A JEW GOOD MEN!

WHICH IS THE TINIEST COMMUNITY IN MUMBAI? THIS IS THE QUIZ MANY OF US ARE LIKELY TO FAIL IN. THESE ARE THE FEW HINTS THROWN: PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO THIS ETHNIC GROUP GO TO SYNOGAUGES TO PRAY. HEBREW IS THEIR ORIGINAL TONGUE. THEY CELEBRATE THE FESTIVALS LIKE MALIDA WITH JOY AND REVERENCE AND HAVE TREMENDOUS FAITH IN THE HOLY WALL OF ISRAEL. YES, YOU HAVE GOT IT RIGHT. JEWS ARE THE SMALLEST COMMUNITY, SHRINKING WITH EVERY PASSING DAY.

Ever since they landed in India, this community has accepted and assimilated various local traditions and rituals to evolve and construct their own identity. Zohar Reuben 25, a student of advertising and an observant Jew of Bandra, while adjusting his skull cap says, “There are different subdivisions in Jews I am a Bene Jew, our ancestor came to the shore of Israel some 300 years ago. Our ancestors were not only accepted but also welcomed in this land. For example we here in Mumbai follow the practice of wearing Mangalsutra along with our practices like atonement it has seeped into our culture so much so that, it has become our culture”.

It is quite a remarkable thing about Zohar who represents the generation next of this community that he speaks Hindi, Marathi, English, Gujarati and Hebrew quite fluently. "Thats the best thing to have happened to us, we are the deadliest linguistic concoction." He jokes.

I was invited at the ceremony called Edyatha Hanavi that marks the arrival of the prophet Elijah in India on his world-tour. This day is celebrated every year and it’s quite interesting to know that this tradition is followed only in India. Malida is all about coming together as a unit, where delicious food is served and prayers are chanted. Hymns are sung and the emphasis is more on keeping some of the vanishing trends alive with love and peace. “I see malida as an opportunity to get people together and make them aware more about the golden traditions of the past” says Sharon Galulkar a student of religious study and teachings at ORT, who also disseminates the information about Jews in Israel, India, Europe and the United States.

“Tasteful India offers which I like a lot, though I am a Jew but my skin color, my habits, my mentality is Indian. These Indian practices and manners which is in my DNA is something that makes me unique when I stand alongside the Jews from various other countries” he says it with a twinkle in his eyes. But there is also a concern on Sharon's mind that does not go unnoticed. “We are already a small group of people and youngsters are drifting away from it. We need to understand the precious values and traditions” says Sharon.

PG NO-HOUSE

GETTING A PG ACCOMMODATION IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS YOU THOUGHT.

TANVI MALHOTRA FINDS THE VARIOUS HINDRANCES THAT WILL COME ALL YOUR WAY.

One faces huge problems when they start looking out for a new home in an unknown city. “Religion has been a barrier in my case. Since I was a Muslim I had to search a lot for a house,” says Sanna Nizami (21), who stays as a PG at Waterfield Road, Bandra (W). It's not always religion that stops you from getting a place. There are instances where if you come late or your relatives keep dropping in every week, the landlord will soon show you the door.

“Once when my cousin had come to drop me, he wasn’t allowed to enter the compound of the building. The security said that the land lady had warned that no stranger should be allowed to enter,” says Shreya Dutta (23), student, staying at Linking Road, Khar.

On the other hand you will come across some girls staying as PGs who are quite happy with the facilities provided to them. Mithila Somayya (21), who stays as a PG at Pali Hill, Bandra had her own version, “I had almost seen 40 houses before I finalized on this one.” And now she seems quite satisfied with the flat. “I’ve got all the facilities – TV, 24 hour water supply, infact, the lady provides me with meals twice a day”.

Though Mithila ends up paying a rent of Rs 13,000, she is happy with the facilities that she gets, compared to what most PGs get. The landlords also have their set of rules and regulations when it comes to girls or boys sharing space with them or while renting a flat. They will try to get all possible details from them like – where they are from, whether they have any guardians in the city, how long they plan to stay and the most important, their religion.

“I was asked to get a Police Verification Certificate by the landlord stating that I don’t have any criminal record,” says Sanna Nizami (23). The proof which is actually meant for boys has now been implemented for the girls also by some landlords.

“However, my roommate wasn’t asked for the same when she shifted here,” adds Sanna.

“You don’t have any information about the person. So, you need to have some proof only for security purposes. I, therefore, prefer Hindu and Catholic girls,” says Mrs. Mookherjee (70), who rents her flat at Chapel Road.

“I’ve been staying here for the past 2 years now and I find this place to be very convenient to travel around. Also I have no issues pertaining to the rules laid by aunty. It’s the same almost everywhere,” says Amrita (24), who works in an ad agency.

Having spoken to the concerned people, next time you’re going looking for a PG in Bandra, be prepared and be secular.

PG AREAS RATES

ANDHERI (W) 1700/- to 3,000/-
SANTA CRUZ (W) 3,500/- to 5,000/-
KHAR (W) 8,000/- to 4,000/-
BANDRA (W) 13,000/-

Rs. Per month

(source: survey among brokers/agents)

tanvi.r.malhotra@gmail.com

prathamesh.jadhav@gmail.com