

Brotherhood of drivers

movers & shakers



MANOJ KUMAR

Run by the aunt-nephew duo of Bharti Chadha and Vipin Suri, 'Road Pe Raahi Bhai Bhai', a campaign to curb road rage, catches on

and she were addressing gatherings at colleges and schools, BPOs and call centres, corporate offices and even temples. "Almost everybody wanted a sticker," says Suri. Among the converts was Amit Agarwal, CEO of Amdel Technology, who says, "The sticker on my car has definitely kept me from getting into fights."

The movement took off through word of mouth and online forums and blogs. As one blogger writes, "I don't know if the sticker on my car influences others, but it definitely reminds me before I fall into the trap of honking and hurling abuses. I am still not 100 per cent sure that I will never react, but it is still under control." Suri, a reformed road rage culprit who has even come to blows with other drivers in Mauritius, says, "The message is to value the life of the other driver or pedestrian, to think of him as your own family member and to tackle provocation calmly and with compassion."

The movement has got support from all walks of life, from Delhi University students who are enrolling in large numbers as volunteers to spread the message, to corporate bodies who are pitching in financially to people from Mumbai, Pune and even Italy who want stickers. Companies like Tricolite have mass ordered stickers for all their employees and office cars, but the most heartening stories are about the common man. Ishwar Bindal, a 50-year-old, was driving when he rammied into a biker. "The boy strode towards me, helmet in hand and fire in his eyes. Before he could hit me, I showed him the sticker. 'Road Pe Raahi Bhai Bhai,' he read aloud and began laughing. He said, he couldn't hit me because I was his brother," says Bindal.

To get a sticker, SMS Bhai to 59994 or log on to www.roadperaahibhaibhai.com

DIPANITA NATH

A FEW DAYS ago, Prashant Nanda, 24, returned to his car at Defence Colony market just in time to see a biker hit the door, leaving a deep dent. Nanda rushed at the offender. As a crowd gathered around, his eyes fell on a yellow sticker pasted on his car. 'Road Pe Raahi Bhai Bhai,' announced the red letters. "Immediately, I felt my temper disappear. I decided to give the biker another chance," he says. The biker was taken aback, the crowd stunned, but not more than Nanda was at his own reaction. "At any other time, I would have beaten up the guy," he says. "The message on the sticker stopped me."

At their Gurgaon office, Bharti Chadha and Vipin Suri, the aunt-nephew duo who started a quiet revolution called 'Road Pe Raahi Bhai Bhai' six months ago, are not surprised. Every day brings stories like Nanda's. "In 2008, 7,500 lives were lost due to rash driving and road rage in the NCR, and 17,000 others were seriously injured. So, this might take a little imagination—what if everybody driving on the road were brothers? Would we honk quite so much, or try to overtake or even come to blows with a driver if he were our brother?" asks Chadha, 50. The sticker is placed on the rear-view mirror, constantly reminding the driver to take it easy.

"We always wait for somebody else to take a stand on matters of our concern. This time, I decided to tackle road menace by doing something about it myself," says Chadha. "The moment the phrase 'Road Pe Raahi Bhai Bhai' hit me, I knew this was it." She began with an impromptu and unrehearsed session at the Delhi Airport taxi stand, and "the response from the cabbies was encouraging". Soon, Suri, a businessman,

WORKBENCH

Tihar's fitness guru

Ramesh Kumar Sharma has been teaching yoga at Tihar Jail for over a decade

DEBESH BANERJEE

FOR over a decade Ramesh Kumar Sharma has been a regular at Tihar Jail. The yoga teacher goes from one cell to another holding classes. Called Guruji in Tihar, 53-year-old Sharma's two-hour sessions are popular with inmates.

Sharma started teaching yoga at Tihar in late 1995 when he was invited by the then superintendent of the jail to conduct classes. "I was a commander with the Home Guards in Haryana and taught jawans yoga there as well. But after I lost my job at the Home Guards, I took this up full time at Tihar. It paid me well and I got a lot of respect from the inmates," he says. His 12 years of service in the Home Guards ensured that he didn't feel intimidated by inmates.

Sharma has been teaching yoga primarily to inmates suffering from mental anxiety and depression, diabetes, tuberculosis, drug addiction, high-blood pressure and body pains. The most common complaint he receives is of inmates suffering from mental anxiety and depression.



RENUKA PURI

Diabetes comes a close second. "I teach the inmates various dhyana mudras (exercises to improve one's thinking) by asking them to shut their eyes and focus on people who they value most in life and I teach pranayam to patients with diabetes. For insomniacs, I teach bal asanas (lying on the back and raising one's legs)," he says.

His students include not just jail inmates but also a former Prisons Minister, whom he treated for diabetes, and various officials at Tihar.

Sharma was forced to test his yoga on himself after an accident in 2002 left with him bed ridden with a broken leg and shoulder. After months of physiotherapy failed to help him, Sharma did a combination of yoga asanas like jeevan tatva (a combination of seven asanas) and acupressure techniques. "Within a year I was able to walk again and teach yoga to the inmates," he says.

In teaching the jail inmates, says Sharma, he finds deep satisfaction. "I feel a sense of satisfaction when these inmates come up to me even after they have been released from jail. Not once have I faced any problems. They respect me a lot," he says.

The Real Page 3 reports on ordinary people doing extraordinary work. If you would like any contact details, write to us at realpage3@expressindia.com



HSOHS TINTIS

CLASSICAL IN THE CITY

As the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya celebrates 70 years, its principal Madhup Maudgalya traces the institute's musical legacy

SUANSHU KHURANA

THE guard at the gate of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya practises his bols before rushing off for a tabla lesson. Such is the pull of music at this 70-year-old institution that even he didn't let the chance of learning music pass him by.

"I have been working here for five years. You can't be untouched by swar and laya at a place where music is worshipped," says Ashok Mishra.

The institute has taught many in the city—well-known students include Shubha Mudgal and Kailash Kher. Set up by Vinaya Chandra Maudgalya in 1939 with a shoestring budget, the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya has been much more than just a centre of learning. From the time when Maudgalya, fondly called Bhaiji, went around town on his bicycle urging parents to send their children, especially girls, to learn classical music, to turning away 3,000 applications every year now because of lack of seats, the institution has come a long way. But Maudgalya's son, vocalist Madhup Maudgalya who is at present the principal of the institute, says there's a lot to be done still. "There is a lot more to do. My father was driven by an ambition that was much more than that of just promoting classical music. People did not consider learning music respectable enough, especially in Delhi, which was a cultural desert as far as music was

concerned. His work changed all that," says Maudgalya.

The vidyalaya was set up to commemorate the doyen of Hindustani classical music, Pt Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, and to popularise Indian classical music among the people.

The school, he adds, initially ran out of their home in Connaught Place. In 1974 the government granted them some land and a Mumbai industrialist gave them Rs 3 lakh and the institute shifted to its present address. "Musicians were generous in giving financial assistance. For instance, vocalist Siddheswari Devi contributed Rs 500 at that time. Each student paid 50 paise for the building fund," says Maudgalya.

The school now charges students Rs 500 a month. "Children from all walks of life are a part of the institution. You can find a bureaucrat's child learning alongside an auto rickshaw driver's child," says Maudgalya.

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan held a sarod concert here when he was just 12 and sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar has performed here on several occasions. Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma and Pandit Jasraj have also given their first major recitals here. "There is hardly a name on the Hindustani music firmament that has not performed here since artistes see the jayanti as a chance to pay homage to Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, the maverick musician who rendered the original Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram," says Maudgalya.

ALOKPARNA DAS goes looking for old comics in Daryaganj, Hauz Khas and Saket

It's a comic world

WHENEVER Arghya Roy is in India, he makes a trip to Daryaganj's Sunday book bazaar, looking for old comics. The 30-something is not merely revisiting his childhood, he is a serious collector.

Based in the US, he comes back home once a year and each time, his 'to do' list includes looking for out-of-print Indrajal comics, old Amar Chitra Kathas and other comics. He has a huge collection—ranging from Chacha Choudhary, Chandamama to Madhu Muskan, Tinkle. And it's not only English ones, he says he has a fairly good collection of Bengali comic books as well.

"My favourites are the Armyadev (Bangla for Phantom) comics I read as a child in Kolkata. I have Amar Chitra Kathas that cost Rs 2 and the first issue, Krishna, printed way back in 1967," he says while scouting through old issues of Superman at a footpath shop.

Roy is a little disappointed. The book-seller, Mohan Lal,

tells him that he is "early for comics". "It's exam time and right now, guides, old question papers, entrance exam guides are much in demand. Come back end of April and you will find a good stock of comics."

Roy is not Mohan Lal's only client. "There are three types of customers: parents who want their children to read comics that they grew up on, comic buffs of all ages, and collectors who buy from us at cheap rates and then either put them up on auction-websites or simply resell them at a higher price. There are a number of foreigners who come here to buy comics. At times, they insist that I give them the addresses of junk dealers so that they can buy books and comics directly from these kabariwalas," says Lal.

Forty-year-old Dhruv Choudhury is another die-hard comic aficionado who recalls spending all his pocket money on Amar Chitra Katha when he was younger. Dhruv is planning to launch a website where he can upload old Madhu Muskan and other comics. "There are a number

of websites that deal with comics and one can surf these mostly free of cost, though some do charge a fee. Usually, these deal with one particular genre of comics, say Indrajal. I want to create a website that will have as many varieties of comic books as possible. I have started collecting all

TASHI TOBGYAL



kinds of comics," he says. For this purpose, Dhruv makes a weekly trip to Daryaganj during the summer vacations and also to Mumbai's Chor Bazar.

Daryaganj is, however, not the only place where one can get old comics. Old issues of Tintin are available at Rs 100 to Rs 350 at Saket's PVR market. While an old Superman is available at Rs 10 at Daryaganj, an old issue of Chandamama comes for Rs 5. Roy says a US-based book club recently sold an old issue of Bahadur—the desi comic hero of Indrajal comics—at \$200.

"In the '70s, these comic books were our sole source of entertainment. Phantom, Bahadur were in many ways the counterparts of the angry young man on the silver screen. Then, in the '90s, Indrajal packed up. Madhu

KD Aryan's store at Hauz Khas stocks old comics

Muskan was gone soon. Amar Chitra Katha started reprinting old issues. Today, the old issues are fast becoming collector's items, thanks to sites like the eBay," says Choudhury.

However, according to K D Aryan, owner of Sri Books that sells old books, maps, movie stills, posters and comics, "It's an uncertain market, and one can't predict the preferences of the customers. Today, there might be a demand for Amar Chitra Katha's old issues. Tomorrow when I procure them, I may not find any takers," he says.

On eBay, for instance, a collection of 10 Amar Chitra Kathas is available at Rs 392, a vintage Hindi Bahadur at Rs 399, a Bengali Phantom at Rs 499 and English Indrajal at anything between Rs 149 and Rs 999 depending on how old the issue is.

So, if you already have a collection of comics that you used to read as a child, don't just throw it away. It may fetch you a fortune.