

Visual Communication Special Project

# Visual Ethnography

‘Paranthe Wali Gali’ at Chandini Chowk

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## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my guide for the project - Prof. Nina Sabnani. Her interest in the subject and the attitude of questioning everything has helped me improve my observation and how to see things. Her brief about the project and support is invaluable.

I would also like to thank all the paranthawalas of Chandini Chowk and the people who have given their precious time and conversed with me and given me the treasure of their knowledge and experience.

I would also like to thank my family and all my friends who have been a constant source of encouragement and motivation.



**चाँदनी चौक**  
**CHANDNI CHOWK**

Culinary cruise down the 'Paranthe Wali Gali'

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## What is Visual Ethnography?

Visual Ethnography is a research method based on observing people in their natural environment rather than in a formal research setting. It explores visual techniques by revealing a deep understanding of people and how they make sense of their world.

Ethnography is a methodology, an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and society. It lets us see beyond our preconceptions and immerse ourselves in the world of others. Most importantly, it allows us to see patterns of behavior in a real world context- patterns that we can understand both rationally and intuitively.

Rather than being a method for the data collection of data, ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge about society, culture and individuals that is based on the ethnographer's own experience. The visual techniques may be photography, painting, sketching and other media to depict the research visually.

# Map of Chandini Chowk



## Where did I go?

For my visual ethnography, I went to Chandini Chowk - "South Asia's Oldest Bazaar".

History claims that Chandni Chowk was designed by Shah Jahan for his favourite daughter "Jahanara". At that time it was meant to be a chowk with a large pool and fountain in the center. This chowk was a few distance away from the Red Fort and fables suggest that the pool used to shimmer in moonlit nights and hence acquired the name "Chandni Chowk".

The diversity and layers beneath layers in Chandini Chowk offered me infinite opportunities and I felt privileged to rediscover and enjoy my city's oldest market destination.



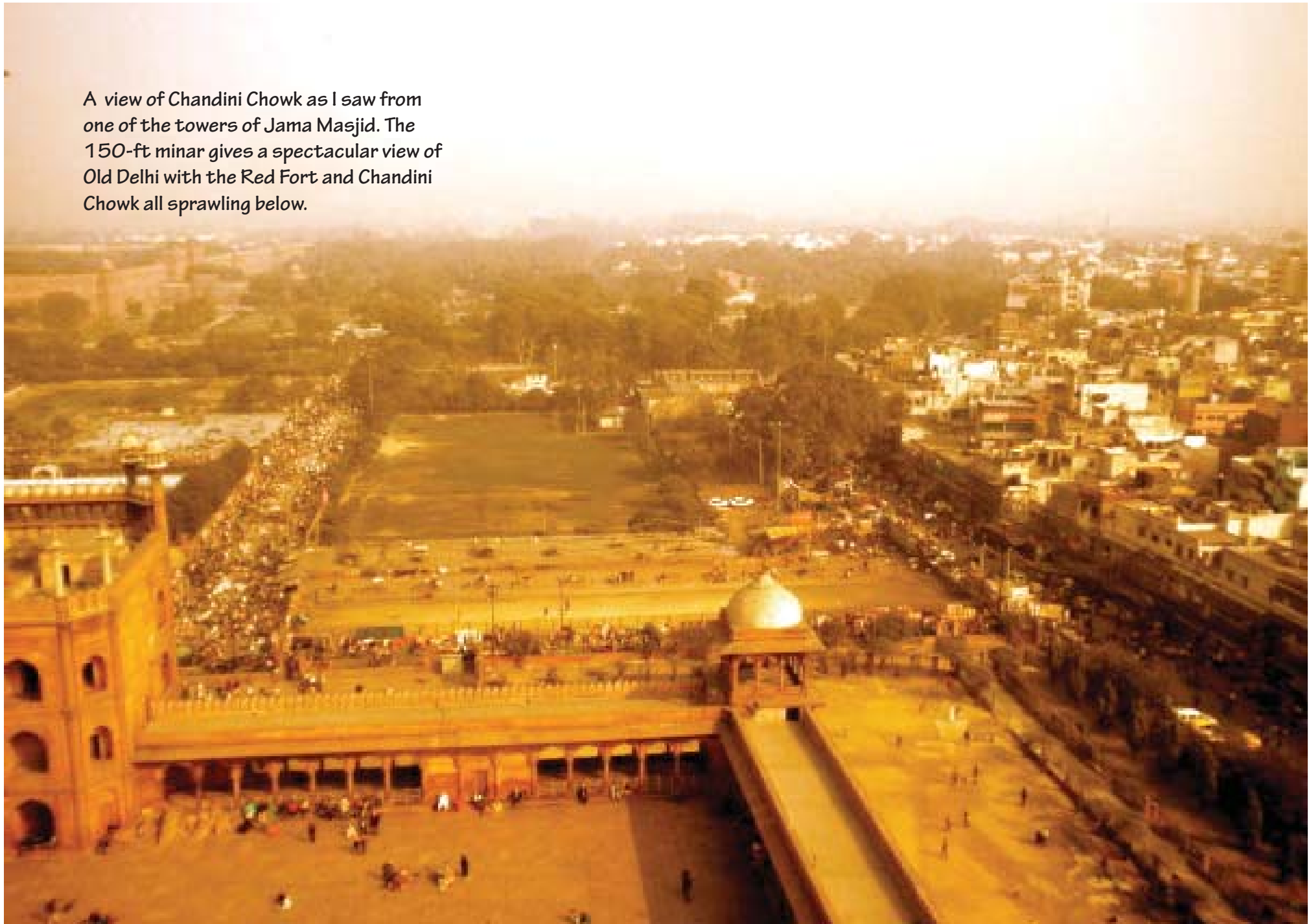


## Why Chandini Chowk?

I have grown up hearing my grandmother talking about the charm of Chandini Chowk and the places she missed visiting because of her health conditions. She has stories describing details of every possible gali, about which I had heard; but, never really seen.

I have been living in Delhi for the last 20 years and but, I have been to Chandni Chowk only a couple of times. I never truly explored it and my visit used to be very brief. So, I decided to go back to Chandini Chowk and explore every possible gali, to find answer to everything that I wanted to know about the place from my own experience.

A view of Chandini Chowk as I saw from one of the towers of Jama Masjid. The 150-ft minar gives a spectacular view of Old Delhi with the Red Fort and Chandini Chowk all sprawling below.





I was excited to start my journey to Chandini Chowk... As I entered the street from the Red Fort Chowk, I saw an area completely dedicated to shopping, trading and eating with hustle and bustle all around!! It is an enormous area, packed with all sorts of shops, bazaars and all kinds of people!!









While walking down the main street of Chandini Chowk, I saw, many important places of worship of major religions of the world. Jain temple, Gauri Shankar temple, Gurdwara Sisganj, Baptist Church, Sunehri Masjid to Fatehpuri Masjid. It is perhaps the only street in the world where a mosque and a gurdwara stand next to each other, with temples and a church as close neighbours. There are places of worship for almost all religions in this area that speaks about the unified spirit of Chandni Chowk!!!





*After walking around a lot and observing the main street, I decided to just stop somewhere and let the frenzy go by. I stood on the central reserve of the road from where I could get a close view of the traffic.*



Peoples are really busy in selling, buying and even in exhibiting their stuff. The serious, sweaty faces of the bicycle-rickshaw drivers driving with heavy loads behind their backs, women walking by with their colourful saris whirling behind them like a flag, cows walking the street, salesmen trying to lure me into their shops.



*On one hand I saw a man arguing over traffic and on the other hand, I saw cow merily making space for itself!*





I think, Chandni Chowk is a shopper's delight because of its wide variety of shops and its unbelievable prices. But what makes the shopping a delight is the incidence of great snack destinations every few meters.



The colour orange hit my eyes first and then the smell of moong - dal ladoos invaded the olfactory senses.









*After shopping, eating is the second most common activity in Chandini Chowk for visitors. I saw an amazing contrast - Fast food joints like Mc Downloads, arrive in Chandini Chowk and coexist with culinary establishments that still refuse to reveal the secrets of their cuisine from recipes centuries old.*



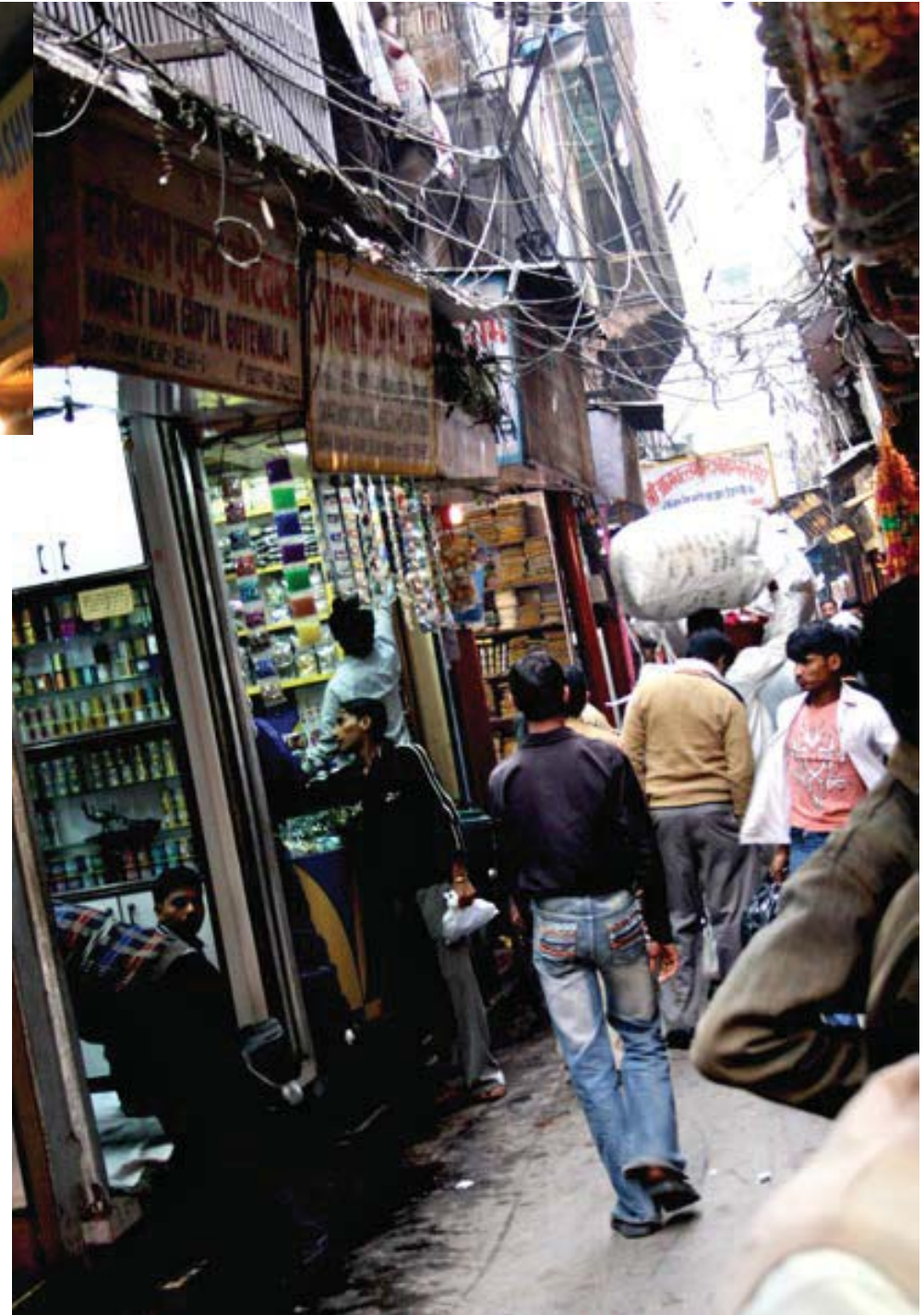
*I experienced a heady mixture of history, modernity, tradition, religion, food, chaos and commerce at Chandini Chowk.*



The main street offers all kinds of shops, and it overflows with all kinds of traffic. But the real discovery was yet to happen! Thus, for the next few days, I went to dive into the small streets that branch off on all sides. Wherever I went, it bustles, boils, is full of sounds and smells, in one word: it is very exciting!

In these narrow winding lanes, there were crumbling concrete and brick buildings, tangled electrical wires and lots of people!

People on foot, in rickshaws, scooters and bicycles. People trading from shops and on the streets, shouting into mobile phones, cooking street food and making chai tea to sell on the edges of the narrow lane.









After walking a distance from the metro station through a maze criss crossing narrow galis, I came across a place where a cook was making paranthas in a very congested place.

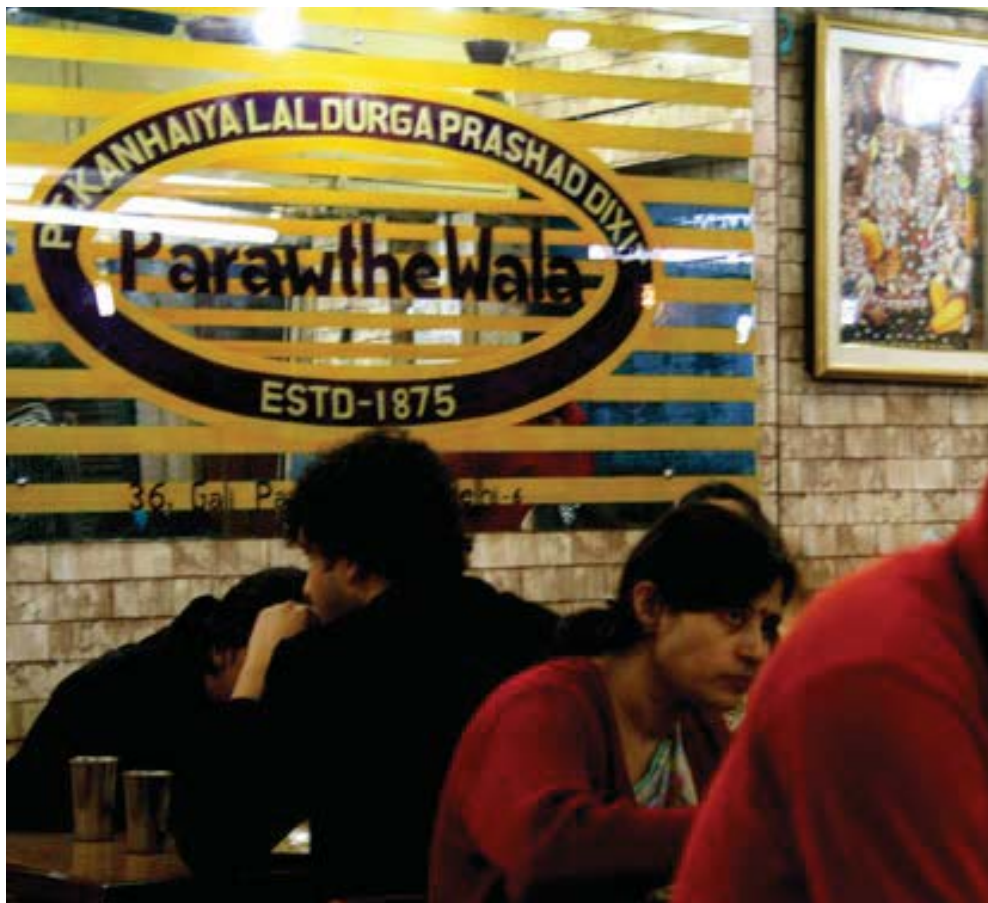
The first impression of the gali was that of a busy narrow lane, crowds walking, bikes, cyclists' driving past, people browsing through the sari and jewellery shops! But as I strolled deeper into the street, I had an irresistible tingling sensation in my nostrils. Its the smell... the first thing that hit me... powerful olfactory amalgamation of Paranthas, vegetables and decaying buildings. I stepped in, then sat down on a bench, looked at what people were eating and asked for gobi paranthas.

There was a long list of the quirkiest possible paranthas ever – karele, tomato, lemon and even chilly paranthas to choose from! The paranthas were delicious. The surroundings were exotic too. After leaving the shop, I found three or more shops selling paranthas.

I curiously asked a shopkeeper - "Yeh konsi gali hai?"... He told me that this 'gali' is known as 'gali paranthe wali'. I have lived in Delhi for 20 years and I have been to Chandni Chowk couple of times before, but never visited Paranthethe wali gali before.



Pt Gaya Prasad Shivcharan Paranthe wale was the founder of his shop, which was established in 1875. Now the sixth generation, Manish Sharma, runs the shop.



Pt Babu Ram Devi Dayal Paranthe wale found his shop in 1889 and his fourth generation representative, Bhimji manages the shop.

Pt Kanhaiya Lal Durga Prasad Dixit Paranthe wale founded the shop in 1875 and at present his fifth generation, Gaura Dixit, manages the shop.





Pt Bhim ji busy preparing Paranthas

Earlier, the Paranthe wali gali was known as 'Dariba Khurd'. In 1910, it was named Paranthe wali gali. It is around 140-150 years old. At that time there were 15-16 shops and all owners belonged to the same family. At present, there are only three shops left.

After 4 days of thorough study of the Chandini Chowk and its various galis, aim of my research became clearer. I directed my research towards the paranthe wali gali. I chose to take 'paranthe wali gali' as my subject of ethnographic research because I found the gali of parantha makers very unique and interesting. Perhaps its candid and uncensored quality appealed me. And of course, the very thought of a lane devoted to paranthas was so mouth-watering.



## || Methodology ||

I started visiting the paranthe wali gali on a daily basis. I observed carefully the process of making paranthas, sat in the parantha stall and tried every variety of parantha possible. I used to listen to the stories of the ardent parantha fans and how they have been visiting this gali for years. Many at times, I even cooked paranthas with the cooks. So after spending quality time in the paranthe wali gali, the parantha makers became friendlier to me and later they allowed me to click pictures of their daily routines.

I went about making close observations and experiencing the daily life scenario of the paranthe wali Gali. Their artifacts, way of exhibitions and strategies for selling. Their life and behaviour.


Through this project, I have aimed to offer versions of my experience of reality that is as truthful as possible based on how the knowledge was produced to me.

## || Tools of study ||

I used my camera Canon 1000D with lense (18-55mm and Sony voice recorder for voice recordings. I used to transfer files to my laptop and made notes from important conversations. Also, I maintained a diary to write down important notes.

I clicked lots of pictures for my research.. I used to sit with people who came to eat paranthas (with the voice recorder in my front pocket) and get involved in their local talks.





**Do they start the day early or do they end the night late?**

# DAWN MORNING AFTERNOON EVENING NIGHT

## *A day in the life of paranthe wali gali*

*This section of my report starts of with the idea of depicting the paranthe wali gali's astonishing variety, the spirit of survival and entrepreneurship, through the device of time and medium of ethnography. I want you to feel the sense of drama unfolding hour by hour, the enthralling theatre of paranthe wali gali's life.*





I was astonished by its pulsating energy and marvelled at the commercial and cultural strides this gali has taken over the years. While, Chandini Chowk is moving forward, for most parantha makers in the gali, it is the spirit of sheer survival. Earlier, the gali had thirteen eateries cooking these sumptuous paranthas. But as more and more families are diversifying into other business ventures, only three families of Chandini Chowk are left in the field of parantha-making.

My photographs celebrate this very spirit of survival. A few images are literal, making a fitting statement as well as of setting others, which are either abstract or have a narrative.

Honouring this pervasive spirit was a commitment I made to myself. I tried to capture the paranthe wali gali in its many avatars, from early hours of dawn through the day, to evening and way into the night and beyond.

# DAWN

**5:00 am** Chandini Chowk awaits the first golden rays of the sun to sneak out of the cold morning darkness.

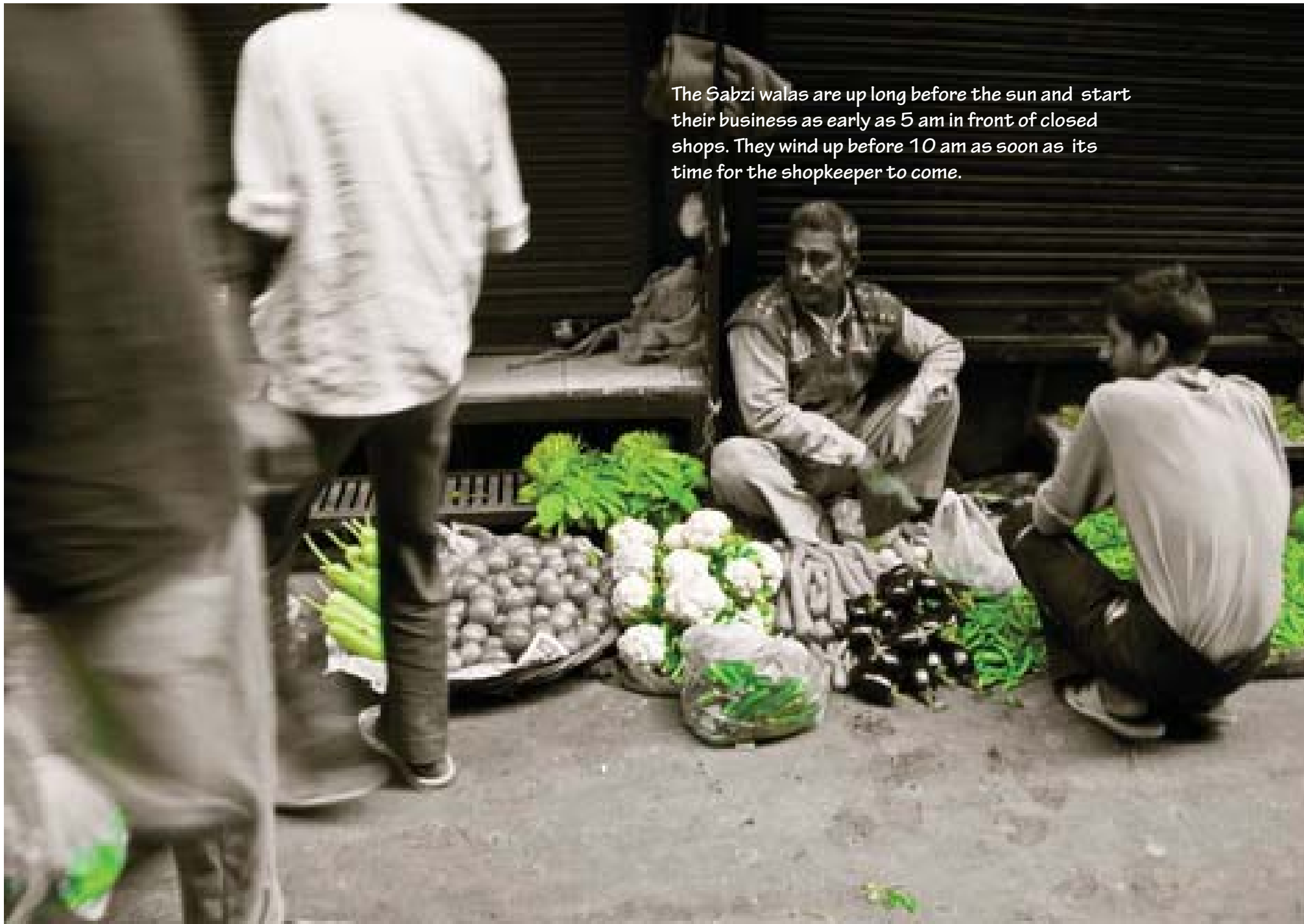




5:45 am Miles to go before the heart can rest.

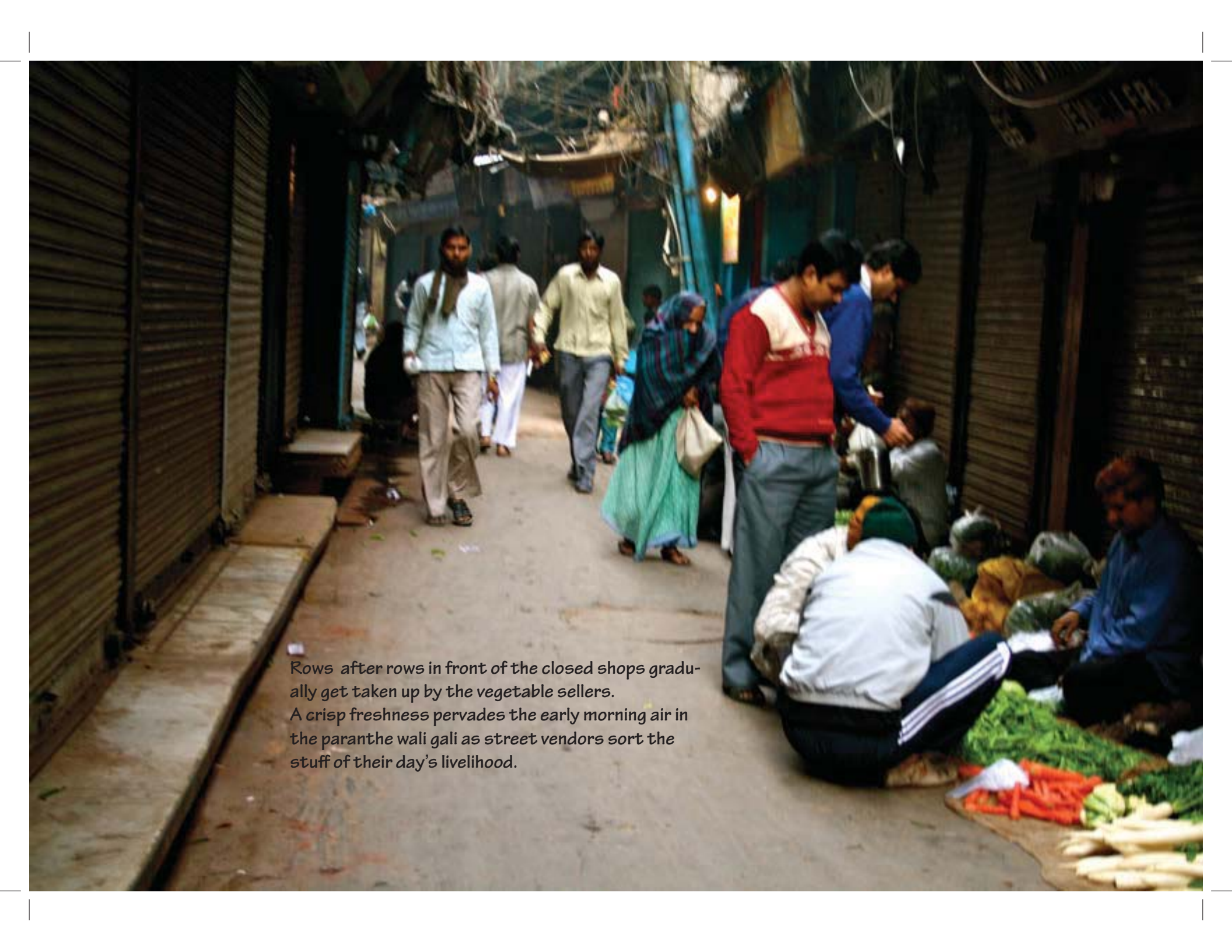


*The Sabzi walas are up long before the sun and start their business as early as 5 am in front of closed shops. They wind up before 10 am as soon as its time for the shopkeeper to come.*







A narrow alleyway in a market, likely a 'paranthe wali gali' (a street famous for parathas). The shops on either side have their metal shutters closed. The ground is paved but cluttered with vegetable sellers and their produce. In the foreground, a man in a white jacket and dark pants is crouching, sorting through a large pile of fresh vegetables, including bright red carrots and green leafy greens. Other people are walking through the alley, some carrying bags. The scene is lit by overhead lights, creating a mix of shadows and highlights. The overall atmosphere is one of early morning activity and the freshness of the market.

Rows after rows in front of the closed shops gradually get taken up by the vegetable sellers. A crisp freshness pervades the early morning air in the paranthe wali gali as street vendors sort the stuff of their day's livelihood.





**6:00 am** What is most fascinating about the Paranthe wali gali is how it transforms - from being quiet in the foggy winter mornings to bustling and beaming with energy of people as they move around fuelling the momentum of the day.

6:40 am The pace is picking up. But there is still time to read a newspaper or to get a cup of chai and warm up on cold winter morning.













As I walked through the gali, it was refreshing and smelling of fresh flowers and not of parnthas yet.





**6:45 am** There are some catching the last snatch of sleep before another long day dawns.



**7:00 am** He is not ready to face the day yet, or he feel asleep waiting for sunrise.

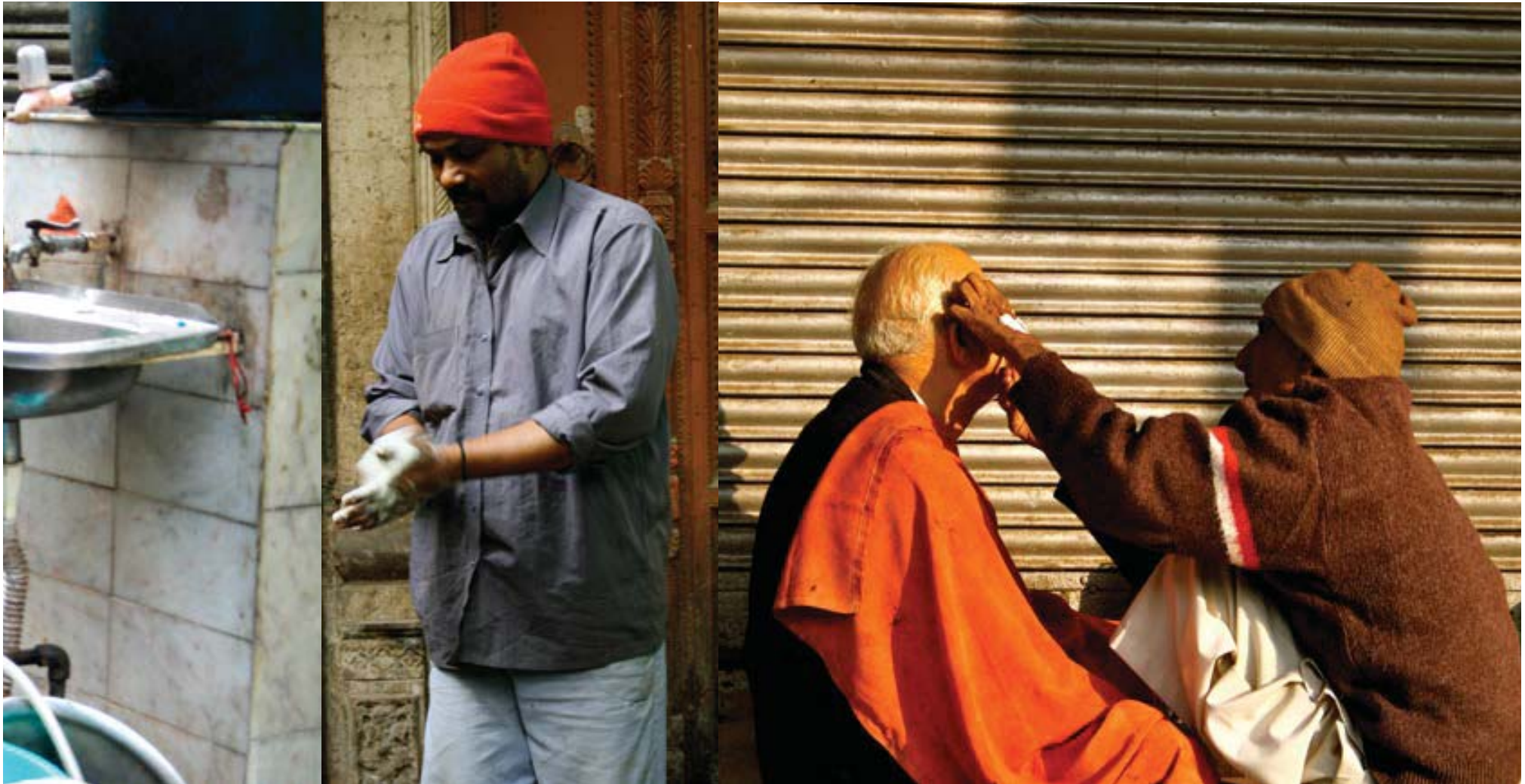
**7:30 am** After the phool wala's and sabazi wala's, the paranthe wala's get geared up...They also keep a shelf time to prepare for their day before other shopkeepers come by 10 :30 am.

I was keen to just to move around and try to observe and analyse what kind of activities do these people do? How they begin their day?



Docked in their shops for the night, staff that stays inside the shops, wash their street and themselves at the crack of dawn. Water is not conveniently available , and privacy even less.

Most of them have to settle for bathing on the street before beginning the day. On the other hand, the pandit who is the owner of the shop gets ready for his customised shave.





Though the parantha wala's try to clean their street as much as possible, But, I also noticed a cleaner who visited every morning around 7:40 am to collect the night before's left over.

Though, I met some people who think of Paranthewali gali as a tacky and down market street of old Delhi. But, observing them closely through days. I realised that they are well sorted before dawn.



At the first glance this small street might look like a muddle. narrow and twisting, dark and overhung. But, it is also clean, practical, orderly and safe.



Another kind of sorting and distribution here, as rows of rickshaws stack up water jugs which will be off-loaded in front of shops. Mahesh is the man who supplies drinking water to all the shops before they open their shutters to start their business.

This system is somewhat similar to the Dabba system in Bombay. Interestingly, I also saw him filling up this water from free water booth provided by the government near the metro station. But, he was doing the effort of transporting it.





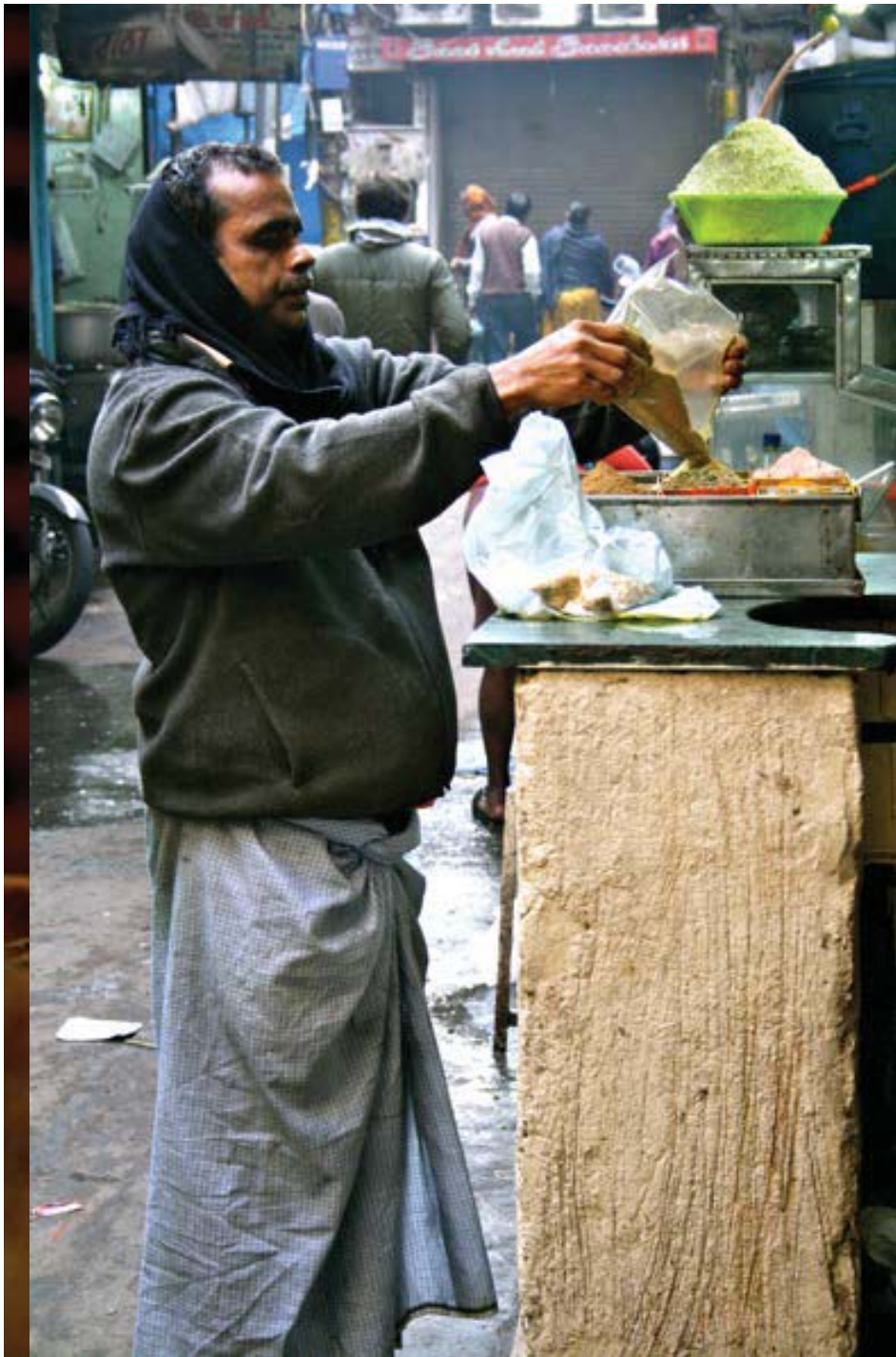




A vegetable vendor named Shankar gets fresh vegetables on his rickshaw on a daily basis. He off-loads his rickshaw and keeps the vegetables inside the Parantha shops.







I sit on the pavement and watch the world go by,  
While pandit ji empties the masala sachets an  
overpowering smell of masalas overwhelms the  
paranthe wali gali.



The street gradually turns into a kitchen for these parantha wala's. They all step out of their shops and start cutting and grating the vegetables in front of neighbouring closed saree shops which wont open until 11:00 am

The only shops which get open during early hours are of the day are those of the Parantha wala's. Hence, not unusual here to have your work spilling on to the road.







It was so interesting to see how every inch of space was being utilised whether inside the shop or outside on the street. In some of the Parantha shops, tables and chair were being put together not for the customers ;but, primarily for creating space for cutting vegetables. It was truly an open kitchen.



नींबू परांठा	40/-
शेल परांठा	45/-
मिर्ची परांठा	45/-
मेवा परांठा	45/-
काजू परांठा	45/-
किशमिश परांठा	45/-
बदाम परांठा	45/-
खबडी परांठा	45/-
खुर्वन परांठा	45/-
केला परांठा	45/-
करेला परांठा	45/-
भिन्डी परांठा	45/-
टमाटर परांठा	45/-





Finally by 9:00 am, Parathe wali gali gets ready will all the prior preparation.

# MORNING



**9:00 am** Like a fresh flower, Parathe wali gali is at her best in the morning. When all the preparation is over and the street is clear of litter. The hanging of fresh nimbu and mirchi will signal the formal beginning of the day.





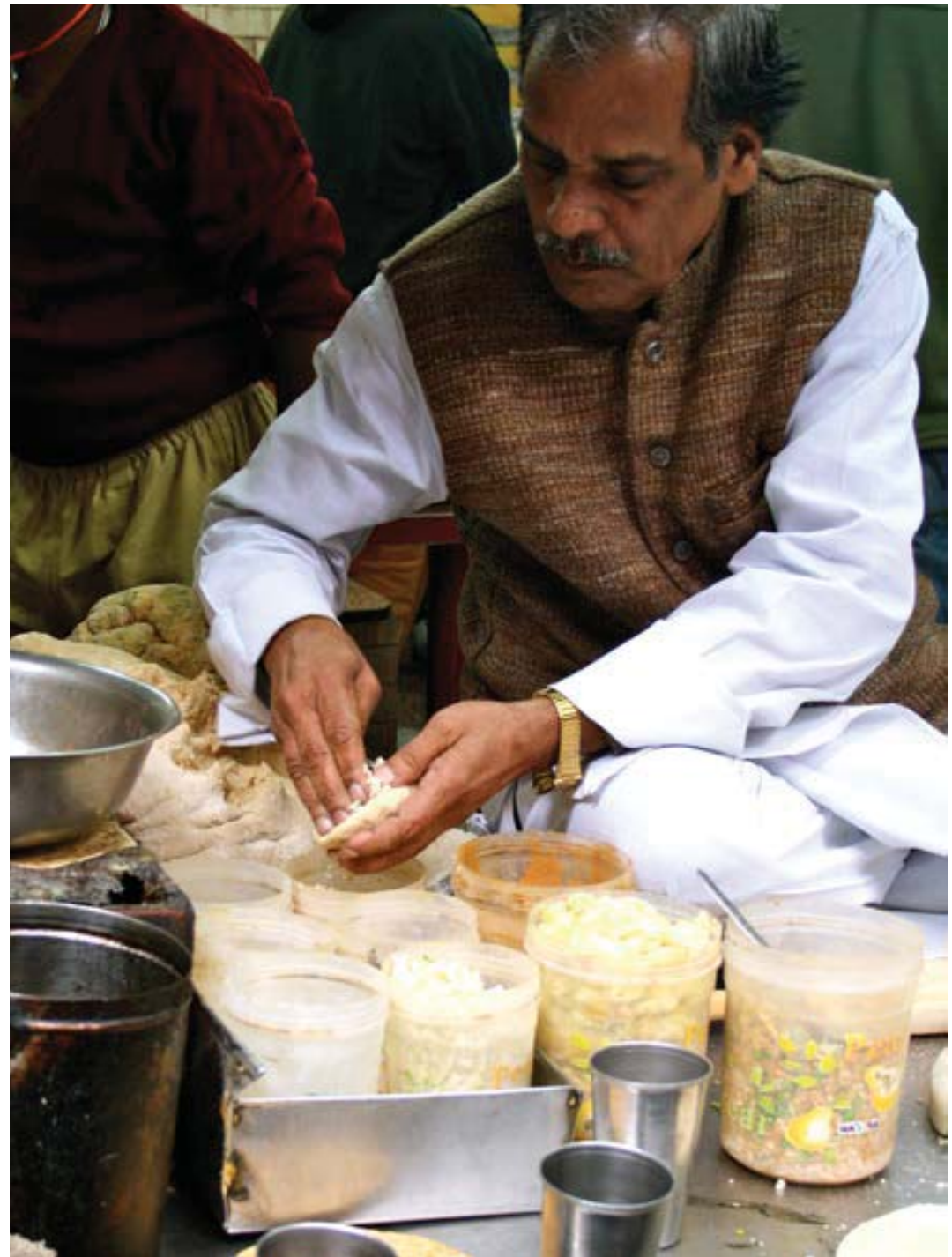
**9:30 am** The parantha makers are ready and they eagerly entice me to be their first customer



## || Paranthe wala ||

The simple man behind the preparation of the delicious paranthas and the one who is also performing as a host, is the paranthe wala. Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji, one of the most experienced cook as well as fourth generation owner of Pandit Kanhaiya Lal Durga Prasad Dixit's Parantha Shop. He has been running the shop for the last 30 years.


I spent some of my time with him, studying his daily routine, his skills of preparing various paranthas and his knowledge and his background. Initially he wasn't very open, but gradually over the days he started opening up after I became his loyal parnatha eating customer.





I saw almost fourteen varieties of Paranthas being served in the Paranthé Wali Gali. The fillings range from the usual, aaloo (mashed potatoes), gobhi (grated cauliflower), gaajar (carrots), mooli (radish) and paneer (cottage cheese); to the adventurous, methi (fenugreek), pudina (mint), karela (bittergourd), bhindi (okra); to the exotic, kela (banana), khurchan (thick layer of cream) and dry fruits. The fillings are rolled into a ball of dough and flattened with a rolling belan on a marble base. In the exotic paranthas, the filling is spread on a flattened layer of dough and covered with another layer. The layers are then neatly tied and are ready to fry. Unlike the usual way of frying the paranthas on a 'tawa' (flat griddle), the paranthas in the Parathe Wali Gali are fried in a 'kadahi'. So the paranthas are doused in ghee or butter.





The parathas, fried in the 'desi ghee' (clarified butter) are then served in a 'thali' accompanied by 'kaddu (pumpkin) ki sabzi', 'aaloo mattar' (potatoes and green peas), 'kele ki saunth' (slices of bananas in thick jaggery and dried ginger chutney) and pudina (mint) chutney.

The choice of vegetables and chutneys, served as accompaniments, have remained unchanged all these years.





**10:30 am** As I enjoyed my breakfast with Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji, I asked him more questions about the Paranthas wali gali. He informed me that his Parantha shop in the gali was shudh Brahmin bhojanalay and did not serve any onions or garlic. He was also quick to tell me that all the parantha shops were owned by Brahmins and were vegetarian.

Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji said that the variety that is present today is a totally new phenomenon. He said, "that 50 years back, at the time of his great grand father, the paranthas were just of 3-4 types of the usual aloo gobi and matar (potato, cauliflower and peas respectively). But today he can boast of almost 14 varieties of paranthas."

Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji told me about the times when the paranthas were served to people with sitting on the floor, on leaf plates with water in clay pots called khullars but today he said the benches and tables are mandatory. He also said that all the parantha shops in the gali were owned by people of the same family, who because of family feuds had separated and set up their own shops.







“Various celebrities have tasted my paranthas,” said Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji, the owner of one shop, pointing to the photographs of celebrities eating paranthas there. I realised that they advertise their parntha shops by putting these photoraphs and newspaper cuttings.



The framed photographs on the wall showed Nehru as well as Indira Gandhi dining in the shop. Another photograph showed Delhi Chief minister, Sheila Dixit being served paranthas in the gali. Down the years, Paranthi Wali Gali has added Bollywood actor Salman Khan and TV star's like Cyrus Broacha to its list of clients.



HT city top nomination award certificate framed on the wall of Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji's shop.

# AFTERNOON





**1:00 pm** Shopkeepers have crowded the gali before the heat of the day sets in. The sunlight is still pale and clear, in the shade its still cool...But the rush hour is starting to build up, the narrow parnathe wali gali gets jammed with cycles and pedestrians who jostle for space.





**1:20 pm** Afternoons bring redolent invitations from paranthe wali gali for the crusty paranthas. Loyal parantha fans, actually know the exact timings for hot paranthas to emerge from the kadhai.

For some people, parantha's taste even better with a glass of lassi. Lassi is the only item in the menu list of Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji 's parantha shop, which is outsourced from Gyan's rabri and lassi shop. It was so interesting to see how two different shops collaborate together mutually and beneficially.









The photographs and sign boards on the walls of Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji 's and his son's shop reflect their lives. I learnt what they value and hold dear. They have photographs of their forefathers on the walls along with images of god.

Also, they strictly practice a non-smoking environment and don't give plastic carry bags for take away to any customer.

Another important notice is the "no onion and no garlic usage"- This is in reference to caste purity in cooking and is a true vestige of a bygone era as very few eateries in Delhi would care about the caste of the cook. The garlic and onion ban are also indicative of the values of some clients as staunchly religious upper caste Hindus who do not believe that onion and garlic are suitably 'pure' ingredients due to their aphrodisiacal qualities.

Amidst all this a board on the walls of all the shops heralded the present - a sign of changing times- it said "Bisleri Mineral Water available here". But that is not the only change, they are even willing to pack for takeaways.



माननीय उच्चतम न्यायालय के आदेशानुसार  
कैरी बैग पर प्रतिबंध है। कृपया थैली न मांगे।



People of all age groups like eating parantha's. People also come from far off place visit their favourite parantha wala. So a parantha wala treats his regular customers and also welcomes the new ones who come to taste the flavour of it.



Media professional Jagat Kumar told me that "The paranthas here are very crispy. I come here whenever I get time."

Sandeep who is pursuing his MBA from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) came from Katwaria Sarai in south Delhi to check out the food at the famous gali.

Sandeep's friend Ashish Sinha, who is an engineer, told me that- "The paranthas here are completely different and I liked the mewa parantha made with dry fruits,"

The place attracts a huge variety of people. College students, aunties and uncles, kids, foreigners... the list of visitors is just as long and diverse as the menu.





**2:30 pm** I enjoyed my lunch at Paranthe wali gali, in half an hour I saw, the Gaurav Dixit, ( Pandit Ram Lal Dixit ji's son) sold 20 paranthas and claimed that he daily sold around 400 paranthas. Afternoon is a peak time specially in winters and he proudly said that in its heyday, there were huge queues outside for the wonderful paranthas But he admitted that the business was not good. As I enjoyed the ghee-laden tasty paranthas, I asked Mr. Gaurav for the reason of this decline. He was candid enough. With hundreds of catteries mushrooming in all parts of Delhi, paranthas were no longer exclusive food items, he said.

“What can be done to rescue the Paranthe wali Gali?” I asked him. He said that the future was bleak. The greatest danger was the skyrocketing price of real estate in the Dhariba Kalan area where the Paranthe wali Gali was situated. The space occupied by the last three parantha shops is worth crores and the returns from parantha selling very meagre. Soon some cybercafe's or wine shops might take over the century old food shops. Over the years, the lane has lost its glory. Several shops downed their shutters, leaving just a few behind. Most shop owners thought there was not enough money in paranthas, and moved or sold their business to sariwallahs and others.



Another problem I felt was that the parantha shops have not been able to diversify to rekindle the interest of local gourmets. Today from Kerala to Kashmir, there are hundreds of varieties of local paranthas. Restaurants like Only Paranthas in Bombay have as many as 88 types of this favourite paranthas, while the Paranthé wali gali shops offer only 14 varieties.

Again, once the greatest attraction was, that only pure ghee is used to make the Paranthé wali Gali products. But nowadays, with a calorie-conscious clientele, this main selling point is no longer of any advantage to the gali.

As such, the future of the three, over a century old shops in Paranthé wali gali is bleak. Once these parantha shops vanish, cuisine world in India would have lost a famous landmark forever.



**3:30 pm** Late afternoon is reserved for cleaning up at paranthe wali gali. Plates and glasses are stacked on floor and are washed clean.







**4:00 pm** Oblivious to the hustle  
bustle on the street, Gopal kishan  
goes about doing his work.



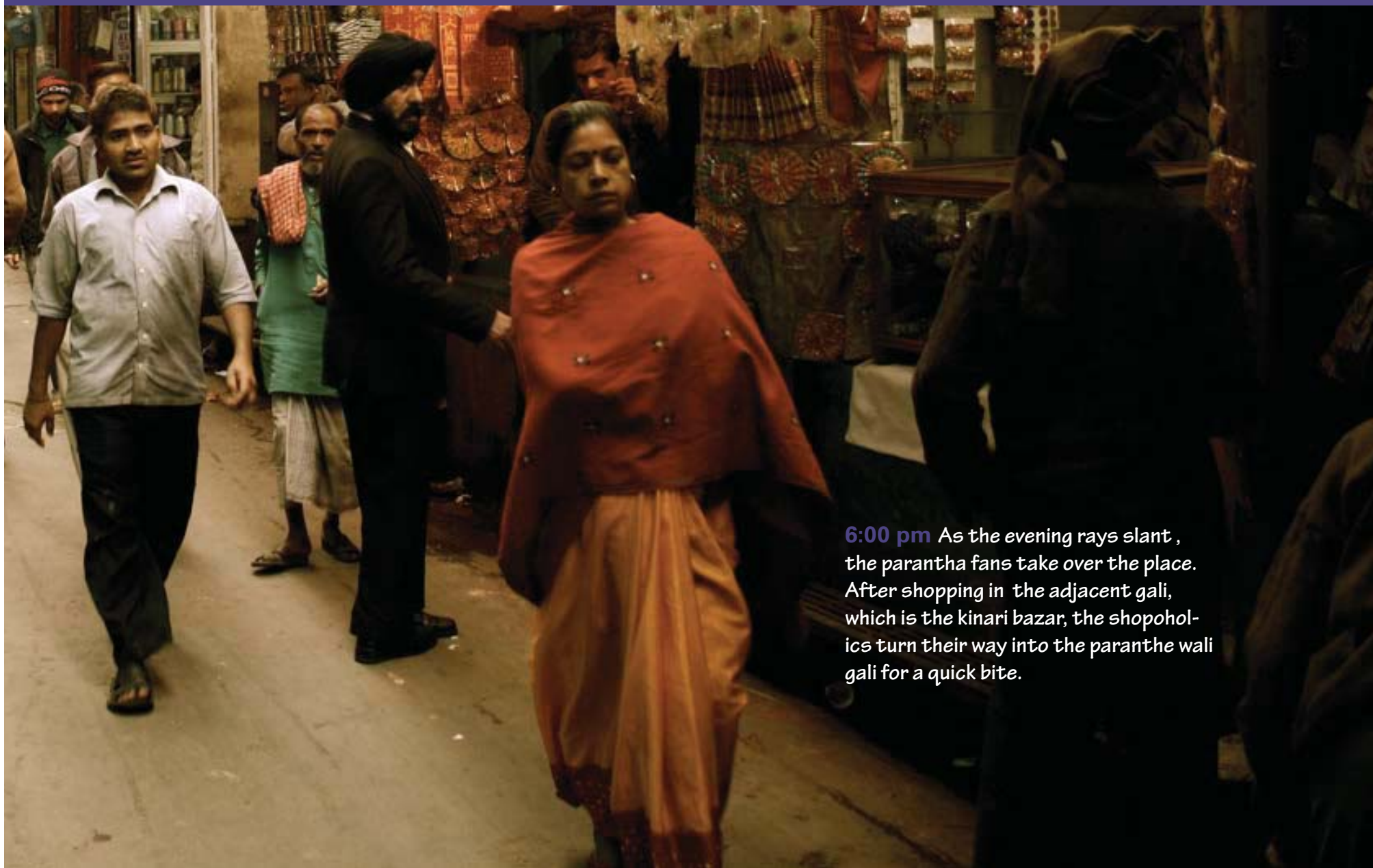




**4:15 pm** In the late afternoon, Paranthewali gali droops like the electric cables between high tension pylons in that area. The enthusiasm of the morning has evaporated in a hiss, The paranthawalas eagerly wait with a mirage in their minds for the customers to come back again for an evening snack or for dinner.

# EVENING





**6:00 pm** As the evening rays slant ,  
the parantha fans take over the place.  
After shopping in the adjacent gali,  
which is the kinari bazar, the shopohol-  
ics turn their way into the paranthe wali  
gali for a quick bite.

**7:30 pm** The paranthe wali gali gets ready for the evening and lights up the ambience to attract more people for a gastronomic experience. It is not the lighting, but the delicious scents that accost people as they tunnel their way into the gali through a mass of people and honking rickshaws and cycles.









आम्र परांठ 35  
मूला परांठ 35  
मिर्ची परांठ 35  
मिर्ची परांठ 35  
मूला परांठ 35  
मटर परांठ 35  
पापड परांठ 35  
परत परांठ 35  
गोज परांठ 35  
ककत परांठ 35



8:30 pm In the space crunchy paranthe wali gali, people accommodate themselves on rickety bench and table, but its the parantha that more than makes up for it.



**9:15 pm** The waiter Murli checks the parantha, while the customers gaze.



# NIGHT

**10:00 pm** Night in Parathe wali gali  
gather like tears in the eyes- I could  
see everything through a waver of  
glass and light





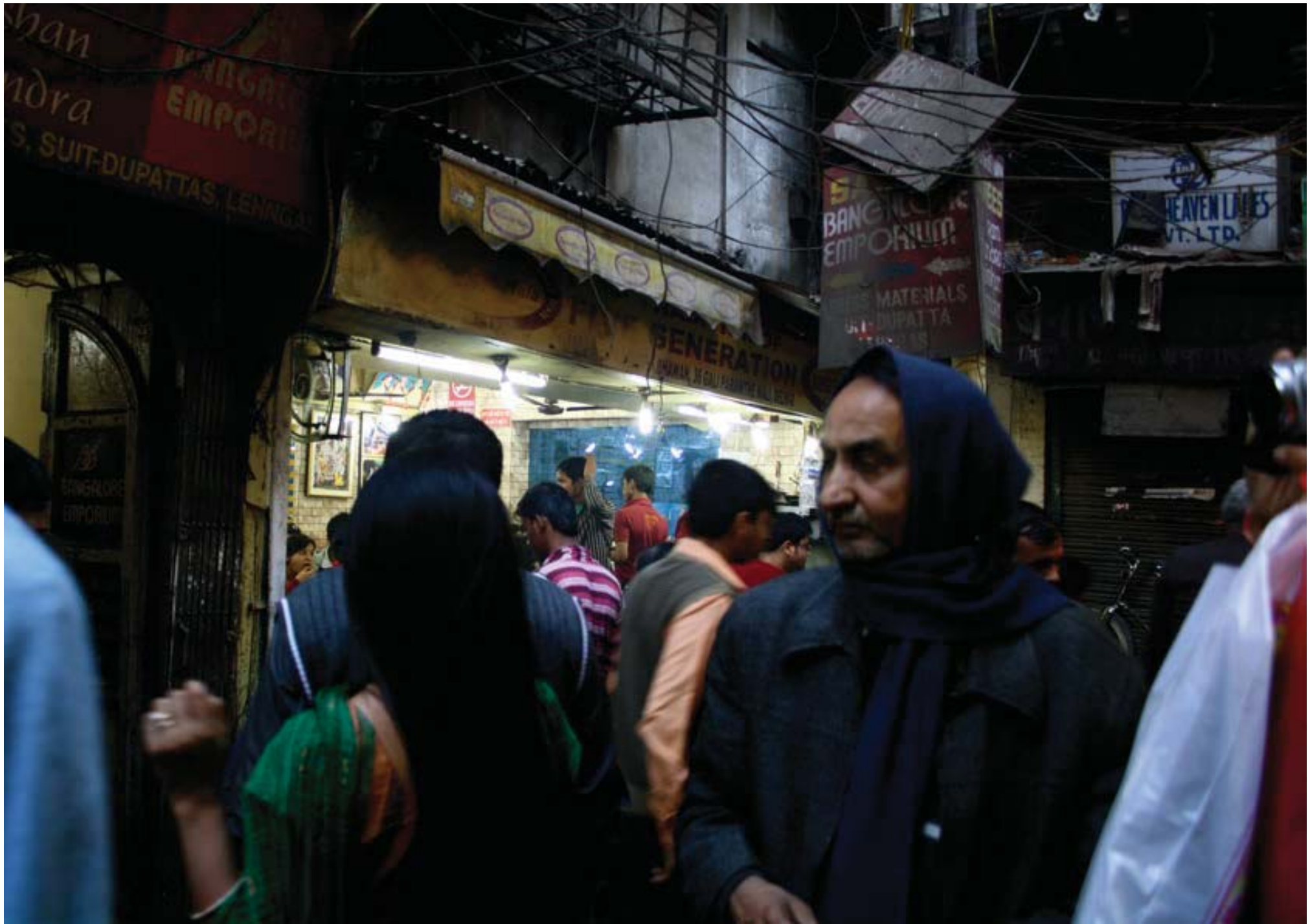
The paranthe wali gali twinkling with lights, wears almost a festive look. No evidence of power shortage here.











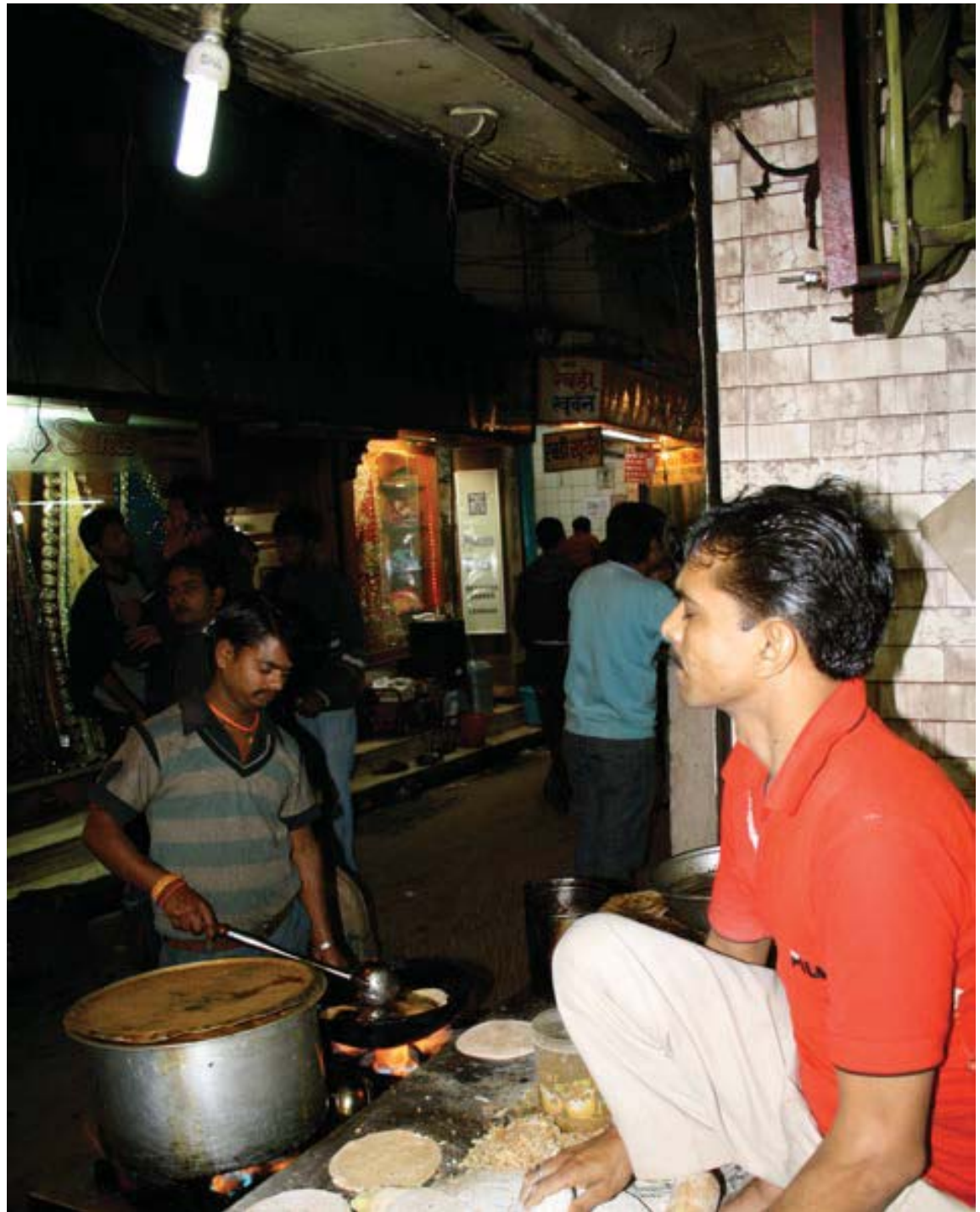








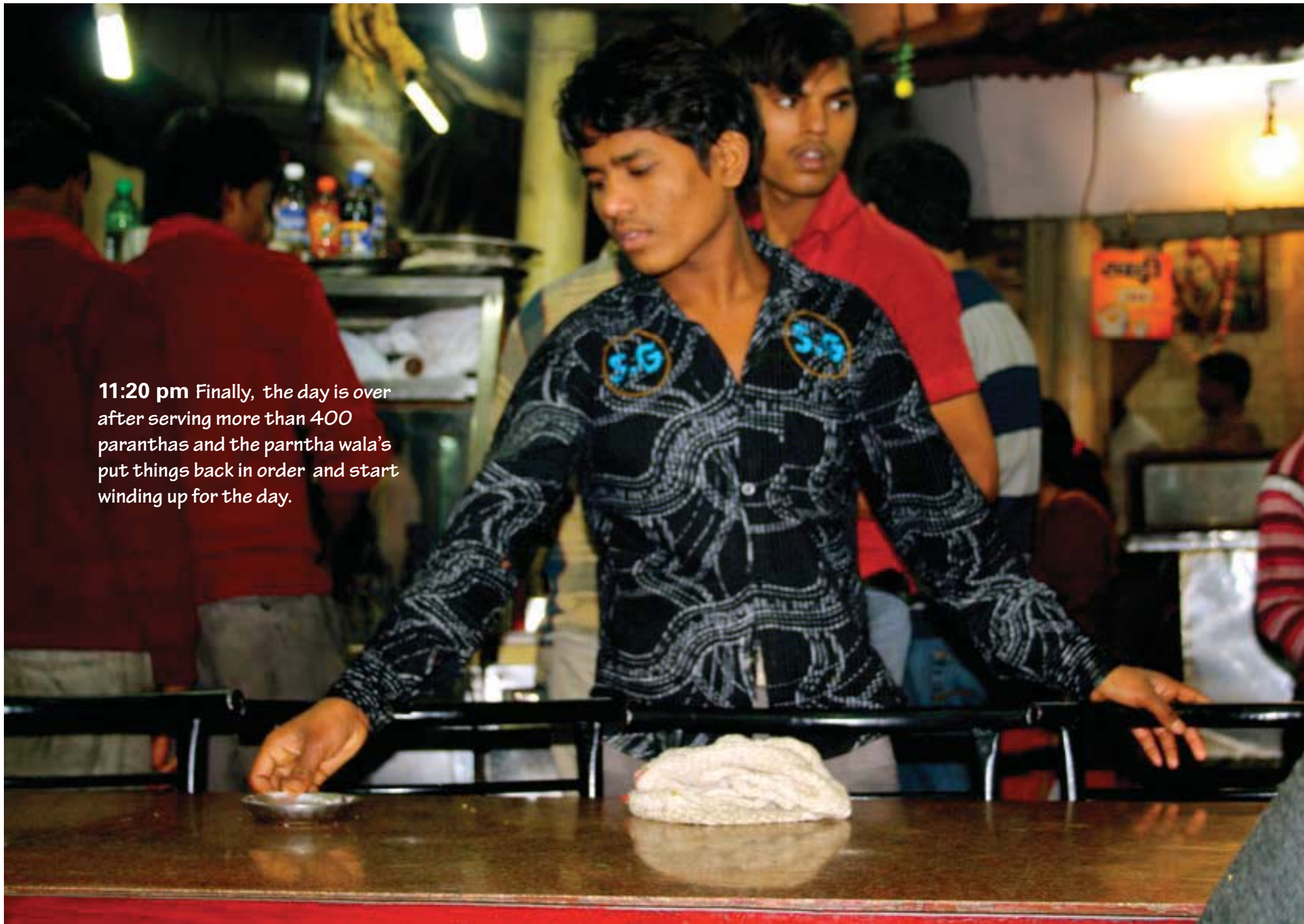
**11:00 pm** Last Parantha in the Kadhai...  
While, Mr. Gaurav Dikshit is busy settling  
the final bill with the customers.







**11:20 pm** Finally, the day is over after serving more than 400 paranthas and the parntha wala's put things back in order and start winding up for the day.





राज प्रति फाळा मूल्य

राज	35/-	मंडू	40/-
राज	45/-	कचारा	40/-
राज	40/-	पुण्डरी	40/-
राज	40/-	कनो	40/-
राज	45/-	मंडू	25/-
राज	45/-	मंडू	10/-
राज	45/-	मंडू	35/-
राज	45/-	मंडू	30/-
राज	45/-	मंडू	15/-

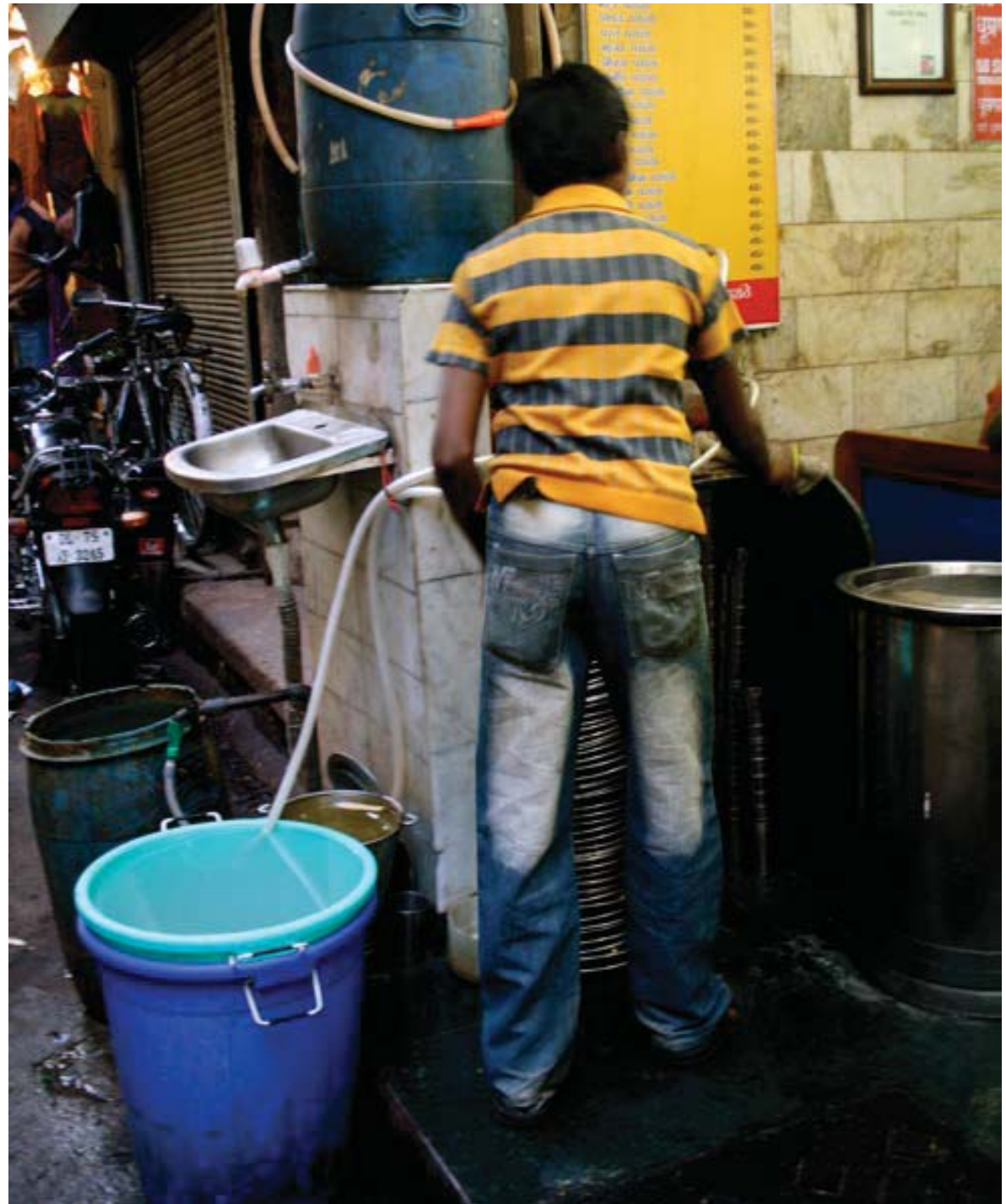
ठ कास्ट निस्सा हे स्पष्ट मे दो फाळ लेजे



PT. KANHAIYA LAL  
**Parawathe**  
ESTD-1875

36. Gali Parawathe Wali De

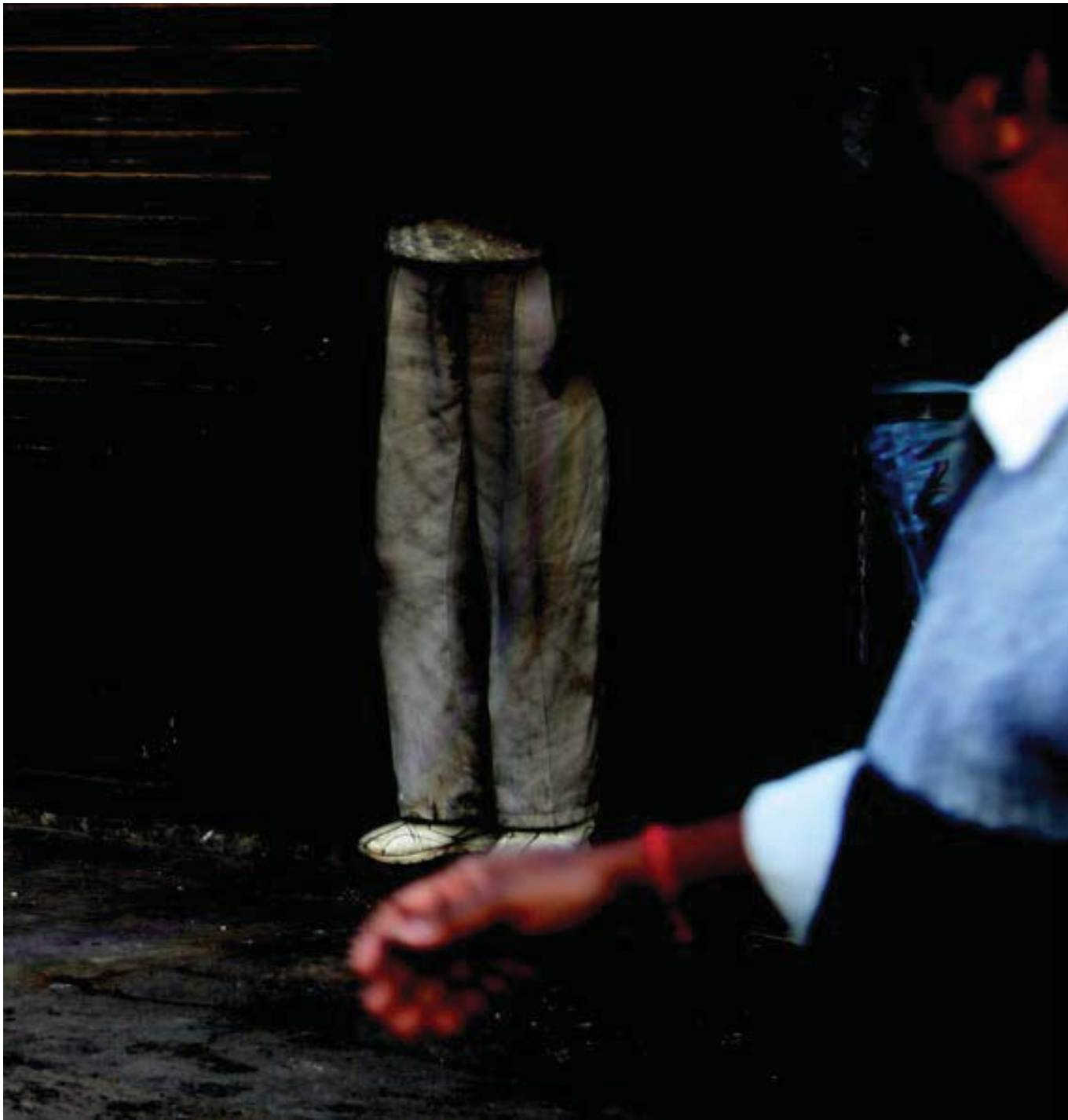
**11:40 pm** Preparing for the next morning...  
the staff fills up the water tank before its  
time to close.



**12:00 pm** When the parantha walas are away, rats are at play. They come out at night and feast on the leftovers.







**12:00 pm** The long day gets over and parantha wala's leave for home. Yet, there are some who have no home and will be sleeping on the pavements - the darkness brings about disparities in even sharper relief. They huddle together trying to keep winter at bay. But, this unkind cold winter night might keep them awake the whole night.



**12:00 pm** A Rickshaw rider staring at his hands after a hard days work, his hands still smeared with dust from all the hard work of the day.







## Conclusion

Some places are defined by their history, some by their memories, some by their architecture, some by the people who live in that place... Chandini Chowk's Paranthe wali gali has all of these, but something in addition - it is the spirit of survival. With more and more Parnatha walas diversifying into other ventures, only three families of chandini chowk are left in the field of parantha making. It is their sixth generation that has taken on the endeavour to preserve the gali's name and offer the flavour of the past to the present.

What then is different about paranthe wali gali? Why should it survive? Can such a gali or street survive in a hurtling pace of growth of so many other fast food eating joints in the area. Does it need to completely recreate itself to survive? These are the questions which came to my mind.

The answer, I think, is that since Paranthe wali gali has foot prints of history criss crossing its body and it cannot reinvent itself as if it has had no history. It cannot reincarnate itself by obliterating its link to the past. It is serving the umbilical cord to the past and that's the beauty of it.

Here, with every bite, one samples not only a delicacy, but also a piece of history. Handed down from father to son, three of these pannantha wala shops are now being managed by the fifth or six generations and their recipes are treated like family heirlooms.

For me the entire experience has been totally uplifting. And Visual ethnography gave me an opportunity to travel and take a peak into the lives of diverse people and experience the entire spectrum of life with them.

It was like a rustic route to my roots. I came across a vanishing way of life - where sharing space with others is noble, ethics outweigh opportunism and spirituality of these parantha wala pandits transcends materialism. If I have been able to convey some of this experience to others through this report, I would have made this ethnographic experience worthwhile.