

Tilonia, 2019



A JOURNEY OF HOPE AND INSPIRATION



Mr. Bunker Roy presides over a discussion with visitors and organisers.

From Munich to Tilonia

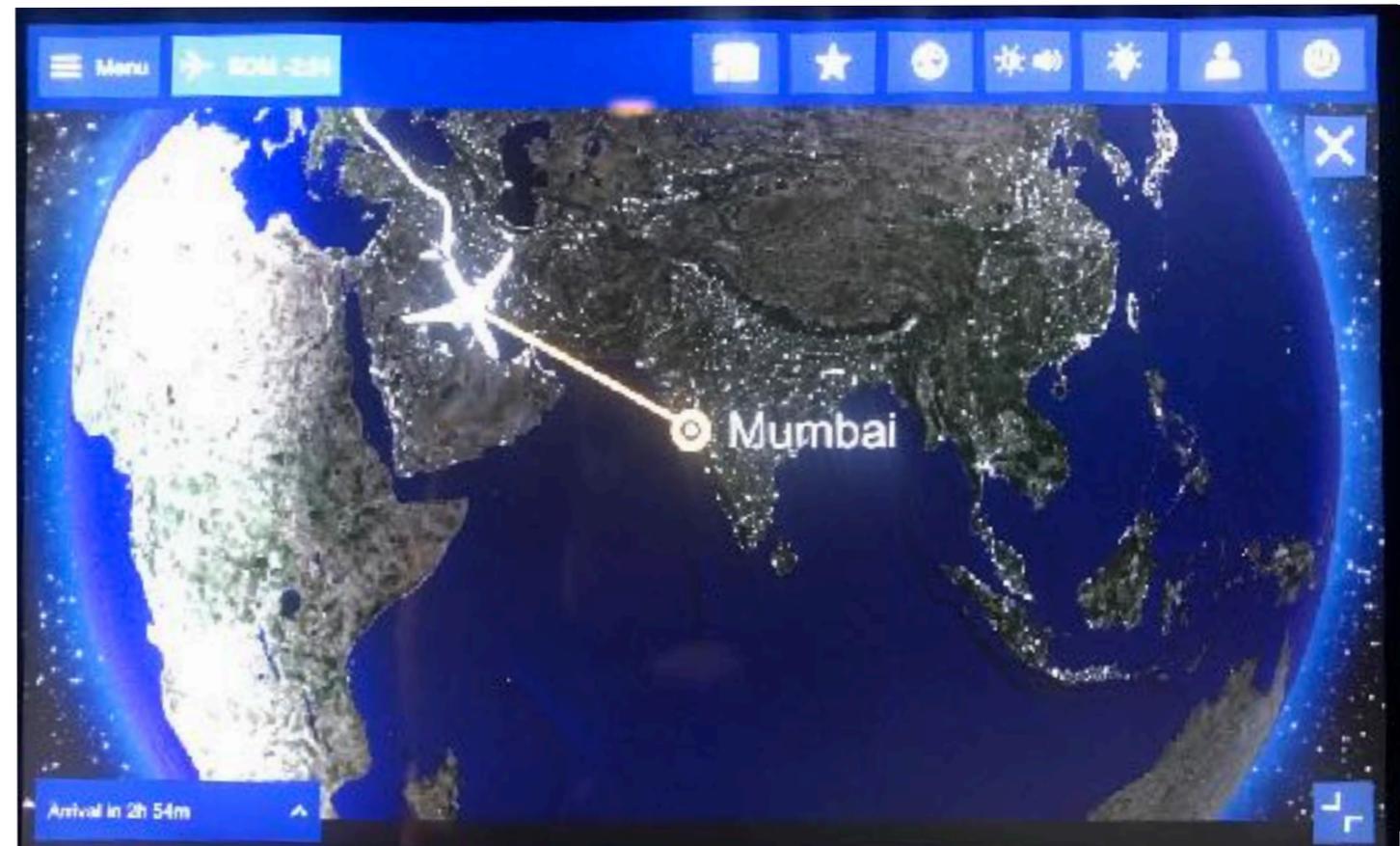


GETTING THERE

To Singla, against all odds

Little donations of sweets, colouring pens, balls were being collected from supportive friends and family. Everything was in place for the trip to Singla, India. In Germany, winter was finally easing off, transitioning to the wetness of pre-spring. The trip collided with yet another escalation in the India-Pakistan conflict, dampening the travel spirits to match the weather in Munich. Border areas were being evacuated and at first it looked like airports in northern India were also closing, following Indian airstrikes on Pakistan along the Kashmir border, the first since 1971.

Although the airport shutdown was later withdrawn, Pakistan closed their



March 7, LH767 inflight screen - Route to the Indian sub-continent over the Persian gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

airspace causing flights from Europe to re-route over the Persian gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Onwards from Mumbai to Jaipur and then Tilonia (in Rajasthan), it was

peaceful progress. All is well that lands well at the destination!

THE BAREFOOT COLLEGE CAMPUS



Grandfather sharing breakfast with his granddaughter.

An oasis of humanity

Landing in Jaipur presented a unique opportunity of stopping at the sport store to stock pile on sports equipment for the various Barefoot schools. Badminton rackets, shuttle cocks, basic gear for the beloved cricket, footballs and frisbees. The rest of the 3 hour journey concluded at the remotely located Barefoot college campus in Tilonia. An oasis of humanity, which although tucked away, was astoundingly well known to taxi drivers at Jaipur airport. Benevolence is popular.

If ever you have wondered about a place where all humans are equal, where respect and consideration are not enforced but common place, where everyone - young or old, able or not, can make an appreciated and valuable contribution to society, that place is Barefoot College campus. The person who has created this world, Bunker Roy.

It attracts the ideas and energy of young university grads, who choose to work in the remotest corners of India, far from their native homes. A new language, new terrain, dry arid environments, scarcity of water, these are the challenges that they have sought and thrive on. With total application and dedication, these young bright minds throw themselves wholly into the service of those less fortunate. On a busy morning, you catch a grandfather sharing breakfast with his little granddaughter - generations of inhabitants are proof of a stable, sustainable haven of togetherness.



Inclusion everywhere

Whether at the night schools or at the Hatheli store, at the mess that feeds every inhabitant on campus or at the rain water harvesting installations, there is inclusion everywhere. It is a reminder of not only how recent the eradication of polio is in India, but more importantly that there is ambition, dignity and value in every human, regardless of how varying the capabilities. The projects and causes are many, involving all hands to run the various education centres, the campus hospital, building and maintaining the rain water reservoirs or overseeing the campus production of products like eco-friendly sanitary napkins and mosquito nets etc.

Just as with Polio, so also with social discriminations. Bunker Roy has eradicated discriminations based on castes, religion and the curse of servitude imposed upon the unfortunates. At Barefoot, regardless of who you are or where you're from, meals are had on the floor, rooms and bathrooms are cleaned by it's occupants and you wash your own dishes and clothes, thus fostering an individual sense of responsibility towards consumption of resources and the space we occupy on this planet.

(When visiting sites, we bear all our travel costs ourselves.)





From front to back - Dagmar, Jasvanth (fellow) and Madiyas Mali (local born and bred under the Barefoot influence, now part of Barefoot's education team)



Jasvanth (fellow), Dagmar (supporter), Teja Ramji (veteran of Barefoot), Mrinalini



Mrinalini and Dagmar (left to right), supporters of Barefoot

THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT OF BAREFOOT



*Teja Ramji and his wife. Founder of Manthan, an organisation for sustainable development in Kotri, Rajasthan.
Some insights: <https://vimeo.com/169682725>*

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