

It had been 3-4 weeks since the last ride, with the monsoons were in full swing, it was looking dicky for a weekend without a ride.

During the week Rahul and Avishkar seemed keen but I felt the downpours would keep us all housebound. **Boring!**

Got a txt from Rahul to saying 7.30 at Thane Toll Naka. That was a problem, 'Where is it?'. Probably been there many times but didnt know it by name. We decided to meet at 7.00 at Sion Circle. Yippee new meeting spot!

Got up late and a window check meant a txt to Rahul 'Are we still on as its piddling down?' No reply so, dashed around and just made it just in time.

Stopped at Thane Toll Naka to check our bearings and now I know where it is. No Avishkar as he was having problems with water in the fuel on his bike. **Maybe he should try the bathroom!**

Not the same when he isnt with us, the rides are a rascal and a few laughs short. Hope he makes it to the next one.



We stopped at Evergreen for breakfast of masala egg and powe. **Get used to powe if coming to Mumbai, every menu item in these 'hotels' – Indian for cafes' is suffixed by powe – a form of bread bun.**



We moved on to Shahapur where we took directions from some policemen. They directed us further up the NH3. Rahul wasnt convinced about this so we checked on the GPS to be doubly sure.

That indicated for us to go back and take a left. **Thats Indian police for you but wait for it,** 500m down the road we where flagged down by a couple of bobbies. **Oh shit me thinks!** They just wanted a lift to the next junction. **Hope no-one wants to be my pillion!** Luckily just one got on Rahuls bike.

We dropped the highway policeman off and headed down the SH44 stands for State Highway 44 **not shit head!**

More about Indian roads. Expressways are the equivalent to UK motorways with poor road surfaces and any kind of bike is barred.

National Highways are tarmacked dual carriageways which have intermittent potholes during monsoons even when they have just been laid. These create serious traffic jams. SH are single lane and are full of potholes. **Atleast road users know what to expect!**



Then there are unlisted roads where you dont see much traffic because they are one big pothole and normally best for trekking. But on a bike thats where the fun starts and its great for your abs. **Small wonder I carry a 6 pack. What you fancy? Kingfisher or a Fosters?**

All this is a bit tongue in cheek.

We move on and Rahul not trusting the US built GPS navigation system, decides to ask a local barber the way to Bhandapara. He couldnt help but his customers chirp in and said we are going down the wrong road advising us to take a left. My intuition was stay on our selected route unless it was a bye pass for a 6 huts!



We took their advice and yes, went down the wrong road doing a perfect horseshoe and ending up back on the NH3 at Kasara. **Felt like going back and punching them!**



There was a silver lining to all this. Despite the continuous down pour, the single track tarmac was a joy to ride with meandering curves and got to see some waterfalls and a fast moving stream that was probably heading to our final destination.



At the cross roads of Kasara we took refuge in a bus shelter which was inhabited by wild dogs and gathered our bearings.

At Iglit we had a tea stop and then it was non stop to Bhandadara which is renowned for the Wilson Dam. We took the bikes to the edge of the lake but for me it was too windy, cold and raining hard. Rahul wanted to spend 5 mins here so I said that I would move on and find somewhere to have a gag.



About 1km from the lake there was a bus shelter that seemed an ideal place for my tranquiliser. I was minding my own business and in comes a shepherd wanting a conversation in hindi. **Nightmare!**

'Got a watch', 'No'. 'What time is it?' **Dum fuk, if I havnt got a watch how would I know the time?**

'3.30' from my moby. A minute later he asks again, 'What time is it?' I said 'One minute more than 3.30 – do the f ing arithmetic!

'Are you on your own?' **No my team of 'kill on sight' marines are on a top secret naval exercise at the bottom of the freezing waters of Lake Bhandadara'.**

'Where are you from?' **'Mars', 'Are you going back today'. 'No, I have been searching for a good place have a disco and rest for the night. You and your goats would be invited as guests of honour. This shelter will do nicely for me and my officers but can you house my marines with your goats?'**



'Of course I am going home you dumb twit, I couldnt bear the sight of you and this deep meaningful conversation all night long!' Why does it always happen to me?



Rahul turns up and thankfully we are homeward bound, I waved cheerio to my new found friend.

On reaching the NH3 we find a place to dine which was above middle of the road but didnt have any red meat so I marked it down.

We left the restaurant and a few Kms down Rahul was out of fuel. For once I was not carrying my backpack, so no tow rope.

Rahul had a novel idea, pushing his bike with his right leg whilst riding mine and I had to get on his bike and steer it. We tried it but gave up as I wasnt able to keep a straight line.

The nearest pump was back whence we came and he decided to push it as it was down hill. Asked me to wait for ten mins then move on. After a bit thought whats the point of waiting so traced Rahul back towards the petrol pump. He loaded up and we were off.

The rain was pelting down from well before Shahapur to the first Kalyan entry and there was a massive traffic jam. I lost Rahul as he wiggled in and out of the static traffic like a downhill slalom skier.

Landed home around 10.00pm, drenched and straight into a hot shower to warm up after a 402kms round trip.