

Close encounter with a silent communicator

Shirin Pajnoo

MassComm students are adept at spoken communication. But when faced with a person who can neither hear nor speak, it becomes a learning experience in non-verbal communication.

Meet Supriya Meghnath Dethé, 26, a sales personnel at Zudio, Star Bazar, in Phoenix Mall in Viman Nagar. She is both hearing and speech impaired. And yet she communicates cogently, intelligibly and effectively – using meaningful signs and gestures. This reporter had occasion to interact with her while shopping at the store. Fortunately, I have rudimentary knowledge of sign language. This is how the interaction went: I point to the clothes I have selected and ask her how many I can try out in the trial room. She holds up three fingers. That was easy.

contd. on pg 4



Supriya Dethé

Sanket Jain delves deep into the rural heartland

This SCMC alumni's stories have gone international

Krishna Barot

"If you dig deeper into statistics, you will find that there are about 833 million people residing in rural India. But there is barely any coverage about them in mainstream Indian media. If we are choosing not to report on them - it means that 833 million people do not make news. Which is plain wrong."

It was this thought that drove Sanket Jain back to his hometown in rural Maharashtra – where he decided to pursue rural reporting. Belonging to SCMC's Batch 2014-2017, Sanket had already interned as a crime reporter at the Indian Express in Mumbai and Delhi.

But he found his calling in the fascinating stories of Indians living in rural Maharashtra. Today, he is changing the course of rural journalism, one story at a time.

Jain's journey has led him throughout the state of Maharashtra – where he has covered extensive stories on an array of subjects. From the impact of climate change on villagers and human-wildlife conflicts, to disappearing art forms and women's issues.

His groundbreaking work in shedding light on the lives of a predominantly ignored rural population has caught the attention of Indians and foreigners alike. Sanket's articles have featured in over 30 national and international publications – including USA Today, British Medical Journal and Unbias the News.

Currently, Sanket is amongst the top 10 finalists for the Journalism for an Equitable Asia Award 2021-2022, instituted by the international NGO Oxfam.

Amongst several other prestigious accolades, Sanket won the Ram Nath Goenka Award 2021 in the Environment, Science and Technology Reporting category. He worked alongside Team PARI (People's Archives of Rural India) – an organization he has been associated with since 2017, and covered the climate crisis's impact on humans and the bison in Maharashtra's Kolhapur district.

While Sanket is proud of his achievements, he firmly believes that stories that challenge the status quo and inspire change are the biggest assets to a journalist. "I am a big believer of the ideology that good journalism will never die," he stated. He recounted a story he wrote on a wrestler in a remote villager who had a physical disability. Although physical disabilities are a big taboo in



Sanket Jain: inseparable from his camera

rural India, his story created a change within the community itself – as people began respecting the wrestler for his grit. Sanket was pleasantly surprised when he realized that people do care for a well-written story. It is moments like these that continue to motivate him. As Sanket continues chasing stories, he also aims to change the perspective of rural journalism amongst young minds. His experiences in rural reporting will prove to be a great example for journalists who wish to make a career in rural and developmental journalism.

Viman Nagar footpaths: good, bad and ugly

Shruti Menon

The sidewalks in Viman Nagar are paved with good intentions by the civic body. But good intentions alone are not enough for their upkeep.

Viman Nagar has more pedestrians than most other areas of the city – considering the predominantly high student population who do not own vehicles and therefore have to walk, pavements and sidewalks need to be functional.

Most of the sidewalks in Viman Nagar are pitted with cracks with paving blocks broken and missing in many places. Worse still, large stretches of sidewalks are inaccessible to pedestrians for two major reasons – taxis waiting for passengers are lined up on both sides of roads near the airport, and slum dwellers parking their two-wheelers on sidewalks.

"I have stopped wearing my good shoes because they end up getting broken or damaged due to the rough surfaces of the pavements," says Siddhee Satish, a student of SCMC who lives at the hostel, which is barely a kilometre from the college.

Most students in the hostel walk to and from the college. The sidewalks and pavements are in permanent state of disrepair. "At the end of the day, my shoes and clothes are covered in dust," says Siddhee.



A pavement next to a road under construction in Viman Nagar

But there are exceptions too. Not all of Viman Nagar's pavements are like this. There are some places where there are wide, well-paved pavements which are a pleasure to walk on.

One such is the road-crossing pavement at the traffic intersection near Lunkad Queensland on West Avenue road. Says Sayanta Sengupta, a student of SCMC, "There are some decent footpaths too,

like those between Ganapati Chowk and Dorabjees, which is a relief, because traffic here is heavy and there are no traffic police on this stretch."

"Comparatively, however, there are more footpaths and sidewalks in Viman Nagar because it is a relatively new area of the city. But the footpaths must be usable," observes Prof Vidyabhushan Arya, a long-time resident of Pune.

You never know what you'll find in this quaint bookstore

Abhishek Anand

The Konark Nagar Road is one of the most happening streets in Viman Nagar. Yet amidst the constant hustle and bustle there is an oasis of peace and fulfilment – a second-hand bookstore called Saiesh Enterprises owned by Mangesh Madanlal Kothari, 42, - a man full of metaphors, humour, and positivity.

Initially a newspaper agency, the store gradually transitioned into a flexible second-hand library. Giving people a chance to buy or lend books, the enterprise allows its customers to function out of their own comfort zones. Today, it has readers across generations ranging from school and college-going kids to elderly people.

contd. on pg 4



The shopkeeper inside Saiesh Enterprises