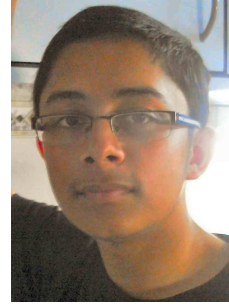


A Tryst with My Dreams – Abhishek Ghosh



Everybody has their own secret desire, isn't it? I have one too. I don't want to become the President of a country, rule the world, defeat all my enemies or save the world from some impending danger. All I want to do is experience the world by talking to different nationals – perhaps in a totally unplanned manner.

We, - my mother, sister and I - went to Mumbai from Pune, on the dreaded morning of December 6, 2008, after the Mumbai carnage. We were accompanied by my mother's friend and her daughter. It was undoubtedly my favorite day ever. We first visited the Chattrapati Shivaji Museum, though only I was left admiring the broken pieces of antiquity! Everyone else had escaped to the nearby Westside Hotel! Obviously, my mother, her friend and daughter and my sister hadn't been interested to go through the remains of some ravaged relics!!!

Then we went to The Colaba Causeway - the Champs Elysees of Mumbai! What a time we had - chatting and going through the quaint little shops and most educated vendors humbly selling their wares. We entered the Leopold Cafe, greeted by a poster made by the frequent haunters - denouncing terrorism. But, what struck me most was the French conversation floating in the wind. I was immediately interested. I approached the trio - two middle-aged gentlemen and a lady. They were from Canada. I was utterly thrilled. They kept staring at me as if they could not believe that an Indian, young boy like me would have the courage to go up and speak so confidently in French with unknown foreigners.

Visitors are often wary of the innumerable mendicants, beggars and over-friendly locals. However, I think that they must be able to distinguish genuine well-wishers from exploiters, and must be a little open to other cultures to enjoy the diversity of the world fully. People think that only friendship, love, family ties and similar close relationships can bind people. But, has anybody considered that an unplanned encounter in a strange land with a complete stranger might truly make a more lasting impression than prolonged acquaintances?