



INDIAN COFFEE HEARTS: A vintage Cafe, Indian Coffee House with hundreds of Stories

Description

In my two months of staying in Pondicherry, I found out that this city has an Indian Coffee House, which is a classic Cafe for people for years. For a lot of people, Indian Coffee House (ICH) is a very special place as it holds a lot of memories and I am no different. As a student I have spent a lot of time in the ICH of my University. It was not just a source of healthy food options and filter coffee but also a place to make friends, have discussions, do assignments and even have arguments. Four months later when I saw an ICH in Pondicherry, I had a quick recap of my stories in the coffee house. Hence, I went to the Coffee House, met some people and asked them why this place was special to them and what connection they have with it.

The Cardiologist who gave his heart:



Ms. Sujatha and Dr. Kalanidhi, a couple revisiting the Coffee House where they had their first date about 55 years ago.

I happened to come across two lovely couples, who have come from the United States and Chennai to relive their good old days in Pondicherry. First person whom I met was Dr. Kalanidhi who is currently a Radio Cardiologist in the United States and his wife Sujatha. They both were students in Jipmer and later this became their favourite place to go on dates. “ *We had our first date here. I used to come here with her and later I gave her my heart as I was in love with her.*” Years later, they are now settled in the US, but whenever they come to India, they come to this Cafe to re-experience their dates.

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Dr. Thirumalai, a Cardiologist with his wife Chandra

“Kalanadhi and I have been very good friends since College. We were batchmates, I also used to come with him to ICH.” Dr. Thirumalai also has a connection with the coffee house with his friend Kalanidhi. In his student life he would come to the place often, mostly with his friend. To him, everything seems pretty much the same except the uniforms of the staff. Whenever he comes to Pondicherry, he makes sure that he visits the cafe

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Bhame Shenoy, talking with all excitement about why ICH is still special to him.?

Bhame Shenoy, from Bengaluru finds Indian Coffee House a very special place. As he was in Pondicherry for his son's Convocation, he brought his family to the place to show them his one of the favourite spots of Pondicherry. In 1989, Mr. Shenoy did a course in Auroville. Every morning, he would ride a bicycle from Auroville and would come to the coffee house to have his favourite Filter Coffee in the city. *"Have you tasted their Filter Coffee? It is just amazing! It is just like the coffee we have in Bangalore."* said Bhame Shenoy while talking to me and his family. The excitement and joy on his face is clearly visible.

Always the best place to Hangout:

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PJ Rathnam (in pink shirt) and his friends, enjoying Sunday lunch.

Mr. PJ Rathnam with his friends J. Veerapandian, K. Ananda, M. Chandran and M. Kariaperumal have been friends since their College days. They are natives of Pondicherry and have been visiting the coffee house since 1965. Currently, they all are retired professionals and do a little get together on weekends or whenever they get time. They prefer sitting in the corner, facing the road as they mostly used to sit there in the initial days when they became friends over Coffee. The place is their favourite hangout spot among all the other cafes in Pondicherry.

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Retired professors having their political discourse.

The discussions of these men include their daily life updates, the current situation from Pondicherry, political discourse and roasting each other. For them, sitting together and ranting about a politician they don't really like is nothing less than a love language. They feel good when young students approach them and talk to them. I was lucky to be one of those students whom they liked talking to and also agreed to get their photographs clicked.

Yeah, We love our jobs :

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Mr. Joseph, a native of Pondicherry works as a Cashier and Manager of the Coffee House.

The Coffee House is not just special to the customers but also the people who work there. The happiness and loyalty of the staff describe that they love doing their jobs. Joseph, the cashier and manager at the coffee house, said, *"I have been working for 42 years. While I mostly worked in the Pondicherry branch, I have also worked in Cuddalore and other places in TamilNadu. This place is not just a job but also a habit."* He finds pride in associating himself with the cafe. He also mentioned that people who used to come years ago still recognise and meet him.

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2 Staff members of ICH preparing meals and wrapping parcels.?

After a happy interaction, Mr. Joseph allowed me to click photographs of the parcel counter and the coffee making area. These two men were busy with their work so I did not bother them a lot. They smiled and agreed to get their photos clicked while sorting out the orders for parcels. The staff at the back had been blending milk with the decoction for Filter Coffee. Been working for years, They are very quick and best at what they do.

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ICH Staff blending milk in freshly filtered decoction for filter coffee.

The face behind the classic and delicious filter coffee. The loyal staff and their hard work are the reason why the Indian Coffee House still holds the legacy. The aromatic fresh Filter Coffee, the crisp Masala Dosas, the Bombay/ French toast and many more dishes that are served with love still attract their old customers and tourists in Pondicherry. The stories of the customers and staff make the place very special and nostalgic for them, making a special place in their heart

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