

Viman Nagar runs on momos



Kung Pao wok-tossed chicken momos from Mandarin Oak priced at Rs. 259 (left) and Steamed veg momos from Himalaya Momos priced at Rs. 60 (right)

— Rishab Sengupta —

The sun is just beginning to set, and the air is heavy and laced with the smell of hot tea and cigarettes. As a gentleman pours tea into tiny paper cups for the customers, his colleague lifts up a steaming plate, yelling into the crowd “veg momos!”. Customers crowd around him claiming to have ordered the plate of hot vegetable dumplings. The cook promptly begins preparing a fresh plate. It would be hard for one to miss such a scene in Viman Nagar, given how common they are. You only need to spend fifteen minutes driving around the locality to see several such scenes in one single night.

With scores of hawkers, stalls, eateries, and restaurants serving momos throughout the area, it's safe to assume that momos are Viman Nagar's favourite snack. The humble oriental dumplings have become somewhat of a cultural phenomenon, establishing themselves as a mainstay of Indian street food culture, alongside vada pav and pani puri. The popularity of the snack has ensured their presence on the menu of a vast majority of food and dining establishments in Viman Nagar. In this part of town, one can even find momos in the most unexpected of places, such as Pind Punjab and KaatiZone. Street vendors are the big-

gest players in the momo game however, with many places being sold out by the evening. Manoj Kumar, the proprietor of Himalaya Momos, one of the most iconic momo vendors in the area, says that his stall sells at least 100 plates of momos on an average day.

Momos have their origins in Tibet and Nepal. The traditional momo is a steamed dumpling with a red-meat filling. Since making their way over to India, new filling variants such as vegetable, paneer, chicken, fish, and cheese have become popular. They are also prepared in various ways - fried momos, tandoori momos, Afghani momos, and momos tossed in a sauce/gravy.

With such a massive variety of momos available to the market at every possible price point, there's something for everyone. It's no wonder that places with large student populations such as Viman Nagar enjoy momos so much; be it from small street-side vendors such as Himalaya Momos and Hira's, small restaurants like Sevensisters and Mad Momos, or high-class restaurants like Kimchee and The Mandarin Oak. Whether you're a broke student looking for a street food dinner or someone treating yourself at a fine-dining restaurant, the humble momo has got you covered.

Hope and a new lease of life for kids with cancer

— Shirin Pajnoo —

Sad. Stressful. Chronic. Painful. These might be a few words that come into your mind when you hear the word 'Childhood Cancer'. 'Access Life', an NGO in Kalyani Nagar, ensures to change your perception about it.

Families from remote areas come to big cities for their child's treatment. While the treatment is in process, the families do not have proper access to hygienic environments. "The patients and their families stay in the corridors of the hospitals, and the child is prone to secondary infections that way," mentioned Ms. Subhadra, the Centre Manager at Access Life, Pune.

Access Life Assistance Foundation was set up in 2014 in Mumbai and later, in Pune in 2021 with free accommodation services for cancer patients and their caregivers. Gradually, it added free transport, food, recreational activities and counseling.

From the logo to the interiors, the design is made in a way to make the environment happy and vibrant for the children. Their aim is to open shelter homes in every state and ensure that everything they do, drives towards curing the kids and

that the child shouldn't carry the baggage of the hospital. "Instead of focusing on the fact that they have cancer, I focus on the fact that they are getting treated," said Ms. Subhadra.

Two mental health counselors have been appointed to conduct sessions every week. Group sessions happen once a week, wherein parents gather to do some paintings, watch motivational videos, and other activities. In addition, a teacher is hired to develop a primary curriculum for every child depending on their learning capabilities. Volunteers visit and interact with the kids & their families, have play-dates with them, celebrate birthdays etc. All funding for the NGO comes from donors; individuals and Corporates who engaged in CSRs.

So far, six children have gone back home for their remission. "When the children come in, it is hard to see them. But just within a month, there is a huge transformation. Now, the kids have become so notorious. It is sometimes so hard to manage these kids, as they play and run around every day. It feels happy to see them cheerful like this," the Centre Manager added.



Children under treatment watching TV

Creaticon upscaled

cont'd from P-1

It is a difficult task, and yet all the participants did a fantastic job of using their strategic skills and coming up with ideas to convince their imaginary clients. Hardik Kharbanda (Batch 2023) emerged as the winner of this event, and the runner up was Rhythm Joshi (Batch 2022).

For the virtual Instagram contest, participants had to create a poster based on a certain theme and brand, the prompt for which was provided two days before the event. Submissions were to be done within 24 hours of releasing the prompt. Rhythm Joshi (Batch 2022) won the contest and Vidhi Agrawal (Batch 2024) was the runner-up. This year's Creaticon saw active participation from students as well as the faculty. In fact, the judges for all the events were faculty members and students. Manish Hingorani and Rugved Khante judged the Pop Up Stall competition, Juhi Rajwani and Aviini Ashikho were judges for the Celeb Rebranding event, and the Instagram contest was judged by the Art and Design Club Heads, Anica Singh and Soumya Badam.

The iconic comfort food from Bihar

— Abhishek Anand —

If you are from Bihar, or thereabouts, what would fill your heart with joy at the end of an exhausting day? Quite obviously some 'litti chokha' – that iconic ball of wheat and gram flour, mixed with herbs, spices, chopped onions, green chili, coriander, with a dash of mustard oil and baked over a coal fire. It's nutritious, fulfilling and it's profoundly comforting. Ask any Bihari! And now it's available in Viman Nagar. In the middle of the hustle and bustle of an unfamiliar city, there exists a litti chokha stall run by Sanjay Shah, a 30 year old from Darbhanga in Bihar.

Named Vaishnavi Litti Bhandar, the stall can be found near Ganpati Chowk. Shah named it after his daughter and considers it lucky. His struggles began when he lost his father at the age of 13 and had to support his family. He moved to Patna, where he studied and learned to ply the trade under his uncle.

After setting up multiple stalls in the hot-spots of Patna, he failed to sustain his businesses due to restrictions by the local authorities. His financial situation deteriorated due to loans and expenses, which forced him to relocate to Pune and start



Sanjay Shah seen baking the littis over a coal fire in his stall

working in a restaurant here. Soon he was spotted by a Viman Nagar restaurant owner who liked his cooking and helped him set up a stall in the locality.

So, why did he decide to sell litti chokha? "When I came to Pune, I found people from Bihar, but I did not find anyone selling Bihari dishes," said Shah. That was in 2016. For the first six months his small litti chokha stall hardly had any takers, until one day two of his customers posted about his stall on social media. Today, his

stall sees 200 customers a day, and not all of them are Biharis.

His success has made him ambitious. Now he wants to open an outlet every 10 kms! In fact, he already has two outlets – one in Viman Nagar and the other in Kharadi. A third was shut down to losses incurred during the lockdown. He is thankful to his landlord, his friends, and the people from his hometown in Pune who understood his vision and helped him succeed, he said in his native tongue Maithili.