

# A day at the railway s

The train station is rarely quiet and peaceful. But when 12-year-old Ranjan wakes at dawn, the rush-hour hasn't yet begun.

06.00

## 06.00 Morning rush hour

The station starts to fill up with people on their way to work. Raja, 8, is ready to start begging from the passengers.

"I wear my dirtiest, most torn clothes. That way I earn more. In one day I can make about \$0.60. I give the money to my mum. Foreigners give the most, but I try to beg from everyone. Some shout at me and say bad words. Then I walk away. There are lots of children begging and sometimes we fight. But we always become friends again."



05.30

## 05.30 Toothbrush sticks

The children at the station brush their teeth with sticks from the neem tree. Ranjan and his friends buy sticks for about one cent at the station.



07.00

## 07.00 Sibling love

Lots of children come to the station from the slums next to the railway line. Many bring their younger brothers and sisters. They can't stay at home when their parents are at work, so they go with their big brother or sister to work or school.

Mahmina, 12, fixes her little sister's hair on the platform.



Raja is not the only one starting work in the morning rush hour. Suresh, 11, shines the shoes of an early-bird policeman.



08.00

## 08.00 The platform school begins.

The crowds of people at the station thin out – most people have arrived at work now. So the working children can also take a break and go to the first lesson of the day at the platform school.



Shayama dances with a friend at the platform school. "I've learned to dance by watching films!"



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09.30

## 09.30 Tiger fight

The children have made funny and scary masks from papier maché. Here, a tiger is fighting a powerful God. The other children cheer them on.

Hiding behind the masks are Kanha and Jagan, both 8.



## 10.00 Puppet show

The teachers at the platform school often use puppet shows to make the lessons more fun. Ranjan and a classmate hold up a piece of cloth to create the stage.

10.00



## 11.15 Time for food

If the children don't get to eat they have no energy for learning. That's why the teachers give them chhathua, a dish made from flattened rice, peanuts, sugar and milk powder that's a bit like rice pudding. For some of the children, that's the only food they eat all day.



Of course, everyone washes up their own plate at the sink in the station.



The school medicine box has everything from painkillers to bandages and de-worming tablets. If a child gets injured or is seriously ill, the teachers call the Ruchika doctors.



11.15



11.45

## 11.45 Saturday bath

Every Saturday it's time for the weekly bath. The teachers help to scrub, rinse and dry the children.





The teachers give the children vitamin drops.



12.00

### 12.00 Thanks, that's it for the day!

When the lesson is over, the whole school gets packed up. Everybody helps to carry the school sign and all the materials to a small shed next to the train tracks.

12.05

### 12.05 Games time

After school, lots of children have to run home and help their mothers make lunch. Others are able to stay at the station and play, as long as no big passenger trains come. Ranjan says he has over 300 friends at the station.

"My best friend is called Parama. We play together and help each other. Once I had an upset stomach and he took me to hospital. When he broke his leg I took him to the doctor and paid the medical bill with the last of my money."



Ranjan and Rama climb trees.



16.00

### 16.00 Rush hour again

In the afternoon, people start to make their way home from work. The trains fill up with people and the children start work again. A crowded train has come into the station. Mithun prepares to jump on board with his broom.

### 17.30 Bottle jackpot

Mithun and his friends have run through the carriages and found empty bottles that they can sell. The temperature outside is over 40 degrees celcius and it's hot and sticky in the carriages. A lot of passengers bring water to drink.

17.30



19.30



### 19.30. Finally quiet

The last packed train has left the station. The platforms are quiet and empty for once. Most of the children have run off home to eat dinner with their families. Ranjan, Rama and Bijay have earned enough today to be able to buy their favourite dish at one of the station's food stands: chicken and rice.



### 21.00 Good night

The children who sleep at or near the station almost always sleep together. It feels safer that way. When it's dark, both boys and girls run the risk of being beaten and raped, by both older children and adults. Ruchika staff walk around the stations in the evening to help children who are on their own get home to their families or to the children's home.

21.00

