

INDIA

BY JOE RAY | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Riding through a moving picture

NEW DELHI — Jump on a plane, pop up here, walk around for a day, and it feels like your brain is stuck on “spin.” An auto-rickshaw, one of those souped-up, three-wheeled scooter-taxis, blazes through traffic and the driver, one foot on his lap, squeezes through openings so tight you can touch the bus to your left and the gravel truck on the right. Ahead, a couple weaves through traffic on a scooter, the woman sidesaddle on the back, ponytail swaying in the breeze.

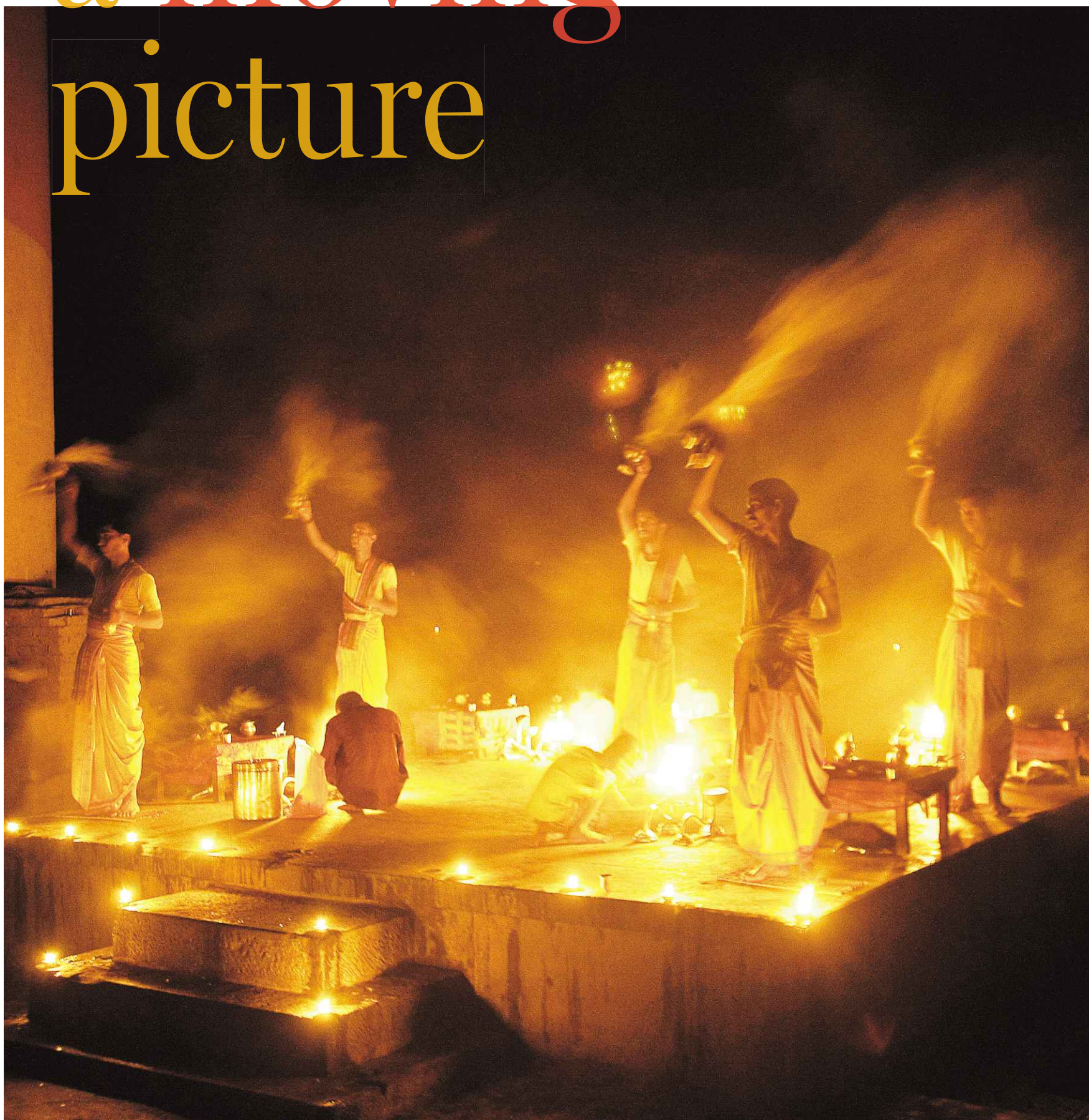
On a market street, the assault on your senses is complete. A vendor sells flowers and above him, an electronics shop blares white light and sound. Just behind, a crowd gathers around a street cart full of madly bubbling fritters. Under your arm appears a string of painfully poor children, while masses of people file by, parting like a river around a cow in the road.

In the beginning, it's hard to get India to stop.

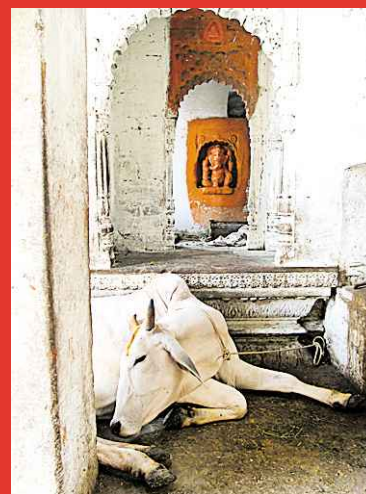
Stand and stare for a few moments in an Indian city and you will understand the impossibility of summing up the country and how it sends you running to the recesses of your mind for quiet. The train system, however, is what links India's dizzying disparate elements — country and city, rich and poor, calm and chaotic. It is a rolling microcosm, a big, blue myth, proudly trundling along at an impossibly slow average speed.

Despite the myriad transportation possibilities available, from cycle rickshaws to Mumbai's wonderfully cool Premier Padmini taxis, the king of them all is Indian Railways, the largest single-management train system in the world.

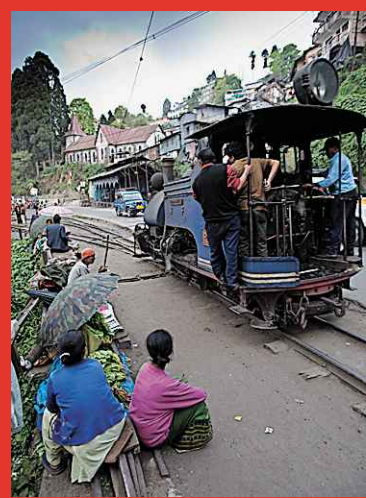
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On a platform beside the Ganges, lights are offered to Hindu deities in the Aarti ritual performed daily.



In Varanasi, a statue of the deity Ganesh is visible inside a building where outside a cow is tethered.



The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway steam engine pulls into Darjeeling station on its 2-foot-wide rails.

TRAINS CUT THROUGH THE TRANSIENT, MESMERIZING SIGHTS OF A COUNTRY GOING NONSTOP

PHOTOS BY JOE RAY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

INSIDE

An arts trail in **New Mexico** weaves alpaca wool, dyes, history, and business. **M2**

Seaside **Marseille** grows from a 'French Connection' to a French destination. **M4**

EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND

Getaway weekend on **bikes** and back roads. **M5**

Going with the flow on the **Minuteman Bikeway**. **M5**



BUSINESS WIRE

New Delhi fills up al fresco all day, all night

By Joe Ray
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

This city begins on the street where I spy an indoor-outdoor, sit-stand joint called Al Bake with a team of cooks trimming cooked lamb from upright spits before going crazy on the trimmed meat with a pair of cleavers. Wap! Wap! Wap! Wap! It leaves a mound of heavenly-smelling minced lamb and spice that, wrapped in flatbread, make one mean, minimalist, New Delhi-style shawarma.

At dinner, I corral a few friends and guilt-trip them into joining me at Al Bake. Munching away while sitting on plastic chairs under the stars, we are not disappointed. While Delhi can feel hard to connect with, exploring the street food scene is a direct path to its core.

"In India, life happens on the street," says a friend, and nowhere is that more evident than in the Delhi street food scene, particularly in the pulsing heart of Old Delhi.

Indian street food explodes all day, from sidewalk-straddling sugar cane

STREET FOOD, Page M4



JOE RAY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Chickpea fritters prepared for street sale.