

Mumbai Annadata

(Mumbai Dabbawala)

Design Research Seminar – Report

Study of Stereotypical Characters and Ambiance of a
specific Geographical Area

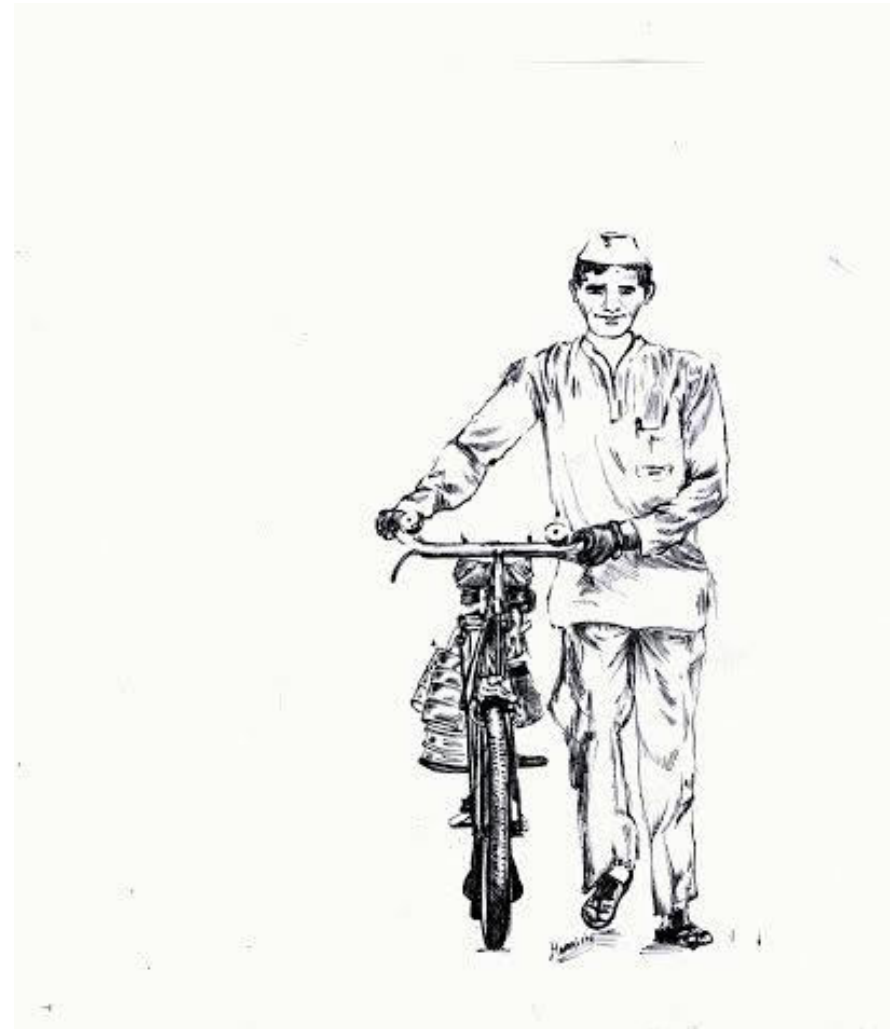
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Approval Sheet

The Design Research Seminar Project entitled “Mumbai Annadata”, by Manisha Swarnkar (Roll number, 126340002) is approved, in partial fulfilment of requirements of the Masters of Design degree in Animation in Industrial Design Centre of Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.



.....Project Guide

Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated any idea/ data/ fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature.....

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Acknowledgements

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(Dabbawala at CST – Mumbai)

Introduction

When the word "Dabba - Wala" chimes in the ears we sub-consciously form an imagery of a man with white "topi"(Hindi word) and full white clothes carrying Tiffin boxes to different places. Yes, we are going to have an insight of the legendry "Dabba - Walla's " of Mumbai. This error proof system of delivering freshly prepared food from home to work places has its roots as deep as the city (Mumbai) itself.

A simple initiation by a few men have sparked a revolution with approximately 5000 "Dabba -Walla's" and more than 2,00,000 "Dabba's" being delivered daily as of now.



(Interview conducted)

Who are they:

The Dabbawala's are a very common face in the Mumbai crowd. Their distinctive dressing style makes them to outstand in a crowd. Life is not only about delivering the dabbas , they also do take part in public events and festivals. They are "Maratha's" and they take pride in that. Their love for the people and the place makes them the most reliable people in the whole of the Mumbai .

Mumbai Dabba Walla's have a very humble origin. Majority of them are from rural areas and have come to the city for work. Most of their families still stays in the villages which are quite far away. Whiles others manage to keep their families in some slums or chawls. Life is tough with high expenses and other priorities, but they manage to overcome it because they work for humanity.

Categories of Dabbawalas -

- The Muqqadam
- The simple workers who work under Muqqadam
- Muqqadam own a small sector of the city
(Where dabbas are collected)
- The workers have few trainees under them and have around twelve workers under them

How it all started :



It was started under British rule. In 1890 , Mr. Mahadeo Havaji Bachche was asked by a parsi “ Will you bring my Tiffin from my home ” and the journey of carrying tiffin boxes started since then . In 1890, there was one Dabbawala and one customer.

Currently there are around 5000 people employed under this system ,there by delivering around 200,000 Lunch boxes.

They got registered in 1956

Their average income per month is around 8000 to 10,000 INR .



Daily Routine:

- Work starts by collection of Tiffin boxes from morning 9 am onwards
- There are approx 5000 Dabba Walla's and every 20 members forms a group to handle particular areas
- Each of the 20 member group collect close to 30 - 40 dabbas from their area
- After collection of dabbas the group moves to the nearest station
- At station the boxes are sorted as per their destination by color coding
- Color coding on boxes tell the Dabba Walla's the area of origin, delivery destination, pick and drop station, building address and floor n room no.
- After the dabbas are sorted they are stacked into the local trains which form the heart line of the city
- When the dabbas arrive the destination station...the boxes are sorted again as per the areas to be delivered
- Approximately 70 stations are covered by them.
- The delivery time is max by 1 pm in the afternoon
- After the delivery the Dabba Walla's take break for lunch
- After lunch the boxes are collected back by the Dabba Walla's and the same process is repeated in reverse

The Journey starts by putting a Tilak on forehead after taking bath and dressing up in white kurta or shirt and pant along with a Nehru Topi.



The house wives usually keep the food ready by the time ,or sometime keep the dabbas at the door step which is picked by the Dabbawalas from the respective homes

Why bicycles –

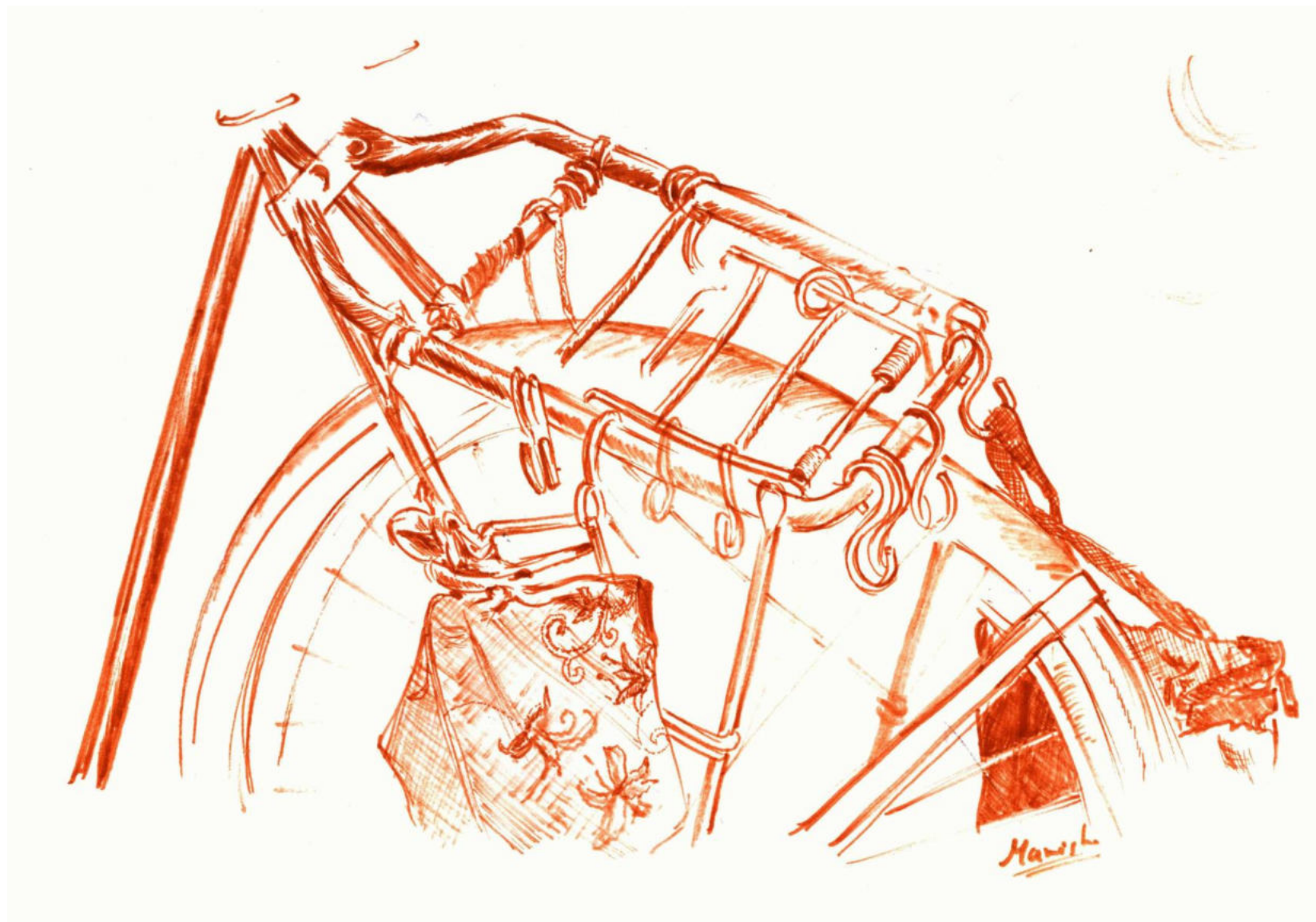
Don't Need License

They can Flout signals or ride over footpaths

Even in Traffic Jam they can easily find space for moving ahead to reach station quickly and Deliver on time.

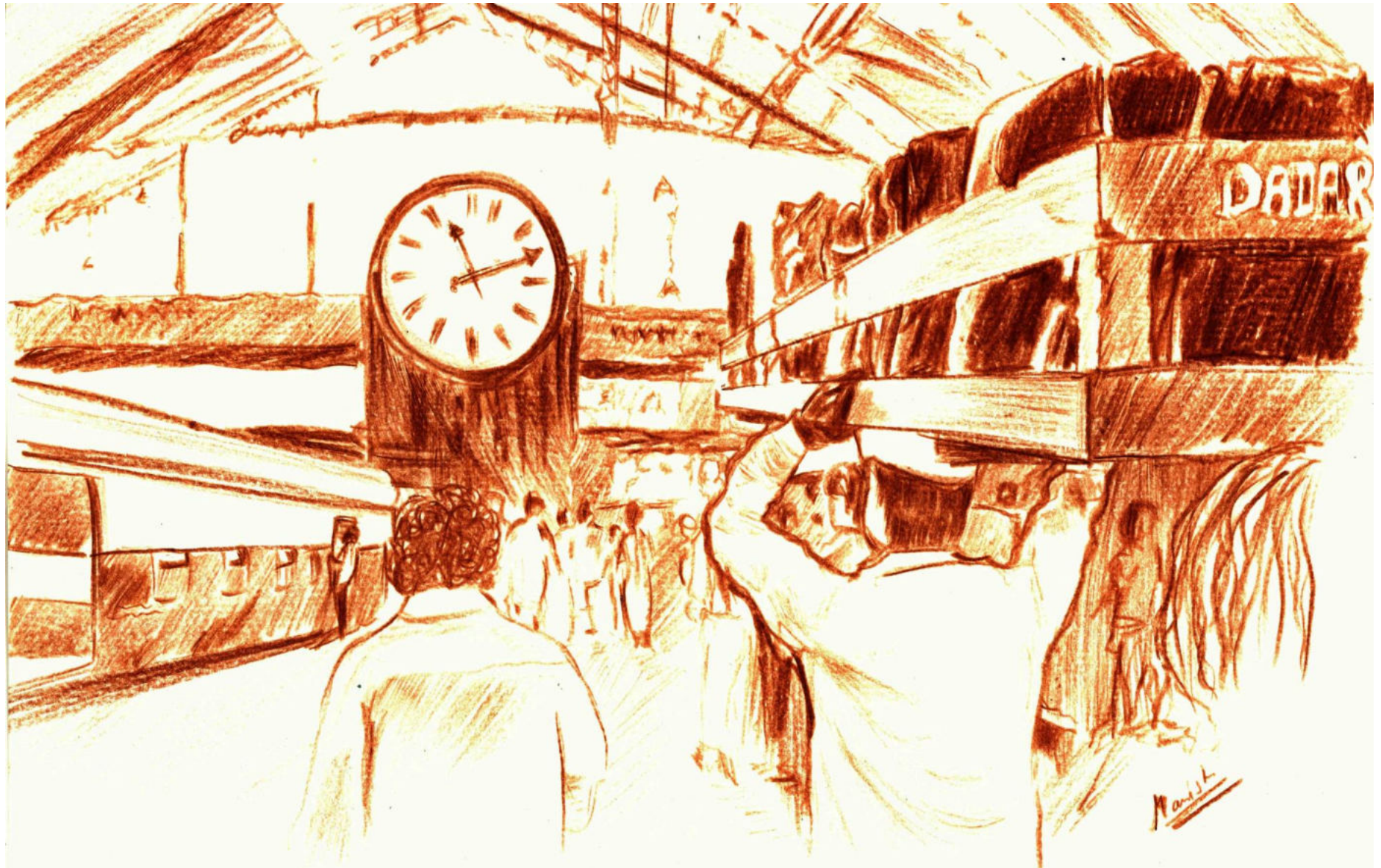
The Dabbawalas are so particular about the time that even if the trains are late, Dabbawalas can't be late.

Maintenance cost – around 300 INR - 2 bicycle















- Most of the Dabbawalas worship Lord Vitthala and consider their customers as their god . For them ‘Work is Worship’.
- Average Literacy rate is schooling till 8th grade.
- Considered as a model of Mumbai Entrepreneurship ,the best management system
- Solve the problem of one hundred Thousands people
- Majority of Dabbawalas customers are men.
- Clock work precision from past 120 years
- No strike or agitation
- They Cover nearly 70 stations
- It happened just once when the Dabbawalas failed to deliver dabbas, that too in Train strike 1974
- Their coverage area is around 60-70km
- They are fined 1000 INR if they found absent without notice or if they are not wearing cap
- Number of Transactions per day – 4,00,000
- Monthly charges come around 500 INR
- No Technology is involved in the entire system
- People from village arrive for training when they are around 15 years old.

Conclusion

As long as human's exist they will be hungry and they need food to eat and so will the "Dabba - Walla's". In short they will be there to serve humanity with a warm smile on their face.

In Mumbai if you are a working class professional and are fond of homemade food then consider a "Dabba Wala" to be your best friend. For centuries "Dabba Wala's" have worked selflessly and effortlessly to feed a nonstop growing population of Mumbai . Their motto - "You can't win a war with empty stomach" has earned them the respect and acknowledgement

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