

# A WINDOW INTO KHIRKEE



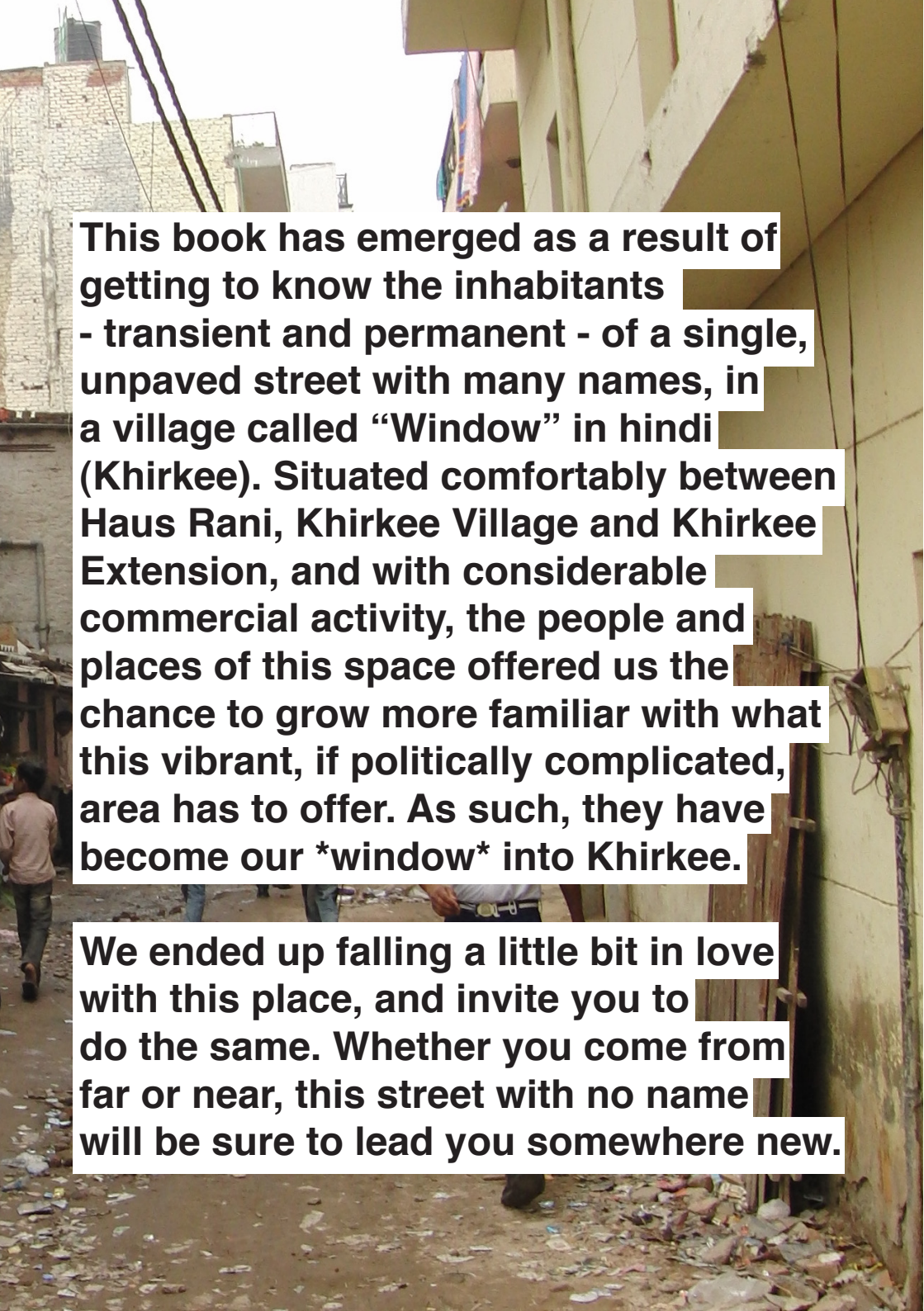
8, 9, फेल  
10 पास करें  
11 फेल  
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**“you just walk a little bit,  
and then it comes”**

**Khirkee girl, age 4.**

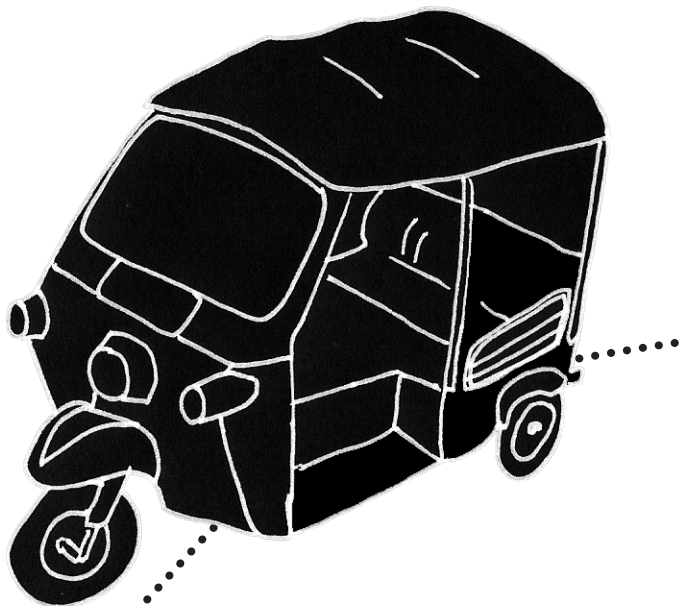


The lower half of the image shows a man in a red shirt sitting on a white plastic stool in a narrow, cluttered alleyway. The ground is covered with trash and debris. In the background, there are brick buildings and a utility pole. Two other men are standing further down the alley. The overall scene depicts a densely populated and impoverished urban environment.

A narrow, unpaved street in a village, likely Khirkee, with buildings on either side and people walking. The street is cluttered with trash and debris. The buildings are made of brick and concrete, with some laundry hanging from a line. The sky is overcast.

**This book has emerged as a result of getting to know the inhabitants - transient and permanent - of a single, unpaved street with many names, in a village called “Window” in hindi (Khirkee). Situated comfortably between Haus Rani, Khirkee Village and Khirkee Extension, and with considerable commercial activity, the people and places of this space offered us the chance to grow more familiar with what this vibrant, if politically complicated, area has to offer. As such, they have become our \*window\* into Khirkee.**

**We ended up falling a little bit in love with this place, and invite you to do the same. Whether you come from far or near, this street with no name will be sure to lead you somewhere new.**



**KHIRKEE**



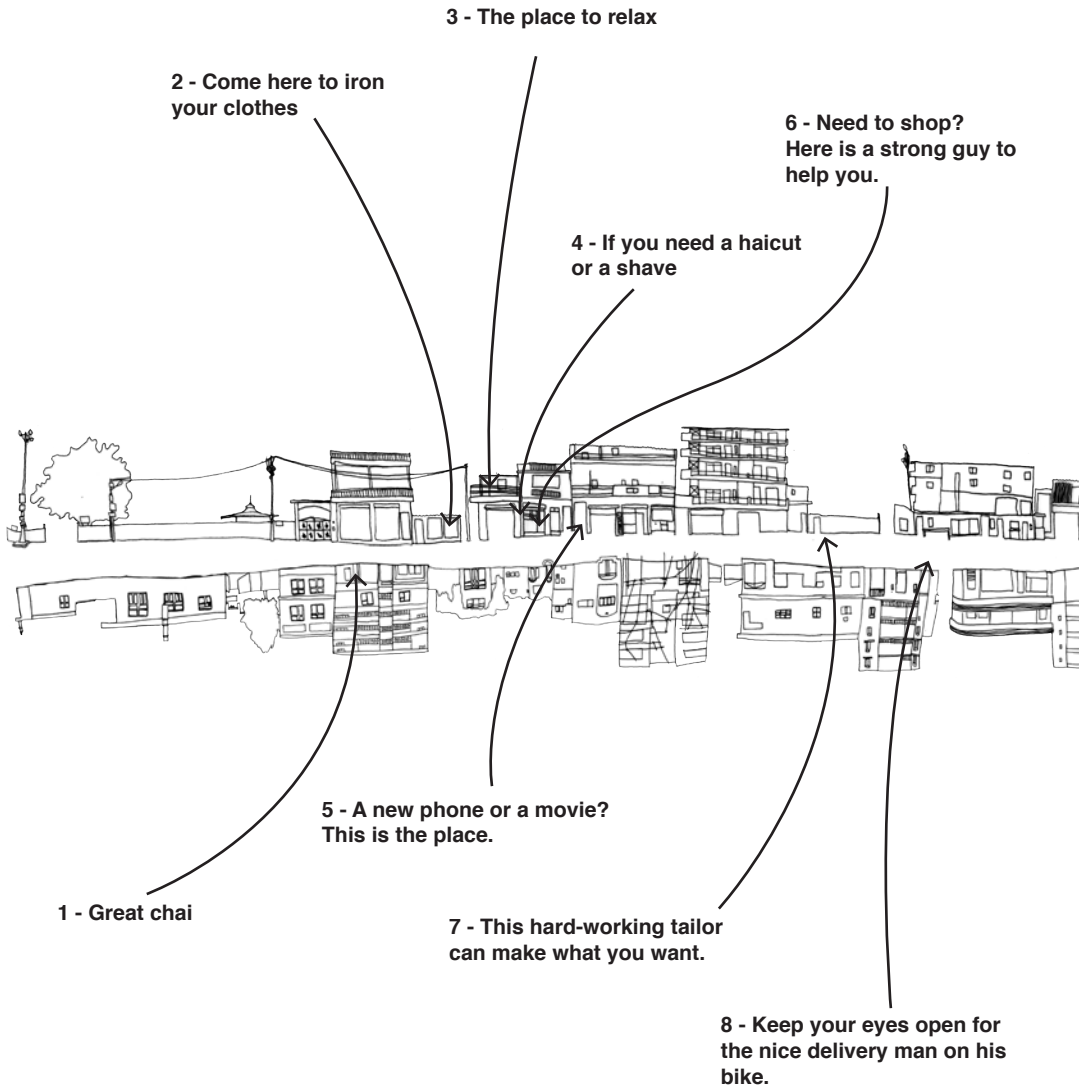


**This adventure was imagined and lived by 4 travelers with distant global perspectives, who bonded over a fascination with this urban village. Strangers at first, both with each other and with the residents here**





# Some suggestions on where to go:





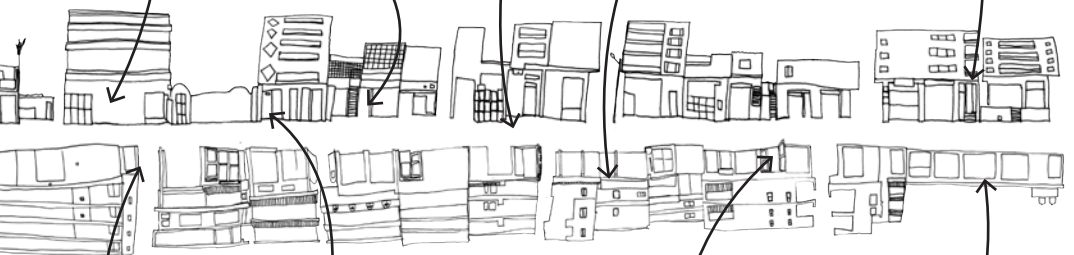
**9 - Hungry? This family will cook you the best lunch.**

**17 - Keep your eyes open for the best potato snack.**

**13 - Egg and bread!**

**12 - Shop until you drop.**

**16 - Up for a snack?!**



**14 - The need for vegetables?  
This guy has connections.**

**10 - Chai and a chat.**

**15 - A relaxing alley for getting  
you clothes ironed.**

**11 - The funny shop-owner**



“Everyone is at peace here”

1

Our entrée to the street set the tone for our exploration over a perfectly silky cup of soothing tea. The local chai master charmed us with his positive outlook on the area and his happy demeanor, which he claims comes from simply being in Khirkee - where everyone is at peace. He is content with his friends nearby, the park

to relax around, the mall to cool off in, and the view of the fort to rely upon. He’s been here for 15 years and, luckily for the resident tea drinkers, he has no plans to move. His top tip: the secret isn’t in the sugar. More milk + more tea = the perfect cup. Noted.





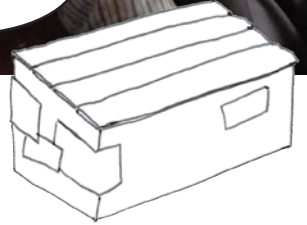
## 2 . . .

This fantastically friendly brother and sister pair happily press their clients' clothes within the 2 brick rooms of their parents' shop...while catching up on the latest pop music, of course. We will be back to ask them for their ironing playlist, so we, too, can break the monotony next time we press our shirts.





“Arām Se!”



### 3

.. ..

These super easy-going and charming chaps have appropriated this passage way as their lounge, so to speak. Conveniently located next to their friend’s barber shop, it’s where they relax together in the moments between work. They are

an inspiration to stressed city types, as they’ve mastered the all-important Indian art of *Arām Se!*, loosely translated as “what’s the rush, take it easy”!





4

**OPEN for business!**

In the fresh winter months, Delhi's climate is perfectly conducive towards outdoor living...and, as it turns out, hair cutting, too. Decorated with the help of his lounge-loving friends, this open-air barber shop makes productive use out of a mere alleyway. Too much of anything can be a bore, however, so all this open-ness is balanced out by evenings spent at the enclosed mall.



5

With over 670 million cell phone connections in India today, shops like these are critical, but often crowded. This gentleman, a visitor to Khirkee for practical reasons, shared his tip for how to skip the inevitable queue – go to your friend’s shop, where you will be sure to earn VIP service!

Khirkee’s not that posh, but that’s ok!



My parents ask me to work here sometimes because I am strong enough to lift things up!



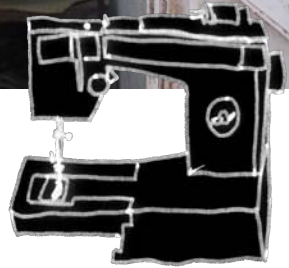
# 6

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India's future appears to be hard-working, funny, admired, motivated and...STRONG!

Sitting proudly behind the almost-as-tall-as-he-is counter, this little guy expertly sold us our water and shared his visions for his future. Though he enjoys working in the shop, he prefers when school's on, so he can learn and improve his chances for admission to medical school one day!





7 . . . . .

With barely a moment to spare, this tailor appears to be quite popular and focused – two traits, apart from expertise, which carry a good craftsman from good to great. We will be back, cloth in hand.





8

Despite the uneven road, this bike-loving delivery man cajoles his cart over unfriendly terrain in order to keep his clients on this street happy. We hope, for his sake especially, that the road might one day get paved and his energy can be spared....







All smiles!

## 9



Heaven really is upstairs, it seems. Watching from their balcony above a popular dhaba, this family witnessed our meal there and then invited us to experience a more personal feast as guests in their home. Over deem er dalna (a typical Bengali street food prepared by our host, as she

wanted to introduce us to her hometown of Calcutta), we laughed with the children, learned about the hosts' embroidery trade and listened to the comfortingly chaotic sounds of a happy Indian home. We were simply touched.





# 10. . . . .

All good streets need choices for chai. What could be better than an apparently-popular, cozy nook called Tea Corner?! According to these guys, chai choices are not enough: "This street needs a jeans store!" We guess the mall is not close enough...





Home is where the rotis are.

11

Forget loving the place where everyone knows your name. According to this well-fed, chatty and thoughtful shop owner, the place he likes is the place where he gets fed rotis. Fair enough. We wonder if the roti is actually irrelevant - perhaps the key is the getting fed element...would it be the same if he had to make his own?

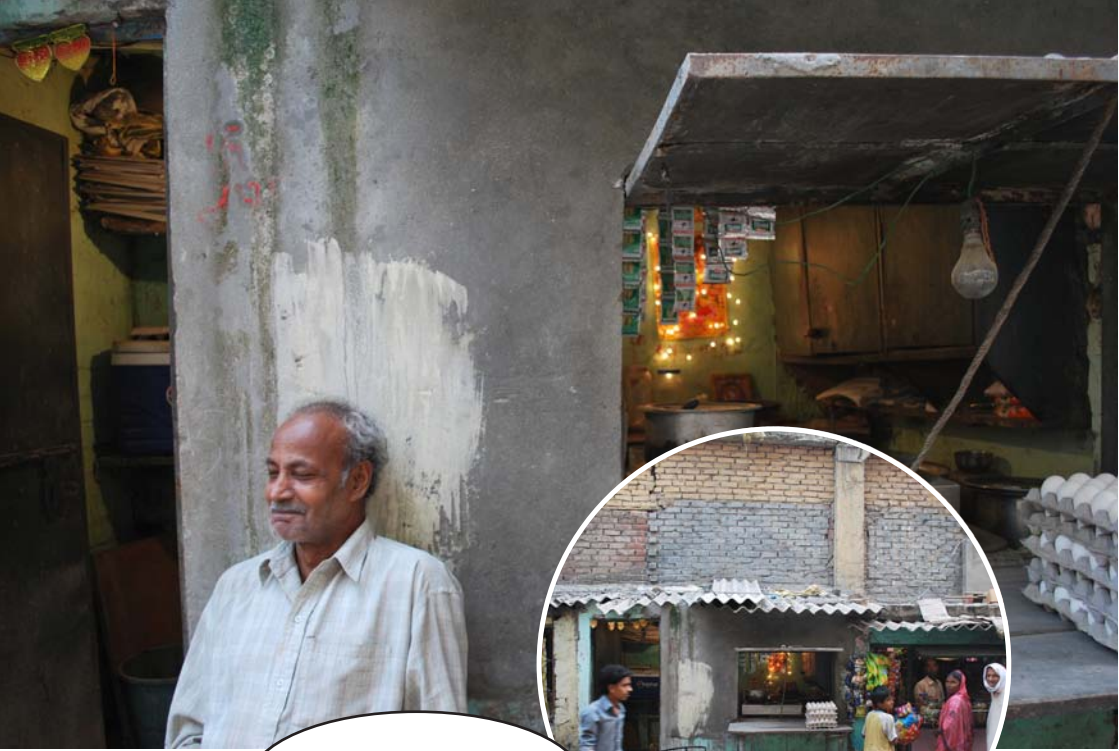




# 12 . . . . .

“Khirki is a good place because everyone works hard. If the road were fixed, then everything really would be perfect”





The Ultimate  
Omelette Station

13

1-egg Omelette: Rs. 8

2-egg Omelette: Rs. 15

Boiled egg: Rs. 5

All served with Roti and a smile

Prices inclusive of taxes



14.

This enterprising young produce salesman has cracked the vegetable code: he avoids the hassle of the main markets and buys his stock, instead, from other stands. Prices may be higher, but his life and his customers are eased.







Allez! Allez!...Alley!

# 15 . . . . .

You start to appreciate the diverse possibilities of alley-way space after cruising down this street. Ironing, selling phones, cutting hair, doing laundry, feeding goats, playing – so much is possible.

drawback, placement in an alley does give the willing shopkeeper certain advantages: easier access to his customers, fresh air, and natural lighting.

This press shop showed us that, while vulnerability to the elements is a





Just eat.

# 16.....

\*Samosas: Rs. 4 ea.\*

\*Chole: Rs. 12/bag\*

\*Jalebis: Rs. 3 ea.\*

\*Pakoras: Rs. 100/Kg.\*



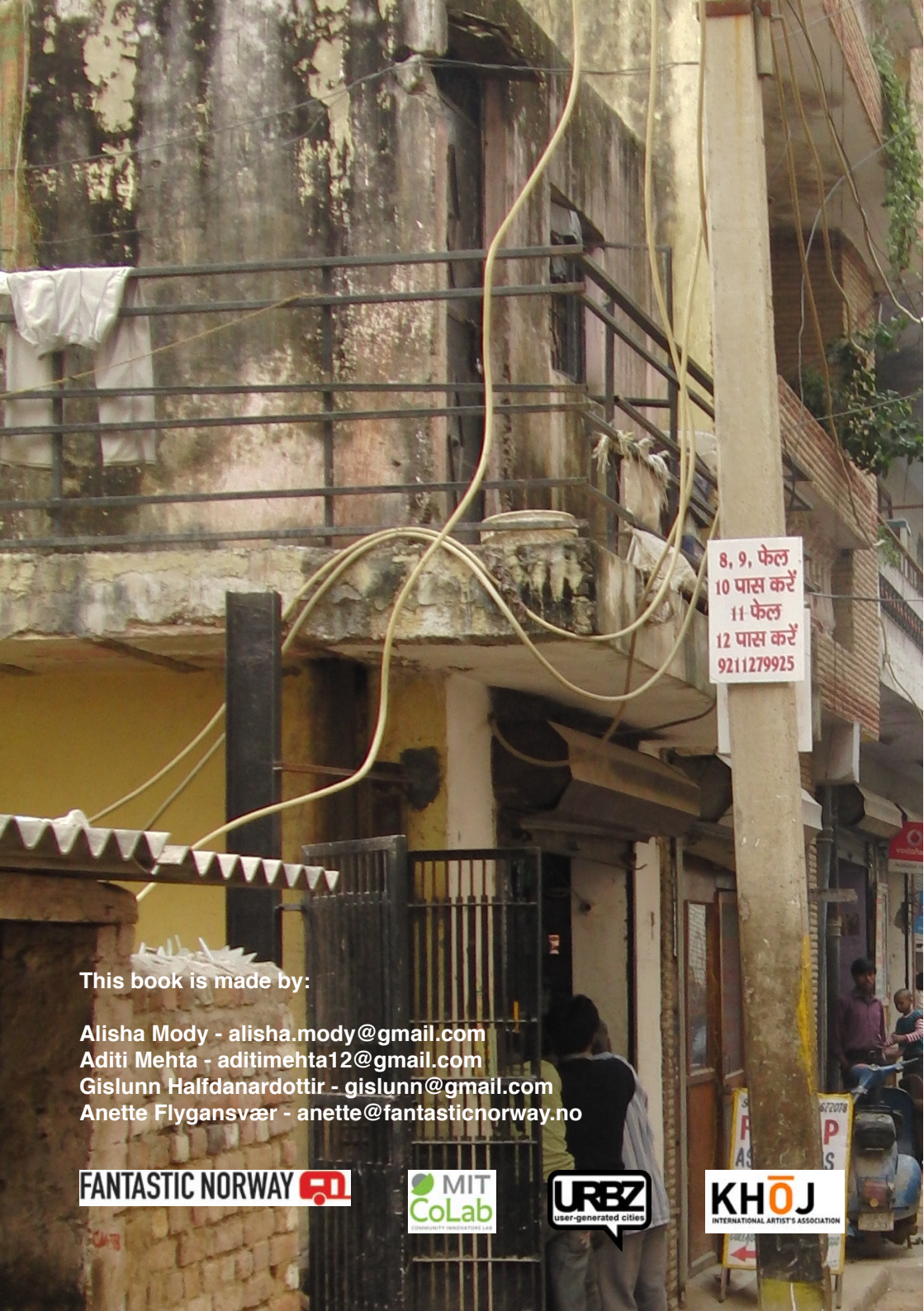


17

Chaat but no chat.

With winter here to stay, the street's popular Shakarkandi seller is keeping too busy to really chat. This typical northern Indian snack warms with just 3 ingredients: charcoal-roasted sweet potatoes, lime and chaat masala. Simply delicious.






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9211279925

This book is made by:

Alisha Mody - [alisha.mody@gmail.com](mailto:alisha.mody@gmail.com)  
Aditi Mehta - [aditimehta12@gmail.com](mailto:aditimehta12@gmail.com)  
Gislunn Halfdanardottir - [gislunn@gmail.com](mailto:gislunn@gmail.com)  
Anette Flygansvær - [anette@fantasticnorway.no](mailto:anette@fantasticnorway.no)

**FANTASTIC NORWAY** 

  
MIT  
CoLab  
COMMUNITY INNOVATORS LAB

  
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