

Meet the Jarheads

I had never assumed any of us to be avid coffee drinkers, much less 'connoisseurs' of fine coffee. It just struck me a few days back that going to 'Coffee Jar' has assumed almost ritualistic proportions. Back in the 'Konark Pooram' (the housing society where some of us lived officially, though you would always find each one of us) days, there was always 'Aunty's store' to just sit for a while and spend some time. Amidst the 'Appys', the 'Pepsis' and the cancer sticks, conversations would range from topics as diverse and unrelated as 'MS in the US' to 'African Politics', while the 'balance' (read credit) at aunty's store would invariably keep growing. It was not until most of us passed out, and the few of us who were left behind shifted to 'Mayurpankh', did we start frequenting 'Coffee Jar'. There was no particular reason for it, it had just grown into a practice and has now turned into a ritual. If you want to know exactly what coffee table conversations are all about, I would only ask you to join us sometimes. I guess it is the wild imagination and an uncanny sense of humor that each one of us is blessed with, that make Jar-time stories, snippets and discussions so memorable.

It was Kabi and I who had left a little earlier for jar that day, soon to be joined by Jambo, Lotu, Kshittu and Praah. As is customary for all of us to order a large coffee jar and for Kabi and Jambo to order a cinnamon roll to go with the coffee, that day was no different. I was just flipping through the day's newspaper and I really don't remember as to when the conversation veered to Indian mythology. Perhaps it was when Lotu started off on his *Vaishnodevi* and *Madhuban* experiences. It was all fine as long as we stayed at jar, but the topic hadn't really ceased and was picked up again the moment we came home. It was soon followed by heated arguments on the very essence of Hinduism itself and people started forming sides; Baby (until he could sustain interest and keep off 'DotA'), Bashu and me (with Lotu's tacit approval) on one side, and Dude (who had joined us by then), Kshittu, and Phugga on the other. I simply cannot understand how we kept off each other as matters just kept getting worse. Things deteriorated and I withdrew from the discussion, but I cannot remember how it switched to Sikhism with Kshittu and Dude on opposing sides and Bashu trying to vociferously rubbish the two of them. It was enlightening to say the least, and I felt I was watching a bunch of guys who probably knew less than they thought they did. 'Giving in' was something no one had learnt, not Dude at least.

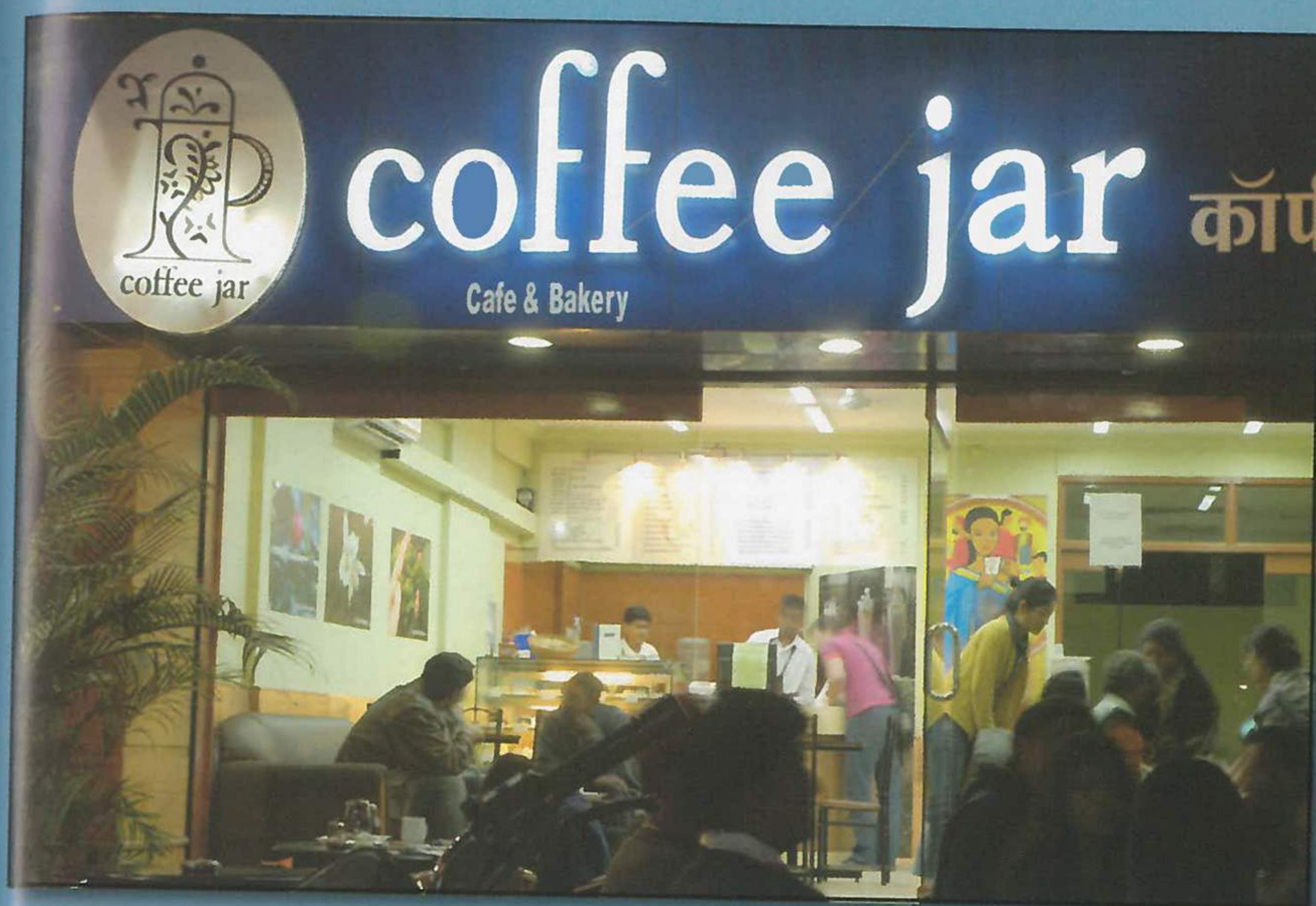
There were six odd hours left for the New Year; the last exam had gotten over that day. Ganju was coming down from Abu, he had left just two months back but everyone's excited whenever Ganja is visiting. After the usually raucous "Wazzup Johnny?" and "Ganja mah man!" greetings, it was back to the plain old 'Pade Raho' business at Mayurpankh. Gotty was quite excited though, asking around for the 'Chilling ka scene'; in spite of knowing well that there could never be a mutually agreed upon 'Chilling ka scene' at Pankh. Someone suggested Jar, and ten minutes later we were sipping coffee. 'Plans' and 'Scenes' flew in fast and from all around the table (I preferred to 'abstain', as usual). Gandhi said he could arrange for the passes to 'Gaia'; no big deal all cried, three grand was simply too much to spend for a night and that too in all the 'chick-less' glory. Somebody suggested we hire a vehicle right at that moment and leave for Goa. It was plain 'bakad' as we usually refer to it, since no one had that kind of money but nobody was willing to admit to it either. Bashu said that there was no way we were going to make it to Goa on time, and that he wouldn't want to be at some obscure roadside 'dhaba' when the clock struck twelve. We all agreed with him on that, a decent enough excuse to avoid burning holes in your pockets. Phugga, the self-proclaimed and also

consensual 'party boy', started taking the names of all the Mumbai nightclubs he could think of, telling us that he 'knew' most of the guys who run those places and 'getting in' wouldn't be a problem. Subba was quiet; that is how you would find him most of the time, he was probably waiting for the 'bakad' to die down, to just go home and 'khap jao' (MP slang for lying on the bed and doing nothing). Ganja was too jetlagged for any 'scene' and just wanted to get home and 'crash' (another MP slang for 'sleep'). It was 'cutter scene' (meaning 'nothing has happened' or 'something adverse has happened' depending on the context) as usual, we were all back home for the 'grand new year bash'. Everyone likes house parties, cheapest way to get inebriated when low on 'funds', and of course there isn't a better music collection around than Kabi's. Gotty would have been disappointed, he was planning for the moment for quite some time (Chunky pulled off the 'cutter scene' first and it was followed by so many more).

It is always nice to find Gandhi, Surd and the other 'Road Shakers' while at Jar. We follow the same routine, as far as going to Jar is concerned. Gandhi is the sort of guy who would put you to ease and still 'take your case'. It is not about wit alone, Surd tells us, it is 'Faridabad' that makes the difference. Sometimes the discussion gets too bike-centric, it's not that I don't like bikes, hell everybody likes an Enfield! 'Roadshakers' love them, the love is not just restricted to long trips on highways but extends to the anatomical details of the bike. The next time you find somebody saying, "I just love the freaking mudguard of the bike dude, it is so beautiful!", don't freak out. It is probably a roadshaker. Gandhi is just too fascinated by the daily crossword, he had probably seen Jambo and me brainstorming over it sometime. He couldn't figure out how we would manage to complete the whole thing. "You guys actually sit with the dictionary, like in the good old days!" "No", we said, "it is not that difficult really, we could teach you if you are interested". And so began Gandhi's love affair with the crossword, and it continues to flourish.



1996



Dhodapkar is a natural story teller, probably second only to Subba. I guess it was last week when we were sitting at Jar and discussing the Russian Mafia (God knows why!) that the conversation slowly shifted focus to the 'Armed Forces'. Dhodapkar was rubbing his palms in delight, it was his forte. The slew of 'army bloopers' that ensued kept us in splits for almost two hours. Dhodapkar gave us the sometimes graphic, and often outrageously funny accounts of his days at the cantonment areas of the border. That the third best sniper in the world was killed because of Maggi water is not something you get to hear very often. In another story, an Assamese Rifles guy, who got caught in major crossfire with the terrorists and found his pistol ineffective, looked out for the nearest LMG (light machine gun, I guess), assembled it in record time, and started firing at his own people. The bloopers were never ending, and so were the laughs. The discussion moved on to what each one of us would ask for the customary 'last wish' just before execution, as usually happens in the army. We decided that Kabi would ask for one last game on GG, and he would die because people would quit as soon as he joins the game. Gotty would ask for a last meal of Maggi, eggs, milk and 'mass mein' (MP slang for 'lots of') cheese. Phugga would like to be the stalker in the barracks, and there was another wish which I cannot mention here, solely for the purpose of maintaining decency in forums like our magazine. It just kept going on. Fortunately, I was spared; there were no discussions on my 'last wish'. We were way too loud that evening and the topics were way too gross, and I was thinking that it probably was time when Cini would show up and ask us to quiet down. But then, Jar is like an extended porch or something of 'Mayurpankh A1-204' and Cini is a good friend.

I do not remember who coined the term 'Jarheads' for all us Jar patrons in the first place. It sounds apt though. All good things die a natural death; and so will the Jar-times one day. The 'bakad' will be missed, and so will the coffee. Until then, as Surd says, "Let's Jar it!" Cheers!

Nicks Explained:

Kabi/Baby/Babax/Babes : Gaurav Kabi
Jambo : Ameya Jambavalikar
Ganja/Ganju : Ashin John Matthew
Bashu : Pranav Behal
Gotty : Gautam Verma
Gandhi : Rajat Gandhi
Lotu/Lota : Deepak Girdhar
Surd/Praah/Sardar : Aseem Sidhu
Dhodapkar : Alok Dhodapkar
Chunky/Chunka : Varun Jhangiani
Subba/Subbu : Subrat Kumar
Dude : Ankit Mahajan
Phugga : Siddharth Singh
Kshittu : Kshitij Saxena

And of course me, myself but no Irene!

- Chaitanya Tata
B.E. - Electronics

Utter Kkrap!

Oh! Now what can I say,
About the 'K'serials and the roles they play.
The times they marry is five to ten.
They die and come back, again and again,
Murder and fraud are mere child's play.
And honesty is lost day after day.
They meet with accidents, disappearing from our sight,
And return with a new voice, face and height.
Being good is bad and bad is good,
They show wrong winning as it never could.
They make fools of the common housewife,
By portraying life as full of strife.
Are we so stupid to follow this madness?
Life is beautiful, not full of sadness.

- Varjavan Dastoor
S.E. - Production