

## Share My Dabba

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Indian families take their home cooked meals very seriously and the dabbawallah system is a great example of this. The “dabba” is a 3-tiered lunch box made of steel. Every day lunch is prepared fresh and packed into this dabba so that office-going members of the family can enjoy a home cooked meal at work. The dabba is a symbol of fresh, healthy food, uncontaminated by outsiders who might use the same vessels to cook beef etc.



Every day a group of men go around the city collecting these dabbas from homes and deliver them to offices. A few hours later they collect these empty dabbas and return them to the houses. These men are the “dabbawallahs” of Mumbai. The “delivery boys” travel to every corner of Mumbai by local trains, bicycles and on foot. According to an article published in *Forbes* magazine in 1998, one mistake for every eight million deliveries constitutes Six Sigma quality standards. Each lunch box is sorted and differentiated on the basis of markings on the lid. This marking gives the dabbawallahs an indication of the source as well as the destination.



The dabbawallahs have a fan club that includes Richard Branson and Prince Charles and they have the distinction of having made numerous speeches at colleges about management. These businessmen are not your usual corporate types dressed in swanky suits, but their business has been a case study for some of the best B-schools of the world.

The dabbas that arrive in offices often have a lot of food in them- not enough for one person to finish them. This “leftover” food was seen an opportunity by a local NGO to feed kids. The initiative makes an attempt to leverage the expertise of the dabbawallahs to feed the thousands of hungry street children in India. Through the ‘Share My Dabba’ initiative, the Dabbawala Foundation and volunteers will distribute food to thousands of hungry children on the city streets. All people need to do is put a ‘SHARE’ sticker on their dabba.

“On their way back after collecting the tiffins, the dabbawallahs will separate the boxes with stickers,” said Abhishek Dinkar Ekal, vice president of the Dabbawala Foundation.

This is different from leftover food- it is a conscious decision to share your lunch with someone who needs it. The volunteers will also ensure that the nutritional value and freshness of the food will remain intact till it reaches the kids.



Here's a lovely video explaining the initiative: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZC1czZofyY>

Today there are 5,000 dabbawallas in India. They deliver lunch to 200,000 people every day, i.e. 400,000 transactions every day. At an average of Rs 200 per lunch box per month, they have a turnover of 500 million rupees per year!

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