me. The internet has made a lot of changes ever since I first visited it. We now have new ways of accessing our homework and schoolwork, and we have Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, and whatever version of the iPad Air Apple is making at the time you are reading this. I’m happy that it grew and hope it stays around for a long time.

Unfortunately the inevitable occurred and Zurich left, and then came fourth grade. After you pass a grade, you are told to become mature and disciplined. And fourth grade was no different, teachers were strict and “inside voices” were used. I met a boy named Jersey, who apparently had been in ASB since Pre-School. This surprised me because even after four years in this school, I had never met him before. This was yet more evidence that my journey in ASB was far from over, and I was still far from being an expert of international schools.

He and I had a lot in common, and thankfully we were both equally strange. We were both in the same reading group and had the “gift,” if you may, of comedy. We made each other laugh and made our friends laugh as well, but unlike some of the others, he stayed, and we are still friends.

On the first day of fifth grade, I sat on a table with Moscow. He was too hyper for his own good. He was the kind that you knew teachers would
hate, he talked too loud, and ran in the hallways. Moscow introduced me to his friend, Boston, and we got along as well. I ended up going to Boston’s house several times and sleeping over. I went to Moscow’s house as well.

Then one day, the only day I was absent from school in that entire year, a pair of American-Australian twins arrived. Both had blonde hair, both had blueish greenish eyes, and they were the complete opposites of each other. They had different personalities, different struts and different friends.

I was then going to Middle School with the American-Australian twins, Boston, Moscow, Jersey, and Minnesota, but unfortunately my good friend Delaware, the person I had seen movies with, the person I played pranks on, the person I always laughed with... had to leave. And we had to go to 6th grade without her.

I didn’t like middle school – at all. Not only were they strict, but the kids were older, the homework was harder. I remember coming back from school with headaches sometimes. I thought about myself, and I realized I didn’t like myself. That made me want to punch something... I wanted to leave, but I couldn’t leave.

For the first time in my life, I didn’t like school, and I genuinely didn’t want to leave my bed in the mornings. Hating your brain is not a good feeling. I felt I had a problem.

I can’t lie. I didn’t like 6th grade. But it got better. Somehow. Slowly it got better. My sickness of sadness was leaving me.

I made new friends named Peterborough and Abu Dhabi. They were both new students, new additions to our team. I met more people, and I had better
classes, and better grades. They improved so significantly that I ended up receiving the honour roll by the end of the year.

And now I’m in my final grade, and things are going better than ever. I am comfortably sitting, finishing this story, I have no thoughts in my mind, and that feels great. I still wonder about my next school, about the experience, and if I will be liked. But I know that if I’m ever feeling homesick, I’ll come back and read this story. I am finally leaving; I’m going back to my birthplace. My especially odd birthplace. And it feels incredibly strange. So let’s make a deal, I’ll continue writing, and continue enveloping myself in thoughts, and you can continue reading.
A heavenly smell wafts through our ASB school parent cafe in Kurla. Coffee is being brewed from freshly roasted beans hailing from all over the world. The crisp, strong, yet delectable aroma of coffee captivates us into having a ‘cuppa’ almost anytime of the day. (The blends of which bond and complement the intercultural exchanges which lead to deep friendships paving the way for planned play dates and lunches, broad learning about Mumbai and the world and a beautiful sharing of experiences.) These insightful experiences have created many unforgettable memories for the road of life.

Our resident coffee barista, Rajesh Bobade, takes this pleasing experience of coffee drinking to the next level.

He has deftly fashioned simple coffee making into an art form! Whatever be your mood of the day, Rajesh manages to stir up your senses and emotions with the right kind of cafe foam designs on your cappuccino. No one seems to mind even an occasional little delay. His designs never cease to amaze and have become an inherent part of our ASB community culture.

It is nothing short of one of the best coffees in town!
Artwork by Rajesh Bobade, ASB Barista
שלום,

אנו משפחתי ישראלי ושלו שלושה בני. הגודל בן 10, האmenoי בן 6 והקטן בן שנתיים. לﻔני כשנחנו הזוג ולצאת שליחות ב決め את המкли.

כשאש התינוlegen שנטע שליחות בו"ל שלחוית בוח"لعب וจำหนית מקדים.

בלשליחות הקודמת להם בין ביתורון הרבים שיש בחוויית השליחות לכל המשפחות, דבץ הראשונים המסתננים, שינו לבצוב החיצון, התמין של האין, הגרות תרבות והיתובית הילדיים לותרות.

┅וניים ושפים.

לפלי השליחות,.currentTimeMillisי על הוזא, המשתיי על טויל תרמיליאים

עדיר אאחי, צאא.

לא דminster את עלシー, עלシー, תחו שלーム עלי_then שנען זהול...羡慕י מואר הנבך על זהול, כלמקום.

היתובות בכרביוטי הקורנבה, הוסיפו לחפשותי, ישול על רמת למעון, הנבריאות, השמירה על העיין, ביז הספור והוד.

כר דבריקי ההיתובות גליתי, שמסור, היא על יער שלפני להאר, איתא איתא, צובעת בדימה, מואר צבועית ומעין, מואר שמחת, מואר רועשת.

ומאוז עדות.
בנוסף, גיליתי שיש בה הכל ובתחילה apresent ليיהנות בה, לחיות בה חום.
טובים והולים בה杉ר של מושחתה, קנים בוליות וטוליים.

mahger הראשהו, קודה הואר של, בומקארי ייהנה ב였 הספר.
האמוריה בוי למדא שין ילדי ושלידו.

 classNames והם מצטיינים, או שואים, צוות והורים מקסים, אדיבים.

tומכים ומתחבכים אחרינו, עבורנו בית, שני יוך תומכת ולא פגוע
החליפו.

עבורנ אוצ המשפחתיו והחברבים.

לבד הספר הגעני העיילד, כל ילד והורות לאיסוף אהוב אחים.
הצהרים.

בכל פתם השיגהתי לפני הספר, מצאתי קהליה של אימוס, שוטפת
לחותו, שופסו לחבורת טובות או מיתו לכלות, לקשים, לחלום, ולחיותית.
וז בעניין קודו התוספת של בית הספר שלחכי לוחמי התומך-
והכיר

נתראס שחלו החף את עצמו עבורי, למדרכחברתי תומך אווחב.

לכל אפרץ להוסף את העפעפיות המגננות שבי המספר עובר מעבר
למשלת

הלימודיים כלון: קיטנוט, מפגשים בשבתות, ליגת חדיה, מתעד.
המודניי, היגיות היגים משולים עוד.

אינו לי מוספים מילים להודות בית הספר על
כי שיקבל אתון והเลย עימו אהוב על כל המשפחתי.
KOREAN SCHOOL VS. ASB
한국학교와 미국학교의 공통점과 차이점
손종현  |  Jong Hyun Sohn  |  Grade 7 Student

ASB 학교는 기회를 많이 주는 참 인심 좋은 학교인 것 같다.

이 학교를 오기 전 한국에서 연탄 나누기라는 비디오를 봤다. 그때 나는 이런 활동이 각주구검이라고 생각했다. 하지만 이 학교에서 봉사활동을 할 수 있는 경험을 많이 생겼다. 나는 이 학교 학생으로서 봉사활동을 하는 것은 별로 좋아하지 않지만, 거리에 있는 노숙자들을 도와준다는 것은 참 한국인으로서 자랑스럽다고 생각한다. 그리고 Habitat For Humanity라는 유명한 봉사단체가 있다. 이 곳은 사람들을 위해 거주지를 지어주는 좋은 봉사활동 단체이다. 매년 한 번씩, 총 합해서 24명이 선착순으로 설문지를 내면 12명의 중학생, 12명의 고등학생을 데리고 빈민가에 가서 집도 지어주고, 페인트칠도 한다. 작년에 가보니 나쁜 경험은 아니었다. 솔직히 체력소모가 크고 힘들었지만 페인트칠을 하고 집이 완성되는 것을 보니 뿌듯했다.

국제학교에서 전학생들이 처음에 친구를 만드는 것은 극악의 난이도다. 하지만 영어로 의사소통이 가능하다면 그다지 어렵지는 않다. 3학년과 4학년은 조용한 나날들을 살아왔기 때문에 잘 넘겼지만, 5학년이 되어서야 금란지교(金蘭之交)가 필요하다는 걸 알았다. 친구가 없으면 중요한 일에서 성과를 보기 어렵다. 나이를 먹을수록 재능과 실력을 쌓아 성과를 이루어야 된다.

또 다른 점은 이 학교 교육시스템은 예상도 못할 정도로 한국과 다르다. 이 학교는 학생들을 자유롭고 재미있게 가르치기 때문에 학생들이 열심히 공부하는 미국학교이지만, 한국일 경우는 학생들이 모두 공부에 스트레스를
받으며 동고동락을 한다. 그렇다고 나는 한국의 교육과정이 잘못되어 있다고 생각하지 않는다. 단지 한국은 학생들에게 너무 스트레스를 많이 주는 것 같다. 그리고 이 학교의 또 좋은 점은 컴퓨터를 쓸 수 있다는 점이다. 컴퓨터로 모든 걸 해결하는 이 학교. 물론 몰래 게임하는 학생들의 문제도 커지고 있지만, 학교 선생님들의 감시카메라 같은 눈을 피하기는 어렵다. 또한 이 학교에서는 시험 전날에 침불안-식불감 하지 않아도 된다. 왜냐하면 사용하는 교과서 기반이 없기 때문에 평소에 열심히 수업에 참여하고 숙제제출을 잘하기만 하면 스트레스 받지 않고도 시험 준비를 할 수 있기 때문이다.

이 학교가 또 좋은 점은 방과 후 활동이 잘되어 있다는 것이다. 테니스, 축구, 농구, 배구 등등 다양한 방과 후 선택권이 있다. 만약 본인이 재능이 있고 열심히 해서 코치들의 눈에 띄면 빨리해서 다른 나라나, 다른 지역으로 가 그 나라에서 자신의 재능을 선보일 수 있다. MUN같은 좋은 방과 후 활동도 선출되어 다른 나라로 갈 수 있다면 학생에게 엄청난 좋은 기회라고 생각한다. 이 글을 쓰는 것도 Writer’s Club덕분이다. 글을 쓰는 것도, 책을 쓰는 것도 문장을 쓰는 것인 만큼 쉬운 일이라고 생각할 수도 있지만 그렇게 쉬운 일은 아닌 것 같다. 하지만 분명히 나의 미래에 도움을 줄 거라고 생각한다.

학생들에게 기회를 많이 주는 학교를 다니는 건 정말 운이 좋다고 생각한다. 연탄 나누기라는 비디오의 만남으로부터 이 학교에서 많은 경험을 할 수 있는 건 나의 삶을 풍요롭게 해 주는 굉장한 일인 것 같다.
The Indian Experience

Artwork by Eliza Mishler, Grade 12 Student
As I reflect on our family’s first year in India, it has been an adventure. In fact, our family was not supposed to move to India until Christina volunteered to accept an ad hoc assignment on a business trip in late September 2014. Imagine my surprise when she greeted me at the airport and told me that her vacation had become a house hunting trip. Needless to say, we’ve never turned down opportunities, and this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity we couldn’t pass up. To make life even more interesting, we decided to move by January 2015.

Though we’ve previously lived in other foreign countries, India is unique as there is no other country like her. Initially, all of our senses were overwhelmed, but as time progressed, we adjusted and blended into everyday life where our family appreciates the richness of Indian spirituality, culture, and especially the people. This has been the best move our family has made. With that said, I have borrowed David Letterman’s (US talk show host) Top 10 list and created the AiChang’s Top 10 list of “Only in India.”

Number 10 – Honking is a form of echo location whether you are 5 ft or 50 ft away, honking is mandatory.

Number 9 – Does “yes” mean “no?” No one ever says “no.” How can I tell if “yes” means “yes?”
Number 8 – Seeing the locals’ reaction when saying “Mujhe ullu mat banao” when the situation calls for it.

Number 7 – Scratching my head when my neighbor complained that the shoe rack outside of my flat caused the hallway to be dirty.

Number 6 – A small city means less than 1,000,000 people.

Number 5 – A wedding attended by 400 people is considered “very small.”

Number 4 – I thought my family’s “island time” in Hawaii was relaxed. India is even more relaxed – always add at least two hours (or two days) to a start/delivery timeframe.

Number 3 – There are bad monkeys here. Lock your possessions (especially food), or they will disappear.

Number 2 – You think you are “ballin” (living a good life) until you realize you didn’t have an elephant at your wedding.

Number 1 – Everybody is a cricket coach!

With the multitude of religions, languages, and people, India is a country that cannot be described by reading a book or watching TV, but rather a country that you must “feel.” India has taught our family many lessons and provided both professional and personal growth for which we are forever grateful.
Melodies, colors, rhythm – lack of it sometimes, careful trepidation when a step goes wrong and the following consternation from our teacher, Sam, albeit one put forth in a jovial manner, teamwork and hence the beauty and joy when the feet, bodies and arms sway in one tempo of the grand finale; all of us looking in the mirror in assuring glances that we did right this time and won! Bollywood Dancing Divas of Bandra are so much more to me than an effort to get my poor two left feet to perform in synchronization with my friends. It’s a celebration of joy, of beautiful friendships. It’s simply liberating!

To our team, our little group comprised of women from at least seven nationalities, it is like a biweekly ASBesque Festival of Nations. I have met some lovely ladies through this dance club started by Indy Aristidou that has helped me appreciate Bombay even more. It’s no fun loving a city if you don’t have friends to share your love with. The dancing spills over to love for gastronomical treats and discovering new restaurants, sights, and places of interest. In our dance club, we dance away to joy, to forget our worries and transform in that one hour to the starlets we so admire on the silver screen. I love our little microcosm and it’s happy, dancing inhabitants!
“Dance, when you’re broken open. 
Dance, if you’ve torn the bandage off. 
Dance in the middle of the fighting. 
Dance in your blood. 
Dance when you’re perfectly free.”

– Rumi
Dusty hot air
Cement truck
White feet asleep
Khaanaa (खाना) is to eat
Sonaa (सोना) is to sleep
Tairnaa (तैरना) is to swim, swim, swim, swim, swim.

Bajaanaa (बजाना) is to play (play an instrument)
Gaanaa (गाना) is to sing
Padhnaa (पढ़ना) is to read, read, read, read, read.

Naachnaa (नाचना) is to dance
Chalnaa (चलना) is to walk
Sab (सब) is everyone.
I jumped into the car. It was an eight seat Innova, which means it looks like the following: two seats at the front, three seats in the middle and three seats at the back.

I jumped in the back seat which is my lair in the car. My sister was on the middle seat and my parents at the front.

We were going on a ten-hour journey, and I hate cars! Yes, so much sadness! Well, I had to do the journey, so I was thinking to myself, “brace for impact, yes very big impact.” When I am in the car in the sun, I feel extremely sick, so that is what I mean by brace for impact.


I don’t usually dream, so I woke approximately two hours later. I looked out of the window ... there was some kind of bridge.

“Where are we?” I asked my parents.

“In Pune,” my dad replied.

“Ok,” I said.

I stayed up sitting and looking out of the window. I had a box of Tic-Tac’s, and I popped a few in my mouth. Ten minutes later, my dad asked for directions. The directions were wrong, so my dad just relied on Google maps.

“Two and a half hours,” my mom said.

“Seven and a half hours to go,” I thought to myself. Great! So, of course I lay right back down and I tried to fall asleep, but yes, everyone knows it. I could not fall asleep. “How brilliant,” I thought. Yay!

“Please put on the music dad,” I said. As a result, my dad did put on the music.

I then started to feel more and more sleepy. I gradually fell asleep about three hours into the car ride. I woke up. The car was at a full stop, so I sat up to see what the matter was. What I saw terrified me! It was a humongous, big, super large queue for a toll both. It was petrifying! After what felt like a million years (about fifteen minutes), we paid the toll, and we were on our way again. I got over my fear of long toll booth lines. I was feeling so happy. Well, not really, I was never actually scared of long toll booth lines.

Now we were on the freeway, and we were cruising really fast. One uneventful hour later, my fear came back; another toll booth line. We cleared that fairly quickly and soon it was go time.

“See the brilliant scenery,” my mom said.

I looked at the scenery; it was truly marvelous. I had no idea of where we were, and I did not bother asking because it was 99% a place I had never heard of before.

I slept again and it was seven hours into the journey when I woke up. Now we were passing corn field and farms.
“That is a corn field,” my dad said.

I looked out, I like corn, so the corn looked very good to eat. After some time, I realized that my dad had turned Google maps on, and when I asked him how much more time, he said one more hour! We were actually running ahead of schedule by two hours! I was so happy. Well, I soon figured out my parents were wrong. It took about thirty minutes. We saw this dome of a palace that my parents were telling me about.

“What is the name of the place again?” I asked.

“Bijapur,” my mom answered.

We parked in front of our hotel which made me happy because I felt like I was going to throw up in the car if we drove for one second longer.

We walked into the hotel and checked in. We went to the room, and I threw everything down and flopped onto the bed. I got shouted at and it sounded as follows, “AJ, you know you have to wash up before you can flop onto the bed.”

The next morning, we took a tour of Bijapur, and we saw a gigantic cannon and a palace with brilliant designs. Then we were off again to Hampi by road. The journey was about three and a half hours. So, it was all cool.

For the first hour, I listened to music and then I fell asleep.

Two hours later, my mom woke me up.

“AJ, we have reached,” she said.

I woke up with a jolt, I got out, and we went to our room. The hotel was awesome because it was made to look like a small village. The hotel had a
big field and we played American football. We had dinner and slept. The food was awesome, so I overate.

The rest of my journey is for another time!

I hope you enjoyed my personal narrative.
The first trekking day

“Mum, when are we there?” I asked. Today is the big day, my mum, dad and I were going trekking. When we arrived, there were no donkeys. I said “How are we going to carry all the tents and the food and all of that if there are no donkeys?” After half an hour the donkeys arrived. “Oh my God,” I said, “this will take ages because they did not put the luggage on the animals.” So that took another half an hour. Finally, they finished and we were good to go. STOMP, POMP, SPLASH, TING – we raced up the hill. I was huffing and puffing. “Oh my God, the track is three days long,” I thought. When we reached the first camp, the place where we put up the tents, I felt sick and vomited two times. The cook prepared our dinner and it was really nice, but I did not eat it because I still felt sick. When it was time to sleep, a part of the tent collapsed. Suddenly the wind started to blow. “FFF, FFF,” and it also started to rain. We quickly went in the tent. “All of this has to happen when I am feeling sick,” I thought. We were so tired that we did not care too much about our tent and fell asleep. We hardly heard the thunderstorm, the wind and the rain.

The second day

The next day I felt much better. I looked out of the tent: everything was white, all the mountains around us where covered with snow and … the donkeys were all gone. “No donkey, no hiking,” I said. We told the guide about
the donkeys. He said they will come back. “Sure,” I said to myself. We waited for two minutes and nothing happened. Then we waited for four minutes and still nothing happened. Finally the guide informed us that the donkey man woke up at four in the morning to search for the donkeys. After two hours we saw the donkeys coming up the path and with them also came the horse man. The donkeys got so frightened during the thunderstorm that they ran back to the village from which we had started our track. The horse man had gone all the way back this early morning to finally find the animals right at the starting point of our track.

My mum tried to explain to me why I felt so bad yesterday. This is what she told me, “We are so high up in the mountains that the air has become thin.” Anyway, the day went on and I ate my breakfast. We packed our bags and huffed and puffed to the next place where we again set up our tents. The trek took us six hours though for me it was six hours of an easy time because I was carried by a donkey. We went on and on till we had our lunch. Unfortunately, somehow the donkeys got hold of my lunch so my mum kindly shared her lunch with me. We went on and on through flower fields, and we also saw wild donkeys. Suddenly, we arrived at the camp ground.

My dad said that today he was going to show me how to set up a tent. I think he wanted to do that as he did not want to experience a collapsing tent again. We had our dinner and a very sound sleep. This gave me hope that the next day would be really great.

The third day

The next morning I woke up and heard “Moa, moa, moa! – What was that?” I opened the tent entry and saw that the tent was surrounded by sheep.
I pushed the sheep away and closed the zipper again. “That was close!” Again I opened the zipper of the tent entry, this time very carefully. I looked outside: this time there was not only one sheep, but I saw the complete herd of sheep. “Oh no, how am I going to get out of here?” I asked myself. “Mum, mum help me, I am stuck!” My mum helped me out. This time I was really hungry for breakfast. Finally, we went to brush our teeth at a mountain stream. The water was very cold. Again we packed our bags and continued our trek. I started riding on my donkey but it took only four minutes until the strap of the saddle tore apart. I almost fell to the ground. I asked my dad to carry me, but unfortunately he did not agree to this idea. We went on and walked down the mountain trails until we finally arrived at a village.

The donkeys did not fit through the small gate that was right at the end of the trek, so the guides decided that the donkeys had to walk up again and walk all the way back. I felt bad for the donkeys. IMAGINE if I had to go back all the way. I said “bye” and put a flower on top of their eyes and patted them on the back. Then I had to go too. We stopped at a temple where you could see many small Buddha’s. I joined some monks who played Badminton. I guess they had never played Badminton with a white boy, but for me it was special too.

Finally we reached our hotel which was called Iceland. I wondered if there was ice in the hotel. When we arrived at the hotel, I saw that it was made out of wood. It looked kind of cozy and cold. When we got in the room, I was the first one to go in the shower after three days and guess what, it was cold. It was not the best night I had in the holidays because my dad was snoring and you could also hear someone snoring next to or room. I do not mean just snoring, I meant super loud snoring!
After we had finished our breakfast the next day, we got ready to go to the highest road in the world. I think it is really cool to travel to get to know different places and to see how different people live in the world. Anyhow, this trek is different to other treks. We really had an awesome time. Traveling to places you have never been to and interacting with people you never would meet at home, helps you to understand how different the same world is all over the globe!
I was born in Melbourne, Australia before moving to India with my family. During my time in India, I have lived in Delhi, Jaipur and Mumbai and travelled to many places around this big country. I would like to share some of my insights and experiences about India with you.

India has more than one billion people and the population of Mumbai itself is greater than the whole of Australia. So, naturally, judging by the number of people living here, I needed to adapt to my new environment. The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists only 22 languages, but the 2001 Census of India has 122 major languages and 1599 other dialects. People in India mostly speak the languages Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odiya. The most common language in India is Hindi. When I arrived in India, I couldn’t speak Hindi at all, but I am now proud to say that I speak the language fluently.

I had a lot of help from a friend who lived in the same building in Jaipur. I would play with her every day and because she taught me Hindi and I taught her English, it helped me learn quickly. Also, at my school, I had a Hindi class each day and started to learn the language. I first started to understand what people were saying, then started speaking myself and then reading and writing. I also had a Hindi teacher teaching me for an hour a day. It is a funny story. He was our car cleaner and my mum didn’t need him to clean
the car anymore but didn’t want him to lose his job, so she asked him if he could help with my Hindi homework and teach me Hindi. Most car cleaners do not get many opportunities, but he turned out to be a star. When I told my friend how good he was, he also started taking tuition classes from him. He actually became a successful tutor! When we left Jaipur to move to Mumbai, I said goodbye to Sunny-sir. He had become a really good friend and mentor.

The activities in India that you can do are many. Some of them I have tried are horse riding, roller skating, biking, playing guitar, soccer and cricket. I joined the Rajasthan Polo Club and learnt to ride at a horse riding school. For three years, I spent each day with different polo horses and it was a great experience. Some horses were stubborn, some others smooth riders and some easy to canter. My favorite horse was Steel; he was white and could understand me well. He was easy to control, but I felt like I wasn’t always the master, nor was he. He was a fair horse, and I could ride him any day. Suraj was moody. He bucked me a few times and even crashed me against the wall. I did jump off him once when I thought he was out of control. The real reason I jumped was to maintain my track record of never falling off a horse. You can understand why I was afraid of going back on Suraj, but the coaches still made me ride him from time to time. I noticed that they all have different personalities, and you sometimes can’t predict animals.

Most of my coaches and trainers lived with the horses; they had a tent just next to the stable. So, when they wake up each day, they can feed and care for the horses. It is a bit of a tough life for them; they are very dedicated to their jobs. I liked all my coaches and appreciated what they did for me and the horses. I liked watching polo matches at the weekend; horses riding at full speed, thundering down the field, are thrilling when you watch them live. Many of the polo horses are ex-race-horses, so they are very fast on the chase.
I would highly recommend you go join or watch the sport of polo. Take the time to have lunch or a drink in the historic Rajasthan polo club lounge that overlooks the field. Horse shows came to town as well, with dancing horses and acrobats from the military regiments. The military riders are agile, standing in the stirrups, jousting and picking up flags from the ground. They are exciting and entertaining to watch.

Guitar is also a good activity to do because you learn to play a new instrument. I started playing the guitar when I was seven years old. My first guitar teacher’s name was Joseph and he came to my house twice a week for lessons and made sure that I practiced every day. In India, music is often taught and played without music, so I learnt the guitar from my teacher by memorizing tunes and notes. He taught me a combination of Indian and Western music and my favorite song was *Jai Ho* from the famous movie *Slumdog Millionaire*. I like this song because of the fast rhythm. It felt good when I finally memorized this song and performed it at a competition. I started the guitar because I liked the idea of being a famous rock star, and it’s a lot of fun. Mum has taught me how to read music, so I can now choose the songs I like to play. I still play through the ASB school programs and enjoy learning new music. Joseph, my teacher, has a very calm and cool personality.

Some of the other people I have met in India are often short tempered. I have many friends that live in my apartment block and initially it was a shock to me that everyone was screaming all of the time. However, I have now realized it is usually not a major thing that leads them to get aggressive. It becomes normal to raise the volume, one screams, the other screams back and they all try to scream over each other. Everyone wants to get his or her voice heard, so the result is a high decibel encounter. Followed by a push, a punch and possibly a kick. One guy will eventually shout the loudest and he seemingly
“wins” the battle until someone calms everything down. Some of the reasons for a shouting session could be fouling or missing a goal in soccer, cheating in any game, damaging someone else’s property (bikes), disagreements about anything. I believe that the moral of this story is try to blend in with the group, so you don’t get left out. If someone shouts at you, the best tactic is to get your friends and allies on your side, so you have a powerful argument. The right person doesn’t always “win,” it is the art of the negotiating battle that determines the winners.

I often can’t sleep at night because there is so much noise; children are playing and other things like parties, weddings, car horns or animals. Usually I put the air-conditioner on to drown out the noise. Even in winter, this gentle hum somehow helps me forget about India’s noises 24/7. When I go to Australia, the dead silence is weird at first, but then I have the most restful sleep.

I have had an excellent time in India and have learned a lot over the past few years, and now I also have another language to talk with my friends, parents and relatives.

Thank you for reading my story. I hope you have a chance to visit India as I did.
Life in Mumbai

Artwork by  Adit Ambani, Grade 11 Student
Bahasa

Setelah hampir 10 tahun tinggal di Mumbai, kami melihat banyak sekali perubahan positif yang terjadi. Singkat kata, dari tahun ke tahun kami sekeluarga makin merasa nyaman tinggal di Mumbai.


Dari tahun ke tahun kami makin mudah mendapatkan barang kebutuhan sehari hari. Salah satu contohnya adalah tahu atau tofu. Sekarang tahu sudah menjadi barang yang lumrah tersedia di rantai supermarket ternama. Demikian pula dengan tersedianya berbagai jenis sayur sayuran seperti sawi
hijau, sawi putih sampai kangkung. Pokoknya kalau anda ingin memasak cap cay cap cay saja sih bahannya tersedia dengan mudah.

Kami melihat di Mumbai banyak orang yang sayang binatang, hal ini membuat binatang menjadi tidak agresif dan sangat bersahabat. Kami sering berinteraksi dengan anjing jalan. Tetapi jumlah binatang yang berkelar dari jalan memang terlalu banyak. Dari anjing, kucing, sapi sampai burung dara yang membuat lingkungan kota menjadi kotor.


TRANSLATION (My Mumbai)

After having lived in Mumbai for ten years, we have seen many positive changes in this city. To make a long story short, each passing year our family feels more and more at home.

One of the things that has improved, is the traffic. Ten years back, I felt that about 40 percent of the roads were either under construction or in very bad condition. Just imagine that there was bad traffic at every corner and junction. It used to take us about two and half hours to just travel to Sobh Haji Ali from Powai. Whereas now at the busiest time of the day, it takes a little over an hour to travel the same route. It seems that there is lot less traffic now. The traveling time to school for children has also decreased significantly. As a result, they have more time to play, rest and study. It is indeed a great achievement by the road department, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)

Every year that goes by, there is an improvement in the availability of South Asian food and vegetables, especially tofu. Now, almost every other international supermarket seems to sell tofu, Chinese cabbage, pak choy and morning glory. There are lot of things you can order and bring to your doorstep as the delivery services are fantastic and hence we have the opportunity to do many things at home.

Over the years we have noticed that there is greater emphasis on care of stray animals; in return the stray animals seem to live in harmony with humans. But there are still many stark issues like cleanliness and control of stray animals, that need to be handled.

Bollywood movies generally portray a lot of energy and color with dancing but in real life. Is it true? After watching these movies, the real life parties in comparison, seem a bit lame.
我们的司机叫Sharad，三十出头，不过看起来像是四十出头的样子，Sharad来自于马哈拉斯他州的帕天，一个在大山里的小村子，他和他妻子还有三岁的儿子住在孟买。Sharad跟我们工作已经有快四年了，回想当时雇到他也是缘分。三年前我们以前的司机嫌公司老加班太累，拿了当月的工资后第二天辞职不干了，我们急忙要招聘新司机，可是匆匆忙忙到哪里去找好司机呢，我们面试了若干个都不满意。

有一天，我在家楼下的大厅里看到邻居的司机，他有五十多岁，看上去和蔼可亲的，我以前从未见过他，但不知为什么，感觉他很可信，于是就跟他讲我们要招聘司机，如果他有朋友找工作，可以向我推荐，他说好的。我于是回到家，没过一会儿门铃响了，有人来应聘，我问他怎么找到这里的，他说他正在旁边小区找工作，碰巧遇到了那个老司机告诉他我们这里招司机，就跑过来了。他说他也不认识那个老司机，也忘了问名字，只道了谢谢就来应聘了，这个来应聘的人就是Sharad。

那时候我们还住在新孟买，Sharad住得离我们不远，上班很方便，他从不迟到，也很喜欢加班，因为加班可以多赚些，我们都很喜欢这个勤勤恳恳工作又诚实可信的老实人。可是这样过了半年后，我们因为公司办公室搬迁的缘故要搬到powai区去住，从新孟买到powai还是很远的，我们正在担心会失去这个好司机的时候，Sharad做了一个让我们很吃惊的决定，他们全家也跟我们一
起搬到靠近powai的地方，这样他还可以继续为我们工作。我和我的先生都非常感激这个朴实的中年人。就这样Sharad一家搬到了离我们住的不远的地区，他继续为我们工作。当我们向他表示感谢的时候，他说：没关系，他和妻子也想搬到powai周围住，因为他们是山里人来到孟买大都市的，多住些地方可以更好的感受孟买的都市生活。而就在他们搬到新家不久，他们的儿子也出生了。Sharad好开心，每天乐乐呵呵的。

Sharad工作勤恳，尤其喜爱加班，按照他的薪水标准他应该生活无忧，可有段时间他突然开口向我的先生借钱，我们很吃惊，因为Sharad跟我们工作了一年多从未向我们借过钱，而且这次数字还不小，于是我们问他为什么要借这么多钱，Sharad这才跟我们讲起了他的家庭。Sharad出生于一个山区的贫苦的农民家庭，他的父亲成日酗酒；因为他的姑姑生了五个女儿，且家庭也很贫困，没钱嫁女儿，于是就把二女儿许配给了他，所以他的妻子实际上就是他的堂妹（这种近亲结婚的现象至今在印度还是非常的普遍）。Sharad和他的堂妹成亲后生了一个男孩，可是这个可怜的孩子因为是近亲的缘故，出生后就患有先天心脏病，Sharad这次借钱就是为了给他的孩子治病。听了他的故事后，我才明白为什么他总是很节省。为了帮助他度过难关，我们借钱给他。不久后我们得知他的儿子经过一段时间的治疗后渐渐开始好转，我们由衷得为他高兴，往日的笑容又回到了Sharad的脸上，他说感谢神的保佑！而他后来也通过自己勤恳的工作渐渐地把借的钱又都还给了我们。

虽然自己生活不轻松，可Sharad还要照顾他在山区村子里的家人，他经常寄钱给家里。我们搬家的时候由于新房间户型的关系原来的沙发不能用了，就给了Sharad。过了很长时间，有一天他来感谢我，说我们给他的沙发，他父亲很喜欢，每天躺在沙发上面看电视，都不出去喝酒了。原来Sharad把我们的沙发托人辗转运到了他山里的老家，他说他们的家人从没有过这样好的家
具，邻居和亲戚们都上门来看，哈哈！他居然把那么大的沙发运到了山里，这太令我们吃惊了！

我有一次问Sharad关于他的家乡，他说那是个景色非常美丽的村子，人们纯朴善良，只是山里交通不发达，人们还是很贫穷，他说他很想念家乡的亲人和美景，但他也喜欢孟买的繁华与现代，他不后悔来孟买追随自己梦想。
A BIKE RIDE, OH MY GOODNESS

Nickole Backman  |  Grand Parent

I love my bike. There is just something about riding it that makes me feel young and free. Wind in my hair, pedaling, able to watch the world as I go. My husband gave me a new bike for our anniversary, and it is bright blue, the color of sky, the color of love. We planned to ride together, but he has rarely gone, but me, I rode pretty much every day in Arizona and St. George. Even when it got colder, the bike was the place I wanted to be each morning when I got up. It was part of my routine. I didn’t tackle long rides or high hills, but I rode the bike trails in St. George and pedaled every day to the gym in Arizona. Traffic was not an issue. Life was good.

So, when my daughter said not to bring my bike to India, I was so sad. She said there would be no place to ride it and so reluctantly I left it home, to be used another day, in another life. When I arrived here, I realized quickly that she was right. Biking here, like walking, is not a pleasure sport. People bike to get themselves from one place to another, and it is not for the faint of heart.

Bikes here are old, rusty, brought from the war someplace where they were dented and bumped and kicked and barely able to roll along roads. My bike would have been stolen immediately because it is shiny and new, and it looks great; you want to get on it and rush off to someplace, any place. So, last week when a bike tour appeared in the newsletter, I was in! It said not to bring children because they may not make it the thirteen miles required for
the trip. A helmet, snack, water, and lunch was included. Plus it was in South Mumbai, by the ocean, no hills. By then I was really in.

Let me just say, I had a wonderful vision of my morning on the bike. I said to myself, this is a sponsored tour, with guides and trails to follow. My daughter’s first response was, “You’re not going to be riding in the streets are you?” And I replied, “Of course not. This is a guided tour. They have a plan I’m sure.”

My plan was that we would be riding on the wide walkways along the ocean, dodging only pedestrians and small children. In my mind it all sounded quite
nice, pleasant, cool, a good way to spend a Saturday morning. I secured a ride to the pick up point with a neighbor, and so had absolutely no pressure in the planning. It sounded good, and I was on my own.

8:00 and we arrived at the spot, on the walkway, next to the ocean - all thirteen of us. We selected our bikes, which were nice by the way, and our helmets. We adjusted the straps of our helmets, the seats, higher or lower, and we were ready to go. Our guides told us to for sure ride single file, stay close to the side of the street, and we would have a leader in front and in back. Have a fun time they said.

I realized immediately that we were not going to be riding along the cement walkway; bikers were not wanted there. Our guide in front took us out into traffic. Still, I was optimistic. We had a leader; he was leading us somewhere; he knew the area. It was early; the traffic was just getting worked up, starting to honk, crowd each other, push to get ahead. At this point I could pedal steadily and ride forward, staying behind the person in front of me. That was the other thing they said, stay at least four feet behind the rider in front of you in case you have to stop suddenly. I could do that, I thought, that is not a problem.

But then, after only a little pedaling, we were to cross our first major intersection. We had to have our wits about us, our focus sure. The guide actually went mid road for the first of many traffic stoppages. He blew his whistle, made us walk our bikes, and held his arms up to stop cars. Everyone honked at us, started nudging ahead, wanted us out of the way. But we made it, we forged ahead.

From that point on, it was an adrenalin rush, just to keep myself focused on my job - to stay alive. I was now officially part of the crazy traffic mess,
forced to suddenly stop when a scooter would pull in front or a pedestrian would dodge a car that was next to me, forcing me to the side. Many times I barely missed being bumped over by a car side mirror, another bike carrying wide loads, or a box in the road. I said to myself I will not be afraid, but I was. For many reasons, afraid that I wouldn’t be able to stay upright because I was continually stopping, afraid trying not to run over the bike in front of me, afraid that a scooter would knock me down, afraid that actually a car would hit me! Where was the quiet, peaceful ride I had envisioned? I was struggling for my life for two solid hours! My arms ached from the continual stopping and holding myself upright; my legs were exhausted; I had scrapes everywhere from my pedals banging me as I suddenly stopped. It was pretty rare when we could actually ride steadily and stay in our line as expected.

Then we stopped for the included snack. Once again, I had a vision of a crunchy granola bar, an apple, some grapes, whatever, snack food. In reality, we stopped at two prearranged street vendors handing out Indian rice cakes. No way would I be eating from a street shop; I have enough trouble keeping my system running in a normal way without eating food from a tin plate washed in a bucket.

My son-in-law had lived in India 20 years ago for an extended time in service to his church. He and his companion rode their bikes everywhere. Three months after he returned home, a church leader in charge visited India. Once he actually experienced the traffic and saw bikers riding amidst the crazy car madness, he quickly declared bike riding was too dangerous for the young religious companions to continue! My son-in-law questioned why that had not happened sooner. Once he got home, he was done with riding, and even now, he rarely does it, and never happily. I could identify. At the end of our ride, mentally exhausted and hot, I could have walked away from my bike
and never looked back, never pedaled again. But, once I got home, on solid ground, away from honking horns and obnoxious scooters, my brain could again think in positive ways. So, I am optimistic, hopeful that once again, in the States, on manicured bike paths, I can pedal with wind in my hair, feeling carefree and young! I have to feel that is possible.

Actually, all of us at the end of the ride agreed, we were glad for the experience. We had faced danger head on, all around, and come away victorious! We had passed many interesting places like the red light district, in which we were warned to be careful, take no pictures, and the famous outdoor laundry which was quite amazing really. But, we were also glad we were done, and glad we wouldn’t be going again any time soon. I have definitely hung up my biking pants for while.
CARTER ROAD

Zaid Bangee | Grade 11 Student

Lazy Sunday stroll,
Seeking my catch of the day
I find so much more.
The moment I step out of my home,
Climbing onto the ledge,
Into the car,
I feel it.
The feeling of stepping into a
Different world,
As if taking my first steps as a
Tiny baby,
In my new home,
Not knowing where to go,
What to do,
But eager to find out,
Explore,
Play,
And most of all,
Imagine…

Strapping on my belt,
As if being protected from what’s out there
In the world,
But in my head,
All I want
Is to explore, play, and imagine!
Looking out of the window,
What fun I see,
Like dancing in the freezing cold rain,
I get cold feet.
But they don’t care,
They don’t care,
They don’t care,
Prancing all around,
Wait a sec,
What’s that all about?

I see a big shadow
Covering my car,
I look up,
I see it,
A cow?
In the middle of the street?
Wow!

All the colours,
Of the beautiful sarees,
The fresh, ripe fruits,
They catch my eye,
Oh yes they do.

The dogs,
The dogs,
The dogs,
Staring up at the cars,
Barking out,
What do they want?
What do they want?
The smiles,
Oh,
How do they feel?
Their teeth shining in the morning light,

I close my eyes,
taking it all in,
But it’s too late,
We’re at school again!

I’m out of that world,
But not for long,
Cheerio Mumbai!
I’ll soon see you again!
A familiar whistle of the train echoes in the distance. The sign boards of an era gone by clinging to a decrepit infrastructure. The people who have probably been using the electric train station for generations, wait for their next connection. A connection that could give them more solace then the earlier ones. As the trains constantly rumble in and out, it feels like almost a million people in there.

The multitudes deftly run clinging to their belongings. Hawkers trying to make a decent buck by shouting catchy phrases to sell their ware. There are local foods like Vada Pav and Behl Puri in abundance by the platform. Every corner of this station tells us a story. Newspapers, stacked or strewn with the miserable lot of lives under them, paint a pitiful sight. Beggars, peddlers and salesmen seem to actually share this space with the passengers for a good twelve hours of the day.

On one such occasion, I chanced upon Dadar station at a busy hour and was shocked to see the masses being swept in and out of the trains. A bystander said, “just get in the crowd, you don’t even have to walk.” I realized then, this ride isn’t for the faint hearted. Be prepared for a roller coaster type of entrance and exit. Adrenalin fills my body with a new found energy and sense of adventure. The flow of people seems to be akin to turbulent waters caught in the whirlpool of life. Every categorized Indian middle class person can actually connect to this picture. About a diligent thirty percent of them!
I almost try to resist but the crowd sweeps me into the train. It is jam packed and bursting at the seams! Barely a handle bar to hold onto at the corners, but I’m listening to an interesting crowd. The number of languages I hear is amazing. Colloquial discussions on sport and Bollywood are the frequent bits of conversation but rising prices and shortages also dominate some of them.

On the train, you get people selling a variety of goods. Hairpins, packed diced vegetables, cloth, stickers and snacks. Interesting sounds and noises clutter the air. Children seated precariously by the door watch the interesting sights. A banker could be next to a painter, a cook, a fruit seller and possibly a manual laborer, but they all have a sense of camaraderie when it comes to the electric trains.

There was one interesting character who was worth mentioning, the kind that most of us have met at some point in our lives in India, ‘Mr. Know it all’. His very presence in the train attracts attention and brings forth some listeners. This loquacious kind seems to have a take on everything in life and has readymade solutions to the tired eye. Truly a man who can advise you in topics as diverse as laptop prices, education, vegetables, foreign travel, politics and at times even child rearing. Switching between Marathi and English, he really entertains. I wonder if he even has a ticket.

The noise levels must be already way over international permissible limits; everyone is getting squeezed to a pulp, about two hundred pairs of eyes staring at me, but I must say, I have actually enjoyed this ride. I radiate towards the entrance six stations later, and then am swept off my feet again to exit the train. A bit dazed, I smirk and wonder as to when I may take a ride on the electric trains in Mumbai again. The chaos and time delays stun me and yet
everything seems to be like clockwork. A sort of dynamism is present in it. It has been a truly unforgettable experience for me.

I finish by quoting a famous American historian, Henry Adams

“CHAOS OFTEN BREEDS LIFE, WHEN ORDER BREEDS HABIT”

I believe this totally applies to Mumbai.
HOME SWEET HOME MUMBAI

Yuri Huele  |  Parent

When we arrived at the airport in Mumbai after a wonderful 3 weeks holiday in Holland in January 2016, I said “we are home, our home in Mumbai.” And I felt “my sweet home Mumbai.”

I do recall that I did feel different a few years ago when getting back to Mumbai. It was something like, “oh no, here we are again. Why did I have to come back to Mumbai?” and I must admit that I was unhappy coming back to Mumbai after a holiday, at least for the first few years. It even took me a few days to recover from holiday mood to get back to life here. I sometimes wondered why I just came back to Mumbai. It was difficult to deal with now everything seems so against me? Mumbai is not the best place to live as a foreigner nor is it an easy place to get used to. However, it is not all bad. It took me a while before I began to feel comfortable about everything around us. I can now say “Mumbai is my sweet home.”

What do you think changed for me? How did Mumbai become so friendly all of a sudden? I will tell you my story and how I am better adjusted now.

We are a family of 4, my husband is Dutch and I am Japanese, our son is almost nine and my daughter is six years old. We have been in Mumbai since September 2010. My son started with ASB in EC3 and is now in Grade 3 – he believes he will finish all his schooling with ASB, but I am
afraid that might not be the case. Anyway, this is our 6th school year in Mumbai, definitely longer than some of the other ASB families.

As I go back to back to 2006, we were still living in Costa Rica – amazingly nice weather and a very relaxed pace. Everything was “Esta bien. Hasta manana”; if I translate it into English, it sounds like: “It’s ok. See you tomorrow”, but I think people actually mean “everything will be just fine” – well at least, that is how it sounded. This scenic country had a lot to offer.

We lived in a beautiful house surrounded by a lot of greenery. That was the time I got pregnant with our first baby. Before I got too big, when I was about 5 months, I went to Japan for a holiday. Then one day, just like every other day I received a call from my husband at Costa Rica and he informed me that we would be moving to Chennai in two months.

A week later, I was back at Costa Rica and getting ready for the move. Moving to Chennai wasn’t our choice but we moved. We both had been to India and so I should have known what India was like. What I didn’t know was that you have completely different reactions or thoughts when you see something during a visit to the place as opposed to when your living in it. For example, when I saw a cow walking in a street for the first time in India, I thought “wow, a cow is walking in a street!!! It is India!” Surprised but joyful was my reaction. However, when I saw the same in Chennai right after arriving at the airport and on the way to our hotel, I thought “Oh dear...a cow in the street. Is this going to be my life every day? Shocked and worried were my feelings now. That was exactly how my life in India started...

Remember, I was pregnant. This didn’t help me much emotionally to remain optimistic with everything I saw and experienced at the time. But life goes on and our son was born in March 2007 at a local private hospital in Chennai.
He was a big and healthy baby and I was a little happier. We lived there for about a year and a half, and then moved to Cairo in Egypt.

All I would like to tell you for now is that I made a promise to myself prior to leaving Chennai to never return. “Bye bye Chennai, Bye Bye India.” Of course I had no clue that we would return to Mumbai only two years later.

We moved to Cairo; our life was rather calm and I kind of enjoyed living there. Once again, I kind of knew that it was coming soon and then, one day, my husband came home with this look; I knew that he was going to tell me something that I wouldn’t like. He said, “I have got a better job offer. A very good one and I would like to take it, but...it is in Mumbai, India. I know that you didn’t like Chennai, I didn’t either. But Mumbai is different; a much bigger city, things will be different.” He was telling me how nice Mumbai is compared to Chennai.

Silent, probably only for a few seconds, then I said, “Okay, let’s go.” I couldn’t believe what I had just said to my husband. I was telling myself, ”Are you crazy? Moving to Mumbai? Have you already forgotten how much you hated living in Chennai? Within a few minutes, I started to hear many voices in my head. However, something was telling me that we should go. Well, I was right! Cairo soon became a very dangerous place when all those revolutions started and the city became a mess. We left just in time.

Now how did our life in Mumbai start? Our son was 3 years old and joined ASB in September 2010; our daughter had just turned 1. I knew what India was like, so I didn’t have a difficult start. But Mumbai was not that easy, having a little one who still needed diapers and baby milk formula at that
time. When we came to Mumbai six years ago, there was no Starbucks and coffee beans weren’t widely available, so it used to be our top 10 items to bring back from home-- not many big shopping malls, only the Hyper city in Malad and the Phoenix Mall in Lower Parel. Seriously, I constantly chased diapers, baby milk powder and made sure that I had good stock at home.

Our first apartment was located in Bandra, one of the busiest intersections was just around the corner. You couldn’t have a quiet day as the noise of rickshaws, cars honking and construction was somehow always there or somewhere nearby or even just the noise of neighbors in the building. Our Mumbai life started like this, just like everyone else.

I was not prepared enough. There was a bad day, another bad day and a little better day, then a worse day, etc… I felt as if the whole world was against me. I was almost going to say to my husband, “It was actually a bad decision to come here. I am taking the children and going to Japan.” But I didn’t, well, I might have said it, but I didn’t mean it. Sometimes husbands take things through one year and take it out through the other.

I didn’t get involved much in school activities in the beginning of our stay. I thought I was too busy looking after my little monsters and I was kind of occupied with everyday life. But I didn’t want to make the same mistakes that I made in Chennai. I had no friends there. There was no one to talk to or even share bad or good stories. It was indeed a bad experience and some lessons were learnt. Yes, I had to start making friends.

I slowly started to get engaged with the school and other community things. My son didn’t tell me much about school, but he seemed to be enjoying
playing with his friends and also school. There was a German family who moved to Mumbai and started school almost the same time as us. They had lived in Pune earlier and I felt quite comfortable having someone whose had a similar experience. Our children were the same ages, in the same class, plus went to the same club over the weekends; it didn't take very long before we became good friends.

I have also got many Japanese friends, to whom I can speak my language, having extended chats with these Japanese ladies also made me feel good about living in Mumbai. I finally started to get the feeling that I am not alone in my problems; in fact we are all in the same boat.

There was a Japanese lady who helped me a lot when I was struggling with many little problems in Mumbai as well as getting familiar with everything at ASB. She was not a parent ambassador at school but to me she was one in every way.

There are many other people I have met who’ve made me feel confident. And slowly I have begun to enjoy my life in Mumbai. What they did for me was perhaps opening up a new world for me. A world that makes me more curious. It is always nice to have someone who can guide you in the right direction when in need. So yes, a few good friends are very important when you start a new life somewhere.

Mumbai is not the best place to live in or an easy city to walk around to find things out on your own as a foreigner. Therefore you need someone who can guide you, especially in the beginning of your stay. Then you find out where to go to find this and that, you find people who might be resourceful, you find places to visit where you can wind down for the day and you
find good friends who can share both good and bad experiences and have fun together. Sounds like a lot, but it is rather simple. Once you feel comfortable about your surroundings, then your life in Mumbai can be easy and enjoyable.

You might want to ask me, “So, where do I find all the information and make friends then?” My answer is simple, ASB. You will definitely find all that you need to know in the ASB community. There will always be someone in the community willing to help you out, who has information on what you are looking for, or to be friends with. All you need is to get to know people.

As I became more engaged in the ASB community, my life in Mumbai has become easier and happier. It took me more than one year to reach this point and after that, things were almost unbelievably easy.

Some people take only a few weeks, others take two years to get comfortable living in Mumbai. Maybe most of us will leave just when we start liking Mumbai. Of course there are good days and bad days, but this can be the same everywhere in the world. I think that it is better to enjoy yourself rather than keep comparing what you can’t do here to what you can do back home or the place you used to live at. Look forward, not at the past. If a door won’t open by pushing, then maybe try sliding it instead. Mumbai treats you well if you open your minds and feel free to tap in to the ASB community as much as possible.

And don’t forget to enjoy being away from Mumbai once in a while because you do need to do that too, no matter how long you live in Mumbai and/or how much you have adjusted to it. Enjoy fresh air, eat what you miss in Mumbai and drink good wine perhaps? Then you
come back recharged and ready to start your busy but happy routine in Mumbai again.

I will probably feel the same the next time I’m coming back from a holiday.

“Mumbai my home, my sweet home Mumbai!” Who will be the next, perhaps you?
During my first year in Mumbai, I met a very nice lady named Mrs. Zelma Lazarus who told me that she was the CEO of an NGO called Impact India. Coming from a western lifestyle, I didn’t understand what an NGO was or why she had a full time job related to helping others. She continued to share with me that she had visitors who had come from abroad and donated footballs. These volunteers had also travelled a few hours outside Mumbai to teach children in the villages how to play football. I thought to myself that it was probably something to do with my language skills that prevented me from understanding what I just heard. Who on Earth had never heard about football, let alone could not go to the shop and buy themselves a ball?

A decade later, and after I travelled to the villages of Maharashtra, I now know that it was not my language skills that prevented me from comprehending Mrs. Lazarus’ message, rather it was my lack of cultural understanding.

The beauty of Mumbai is the sense of responsibility that many people have to help others. There are many NGOs (as I know now stands for Non-Governmental Organizations) who are helping others in so many ways ranging from health to financial support and education. Doctors who volunteer to assist patients with no financial reward, teachers and endless volunteers that strive to make sure that each person in Mumbai will go to sleep with some assurance for a chance of a better future. That sense of responsibility
leads many people from both sides of the NGOs – from the giving and from the receiving end – to be very grateful.

Foreigners who live in Mumbai often follow that path by volunteering in different NGO's and helping others. The ASB community recently assisted Impact India with one of its recent projects: the Baby Wrap Project. The project goal was to educate young mothers on how to assist their new born babies to adjust to the temperature differences between the mother’s womb and the cold season low temperatures. Hundreds of baby blankets were donated by parents from the ASB community and were given to the young mothers. The project was declared a success and Impact India is moving on to its next project, which is to fight young girls’ anaemia. Their aim is to ensure that each school girl from the age of 14 is being given a daily dose of iron and folic acid to build up her immune system.

The fact that many foreigners and members of the ASB community are part of this volunteers’ web help give meaning to their lines in Mumbai. The students of ASB are also part of this web, as they volunteer from a young age in different NGO’s; some of them get to play ball games with children from the villages or they may help to take care of street dogs. Today, when I write these lines, I can understand better the cultural differences between the west and the villages of India. The residents of the villages have vast cultural traditions from arts and music through cooking, education and financial systems. My first year in Mumbai I looked at my surroundings with western eyes and I missed so much of India’s beauty. The volunteer system has allowed me the needed exposure to the local culture and different lifestyle, which I grew to appreciate through the years.
Looking for an apartment in Mumbai is not easy. When we first arrived, we hoped to find an apartment close to ASB, but my husband’s workplace was very far away. Since he is so busy, if he has to travel far, then he would not have time to be with us. So eventually we decided to choose an apartment in the area close to his office. The Chinese people have a saying: When in Rome, do as the Romans do. And so, after we settled in, I began to look for goodness in the neighborhood and for parts that would surprise me.

I clearly remember the first morning after I arrived in Mumbai. I opened the curtains and a large green grassy area came into view. Beside the grass there was a row of old trees and a small jungle. Beyond the jungle was the sea. It was a wide perspective. I have since gotten to know this view throughout the seasons and times of day.

In spring, when the morning breeze passes, showers of petals from the trees fill the air with fragrance. At autumn dusk, birds come back home, crows are noisy at dusk, and when the wind blows, yellow leaves whip in the air.

On moonlit nights, we walk through a coconut grove, listening to leaves rustling in the wind. It is the music of nature. Occasionally we look up through the trees to see the moon hanging in the sky. It is unspeakably beautiful.
During summer, hundreds and thousands of flamingos perch on the edge of the swamp. I always take my child with her friends to see these birds. Sometimes I take my daughter to the patch of jungle for adventure and fix every moment of joy and beauty with the camera.

In the rainy season, I often hear the wind. I lean out of my windows and can feel things grow in the abundant rain.

Sometimes I take my daughter to feed birds and dogs in our neighborhood. One mother dog has given birth to four puppies. My daughter always takes food for them and calls to them. When we walk during the evenings, they run to her fast, following us and bringing so much happiness.

I savor these years in this place.
Mumbai is a very special to me, and I think it’s an amazing place to live in with its events, dazzling lights, and kind hearted people. Mumbai looks like it’s lit up night and day! The food is also interesting. It may be spicy at first and may seem difficult to eat, but once you get used to it, the richness and aroma of its different spices is nice for your taste buds. They also have many festivals and celebrations here. Ganesha festival is celebrated by many people. It’s a festival for the elephant headed god. Diwali is a festival of lights where we have a one week holiday. Other celebrations are Independence Day and Christmas. Independence Day is celebrated on the date India got freedom from the British. On Christmas day, they put tiny lights on mango trees.

But there are also other things like the traffic, which can be awful. It's normal on a daily basis. People get frustrated and impatient and start honking. It causes a lot of noise. There is also a lot of trash thrown everywhere and sometimes no place to walk. There are many people here who are born into poverty and live on the streets. We have to think how lucky we are to have such proper homes and a beautiful school like ASB. Imagine having to go camping all your life, it would be fun at first but then it would become rather miserable. I sometimes also see cows, goats or hens in the city. The cows and goats are normally tethered to something but hens are free.
One day, I hope that all poor people in Mumbai have a proper home and have their dreams come true. I hope that all the trash on the road is recycled into new products!

To me Mumbai is one of the most spectacular and adventurous places to live. I hope you feel the same way too!
Mumbai

Sarita Pereira | Parent

Mumbai, my City;
The place I now call home.
It's mobile, it’s uplifting,
It’s so friendly that you can never feel alone.
Horns trumpeting, rickshaw engines pounding, smoke and grime.
Friendly stares, helping hands, and that warm Indian smile.
Differing languages, hand gestures, and that famous head shake;
Aromatic chai, coconuts and *dabba wallahs* who are yet to make a mistake.
The battered taxis; the multitude of cars,
The beautiful homes of the movie stars.

The roaming cows, the occasional goat,
the stall with the *wada pav*.
The trendy bistros, the coffee shops,
not to mention the five star hotels.
Heavenly Indian sweets, the *daals*, the variety of breads,
Masalas, coriander and in May the showering of mango-fruits from the gods.
The malls, the fitness centres, the parks that go round and around.
the kitty parties, the manicures, the bollywood songs that resound.
The poverty, the ambition, the school children so beautifully turned out.
The thirst for knowledge, the hospitality,
everything in abundance and learning to go without.
The buildings tower way above; reaching heights up to the sky;
Looking down on slums below of the people with aspirations greater than
you and I.

Mumbai, city of juxtapositions. The rich live next to the poor.
We all coexist, we thrive, this is the City we adore.
It’s innate energy, it’s honesty, it has gravitational pull,
Spending time in this City will impact your soul.

Vada Pav | Gayathri Durairaj, Parent
In July 2014, my husband, my two sons and I boarded a Boeing 747 and arrived in India 8 hours and 45 minutes later. Trying to explain to friends and family that we were about to move to India was difficult. Trying to explain that it was a well-informed decision and our own free choice was even harder. Nevertheless, we were ready for it. We wanted to experience something different. We felt the need to go beyond our familiar world and to just briefly escape a culture that lacks nothing but tends to complain about everything. When we first started talking about India, many reactions came our way ranging from violence, corruption, poverty and pollution to kindness, spirituality, hospitality and pride. We prepared ourselves to walk the road and to embrace as many experiences as possible.

After one year, we easily find our way to the children’s school and the consulate. We know where to buy fruit, vegetables, milk and other grocery supplies. We have done some Mumbai sightseeing, met a lot of expats, and started to travel in India. The kids have their friends who come and go, and we have our occasional drink. It sounds easy-going but don’t be misled. Culturally we are still on the tip of the iceberg. India is an extremely difficult country for foreigners to understand. If you aren’t born into the dynamics of the various religions and castes, it is almost impossible to make sense of the divisions. For an outsider, confusion is an important part of the whole experience and being pulled out of your comfort zone turns out to be a daily business. If it is
true that life starts at the end of your comfort zone, then I can truly say that our lives have begun.

As usual, we consider it our moral duty to become a part of the country we live in. In Mumbai, this involves facing some heart-wrenching situations. We see people struggle, trying to survive day by day. People with hollow gazes roaming the streets as lost zombies. We now recognise them. The blind man standing at the same spot in the soaring heat or the pouring rain every single day; emaciated children begging for food; families living in makeshift houses at the side of the road while passing cars nearly miss their barely clothed children; the old lady lying on the pavement under a pile of dirty cloths 24/7.

Of course Mumbai doesn’t equal poverty, but it is its scale, its ubiquity and its severity that make poverty walk with you every step you take. It is not across the border, it is not across the Mediterranean, it is right next to your door. Although I do not consider myself a negative person, and although I really do try hard to look beyond poverty, the reality is that it’s everywhere and always, and it constantly unleashes feelings of injustice and incomprehension within myself. I feel grateful for the many meaningful discussions I have had with friends who feel equally challenged by it, and I am especially grateful for the words of Arundhati Roy, a famous Indian writer, which have made me stronger: “Of course India is a microcosm of the world. Of course versions of what happens here happens everywhere […] The difference in India is only in the scale, the magnitude and the sheer proximity of the disparity. In India, your face is slammed right up against it. To address it, to deal with it, to not deal with it, to try and understand it, to insist on not understanding it, to simply survive it – on a daily, hourly basis – is a fine art in itself.”

A while ago the American School of Bombay hosted a workshop about how social problems can break your heart and how to move toward a breakthrough. Well for me, finding my inner struggle acknowledged in Roy’s writings,
helped me to move forward. I realised that India’s widespread poverty had paralysed me. I got stuck in thinking big, in thinking that only comprehensive institutional measures could offer a solution. Finally I realised that although big steps are absolutely necessary, little steps are equally important and do make a significant difference in people’s lives. Simple recognition, a sweet smile, a nice word, a contribution of necessities: these small individual gestures all fall within our possibilities to help and make everyday life a little more humane. And although I don’t like falling into the trap of “them” and “us,” it is the people in the street who have shown me and my family the true meaning of perseverance, humility, simple happiness, and strong resilience.

While I write this, my thoughts automatically go to the lady who sits in front of the bank every day after four. Tenderly and patiently, she caresses her mentally and physically disabled son who sits on her lap. What started out as an observation, quickly turned into an involvement. We know now that their stomachs are empty and that they have to return to a rather desperate situation in the evening. Nevertheless, she is proud because she has recently exchanged her home under the bridge for a home in the slums; nevertheless she always gives us a big smile whether we just wave at her from the car or bring her the bare necessities which she so desperately needs.

It is through people like her that I gained an immense amount of faith in the strength of individuals. India is partly transforming me, it is redirecting my way of thinking, and I truly appreciate the experience. When it is time to leave India, I will for sure not be the same person as the one that arrived here. However, for the time being, it isn’t time to leave yet, and I’m happy about it. I’m not ready to leave. I’m not ready to leave people like the lady behind. I’m not ready to say goodbye to her son who was wearing my son’s pants today. India invites me… to dig deeper… to get closer.
After having been in Mumbai for almost one year, my son loves his new school – ASB and I have also totally gotten used to the new life here.

My apartment is located in Navi Mumbai which is far from downtown. The environment is very well-protected and a little wild. I can see the beautiful view of sea and wetland forest from the window and watch flocks of pink flamingos fishing on the marsh. In my tree-lined complex there are some natural animals such as insects, wild cats, wild dogs, pigeons, crows, squirrels, lizards and even tiny snakes; it is like living in a tiny zoo.

I’m sure that everyone has seen the amazing things in this incredible country. Now I want to tell two stories about the animals, a scary one and a happy one.

One day, I bought some milk and biscuits and put them on the kitchen table. The next morning, I found that the milk box had been bitten and the biscuit bag has broken. After investigation, my husband came to the conclusion that we had a mouse invasion. The mouse maybe climbed into my home from the pipe in the store room. I didn’t want to live with a mouse. That night my husband bought a large mouse sticker and put it in the store room, with a piece of bread on the sticker to attract the mouse to fall into the trap. We caught it.
There are some other cute animals. Two pigeons lived behind the outdoor unit of the air conditioner on my windowsill. They cooed every day, and my son liked to watch them. One day my son excitedly told me that the pigeons laid two eggs. The mother and father pigeons took turns incubating the eggs in the nest every day. Soon the baby pigeons broke out of the egg shell and then the mother and father pigeon’s took turns going out to look for food and feeding their baby pigeons. My son and I watched the small pigeons growing up day by day. How happy the pigeon family is!

Live the life you like, like the life you live. The experience of living in this tiny zoo will become the unique and unforgettable memory in my life.
When you begin to experience culture shock, you try to shake off the negative and focus on the positive, to find the humor within your frustrations. Especially when your far away loved ones are so excited, so intrigued by your exotic experiences, and so enthralled with what appears to be a life of jet setting and glamour.

Yes, there are lots of flights here and there, but usually in coach. And even if the seats aren’t packed tight, any international flight is filled with people of different cultures, all with their own ‘quirks.’ Uncovered coughs and sneezes. Sniffs and snorts. Throat clearing. The scent of perspiration. All of us trapped in an enclosed space for hours on end breathing each others’ germs. There’s never anyone sashaying down the aisle delivering glorious cocktails.

And yes, I have a maid, which is lovely when we can understand each other. But beyond the language barrier, her Indian English and my American English, there’s also simply communicating when and how I’d like things to be done. It usually takes multiple attempts to explain something, and then when it finally happens, for some reason it only happens once. There’s not consistency in the task afterward. Don’t get me wrong, my maid is a blessing to have, but it takes time to build relationships. It makes me miss my maid of nine years in Colombia. And that’s part of the experience of living overseas always — starting over from nearly scratch each time you move. So for now, I’ll just keep rearranging what she’s rearranged and explaining it over again.
And yes, the city of Mumbai is new and exciting and honestly, never sleeps! I’m not sure what festival we’re in now, but there are low flying fireworks going off every night. Before that, it was lights and drumming. Before that, it was drumming and loud speakers. Before that, it was carrying a statue of a god to the sea with singing and drumming. Before that, it was filling the street with goats then slaughtering them over two days and eating them. With some drumming for good measure. I’m fortunate in that I can sleep through anything, but my colleagues have had their windows rattled with the noise.

One day, I’ll take a noisy, bumpy rickshaw to the crowded train station to wait in line to elbow myself onto a train downtown to have a coffee by the sea, only to have a pigeon poop on me.

Another day, I’ll stroll for hours in the heat, sweaty and sticky, to enjoy the streets and shops of nicer neighborhoods, popping in to make a mental note of gifts to buy later, and just as I look up to admire the detailed architecture, I step on a loose brick and have the back of my pants, ankle to butt, splattered with muddy water that is most likely more than just mud. eck

I’ll wake up and throw my curtains open only to see the neighbor lady, not four feet away, staring back at me with binoculars. I’ll go downstairs to receive a blank stare from the guard, which is better than the look away. I’ll walk into the street to have ear-poking, body-scratching, roadside Romeos try their best to catch my eye.

And then, in the sky, there’ll be kites. The children here make their own kites and fly them off the roofs of their buildings. And it’s beautiful. They coast and soar and cross back and forth and cut themselves free. And for two minutes, as you look up, it’s a little moment of something wonderful in the midst of all the madness.
“Yes! It’s finally happening!” exclaimed my hubby as he stormed in through the front door. I glanced at the clock hanging above the door. He was home earlier than usual. “What’s happening?” I threw the question at him. The excitement was contagious as I could feel my heart fluttering. “We are moving countries ….guess where?” he quizzed. “London? Singapore?” I asked cautiously. Each time he shook his head. “Err...Mumbai?” I was taking a long shot. He nodded his head with a confident smile. “Yes!!” I screamed, punching my fist in the air. I was returning to my native city after 10 years of staying abroad. My daughter, Taara, who was sitting amidst her stuffed toys appeared startled. She broke into a toothless grin when she realized that my hysterics were triggered by exhilaration.

The next few days were a blur. I got busy with renting out our apartment, getting a quote from the movers, attending farewell lunches, and of course arranging playdates! My heart grew heavier as the date of departure approached. We had grown to love Hong Kong. I would miss the mindless shopping through the narrow streets of Mong Kok, the persuasive vendors, the gregarious chatter of Filipina helpers on the streets, dim sum brunches, weekend hikes to the peak, our non-intrusive neighbours….the list was endless.

“In a few minutes from now, we will be landing at Mumbai airport,” said the voice over the loudspeaker politely. I jumped with a start only to realise that
I was dozing off in a plane. My co-passenger, a pretty blonde teenager, was peering down the window. Turning to me, she exclaimed “Wow! Mumbai looks pretty from here. I can see a big patch of blue. Are the houses painted blue?” I leaned over to look out. She was referring to the bright blue tarpaulin which covered the roofs of the biggest slum of Asia, Dharavi. “Oh, have you watched ‘Slumdog Millionaire? It is the Dharavi area of Mumbai.” I informed her. Her jaw dropped! “Boy! Dharavi is sprawling,” she said with a tinge of amazement. She was further amazed when I told her how resourceful the slum dwellers were. Dharavi is home to thriving businesses for leather goods and pottery. What’s more? They also conduct guided tours.

Within a few days, the children had settled down in our new flat. Their transition into the American school of Bombay was smooth, thanks to the nurturing environment. My son, Shiv, was delighted that he needn’t wear a boring uniform to school. Old friends and family visited us. I had acquired efficient helpers. Actually, they came knocking on my door asking for work. The security guards had passed the word around for me. In Mumbai, things get sorted by word of mouth.

As time passed, I slowly began to absorb the changes that had occurred in the city. Old memories were revived. If we did well at school, my dad would stand in the queue for at least half an hour to buy us tickets to the latest blockbuster. Now, all I need is a laptop, a credit card (of course!) and pronto, I can print the tickets at home. Crowds would hysterically cheer for the Indian cricket team while watching a test match at the Wankhede stadium. Now, cheering is done by stunning cheerleaders. We would freely go on outstation trips without our parents tracking us on their mobile phones. Cut to present day, if we can’t find our mobile phone, we behave like fish without water. Not that I have anything against this awesome gadget. It has
made service providers more accountable. “Chalta hai (it’s ok),” “Ho jayega (it will be done...)” replies are no longer acceptable. If a job is left half done, they are chased by phone calls and text messages. Things are getting done sooner rather than later.

But, I get the feeling that relationships are left unfolded with the advent of technology. As a child, we looked forward to the arrival of our vegetable vendor at my parent’s door. She would be there with a basket of assorted vegetables on her head. As my mom bought vegetables, she would give us the local gossip without so much as being asked. Then she would proceed to complain about her mean daughter-in-law and her aching limbs. “Don’t worry, you will do well,” she pacified me just a day before my board exams. She threw in a few extra veggies when she heard my results. I gave her a little box of sweets, very grateful that her words had somehow managed to ebb my fear. A few things remain unchanged. Diwali and Ganesh festivals are celebrated with the same fervor. Bollywood chatter persists at parties. Fresh milk is still delivered at homes. ‘Raddiwalas’ continue to collect old newspapers and plastic trash from apartments. Little do they know how much they contribute to environmental conservation.

I can’t help but admire how smoothly the city functions despite corruption and excessive traffic. Mumbaikars have developed skills of resilience, humour and acceptance. My part time help works from house to house. She cannot possibly give enough attention to her daughter. Yet, she treats my children as her own. She accepts their hand me downs graciously without a trace of envy. Once, a street child, tugged at my hand and said with a naughty smile, “Didi, look at my Taj Mahal!” She was gesturing at a ramshackled tent, covered with the famous blue tarpaulin. I marveled at her positive outlook to
life. Every time my car rolls out of my gated complex, my eyes are drawn to teenagers busy studying under the bright lights outside the gate. I see hope and aspiration on their faces when they look at me, not resentment.

After months of procrastination, I finally decided to tick one thing off my bucket list, to get a driver’s license. On the first day, my instructor gave me a useful tip as we weaved the car through pedestrians and traffic. He said, “Madam, be ready to press the brake anytime. Better still, don’t take your foot off the brake.” With experience, I’ve understood that some pedestrians cross roads freely with implicit faith in the driver’s prowess to avert accidents.

As they say, ‘Every drop makes an ocean.’ It is heartening to see steps being taken towards progression. There are fewer instances of child labour, stricter non-smoking and seat belt laws, there is more awareness of cleanliness and hygiene. Fingers crossed, we’ll get there. Along the way, a few ignorant ones will need to be educated. One of them is my driver’s peer who sarcastically said to him, “Your employers don’t trust your driving skills. They wear seat belts all the time.”

As our stay in Mumbai draws to an end, I find myself humming the famous song, “Yeh hai Bombay meri jaan (This is Mumbai, my love!)”
I
didn't want to get a maid when I first moved to Mumbai. It seemed such a
bother – calling and interviewing candidates – and I don't mind cleaning and
cooking, especially since I'd be living on my own here. It would be a pleasure to
walk to the market, buy a few vegetables every day, make a simple curry.

“I don’t need a maid,” I told Freny, the ASB staff member who was helping
the new teachers settle in. She nodded an Indian nod, whether in agreement
or disagreement, I wasn’t sure.

My first task was to find a market close to my apartment where I could
buy some food and cleaning supplies. Someone had mentioned the Phoenix
Mall but a quick Google search informed me that there was a closer store, a
supermarket, just down the street from my building, and so I set off for my
first walk in Mumbai.

Not two minutes later, it became clear to me that the store Google had told
me about was closed. Although the plate-glass windows were plastered with
ads for dish soap and biscuits, closer inspection revealed them to be peeling
and covered with dust, and the sidewalk near the front entrance was occupied
by squatting men and stray dogs. I dared not make eye contact with either
and kept walking as if I knew where I was going.

And I sort of did. When people had talked about the mall, they had waved their
hands in the general direction I was walking. Surely I would come to it soon.
But first, apparently, I had to walk for three-quarters of an hour on streets that bore no resemblance to the Incredible India that had lured me here. There were no stalls piled high with colorful spices and vegetables. There were no bright fabrics adorning beautiful women. There were no smiling children poking their heads out from curtained windows. There were only men and there was only dirt and traffic. Everything – the steel beams the men were pounding, the tires stacked on the sidewalks, the gravel being shoveled onto trucks – was a dull gray cast in dust. Cars and buses honked and left me in a plume of exhaust.

I dared not glance up after that, but when I did I saw before me, rising from the grit like Oz, a modern, glass-enclosed building: Phoenix Market City. There was just one more hurdle: a wide road to cross. I would soon know this road as LBS Marg, one of the busiest thoroughfares in Mumbai, but for now I looked left, then – oops, I looked right, then left. A traffic light? A cross walk? All I saw was a river of traffic bearing down on me.

I eventually crossed that road. I made it to the mall. I managed the grocery cart and the check-out system. I carried my bags, a mop handle sticking awkwardly out of one, and crossed the road again, this time with the help of a giggling group of girls. But as soon as I walked into my apartment, a good three hours after I left, I put my bags on the kitchen counter and called Freny. “About that household help,” I said. I could only imagine her nod.

I can now admit that I happily employ a maid. Lesson learned. But that’s not really where the story ends. One of the first conversations I had with her, besides what kind of food I liked and how I wanted my bed made, was how to get to the mall.

“Walk the church way,” she said, surprised that I didn’t know about it.
She elaborated: a tree-lined street where no traffic was allowed; an open courtyard with a Catholic church at the top of a hill. Step through a red gate on the left, which leads you into a lane. Quiet houses. Window boxes. The mall will be directly across the street.

The next time I needed the diversion of a mall, I followed my maid’s instructions. The courtyard and lane were hushed and clean. The church, calm, swept, whitewashed. I stepped through the red gate and admired the flowers on the balconies. When I got to LBS Marg, I was prepared. I looked right this time, then left. Somehow the street seemed less formidable. Could it be that just a week or two of experience had boosted my confidence? I thought so at the time, giving myself credit for being a quick learner.

But I’ve been in this city for a few months now. I ride in rickshaws or taxis on a daily basis. I walk regularly. I’ve joined the crowded dance of pedestrians and buses, trucks and rickshaws, taxis and bicycles, scooters and handcarts, book vendors, coconut vendors, banana vendors, strawberry vendors, street children, blind beggars, goats and dogs, rats and crows. It’s a dance I don’t understand. Why aren’t cars stopping at the red lights? Why is everybody honking? How do the dogs and children not get hit? How close is my rickshaw going to get to that enormous truck?

The more questions I have, the more I realize that my maid, in telling me to take the “church way,” wasn’t simply telling me about a nice short-cut to the mall. Instead, she was clueing me in to a basic fact of life here: that no matter where you go for your religion – whether a temple or a mosque, a gurdwara or a church, a yoga mat or a living room couch – it most definitely helps to gather your faith before diving into a Mumbai street.
When I first moved to Mumbai, I entered the terminal with a heavy heart filled with air travel exhaustion, classic teenage anger, and a speck of hope. As we drove through the endless city, filled with gray and trash, I felt my hope drain away, being stashed somewhere deep in my soul.

By the 3rd day in the dark and strange city, I had a racking cough and was almost in tears. My mind was filled with recent memories of my old friends and home, and even more prominently, my cat that had passed away during the move. It was the first day of school, and I felt so bare in the white and lavender dress that was draped over me. I half heartedly said goodbye to my family and walked out the door. After a long wait for the elevator, I stepped out into the street and was automatically surrounded by a cloud of exhaust from a passing rickshaw. I coughed, and stalked over to a step where I would wait for the bus. I looked down before I sat, and all that I could see was the dust and dirt that covered it. I sat down slowly, hoping that the bus would come soon.

As I sat, I began to watch people. At first, it was through eyes of fury, thinking how they lived in such a perfect accepting world until a woman with a purple sari came and stood by me. She had dark brown eyes and long cone shaped earrings that jingled when she moved her hair. Her arms were filled with bananas and mangos that were shoved into a stretching plastic bag.
She rocked back and forth until she walked into the busy road and raised a hand, calling out. I was shocked! Why would anyone ever walk out into a road that busy? The cars and rickshaws moved around her, and she began to weave through. Rickshaws raced by her, creating a black and gray blur. Her purple sari stood out, a bit of light in the city. The vehicles moved by her, making her long scarf flutter and wave in the wind. It was beautiful, almost reminding me of a flickering purple flame. It was a patch of brightness in a dark city. She moved again, and soon climbed into a parked rickshaw on the other side of the road and disappeared, her outstanding color moving back into the city.

I was surrounded by a perfect euphoria, I felt so light, almost as if I could float.

It was some time before I realized that it was because it was the first time in a long while that I had believed that something was beautiful.

Over the next weeks I noticed little things that I would have never noticed before. How a little sunlight can light up the dullest of buildings, suddenly making it as exquisite as the Taj Mahal. How a little color in a dark world makes it all worthwhile, and how simple things could dig up that little bit of hope inside me and care for it until it grew and grew.

To me though, it is because we all pack something away, and really, you need India to find it. Some may say that this is because we get used to such a battered city.
RAIN TO SUN

Saaya Kumasako | Grade 7 Student

Living beside those with little to own
Rain to Sun of fun, I see
Football, chasing, kite flying, they do
to phones, computers, games, we choose

Living beside those citizens of Mumbai
Rain to Sun of clothings, I see
Proper length sleeves, and pants, they wear
to arms, legs, and more, we bare

Living beside those proud Indians
Rain to Sun of life, I see
Space, clean water, clean air, are rare
to drivers, maids, and food, we spare
Poetry

Yuya Kumasako | Grade 10 Student

<Haiku>
雨、風、陽、
人、物から成る
ここの調和
Rain, wind, the sun
people, objects, all around.
Harmony, in a sum.

<Tanka>
(“Tanka” is a traditional form of Japanese poetry. Tanka poems consist of 5 lines. Mostly, the first and third lines of a Tanka have 5 syllables and the middle and the last two lines have 7 syllables.)

灼熱の
暑さの中を
今日もまた
行き交うリキシャと
揺れる人混み
Like a normal day
today again, in the heat
extreme and burning day
Rickshaws sewing through the crowd
and waves of people everyday.
A Rickshaw. A cow. People crossing the road. A truck with the “HORN OK PLEASE” sign. I see multiple numbers of each of these things every day when I come to school every morning in Mumbai. When my driver opens the window of our car while the car is skating past the morning traffic, I feel the warm breeze with a quite unique scent blended into it. I can also hear the screams of the car horns beeping in the middle of my Japanese music which flows from my phone through my earphones.
J’ai passé ma vie à Bombay – mon premier souffle jusqu’au présent, j’ai respiré la ville et sa vie.
Les photos que vous verrez ne sont pas des impressions que laissent cette magnifique ville sur des touristes, mais plutôt des expériences que vivent des locaux.
Le Dhobi Ghat, les stations de trains, Chor Bazar, le village des pécheurs – ce sont des quartiers qui rendent cette ville d’autant plus lumineuse. Les couleurs explosent et le soleil met en valeur le charme et les gens chaleureux.
Une ville pleine de vie, de couleurs, de charme, de bruit, de musique et de vie.

Crépuscle / Twilight

Je suis / I am
I am Indian. I am a Bombaykar. I am a Photographer.

I have spent my life in Bombay – right from the first breath till the present, I breathed in the city and its life.

The pictures that you will see are not impressions that this beautiful city leave on tourists or people passing by. They are representations of the life as experienced by the locals.

Dhobi Ghat, the train stations, Chor Bazaar, the fishermen’s village – These are the places that brighten the city even more than it already shines. The colours explode and the sun emphasises the charm and the hospitality of the Mumbaikars.

A city full of charm, colours, noise, music and life.
その幼稚園に足を踏み入れると、可愛い子供達が「ナマステ」と手を合わせ、わた
しとわたしの子供たちに、一人ずつ首から白い布をかけて、歓迎の意を表し、歌を
歌ってくれました。

皆さんはムンバイに日本人のお寺があるのを知っていますか？

ウォーリーに買い物に行く時、私はいつも何気なく、そのお寺の前を通りすぎてい
ました。日本のお寺だとは気づいていたのですが、正直あまり気にも止めていませ
んでした。

でもある日、私の所属する日本人会から、そのお寺に日本人のお坊さんがいるこ
と、そのお坊さんが４０年も一人で日本のお寺とお墓を守っていること（ムンバイ
に日本人のお墓もあるとその時知りました）、お寺に幼稚園を併設して、お寺の周
辺にあるスラム地区に住む子供達が通っていることを知りました。

そして先日、私は日本のお墓の墓参参に参列しました。１００年以上も前に、はる
ばるムンバイにやってきて住んでいた日本人が大勢いたことを知りました。そのほ
とんどが２、３０代、乳幼児の名前も多く見られました。苦しくも異国で命を落と
してしまい、日本に帰ることができなかった、その人々の魂が今でもそこで眠って
おり、森田上人は４０年も一人ムンバイでお墓とお寺を守っているのです。

その墓参参にも、幼稚園のインドの子供たちが大勢で、私たち日本人のために歌や
踊りを披露してくれました。今から１００年以上も前に、ムンバイ市は日本人がお
墓としてその土地を永代使用する許可をくれたそうです。ムンバイの人々と森田上
人のおおらかな志をあらわすかのように、その日の空は青く澄み渡り、子供たちの
声が高らかに響き渡っていました。
When I arrived at the kindergarten, a set of pretty little children said “Namaste!” and welcomed my children and I. They garlanded us with white scarves. They sang a song and greeted us.

By the way, have you ever heard about the Japanese temple in Mumbai? Before I knew about the Japanese temple, I always passed by it on my way to Worli in south Mumbai. I knew that it was a Japanese temple, but I was not interested in it that much at that time.

But one day, I got some information about the temple. There is one Japanese monk there who has lived in Mumbai by himself for 40 years. There are also Japanese graves near there and the monk prayed there for the people who died here in olden times. Also, he set up a kindergarten for the children living in the slum villages around the temple. Then I was surprised to hear that there were many Japanese people living here for more than a 100 years. Most of them were very young including babies and small children. However, because they could not go to Japan, they remained in Mumbai far away from Japan. This monk was praying for them and taking care of the graves all by himself.

One day, when I visited the grave with a Japanese group, many kindergarten children played music and danced for us. The Mumbai city officials gave the Japanese permission to keep the graves forever. The sky was so clear; as if it was reflecting on the generosities of the people in Mumbai and the Japanese monk. Then the voices of the children and the Buddhist scriptures echoed throughout the sky.
“혈, 데박ㅋㅋ 너 러시아로 이사 가는 거 아니었어? 원래 러시아 간다며 갑자기 왜 인도?”

이 말을 처음 친구한테 들었을 때는 정확히 2014년 겨울이었다. 당시에는 그저 ‘그러게 말이다. 살다 살다 인도에서 살게 될 줄은 꿈에도 몰랐다’ 하는 생각이 전부였다. 그 중에서도 제일 많이 들었던 말은,

“인도에서 맛있는 카레 먹고 와 ㅋㅋ.”

그럼다. 인도에 가기 전까지만 해도 해도 나와 내 친구들은 인도에 대해서 딱히 아는 게 없었다. 아는 거라면 곧작 인도의 카레, 타지마할, 마하트마 간디 그리고 세상에서 중국 다음으로 인구가 많고 빈부격차가 큰 나라인 것. 그만큼 인도라는 나라라는 매우 낮선 미지의 세계 같은 존재였다. 그렇지만 막상 비행기를 타고 차트라파티 시바지 몰바이 국제 공항에 도착했을 때는 ‘아 드디어 시작이네’하는 불안한 생각과 원가 전혀 다른 새로운 곳이라는 한껏 들뜬 마음이 섞여 오묘한 느낌이 들었다.

그렇게 인도에서의 첫날이 시작되었고 인도에 도착한지 3일만에 학교에 가게 되었다. 모든 첫 등교 날이 그렇듯 설렘 반 두려움 반으로 시작했다. 과연 내가 이 학교에 잘 적응할 수 있을까 하는 걱정부터 ‘에이, 그래도 싱가포르에서 살아 왔으니깐 외국 애들이랑 빨리 친해질 수 있겠지’ 하는 기대감으로 학교를 갔지만, 막상 겪어보니 내가 여태까지 다녔던 학교들과는 매우 달랐다. 컬쳐 쇼크라고 해야 되나? 내가 다녔던 한국과 싱가포르의 공립 학교들과는 천지 차이였다. 교실 분위기부터 국제 학교라서 그런지 매우 자유로웠고 선생님들의 일반적인 주입식 교육이 아닌학생과 선생님들의 수업시간의 교류를 중요시 생각하는 점이 매우 인상적이었다. 나는 첫날은 혼란의 연속이었다. 가끔 잡일이라도 난 내가 처음 온 날에 우리 학교에서 SAISA sports 경기를 개최하는 날이어서 학교가 더 정신이 없었던 점도
있었다. 그때는 원래 학교가 매일 매일 이런 분위기인가 하는 생각이 들었다. 물론 지금 생각하면 그렇게 생각했던 내가 어이가 없지만 말이다.

국제 학교 애들이 개방적이어서 친구를 빨리 사귈 수 있겠다는 기대감은 하루 만에 접었다. 세계 어디를 가나 친구를 사귀는 데에는 어느 정도의 시간이 걸리는 걸 또 다시 한번 깨닫게 되는 순간이었다. 애초에 말이 엄청 많은 성격도 아니고 그렇다고 먼저 다가가서 말을 거는 강이 있는 것도 아니어서 며칠간은 아이들이 사이에서 걸들면서 지내는 우울한 시기를 보냈다. 그럴 때마다 드는 생각은 ‘돌아가고 싶다’ 혹은 ‘여기서 내가 뭐 하는 거지 지금’ 이런 생각으로 머리가 복잡했다. 현재의 내가 그때를 회상해보면 이 학교에 다니는 건 처음이니까 친구가 없는 건 당연한 것이었는데 그때는 왜 그렇게 외로워하고 슬퍼했었던 건지 헛웃음만 나온다.

인도에 온 지 얼마 되지는 않았지만 곧 엄청난 불만이 쏟아져 나왔다. 한국과 싱가포르와 180도 다른 학교시스템 문제는 물론이고 날씨, 더러움과 음식 등등... 무조건 부정적인 생각만 했던 거 같다. 아직 2월인데 날씨는 왜 이렇게 덥고 습하냐, 무슨 인도는 음식마다 향신료를 넣는 거 같아서 향이랑 맛도 어이없게 이상해서 손도 대고 싶지 않았고, 개념이 없는 건지 생각이 없는 건지 도로에서는 며칠 차들은 빵빵거리고 교통법규도 엉망진창이고, IT 강국이라면서도 대대적 인터넷은 왜 이렇게 잘 끊기고 느린 건지 이해할 수 없었다. 인도 그 자체를 이해하고 받아들이려는 마음보다 그냥 무조건 밀어내고 싶었던 마음이 더 컸던 거 같았다. 항상 모든 것을 긍정적으로 생각하는 나는, 스스로 당황스러운 정도로 한국과 싱가포르와 비교하며 불편한 편했다. 이제 몸바이 생활 1년째, 이제는 그려나면서 산다. 역시 모든 게 마음먹고 생각하기 너무가 보다. 이제는 인도도 나름 살만한 곳이라는 여유가 생긴 거 보면 말이다.

나의 학교생활에도 여유가 생겼다. 예전 같았으면 마음먹은 대로 안되면 자꾸 좌충우돌 투덜거렸을 텐데 나름 이제는 못음으로 넘기며 산다. 그냥 학교만 정신없이 다녔던 9학년 약 석 달간의 생활에 비하면, 10학년 현재에는 좀 더 여러 가지 방과 후 활동이나 봉사 활동에도 관심을 갖게 되었다. 평소에도 관심이 있었던 MUN(모의 유엔 반)에도 참여해서 싱가포르에서 열리는 THIMUN에서 직접 회의도 해보고 더 넓은 세상을 바라보게 되는 눈도 가지게 되었다. 봉사 활동 클럽인 The Girl’s Effect 에 가입해서 교육을 잘 받지 못한 인도 슬럼가의 아이들에게 과학을 가르치고 영어를 잘 하지 못하는 버스
도우미들에게 영어를 가르치며 인도에 자그마한 도움이라도 줄 수 있어서 기쁘다. 친구가 없다고 생각했었던 과거와 달리 여러 친구들과 두루두루 이야기를 나누는 소소한 재미에도 맛 들렸다. 이집트에서 살았던 인도인 친구의 옷지 못할 폭탄 테러 경험 이야기부터 싱가포르에서 살았던 일본인 친구와의 공감대 형성기까지 매일 매일 새로운 이야기 보따리들이 쏟아져 나오니 학교 가기가 즐겁다.

과거의 나는 인도로 나를 데리고 온 부모님을 원망하기도 했지만, 그때와는 다르게 요즘에는 오히려 감사한 마음이 더 든다. 인도가 아니었다면 이런 신선하고 스펙터클한 경험도 해보지도 못 했을 것 아닌가? 다음에 한국에 있는 친구들을 만나면 인도대륙에 대한 더 흥미진진한 스토리를 들려줄 것이다.
배경 제공.....

드디어 시작이다.

평소에 난 꽤나 환경의 변화에 최적화된 정신 상태를 가졌다고 은근히 자부하던 터였다. 그런데 몸바이에 도착한지 하루 만에 아이들을 학교로 데려가면서 바라본 창밖 풍경은 여태까지 내가 나 자신을 과대 평가했음을 뼈저리게 알려주었다.

문순 때라 비는 주룩주룩 내리고, 길에는 수많은 차들이 서로 엎혀 경적을 미친 듯이 울리며 한 치의 양보도 없는 몸바이 거리는 다음 아닌 아수라장이었다. 생전 처음 보는 험난한 도로, 곡예수준의 운전 솜씨를 뽐내며, 통과하기 거의 불가능할 것처럼 보이는 조그만 틈새도 주저하지 않고 마구 파고드는 게 아닌가? 길 곳곳에서 돌발 상황들이 끊임없이 벌어졌다. 우리 차를 운전하는 임시기사의 성격이 급하고 다혈질인 모양이다. 계속 욕을 해대며 경적을 화풀이하듯 눌러댔다. 마치 누가 누가 더 빨리, 더 자주 자주 누르는지 경쟁이라도 하듯. 그의 운전 태도가 마음에 안 들었지만 운전기사를 처음 고용해 보는 나는 잔뜩 주눅이 들어 한마디도 할 수가 없었다. 차 안팎에서 계속되는 신경을 거슬리는 소리들은 가뜩이나 학교 첫날이라 긴장한 나의 신경을 자극해왔다. 이것도 시간이 지나면 익숙해지겠나? 이 와중에 길을 건너려는 사람들은 좁아서 갑자기 자동차 사이로 나타나지 않나, 급제동에 나와 아이들은 쓰러지지 않으려고 손잡이를 꽉 잡을 수밖에 없었다. 롤러코스터를 타듯 혼들리는 차에 몸을 맡기고 해도 상황이 계속 연출되었다.

정말 여기가 앞으로 우리가 살아야 할 곳이란 말이지? 아! 한국에 돌아가고 싶다. 게다가 길은 왜 이 모양일까? 배수가 안 되는 길을 차들은 속도도 줄이지도 않고 연신 물을 끼얹으며 지나갔다. 비록 창문은 닫혀 있었지만 마치 내게 직접 물을 퍼부으며 계속 이래도 여기서 살고 싶으나고 비웃는 듯 싶었다. 학교 가는 길이 이리 험난할 줄이야. 밖으로 다시 시선을 돌리자, 길 한편에 잔뜩 쌓인 마녀진 쓰레기더미 위로 새까만 까마귀떼들이 먹이를 찾고 있었다. 까마귀들이 이리 켜쳤다면? 너무나 많은
새벽에 놀라 차안 반응을 살폈다. 다행이라 해야 할까? 아이들은 그다지 동요하는 모습을 보이지 않았다. 우리 아이들은 핸드폰과 컴퓨터만 있으면 어떤 상황에서도 끌어도 하지 않을 모양이다. 난 아이들과 달리 운명 기기들과 그리 친하지 않아 그런가, 앞으로 여기서 살아갈 일이 깊잡할 지경인데 말이다. 가슴이 이리 뛰고 아프게 죽어가는 걸로 보니 엄청 스트레스를 받고 있나 보다. 길이 심호흡을 한번 해보자. 휴~. 나의 적응 분능이 빨리 작동해야 할 텐데... 언제 이 모든 상황에 적응할 수 있을지 자신할 수 없었다.

매도 빨리 맞는 게 낳다는 말이 맞을지도 모르겠다. 학교 가는 첫날 학교 위치를 잘 모르는 임시기사 덕분에, 그리고 기사가 무서워 한마디도 못했던 나의 소심함 덕분에, 나는 텅鹕tat 곳곳을 누비며 인도의 일상을 하루 만에 너무 빨리 경험하고야 말았다. 아침 시간이라 이들도 나름 깨끗하게 아침을 시작하고 싶은 가 보다. 사람들이 마사지가, 차들이 마사지가, 아랑곳하지 않고 길가에서 물통을 떠오르 놓고 비누를 올들에 압심히 바르며 목욕을 하는 강심장 아저씨들. 보도 블록 한 켤에 쥐그리고 앉아 웃으면서 큰일을 보는 아이들. 물통 하나를 손에 들고 삼삼오오 줄지어 강둑으로 쾌변을 배출하러 가는 아저씨들. 이 풍경을 바라보며 나는 마치 영화의 한 장면 속에 던져진 것 같은 착각을 하게 되었다. 과연 난 이런 인도를 사랑하게 될 수 있을까? 아니 사랑은 아니더라도 이를 견뎌낼 수 있을까하는 걱정이 앞섰다.

대학생 시절부터 인도 장신구와 옷들을 좋아하던 나한테 인도는 결코 낯선 곳이 아니어야 했다. 근데 첫날 내가 겪은 일들은 그냥 인도옷과 장신구를 좋아한다고 극복될 수 있는 건 아니었다. 인도에서 생활하면서 수시로 나의 인내를 시험에 들게 하고 측은지심을 갖고 하는 행동이 오히려 내가 상처를 가져온다는 사실을 자주 경험하면서도, 나는 인도인들의 미소를 좋아하게 되었다. 시간이 지나 돌이켜 보면, 그래도 내가 좀 더 인도를 참을 수 있게 용기를 준 것은 다름 아닌 사람들들이었다. 처음 얼마나 견디던 우울함에서 나를 벗어나게 해주었던 것 역시 바로 이 사람들의 웃는 모습이었던 것 같다. 거리에 음악을 치고 떠다니면서 가족들이 응기종기 모여 빨을 해먹으며 두근두근 얘기 나누는 모습 속에서, 옷 하나 걸치지 못한 동생들을 엄마가 안고 다니는 어린 형제들을 볼 때도, 이들의 얼굴에는 웃음이 있었다. 힘들게 물건을 지고 끌고 지나가는 아저씨 아줌마들, 시장에서 물건 파는 상인들도 눈이 마주치면 내 얼굴을 신기해하면서도 웃음으로 눈인사를 하곤 했다. 이들을 보며 이들을 웃음 짓게 하는 게 과연 월까 하는 생각이 들었다.
우리의 잣대로 이들의 행복을 가늠해서는 안 된다는 건 분명하다. 특히 한국에서는 한 치의 여유도 없이 살아갈 수밖에 없었던 나. 왜 나는 삶을 이들처럼 여유있게 바라볼 수 없는 것인지, 왜 마음이 항상 채워도 채워도 부족한 것인지, 여유없는 내 모습이 스스로 안쓰럽기도 하다. 분명 나는 이들보다 물질적으로 가진 게 많지만 마음은 가난한 모양이다. 내가 인도에서 살며 배워가야 할 것은 바로 여유있는 마음을 갖는 것이라. 누가 말한 것처럼 행복은 밖에서 오는 게 아니라 내 마음속에서 시작된다는 걸 잊지 말아야 할 테지. 나를 인도로 불러 여기서 살아 숨 쉬게 하고, 많은 사람들을 만나게 하고, 때로는 불평을 하고 우울하게 만드는 모든 일들은 어쩌면 그냥 일어난 것이 아닌지도 모르겠다. 나를 성장할 수 있도록, 보다 나은 인간이 될 수 있도록, 우주의 보이지 않는 힘이 작용한 게 아닐까? 나는 이런 순간, 순간이 참 감사하다. 나를 정신적으로 성장시키는 인도를 내가 언제가 사랑하게 될 수 있을 거 같다는 생각이 드는데... 기대된다.
“여보, 나, 인도 발령 받았어.”

남편의 발령 소식을 듣고 한동안 무슨 말을 해야 할지 몰랐다. 한국의 무료했던 삶에서 잠시나마 벗어나 새로운 세계의 맛을 볼 수 있다는 약간의 떨림과 기대감이 분명 있었으리라. 하지만 ‘인도’ 그 곳을 어떻게 받아들이어야 할지 몰랐다. 잘된 일인지... 그렇지 않은지...

내가 알고 있던 인도는 길거리가 더럽고 거지가 많으며 커리를 손으로 먹는 사람들이 사는 나라. 인구 수만큼이나 많은 신을 믿고 카스트제도가 뿌리깊이 남아있는 신기한 곳이라는 게 전부였다. 그런 막연한 생각도 수집된 정보를 바탕으로 짐 부칠 준비를 하면서 점점 구체화 되어갔다. 라면, 간장, 고추장부터 시작해서 화장지, 슬리퍼, 냄비 등의 잡화류까지 마트의 물건을 쓸어 담다시피 했다. 계산점원은 어디 피난 가는 사람 보듯이 의아해 했다. 그때 알았다. 인도가 이런 곳이구나. 내가 이런 곳에 가서 살아야 하는구나. 새로운 세계의 동경은 제쳐두고 당장 먹거리부터 걱정하고 질 안 좋은 상품들을 대비해서 한국산 물건들을 될 수 있는 대로 많이 쟁여가야 하는 나라. 그래도 위안 삼은 두 가지가 있었다.

“집안 청소는 네가 안 해도 된대!!!”

“유민이 영어학원비는 굳었어.”

작은 위안은 가슴에 안고 큰 짐들은 들고 메고 인도란 곳에 드디어 발을 디뎠다. 집을 얻기까지 얻고 나서도 우여곡절이 많았다. 인도 사람과의 시간약속에 한차례 멘붕(당황하고 어이가 없어 정신이 붕괴되는 현상)이 왔고, 분명 한디였는데 알고 보니 영어였다는 옷핀(옷긴데 슬픈) 해프닝들, 거짓말을 당당히 하고 걸리면 웃어넘기는 인도인의 여유에 헛갈을 여러 번 잡았다. 그 밖에도 불합리하고 답답하기 지지없는 상황들은 내 가슴을 점점 조여오기 시작했다.
그 중에서도 첫 번째 시련은 메이드와의 문제에서 시작되었다. 아마 인도에 살고 있는 한국마담이라면 누구나 겪는 문제일거라 확신했다. 인생에서 메이드라는 직업의 사람과 지내본 경험이 없는 나로서 그녀는 그저 고맙고 날이 갈수록 소중한 존재가 되어갔다. 어느 날부터인가 올 시간에 안 오면 점점 화심이 나오고 불안이 엄습해 옵을 느끼다 늦게라도 오면 반가운 손님이 온 양한 기쁨으로 문을 열어 주고 있는 내 자신을 볼 때 참 우습기도 했다. 그러다 한국인의 인정으로 이것저것 쌓주고 선물도 주며 마음을 주지만 그런 마담을 배신하고 물레 물건들을 가져가며 실망을 시키는 일은 마담들의 수다에 자주 오르내리는 단골 메뉴가 되었다.

메이드가 진정되면 이어서 기사 문제로 다음은 집주인, 집수리 하는 사람 등 끝이지 않고 화낼 일들의 연속행진이 펼쳐졌다. 한국과 너무 다른 비합리적인 시스템, 외출을 하면 보고 싶지 않은 지저분한 거리의 풍경, 자장면도 먹을 수 없다는 절망감이 이곳을 떠나고 싶게 만들었다.

그런대로 시간은 지나고 인도의 생활도 익숙해졌다. 메이드에겐 더 이상 정을 주지 않았고 언제든 떠날 수 있는 직업인으로 생각하려 했다. 비합리적인 시스템 앞에서는 나도 비합리적인 사람이 되어야 했고, 인도인과의 시간 약속은 지켜지는 게 이상한 일이 돼 버렸다. 불쌍한 걸만을 보면 마음에서의 동요를 애써 외면했고, 물건 가격을 흥정할 때마다 나도 장사꾼이 되어갔으며 일이 안 될 때마다 위로의 한 마디가 생겼다.

“인도잡아~.”

그거면 다 이해가 되었다. 인도에 사는 한국인이라면 모두 공감하는 말이 되었다. 문화와 가치는 상대적인 것이니 인도의 문화를 들여다보면 이해 못할 것도 없다.

내일의 공작보다는 오늘의 비둘기를 택하라는 인도숙담도 있듯이 당장의 이익을 우선시 하는 그들의 철학을 누가 비판할 수 있으랴. 주어진 처지에 큰 불만 없이 하루를 열심히 살면 다음 생에 좋은 신분으로 태어나리라 믿는 그들의 신념 또한 인도를 돌아가게 하는 원동력이 될 수 있음을. 그런 의미로 보면 그들은 행복해 보인다. 인도의 부유층들은 더욱 행복해 보인다. '빨리 빨리'를 외치며 앞으로만 나아가고 남과 비교하여 적게 갖는 것에 불만을 끼도 없이 늘어놓는 우리의 문화가 초라해 보일 때도 있었으리라.

인도의 기억은 한마디로 말하기엔 원가 복잡한 감정이 뒤섞여 있다. 정신의 피곤함 속에 육체의 편함이 있고, 새우깡 한 봉지에 행복을 느낄 수 있는 소박함이 있으며 갈 곳
이 없다고 투덜대는 차 안에선 쇼핑 이야기로 웃음꽃이 퍼진다. 낯선 쿠르타(인도옷)를 입고서 인도패션의 촌스러움을 논하니, 듯/if면 옳았던 힌글리쉬가 이제는 잉글리쉬보다 더 잘 들린다. 이해할 수 없었던 인도가 이젠 이해 못할 것도 없는 나라로 내 마음 속에 자리 잡아가고 있다. 한국에 돌아가면 직장생활을 하는 나로서는 이곳에서의 마담생활만큼 여유 있고 행복했던 적이 없었다고 말할지 모른다. 인도라는 말만 들어도 아련한 향수에 젖어 영어와 한국말의 중간쯤 되는 제3의 언어로 의사소통을 했던 메이드 그녀와 운전할 때 양보란 있을 수 없었던 기사 할아버지가 생각날지 모른다. 인도인도 모르는 온갖 정보를 알아내어 서로 공유했던 능력자 한국마담들, 석수 50병이 사면 50번의 바코드를 눌렀던 하이코(슈퍼마켓) 점원들, 학교 핍업 가는 길에 늘 보였던 나체의 자유로운 영혼의 아이들, ASB에서 만날 때마다 할 말은 많았으나 결국 ‘Hi~, How are you?’로만 주고받던 외국인들, 연예인 머리를 설명했던 담실이 단발을 만들어 버린 인도 미용사 등 이 모두가 인도라는 단어 속에 살아있는 기억들일 것이다.

바쁘게만 살아왔던 내 인생의 박자를 늦춰주고 묘한 기억까지 선물한 인도는 내 인생의 맛을 폭락시켜 준 MSG와 같은 존재임은 분명하다. 그리고 그 맛은 지금은 아닐지라도 먼 훗날 고단한 나의 삶 가운데 작은 위로가 되어주리라 믿는다.
2 년여 동안의 싱가포르 생활을 접고 귀국한지 일년이 지났을 작년 요맞때 무렵이었던 것 같다. 예정이었던 지역으로 차근차근 출국을 준비하며 아이들 학교까지 이미 지원을 했었던 와중에 몰바이 발령 소식은 청천벽력이었다. 이사를 준비하면서 거의 울먹거렸던 기억들이 주마등처럼 스쳐 지나가니 나도 모르게 미소가 지어진다.

“왜 하필 인도야?”

“영어를 쓰는 나라이고 춥지 않으니까 네가 생활하기엔 몰바이가 더 나을 거야.”라며 남편이 애써 위로를 해주었으나 귓가에 맴돌 뿐 현실을 받아들이고 싶지는 않았다.

여자아이 키우기에 안전했던 싱가포르에 비해 덜컥 겁도 났었던 것도 사실이었다.

“여기도 다 사람 사는 곳이야. 뭐든지 다 있어. 걱정 말고 와.”라는 남편의 말을 반신반의하며 몰바이 공항에 우리 셋이 도착했던게 염그제 같다.

해외생활이 두 번째라고 준비 없이 너무 안일하게 오게 된 나의 몰바이 라이프는 정말 이지 좌충우돌의 연속이었다. 물론 지금도 그렇지만 말이다.

비싼 월세에도 불구하고 우리의 보금자리는 만순 때는 바닥이 천방지하 정도로 비가 새기도 했으며, 양보란 절대 없을 같은 경적소리에 나의 두통은 멈추지 않았으며, 시끄러운 사거리 한복판에 누워서 자고 있는 것 같은 느낌이 들어서 도통 숙면이라는 걸 잊은 지가 오래다. 또 길거리는 너무 더럽고 구걸하는 아이들을 보자니 안타깝게 차창 밖으로 눈길을 줄 수가 없었다. 교통신호를 지키면 더 지체하게 되는 이상한 나라, 우리를 신기한 원숭이마냥 뚫어지게 뼈다보는 그들의 눈길이 너무나 부담스러웠다. 기사에게 물어보니 우리가 외국인이라서 그렇다고 한다. 처음에는 의아했지만 지금은 오토릭사에서 나를 뻔히 뼈다보는 그들에게 인사를 건넬 정도의 여유도 생겼다.

SUM OF SMALL MOMENTS
순간의 합
박덕자 | Duck Ja Park | Parent
여기서 아이러니하게도 세상에서 가장 비싼 집이 있는가 하면, 최고급 호텔 앞에서 가로수에 빼래를 넣고 소를 키우며 길바닥에서 생활하는 이들이 공존을 하며 각자의 삶을 당연히 받아들이고 살고 있는 것처럼 보였다. 아무것도 가진 것이 없는 무소유의 그들이 이 더 행복한가? 많은 것들을 가지고도 항상 부족하다고 투덜대는 내가 더 행복한가를 되돌아보게 해주는 곳이기도 하다.

또 인도에서는 가장 친한 친구라도 그 친구의 종교의례는 모른다는 말이 있을 만큼 다양한 종교를 믿고 복잡한 의례를 따르다고 하는데 아니라 많은 신들이 있는지 가늠하기가 어렵다. 직장 때문에 이곳에 살게 된 인도인 친구가 자기는 언어문제 때문에 뭄바이 생활이 어렵다고 하소연을 한 적이 있었다. 영어를 잘하는 그녀가 왜 그럴까? 하고 의아했지만 종교만큼도 언어도 많다니 정말 그럴 만도했다.

처음 몇 달간 고등학생인 큰 아이가 학교 가기 싫고 수업이 재미가 없다고 했을 때는 괜히 데리고 나왔나 보다라는 생각에 후회가 되기도 했다. 그래서 매일 밤이면 아이처럼 이런저런 고민들을 함께 이야기하며 밤이 깊어 갔었던 때가 생각난다. 해외에 살면 힘든 것도 있지만 가족 간에 서로 더 위해주고 끈끈한 가족애를 느낄 수 있는 게 좋은 점인 것 같다. 모든 새로운 것에는 두렵기도 하고 호기심도 있지만 익숙해 지는데 인내와 기다림이 필요하듯이, 아이들도 나도 이제는 이 생활에 어느 정도 젖어들었다.

영어 울렁증을 극복하려고 학교에서 가르쳐주는 무료 영어 수업도 가고, 제대로 알아들지도 못하는 학교 커피모닝과 요가 수업도 빠지지 않고 가려고 애쓰다 보니 나의 일주일은 후딱 지나간다. 처음 이 곳에 와서 070 한국 인터넷 전화기를 붙잡으며 보냈던 혼자만의 외로운 시간들이 지나가고 이제는 뭄바이 생활의 지혜와 정보들을 하나씩 알아가는 소소한 재미도 느끼며 지내고 있다. 그동안 잊고 지냈던 인연들을 되짚어 보게 되었고, 새로운 소중한 인연들도 많이 맺게 된 이 도시에 감사하다.

정말이지 잘나의 순간처럼 일 년이 지나가다 보니, 이런 저런 바쁘고 힘들다는 핑계로 아쉽게 놓쳐버린 지나간 일들이 후회되는 게 많다.

길거리에 땅구는 돌멩이조차도 문화유산일지도 모른다고 말할 정도로 전 세계에서 일곱 번째로 세계문화유산이 많다는 인도에 대해 더 배우고 느끼고 싶고 세계 3대 요리인 인도 요리를 제대로 줄기보고는 것이나 자신과의 숙제이다.

또 다른 그 어떤 날이 올 때까지 우리 가족의 뭄바이 생활은 현재 진행형이다.
I am now from the Mumbai of my parents past
The far flung tales that they once told are now proudly mine
The trams are no more that my dad once rode
But these trams, they left me tracks.
Tracks for me to freely follow and find
Their love from old of my now Mumbai.

My foot tracks unfurl their truthful tales,
Their longings of a past left way behind,
An abstract past left for me to now see & frame
Through my adult child eyes, I now walk these tale tracks for them.

Tales of long coffees from the club called Radio.
Tastebud tantalising tales of eggs that got eaten ‘hapboil’.
Mongini cakes a favourite of his, they make them still now. How I wish he could have one.
Bollywood tales of meeting her friend Mr Dilip. My mum called him Khan.
The aquarium for fishy tails, I was told I should visit
I see him there now, my dad a young lad, a young lad my dad
He must have had a grand day out back then.
My mother at Crawford, ‘yeh hai Bombay meri jaan’
Looking back at me, gliding across the road she goes
So effortless. What traffic? She seems to ask!
If only I could tell her how the traffic is now.
As I walk her Crawford market tracks I feel new adventure
As I walk on further I know her tales have surely brought me here before.

The Mumbai of the trams past and forgotten
That era always brought for them a smile.
Those tracks keep me connected and now
I understand the behind of that smile
For that I’m so glad and proud
I am from their Bombay past and now.

Artwork by Sa Eun Hong, Grade 11 Student
A toddler
weaves
his way
through traffic
looking for a sparkle in the lines of gray pavement.

His older brother, no more than five, follows.
He picks up the child,
balancing him
head up
on his shoulder.

The baby wails,
helpless,
precariously curved around his brother,
looking at the sky,
the buildings,
and me.

Gulping for air,
Helpless or unhelpful,
Falling,
Head knocking
On the hard knowledge that
When the light changes,
We move on.
Hellos and Goodbyes
Ik zat in het vliegtuig, heel erg gespannen..... en we gingen landen.
“We zijn er eindelijk”, zei ik tegen mijn moeder.

Toen we uit de luchthaven stapten, was het echt heet! Ik vond het ook heel erg stinken en er waren heel veel mensen, maar ik vond het modern. Toen wij bij het Grand Hyatt Hotel in Mumbai aankwamen, had ik het echt warm! 30 graden! In Nederland was het 10 graden!

Maar toen we daar aankwamen, moesten we nog een hele ceremonie ondergaan met bloemen, kransen en stippen op onze voorhoofden. “Moet dit nu echt?” vroeg ik aan mijn moeder.

Ik kon de eerste nacht niet slapen: het was te warm, mijn oren deden pijn, te veel geluid, maar ik ben uiteindelijk wel in slaap gevallen.

We moesten in dit hotel 8 weken wonen omdat wij nog geen woning hadden en onze spullen nog onderweg waren. Ieder weekend gingen we kijken naar huizen. Ik vond het wel leuk maar ook een beetje saai. In het Grand Hyatt Hotel Mumbai wonen vond ik een beetje te luxueus maar ook wel leuk.

De eerste schooldag! Het was zo vroeg dat ik niet wou opstaan, maar ik moest wel. Toen ik de lift uit ging, zag ik iemand naar de schoolbus gaan. Maar ik ging met de auto. Mijn eerste dag van mijn school ging beginnen!
Toen ik de school zag, was ik erg verbaasd omdat mijn school in Nederland heel erg ouderwets is en hier is het zo modern. “Wow”, zei ik tegen mijn vader en moeder. Toen ik binnenkwam, was ik nog verbaasder omdat het nog moderner was. En toen ik bij mijn klas kwam, was ik…… nerveus. “Ayla, Zainab can you help the new student?” zei de juf. En toen kwamen er twee meisjes naar mij toe.

De eerste maand voelde ik me niet erg op mijn gemak omdat ik niet zo veel Engels sprak maar daarna ging het al veel beter.

Toen ik terug in Nederland was, vond ik het heel leuk, lekker koel. Ik kon mijn oude vriendinnen weer zien en ik kon ook een dagje op mijn oude school meelopen. Maar het allerleukste was om mijn broer en mijn konijn terug te zien. Mijn broer zit op de universiteit dus hij kon niet mee verhuizen en mijn konijn kon ook niet mee.

Ik vind het nu heel erg leuk omdat ik samen met mijn vriendinnen naar de Breach Candy Swimming Club of Waterstones kan gaan zonder dat er sneeuw ligt of dat het koud is.

Op school kunnen we ook onze eigen laptops gebruiken en het is een moderne school.
I clutch my son’s clammy hand tighter. I can feel his nervousness as he hesitates to get out of the car. He drags his feet as we approach the school gates. I stroke his head in what I hope is a reassuring way. But I don’t dare look him in the eye, fearing that I will give away what I am feeling. I mean, what is the point of dwelling on it. We have no choice after all. We have to crack this. Another new city, another new home, another new school, another new life. We’ve survived this before. We can handle it again.

I am a veteran of moves – in my 15 years of marriage, I have moved seven homes across three countries, all because my husband’s or my work required it. Admittedly, they have all been to nice homes in interesting cities. I have the drill down pat. I have become an expert at organizing movers, researching neighbourhoods, school applications, identifying storage units. I have developed the enviable skill of being able to walk into any empty residence and know exactly how my furniture will fit in it.

My family knows the drill too. In our first month, we figure out electric plugs, grocery stores and the nearest dry-cleaners. We seek out other families like ourselves who also move regularly and make weekend dates so our kids can have someone to play with. We pull out maps of the area and use every long weekend to travel around our new city, seeing as much as we can because our time is rationed. And we tell ourselves how much ‘fun’ it all is.
But deep down we insulate ourselves. We try hard not to envy ‘settled’ families that have a fixed sense of home. We ignore how they look upon our children’s life experiences with a mixture of awe and sympathy. We keep things light, simple and safe. All of the furniture we own is dismantle-able. Even our bookshelves don’t need to be fixed on a wall. No nails to pull out means no walls damaged. We keep all social interaction to a light, breezy chatter and walk swiftly on from even those that have the potential for life-long friendships. We’re like the money plant in water that grows green and fresh and fast but whose roots are never deep. Because deep down we know that the pain of the uprooting – the goodbyes, the adieus – always seem more palpable than the excitement of the new to come.

By all comparisons, my experience of moving has been easy. We move with packers, and brokers help us find new homes. We can research our new cities extensively on Google, our organizations offer relocation packages and technology allows us to tour schools and plug into social communities even before we arrive. This is very different from the stories I grew up with. You see, mine is a family of immigrants, of military folks, of wanderers. For the past four generations, not one of us has had the privilege of spending our lives in just one country. One grandfather took off to Africa in search of opportunity, another was a refugee of war. A third was in the army, posted all over the world during WWII and another worked for the Railways, engineering the laying of tracks in distant mountains. My grandmothers’ stories are of separation from their loved ones – often even their husbands – for years, of uncertainty of food and shelter for their families, of total displacement and rebuilding. In comparison, my life has been easy. I feel like an absolute wimp complaining about my moves when I compare my life to theirs. And from these tales of struggle and triumph, I have inherited a certain attitude to this
wandering existence. We approach them with a sense of ‘going into battle’ – never succumbing to emotion or sentimentality. We hold our heads high and always move forward. As I am thinking of this, my son pulls on my hand again. His little body is now convulsing with small sobs. I hug him. I tell him it will be ok. And I know somewhere deep down that, indeed, it will. I know this anxiety will pass, that he will settle into his new class, make friends and love his teachers. I must believe that this fear will soon be behind us. I know it does not make this minute any less difficult. For him or for me. But for all of our sakes, I must hold my chin up and treat it merely as a ‘phase.’

After our tearful separation outside the classroom, I stay back in the school lobby. Here at ASB, the entire community is made up of people like us whose lives are lived on the verges of ‘moves’ – either ‘just arrived’ or ‘leaving soon’. I linger to talk to the other mums. I imagine that while we look different and speak in varied accents, there will be many common experiences – seasoned, ‘mobile-life’ managers that we all are. I get ready to exchange our stories of survival.

And indeed there are many of those hairy-scary ones. Of feeling desperately foreign and alone and helpless. The stories I know and can relate to. But amazingly, there are others too. Milena has been in India for less than a week. She arrived with a bucket list of all the things she wanted to do; she was most excited about her adventure to come in Mumbai. In her first week she has already ticked off two things from her list – she has learnt to wear a saree, and she has watched her first Bollywood movie. Vilde, who is planning to go see the Ganapati pandals over the coming holidays has also registered herself for a yoga teacher’s training course. Kumi is deep in the throes of writing a book on Bombay while she is here for a year. She talks excitedly in her broken English about how she writes each time she moves because it
gives her a great reason to go out and explore her new home city. These are not narratives merely of survival but of adventure. We are all mobile families but while my efforts have been of protecting and insulating, their experiences are of seeking experiences, throwing themselves in the unknown and taking pleasure in the ride. They dismiss fears of germs and illness, calling it a rite of passage in a new home. I approach the unknown with concern, dread and stoic grit. They seek it with such excitement and pleasure. Their energy is positive and contagious.

That night, I suggest a post dinner drive to find an ice cream/dessert place. My husband is surprised, after all, there are still unpacked boxes in the living room and I typically would immerse myself in putting things away. But he is clearly intrigued. My children are hesitant and ask questions about whether it will be safe to go out in our new neighbourhood. I realize at that moment how much of my own fear they have internalized.

I assure them it will be. As they run off to find their shoes, I look at the boxes and think how much time I usually spend in new places, trying to set our lives up to be ‘just the same’ as before. I wonder if we might find it in us to use the time instead to live and immerse in the newness of our experience, to plunge into it headlong, to embrace the foreign. I wonder what it might be to talk not about how we survived each of those early days, but of seeking encounters with strangers in strange places – along a new street or a new store – and shared those stories with our children. Of giving oneself to deep relationships that one will feel truly lucky to have had even when we move on. Of helping them see the alien that we are now living within, not as a hostile unknown but as a large landscape; theirs to embrace as they please. The children arrive with their shoes all laced up. “Let’s go out and find an adventure!” I tell them, and we head out into our new home city.
NOT GOODBYE, SEE YOU LATER!

Antara Kshirsagar | Grade 5 Student

How it feels when other people move away.

Januaries are usually exciting with fresh beginnings and new year cheers. But there are also some days filled with sadness. These are the days where many students come up and say casually “Oh, I’m leaving this year.” While I try to be encouraging on the surface, inside I am shell shocked.

For example, last year I gloomily listened as one of my close friends talked and talked about how excited she was to go back to the US. “I love ASB (American School of Bombay) and stuff,” she said. “But, I am happy to leave Mumbai, with all the traffic and pollution. California will be nice and clean!” I wondered whether she was trying to reassure me that she was happy to move, or herself. Despite the cheery words, I could tell she wasn’t happy about moving. She just did not want to show it. She knew she would miss her friends, her apartment, ASB. In California, she would have to start all over again.

In our school this is a normal phenomenon with as many as 30-40 percent of students moving every year. And so while we miss those who leave, new students can also mean new friends. It’s like when you lose a tooth. You will never have that tooth back where it was again. But you know that a new tooth will bloom in its place.
I have been at this school for five years and over these years I have had many friends who had to move away. I know that unless something unexpectedly happens, my family is now settled in Mumbai. We have family here as well as school and classes. We call India our home now. Of course, occasionally we miss New York (where I spent our first few years), and we do go to visit in the summer.

It was long ago but I remember feeling sad at our farewell party. My parents threw a party and my class made a big card with goodbye notes all over it. My two closest friends cried and gave me big hugs. They were so sad to see me leave. I remember feeling a lump in my throat, and I remember not wanting my friends to cry. I wanted to stay. On our last day, my babysitter and I cried. My parents told me that though it was hard to move, there were new memories waiting to be made in Mumbai. We would always stay in touch with the people we cared about even if we were far away.

In fact, this has come true. Every year we meet at least some close friends and family. One year, my friend Isabella and I made a lemonade stand near Central Park and had tons of customers. We collected a lot of coins and had a blast! My family and I also go on an annual winter trip with some of our closest friends and really enjoy ourselves. Some of my friends who have left have come back to visit, and I have playdates and sleepovers with them. My parents have the same experience with their friends. Some of my mom and dad’s best friends are people they only see and talk to once or twice a year. But when they do, they pick up right where they left off, laughing and smiling together.

So, while the moment of leaving is sad, and Januaries can be gloomy when people announce their plans to leave, I have come to learn that it is not goodbye, it’s see you later.
Was it fate?

My love for India started without me even realising it. As a memento for my first birthday visit to Taronga Zoo, Australia, I chose a sequined and jeweled, metallic coloured elephant. After visiting the zoo many times, I accumulated quite an elephant herd.

Exactly four years later, my dance troupe was on stage at Star City doing a Bollywood dance to the song *Jai Ho*, appropriately costumed down to the accessories and bindi. We were great and the audience went wild!

The following year I prayed to a Hindu god in the Sri Mariamman temple, Singapore. It seemed like the right thing to do. I also went bangle shopping and decided that I loved the area called Little India in Singapore.

My Grade 3 class was one of five across Sydney to undertake a special unit of study – ‘Incredible India’. About six of us were selected to dance and sing to ‘*Dilwale Aaye*’ at the Parliament House. I thought the costumes for the performance were not that fantastic.

A couple of months after my tenth birthday, I was devastated to be told that we were moving to Mumbai. I loved my life in Sydney; my friends, my pets, my house, the local park, the harbour and many other things...
Reflections

My Indian elephants are on my shelf with a paper mache peacock, a sand bottle from Dubai, and other junky items purchased in the last seventeen months. Bling and junk are readily available in India! I have fed, ridden and painted elephants in Jaipur. Far more exciting than just seeing elephants from afar at Taronga Zoo!

We were able to find a suitable dance class in Mumbai, but unfortunately, I am no longer interested in Bollywood dancing. However I do own a real sari.

To my mind, Little India and Mumbai have very little in common. Little India and Jaipur maybe have something alike, but not Mumbai. Last year my grade in Mumbai had to sing ‘Hum Honge Kamyab’ (‘We Shall Overcome’) to local office workers. It was an experience and prophesy in a way!

I now know that there is a lot more that I miss about Sydney. Characteristics that I took for granted, including the trees, fresh air, safe water, beaches, personal space, lack of extreme poverty, female equality, school sports, cars, supermarkets, food, shopping centres and garbage collection.

However, I also know that while Mumbai is not marvelous, India is incredible – incredibly colourful, incredibly talented, incredibly noisy, incredibly dirty, incredibly frustrating, incredibly sad and incredibly uplifting. When people ask me about my life in Mumbai, I give them the politically correct response of ‘interesting.’ It’s complicated, and I think you need to experience it for at least a year to understand.

When I leave India there will be an amazing amount I’ll miss including my friends, the buzz, the festivals, fabulous holidays, naan bread and the Indian spirit in terms of creativity and survival. I have been changed by India and for that I thank it.
A ugust 14, 2007 was a beautiful sunny day in Mumbai; a rare treat during the monsoons that had soaked the city over the previous few days. It was my little boy’s first day at school. The image of him standing on the stairs of the BKC campus beneath the fluttering flags, wearing a blue polo shirt and shorts that came down much below his knees than they should have, is indelibly etched in my memory. He looked back at me, his face beaming with pride as he stood at the threshold of a ‘big-kid’ school. He was joining ECEC 4 at the American School of Bombay and could barely wait to meet new friends and learn how to read the many books in his new classroom.

Nine years later, he has just finished writing a persuasive essay on the future of books, analyzing if they will suffer a slow demise with the growing proliferation of online content. He still wears blue polo shirts and shorts that sometimes belt much lower down on his waist than they should. And he still runs up those stairs every school morning eager to meet his friends. He does not turn around to wave to me as he did while in ECEC 4, but I have been told that it does not happen often with middle-schoolers.

Nine years in the same school was not anything exceptional when I was growing up. But in the ASB and international school context, where the average tenure of a student is only a little over three years, it is monumental. At the start of the current school year, my son looked at his yearbook from
ECEC 4 which he still treasures. Only one other student from that school year is in his grade 7 class. Every summer he has had to say goodbye to many close friends, and every fall, he has made new friends. When I asked him if the constant cycle of goodbyes and introductions bothered him, he thought for a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders. ‘It’s sad to say goodbye, but that’s just the fact of life at ASB. On the flip side, I think I am quite fortunate to have good friends all over the world.’ I think in those two sentences, he summarized the essence of the international school experience, where goodbyes are frequent, but the relationships remain strong because of the intensity of the shared journey.

As I look back on our family’s journey at ASB through these past nine years, it is hard not to get emotional. It is not just the children who made good friends and had to say tearful goodbyes. Many mornings have been spent in the school’s parent café with fellow parents who became kindred souls, telling each other our stories, sharing our experiences, our dreams, hopes and sometimes, even our fears. Saying goodbye frequently to friends who became an integral part of my parenting journey was difficult (in fact, I am convinced that the children are much better than I am at saying goodbyes). Five years into our time at ASB, I vowed to not get too close to other mums at the school because the heartbreak when the families moved was too much. That vow did not last long. And that is because of the shared values and experiences that we all have as members of this diverse but tightly-knit community.

Families that have been here for several years have seen the school evolve from one campus to two. We have stood next to each other, cheering on our children walking for different countries at the Festival of Nations. We have run with our children during sports days, marveled at their talents during music and drama performances, and celebrated the magic during the Diwali
assemblies and the Tree Lighting ceremonies. And we have watched our children growing up together.

There have also been sad moments. We have been through the tragedy of 26/11, and we have lost some of our own. We have cried together and shared our grief. For many of us, ASB has been a home away from home, with a community that has become an extension of our family. And like a family, it comes together at good times and tough times.

Last summer, a friend asked my younger son what he liked most about ASB. He mentioned the teachers, and when he was probed further on what about his teachers he liked, he said, “They help me think and understand.” Having observed children at ASB for close to a decade, I know the school does not just focus on understanding the material for academic tests but rather the tests of life. If only schools and institutions around the world were like ASB, teaching their students to think for themselves and to understand, the world would be a rather different place.

For now, I continue to enjoy the joy on the faces of my children as they run into school every morning, excited at what the day will bring. And I continue to enjoy connecting with my extended ASB family; those who remain in Mumbai and those who will always be remembered here.
It has been difficult to find the words to write this, because I am leaving. We are leaving. My husband’s work here in Mumbai is coming to an end and our visa runs out after five (five!) magical, amazing, painful, incredible, transforming, sunshine-filled years. We still don’t know for sure what his new job will be or where it will take us. We might even end up coming back to Mumbai again. At this stage we just do not know. So we are in a period of transition and uncertainty.

Over the weekend, we gathered with the ASB community to celebrate the diversity of nationalities and cultures at the school. Talking about leaving with one of my children’s teachers, she looked at me and said: “At least you know you have really really loved it here.” I thought these were such beautiful words. I realised that she was right. I have really really loved it here. I have really really loved. I have loved every single friend I have made here, every single journey I took, every time I got to help out at ASB or even just when I got a little wave from my girls or one of their cute little friends in the cafeteria. I realised that I really love my helpers, who both got pregnant and had their sweet babies while working for us. I realised I love our driver and his dependability and sunny personality. I love the way sometimes things make no sense at all and there is no choice but to accept them exactly the way they are. I love the girls at the orphanage where I have been teaching, who hug me and smile shyly and giggle when we do Lion pose. I love
The Yoga House, my home away from home, where I would go on tough days and immediately feel embraced in the love of that community. I love all my friends here, many of whom have long since gone but who stay in my heart no matter where in the world we find ourselves.

I love the person I was when my husband and I made the (crazy? brave?) decision to leave behind our lives in London and move here. I love the person I am today — who has been shaped by India, by Yoga and by the infinite wisdom that these life experiences afford us if we are open to them. I love the smells and the noise and the fact that in our last apartment, we were kept awake at night by Hindu chants to colourful deities, and in our current apartment it is the sound of Abba tribute bands that make us occasionally sing along and smile while we are trying to watch TV. I love that I have spent hours in traffic, gazing out at the streets that are dirty and chaotic but somehow always new. I love the dogs that have come and laid down by my feet as I drank chai in a pavement cafe. I loved navigating the traffic of streets with no pavements, carrying one daughter and tightly holding the hand of the other one as we made our way to yoga or ballet. I love the cows I have hugged and who have lovingly licked my hands. I love that my husband and I think differently about things now than we did five or even three years ago. I love that throughout this adventure we have been there for each other, always encouraging each other and supporting each other, no matter what. I love that I get to do all this with him since he is my rock and my best friend and that we get to share all of this with two sweet and funny angels.

I love the way how looking out at the roadside dwellers has taught me to have faith in human resilience. I love that my kids’ teachers are my teachers and friends, and my friends are my teachers, and my kids are my teachers and my students are my teachers and that I have had the opportunity to teach students,
teachers, kids and friends. I love how whatever divisions I once thought there were have been melted away over time. I love the way different cultures and religions and backgrounds all weave and dance and breathe together in my children’s school, in every yoga class, and on a daily basis in Mumbai itself. I love the way I have been able to look at the flaws of this country and city right in the face and ultimately still found nothing but love staring back. I love every single one of my so many amazing, lovely, caring, funny, talented and thoughtful friends.

I love the new adventures we’ve had here. I love the new food I got to taste and enjoy. I love the people who invited me for lunches, dinners, celebrations, poojas, dancing and singing. I love that I met my Guru here (at last!) and had so many beautiful opportunities to learn from him. I love every single person who got on a plane and came out to stay with us here and let us share with them a little piece of this chaos and magic. I love every single amazing friend I made here…did I mention that already?

The thing that surprises me about all of this is a paradoxical truth. I have come to understand that loving with my whole heart actually does not make me feel sad about leaving, or at least nowhere near as sad as I expected to feel somehow. Loving with my whole heart, I realise now, means that it is actually easier to say goodbye, because I have no regrets. I know that I have savoured every moment of juice from this experience, the good, the bad and the ugly!

It helps to mitigate the sadness, but it does not exactly make it any easier to say goodbye. I was asked by the school today to fill in a form officially notifying them of the fact that we are withdrawing the children. As I hit the “submit” button, I could hardly see the screen through my tears. It hurts to say goodbye. It hurts so much more than I ever imagined when I arrived
five years ago and looked out of the window feeling very lost and alone, cooped up in a small serviced apartment with two kids with chickenpox and my stomach feeling like it was about to fall out. It hurts, because I am really feeling it. But there is also surprisingly little sadness, because I do not feel a sense of loss at leaving. I feel mainly deep gratitude and love. Love love love …

So I look back on our time here with nothing but love. I look forward with optimism and faith, and surprisingly little sadness because there are no regrets. I have no regrets. If I had to do it all again tomorrow, I would. In a heartbeat. I have nothing but gratitude and love for the immensity (is that a real word?) of our experience here.

*And in the meantime, I sit on my mat, I work on being here and now. Because I am still here. I still have 16 days left. And I intend to squeeze the juice out of every single one of them.*
日本を発つ時、海外の学校について相談する機会がありました。そこで最後に付け加えられて聞いた「お母さんが、新しい生活を楽しむと良いですよ。そうするとお子さん達も自然と楽しんで、学校生活に早く慣れますよ。」という言葉をずっと心に留めていました。

私の子供達は当時、中２と小３で、突然の赴任のお話でした。準備期間もなく、英語での教育は全くの初めでした。私自身にもそのような経験はありません。準備しておくことがたくさんあるはずなのに、何から手をつけたら良いのかわかりません。新しい学校に向けて、もっと難しい宿題をもらうものと思っていた。そんな時のアドバイスでしたので、これなら出来るかも...と感じたのです。

日本にいた頃は、学校から帰った子供達の話を聞くのが習慣でしたが、子供達が新しい学校に通い始めてからは、その日にあった私自身の楽しい出来事を話すような心がけました。保護者として学校に行く機会も多く、その時の失敗した話も含めて...

幸いにも、子供たちも今ではすっかり慣れ、順風満帆とまでは行かないものの、元気に登校しています。

さあ、これからも楽しみなくちゃ！
Musings

Artwork by Shanaya Shah, Grade 8 Student
Water

Avighna Daruka | Grade 1 Student

Water is one of the most important resources in this world. Some animals, like fish, live in water. We use water for washing our clothes and for cooking. We drink water. We need water for bathing also. Animals and plants also need water. We use water for putting out the fire. We can not live without water.

People are wasting water. That’s why the earth is losing a lot of it. They are keeping the taps on and not switching off the showers after a bath. Washing a car every day is wasting water!!

I am in first grade. Now, I live in Mumbai, and I do not wash my car every day because I do not want to waste water. I always switch off the tap after use, after a bath and brushing. I use a bucket for a bath. A bucket has a limited capacity, but the shower keeps on going until you turn it off. Being in Mumbai has taught me to be careful with water wherever I go next.
Artwork by Avighna Daruka, Grade 1 Student
If I never ever get a pet,
I'll never get to use a vet,
I'll be in my home full of bore,
Or maybe I'll die in a bore!

But think! What else can I do?
Instead of surprising everyone by shouting... BOO!

Unless, you talk about a disaster of getting a pet?
Or maybe make a speech there's no clean vet?

I know, I know, I know, I know, I know!
Since you told me a billion times until now!

But what do I do without a pet?
And not the book, 'Cat in the Hat',

Please do not buy me a bad hat!
Unless it contains a cat!

Have you ever thought if you want a pet?
It can be a great friend while travelling!

It might cost quite a lot money, but it is worth it!
So, get a cat in a hat right now!
Was it a dream, or was it reality? Aughhhh, I feel so dizzy from last night. I dreamt about a faraway world that only I knew existed. Where there were trees full of singing and chirping birds, blooming flowers and sparkling lakes. "But where did I go last night?" I asked myself as I sat down with my head in my hands. When I lay down and reached under my pillow, I felt something cold and smooth. As I slowly lifted up the pillow, I saw a golden key! It was quite shiny and about the length of my hand. When I went to the closet to get my slippers, I noticed a tiny rusted keyhole in the corner. I looked inside the keyhole and BAM! Just like that I've discovered a whole new world. (Well not totally new, I had already dreamt about it). Overjoyed, I ran to my bedside and grabbed the key. As I pushed the key through the hole, I could already hear the birds chirping and see the warm sunlight. Crack! The door opens, and I fall out. THUMP!

I fall onto some grass that was rather sharp if you ask me. As I get up and look around, everything is fuzzy. I blink a couple of times and then I’m fine. I start strolling into the forest clueless about where I’m going, but never mind that. As I venture deeper into the forest, something rustles in the bushes behind me. A little bit startled, I slither towards the bushes slowly. I peek inside the bushes and AHHHHHHHHH! Just kidding, I actually saw a tiny fox looking lonely, so I decided to take it with me. After that, we went a little further and suddenly “ATTENTION! MARCH! ONE TWO THREE FOUR!” a knight
shouted. “Oh no,” I thought. Knights are probably a bad thing. I peek through the trees and see that they are hunting deer for no good reason. I see two deer fall to the ground and the Knights don’t even pick them up. They just leave them there. That’s when I decide that I should do something more than just hide like a scaredy cat. “STOP IT!” I yell to the knights. Whoopsie – they all give me the death stare. I sprint away as fast as I can. DUM-DUM DUM-DUM DUM-DUM-DUM. I hear the galloping of horses coming closer and closer and finally someone scoops me up onto their horse, very quickly, and throws me behind onto the horse’s back. Once we reached the palace I am literally thrown onto the ground like a ball. “Owww!” I yell, as it really hurt. “Who do you work for?!” the king bellows. “No no one.” I stammer.

“OFF WITH HER HEAD!” yells The Majesty.

“NOOOOOOO!” I shout!

DING DING DING! Why do I hear church bells ringing? Suddenly everything gets foggy. “DEAR!” My mum shouts, “You’re going to be late for school! Hurry up will you?”

“Sure Mom!” I yell back, jumping out of my bed. We have a loud house, even though it’s only my mum, my dad and me. I surely make up for a whole bunch... hahahaha! Toodles... I have to get ready for school, “bye now!”

“HURRY UP DEAR!” my mum calls out to me, again. Aaaagggghhhhh! Anyway, bye now! Au revoir mon amis!

Bonjour Bombay...
भरती माँ की लाली ने जब उन्हें पुकारा,
तब वो बहादुर माँ के लाल
चले आये सीना तान
सीने पर खाने गोली
बचाने अपनी माँ की आन।

तब भरती हुई लाल उनके लहू से
मिट गई कई हाथों की मेहमी
छिन गए कई माओं से उनके बेटे
लेकिन …

लेकिन पीछे कोई हटा नहीं
कोई दुर्मन से डरा नहीं
चाहे थे वो …
बीर सिपाही
या मेहमी से लाल हाथ
या माँ की नम आँखें,
सबने खुशी से किया बलिदान
अपनी जान ढंढ़ा दी भेंट
भारत माता के नाम।
प्यारे बच्चों नयी पीढ़ी तुम्हारी है,
ये आज़ाद देश अब तुम्हारी ज़िम्मेदारी है
आपस में लड़ना नहीं
भेदभाव करना नहीं
शिक्षा और मेहनत हैं तुम्हारे हथियार
आपस में तुम्हें है बढ़ाना प्यार
क्योंकि ...
क्योंकि यह आज़ाद देश अब तुम्हारी ज़िम्मेदारी है।
Abidjan blooms.
Branches bend from the weight
of leaves and fruit.
Jungle foliage wraps around the city.

Head wraps extend in birdlike shapes and shades.
Women glide,
Balancing family, food,
and fate
on their heads and backs.
Having no control over any of them.

The staticky charge of radios
pollutes the streets
with today’s football game and
the latest government propaganda.
Voices charge the air.

I run through these streets,
In my little shorts and
Airmax shirt.
A part of
but apart from
the scene.
Minnesota hibernates.
Manicured
Bare
Trees keep to themselves
Holding so little
in this lost winter.

Heads encased in dark wools and
man-made super fibers
bend against nature,
Wrapped up in thoughts of
self
and the future.
Controlling destiny.

Cars in muted colors pass each other
Carrying solitary people
listening to “the news”
of places
too different to understand,
Passing judgments along the way.

I watch from the window,
bundled up in the dark colors I have not worn for so long,
but still love.
A part of
but apart from
the scene.
Jen Devidayal
wind whistles
under the door
drinking tea
dusty leaves waiting
expecting
finally first drop

Zulekha Bangee
lights bright and dazzle
sounds will not stop
Rama and Sita are here

Dorothy Barnhouse
noisy crows settle
children plead
stay, can’t I stay?

Katya Schodts
Mumbai rickshaws
waking up -
morning opera
Gayathri Durairaj
Mumbai monsoon
makes the land
joyful and wet

Yuri Huele
ニコニコと
微笑む息子
読書かな

Fumiko Hayakawa
The early bird wakes me from my dark blanket
sunrise shines
on child’s face

Naruko Kumasako
rain, rain, rain
town in the puddle
dancing in rain

Gayathri Durairaj and Heeru Bhojwani
नरम पीला आसमान
पवित्र रवि किरण में
तितलियाँ नाचती हैं।
GLOBAL NOMADS ARE LIKE SNAILS. THEY CARRY THEIR HOME OR AT LEAST THEIR SENSE OF HOME AROUND WITH THEM.

As we step into the future, this book brings together the stories of our journeys and the voices of our memories that we carry along with us in our moving boxes.

As a community, we at the American School of Bombay hope that our book will resonate not only with expatriates and third culture families, but also with all global citizens.